in Gen. iii. downwards. But *why* is the  
devil set forth by the *serpent*? How  
does the bite of the serpent operate? It  
*pervades with its poison the frame of its  
victim*: that frame *becomes poisoned*:—  
and *death ensues*. So sin, *the poison of  
the devil*, being instilled into our nature,  
that nature has become a *poisoned nature*,  
—a *flesh of sin* (see Rom. viii. 3). Now  
the brazen serpent was made *in the likeness of the serpents* which had bitten the  
children of Israel. It *represented to them  
the poison* which had gone through their  
frames, and it was hung up there, on the  
banner-staff, as a trophy, to shew them  
that *for the poison, there was healing*;—  
that the plague had been overcome. In  
*it*, there was *no poison*; only the *likeness*of it. Now was not the Lord Jesus made  
*in the likeness of the flesh of sin*, Rom.  
viii. 3? Was not He made ‘*Sin for us,  
who knew no sin’* (2 Cor. v. 21)?

Did not He, on His Cross, make an open shew  
of, and triumph over, the Enemy, so that  
it was *as if the Enemy himself had been  
nailed to that Cross* (Col. ii.15)? Were  
not Sin and Death and Satan crucified,  
when *He was crucified*? “In that case,  
since the injury was by the serpent, by the  
serpent was also the cure: and in this,  
since by man death came into the world,  
by man entered life also.” Euthymius.

**must the Son of man be lifted up:  
i.e. it is necessary**, in the Father’s counsel—it is decreed, but not arbitrarily ;—  
the very necessity of things, which is in  
fact but the evolution of the divine Will,  
made it requisite that the pure and sinless  
Son of Man should thus be uplifted and  
suffer; see Luke xxiv. 26.

In the word  
**lifted up** there is more than the mere crucifixion. It has respect in its double meaning (of which see a remarkable instance in  
Gen. xl. 13, 19) to the exaltation of the  
Lord on the Cross, and through the Cross  
to His Kingdom; and refers back to “*hath  
ascended up into heaven*” before.

**15.]**  
The corresponding clause applying to the  
type is left to be supplied—‘ And as every  
one who looked on it was healed, so....’

**believeth in him]** This expression,  
here only used by John, *implies his exaltation*,—see ch. xii. 32. It is *a belief in*(*abiding in*, see note on ver. 18) *His Person being what God by his sufferings and  
exaltation hath made Him to be, and being  
that* TO ME. This involves, on the part of  
the believer, the anguish of the bite of the  
fiery serpent,—and the earnest looking on  
Him in Whom sin is crucified, with the  
inner eye of faith.

**have eternal life]**Just as in the type, God did not remove  
the fiery serpents,—or not all at once,—but  
healing was to be found in the midst of  
them by looking to the brazen serpent  
(‘every one that is bitten, when he looketh  
upon it **shall live**,’ Num. xxi. 8),—so the  
temptations and conflicts of sin shall not  
*leave* the believer,—but *in the midst of  
these*, with the Eye of Faith fixed on the  
uplifted Son of Man, he *has eternal life*;  
perishes not of the bite, but **shall live**.

See on this verse the remarkable passage,  
Wisd. xvi. 5—13, where as much of the  
healing sign is opened as could be expected  
before the great Antitype Himselfappeared.

**16.]** Many Commentators—since the  
time of Erasmus, who first suggested the  
notion,—have maintained *that the discourse of our Lord breaks off here*, and the  
rest, to ver. 21, consists of the remarks of  
the Evangelist. (So Tholuck, Olshausen,  
Lücke, De Wette; which last attributes  
vv. 13, 14 also to John.) But to those  
who view these discourses of our Lord as  
intimately connected *wholes*, this will be  
as inconceivable, as the idea of St. Matthew having combined into one the insulated sayings of his Master. This discourse  
would be altogether fragmentary, and would  
have left Nicodemus *almost where he was  
before*, had not this most weighty concluding part been also spoken to him. This  
it is, which expands and explains the assertions of vv. 14, 15, and applies them to the  
present life and conduct of mankind.

The principal grounds alleged for supposing  
the discourse to break off here seem to be

*(a) that all allusion to Nicodemus is henceforth dropped*.

But this is not conclusive, for it is obvious that the natural progress of such an interview on his part would  
be *from questioning to listening*: and that  
even had he joined in the dialogue, the  
Evangelist would not have been bound to  
relate all his remarks, but only those which,  
as vv. 2, 4, and 9, were important to bring  
out his mind and standing-point.

(*b*) *that henceforth past tenses are used*; making  
it more probable that the passage was