

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE translator has been requested to say a few words with respect to the book which is now, after some delay, presented to the English public. The first thing expected of him is naturally some account of the author; but this curiosity it is not in his power to gratify. The work was published some years ago by a writer who has not since made his appearance in literature. It was received with much favour, and generally regarded as a specimen of exegesis at once original and orthodox; in fact, it took its place immediately among the best contributions to a literature, already very rich, devoted to the exposition of St. John's writings. Perhaps the best introduction to these remarks will be some extracts from early criticisms in the German theological press, especially as those criticisms are bound up with the first issue of the original. Zimmermann's *Theologische Literaturblatt* thus speaks in a free translation:—

“The present work may be classed among the most useful and interesting that have lately appeared in Biblical-exegetical literature. It exhibits scientific profundness and practical application in harmonious union: united in such a way as few books unite them. It is a pleasant thing in these days, when the storms of party contest disturb the Church, when the opponents and the friends of revelation are pitched against each other in open and violent warfare, when Supernaturalism and Nihilism contend everywhere and in all confessions for the mastery,—to fall in with books whose authors have evidently, in quiet and earnest toil, been pondering the precious word of God, and extracting from the hidden depths of Scripture its pure gold. Such a gift this author presents us; and, in the

name of all who love the Bible, but especially in the name of our ministerial brethren, whom this expositor has mainly had in view, we heartily thank him. He has done much by his own fundamental investigations to advance the knowledge of this Epistle; and he has also offered an important contribution towards the yet future exploration of its depths. In a way not hitherto trodden, and with a success not hitherto attained, he shows the subtle connection of thought in its general scope; and thus by his clear and luminous analysis refutes the objection sometimes urged against the Epistle as being without any method. He, in fact, shows that the most beautiful order reigns in it. And he further admits us into the secret mystery of St. John's habit of thought and view of things generally; so that by his aid we can understand the spiritual life of the evangelist in its entire unity and harmony, and even penetrate into the inmost movements and feelings of his apostolic heart inflamed and governed by perfect love.

“He rightly observes that it is the province of Biblical Theology, to which he offers this contribution, to place, as it were, every word under a microscope, and examine in a dialectical way from what presuppositions it springs, to what consequences it leads; in short, to deduce from incidental expressions what the general system of thought was, and conversely to pour upon individual expressions light derived from the spirit of the Christian philosophy of the whole. With this aim the author has examined the Johannean ideas *ζωὴ αἰώνιος, φῶς, χρίσμα, δικαιοσύνη, ἀλήθεια, ἀγάπη, ἀνομία*, and illustrated their meaning with such a profusion of learning and skill as must be studied to be adequately appreciated.

“We have particularly to remark upon one thing, that the author has avoided a snare into which, as far as our observation goes, all expositors have more or less fallen: the superabundant citation and refutation of other exegetes. To such an extent is this carried, even in de Wette and Meyer, and in the excellent Bible of Lange, that often the expositor forgets to establish and clear up his own views. We see no reason why this practice should be indulged in,

at the expense of the compendiousness of the work and the concentration of the mind on its own teaching. It holds good here also that *nimum nocet*. This danger our expositor has happily avoided; although he has, as the whole book plainly shows, thoroughly examined and tested the opinions of others, and his own exposition is the product and rich fruit of that conscientious study. Moreover, the arrangement of the work is very suggestive. Each independent section of the Epistle has its explanation of word and matter and sense; this is followed by a *resumé* of the meaning of the whole section as such, with which is connected a glance backward at each leading division of the Epistle, followed by a development of its entire current of thought, as also by an examination of the occasion and purport and aim of the letter, with a final review of its theological character. And all this is done in a spirited, penetrating, and attractive style.

“After these general observations we count it our duty, and an obligation of gratitude, to examine a few points in detail. As already mentioned, it was the steady purpose of the writer to illustrate the fundamental ideas and sharply define the leading principles of the whole Epistle, which bears a specifically Christological character. Around these unique ideas the excellent exposition is ordered, in which the author has succeeded in developing the deep thought of the Johannæan theology in a clear and perspicuous manner, and in contributing much valuable help towards understanding the obscure and difficult parts of the Epistle. For instance, we perfectly agree with him in the explanation of the first four verses of the first chapter, which are very frequently misunderstood: his exhibition of the argument is clear and unforced; and the personal meaning of the *Λόγος* in ver. 1, as he supports it, appears to commend itself most absolutely to acceptance. His view of the connection between this and the subsequent *υἱός* is highly suggestive; and so is the development of the idea in *φῶς*, which he rightly denies to be a particular quality in God, and asserts to be the primal ground of His essence which is such as manifests itself to itself. The interpretation of

ch. i. 7 is rather unusual: the author makes *καθαρίξειν* refer to sanctification, and shows, with keen and convincing force, the internal connection between ver. 8 and the closing words of ver. 7.

“The second chapter presents a knot to expositors in vers. 12–14, not only as to the meaning of the sixfold address, but also as to the place of the paragraph in the organic whole of the letter. Our author is successful in diffusing light in both directions. He shows that the aim of the exhortation is not to set forth generally the doctrines of Christianity, but to bring the Christian disciples to a higher perfection. Not less admirable is the profound way in which all Scripture is made to illustrate the principle laid down by St. John. He rightly takes the *καί* in ver. 20, not adversatively, but as expressing simple progression. This gives precision and clearness to the context, and makes the connection with the preceding passage luminous at once. ‘Ye who are able through your anointing to discern with sufficient clearness the anti-Christian error, will also now take care to avoid it, and hold fast the truth.’ He correctly interprets the *χρίσμα* of anointing as the symbol of the impartation of the Spirit, and refers the *ἅγιος* not to the Father, but to the Son.

“Concerning the exposition of the passages, ch. iv. 17–19 and ch. v. 6–8, which present so many difficulties, we need say no more than that our expositor has been able to illustrate every point in its relation to St. John’s general habit of thought. On the other hand, we cannot altogether accord with his remarks upon ch. v. 16, 17. Our own view is that the apostle here describes by another name the sin which the Saviour termed a sin against the Holy Ghost, and does no more than declare the uselessness of prayer for such a sin. For the rest, the elucidation of the details is here also, as everywhere, both striking and instructive.

“We can therefore heartily and with perfect confidence recommend this work, which in fact presents to the working minister specifically a rich fund of help for his study, continually keeping, as it does, the scientific and the practical equally in view. For such labour as this we would have

as many sympathizers and helpers as possible. We are deeply convinced that he who penetrates the spirit of this book, and ponders, with our author's help, the sublime and majestic divine ideas of the Epistle, will lay down the work enriched in knowledge and comforted in his inner man. Nor will he fail to wish that the New Testament were handled in this fashion by many more among the learned."

The student—for he who appreciates our volume must be a student—will find that this testimony is true. He will perceive that, while St. John's inspiration and the canonical authority of his letter are left uninvestigated, every word, and every turn of thought in every sentence, is examined with most reverent care, and viewed in the light of the analogy of his own other writings, and in that of the other Scriptures. It will be found to yield a great advantage—as the reviewer points out—that we have to do with the opinions and decisions of one mind, and are not required to watch how he holds the balances in which a thousand conflicting interpretations lie. It is a book that encourages the reader's private judgment; while sufficiently dogmatic, and occasionally almost dictatorial, it commends itself to every man's thoughtful discrimination. Though a certain Platonic philosophy and the theology of Lutheranism underlie the exposition, these are not unduly obtruded. The reader and his guide are together in the presence of St. John as an independent witness of the truth of God. The translator in this case not being an editor also, it would be out of place to point out what he may deem flaws in the exegesis. Were it right to do so, he could indicate several results of elaborate exegetical criticism from which he dissents; among them would be two that the reviewer above highly approves,—connected with the *καθαρίζειν* and the *φῶς*,—the determination of the vexed question as to the residue of necessary sin in the believer, and the terms used in the definition of regeneration, and as to the operation of perfecting and perfected charity in the hearts of the sanctified. It would be a labour of love to discuss these points here or anywhere; but it must suffice that the translator clears

himself from the responsibility of some few of the conclusions of his author. For the rest, there is nothing in the volume that is not true to the Catholic faith; even in the questions alluded to, our expositor—it must be honestly confessed—has on his side the great majority. But let that pass.

A word may be said here as to the studied exclusion of the polemics of exegesis. It is quite possible, while admiring this specimen of direct in opposition to indirect interpretation, that we may do injustice to those invaluable works which adopt a different plan. It is undoubtedly sometimes a very troublesome thing to get at the meaning of Meyer or Huther themselves through the wearisome array of contradicted authors who bar the way. But, generally speaking, the toil is in the long run rewarded. We see, as we otherwise should not, all that has been or may be said on the subject; we are saved the trouble of consulting a multitude of writers; and meanwhile we have the pleasure of exercising our own critical faculty upon a variety of opinions,—a pleasure which to many is one of a very exquisite kind. It is hardly fair, moreover, that an author who could never have produced a book like this had he not carefully read the other kind of commentaries should even seem to disparage them. He could not have used his own microscope with such wonderful effect had he not been in the habit of looking through a multitude of other men's less finished instruments. And his honest desire to advance the truth would be thought by himself to have failed of its reward if he did not find his own conclusions discussed in commentaries yet to come. We have noticed evidences already—and if we had not noticed them, may be sure of their being found—that Haupt's interpretations will play a conspicuous part in the labours of future Meyers and Huthers, who will point out where his microscope has seen more than it should have seen, or has failed to see what ought to be seen. After all, this matter of bristling polemics on the page of calm exegesis is one merely of degree. It is carried to a great and wearisome excess, but it cannot be altogether avoided.

Another reviewer in the *Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung* brings out a feature of the book not yet touched upon:—

“The present work occupies a place as it were between a commentary and a biblical-theological essay. It is distinguished from the former, inasmuch as grammatical-historical exegesis is not the writer's chief aim, but is regarded only as the foundation already laid, which, however, is introduced more or less according to the necessity of the case. His eye is always fixed on the process of thought; all else is subordinate to this supreme object. On the other hand, it is distinguished from those works which deal with the Epistle only as illustrating Johannaean theology; for it does not select and discuss isolated passages, but impartially investigates every thought from beginning to end. The expositor aims to develop from it the general principles of St. John's views of God and the universe; for, although the apostle may not have been conscious that he was exhibiting such a system, all the elements of it were enfolded in his thinking. Hence, as Haupt himself says, he has placed every expression under a microscope, and traced it back to its premisses, and forward to its conclusions; thus finding its exact relation to the apostle's scheme of thought generally. He has taken special pains with the order of the ideas in the Epistle; this having always been, and still being, matter of great difficulty to exegetes. He thinks that he has found a specific, compact, and regularly ordered process of thought, without, however, believing that the apostle wrote on a preconceived harmonious plan. Throughout the exposition we trace a decidedly realistic feature; as also a dialectic, sometimes even too keen, which with great subtilty seeks to do justice to every word of the Bible.”

The question of any analytical arrangement of this Epistle has been a fruitful source of discussion among expositors. Taking it altogether, that which is established in the present volume is, perhaps, the most elaborate that has ever been attempted. How elaborate it is the reader will hardly be aware until he reaches the summing up at the close. He will then perceive that he has been examin-

ing the most exquisite piece of reticulation imaginable. If he should attempt—what the author has not attempted—to write out the Greek, which is everything here, on the principle of this analysis, he will be simply amazed at the result. Two things will strike him most forcibly. First, that men with any pretension to common sense could ever have come to the conclusion that the Epistle, as the production of St. John's old age,—this undoubtedly it was,—betrays all the marks of senility, being an unmethodized effusion of pious sentiments and reflections. This view has been put in a more respectful form, in the assertion that the apostle was a contemplative and not a dialectical spirit, and that he poured out the aphorisms or detached expressions of his pure meditation on the profound truths of the Gospel. We cannot travel through the first chapter, under our author's guidance, without feeling that, at any rate, such a fallacy as this must be exploded. Intuition and deductive thought meet here as they never met before, and have perhaps never met since, save in some of the meditations of St. Augustine. The second matter of astonishment will be, that a writer whose mind never for a moment loses the thread or the clue of his own analysis should have adopted his method unconsciously, as our author seems to assert that he did. And this may beget some suspicion of the analysis itself: suspicion which, it may be observed, a careful examination will justify. But into this question the present notice cannot enter. Suffice to say that, saving in a few cases where the despotism of analysis leads to a certain violence being done to the text, even a faulty scheme, thoroughly worked out, very much aids the interpretation of the whole. None can read Bengel's exposition of the Epistle without feeling this. It is remarkable that no two expositors are in agreement here. Every man has his own interpretation. It would be wrong here to yield to the temptation of adding another.

Before delivering up the book to its readers, a few concluding sentences may be permitted on the general characteristics of the Epistle, and the spirit in which it should be studied.

Our expositor again and again remarks that St. John's letter bears all the marks of having been written to congregations already in possession of the truth. This hardly goes far enough to do justice to the case. It was written designedly as the supplement to all extant New Testament Scripture, as, in fact, the final treatise of inspired revelation. This is not avowed, or, if avowed, the expression of it is very faint and indirect. But the effect of this truth is everywhere apparent. Every doctrine, from that of God, as manifested in the Mediatorial Trinity, through the atonement down to the last things, receives its consummating form. The evangelist was reserved to "seal up the vision" and close the long series of divine communications to man. The commandment to "write," which was first given to Moses, and is not often heard afterwards, is emphatically given at the close to St. John, who finishes what Moses began. He is the last writer of the New Testament, and it is highly probable that his Catholic Epistle was his last service to Christianity. It is his only doctrinal work, for in neither the Gospel nor the Revelation does he speak in his own person as a teacher. In the latter, he is only the amanuensis of the Lord's Apocalypse, and the recorder of the visions which he beheld "in the Spirit;" where he speaks in his own person, it is only to narrate his rapture or the historical event connected with his vocation to write. The prologue of the Gospel seems to be an exception; but that is not so much his own teaching as the necessary introduction of the person of his Lord. In this Epistle we receive the closing doctrinal testimony of the last and greatest teacher of the Christian Church; and in it we have, therefore, the final and finishing touches of the whole system of evangelical truth. As the fourth evangelist undeniably had the three synoptical Gospels before him, so the last apostle had the apostolical Epistles before him, and gave them also their finish and perfection. Remembering how long an interval separates this document from all other purely doctrinal treatises, it will not be too much to say that St. John devotes the last breath, as it were, of infallible inspiration to a general review of the whole sum of truth, and sets on

it his final seal. Not that the letter is a general doctrinal summary. It is, like almost all the other treatises of revelation, an occasional document : a protest against many kinds of Gnostic heresy, especially concerning the Person of Christ and its relation to the redeeming economy. As such it keeps its eye steadily on the ultimate forms which fleeting errors were beginning to assume, and almost defines the terms of these false theories. It is undoubtedly a contribution of St. John to the pressing needs of the universal Church ; a Catholic defence against uncatholic false doctrine. We hear again the voice of the "son of thunder," still vehement against every insult to the majesty of his Lord. It is not therefore a general compendium of theology. But we may say that it traverses, more than any other treatise, the whole field ; in other words, that it would, better than any other fragment of the New Testament, supply the place of the entire final revelation to such as might possess it alone.

It is evident that St. John speaks generally as the representative of the company of his predecessors ; the opening of the Epistle introduces the "we," not of personal authority, but of the apostolic brotherhood. His is the last voice, soon to be silent like the others ; and the tone of the whole letter is that of recapitulation and bringing to remembrance. Not a solitary instance is there of a new assertion ; all is written under the law of its own maxim, "I write no new commandment unto you." There is not from beginning to end a truth which adds to the old stock, as is so often the case in the earlier writings. Yet the form of all is new. The ever fresh and never exhausted Spirit of inspiration leaves the Church in this Epistle with the token that there is no limit to the power of exhibiting fresh combinations of truth. As St. Paul's last letters are still full of new forms and turns of expression, so it is with St. John, and especially in this last fragment of Scripture. But every novelty of expression is in perfect harmony with the other types of doctrine, on which it sets the seal of perfection. This double truth—that St. John retains every other element of evangelical truth while giving a final touch to

every other—is of the utmost possible importance to the expositor of this Epistle.

Let it be remembered, for instance, in every passage that introduces the three several Persons of the Holy Trinity, and it will be seen that some delicate points emerge which have no strict parallel elsewhere. Not to speak of the Three Heavenly Witnesses—our author, in common with most recent criticism, rejects this—reference may be made to the passage that closes the Epistle, and therefore in a sense the whole Bible. “We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” Here God and the Father are one in His Son. With this let ch. iv. 9, 14 be collated: “God sent His only-begotten Son into the world,” which in a remarkable variation becomes, “the Father sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world.” Hence, in a manner more express than anywhere else, it is asserted that the Father is the Head and Representative of the Godhead: in other words, God and the Father are one. Of course, this is the doctrine of the entire New Testament; but it has here its final and full expression. Again, with regard to the Person of Christ, we find the same note of a final recension of doctrine. What elsewhere is said concerning the Son as having “life in Himself,” might be and has been referred to the incarnate Son the life of men; but here “the Word of life is with the Father,” an expression that retires behind all temporal relations. And the Son is here more emphatically than anywhere else “that Son of Him the Only-begotten” who, as such, was “sent into the world.” And, with respect to the incarnation itself, the basis and presupposition of all other doctrine, our Epistle has the final and unsurpassable formulæ, almost all of them peculiar, though each of them linking itself with something that had been said before: formulæ, namely, such as “was manifested,” “came in the flesh,” “sent into the world,” which will be found to contain, when studied in their connection, some slight but very specific variation from all preceding phrases, and improvement upon them. The emphasis is here at the close upon the truth that not God absolutely, but the Son

came in flesh, and that this Son is still Jesus Christ who came: the reader must mark for himself by collation the advance in such phrases as these found in the Epistle. They are unique, and chosen in order to serve the double purpose of rebuking the Gnostic antichrists, who refused to believe that the Son of God took more than the semblance of a human existence, and that also of making it for ever plain that there was no conversion of the divine into the human when "the Word became flesh." The Epistle ends with a declaration, so clear as to leave all doubt behind, that the entire manifestation of Jesus Christ is that of the personal Son, whose divine and eternal personality governs the development of His person and work. Here is a final and definitive and consummate word, "the Son of God is come:" there is but One Person of whom all is said, by whom all was done upon earth, and who is accomplishing all that remains to be done in heaven. The distinctions of later theology between a divine and a human personality in our Lord were unknown to St. John, who speaks for all the apostles, and for the Lord Himself. They know of no human personality as such and as apart from the divine. They do not say that He became a man, but that He became flesh, or came in the flesh: flesh being the realistic compendium of human nature or human existence. There is a remarkable reading of ch. iv. 3, which Haupt admirably defends, implying that St. John seemed to condemn the sundering or dissolving of Jesus into a God and man: "every spirit δ $\lambda\upsilon\epsilon\iota$." There is something deeply suggestive in this variation of the text. However much one might hesitate before its authentication, when once it is authenticated no one can doubt that it must be classed among that large number of presentient or anticipative texts of Scripture the meaning and application of which the set time should declare. Be that as it may, this Epistle does, in the most subtle and exquisite way, exhibit the very perfection of the doctrine of the two natures in one personality which make up the true doctrine of the Person of Christ. It removes the angularity and roughness from all other passages, obviates the possible misconception to which

they were liable, and, in short, crowns them all, as has been said again and again, with the finishing touch of perfection.

The same principle might be applied to the doctrine of sin in this Epistle, which is brought into relation with Satan in a manner quite peculiar to itself, though in strict harmony with other passages in the Gospel and the later Epistles of St. Paul. The original sinner himself is brought out into very distinct prominence: never, indeed, is he so sharply defined in his personality and in his relation to the redeeming work as in the last pages of Scripture. But more important than this is the effect of the finishing hand upon the work and mediatorial ministry of Christ. Let the reader, carefully mark the specific aspect in which the atonement is seen in four or five distinct presentations of it, and his own reflection will suggest all that might be said. The Father sent the Son AS the Saviour rather than TO BE the Saviour of the world. He sent His Only-begotten Son as the propitiation for our sins. This term in the Epistle, *ἰλασμός*, is invested with deep interest as St. John's unique expression, reserved as it were for the close of the Scripture, just as is the revelation that "God is love." Jesus is Himself the propitiation once in heaven and once on earth: Himself, which is the same as St. Paul's "propitiatory in His blood through faith," but also very much more than that. The term Mediator is not used; but what the term means is exhibited more clearly than anywhere else. It is the Pauline "Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" somewhat improved upon, if such language may be used. The Mediator is God and man, and not only BETWEEN God and men. Everywhere the mission is of the only-begotten Son, not to win for man the love of God by appeasing first His holy wrath, but as the Messenger of a love which had already provided the propitiation that eternal holiness rendered necessary and justice found sufficient. It must be remembered that the wonderful revelations of the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians and the Hebrews were before St. John when he so carefully blended love and propitiation together, giving love the pre-eminence. But it is hardly possible to doubt that his full

and complete doctrine of the atonement is, and is intended to be, the complement and perfection of all former testimonies.

The same may be said of the application of the atonement to the individual, with all the blessings of the Christian covenant as imparted to faith. The same three leading ideas of righteousness, sonship, and sanctification which run through the whole New Testament pervade this Epistle also, though the terminology undergoes a slight variation here and there. We miss many of St. Paul's phrases, and many of these found in the Epistle to the Hebrews; but we do not miss what these terms signify. And it may be said with confidence that in this last document of revelation these three several families of blessing are combined and interwoven with each other in a manner of which there is no example elsewhere. The verification of this would be a good preliminary discipline for the study of our Epistle.

With regard to the first term, we certainly find nothing here answerable to the Pauline "righteousness of God," "righteousness of faith," Christ "made unto us righteousness." But we have, corresponding to each of these terms respectively, phrases which suggest the same meaning to ears already prepared for them. St. John, however, taking for granted St. Paul's earlier fundamental teaching, enters into the spirit of his later defence of the doctrine against antinomian perversion: he lays stress upon the link between imputed and inherent conformity with law. Supposing this Epistle to be the final expression of the evangelical doctrine of the new righteousness of faith, how striking is the play upon the words: "he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous"! On any other supposition they seem nothing but a play on the words; and, in fact, have been set by more than one shallow and irreverent expositor to the account of our apostle's senility.

In harmony with the principle thus laid down, the connection between righteousness as before the law and the filial relation to God in Christ is set forth in its final and consummate form. The Epistle does not distinguish between the mediatorial court, in which law, with its forensic phraseology, presides, and the household or family of God

wherein all belongs to the adoption of sons. St. Paul does in general keep these apart. St. John unites them in these words, which form the transition from the one great term to the other: "Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him." He makes more emphatic than ever, as if by a final testimony, the pre-eminent dignity of the estate of sonship. It had been said that believers were "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son:" thus making their sonship the only privilege spoken of in such high terms. The second part of our Epistle is a wonderful expansion of this very theme, with the terms changed and a finishing touch laid on the whole. The old word adoption is no longer used; but the reality of its meaning, and its close connection with the new birth itself, are again and again expressed in the apostle's words. As if the whole design of God's love in the Gospel was summed up in this, he cries,—in the centre of the Epistle and in its unique apostrophe,—"Behold what and how great love God hath given to us, in order that we may be called, and we are, the children of God!" But the very highest expression of this dignity is, that it springs from union with the First-born and the Only-begotten. St. Paul gives many hints of this; but his hints are in our Epistle perfect developments. Passing over many passages which illustrate the high reach of its doctrine, it is enough to say that only of our sonship in Christ and the more abundant life it imparts is "eternal" used: it is not eternal righteousness, nor eternal sanctification, but eternal life. Whatever has been said before is now more greatly said: "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." More glorious things are spoken of the estate of regeneration than had ever before been spoken. This gives the Christians at last their name: not any longer "the righteous," or "the saints," but "children," "little children," "brethren," "the sons of God." This, however, is comparatively a small thing. The actual birth "of God," of "His seed," defines regeneration by stronger terms, if possible, than had been used before; the privileges of the new birth have here their highest

ideal description, so high indeed as to be the despair of commentators. In fact, this final treatise makes the supreme glory of the Christian vocation to be, that the sons of God in Christ are like the Son as He now is and as He will appear hereafter: like Him in the sense both of *ὁμοίοι* and of *ὁμοουσίοι*; or, to borrow a word of St. Paul, which for once St. John has not surpassed, "one Spirit with Him."

The third branch or development of privilege in the Christian covenant is everywhere in the New Testament the sanctification of the soul, pardoned and regenerate, to God: not, however, as if the sanctification follows on forgiveness and the new birth; rather it is concurrent with them. Strictly speaking, there is but one great substantial blessing, life in Christ; the other two are the necessary concomitants or conditions or appendages of this. The relation thus indicated is impressed most emphatically by St. John as the final lesson of the New Testament. We are forgiven in order that we be "called sons;" we are sanctified in order that we may worthily "be sons." The new life is in the mediatorial court, where law reigns, cleared from condemnation, and enabled to fulfil all righteousness; it is itself imparted in fellowship with the Son, "the First-born among many brethren," in the Father's house; and it is in the new temple of Christianity, over which Jesus presides as High Priest, consecrated and sanctified. The development of this last idea bears the same marks of finality and consummation which have been observed in the two others. A certain change has passed over the terminology; but the change is—*sit venia verbo*—on the side of simplicity and strength. For the purification from sin only two are retained out of a large number, *καθαρίζειν* and *ἀγνίζειν*. The former is used twice at the threshold of the Epistle, and in each case with a unique application: "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin," from all sin which the light reveals as spot and defilement; and presently afterwards the virtue of the atonement is said to be administered by God, "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness:" that is, blending the court and the temple in a way hitherto

unusual, to forgive the sin in the one, and to cleanse from the guilt of unrighteousness in the other. Here, at the outset, we have the divine application of the atonement to those who confess that they have been, that they are, and that they will be to eternity sinners, depending on the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ for admission to eternal life. In the heart of the Epistle the other term comes in, and St. John appropriates it to the human co-operation. Both St. Paul and St. James apply the former term, *καθαρίζειν*, to man's own act; St. John only uses *ἀγνίζειν* for this. He says all that St. Paul meant when he exhorts us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" but, as his manner is, he varies and, if possible, elevates the argument: "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." But hitherto all has been in some sense negative, the cleansing the nature from sin. The positive element of entire consecration to God comes before us in the form of the perfected work of the love of God in us: St. John's final contribution to the subject. The passages which unfold this high doctrine have no parallel in Scripture, though they are jointly and severally the exact expression, in its highest form, of the spirit of the entire New Testament. This is not the place to expound them fully. But let the reader of our present volume, and of most other commentaries on this Epistle, ask himself as he reads whether justice is done to them. He should be exceedingly jealous upon this point, and not suffer his mind to be beclouded in the interpretation of this last and highest testimony to the prerogatives of the Christian life of holiness.

The passages here referred to—those which speak of the perfected love of God in man—are distributed over the Epistle in a very suggestive manner, illustrating what has been said as to the final tone here impressed upon the evangelical phraseology. Their first occurrence connects them with the observance of the law or righteousness: "whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." Here there is a beautiful inversion of St. Paul's

order, "love is the fulfilling of the law:" for in St. John the fulfilling of the law is also the perfecting of love. The second instance of their use connects them with the regenerate life. Writing to those who are born of God, St. John says: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." At this point rises in the text the word which revelation had never uttered before, "God is love," and the love of God, dwelling in those who are born of Him, has in and through their charity to man its perfect operation. The third time they are connected with our sanctification from all sin, through the indwelling of God by His Spirit in the soul. St. Paul speaks of the "love of God shed abroad" in the believer. This is a large word, but here it is surpassed: "love with us is perfected," it becomes "perfect love" in us, which drives out fear because it drives out sin, the cause of fear, gives boldness in the judgment whether present or future, and is the entire consecration of the soul in the indwelling Trinity. These are only suggestions, offered only to illustrate a principle that furnishes one key of great importance to the exposition of this Epistle. It sets the seal of perfection on all former doctrine concerning the privileges of the Christian estate.

The entire vocabulary sanctified in the New Testament to describe these privileges falls into three classes, as we have seen: one large class revolves around the word righteousness; another around the life of sonship; and a third, brought up from the temple, is composed entirely of sacrificial terms. These various departments of phraseology are everywhere distinct, though sometimes they seem to be blended. We see at once which predominates in the several Epistles of St. Paul and the Hebrews, and in the other writings of the New Testament. But when we come to this last document or compendium, they are intertwined and made one after a new fashion. This can be verified in every paragraph. One instance may suffice. Let the reader begin with ch. ii. 29, and go on to ch. iii. 5, with this thought in his mind. He finds the three ideas of conformity to law or righteousness, perfection of the filial life in the image of the Son, and sanctification from all sin,

distinct and yet blended inextricably. The order is there, righteousness, sonship, sanctification; but the three are one. The terms of the court, the household and the temple, confirm and illustrate each other; and Jesus Christ—the Righteous, the Son of the Father, the Holy One—presides, in the glory of His holiness, over all and over each.

The principle here laid down may be perverted in its application. It may be said that this final testimony of revelation has left behind and rendered obsolete much of St. Paul's forensic and judicial thought, and sublimated the Gospel into its higher and more simple character. But this is a mistake. This Epistle perfects all, but not by suppressing anything. For instance, there is no aspect of the atonement—as in the divine nature first, and then revealed at the cross—which may not be discovered by the faithful eye in this Epistle. Christ is the messenger of eternal love, but He bears a propitiatory sacrifice sent forth from eternity, and as the Righteous One He vindicates the rectoral righteousness of God in His advocacy for sinners. St. Paul has dilated on these three points more fully; but no terms of his surpass the force of the last apostle. The entire doctrine of the righteousness of faith is wrapped up in one expression: "Your sins are forgiven for His name's sake." St. Paul's: "just God and the Justifier," is reproduced in St. John's "faithful and just to forgive us our sins." St. John's vindication of the necessity of interior righteousness is only the echo of St. Paul's own; and in his pages St. James and St. Paul are harmonized better than anywhere else. Again, it may be insinuated that the absence of the ideas of Church, and sacraments, and ministry, indicate a certain disparagement of these ideas. Certainly the spirituality of the true Christian fellowship is exalted to the highest point; but the visible organization is implied in the condemnation of those "who went out from us," and the little Epistle to Gaius, written by the same hand, and about the same time, settles the place "the Church" and its ministry held in the apostle's system. As to the sacraments, they are not alluded to, save in a mystical way, because there is no reason to think that the sacramental

doctrine had been perverted in St. John's time. But here comes in another principle or key of interpretation,—that the great errors of the time were assailed in this final document,—and this has not been dwelt upon here, because it is abundantly illustrated in the volume now introduced.

It only remains to commend the reverential and devout spirit that pervades this exposition. The writer evidently knows that secret of the “unction from the Holy One” which he has so beautifully expounded, and the reader must know it too, if he would not lose his labour.