

THE INTERNATIONAL  
ILLUSTRATED COMMENTARY

ON

THE NEW TESTAMENT

BY AMERICAN AND ENGLISH SCHOLARS OF VARIOUS  
EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS

EDITED BY

PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY IN THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, NEW YORK  
PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN REVISION COMMITTEE

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# LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS.

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## **PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., LL.D.,**

President of the American Bible Revision Committee. Prof. of Sacred Literature and Church History, Union Theological Seminary, N. Y. American Editor of Lange's Commentary. Author of "Church History" and other exegetical and historical works.

## **MATTHEW B. RIDDLE, D.D.,**

Member of the American Bible Revision Committee. Prof. of Biblical Literature in Hartford Theological Seminary. Author of revised edition of "Harmony of the Gospels," Greek and English.

## **WILLIAM F. MOULTON, D.D.,**

Member of the English Bible Revision Committee. Prof. of Church History, The Leys School, Cambridge. Author of "History of the English Bible."

## **EDWARD HAYES PLUMPTRE, D.D.,**

Member of the English Bible Revision Committee. Dean of Wells. Author of "Spirits in Prison."

## **JOSEPH ANGUS, D.D.,**

Member of the English Bible Revision Committee. President of Regent's Park College, London. Author of "Bible Handbook," "Christ our Life," etc.

## **J. S. HOWSON, D.D.,**

Dean of Chester. One of the authors of Conybeare and Howson's "Life and Epistles of St. Paul."

## **WILLIAM MILLIGAN, D.D.,**

Member of the English Bible Revision Committee. Prof. of Biblical Literature, University of Aberdeen.

## **Canon DONALD SPENCE, B.D.,**

Rector St. Pancras, London. Author of "Teachings of the Twelve Apostles," and other biblical works.

## **Principal DAVID BROWN, D.D.,**

Member of the English Bible Revision Committee. Principal of Free Church College, Aberdeen. Author of a number of exegetical works.

## **WILLIAM B. POPE, M.A.,**

President of Wesleyan College, Didsbury, Manchester. Author of "Compendium of Christian Theology," "Prayers of St. Paul," etc. Pres. British Wesleyan Conference, 1877.

## **J. RAWSON LUMBY, D.D.,**

Member of the English Bible Revision Committee. Prof. of Divinity, University of Cambridge. Author of "Ancient Creeds," etc.

## **MARCUS DODS, D.D.,**

Author of "Introduction to the New Testament." Contributor to the "Expositor," "Parables of Our Lord," "Com. on Thessalonians," etc.

## **J. OSWALD DYKES, D.D.,**

Regent Square Church, London. Author of "Laws of the Kingdom," "A Study from Old Testament History," etc.

## **PATON J. GLOAG, D.D.,**

Author of "Practical Christianity," "The Messianic Prophecies," "Commentary on the Acts and Catholic Epistles."

## **S. D. F. SALMOND, M.A.,**

Professor of Theology in the Free Church College, Aberdeen. Author of "The Life of the Apostle Peter," and other critical and exegetical works.

## **WILLIAM M. THOMSON, D.D.,**

Author of "The Land and the Book."

Late of Beirût, Syria.

## **WILLIAM H. THOMSON, M.D.,**

## **ARNOLD GUYOT, Ph.D., LL.D.,**

Late Professor of Geology and Physical Geography in College of New Jersey, Princeton. Author of standard geographical works, maps, etc.



# CONTENTS OF THE FOUR VOLUMES.

## VOLUME I.

### INTRODUCTION, AND THE GOSPELS OF MATTHEW, MARK, AND LUKE.

	PAGE.
<i>Introduction to the New Testament.</i> By Prof. PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., New York, and Prof. MATTHEW B. RIDDLE, D.D., Hartford . . . . .	3-26
<i>The Gospel of Matthew.</i> By Prof. PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., and Prof. MATTHEW B. RIDDLE, D.D. . . . .	27-245
<i>The Gospel of Mark.</i> By Prof. MATTHEW B. RIDDLE, D.D., and Prof. PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D. . . . .	246-336
<i>The Gospel of Luke.</i> By Prof. MATTHEW B. RIDDLE, D.D., and Prof. PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D. . . . .	337-508

## VOLUME II.

### THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

<i>The Gospel of John.</i> By Prof. WILLIAM MILLIGAN, D.D., University of Aberdeen, and Prof. WILLIAM F. MOULTON, D.D., The Leys School, Cambridge.
<i>The Acts of the Apostles.</i> By J. S. HOWSON, D.D., Dean of Chester, and Canon DONALD SPENCE, Rector of St. Pancras, London.

## VOLUME III.

### THE EPISTLES OF PAUL.

<i>Romans.</i> By Prof. PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., and Prof. MATTHEW B. RIDDLE, D.D.
<i>I. and II. Corinthians.</i> By Principal DAVID BROWN, D.D., Free Church College, Aberdeen.
<i>Galatians.</i> By Prof. PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D.
<i>Ephesians.</i> By Prof. MATTHEW B. RIDDLE, D.D.
<i>Philippians.</i> By Prof. J. RAWSON LUMBY, D.D., Norrisian Professor of Divinity, University of Cambridge.
<i>Colossians.</i> By Prof. MATTHEW B. RIDDLE, D.D.
<i>I. and II. Thessalonians.</i> By Rev. MARCUS DODS, D.D., Glasgow.
<i>I. and II. Timothy.</i> By Prof. EDWARD HAYES PLUMPTRE, D.D., Dean of Wells, England.
<i>Titus.</i> By Rev. J. OSWALD DYKES, D.D., London.
<i>Philemon.</i> By Rev. J. RAWSON LUMBY, D.D., Cambridge.

## VOLUME IV.

### THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES AND REVELATION.

*Hebrews.* By Rev. JOSEPH ANGUS, D.D., President of Regent's Park College, London.

*James.* By Rev. PATON J. GLOAG, D.D., Galashiels, Scotland.

*I. and II. Peter.* By Prof. S. D. F. SALMOND, M.A., Free Church College, Aberdeen.

*I. II. and III. John.* By Prof. WILLIAM B. POPE, M.A., Didsbury College, Manchester, and Prof. WILLIAM F. MOULTON, D.D., Cambridge.

*Jude.* By Rev. JOSEPH ANGUS, D.D., President of Regent's Park College, London.

*Revelation.* By Prof. WILLIAM MILLIGAN, D.D., University of Aberdeen, and Prof. WILLIAM F. MOULTON, D.D., Cambridge.

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By Prof. ARNOLD GUYOT, Ph.D., LL.D., late Professor of Geology and Physical Geography in College of New Jersey, Princeton.

### ILLUSTRATIONS.

By Rev. WILLIAM M. THOMSON, D.D., late of Beirût, Syria, and WILLIAM H. THOMSON, M.D., New York.

## CONTENTS OF VOLUME IV.

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#### HEBREWS.

By PROF. JOSEPH ANGUS, D.D., Regent's Park College, London.

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#### REVELATION.

By PROF. WILLIAM MILLIGAN, D.D., Aberdeen.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

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**T**HE First Epistle of St. John may be said generally to belong to that sphere of revelation in which we have 'pressed on unto perfection' (Heb. vi. 1). It takes us into the 'most holy place' of the Divine mysteries; and, as has been before observed, the reader must seek admission with the words in his ears: 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' We find ourselves, indeed, in the same inmost sanctuary into which St. John's Gospel has led us; but, while in the Gospel we see the highest glory of the High Priest who came from heaven and re-entered it for us, in the Epistle we are taught what the Christian life is upon earth that most fully represents and honours the Saviour's work in heaven, and makes us partakers of His glory. Its matter is the highest and deepest mystery of Christian doctrine reduced to practice; its tone is that of the assured and tranquil confidence of Christian experience; its style is that of childlike simplicity, combined with the most matured contemplative grandeur. St. John here leaves us his final legacy; and his final legacy—confirming all that has gone before—supplements and consummates the entire revelation of God, and may be said to be the final voice of the inspiring Spirit. It may be expected, therefore, that he who would understand it must connect its teaching with all that has gone before, must carefully collate it with the Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament, and above all must yield himself up to the supreme guidance of the Spirit whose unction 'teaching all things' is so specially honoured in the heart of the Epistle.

The questions which meet us at the outset, and belong to the Introduction, are few and simple. We have to consider the testimony, external and internal, to its apostolic authorship; its relation to the other writings of St. John; the readers for whom it was designed; its pre-eminence in the doctrine of the New Testament generally, as its close and consummation; the integrity of the text; and, finally, the order of thought traceable in it. These topics will be briefly considered: briefly, because many of them have been more fully discussed in the Introductions to the other Johannine writings, and, moreover, because the exposition itself will render much diffuse preliminary matter needless.

I. The Epistle, like the Gospel, does not bear the name of its author. But the early Church, with all but perfect unanimity, ascribed both to the Apostle John. The evidence of this, in relation to the Epistle with which we now have to do, is without a flaw, since the few slight exceptions that may be found do, when fairly looked at, really support the argument. Every generation in the first three centuries, and almost every decade, furnishes some distinct evidence of the common sentiment. Polycarp, one of the sub-apostolic Fathers, and a disciple of St. John, quotes the very words of 1 John iv. 2, 3. We have the testimony of Eusebius that Papias, in

the first half of the second century, expressly quoted it. Justin Martyr, or the anonymous author of the Epistle to Diognetus, again and again refers to it. So do Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, and Irenæus; some of these giving the words of the Epistle—and those among its most distinctive words—mentioning, too, the author by name. A list of New Testament writings, drawn up towards the close of the second century, and known as the Muratorian Canon, cites the first words as St. John's, speaks of his using his own Gospel, and refers to the two smaller Epistles as St. John's, and as 'general' or 'catholic.' About the same time the Peshito, or old Syriac Version, bears the same testimony. Eusebius placed our Epistle among the Homologoumena, or 'writings universally accepted.' Subsequent witnesses continue the uninterrupted tradition; and, in fact, East and West, Europe and Asia and Africa, agree for many ages in ascribing the three Epistles, or at least the First, to the Evangelist and Apostle St. John. It has been remarked already that the exceptions only strengthen the chain of evidence. The Alogi, who, as enemies of the Logos doctrine, were said by Epiphanius to have rejected the Gospel and the Revelation, rejected the Epistle also. Marcion did not include it in his list; for some few expressions in it were deemed contradictory to his views of the Old Testament. On the whole, therefore, it may be said that no document of the New Testament is better attested in antiquity. Jerome sums up its general consent: 'Ab universis ecclesiasticis viris probatur' (*De vir. ill.* c. 9). Modern criticism has had nothing to plead against this catena, but has founded its objections on internal evidence alone. This leads us to our next section.

II. The relation of the Epistle to the other writings of St. John, or to the Johannine literature generally, is a very interesting one. Omitting at present the Apocalypse, it needs only a casual glance to show that there is a certain style, whether literary or theological, common to the Epistles and the Gospel: a style that is so marked and characteristic as to separate these writings from all others in the New Testament. This absolute unity of conception pervades both the documents, and moulds them throughout. It extends from the highest objects of thought, God and Christ, life and death, down to the slightest peculiarities of phrase and construction. The similarity, or rather the identity, is so obvious that we may dispense with the lists of doctrinal and verbal coincidence usually given, and leave the reader to mark them for himself, especially as we shall have to dwell on some of these leading ideas for another purpose. Now in ancient times, as we have seen, there was never any doubt that St. John wrote both. But the exigencies of hypothesis in modern times have required the abandonment of this notion, which is regarded by a certain class as unworthy of scientific criticism. The Apostle St. John is supposed by many to have himself written nothing, but only to have furnished an honourable name on which to hang the results of pious fraud. Others think that the Apostle wrote the Gospel, but that the Epistles were written by a certain 'John the Presbyter,' whom tradition, according to Eusebius, mentions as having lived at Ephesus at the same time with the apostle. There are some, again, who think that the First Epistle is simply a spurious document, feebly imitating the Gospel, and using the name of 'the presbyter' even as the Gospel tacitly assumed the name of the apostle.

A close examination of these writings will further show that they were written, by the same author indeed, but on very different occasions and for very different purposes. It has become almost habitual to regard the Epistle as a companion document or appendage to the Gospel: a view for which there is no justification. There is not a single sentence which, fairly interpreted, points that way. On the contrary, there is much which indicates another class of readers, a new order of

circumstances, and a considerably later date. The Epistle speaks in the style of a more advanced development concerning the 'manifestation' or 'coming' of Christ as the 'day of judgment' and 'the last time.' It is another class of readers which rendered appropriate the reference to the 'many antichrists;' and, generally, the Gnostic errors obviously combated throughout the Epistle are more distinctly viewed, if not actually much nearer, than they appear in the Gospel. There is no hint in the latter that Docetism, or the heresy that made the Son of God a phantom combination of human nature with an emanation descending upon the man Jesus for a season, was directly combated. The Gospel rises sublimely above all transient heresy. But this particular error is directly confronted in the Epistle: more directly than any other error which the New Testament mentions. All this points to a later date, but by no means to a different author. There is not a word about the incarnation, the material judgment or coming of Christ, the antichrist, the person of Satan, or any other leading doctrine in the Epistle, the germ of which is not found somewhere in the Gospel. Contrariety between them there is absolutely none. But different and new aspects of the Logos, the Comforter, the propitiation, the nature and penalty of sin, there doubtless are. The Logos or Word is the Word of life; and surely this is not a lower conception of the Son of God, nor one that essentially diverges from that of the Fourth Gospel. The Paraclete is certainly in the Epistle Jesus Himself; but there is no opposition between this and the Gospel doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete: the heavenly Paraclete of the Epistle and the internal Paraclete of the Gospel answer to each other, as they do in Romans viii. The same may be said of the alleged absence of the Spirit's personality in the doctrine of the Epistle as compared with that of the Gospel. In both He is the Spirit of Christ: in both, 'the anointing from the Holy One;' and in both, the agent and element of regenerate life. The later document—as we believe it to have been—introduces two new terms, Sperma and Chrisma, which certainly no one can prove that St. John might not have used, especially if we regard him as vindicating those terms from Gnostic perversion. And it is not an unfair argument to plead that whatever is said of the Holy Ghost is said to those who are supposed to have the Lord's last discourses in their hands: no one can doubt that the writer of the Epistle writes with those last discourses before him, and uses their language very often. The doctrine of the atonement is different, but does not differ from the earlier statements. It makes Christ as the High Priest Himself 'the Propitiation,' and that in a unique expression; but this is only a strict development of the high-priestly prayer, and certainly in harmony with all apostolic doctrine. There is nothing in the later doctrine of sin which contradicts that of the Gospel. Its relation to Satan, its universality in human nature, its removal by the atonement, are the very same; and if St. John introduces the 'sin unto death,' all we can say is that he has given us a new aspect of the same revelation given us in the Synoptics and the Epistle to the Hebrews. The symbolism of the 'water and the blood,' rightly interpreted in both documents, has in both the same meaning. Failing in their objections, the objectors are reduced to such generalities as the inferiority of tone in the Epistle. But here they render defence needless by differing among themselves. One class follow Baur, calling it a 'weak imitation' of the Gospel; another, following Hilgenfeld, call it a 'splendid reproduction' of the Gospel. For ourselves, we feel in reading the Epistle after the Gospel that we are listening to the same writer, but rather as 'John the theologian' than 'John the evangelist;' that he is no longer writing, so to speak, under the overpowering influence of his Master present in the flesh and chaining him to the simple record of what he saw and heard, but, still in the presence of the

same Master exalted to heaven, is calmly reviewing the wonderful past, and giving his own and his brethren's experience of its present effect, and exhorting all to the perfection which the work of Christ has rendered possible. The current allusions to the monotony, repetition, and illogical dogmatism of the paragraphs deserve no comment: the soul that is formed by the Gospel will feel that the Epistle wants no commendation or defence of man. But what we would say has been better said by Ewald, in an oft-quoted sentence of his work on St. John's writings: 'Here, as in the Gospel, the author retires to the background, unwilling to speak of himself, and still less to base anything on his own name and reputation: notwithstanding that he meets his reader, not as the calm narrator, but as writing a letter, in which he exhorts and teaches as an apostle, and moreover the only surviving apostle. The same delicacy and diffidence, the same lofty calmness and composure, the same truly Christian humility, cause him to recede as an apostle, and to say so little about himself: his only aim is to counsel and warn, reminding his readers simply of the sublime truths they have already received. The higher he stands, the less disposed is he to depress his "brethren" by the weight of his authority and commands. But he knew himself and who he was: every word reveals plainly that none but himself could thus speak and counsel and warn. The unique consciousness which an apostle growing old must have, and which the "beloved" apostle must have had in a pre-eminent degree; the tranquil superiority, clearness, and decidedness of all his views of Christian truth; the rich experience of a long life, steeled in victorious struggle with every unchristian element; the glowing language, concealed under and bursting through this calmness, the force of which we instinctively feel when it commends love to us as the highest attainment of Christianity,—all these are found so wonderfully united in this Epistle that every reader of that age would, without needing any further intimation, discern at once who the writer was. But, when the circumstances required it, the author plainly indicates that he once stood in the nearest possible relation to Jesus (chap. i. 1-3, v. 3-6, iv. 16), precisely as he is wont to give the same indication in the Gospel. And all this is so artless and simple—so entirely without the faintest trace of imitation in either case—that all must of necessity perceive the self-same apostle to be the writer of both documents.'

Another quotation may be added: 'Let it be noted how admirably the character of the Epistle accords with what we otherwise know of the character of the apostle. On the one side, there is a keen severity in the severance of light from darkness, and of the world from God's kingdom, which betrays the son of thunder; indeed, we find such an ethical sharpness of definition as makes every sin an evidence of the Satanic nature (comp. chap. iii. 4-11), such indeed as occurs nowhere else throughout the compass of Scripture. But, on the other side, and concurrently with this, we feel a breath of most pathetic and most inward affection, from a spirit overflowing with love, and strong in peaceful rest, such as corresponds with those traditions concerning his old age which appeal so forcibly to our hearts. . . . That the aged disciple, who through a long life had by faith and love attained so close a relation to his Lord, was so thoroughly pervaded by the riches of the grace that came to him through Christ that all the hatred of the world and raging of antichrist failed to disturb his deep repose, that he could not indeed well understand how their influence could be felt at all, is perfectly imaginable in his case. Simon Peter before this, in his Second Epistle, when the times were disturbed and the lie had raised its head aloft, felt himself impelled with all the energy of his love to transpose himself back into the days when he had his Master's society, and also with all the energy of his hope to propel himself forward to the time of the perfected

kingdom of God. So also our apostle, following his character out, and in harmony with his deep interior nature, must needs, in his old age especially, have still more abundantly felt himself impelled, while enemies raged around him, and the more they raged, to fasten his deep thought upon the glory of Him whom he had seen as He was, and whom he hoped to see as He is. Thus, in conclusion, it may be said that it is perfectly clear how St. John, with such a personality as his, was precisely so affected as the Epistle reveals him, so full of peace in a time of fiercest conflict, so much more occupied with positive construction than with defensive polemic against enemies' (Haupt, *The First Epistle of St. John*, p. 366, Clark's Translation).

A long list of parallel phrases might be exhibited, such as could not be drawn up from any other two books even of the same writer. More than thirty such passages are literally common to the two ; more than half of them linking the Epistle with the Farewell Discourses, John xii.-xvii. As Mr. Sinclair says : ' There the tender, loving, receptive, truthful, retentive mind of the bosom-friend had been particularly necessary ; at that great crisis it had been, through the Spirit of God, particularly strong ; and the more faithfully St. John had listened to His master, and reproduced Him, the deeper the impression was which the words made on his own mind, and the more likely he was to dwell on them in another work instead of on his own thoughts and words. The style may be his own both in Gospels and Epistles, modified by that of our Lord ; the thoughts are also the thoughts of Jesus ' (Intro. to this Epistle in Bishop Ellicott's *Comm.*). In the Introduction to St. John's Gospel in the present work it has been said, on the general question of the relation of St. John's style and our Lord's : ' Nor, further, is the supposition with which we are now dealing needed to explain the fact that the tone of much of our Lord's teaching in this Gospel bears a striking resemblance to that of the First Epistle of John. Why should not the Gospel explain the Epistle rather than the Epistle the Gospel ? Why should not John have been formed upon the model of Jesus rather than the Jesus of this Gospel be the reflected image of himself ? Surely it may be left to all candid minds to say whether, to adopt only the lowest supposition, the creative intellect of Jesus was not far more likely to mould His disciple to a conformity with itself, than the receptive spirit of the disciple to give birth by its own efforts to that conception of a Redeemer which so infinitely surpasses the loftiest image of man's own creation.' This opens up a subject of deep interest, which may be profitably pursued in that Introduction. We have another purpose here. The quotations are not simply quotations, even if they may bear that name at all. In no case are they such as an imitator or forger would have employed. They are the writings of the same man ; but not of one who has his own earlier document before him. Here we may refer to Canon Westcott's Introduction to the Gospel (*Speaker's Commentary*), who says : ' The relation of the Gospel of St. John to his Epistles is that of a history to its accompanying comment or application. The First Epistle presupposes the Gospel either as a writing or as an oral instruction. But while there are numerous and striking resemblances both in form and thought between the Epistle and the Evangelist's record of the Lord's discourses and his own narrative, there are still characteristic differences between them. In the Epistle the doctrine of the Lord's true and perfect humanity (*sarx*) is predominant ; in the Gospel, that of His Divine glory (*doxa*). The burden of the Epistle is " the Christ is Jesus ; " the writer presses his argument from the Divine to the human, from the spiritual and ideal to the historical. The burden of the Gospel is " Jesus is the Christ ; " the writer presses his argument from the human to the Divine, from the historical to the spiritual and ideal. The former is the natural position of the preacher, and the

latter of the historian.' Then, after mentioning some of the differences we have dwelt upon, Dr. Westcott goes on : ' Generally, too, it will be found on a comparison of the closest parallels, that the apostle's own words are more formal in expression than the words of the Lord which he records. The Lord's words have been moulded by the disciple into aphorisms in the Epistles : their historic connection has been broken. At the same time, the language of the Epistle is, in the main, direct, abstract, and unfigurative. The apostle's teaching, so to speak, is "plain," while that of the Lord was "in proverbs" (John xvi. 25). . . . Generally it will be felt that there is a decisive difference (so to speak) in the atmosphere of the two books. In the Epistle St. John deals freely in the truths of the Gospel in direct conflict with the characteristic perils of his own time ; in the Gospel he lives again in the presence of Christ and of the immediate enemies of Christ, while he brings out the universal significance of events and teaching not fully understood at the time.' Besides being illustrative of what has been laid down, such extracts as these are the best material for an Introduction to our Epistle.

III. But when we come more specifically to the relation between the apostle and his readers, we are left very much to conjecture. Ancient tradition tells us that St. John, after the death of St. Paul, 64 A.D., laboured, or rather exercised an apostolical pastorate, in Ephesus for many years. It has been thought not improbable that during his banishment to Patmos, and for some reason not known, he wrote this encyclical or catholic Epistle to the churches from which he had been separated. Had that been the case, however, there would almost certainly have been some reference to his banishment ; we must therefore assume that he wrote it from Ephesus either before or after that exile. In the Apocalypse the seven leading churches of his apostolical district are mentioned, but mentioned as addressed by the Lord through the Spirit ; hence it might almost seem as if the apostle reverently abstained from mentioning by name the churches to which he wrote in person. There can be no question, however, that the communication has the character of an Epistle, though without the form impressed upon the majority of other similar writings of the New Testament. In this respect it is only a little more free than the Epistle to the Hebrews and that of St. James. The absence of the epistolary form is observable only at the outset and at the close : throughout the course of the communication we have more addresses and more epistolary hints than in any other book of the New Testament. In fact, it was an encyclical Epistle, the inscription of which was different for every church to which it was sent, and has not been preserved. It may be sufficient merely to mention the strange tradition which originated with Augustine, or to which he gave permanence, that it was addressed *ad Parthos*, 'to the Parthians.' As the Greek Church has no trace of this inscription, and it was unknown to the West before the time of Augustine, the only concern we have with it is to account for its origin. That, however, is not easy. It has been conjectured that the term Parthos is a corruption of the Greek *parthenous*, or virgins ; and that the inscription given by the allegorizing Clement of Alexandria to the Second Epistle, 'to the virgins,' was by degrees attached to all the Epistles. But the matter is little more than a curiosity of early literature : suffice that all indications point not to Parthia but to Asia Minor for the circle of readers whom St. John addressed.

There is no indication in the Epistle itself that may be relied on for the determination of its date and circle of readers. The 'last time' has no significance here ; the absence of reference to Jerusalem only suggests that the catastrophe had long taken place ; persecutions are not referred to as present or impending ; Jewish opposition is a thing of the past, and the only distinction is between the

Church and the world ; and finally the writer, addressing no particular church, writes as one far advanced in age, who had pastoral relations to his readers of long standing. All these point to a time coinciding with the banishment to Patmos. A few sentences from Haupt's able General Review, at the close of his work on the Epistle, may incline the reader to study his whole discussion. 'The churches of Asia Minor, and especially the Ephesian, to which we are directed by early tradition, had been introduced into Christendom through the long and assiduous activity of the apostle of the Gentiles, with advantages beyond most others. We at once understand, therefore, why our Epistle has no organizing character, but rather that of nurturing and establishing. Further, that the distinction between Judaism and heathenism as two defined hostile camps is so entirely absurd, is natural enough at the end of the first century, and so long after the destruction of Jerusalem ; for, after that event, the power of the Jews in persecuting the Christians lay simply in their hiding themselves behind the Gentiles as the "world." . . . The enemy of these days was, in a peculiar sense, the spirit of false prophecy. We know, indeed, that even in the lifetime of the apostle heresy had been in Ephesus matured by Cerinthus ; and not only so, but the very omissions of the Epistle may be perfectly understood when it is referred to the Corinthian Gnosis. All this proves that the Epistle must have been written later than the other New Testament Scriptures, and that it might well have been written by St. John. . . . If, on the ground of the tradition that the apostle was a long time in Patmos, we assume that he wrote his letter from that island, the hypothesis will lighten up the whole. . . . In it there is neither any greeting from any church, nor any greeting to one. The absence of the latter may be accounted for by the encyclical character. But how shall the absence of the former be accounted for ? It was natural that the apostle should omit that, if he happened at the time to be located in no church whatever. . . . He lived in relative seclusion, separated at least from all the excited movements of the outer world. For, on this small island, he could only to a slight extent exercise any influence, or carry on any work of an external character. To him at his age it would be matter of doubt whether he could win back that larger influence, whether the time of active work was not for ever gone. Then, the great concern was to wait upon the blessed manifestation of the Lord. The more he was shut in from exterior life, the more did he retire into the depths of his own being, and draw upon that which his faith gave him for his own good, and what he, with the whole Church, was called to attain through that faith. Thus the internal and ethical characteristics of the Epistle are no less explained than the apocalyptic tendency of its strain.'

These remarks may not carry conviction as to the Patmos theory, but they corroborate what appears to be the only conclusion from a general review, that the Epistle was written after the Gospel and independently of it ; that it was, although the writer might not fully know in how complete a sense, an encyclical or catholic Epistle for the Ephesian Churches and the whole Christian world ; and that it was a pendant not so much to the Fourth Gospel as to all the Gospels and the whole literature of the New Testament.

IV. To those who fully accept the overruling providence of the Holy Spirit in the construction and arrangement of the New Testament, it will appear a matter of no small importance that St. John's First Epistle is the last doctrinal treatise of Divine revelation. This being so, we may expect to find in it certain characteristics appropriate to a position of such dignity. These characteristics we certainly find. The historical disclosure of truth, continued so long in a series of wonderful dispensations, reaches its close. The faith delivered to the saints is now delivered

in its consummate form : development of doctrine comes to an end in the Bible, that development of dogma may have its beginning. Following this hint, we may glance by way of introduction at some of the dogmatic features of this final document of the Bible.

It may be said, generally, that here we have the complete theological system of St. John himself before us : condensed into a few chapters. What is sometimes called the Pauline Christianity—the Christian doctrine which St. Paul was inspired to unfold—is diffused through a great number of writings, issued at intervals during a generation, and for the most part in the midst of manifold labours. The Johannine Christianity—the Christian doctrine which St. John was inspired to unfold—was given in a few chapters and once for all. In the Gospel and in the Revelation he does not speak in his own person as a teacher ; though in them, and especially in the Gospel, the essentials of his peculiar view of Christianity are to be found. The Prologue of the Gospel alone contains the writer's own theology : in all the rest he is silent and the Lord speaks. But in the Epistle we have himself as a teacher throughout ; and in no part of the New Testament does the voice of personal authority sound so clearly and emphatically. There is no portion of the New Testament in which are more of the 'signs of an apostle.' The beloved disciple, and the elect apostle, has so to speak his supremacy here. He gives his own system of truth in all its completeness. Though there is a remarkable recurrence of one or two themes—so much so that the Epistle has often been charged with monotony and repetition—we perceive, if we examine it carefully, that it contains an entire compendium of the Gospel as it was poured into the mould of the last apostle's spirit. God, the Triune God, Evil in the universe and in man, the person of Christ the Redeemer, the atonement as a propitiation of God and the destroyer of sin, righteousness and sonship and sanctification, perfected and perfecting love, antichrists and the coming of the Christ for their destruction, the eternal death of the reprobate and the high privileges of the saints, are topics that run through the whole round of cardinal fundamentals, and they are all presented in their final and perfected form under the hand of the apostle. He does not say that he is giving the sum of Christian verities ; still less that he is supplementing and perfecting those given by others ; but he is really doing this without saying so, and the result is a body of Christian truth more complete on the whole than any other one document of the Christian faith presents. Probably any of the doctrines, taken alone, may be found more fully developed elsewhere ; but nowhere else are they all combined as in this Epistle. The Beginning and the End are linked in a most emphatic manner : in a manner almost peculiar to St. John. And between them is every prominent truth of evangelical revelation in brief but distinct outline.

And it is the voice of a teacher of doctrine as the foundation of morals. It is customary to speak of St. John as 'the apostle of love,' who shows us the supreme importance of practical in opposition to theoretic religion. But this is not the right view of the matter. This Epistle enforces no ethics which are not based upon revealed doctrine. The reader will observe everywhere that the exhibition of duty has not far of, generally hard by, the foundation of revealed truth, a fact on which it rests. This Epistle is the most perfect example in the New Testament of the indissoluble connection between doctrine and duty : the doctrine always underlying the duty ; doctrine and duty being exhibited together ; and duty being ever the end and consummation of doctrine. Other parts of the New Testament, however, contain all this. But St. John's Epistle is pre-eminent as making Love the bond of perfection between doctrine and ethics. Love is perfected here in every sense : it has its

perfection in God, for in this Epistle alone does revelation say that 'God is love;' and it has its perfection in man, for 'perfected in us' occurs again and again. There is no grander sentence in the Bible than this, when connected with those just quoted: 'Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' The doctrine of the atonement is the foundation of the ethics of perfect self-sacrifice. The entire Epistle—with the two smaller Epistles as its appendages—perfectly illustrates St. Paul's saying that 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' The perfection possible to the disciples of Christ is exhibited as the supreme triumph of the love of God in us. First, 'Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected:' the Epistle makes all obedience a manifestation of love, and in all obedience only is the love of God perfected. Again, 'If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us:' the innumerable obligations of charity are not dwelt upon, but they are all summed up as the outgoings of God's own love, or God Himself, from the heart into the life. Finally, we read: 'He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in Him. Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.' Nothing less than the entire consecration of the soul in fellowship with the indwelling Trinity is here; and such a consecration as opens to human desire and hope the most enlarged prospect of the triumph of perfect love. Let these three passages be studied in their harmony, and it will be seen that the view they give is one that is not so distinct in any other part of Scripture, and one that gives a character of its own to this final document.

V. The text of the Epistle has come down to us in good preservation. Only a few questions of textual criticism have occupied much attention. These are referred to in the commentary; but three of them may be briefly noticed here. One is the passage, chap. ii. 23, which has commonly been italicised in our translation as of doubtful genuineness. Its right to a place in the text has been abundantly vindicated. The second is the reading which changes 'confesseth not' in chap. iv. 3 for 'annulleth:' seeming to mean, as quoted by Latin Fathers, *solvit*, as if the error were the dissolution of the two natures in our Lord's person. It seems hard to resist the evidence in favour of this highly theological reading. But the latest revision has put it only in the margin. The third is of course the well-known passage of 'the three witnesses,' hitherto John v. 7. This passage will be found still within brackets, and it is not dismissed without notice in the exposition. But it is now all but universally admitted that it is spurious.

The case, in fact, is very strong indeed against the passage. It is found in no Greek codex earlier than the eleventh century; and had it been extant in the East in any form, it would certainly have been used in the Arian controversy. Its first insertion into the Greek Testament was simultaneous with the beginning of the printed text; it was honoured with a place in the great edition printed at Complutum A.D. 1522. During the sixteenth century it crept into a few Greek codices. One of them was a copy of the Complutensian Polyglot; the others seem by internal evidence to have been translated from the Vulgate. Among these is the Codex Britannicus (preserved in Dublin), which may be said to have indirectly procured the verse its place in our modern editions. Erasmus was induced by it to give the passage a place in his edition; and his example was followed by other editors and the Textus Receptus. The Old Versions down to A.D. 600 do not contain it; the Vulgate itself in its earliest and best editions being without it. The most recent editions of the Greek Testament altogether exclude the passage.

Its origin is a problem that will probably never be solved. Possibly some Greek

gloss in the margin kept its place until it was in some copies attracted into the text. There is a remarkable passage in Cyprian (*de Unit. Eccles.*), which may shed some light on it: 'Dicit Dominus, Ego et Pater unum sumus (John x. 30), *et iterum de Patre et Filio et Spiritu Sancto scriptum est, et tres unum sunt*, et quisquam credit, hanc unitatem de Divinâ firmitate venientem, sacramentis cœlestibus cohærentem, scindi in ecclesia posse.' In these words Cyprian might have been giving a Trinitarian explanation of 'the Spirit and the water and the blood;' but he might also have been quoting from an old Latin Version. In any case, this only gives a hint as to the way in which the reference to the Trinity might have been placed in the margin as an interpretation of the subsequent allegorical verse, and thence have crept into the text. For the rest, we may say with Ebrard: 'Granted it not to be impossible that Greek codices may be yet discovered which shall contain the clause, we must direct our critical judgment by the evidence of the documents which we have; not of those which we have not, and of the existence of which we as yet know nothing.' It is usual to lay much stress on the internal evidence which condemns the passage. But that is a precarious argument; and one that is hard to maintain against a large number of divines and commentators who have, not only in the Roman communion but among Protestants, maintained the obligation of retaining them. Here we may quote Ebrard again: 'On the internal arguments against the authenticity we do not lay any great stress.' That St. John, who wrote those passages in the Gospel, chap. i. 1, x. 30, xvi. 15, could not have given expression to the thought that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit *are one*, is no more than the unwarranted assertion of subjective hypercriticism. Again, that he who elsewhere opposes God to Word, and Father to Son, should here insert Word between Father and Spirit, involves no direct impossibility. It is indeed strange, as also is the adjective Holy, omitted from chap. iv. 1 downwards. There is nothing in the interpolation directly conflicting with the order of thought, especially if we adopt the arrangement confirmed by the oldest citations in Vigilius, Fulgentius, Cassius, and Etherius, which inverts the order of the verses. According to the right exposition of the *witness* which refers it, not to the demonstration that Jesus and no other is the promised Messiah, but to the testimony as to whose might it is through which the world is overcome, St. John would first mention the three factors of God's power on earth. . . . After these, he would introduce the Three-One in heaven, Who from heaven sustains the testimony of His church.' We will close with the words of Haupt (the First Epistle of St. John, Clark's Translation, p. 312): 'In spite of my private conviction of the genuineness of the reading *annulleth Jesus*, chap. iv. 3, I could not decide to put it into the text; for our editions must keep close to the substance of the manuscripts. But to preserve chap. v. 7 cannot be justified by any means. The most acute argument that has to this hour been adduced in its favour is represented by the venerable Bengel, who asserts that here the analysis of the Epistle is summed up in one point, the Trinity being the governing principle of its arrangement. . . . As to the dogmatic shortsightedness which bewails in its loss the removal of a prop for the doctrine of the Absolute Trinity, this might be expected in lay circles, but ought not to be found among theologians. A doctrine which should depend on one such utterance, and in its absence lose its main support, would certainly be liable to suspicion. Omitting the verse, we have in this very section the doctrine of the Trinity in the form in which Scripture generally presents it: the Father, who witnesses, ver. 9; the Son, who is attested, ver. 6 seq.; the Holy Spirit, through whom the Son is witnessed by the Father, ver. 6: the passage being thus very similar to the narrative of our Lord's baptism.'

VI. Perhaps no book of the New Testament has suffered more than this Epistle

from arbitrary attempts to force upon it an order of thought and subject it to analytical arrangement. In this, however, there have been two extremes. The ancient expositors, and the earlier ones of modern times, thought too lightly of St. John's order: Augustine led the way by speaking of the Epistle as speaking many things mainly about love. To them the writer was a contemplative mystic, who followed the sacred impulse whithersoever it led him; and wrote down his meditations, partly about sound doctrine and partly about pure charity in aphoristic sentences. The commentators who have annotated the Epistle during the last hundred and fifty years have been disposed to go to the other extreme, and to find too exact and minute a distribution. Certainly the apostle has a train of thought in his mind, and writes according to a plan; but it is equally obvious as we read that he turns aside here and there from his main current, and also that he revolves round occasionally to the same ideas and words. Too much stress has been laid upon the specification at the beginning, 'These things we write that your joy may be fulfilled:' it is not necessary to regard this as indicating a plan in St. John's mind. So with the purpose mentioned at the close, 'that ye may know that ye have eternal life:' the apostle does not mean to say that it has been his one leading design to lead them to this experimental knowledge.

It is plain enough that there is an exordium; and equally plain that the concluding verses of the Epistle are a peroration, gathering up the whole into a few final sentences. Between these two the idea of the fellowship of Christians with God seems to rule the whole: first, as a fellowship in light and holiness, viewed under a variety of aspects down to the close of the second chapter. Then the fellowship is rather that of the life in and with God which the Christian sonship imparts: this governing the Epistle in the third chapter. Then follows the fellowship in faith down to the concluding paragraph. But the vindication of this order must be left to the exposition itself.

## THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF

# J O H N.

### CHAPTER I. 1-4.

#### *The Exordium.*

- 1 **T**HAT which <sup>a</sup>was from the beginning, which <sup>b</sup>we have <sup>c</sup>heard, which <sup>d</sup>we have seen with our eyes, which we <sup>e</sup>have looked upon, and our <sup>f</sup>hands have handled, of the Word <sup>g</sup>of life; <sup>h</sup>1 (For <sup>i</sup>the life was manifested, and we have seen <sup>j</sup>it, and <sup>k</sup>bear witness, and shew <sup>l</sup>unto you that eternal life which <sup>m</sup>was <sup>n</sup>with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which <sup>o</sup>we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also <sup>p</sup>may have fellowship with us: and truly <sup>q</sup>our fellowship is with <sup>r</sup>the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things <sup>s</sup>write we unto you, <sup>t</sup>that your <sup>u</sup>joy may be full.<sup>u</sup>
- <sup>1</sup> which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life  
<sup>2</sup> And <sup>3</sup> declare <sup>4</sup> our <sup>5</sup> fulfilled

**CONTENTS.** The apostle introduces this catholic Epistle by a compendious description of the object, nature, and design of the apostolical announcement concerning the Incarnate Word of life. Its object is the Eternal Logos who was manifested as the life; its nature is the testimony of personal witnesses of the incarnation; and its design is the establishment of fellowship with the Father and the Son. The immediate purpose of the present communication is the perfecting of the common joy of writer and readers. This Introduction resembles the Prologue of the Gospel; but with such variations as the one writer of both would himself be likely to make, when addressing readers of both. The construction is peculiar, but perfectly regular: its peculiarity being that the whole mystery of the incarnation, and its evidence to the apostles, is poured forth in one long contemplative sentence, which has the secret of the incarnation itself as the manifested life in its heart as a parenthesis. But over the whole sentence as well as the parenthesis hovers always the idea that the apostles are witnesses: the Gospel Prologue being in this respect altogether different.

**Ver. 1.** The object of the apostolical announcement may be said to be complete in the first verse: what is added afterwards in the parenthesis limits that object or more closely defines it by expanding one term which occurs in it, 'the life.' Remembering that 'we declare' rules the paragraph in the distance and is coming, we must begin with the words concerning the Word of life: the Logos who is Himself the life eternally and to the creature imparts life. In the Prologue of the Gospel there is no 'concerning,' because the Person of the Incarnate is there the immediate subject: here and throughout our Epistle it is not so much His Person as the blessedness and benefits of fellowship with Him which are the immediate subject. Again, remembering that the parenthesis is also coming with its closer explanation, we distinguish the announcement as twofold. First, concerning the eternal being of the Logos, that which was from the beginning: the 'was' is really, as in the Gospel, opposed to 'became flesh,' though this latter is here unexpressed; 'from the beginning' we shall find used in various senses, but here its meaning is determined by the first words of the

Gospel, as also by 'with the Father' in the next verse: it is 'from the depths of eternity,' as in St. Paul's 'chosen from the beginning' (2 Thess. ii. 13), and St. John is as it were unconsciously looking back from the moment of the incarnation. In chap. ii. 13 we have 'Him that was from the beginning,' but here the neuter 'that which' is used because the thought of the supreme mystery combines the whole verse into one great object of contemplation. Secondly, concerning His whole historical appearance on earth, seen of men as well as of angels, of which the apostles were the ordained and special witnesses, we read: **that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled.** These clauses must be taken together, and viewed in their various relations. The first two refer to the entire manifestation as one great permanent whole, in the perfect-present; the other two refer to certain express manifestations which were in the apostles' memory for ever, such as the special revelations of the 'glory as of the Only-begotten' before and after the resurrection. Then we must note the ascensive order: from hearing to seeing with the eyes, to contemplation of the deeper mystery behind, and the actual contact with the Incarnate One. Yet the testimony rises and falls as an arch: it springs from the simple hearing, which certainly includes the testimony of others such as the Baptist, to the much higher seeing with the eyes and beholding as it were without the eyes, and then descends again to the touching, which was limited to individuals and limited generally.

Ver. 2. We term this a parenthesis; but the 'and' must suggest that it is not a parenthesis in our modern sense, as it includes and condenses the whole subject in its completeness. **And the life was manifested:** it is not here 'the Word became flesh;' but the life which inheres eternally in the Logos, as the fountain of existence to the universe, came forth into visibility as the eternal life, so called to distinguish it from the life simply that had been manifested apart from the incarnation. The two are one, however, in the personal Logos, for the latter, the eternal, is even the life, the same life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. The three verbs of testimony, if carefully allotted, explain this more clearly. We have seen and bear witness refer to the 'Life' absolutely: the apostolic complete eye-witness becomes an official testimony to the Person of Jesus. The chief thing, however, here is not that, but the announcement which follows: **and declare unto you the eternal life.** Our Lord is never once called 'eternal Life,' but 'the Life.' 'Even the life which was with the Father' singles out the life from the compound term, and expresses, as nearly as human words can express it, an eternal relation of personality to the Father corresponding to His temporal relation to us. 'With God' in the Gospel becomes 'with the Father' here, to mark the personality of that relation.

Ver. 3. The great sentence goes on by selection. All that precedes is resumed and summed up as **that which we have seen and heard**—seen coming first, because of the word in the previous verse—**declare we unto you also, as it was mani-**

festated to us. There is no reference yet to his readers specifically. Witness, testimony, declaration, either generally by the Gospel or by writing in particular, are the order: much of the declaration is universal; and out of that rises the special Epistle. The object of the universal announcement, which these readers had already heard and rejoiced in, was in order that **ye may have**—not obtain or hold fast or increase in, but have generally—**fellowship with us.** Fellowship is union in the possession or enjoyment of something shared in common: that common element being variously viewed as God Himself, imparted through the knowledge and eternal life and hopes of the Gospel; or the external seals of communion of the Church; or even the spirit and gifts of its charity. In our Epistle we have only the first; and in this sentence it is fellowship with the apostles in their experience of the manifestation of the Son, in their enjoyment of the supernatural, true, eternal life which united them with God.

But, as if to preclude any perversion of this thought, it is added: **and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.** It is evident that the apostle does not linger for a moment on any fellowship that falls below the highest. 'Our fellowship,' still spoken generally of all Christians, is with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ, that is, His Son as Mediator, and therefore common to the Father and to us. He is the element as well as the bond of the communion; and 'the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. i. 9) is through His Spirit, common to Him and to us, of whom mention will be made in due course, whose common possession by believers is 'the communion of the Holy Ghost' (2 Cor. xiii. 14). But all this is not in the text. That simply expresses the Saviour's prayer in another form: 'that they may all be one, as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us.' What is common to the Father and to us, and common to the Son and to us—for the 'and' introduces a distinction—is not here said; but in the Lord's Prayer we read, 'All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine;' and again, 'I in them, and Thou in Me;' and once more, 'That the love wherewith Thou lovedst Me may be in them, and I in them' (John xvii. 21, 23, 26). It is observable, and the observation is our best comment, that the term 'fellowship' in this supreme sense occurs no more; but always reappears in the form of the mutual indwelling of the Trinity and the believer who 'abideth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He gave us' (chap. iii. 24). Here are all the gradations of the fellowship in God and among the saints with God.

Ver. 4. Now follows the specific design of this Epistle. **And these things we write, that our joy may be fulfilled.** 'Our' joy, our common joy, as in the same prayer: 'that they may have My joy fulfilled in them' (John xvii. 13). Joy is the utmost elevation of 'eternal life' viewed not as purity or strength, but as blessedness; and here again the best comment is the fact that the word never recurs, but we find, where that might have been expected, always 'eternal life.'

## CHAPTER I. 5-II. 28.

*Fellowship with God as Holiness or Light.*

- 5 **T**HIS then is the message<sup>1</sup> which we have heard of him,<sup>2</sup> <sup>a Ch. iii. 11.</sup>  
 and declare unto you,<sup>3</sup> that <sup>b</sup> God is light, and in him <sup>c</sup> Jas. i. 17.  
 is no darkness at all.
- 6 <sup>d</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with him, <sup>e</sup> and walk in <sup>f</sup> <sup>g</sup> <sup>h</sup> <sup>i</sup> <sup>j</sup> <sup>k</sup> <sup>l</sup> <sup>m</sup> <sup>n</sup> <sup>o</sup> <sup>p</sup> <sup>q</sup> <sup>r</sup> <sup>s</sup> <sup>t</sup> <sup>u</sup> <sup>v</sup> <sup>w</sup> <sup>x</sup> <sup>y</sup> <sup>z</sup> <sup>aa</sup> <sup>ab</sup> <sup>ac</sup> <sup>ad</sup> <sup>ae</sup> <sup>af</sup> <sup>ag</sup> <sup>ah</sup> <sup>ai</sup> <sup>aj</sup> <sup>ak</sup> <sup>al</sup> <sup>am</sup> <sup>an</sup> <sup>ao</sup> <sup>ap</sup> <sup>aq</sup> <sup>ar</sup> <sup>as</sup> <sup>at</sup> <sup>au</sup> <sup>av</sup> <sup>aw</sup> <sup>ax</sup> <sup>ay</sup> <sup>az</sup> <sup>ba</sup> <sup>bb</sup> <sup>bc</sup> <sup>bd</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>bf</sup> <sup>bg</sup> <sup>bh</sup> <sup>bi</sup> <sup>bj</sup> <sup>bk</sup> <sup>bl</sup> <sup>bm</sup> <sup>bn</sup> <sup>bo</sup> <sup>bp</sup> <sup>bq</sup> <sup>br</sup> <sup>bs</sup> <sup>bt</sup> <sup>bu</sup> <sup>bv</sup> <sup>bw</sup> <sup>bx</sup> <sup>by</sup> <sup>bz</sup> <sup>ca</sup> <sup>cb</sup> <sup>cc</sup> <sup>cd</sup> <sup>ce</sup> <sup>cf</sup> <sup>cg</sup> <sup>ch</sup> <sup>ci</sup> <sup>cj</sup> <sup>ck</sup> <sup>cl</sup> <sup>cm</sup> <sup>cn</sup> <sup>co</sup> <sup>cp</sup> <sup>cq</sup> <sup>cr</sup> <sup>cs</sup> <sup>ct</sup> <sup>cu</sup> <sup>cv</sup> <sup>cw</sup> <sup>cx</sup> <sup>cy</sup> <sup>cz</sup> <sup>da</sup> <sup>db</sup> <sup>dc</sup> <sup>dd</sup> <sup>de</sup> <sup>df</sup> <sup>dg</sup> <sup>dh</sup> <sup>di</sup> <sup>dj</sup> <sup>dk</sup> <sup>dl</sup> <sup>dm</sup> <sup>dn</sup> <sup>do</sup> <sup>dp</sup> <sup>dq</sup> <sup>dr</sup> <sup>ds</sup> <sup>dt</sup> <sup>du</sup> <sup>dv</sup> <sup>dw</sup> <sup>dx</sup> <sup>dy</sup> <sup>dz</sup> <sup>ea</sup> <sup>eb</sup> <sup>ec</sup> <sup>ed</sup> <sup>ee</sup> <sup>ef</sup> <sup>eg</sup> <sup>eh</sup> <sup>ei</sup> <sup>ej</sup> <sup>ek</sup> <sup>el</sup> <sup>em</sup> <sup>en</sup> <sup>eo</sup> <sup>ep</sup> <sup>eq</sup> <sup>er</sup> <sup>es</sup> <sup>et</sup> <sup>eu</sup> <sup>ev</sup> <sup>ew</sup> <sup>ex</sup> <sup>ey</sup> <sup>ez</sup> <sup>fa</sup> <sup>fb</sup> <sup>fc</sup> <sup>fd</sup> <sup>fe</sup> <sup>ff</sup> <sup>fg</sup> <sup>fh</sup> <sup>fi</sup> <sup>fj</sup> <sup>fk</sup> <sup>fl</sup> <sup>fm</sup> <sup>fn</sup> <sup>fo</sup> <sup>fp</sup> <sup>fq</sup> <sup>fr</sup> <sup>fs</sup> <sup>ft</sup> <sup>fu</sup> <sup>fv</sup> <sup>fw</sup> <sup>fx</sup> <sup>fy</sup> <sup>fz</sup> <sup>ga</sup> <sup>gb</sup> <sup>gc</sup> <sup>gd</sup> <sup>ge</sup> <sup>gf</sup> <sup>gg</sup> <sup>gh</sup> <sup>gi</sup> <sup>gj</sup> <sup>gk</sup> <sup>gl</sup> <sup>gm</sup> <sup>gn</sup> <sup>go</sup> <sup>gp</sup> <sup>gq</sup> <sup>gr</sup> <sup>gs</sup> <sup>gt</sup> <sup>gu</sup> <sup>gv</sup> <sup>gw</sup> <sup>gx</sup> <sup>gy</sup> <sup>gz</sup> <sup>ha</sup> <sup>hb</sup> <sup>hc</sup> <sup>hd</sup> <sup>he</sup> <sup>hf</sup> <sup>hg</sup> <sup>hh</sup> <sup>hi</sup> <sup>hj</sup> <sup>hk</sup> <sup>hl</sup> <sup>hm</sup> <sup>hn</sup> <sup>ho</sup> <sup>hp</sup> <sup>hq</sup> <sup>hr</sup> <sup>hs</sup> <sup>ht</sup> <sup>hu</sup> <sup>hv</sup> <sup>hw</sup> <sup>hx</sup> <sup>hy</sup> <sup>hz</sup> <sup>ia</sup> <sup>ib</sup> <sup>ic</sup> <sup>id</sup> <sup>ie</sup> <sup>if</sup> <sup>ig</sup> <sup>ih</sup> <sup>ii</sup> <sup>ij</sup> <sup>ik</sup> <sup>il</sup> <sup>im</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>io</sup> <sup>ip</sup> <sup>iq</sup> <sup>ir</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>it</sup> <sup>iu</sup> <sup>iv</sup> <sup>iw</sup> <sup>ix</sup> <sup>iy</sup> <sup>iz</sup> <sup>ja</sup> <sup>jb</sup> <sup>jc</sup> <sup>jd</sup> <sup>je</sup> <sup>jf</sup> <sup>jj</sup> <sup>jk</sup> <sup>jl</sup> <sup>jm</sup> <sup>jn</sup> <sup>jo</sup> <sup>jp</sup> <sup>jq</sup> <sup>jr</sup> <sup>js</sup> <sup>jt</sup> <sup>ju</sup> <sup>jv</sup> <sup>jw</sup> <sup>jx</sup> <sup>ky</sup> <sup>kz</sup> <sup>la</sup> <sup>lb</sup> <sup>lc</sup> <sup>ld</sup> <sup>le</sup> <sup>lf</sup> <sup>lg</sup> <sup>lh</sup> <sup>li</sup> <sup>lj</sup> <sup>lk</sup> <sup>ll</sup> <sup>lm</sup> <sup>ln</sup> <sup>lo</sup> <sup>lp</sup> <sup>lq</sup> <sup>lr</sup> <sup>ls</sup> <sup>lt</sup> <sup>lu</sup> <sup>lv</sup> <sup>lw</sup> <sup>lx</sup> <sup>ly</sup> <sup>lz</sup> <sup>ma</sup> <sup>mb</sup> <sup>mc</sup> <sup>md</sup> <sup>me</sup> <sup>mf</sup> <sup>mg</sup> <sup>mh</sup> <sup>mi</sup> <sup>mj</sup> <sup>mk</sup> <sup>ml</sup> <sup>mn</sup> <sup>mo</sup> <sup>mp</sup> <sup>mq</sup> <sup>mr</sup> <sup>ms</sup> <sup>mt</sup> <sup>mu</sup> <sup>mv</sup> <sup>mw</sup> <sup>mx</sup> <sup>my</sup> <sup>mz</sup> <sup>na</sup> <sup>nb</sup> <sup>nc</sup> <sup>nd</sup> <sup>ne</sup> <sup>nf</sup> <sup>ng</sup> <sup>nh</sup> <sup>ni</sup> <sup>nj</sup> <sup>nk</sup> <sup>nl</sup> <sup>nm</sup> <sup>nn</sup> <sup>no</sup> <sup>np</sup> <sup>nq</sup> <sup>nr</sup> <sup>ns</sup> <sup>nt</sup> <sup>nu</sup> <sup>nv</sup> <sup>nw</sup> <sup>nx</sup> <sup>ny</sup> <sup>nz</sup> <sup>oa</sup> <sup>ob</sup> <sup>oc</sup> <sup>od</sup> <sup>oe</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>og</sup> <sup>oh</sup> <sup>oi</sup> <sup>oj</sup> <sup>ok</sup> <sup>ol</sup> <sup>om</sup> <sup>on</sup> <sup>oo</sup> <sup>op</sup> <sup>oq</sup> <sup>or</sup> <sup>os</sup> <sup>ot</sup> <sup>ou</sup> <sup>ov</sup> <sup>ow</sup> <sup>ox</sup> <sup>oy</sup> <sup>oz</sup> <sup>pa</sup> <sup>pb</sup> <sup>pc</sup> <sup>pd</sup> <sup>pe</sup> <sup>pf</sup> <sup>pg</sup> <sup>ph</sup> <sup>pi</sup> <sup>pj</sup> <sup>pk</sup> <sup>pl</sup> <sup>pm</sup> <sup>pn</sup> <sup>po</sup> <sup>pp</sup> <sup>pq</sup> <sup>pr</sup> <sup>ps</sup> <sup>pt</sup> <sup>pu</sup> <sup>pv</sup> <sup>pw</sup> <sup>px</sup> <sup>py</sup> <sup>pz</sup> <sup>qa</sup> <sup>qb</sup> <sup>qc</sup> <sup>qd</sup> <sup>qe</sup> <sup>qf</sup> <sup>qg</sup> <sup>qh</sup> <sup>qi</sup> <sup>qj</sup> <sup>qk</sup> <sup>ql</sup> <sup>qm</sup> <sup>qn</sup> <sup>qo</sup> <sup>qp</sup> <sup>qq</sup> <sup>qr</sup> <sup>qs</sup> <sup>qt</sup> <sup>qu</sup> <sup>qv</sup> <sup>qw</sup> <sup>qx</sup> <sup>qy</sup> <sup>qz</sup> <sup>ra</sup> <sup>rb</sup> <sup>rc</sup> <sup>rd</sup> <sup>re</sup> <sup>rf</sup> <sup>rg</sup> <sup>rh</sup> <sup>ri</sup> <sup>rj</sup> <sup>rk</sup> <sup>rl</sup> <sup>rm</sup> <sup>rn</sup> <sup>ro</sup> <sup>rp</sup> <sup>rq</sup> <sup>rr</sup> <sup>rs</sup> <sup>rt</sup> <sup>ru</sup> <sup>rv</sup> <sup>rw</sup> <sup>rx</sup> <sup>ry</sup> <sup>rz</sup> <sup>sa</sup> <sup>sb</sup> <sup>sc</sup> <sup>sd</sup> <sup>se</sup> <sup>sf</sup> <sup>sg</sup> <sup>sh</sup> <sup>si</sup> <sup>sj</sup> <sup>sk</sup> <sup>sl</sup> <sup>sm</sup> <sup>sn</sup> <sup>so</sup> <sup>sp</sup> <sup>sq</sup> <sup>sr</sup> <sup>ss</sup> <sup>st</sup> <sup>su</sup> <sup>sv</sup> <sup>sw</sup> <sup>sx</sup> <sup>sy</sup> <sup>sz</sup> <sup>ta</sup> <sup>tb</sup> <sup>tc</sup> <sup>td</sup> <sup>te</sup> <sup>tf</sup> <sup>tg</sup> <sup>th</sup> <sup>ti</sup> <sup>tj</sup> <sup>tk</sup> <sup>tl</sup> <sup>tm</sup> <sup>tn</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>tp</sup> <sup>tr</sup> <sup>ts</sup> <sup>tt</sup> <sup>tu</sup> <sup>tv</sup> <sup>tw</sup> <sup>tx</sup> <sup>ty</sup> <sup>tz</sup> <sup>ua</sup> <sup>ub</sup> <sup>uc</sup> <sup>ud</sup> <sup>ue</sup> <sup>uf</sup> <sup>ug</sup> <sup>uh</sup> <sup>ui</sup> <sup>uj</sup> <sup>uk</sup> <sup>ul</sup> <sup>um</sup> <sup>un</sup> <sup>uo</sup> <sup>up</sup> <sup>uq</sup> <sup>ur</sup> <sup>us</sup> <sup>ut</sup> <sup>uu</sup> <sup>uv</sup> <sup>uw</sup> <sup>ux</sup> <sup>uy</sup> <sup>uz</sup> <sup>va</sup> <sup>vb</sup> <sup>vc</sup> <sup>vd</sup> <sup>ve</sup> <sup>vf</sup> <sup>vg</sup> <sup>vh</sup> <sup>vi</sup> <sup>vj</sup> <sup>vk</sup> <sup>vl</sup> <sup>vm</sup> <sup>vn</sup> <sup>vo</sup> <sup>vp</sup> <sup>vq</sup> <sup>vr</sup> <sup>vs</sup> <sup>vt</sup> <sup>vu</sup> <sup>vv</sup> <sup>vw</sup> <sup>vx</sup> <sup>vy</sup> <sup>vz</sup> <sup>wa</sup> <sup>wb</sup> <sup>wc</sup> <sup>wd</sup> <sup>we</sup> <sup>wf</sup> <sup>wg</sup> <sup>wh</sup> <sup>wi</sup> <sup>wj</sup> <sup>wk</sup> <sup>wl</sup> <sup>wm</sup> <sup>wn</sup> <sup>wo</sup> <sup>wp</sup> <sup>wq</sup> <sup>wr</sup> <sup>ws</sup> <sup>wt</sup> <sup>wu</sup> <sup>wv</sup> <sup>ww</sup> <sup>wx</sup> <sup>wy</sup> <sup>wz</sup> <sup>xa</sup> <sup>xb</sup> <sup>xc</sup> <sup>xd</sup> <sup>xe</sup> <sup>xf</sup> <sup>yg</sup> <sup>yh</sup> <sup>yi</sup> <sup>yj</sup> <sup>yk</sup> <sup>yl</sup> <sup>ym</sup> <sup>yn</sup> <sup>yo</sup> <sup>yp</sup> <sup>yq</sup> <sup>yr</sup> <sup>ys</sup> <sup>yt</sup> <sup>yu</sup> <sup>yv</sup> <sup>yw</sup> <sup>yx</sup> <sup>yy</sup> <sup>yz</sup> <sup>za</sup> <sup>zb</sup> <sup>zc</sup> <sup>zd</sup> <sup>ze</sup> <sup>zf</sup> <sup>zg</sup> <sup>zh</sup> <sup>zi</sup> <sup>zj</sup> <sup>zk</sup> <sup>zl</sup> <sup>zm</sup> <sup>zn</sup> <sup>zo</sup> <sup>zp</sup> <sup>zq</sup> <sup>zr</sup> <sup>zs</sup> <sup>zt</sup> <sup>zu</sup> <sup>zv</sup> <sup>zw</sup> <sup>zx</sup> <sup>zy</sup> <sup>zz</sup> <sup>aa</sup> <sup>ab</sup> <sup>ac</sup> <sup>ad</sup> <sup>ae</sup> <sup>af</sup> <sup>ag</sup> <sup>ah</sup> <sup>ai</sup> <sup>aj</sup> <sup>ak</sup> <sup>al</sup> <sup>am</sup> <sup>an</sup> <sup>ao</sup> <sup>ap</sup> <sup>aq</sup> <sup>ar</sup> <sup>as</sup> <sup>at</sup> <sup>au</sup> <sup>av</sup> <sup>aw</sup> <sup>ax</sup> <sup>ay</sup> <sup>az</sup> <sup>ba</sup> <sup>bb</sup> <sup>bc</sup> <sup>bd</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>bf</sup> <sup>bg</sup> <sup>bh</sup> <sup>bi</sup> <sup>bj</sup> <sup>bk</sup> <sup>bl</sup> <sup>bm</sup> <sup>bn</sup> <sup>bo</sup> <sup>bp</sup> <sup>bq</sup> <sup>br</sup> <sup>bs</sup> <sup>bt</sup> <sup>bu</sup> <sup>bv</sup> <sup>bw</sup> <sup>bx</sup> <sup>by</sup> <sup>bz</sup> <sup>ca</sup> <sup>cb</sup> <sup>cc</sup> <sup>cd</sup> <sup>ce</sup> <sup>cf</sup> <sup>cg</sup> <sup>ch</sup> <sup>ci</sup> <sup>cj</sup> <sup>ck</sup> <sup>cl</sup> <sup>cm</sup> <sup>cn</sup> <sup>co</sup> <sup>cp</sup> <sup>cq</sup> <sup>cr</sup> <sup>cs</sup> <sup>ct</sup> <sup>cu</sup> <sup>cv</sup> <sup>cw</sup> <sup>cx</sup> <sup>cy</sup> <sup>cz</sup> <sup>da</sup> <sup>db</sup> <sup>dc</sup> <sup>dd</sup> <sup>de</sup> <sup>df</sup> <sup>dg</sup> <sup>dh</sup> <sup>di</sup> <sup>dj</sup> <sup>dk</sup> <sup>dl</sup> <sup>dm</sup> <sup>dn</sup> <sup>do</sup> <sup>dp</sup> <sup>dq</sup> <sup>dr</sup> <sup>ds</sup> <sup>dt</sup> <sup>du</sup> <sup>dv</sup> <sup>dw</sup> <sup>dx</sup> <sup>dy</sup> <sup>dz</sup> <sup>ea</sup> <sup>eb</sup> <sup>ec</sup> <sup>ed</sup> <sup>ee</sup> <sup>ef</sup> <sup>eg</sup> <sup>eh</sup> <sup>ei</sup> <sup>ej</sup> <sup>ek</sup> <sup>el</sup> <sup>em</sup> <sup>en</sup> <sup>eo</sup> <sup>ep</sup> <sup>eq</sup> <sup>er</sup> <sup>es</sup> <sup>et</sup> <sup>eu</sup> <sup>ev</sup> <sup>ew</sup> <sup>ex</sup> <sup>ey</sup> <sup>ez</sup> <sup>fa</sup> <sup>fb</sup> <sup>fc</sup> <sup>fd</sup> <sup>fe</sup> <sup>ff</sup> <sup>fg</sup> <sup>fh</sup> <sup>fi</sup> <sup>fj</sup> <sup>fk</sup> <sup>fl</sup> <sup>fm</sup> <sup>fn</sup> <sup>fo</sup> <sup>fp</sup> <sup>fq</sup> <sup>fr</sup> <sup>fs</sup> <sup>ft</sup> <sup>fu</sup> <sup>fv</sup> <sup>fw</sup> <sup>fx</sup> <sup>fy</sup> <sup>fz</sup> <sup>ga</sup> <sup>gb</sup> <sup>gc</sup> <sup>gd</sup> <sup>ge</sup> <sup>gf</sup> <sup>gg</sup> <sup>gh</sup> <sup>gi</sup> <sup>gj</sup> <sup>gk</sup> <sup>gl</sup> <sup>gm</sup> <sup>gn</sup> <sup>go</sup> <sup>gp</sup> <sup>gq</sup> <sup>gr</sup> <sup>gs</sup> <sup>gt</sup> <sup>gu</sup> <sup>gv</sup> <sup>gw</sup> <sup>gx</sup> <sup>gy</sup> <sup>gz</sup> <sup>ha</sup> <sup>hb</sup> <sup>hc</sup> <sup>hd</sup> <sup>he</sup> <sup>hf</sup> <sup>hg</sup> <sup>hh</sup> <sup>hi</sup> <sup>hj</sup> <sup>hk</sup> <sup>hl</sup> <sup>hm</sup> <sup>hn</sup> <sup>ho</sup> <sup>hp</sup> <sup>hq</sup> <sup>hr</sup> <sup>hs</sup> <sup>ht</sup> <sup>hu</sup> <sup>hv</sup> <sup>hw</sup> <sup>hx</sup> <sup>hy</sup> <sup>hz</sup> <sup>ia</sup> <sup>ib</sup> <sup>ic</sup> <sup>id</sup> <sup>ie</sup> <sup>if</sup> <sup>ig</sup> <sup>ih</sup> <sup>ii</sup> <sup>ij</sup> <sup>ik</sup> <sup>il</sup> <sup>im</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>io</sup> <sup>ip</sup> <sup>iq</sup> <sup>ir</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>it</sup> <sup>iu</sup> <sup>iv</sup> <sup>iw</sup> <sup>ix</sup> <sup>iy</sup> <sup>iz</sup> <sup>ja</sup> <sup>jb</sup> <sup>jc</sup> <sup>jd</sup> <sup>je</sup> <sup>jf</sup> <sup>jj</sup> <sup>jk</sup> <sup>jl</sup> <sup>jm</sup> <sup>jn</sup> <sup>jo</sup> <sup>jp</sup> <sup>jq</sup> <sup>jr</sup> <sup>js</sup> <sup>jt</sup> <sup>ju</sup> <sup>jv</sup> <sup>jw</sup> <sup>jx</sup> <sup>ky</sup> <sup>kz</sup> <sup>la</sup> <sup>lb</sup> <sup>lc</sup> <sup>ld</sup> <sup>le</sup> <sup>lf</sup> <sup>lg</sup> <sup>lh</sup> <sup>li</sup> <sup>lj</sup> <sup>lk</sup> <sup>ll</sup> <sup>lm</sup> <sup>ln</sup> <sup>lo</sup> <sup>lp</sup> <sup>lq</sup> <sup>lr</sup> <sup>ls</sup> <sup>lt</sup> <sup>lu</sup> <sup>lv</sup> <sup>lw</sup> <sup>lx</sup> <sup>ly</sup> <sup>lz</sup> <sup>ma</sup> <sup>mb</sup> <sup>mc</sup> <sup>md</sup> <sup>me</sup> <sup>mf</sup> <sup>mg</sup> <sup>mh</sup> <sup>mi</sup> <sup>mj</sup> <sup>mk</sup> <sup>ml</sup> <sup>mn</sup> <sup>mo</sup> <sup>mp</sup> <sup>mq</sup> <sup>mr</sup> <sup>ms</sup> <sup>mt</sup> <sup>mu</sup> <sup>mv</sup> <sup>mw</sup> <sup>mx</sup> <sup>my</sup> <sup>mz</sup> <sup>na</sup> <sup>nb</sup> <sup>nc</sup> <sup>nd</sup> <sup>ne</sup> <sup>nf</sup> <sup>ng</sup> <sup>nh</sup> <sup>ni</sup> <sup>nj</sup> <sup>nk</sup> <sup>nl</sup> <sup>nm</sup> <sup>nn</sup> <sup>no</sup> <sup>np</sup> <sup>nq</sup> <sup>nr</sup> <sup>ns</sup> <sup>nt</sup> <sup>nu</sup> <sup>nv</sup> <sup>nw</sup> <sup>nx</sup> <sup>ny</sup> <sup>nz</sup> <sup>oa</sup> <sup>ob</sup> <sup>oc</sup> <sup>od</sup> <sup>oe</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>og</sup> <sup>oh</sup> <sup>oi</sup> <sup>oj</sup> <sup>ok</sup> <sup>ol</sup> <sup>om</sup> <sup>on</sup> <sup>oo</sup> <sup>op</sup> <sup>oq</sup> <sup>or</sup> <sup>os</sup> <sup>ot</sup> <sup>ou</sup> <sup>ov</sup> <sup>ow</sup> <sup>ox</sup> <sup>oy</sup> <sup>oz</sup> <sup>pa</sup> <sup>pb</sup> <sup>pc</sup> <sup>pd</sup> <sup>pe</sup> <sup>pf</sup> <sup>pg</sup> <sup>ph</sup> <sup>pi</sup> <sup>pj</sup> <sup>pk</sup> <sup>pl</sup> <sup>pm</sup> <sup>pn</sup> <sup>po</sup> <sup>pp</sup> <sup>pq</sup> <sup>pr</sup> <sup>ps</sup> <sup>pt</sup> <sup>pu</sup> <sup>pv</sup> <sup>pw</sup> <sup>px</sup> <sup>py</sup> <sup>pz</sup> <sup>qa</sup> <sup>qb</sup> <sup>qc</sup> <sup>qd</sup> <sup>qe</sup> <sup>qf</sup> <sup>qg</sup> <sup>qh</sup> <sup>qi</sup> <sup>qj</sup> <sup>qk</sup> <sup>ql</sup> <sup>qm</sup> <sup>qn</sup> <sup>qo</sup> <sup>qp</sup> <sup>qq</sup> <sup>qr</sup> <sup>qs</sup> <sup>qt</sup> <sup>qu</sup> <sup>qv</sup> <sup>qw</sup> <sup>qx</sup> <sup>qy</sup> <sup>qz</sup> <sup>ra</sup> <sup>rb</sup> <sup>rc</sup> <sup>rd</sup> <sup>re</sup> <sup>rf</sup> <sup>rg</sup> <sup>rh</sup> <sup>ri</sup> <sup>rj</sup> <sup>rk</sup> <sup>rl</sup> <sup>rm</sup> <sup>rn</sup> <sup>ro</sup> <sup>rp</sup> <sup>rq</sup> <sup>rr</sup> <sup>rs</sup> <sup>rt</sup> <sup>ru</sup> <sup>rv</sup> <sup>rw</sup> <sup>rx</sup> <sup>ry</sup> <sup>rz</sup> <sup>sa</sup> <sup>sb</sup> <sup>sc</sup> <sup>sd</sup> <sup>se</sup> <sup>sf</sup> <sup>sg</sup> <sup>sh</sup> <sup>si</sup> <sup>sj</sup> <sup>sk</sup> <sup>sl</sup> <sup>sm</sup> <sup>sn</sup> <sup>so</sup> <sup>sp</sup> <sup>sq</sup> <sup>sr</sup> <sup>ss</sup> <sup>st</sup> <sup>su</sup> <sup>sv</sup> <sup>sw</sup> <sup>sx</sup> <sup>sy</sup> <sup>sz</sup> <sup>ta</sup> <sup>tb</sup> <sup>tc</sup> <sup>td</sup> <sup>te</sup> <sup>tf</sup> <sup>tg</sup> <sup>th</sup> <sup>ti</sup> <sup>tj</sup> <sup>tk</sup> <sup>tl</sup> <sup>tm</sup> <sup>tn</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>tp</sup> <sup>tr</sup> <sup>ts</sup> <sup>tt</sup> <sup>tu</sup> <sup>tv</sup> <sup>tw</sup> <sup>tx</sup> <sup>ty</sup> <sup>tz</sup> <sup>ua</sup> <sup>ub</sup> 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- 12 I write unto you, little children, because <sup>a</sup> your sins are for- <sup>a</sup> Lu. xxiv. 47:  
13 given you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, <sup>a</sup> Acts xiii. 38.  
because ye have known <sup>17</sup> him <sup>i</sup> *that is* from the beginning. I <sup>i</sup> Ch. i. 1.  
write unto you, young men, because <sup>m</sup> ye have overcome the <sup>m</sup> Ver. 14:  
wicked one.<sup>18</sup> I write <sup>19</sup> unto you, little children, because <sup>n</sup> ye <sup>ch. iv. 4,  
v. 18, 19.  
Jo. xiv. 7.</sup>  
14 have known <sup>17</sup> the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, <sup>n</sup> Eph. vi. 10.  
because ye have known <sup>17</sup> him *that is* from the beginning. I  
have written unto you, young men, <sup>e</sup> because ye are strong, and  
the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the  
wicked one.<sup>18</sup>
- 15 <sup>a</sup> Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. <sup>a</sup> Rom. xii. 2;  
<sup>i</sup> Col. iii. 1, 2;  
<sup>e</sup> Mat. vi. 24;  
<sup>a</sup> Jas. iv. 4;  
<sup>e</sup> Rom. xiii. 14.  
<sup>i</sup> If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in  
16 him. For all that is in the world, <sup>e</sup> the lust of the flesh, and <sup>e</sup> Eccles. v. 11.  
<sup>i</sup> the lust of the eyes, and <sup>i</sup> the pride <sup>19</sup> of life, is not of the <sup>i</sup> Jas. iv. 16;  
17 Father, but is of the world. <sup>a</sup> And the world passeth away, and <sup>i</sup> Isa. xxxix.  
the lust thereof: <sup>n</sup> but he that doeth the will of God abideth <sup>n</sup> 7.  
for ever. <sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 31.  
<sup>e</sup> Mat. vii. 24,  
25.
- 18 Little children, <sup>m</sup> it is the last time: <sup>21</sup> and as ye have heard <sup>m</sup> Heb. i. 2;  
that <sup>a</sup> antichrist shall come,<sup>22</sup> even now are there <sup>24</sup> <sup>a</sup> Pet. iii. 3;  
19 christs; <sup>a</sup> whereby we know that it is the last time.<sup>23</sup> <sup>a</sup> Thea. ii. 3;  
They <sup>e</sup> Mat. xxiv. 41;  
went out from us, but they were not of us; for <sup>a</sup> if they had <sup>a</sup> Jo. 7.  
been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but <sup>a</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 1.  
*they went out,*<sup>26</sup> <sup>e</sup> that they might be made manifest that they <sup>a</sup> Acts xx. 30.  
20 were not all of us.<sup>27</sup> But ye have <sup>e</sup> an unction <sup>28</sup> from the <sup>e</sup> Holy <sup>e</sup> Jo. xvii. 12.  
21 One, and <sup>e</sup> ye know all things. I have not written unto you <sup>e</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 19.  
because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that <sup>e</sup> Ver. 27;  
22 no lie is of the truth. Who is a <sup>29</sup> liar but <sup>e</sup> he that denieth that <sup>e</sup> Cor. i. 11.  
<sup>a</sup> Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist,<sup>30</sup> that denieth the Father <sup>e</sup> Mk. i. 24.  
23 and the Son. <sup>i</sup> Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not <sup>e</sup> Ver. 27;  
the Father: [*but*] *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father* <sup>e</sup> Jude 5;  
24 *also.*<sup>31</sup> Let that therefore <sup>32</sup> abide in you, which <sup>a</sup> ye have <sup>33</sup> <sup>e</sup> Jo. xiv. 26;  
heard from the beginning. If that which ye have <sup>34</sup> heard from <sup>i</sup> Cor. i. 5.  
the beginning shall remain <sup>34</sup> in you, <sup>i</sup> ye also shall continue <sup>34</sup> in <sup>e</sup> Ch. iv. 3;  
25 the Son, and in the Father. And <sup>m</sup> this is the promise that he <sup>a</sup> Jo. 7.  
26 hath promised us, *even* eternal life. These *things* have I written <sup>a</sup> Ch. v. 1.  
27 unto you concerning <sup>m</sup> them that seduce you.<sup>35</sup> But the anoint- <sup>i</sup> Ch. iv. 25.  
ing which ye have received <sup>36</sup> of him <sup>e</sup> abideth in you, <sup>a</sup> and ye <sup>v</sup> 2.  
need not that any man teach you: but as the same <sup>37</sup> anointing <sup>a</sup> Ch. iii. 11;  
teacheth you of all things, <sup>e</sup> and is truth,<sup>38</sup> and is no lie, and <sup>a</sup> Jo. 6.  
<sup>i</sup> Ch. i. 3;  
<sup>e</sup> Jo. xiv. 23;  
<sup>m</sup> Jo. x. 28,  
xvii. 2;  
<sup>ch. i. 2.</sup>

- |                                 |  |   |   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
| 17 ye know                      | 21 hour  | 28 the evil one                         | 29 have written                           |
| 20 the vainglory                | 31 heard   | 32 we perceive that it is the last hour | 33 cometh                                 |
| 24 have there arisen            | 35 that they are none of them of us                | 36 the                                  | 37 This is the antichrist, <i>even</i> he |
| 26 but <i>this came to pass</i> | 38 As for you, let that                            | 39 would lead you astray                | 40 true                                   |
| 28 and ye have an anointing     | 41 And as for you, the anointing which ye received |   |   |

28 even as it hath<sup>39</sup> taught you, ye shall abide<sup>40</sup> in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear,<sup>41</sup> we may have confidence, and not be ashamed<sup>42</sup> before him at his coming.

Ch. iii. 2:  
Col. iii. 4:  
Ch. iii. 21,  
v. 14:  
Heb. iv. 16.  
1 Thes. ii. 19.

<sup>39</sup> omit hath  
<sup>41</sup> if he shall be manifested

<sup>40</sup> ye abide  
<sup>42</sup> shrink with shame

CONTENTS. First the apostle announces his message that God is light and only light (ver. 5). Then follows (down to chap. ii. 2) a universal statement of the evangelical conditions of fellowship with Him in holiness. In chap. ii. 3-6 the knowledge of God is exhibited as a stimulant to perfect obedience. From ver. 7 to ver. 11 the walk in light is viewed with special reference to brotherly love. Vers. 12-14 bear emphatic and redoubled testimony to the reality and truth of the Christian life generally, and of that of his readers in particular; this being introduced because of the stern contrasts which have preceded and will follow. Then comes an exhortation against the love of the world in its darkness, vers. 15-17. From ver. 18 to ver. 27 believers are warned and protected against the doctrinal errors of the world. And, lastly, in ver. 28, the whole is wound up by a reference to the coming of Christ and the Christian confidence before Him. It may be said that in the seven sections of this first part the whole sum of the Christian estate, from the revelation of sin to full preparation for judgment, is found, with its perfect opposite. But it is governed by the idea of the holiness of the Gospel as a sphere of light; and two points in it, regeneration and faith through the Holy Ghost, are afterwards more fully evolved.

*The Message, which is the compendium of Christ's teaching.*

Ver. 5. And, resuming the 'we have heard' in the Introduction, **this is the message which we have heard from Him**: from 'His Son Jesus Christ' (ver. 3), the 'Him' being enough if we remember the 'fellowship' between the Father and the Son. As the apostle condenses the whole of the revelation of Christ's Person into one word 'was manifested,' so he condenses the sum of His teaching into one word 'message': this word occurs again only in chap. iii. 11, there concerning love as here concerning light. **And announce unto you**—or, as it were, 're-message' to you; the word being different from declare,—**that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all**: the positive and negative assertion of a truth, so characteristic of this Epistle, here begins; and the two clauses must be combined in one concept. The subject is fellowship with God; that is, the possession of something common to God and to us. This is hereafter love, 'God is love'; here it is light, or unmingled and diffusive holiness. All interpretations that refer this to the essence of God are superfluous. God in His moral nature is to us light: 'light' is one of the predicates of God, as related to moral creatures. It is purely ethical, as love is in the other passage: the Epistle does not contain one reference to the essence of God, or the manifestation of His essence. It is only said that 'no man hath seen Him at any time;' and

it is remarkable that the 'glory' so common in the Gospel and Revelation is absent here: the only revelation is in Christ, and as such only a revelation of holiness and love. Holiness in God repels evil, and that to the sinner is its first aspect: 'in Him is no darkness' of sin that can be common to Him and us. But holiness in Him is diffusive, as the light is, or it could not become common to Him and to His saints. Both aspects unite in the atonement which is near at hand with its explanation.

*The atoning provision for fellowship in the light of God, viewed generally and with specific reference to the Christian life.*

Vers. 6, 7. If we say: this is a keyword throughout the section, and marks off the utterly unchristian or antichristian spirit from the perfect opposite which in each case follows it. Surely there is here no union of the apostle with his hearers, any more than in St. Paul's 'shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?' 'We' is the universal we of mankind, though it may have special allusion to the Gnostics, who said precisely, in their theory and practice, what is here alleged. They affirmed that, the seed of light being in them, they might live enveloped in darkness and sensuality without losing the prerogative of their knowledge.

That we have fellowship with him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: we lie in the 'saying,' and in the 'walking' do not the truth; 'the truth' being the outward manifestation, 'as truth is in Jesus' (Eph. iv. 21), of the light of holiness, its revealed directory of word and deed. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light. Mark the decorous emphasis on 'walk' and 'is': our 'walk' is the fellowship with His 'being.' We have fellowship one with another: our fellowship with God is not a lie, but a reality; we 'have' the fellowship that it is supposed we also 'say' we have. And our walk does not impeach us; for provision is made to enable us 'to do the truth.'

And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. The 'and' does not mean 'for,' in the sense that the cleansing is the fellowship; nor 'and therefore,' as if the fellowship were the condition of the cleansing. The converse of that would be nearer the truth. The two clauses are simply co-ordinate; the 'and' as it were explaining and obviating objection. We have fellowship with God—we, the universal 'we,'—but how can these things be, seeing that the light of Divine holiness detects in us nothing but sin? Here then comes in the counterpart or undertone of the great message. We have fellowship with God through His Son, but through Jesus the crucified Saviour, His Son, who 'came by water and blood,' the blood,

however, being made prominent now as the sacrificial expiation carried into the sanctuary for sin. This is the first of many allusions to the atonement, and must be remembered throughout the Epistle: the blood itself—not the Person of Christ here, nor faith in Him, nor faith in it—is the objective ground of our deliverance from sin. Its use here is explained by the leading theme, the holiness of God, the sphere of which distinctively is not the judicial court of satisfaction, nor the household where regeneration is introduced, but the temple where the sacrificial blood was offered. The link between it and our cleansing is not yet exhibited. The term 'cleanseth' is to be similarly explained. It includes in the phraseology of the temple the whole privilege of deliverance from sin viewed as the pollution detected and repelled by holiness: it is not sanctification internal as opposed to justification imputed, but cleansing as including both in the terms of the altar economy. It is the present tense, however; and simply preaches a perpetual removal of all sin as pollution in the sight and in the light of God.

Vers. 8, 9. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Another 'if we say,' strictly co-ordinate with the preceding; the phrases here being variations upon those contained in the former, but, after St. John's manner, with some additional points of force. What is falsely asserted by the anti-christian spirit is the absence of that which renders an atonement necessary in order to walking in the light. Sin has been for the first time introduced, as that within us which answers to darkness, its external sphere: it is wrong, therefore, to interpret it as meaning that we may no longer 'walk in the darkness,' although we 'have remaining sin within us.' The two are synonymous: they who say that they are without sin are by that very token in the darkness; for the light of God's holiness cannot be diffused through the soul until it has first revealed its evil. The rebuke runs parallel with the former, with appropriate change of phrase. Instead of lying simply, we are now self-deceivers, with strong emphasis on this: not without great violence could the perverters of the Christian system have brought themselves to deny the sinfulness of their nature. In fact, none who have ever been Christians could assert this; at least, the Christian revelation as truth cannot have remained in them, even if it had ever entered. 'The truth is not in us,' nor we in it.

If we confess our sins: here we have the universal preamble of the Gospel. This confession is the consenting together of the soul and the law in the conviction and acknowledgment of sin. It is the antithesis of the 'saying that we have no sin;' but, as the antitheses are never strictly coincident, this confession may include, and indeed must include, more than a mere internal sentiment. Two things are to be remembered here: first, that the confessing of 'sins,' not 'sin,' is the expression used in the New Testament for the true repentance that precedes the acceptance of the Gospel; and, secondly, that the word is used by St. John only in two senses, for the fundamental confession of sin and need, and for the fundamental confession of Jesus the Saviour from sin and need. He speaks of 'confessing sin' and 'confessing Christ:' he alone has

this combination, and save to express these two he does not employ the word. Accordingly, St. John now introduces in the most full and solemn manner the whole economy of the Gospel as a remedy for sin: in an enlarged statement, and including now another idea, that of righteousness.

He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The two attributes of God, the Administrator in Christ through the Spirit of the redeeming economy, correspond to each other and to the blessings which they guarantee. He is 'faithful' to His holy nature, as it is revealed in His Son, and to the covenant which in Him pledges forgiveness and renewal, and to the express promises of His word: the 'covenant of peace' came to St. John from the Old Testament, and is as much his as St. Paul's, though he never introduces the idea. Hence its antithesis is the making Him a liar; and its counterpart in us is our faith, not here expressed but implied. He is 'righteous' also: this term regards the holiness of God under a new aspect, that of a lawgiver; and declares that His universal faithfulness is pledged in a particular way, namely, as He imparts righteousness to the faith of those who trust in Him. St. John does not adopt the Pauline language, though he implies the Pauline teaching, when he says that God is righteous in order that He may forgive our sins. We receive this release from condemnation from His righteousness; for 'He is just, and the justifier.' He also imparts righteousness,—that point St. John keeps stedfastly in view throughout the Epistle,—but as to that he changes the phrase; and, blending the holiness and righteousness of God in one sentence, declares that He is faithful and righteous also 'that He may cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' This is a remarkable combination: the 'cleansing' is strictly from pollution; but here its meaning is enlarged beyond that of ver. 7, and it is a cleansing from the very principle in us that gives birth to sin, our deviation from holy right or our 'unrighteousness.'

Ver. 10. In a third use of the universal If we say, the great anti-christian lie is once more repeated, but as usual in a strengthened form,—that we have not sinned—that we are not in fact sinners, as the result of a life of which sin has been and is the characteristic. We make him a liar, and his word is not in us: the rebuke is also repeated but deepened. We contradict the God of holiness; and His revelation, His word of truth, has absolutely no place in us. This third description of the unchristian nature has no counterpart: that follows immediately, but in another form. In all these sentences, let it be observed once more, the apostle has been laying down great principles. The 'we say' has no specific reference to his readers. But he would not have used the phrase 'if we say,' had he not included a universal application. While he does not declare that sin must remain in those who walk in the light, and that they must have sin in them, he warns them against the 'saying' that they have it not. He does not declare that it is true of all that they have sinned in their renewed life down to the present moment; but he forbids their 'saying' that they have not sinned. Supposing his later testimony concerning the destruction of sin as a principle, and the absence of sin from the regenerate, to be taken in its highest and deepest, that is, in its

most natural sense, still all the sanctified avow themselves sinners who need the atonement until probation ends; they never separate between their new selves and their old in their humble confession; they still identify themselves with their sin, though this may be gone; and 'say' with the sanctified Apostle Paul (1 Tim. i. 15), 'sinners, of whom I am chief,' 'looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life' (Jude, ver. 21).

CHAP. II. 1-3. **My little children:** instead of giving the antithesis to the third 'if any man say,' St. John, the father of the churches of that time, directly addresses those whose character formed that antithesis; and changes the calm statement into affectionate exhortation. **These things I write unto you**—that is, the whole letter, resuming the 'write we' of ver. 4, but with the usual change. Before, it was the apostolic 'we,' and in the presence of the whole Church, with all its heresies around it; now St. John himself begins a more personal address. **That ye sin not:** before, it was the fullness of joy; now it is the utter separation from sin, the negative condition of that. The last tense that had been used was the perfect, referring to the whole life of sin as needing atonement; the aorist is now used: 'that ye sin not at all,' not as a habit, nor in any single act. The antithesis might have run on, 'If we are forgiven and cleansed, we have for ever ceased from sin.' But it does not; for the saint must ever be a sinner as touching the past, and if not dealt with as such it is only through merciful non-imputation; moreover, he may sin again.

**And if any man sin.** The 'if' does not suppose it necessary, but it clearly implies that 'one'—meaning 'one of us,' though here only used in the Epistle—may commit sin. Yet this will be, in the high teaching of the apostle, a peculiar case, and demands a new application of the atonement to meet it. **We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.** 'We have,' as the common possession of believers—not of the Church; but of every one, for his defence against sin and recovery from it—as certainly ours now as our sin can be. Advocate or Paraclete is the same word as the Comforter of the Gospel. That 'other' Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is in the midst of the Church and in the hearts of believers as a Helper and Teacher, 'making intercession within us;' this Advocate is towards the Father, with allusion to the previous words, 'to forgive us our sins.' He is in a juridical sense the pleader or intercessor of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who must be 'holy, separate from sinners,' 'the Righteous.' The apostle does not say 'the Holy One,' because the very term Advocate makes the heavenly temple as it were a judicial court, and in that court satisfaction and righteousness reign. As 'cleansing from unrighteousness' combines the two ideas, so do Advocate and Propitiation. The third leading idea of the Gospel, our sonship, is involved in 'with the Father.'

**And he is the propitiation for our sins.** Mark the 'and' which here once more introduces a new thought intended to obviate perversion. Though Christ is not said to be a 'righteous Advocate,' yet His advocacy must represent a righteous cause. He pleads His own atonement; that is Himself, for He 'is' in His Divire-human Person the propitiation; the advocacy is distinct from the atonement, is based upon it, and appeals to it.

The word propitiation occurs only here and in chap. iv. throughout the New Testament: it is really the counterpart of the 'blood of Jesus His Son' in chap. i. 6, the administration of the atonement coming between them in chap. i. 9. Christ is in the New Testament 'set forth as a propitiation in His blood' (Rom. iii. 25): a sacrificial offering that, as on the day of atonement to which it refers, averted the wrath of God from the people. He also as High Priest made atonement or 'propitiation for the sins of the people' (Heb. ii. 17), which is here, as in the Septuagint, 'propitiated in the matter of sins' the God of holiness. Uniting these, He is in the present passage Himself the abstract 'propitiation' in His own glorified Person. His prayer for us, issuing from the very treasure-house of atoning virtue, must be acceptable; and, uttered to the Father who 'sent Him' as the propitiation (chap. iv. 14), is one that He 'heareth always' (John xi. 42).

It is then added: **and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.** And why? First, because the apostle would utter his generous testimony, on this his first mention of the world, to the absolute universality of the design of the mission of the 'Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world:' his last mention of it, the second time he says 'the whole world,' will be of a severer character (chap. v. 19). Secondly, he thus intimates that the proper propitiation, as such, was the reconciliation of the Divine holiness and love in respect to all sins at once and in their unity, while the advocacy based upon it refers to special sins: on the one hand, no other atonement is necessary; on the other, that must avail if penitence secures the advocacy of Him who offered it once for all. Lastly, as we doubt not, the apostle thus ends a discussion, the fundamental object of which was to set forth universally and in general the way in which the Gospel offers to all mankind fellowship with the light of God's holiness.

*Fellowship in the knowledge of God: obedience, love, and union, 3-6.*

The best account that can be given of this section—more aphoristic than any other—is that it lays down certain principles, and introduces certain terms, which become the keynotes of the remainder: each begins here, and returns again and again, while few are afterwards added.

Ver. 3. The word fellowship now vanishes from the Epistle. The first substitute is knowledge; a term that is not without allusion to the Gnostic watchword, but soon passes beyond the transitory reference. It is the gnosis of the anti-christian sect, which St. Paul, not renouncing the term, exalted into epignosis: St. John retrieves it, and stamps it with the same dignity that he impresses on the word love.

**And hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments.** The knowing is a word which may be said to be in this Epistle sanctified entirely to God and the experience of Divine things: the knowing Him and the knowing that we know Him, or, in St. Paul's language, 'knowing the proof' of Him. We cannot better explain the word to ourselves than by closely connecting it with the fellowship that precedes. All knowledge is the communion of the mind with its object: the object as it were and the knowing subject have in common the secret nature of the object. To 'know Christ' is to enter into the

'fellowship of His suffering and resurrection.' To know God is to have that which may be known of God made common to Him and to our minds: His holy nature, His truth, His love. Obviously this knowledge of God is its own evidence to ourselves; the very word says that. Yet the apostle adds, in a phrase quite unique in Scripture, 'we know that we know Him': we know our own knowledge; that is, the secret of our true knowledge, its effect, is common to our experiencing and our reflecting mind, to our consciousness as the union of the two. That secret as deliverance from sin has already been dwelt on: now the positive side is brought in; we are privy to our obedience as flowing from the nature of God in us, 'if we keep His commandments.' These were given us by Christ; Christ is God and the 'Him' of this passage in the unity of the Father.

Ver. 4. Hence he that saith, I know him—the 'we' has become 'he,' according to St. John's habit of changing the phrase and making its force more keen and direct,—and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. We are sent back to chap. i. 8, 10; as he lied who said that he had no sin, and the truth of God was not in him, so he lies, and is without the indwelling truth, who, professing to know God in His Son, obeys Him not.

Ver. 5. But whoso keepeth his word: this phrase is our Lord's, both in St. John's Gospel and in the Apocalypse. Examination will show that the 'keeping' is more interior than the 'doing,' including that sacred reverence for the principle of obedience which is its permanent or abiding safeguard in the soul: 'because thou hast kept My word, I will keep thee' (Rev. iii. 8, 10). But St. John never speaks of the law: it is the 'word' as the central expression of the mind of God which as precept is 'the commandment,' and branches out into 'the commandments.' Observe that the 'if' has now vanished, while the individual 'whoso' remains, and it follows, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. 'If ye continue in My word'—interchangeable with 'My word continuing in you,'—then are ye verily My disciples' (John viii. 31): the same emphasis on the 'truly' responding to 'the truth is not in him.' But we cannot help feeling that this 'verily'—here alone made his own by St. John—expresses the solemn joy with which the writer approaches a new word and a new thought that will throbb throughout the remainder of the Epistle.

Postponing the study of 'love' until we hear that 'love is of God,' we must mark the 'perfected love.' Five times the thought occurs; and, while always the fellowship of love with God is the undertone, there is a distinction. Twice it is of God's love in or to us; once, in the middle, it is obviously the love common to God and us; and in the rest it is no less obviously love perfected in ourselves. What it is here let three considerations show. First, the Divine love in the mission and atoning work of the Son has been exhibited as effecting the forgiveness and sanctification of the soul; but that does not constitute the full knowledge of God in Christ: His love in us attains its perfect operation only when it becomes the full power of a simple and pure obedience to His word; that is its finished work in us. We know God when we know His love; and the knowledge or fellowship of His love is

the possession of its perfect influence within us as the active power of holiness in one that has been passively delivered by it from sin. Hence, secondly, it is added, by this we know that we are in him: not by spiritual enjoyments; not by ecstatic absorption into the Divine abyss, such as later and degenerate mysticism delighted to describe; but by the power to do His holy will in absolute self-surrender and consecration, do we know that we have union with God. It may be objected that on this view it should read 'that He is in us:' now precisely this we do read when next the perfect operation of the Divine love is referred to: 'God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us' (chap. iv. 12). It is not our consummate love to God that assures us of our union with Him, but the blessed experience of His perfected love in us. Thirdly, this is confirmed by what follows: He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked. There is no stress on the 'saith,' as if the meaning were that the profession ought to be confirmed by practice. True as that is, the truth is deeper here. The profession before was, 'I know God;' now the phrase changes, 'that he abideth in Him.' The stress is on the 'abiding,' which now enters the Epistle for the first time to go no more out; and as this continuous fellowship with Christ is no other than the life of the Vine producing fruit in the branches, he who has it is bound to exhibit in himself the holiness of Christ, and walk as He walked. The knowledge, the life, the love of Christ is perfected in this, that we live as He lived. In fact, there are two obligations: being abidingly in Christ absolutely involves a Divine necessity of righteous obedience; and the profession of it binds the professor to do his own part to imitate Him. 'If I then—ye also ought. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done' (John xiii. 14, 15). This suggests the Master's self-sacrificing love as the specific characteristic of His pattern, and leads to the next section. But, before passing on, we should observe the wealth of new terms and thoughts which crowd into the present verse: knowledge, indwelling, abiding; all these being perfected love; and all issuing in our being 'even as He.' Each one of these recurs again and again.

*The new commandment, which is also old:  
that of brotherly love, 7-11.*

Ver. 7. Beloved—introducing a new view of the subject by a term appropriate,—no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The apostle had spoken of 'commandments' and of the one 'word,' but he had not as yet said 'commandment.' Now, our Lord had associated the latter with brotherly love as a 'new commandment' (John xiii. 34): hence he distinguishes between his Master's 'giving' and his own 'writing.' 'What I now write is not new, as He gave it: for the old commandment is the word which ye heard in the ever memorable saying that lived in the Church from the beginning of the Christian revelation.'

Ver. 8. Again, resuming and as it were correcting, there is a sense in which a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: 'my saying that it is new is a true thing both as it respects Him who "gave" it

and you who read what I "write." It was new with reference to the old law, which the Saviour fulfilled and consummated and re-enacted in the supreme self-sacrifice rehearsed or anticipated in the feet-washing at the time when He gave it; the law of love was perfected and proclaimed anew, and with an illustration never given to it before. It is new in us, who fulfil it with a new spirit, after a new example, and with new motives, as in short a commandment which is the fulfilment and the fulfiller of all law or word of God. **Because the darkness is passing away, and the True Light now shineth.** When St. John said 'true in Him,' he referred to Christ, whose 'walk' had been spoken of, as also to the Speaker of the new commandment unnamed. He still defines Him without name as the 'True Light:' light as opposed to the darkness of sin, and true, as the reality of which all former revelation was the shadow and precursor. But the Person of Christ is now lost in His manifestation: the perfect revelation of law and of love in their unity is fully come; the darkness of self and sin is only in act of passing.

Ver. 9. It would require a long sentence to supply the unexpanded thought here. In nothing is the newness of the evangelical teaching more evidently seen than in the diametrical opposition it establishes between loving and hating. There is no middle sphere: in the Gospel, love is taught in its purity and perfection as the light of life in the soul, which leaves no part dark, no secret occasion of sin being undiscovered and unremoved; and hate is taught as the synonym of not loving, being the secret germ of all selfishness. Hence he that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness until now, notwithstanding the light shining around, and notwithstanding his profession, and notwithstanding his possible dwelling among Christians whom he calls brethren.

Vers. 10, 11. Here there is no 'but:' we have a pair of counterparts strictly united. He that loveth his brother—his brother being every living man, in this passage as in some others—abideth in the light. It is presupposed that he is in it; but for the sake of what follows the abiding is emphasized; as indeed the 'abiding' always follows hard on the 'is:' and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. Stumbling-block or offence is sometimes what makes others to fall either intentionally or innocently or inadvertently. But here it is that secret selfishness which takes manifold forms, almost all the forms of sin: the light from Christ entering through the spiritual eye makes the whole spiritual body full of light, and nothing remains undiscovered or unremoved that could cause the fulfiller of this law to fall. It is the high ideal of the 'new commandment;' but one that is here said to be realized in him in whom 'the love of God is perfected' or has its full effect. But—now comes in the awful antithesis, containing the whole history of the loveless spirit—he that hateth his brother—who does not love his neighbour as himself—is in the darkness, and abideth in or walketh in the darkness—it is his sphere, and he both receives and diffuses it—and knoweth not whither he goeth: 'whither,' because he is in the darkness, and it hath not yet been revealed what the end of that will be, 'how great is that darkness!' 'he goeth,' because the darkness 'hath blinded,' as it were once for all, his eyes to the path on which he is.

*Testimony to the reality of their religion; addressed to the church generally, and specially under two aspects.*

Vers. 12, 13. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. The apostle, in the act of writing the Epistle, now ceases to distinguish between true and false Christians; he affectionately uses the same appellation which he had used in the first verse when pointing his readers to the intercession and atonement of Jesus Christ; and, taking up again that truth, says that he wrote to them with the confidence that for the sake of His name, on the ground of His finished work on earth and presentation of His Person in heaven, they had the forgiveness of their sins. 'For My name's sake' in the Old Testament becomes now 'for His name's sake;' but it occurs only here, and is parallel with St. Paul's 'God for Christ's sake,' or 'in Christ hath forgiven you.' This confidence is expressed here first simply as the utterance of joyful congratulation.

Continuing the same strain, St. John, to whom all were 'little children,' regards them as divided among themselves into two classes: the more mature, whom he congratulates on that spiritual knowledge of which he had spoken in ver. 3: I write unto you, fathers, because ye know him that was from the beginning: 'that which was' in chap. i. 1 becomes here 'Him that was;' that is, the same Jesus through whose name they were all forgiven was, in His Divine Person as the ultimate secret of the virtue of His atonement, fully revealed to them in the faith which they had received and studied and continued to know. This was true concerning all; but it was the special characteristic of the more advanced. The same may be said of the next clause. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the evil one. The head of the kingdom of darkness, alluded to in ver. 8, in whom 'the whole world lieth' (chap. v. 19), elsewhere 'the Prince of this world' (John xii. 31), had been overcome by all the 'little children;' but the struggle in the case of the fathers had issued in the calm certitude of 'the full assurance of understanding' (Col. ii. 2), while in the young men it was a confident but recent victory. Let it be observed, before proceeding, that hitherto the church had been addressed as children by regeneration; in what follows they are rather children by adoption. Hitherto the Divine Son has been pre-eminent: His name, His eternal personality, His opposition to the wicked one. Communion with Him has been chiefly in the apostle's thoughts.

Vers. 13, 14. Here the apostle takes up again the strain which had been suspended, if not actually, yet in thought. The word 'I write' is changed for 'I wrote:' first, because the three great principles dwelt on—redemption from sin and from the world's ruler by knowledge of God—are absolutely fundamental, and must be repeated emphatically; secondly, because the writer sees fit to regard his Epistle as now in the hands of the readers, and 'I wrote what I am now writing' becomes simple enough; thirdly, because he is about to commence two solemn exhortations for which he would doubly prepare them.

I have written unto you, children or sons of God, because ye know the Father. 'Sons,' the new designation, corresponds here with 'the

**Father.** The Father becomes now pre-eminent, and fellowship with Him through the Son. Forgiveness is connected with regeneration in the Son; as it respects the Father, it is the knowing His fatherly name, and we 'are called the children of God:' in the order of thought this is preceded by the knowledge of the 'name' of the Son. I write to you, fathers, because ye know him that is from the beginning. This exact repetition is very impressive. To the mature the apostle has nothing to add, for to know Christ is to have all knowledge; through it the Father is known, on the one hand, and the enemy is overcome, on the other. I write to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one. Re-writing what went before, the apostle reminds the young men both of their strength and of the source of it. They were strong or 'valiant in fight' (Heb. xi. 34), having 'waxed' or become such through constant victory; not, however, in their own power, but through 'Him that strengthened' them, who Himself through His word was the indwelling and abiding source of their conquest. 'Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world' (chap. iv. 4): hence it is difficult to decide whether the personal Logos is here meant or His living word, 'the sword of the Spirit:' certainly not one without the other, though the former use of the phrase suggests that the living Gospel is signified here. Note with what emphasis the last clause is repeated. He who has entered into fellowship with the Son has an abiding victory over the enemy, and this conscious experience of triumph over him, not only in particular assaults but over him, the conqueror has only to maintain by 'keeping himself' so that the enemy may approach, but touch him not (chap. v. 18). This is not a promise only, nor an exhortation, but the present reality of the healthy Christian life.

*The love of the world: renounced in the Fellowship of the Father. This exhortation is addressed to all, the tone of contrast being now again resumed.*

Ver. 15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Fellowship with God, and walking in darkness, were diametrical opposites in chap. i.; the same is now said of the love of God and fellowship with the world. Here is an exhortation, and the reason for it. The emphasis is in this verse on the 'love,' which only in this passage is used both of God and the world: elsewhere we have 'friendship with the world' (Jas. iv. 4), 'minding earthly things' (Phil. iii. 19); but the strong word love, the giving up of the whole being, mind, and heart, and will, we have only here. That in the nature of things, and by the evangelical law, must be reserved for God alone; two contradictory perfect loves cannot be in the same soul; therefore, he who thus loves the world cannot have the love of the Father. This reason assigned explains the exhortation. The 'world' is interpreted by it, just as mammon is interpreted by the impossibility of double service: 'ye cannot serve God and mammon.' The world is the sphere of the unregenerate life, governed by another god, fallen from God, and

consequently swayed by self, which is separation from God. It is not therefore the whole economy of things; which man cannot love, though he may make it his goal. It is not for the same reason the earth as the abode of man. It is not the aggregate of mankind, whom we must love as 'God loved the world.' But it is the whole sum of evil which makes up the principle of opposition to the holiness of God, the 'world which lieth in the wicked one.' In distinction from this universal sphere of sin, which has the whole heart of the unconverted, 'the things that are in the world' define the particular directions which alienation from God may take, and the special objects which self may convert into objects of love.

Ver. 16. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. Now, the apostle defines the nature of the world, more particularly in its utter contrariety to the nature of God. The world is a sphere of life; it has a unity, and 'the whole that is in it,' as it is occupied by man, may be distributed into a trinity. First, 'the lust of the flesh:' in its more limited sense, the living to gratify the desires of the fleshly nature; in its deeper meaning, the gratification of the fallen nature generally in opposition to the Spirit, for St. John, like St. Paul, defines 'that which is born of the flesh' as 'flesh.' Then 'the lust of the eyes;' all the manifold desires that are awakened by the eye as their instrument, or that connect the flesh with the outer world. This also has its profounder meaning: the desire of the world's eye rests upon the sum of things phenomenal, or the 'things that are seen;' and its sin is the universal sin of dependence on the creature, and not beholding, rejoicing in, and being satisfied with the Creator and invisible realities. Thirdly, 'the vainglory of life:' life being here the way or means of physical existence, and not the life which is the glory of this Epistle; the vainglory is the pride and pomp that exults in itself, and gives not the glory to God. This trinity is a tri-unity, making up the 'whole' that is in the world of man's estrangement from Divine things. And, with reference to this whole, the apostle says, twice repeating 'is,' that it springs not from God. It is not of that new life which is 'from God;' but is its perfect opposite. It cannot love God, because it is not of His nature; it cannot go to God, because it came not from Him. Whence then came it originally and comes it now? The apostle does not say from sin, nor from Satan. He is thinking and about to speak of its emptiness and transitoriness: he could not therefore say that 'it cometh of evil,' or of sin, or of Satan; for these do not pass away. But he limits his words, 'it is of the world,' the emphasis being on this, that 'it is not of the Father,' the Father of that Son in whom we have eternal love and eternal life.

Ver. 17. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. The world as a system of desires contrary to the Divine will, governed by its one 'lust' that makes it what it is, is even now in the act of passing. Its sinners will remain, and the consequences of its sin; but as a complex 'world of iniquity,' ordered in its

disorder, it will pass away, it is even now passing. Then there is a change to the personal individual, who knows no lust, but only the one will: abjuring the lust of the flesh, he doeth that will which is his sanctification; renouncing the sight of his eyes, he walks before Him who is invisible; and forsaking all glorying in self, he gives glory to God supremely and alone. He shall, like God, and with God, and in God, abide for ever.

*The antichrists as errors of the darkness: their mark and character, with the protection against them.*

Ver. 18. Little children: the address is to all; and with reference to the several characteristics acknowledged in them, their knowledge of the Father and of Him who was from the beginning, and their victory over the evil one. While the knowledge and the victory run through this whole section, it is more immediately linked with the preceding 'passeth away.'

It is the last time. This is St. John's final and only expression for the Christian dispensation as answering to the 'last days' of Isa. ii. 2, the 'end of the days' of Deut. iv. 30, the 'afterward' of all the prophets. When our Lord introduced the 'fulness of time,' another 'afterward' began: in His own teaching, for He spoke of 'this world' and the 'world to come' (Matt. xii. 30); and in that of His apostles. Each of them uses his own phrases for the distinction: St. Paul speaks of 'the present time' and 'the coming glory' (Rom. viii. 18), and St. Peter of 'the last days' or 'the last of the days,' and 'to be revealed in the last time' (1 Pet. i. 20, 5). St. John's is 'the last time' here at the beginning of the section, and at the end of it 'His appearing' (ver. 28), which closes the 'time.' The passing away of the world, and the continuance of the hour or time, run on coincidentally: 'when He shall be manifested' will end both. During the old economy, and in the rabbinical interval with its 'the present world' and 'the coming world,' the division of history was the advent of Messiah; now that He has come, the dividing point is His second coming. It is important to remember that the apostle first speaks solemnly of this 'last time' as distinguished from the passing world. Its relation to antichrists comes in afterwards, and gives a new colouring to the thought.

And as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have arisen many antichrists; whereby we perceive that it is the last time. Our Lord had predicted not one 'false Christ,' but 'many,' as coming, not immediately before the end of the world only, but from the time of His departure (Matt. xxiv. 4, 24). And St. John pays homage first and pre-eminently to his Master's word, referring, however, rather to His 'false prophets,' and calling them by a name used only by himself 'antichrists,' not as taking the place of Christ, but as opposing Him. He includes also, of course, the many predictions of his brethren, to the effect that 'false teachers would bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them' (2 Pet. ii. 1). This is the pith of his argument: we discern that we are in the last revelation, because side by side go on the development of truth and error concerning the one Person who is the sum of revelation. But, in his way to this argument, St. John in-

troduces an allusion to what they had heard from St. Paul, interpreting Daniel, concerning one antichrist, whom he mentions only to show that his predecessors are already in the world. As he is not, like St. Paul, referring to the signs of the 'last days' in the 'last time,' but only of the last time generally, he does not dwell on the future personal antichrist. He does, however, set his seal to St. Paul's teaching that a 'man of sin will be revealed,' exalting himself 'above all that is called God,' that is, as St. John interprets it, 'above all that is called Christ' who is God, 'denying the Father and the Son' in a form of opposition which only the fulfilment will explain. Though he does not define his own word more fully, and its explanation must be sought in St. Paul's Epistles and the Apocalypse, he here gives a new name to St. Paul's 'man of sin,' the 'antichrist' or opponent of Christ pre-eminently, and he adds that 'he cometh,' or, in solemn Biblical language, is still 'the coming one,' as opposed to the antichrists who 'have become' such or arisen.

Ver. 19. This verse stands alone, as containing a preliminary encouragement. They went out from us, but they were not of us. They literally left us, for they were in our fellowship, and received in the Church the doctrines they perverted; but they had not the life of our doctrine, and were not of us in the sense of that fellowship of which the first chapter had spoken. For if they had been of us, in this latter sense, they would have continued with us, in the former sense. But—the apostle is hurrying from them and hurries them away, in an elliptical sentence, 'this came to pass—that they might be made manifest that they are not all of us.' The consequence is a purpose: they have gone according to the fixed purpose of God's Spirit that heresy should be purged out of the Church. It is true that by their going out they show the possibility of some being 'with us' who are not 'of us.' But the words, which are not so involved in the original as many think, do not say this. They only declare that such heresy cannot and must not continue in the Christian fellowship,—continue, that is, as maintained by teachers: as members of the fellowship all need the subsequent exhortation to 'abide in Him,' and the warning against being 'ashamed before Him at His coming.' The reason of the necessary rejection of heresy is given in the next verse.

Ver. 20. And ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. There is no 'but' here: the verse introduces a new consolation; and that is the fact of the impartation of the Holy Ghost to all the members of the spiritual fellowship, as a Spirit of consecration generally, and particularly as a teaching guide into all truth. 'Ye have,' as the result of having 'received' (ver. 27), your part of the common Pentecostal gift. This was received from the 'Holy One': that is, Christ, who is 'the life,' or 'the Son' as the source of our sonship, 'the Righteous' as the source of our righteousness, and 'the Holy One' as the source of our sanctification. The term 'unction,' or chrisma, like that of 'seed' or sperma, refers to the Holy Ghost, whose name has not yet been mentioned. It goes back to the Old Testament, which St. John never formally quotes, though he habitually incorporates it: there the 'anointing oil' or 'the oil of anoint-

ing' (Ex. xxix. 7, 21) is the symbol of the Holy Ghost, first as setting apart for God whatever was touched by it, secondly as specifically consecrating the priests and kings and prophets of the old economy. The antitype was poured out on Christ 'without measure' that it might flow upon all His members, consecrating them to God, and making them representatives of His three official relations. In its first meaning, which certainly is included here, it signifies that those who receive the chrism belong to Christ as opposed to all antichrists: this indeed suggesting the word. In its second meaning it signifies that the members of Christ's mystical body share His unction as the Prophet: they have His Spirit teaching them 'all things,' that is, 'all the truth' as 'truth is in Jesus.' The chrisma becomes as it were a charisma: the gift of spiritual knowledge in all that pertains to the doctrine presently made prominent. St. John, as his manner is, lays down the high and sacred privilege in all its perfectness: the qualifications are inserted afterwards, and indeed are suggested in every sentence.

Vers. 21. The promise of the 'Spirit of the truth' is evidently in St. John's thoughts, and these words are in indirect allusion to that promise as fulfilled in the community. The Saviour laid stress on 'the truth' as one: the truth embodied in His own person. That central truth all who receive the anointing must know, and the apostle, with the same feeling that dictated the previous words, 'I have written to you, children, because ye know the Father,' acknowledges their heavenly instruction even while he is instructing them himself.

I write not unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it. His purpose here is to show them that the truth is not only a revelation of the Christ, but a revelation of antichrist also. And that no lie is of the truth: he takes it for granted that they know; that is, in the form of taking it for granted, he urgently exhorts them to remember that there can be no peace between the truth and any form of the lie whatever. The same absolute contrast and diametrical opposition that he establishes between regeneration and sin, the Father's love and love of the world, light and darkness, he establishes between truth and error. We often trace theological error to a perversion of lesser truth; and in many lesser matters rightly. But 'the truth' as it is explained in the next verse cannot shade off into less true, and reach the false that way. Hence the abrupt question that follows.

Vers. 22, 23. Who is the liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? If every lie comes from another source than the truth, what is that source? Our Saviour said of one: 'He is a liar, and the father of it' (John viii. 44). And this was preceded by, 'Ye are of your father the devil,' who 'abode not in truth.' Hence here we have first the great error viewed in respect to its author, the representative of the central lie: that lie being the denial that the Jesus of the Gospels was or is identical with the Christ. To this formula might be reduced most of the heresies of the age; but especially that of the Jews, and that of Gnosticism which made Christ an Æon who joined the man Jesus for a season. This last was in the apostle's mind, and he thought of the exceeding plausibleness of many arguments adduced in its favour; hence the earnestness with which he

changes the abstract lie into the concrete liar, and reminds the anointed Christians that they must remember the fatherhood of every form of error on this subject. Denying the Christ,—This is the antichrist: he deserves that name, though his error in this respect is only a branch of the great lie. He deserves it well, for he is really a member of the family that denieth the Father and the Son. This last is the essence of antichrist: the sum of all possible error, denying and renouncing conjointly the Godhead and the Revealer of the Godhead. It is the heaviest charge brought against the false teachers in the Epistle, and therefore the apostle solemnly explains and substantiates it.

Whosoever denieth the Son, neither hath he the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also. The liar and the antichrist is now reduced and yet extended to 'whosoever.' The denial that Jesus is the Christ is identified with denying the Son in His eternal relation to the Father, in His incarnation which made Him the Christ, and in His sole supremacy as the revealer of the Godhead. He 'hath not' the Father; for 'no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him' (Matt. xi. 30). He that 'confesseth' the Son, in the creed of his heart and lips and life, 'hath' a loving fellowship 'the Father also' as well as the Son. Such being the great issue at stake, the anointing from the Holy One cannot fail to keep you from error, at least on this vital question.

Vers. 24, 25. As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye shall also abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he promised us, even life eternal. The false teachers introduced novelties: their doctrine was opposed to the steadfast message or promise of the Gospel; and the apostle introduces a new element here; that is, the apostolic teaching as the standard to which every form of doctrine, good or evil, must be brought. The unction of the Holy One gives spiritual discernment to every sanctified believer, by which he can perceive the contradiction of error. But the security is deeper even than that. The apostolic doctrine is an indwelling word which is the condition of abiding in the Father and the Son. This abiding in God is the whole substance of the truth as a promise: 'this is the promise which He promised;' and this promise is 'eternal life.'

Vers. 26, 27. The blessedness of 'eternal life' has brought this sad protest against error to an end. But the writer's heart is full, and he introduces a final exhortation and encouragement, in the same tone that has been felt throughout, that of confidence in his readers.

These things have I written unto you concerning them that are seeking to lead you astray: they, rather than the anointed Christians, gave occasion for all he had said. And as for you, the anointing which ye have received abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you. There is no side-glance here at the teachers who would intrude; but it is the old truth that the abiding of the interior Teacher in the heart is the supreme source of knowledge: however important the instruction of ministers, even of that which the apostle is himself here giving, may be, it derives all its value from the inward

demonstration of the Spirit. His unction must sanctify reading and hearing and meditation, and all the subordinate means of learning. There is danger, of course, that this may be perverted. Hence the concluding words are very strong; compressing into three clauses, not united with perfect concinnity, all that had been said. But, as his anointing—His Spirit who is the truth,—teacheth you concerning all things—in all the means He adopts, this letter being among them,—and is true, and is no lie—thus again does the apostle glory against the false teachers,—and even as it taught you, ye abide in him—thus he rejoices over his people safe from the seducers.

Ver. 28. But throughout this Epistle the human side is never forgotten, while all is referred finally to the indwelling of the Son.

And now, my little children, abide in him: that, when he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed from him at his coming. This ends the whole section which began with the 'last time.' The 'coming' of the Lord is His coming to judgment; but St. John here uses, and here only, a gracious word that signifies His presence, though marking the beginning of that presence by the word that signifies its continuance, 'His coming.' No reference is made to the time of His return, or to the possibility of their living on earth till He should come. We are exhorted to 'abide in Him;' and whether we meet Him or are brought with Him, the confidence will be the same. Its opposition is the 'speechless-ness' of the marriage guest, 'ashamed from Him' or His presence.

## CHAPTER II. 29-III. 22.

### *Fellowship in Regeneration.*

- 29 **I**F ye know that <sup>a</sup>he is righteous, ye know<sup>1</sup> that every one that doeth righteousness <sup>b</sup>is born<sup>2</sup> of him. CHAP. III. I. Behold, <sup>c</sup>what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called <sup>d</sup>'the sons' of 'God!' <sup>e</sup>Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, <sup>f</sup>now are we the sons<sup>3</sup> of God; <sup>g</sup>and it doth not yet appear<sup>4</sup> what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear,<sup>h</sup> <sup>i</sup>we shall be like him; <sup>j</sup>for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him<sup>5</sup> <sup>k</sup>'purifieth himself, even as he is pure.
- 4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for <sup>l</sup>'sin is the transgression of the law.' And ye know that <sup>m</sup>'he was manifested to take away our' sins; and <sup>n</sup>'in him is no sin.
- 6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth <sup>o</sup>'hath not seen him, neither known<sup>10</sup> him. Little children, <sup>p</sup>'let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. <sup>q</sup>'He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, <sup>r</sup>'that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born<sup>11</sup> of God <sup>s</sup>'doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth<sup>12</sup> in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born<sup>11</sup> of God. <sup>t</sup>'In this the children of God are manifest, and <sup>u</sup>'the children of the devil: whosoever doeth

<sup>a</sup> Ch. iii. 7.

<sup>b</sup> Jo. i. 13;

ch. iii. 9;

v. 1, 18.

<sup>c</sup> 10. iii. 16;

ch. iv. 10.

<sup>d</sup> Ver. 10.

<sup>e</sup> Jo. xiii. 13.

<sup>f</sup> 10. xvi. 3.

<sup>g</sup> Rom. viii. 15;

Gal. iii. 26.

<sup>h</sup> Rom. viii. 18;

2 Cor. iv. 17,

18.

<sup>i</sup> Rom. viii. 29;

2 Cor. iii. 18.

<sup>j</sup> Jo. xvii. 24;

Rev. xxii. 4.

<sup>k</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 1.

<sup>l</sup> Rom. iv. 15;

ch. v. 17.

<sup>m</sup> Heb. ix. 26;

Jo. i. 29;

Isa. liii. 11,

12.

<sup>n</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 22.

<sup>o</sup> 3 Jo. 11;

ch. ii. 3.

<sup>p</sup> Mat. xxiv. 4;

ch. ii. 26.

<sup>q</sup> Ver. 10;

Mat. xiii. 38.

<sup>r</sup> Heb. ii. 14;

Gen. iii. 15;

Lu. x. 28;

Jo. xii. 31.

<sup>s</sup> Jo. i. 13;

ch. iii. 9, iv.

7, v. 2, 4, 18.

<sup>t</sup> Ver. 2.

<sup>u</sup> Ver. 8.

<sup>1</sup> perceive      <sup>2</sup> begotten      <sup>3</sup> children      <sup>4</sup> insert and such we are

<sup>5</sup> it is not yet made manifest      <sup>6</sup> if he shall be manifested

<sup>7</sup> And every one that hath this hope set on him

<sup>8</sup> Every one that committeth sin committeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

<sup>9</sup> omit our

<sup>10</sup> knoweth

<sup>11</sup> begotten

<sup>12</sup> abideth

not righteousness is not of God, <sup>12</sup> neither he that loveth not his <sup>13</sup> brother.

- 11 For this is <sup>14</sup> the message that ye heard <sup>15</sup> from the beginning, <sup>16</sup> that <sup>17</sup> we should love one another. Not as <sup>18</sup> Cain, *who* was of that <sup>19</sup> wicked one, <sup>20</sup> and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? <sup>21</sup> because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. <sup>22</sup> Marvel not, my <sup>23</sup> brethren, <sup>24</sup> if the world hate you. <sup>25</sup> We know <sup>26</sup> that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother <sup>27</sup> abideth in death. <sup>28</sup> Whosoever hateth his brother is a <sup>29</sup> murderer: and ye know that <sup>30</sup> no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, <sup>31</sup> because he laid down his life for us: and <sup>32</sup> we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. But <sup>33</sup> whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, <sup>34</sup> and <sup>35</sup> shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* <sup>36</sup> from him, <sup>37</sup> how dwelleth <sup>38</sup> the love of God in him? My little children, <sup>39</sup> let us not love in word, neither in <sup>40</sup> tongue; <sup>41</sup> but in deed, and in <sup>42</sup> truth.
- 19 And hereby we know <sup>43</sup> that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart <sup>44</sup> condemn us, <sup>45</sup> God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, <sup>46</sup> if our heart condemn us not, *then* <sup>47</sup> have we confidence <sup>48</sup> toward God. And <sup>49</sup> whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because <sup>50</sup> we keep his commandments, and <sup>51</sup> do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

<sup>14</sup> Ch. i. 5.  
<sup>15</sup> Ch. ii. 24.  
<sup>16</sup> Ver. 23;  
ch. iv. 7.  
<sup>17</sup> Jude 17.  
<sup>18</sup> Mat. xiii. 29.  
<sup>19</sup> Pa. xxxviii. 20.  
<sup>20</sup> Jo. iii. 7.  
<sup>21</sup> Jo. xv. 18.  
<sup>22</sup> Ver. 2.  
<sup>23</sup> Jo. v. 24.  
<sup>24</sup> Mat. v. 21.  
<sup>25</sup> Jo. viii. 44.  
<sup>26</sup> Gal. v. 20.  
<sup>27</sup> Jo. xv. 13.  
<sup>28</sup> Phil. ii. 17;  
1 Thes. ii. 8.  
<sup>29</sup> Jas. xi. 15.  
<sup>30</sup> Deut. xv. 7.  
<sup>31</sup> Ch. iv. 20.  
<sup>32</sup> Ezek. xxxiii 32.  
<sup>33</sup> 2 Jo. 1;  
3 Jo. 1.  
<sup>34</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 4.  
<sup>35</sup> Ch. v. 14;  
Mat. vii. 7.  
<sup>36</sup> Ch. v. 14;  
Mat. vii. 7.  
<sup>37</sup> Ch. ii. 3.  
<sup>38</sup> Jo. viii. 29.

- <sup>13</sup> the evil one      <sup>14</sup> omit my      <sup>15</sup> omit his brother  
<sup>16</sup> hereby know we love      <sup>17</sup> beholdeth his brother in need  
<sup>18</sup> his heart or compassion      <sup>19</sup> abideth      <sup>20</sup> with the      <sup>21</sup> omit in  
<sup>22</sup> Hereby shall we know      <sup>23</sup> before him, whereinsoever our heart  
<sup>24</sup> insert because      <sup>25</sup> boldness

CONTENTS. The apostle now introduces a new order of thought, governed by the idea of regeneration as the gift of life in Christ to individual man. He first (down to chap. iii. 3) dilates on its glory as a birth of God; as the design of His love; as including both the privileges and the reality of sonship; as awaiting its full dignity at the revelation of Christ; and as inspiring through hope the energy of personal sanctification. Then (to ver. 10) he dwells on the absolute incompatibility between the regenerate life and sin: as the destruction of sin is the object of Christ's atoning manifestation; as sin is inconsistent with abiding in Him; and as sin is the mark of communion with the devil. By an easy transition he passes to the essential connection between regeneration and brotherly love (down to ver. 18): showing that the great message to the regenerate was the injunction to love one another; that this involves the abiding difference between the righteous and the unrighteous, between the world and believers, as proved from Cain downwards; that brotherly love is the mark of regeneration; and, finally, that our love to each other has one supreme standard, the sacrifice of

Christ for us. The apostle winds up the subject (to ver. 22) by showing the practical issue of obedience to this commandment in the confidence which it inspires towards God as the Judge of our hearts and the Hearer of our prayer.

*The glory and dignity of regeneration and adoption, both here and hereafter.*

Ver. 29. If ye know that he is righteous, ye perceive that every one also who doeth righteousness is begotten of him. This sentence is strictly transitional, and therefore of necessity may be interpreted with reference as well to what precedes as to what follows. Connected with the words immediately going before, the pronouns must refer to Christ, from whose righteous nature the regenerate receives his life, his righteous conduct declaring the fact of his new birth. Perhaps it is better to connect them with the whole of the preceding context. 'If, after all that has been said, ye know that God is righteous with whom ye have fellowship, then mark the inference that ye who abide in Him, and are righteous also, must be begotten of Him. You cannot abide in

Him but as ye are born OF Him.' What this new aspect of life in Christ means, the apostle proceeds to show. This verse looks forward to all that follows: it is in some sense the superscription of the remainder of the Epistle, but especially of the chapter we now approach. It may seem remarkable that St. John does not begin a new section with a special address to the 'little children;' but that address has been heard just before, and will be presently repeated. Again, it may appear strange that he should pass from God to Christ and from Christ to God with no mark of the change, using the same personal pronoun throughout. But we must remember that the apostle regards the Father and the Son as one: especially here so soon after the words, 'He that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.' There would indeed be no impropriety in referring both pronouns to Christ: He is the Righteous, and the regenerate may be said to be 'begotten of Him,' just as He Himself spoke of their being 'begotten of water and of the Spirit.' But the hegetting, which is the word used by St. John alone for the infusion of a new life into the soul, is commonly referred to the Father or to God. Lastly, though the 'doing of righteousness' leads off the sentence, the emphasis is not on it, but on the 'begotten of Him.' We shall see in the next chapter that the new birth must be approved in righteous conduct; here the order is inverted, and practical righteousness infers and points to the new birth.

CHAP. III. 1. Behold! as an exclamation, and thus standing alone, occurs only here. It is the tranquil expression of adoring wonder. **What manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us:** this expression also is peculiar. It is the kind of love that is meant, not its greatness, nor its unmerited goodness. The gift of love, nowhere else said to be given, should not be limited in meaning to demonstration or proof or token: it is love itself which is made ours; and as this gift is hereafter bound up with the mission of the Son, being indeed jealously restrained to the atonement as its channel, we must needs think here of that, though unexpressed. 'Herein is love.'

That we should be called children of God; and such we are. 'God' indeed 'so loved the world,' in order that whosoever believeth should not perish, but have everlasting life.' But that purpose of mercy to the world is actually reached in believers; and the design ('that' means 'in order that') in their case can hardly be distinguished from the result. Still, the design is uppermost; and the apostle would have chosen another form of expression if he had meant only the great love shown in our being called sons. Observe, however, that 'sons' is not used, but 'children;' St. Paul uses the former in the same connection, but St. John limits it to One. Note also the manifest distinction between the 'being called' and the 'being' children: good authorities support the addition to the text of 'such we are,' the change of tense simply marking the emphasis of the distinction. Although in the Hebrew idiom 'to be called' and 'to be' mean one and the same thing, a careful examination will show that there is a slight shade of difference. Even in the supreme instance, 'He shall be called the Son of God,' the Incarnate who 'is' eternally the Son is 'called' such with special reference to His relation to us. St. Paul expresses the distinction as adoption and renewal: the latter signifying the

restoration of the Divine image, the former its accompanying privileges of liberty and inheritance. St. John himself illustrates his own meaning in the Gospel: 'To them gave He privilege to become the children of God, who were born not of blood but of God.' But the one cannot exist without the other. The two unite in the Christian sonship, an estate which has a glorious expansion and development in time and in eternity: the development of regeneration being into the perfect image of the Saviour's holiness, that of adoption being into the full enjoyment of the eternal inheritance. To this the apostle now proceeds; but, before doing so, he adds a reflection in harmony with his meditative style. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. So far as this is a parenthesis, it is easily explained. The apostle's mind is still occupied with the unanointed world of the last chapter, and he is about to return to it almost immediately: hence the echo of the past and the anticipation of the future. But it is not strictly a parenthesis. It is the writer's manner to think and write in contrasts: known of God, we are unknown to the world. 'For this cause' gives the more general reason: because our new birth is a mystery of Divine gift and grace, the world, not having this gift, understands it not. 'The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit;' and this secret of regeneration is beyond the search of the unregenerate faculty: life alone understands life. The second 'because' gives a profounder reason for the former reason itself. 'It knew Him not' points to the world's rejection of the Father manifested in His Son as one great act of wilful ignorance at the time of the incarnation, which is still continued. The world's ignorance of God has assumed a new character. 'O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee,' the Lord said on the eve of His final rejection. He added, 'But these have known that Thou didst send Me.' And again He said, 'If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.' The ground of the world's negative inability to understand the children of God and positive hatred of them is its rejection of their Lord.

Ver. 2. Beloved, now are we children of God. This new address is appropriate to the sharers in common of the love of God. The affirmation that follows, repeating the solemn 'children of God,' is most emphatic: 'we possess this sacred privilege, though the world acknowledge us not; nor look we for anything higher; there can be no greater title in earth or heaven.' But it must be remembered that the apostle has just spoken of the coming of our Lord, and of our abiding spiritually in Him till then, lest we be ashamed to see His countenance. As He had this in His mind in writing, we must not forget it in our exposition of what follows.

And it hath not yet been manifested what we shall be: we know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him, since we shall see him even as he is. There is no contrast between the now and the then: the thought naturally passes onward 'to see the end.' Yet there is no aid from experience: 'it hath not been manifested;' that is, what kind of inheritance awaits us has never yet been seen, nor will it be seen until He appear. 'But'—though there is no 'but' in the terse sentence—'we know by certain inference what we know not by actual fact, that,

when He appears, our highest hope will be satisfied in our perfect conformity, in body and soul and spirit, to His image. This we know; for we have the promise of His prayer that we shall be with Him where He is and behold His glory. Since we shall see Him as He is, which is our utmost happiness, we must needs be perfectly like Him, which is our utmost blessedness.' Although, as has been said, St. John does not carefully distinguish between the Father and the Son who reveals Him, we must suppose the vision of Jesus to be here meant. God 'dwelleth in light unapproachable;' Him 'no man hath seen, nor can see.' Hence the beatific vision of God 'face to face' refers to 'the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Of the eternal City it is said: 'The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Lamp thereof.' Note that the emphasis does not rest upon the 'seeing,' but upon the 'being like.' Further, that the final glorification into the image of Christ is never said to be the result of seeing it; but, conversely, likeness to Him, the prerogative of the resurrection, is the preparation for seeing. The transformation which follows from 'reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord' has to do with the sanctification of this life; and will be found in the next verse. Lastly, the likeness here spoken of is left indefinite: it is not equality, it is not identification, it is not absorption. It is not the same word which is used concerning the 'sons of the resurrection' who shall be 'equal to the angels;' it is not the same word which is used concerning Christ's equality with the Father; but it is the same that is used of His taking the 'likeness of man.' And this most profoundly touches its meaning here. He as a servant was 'like as we ARE,' but He is now glorified. We shall be hereafter 'like Him as He is.' Meditation and faith and hope must fill up the thought.

Ver. 3. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. That the 'calling' and the 'being,' the privilege and the reality, may be hereafter eternally one and indistinguishable, the children of God must in this life become like the Son in His purity: the Divine gift will be consummated as a gift when the Son is revealed; but it is consummated in this world not without human co-operation. Here alone St. John calls in the energy of Christian hope: its object is the appearing of Christ, it is 'set on Him;' within the soul it is an incentive: the faith which worketh by love worketh by hope also. The meaning of the word 'purifieth himself' will best be understood by collating it with 'doeth righteousness:' the latter is a complete conformity with the requirements of law, the former is the deliverance from all interior sin; the latter is our finished justification, the former is our entire sanctification. Christ is the standard of both: 'even as He is righteous,' 'even as He is pure.' Neither the one nor the other connotes the idea that He became what He is. 'He is pure,' and that is the same as saying that the Divine holiness is essentially in Him. 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.' That He is called 'pure' and not 'holy' has two reasons. First, it springs from the idea of our 'purifying ourselves.' Secondly, it is more limited than 'holy,' and refers to His human nature as free from the stain that all other human nature has. It is never used of God, but is strictly appropriate to God incar-

nate. Then our purifying ourselves has reference to the gradual attainment of that entire deliverance from the stain of sin—not unchastity or any specific form of it—which is represented in the first chapter as the effect of Christ's blood. The word there used St. Paul adopts to express our own evil: 'Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement.' St. John keeps that for the Divine work, and uses a term which St. Peter and St. James agree with him in adopting for the human act: 'Seeing ye have purified your souls' (1 Pet. i. 22); 'Purify your hearts, ye double-minded' (Jas. iv. 8).

*Regeneration and sinning incompatible: first considered with reference to our union with Christ as manifested to take away sin, and our true knowledge of Him; and then secondly with reference to the utter abolition of our fellowship with the Devil.*

In the former part of the section the thought of the Son of God predominates; in the latter, the thought of the author of evil. The same truth is then referred to the indwelling of the Spirit. And the whole is closed by a summary assertion of the contrariety between the children of God and the children of the devil.

Ver. 4. Every one that doeth sin transgresseth also the law: and sin is transgression of law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away sins: and in him is no sin. The apostle reverts to the proposition that began this second part, that the regenerate as born of God doeth righteousness because God is righteous. In the interval he has dilated on the privileges, present and future, of the state of sonship; ending with the sanctifying effect of the hope of being like Christ at His manifestation in glory. Now, he comes back to the first manifestation of Christ, the effect of which was to render righteousness possible by His atonement and obligatory by His example. But righteousness is something different from purification: to be righteous as He is righteous is more than being pure even as He is pure. Righteousness is that 'keeping of His commandments' (chap. ii. 4) and 'doing His will' (chap. ii. 17) which had been spoken of before. To be pure from sin is to be cleansed from its indwelling; to be righteous is to be conformed to the requirements of law: it is the opposite of 'lawlessness' here, which contradicts express ordinance, and of 'unrighteousness' in chap. v. 17, which is the absence of the internal principle of right. Collating these passages, we learn that sin and violation of law (for 'lawlessness' does not express the full idea) and the principle of wrong within are synonymous and co-extensive terms. Now in the phraseology of Scripture, 'the Lamb of God beareth away the sin of the world' (John i. 29), 'was manifested to put away or annul sin' (Heb. ix. 26). St. John refers to the Baptist's word, and the testimony of all the witnesses, as well known: 'Behold,' said the forerunner; and the exclamation pointed to that Son of God, the Only-begotten who was in the bosom of the Father and was manifested 'to take away'—not to bear it by imputation, though that is implied—sin as unrighteousness: to abolish in His people the very principle of opposition to law and deviation from right. For this is the real connection between the two verses. We shall see presently that St. John has the Antinomian in view, who asserted that the abolition of sin meant the abolition of law. Here,

however, he only declares that the design of the Saviour's manifestation was to take away not law, but transgression of law. The manifestation includes the whole process of Christ upon earth. 'In Him is no sin,' of unrighteousness as defined above, which would have prevented His offering from being that of perfect obedience: this, however, is an undertone supplied by the Epistle to the Romans; St. John's sublime view of the atoning work does not linger upon any vindication of its perfection.

Vers. 5, 6, 7. And in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him. My little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. Here first enters the apostle's high testimony to the sinlessness of the estate of fellowship with Christ: a testimony which recurs again and again, and is finally made one of the three summary points of the whole Epistle. Interpretations of his testimony differ according to the doctrinal views of those who offer them: their classification is needless here, as each will appear in its place. Suffice it to say that St. John in every case explains his own meaning in the context; and we shall find that the leading methods of exposition have each its measure of truth when itself is rightly expounded. In this passage the keynote is the danger of being led astray. St. John addresses his readers by the affectionate term which bespeaks the solemnity of the subject, and warns them against a deception which he regards as even in their case possible. The deceiver is no other than the worker of iniquity who thinks himself released from law, and would and might induce them to follow him. To say 'that we have no sin' is in chap. i. 8 self-deception; to say that we may know Christ and 'continue in sin' (using St. Paul's phrase) is, after being saved, to be deceived by another: in the former case the Christian life has not begun, in the latter it is endangered from without. The deception looks back to the negative assertion of ver. 6, and forward to the positive assertion of ver. 7, and might have occupied its own verse between them. With regard to the former, the whole argument is in that grand negation: 'in Him there is no sin,' the 'is' is the eternal present of that Son of God 'whose glory is that of the Only-begotten, full of grace and truth.' The deceiver might not challenge that: although both in ancient and in modern times a certain germ of unrighteousness has been supposed to have been taken with our fallen nature which the Redeemer expelled from Himself; or it has been deemed necessary to maintain at least the possibility of sinning in the tempted Saviour. We may be sure that neither of these notions ever beclouded the apostle's apprehension of his Lord, the Son of God manifested in flesh. 'Whosoever abideth in' this sinless Being himself sinneth not: 'out of His fulness he receives grace upon grace,' in continuous and sufficient measure to keep him from sin: the abiding is the condition, and it is the explanation of this wonderful word. This is admitted by many, who speak of it as the ideal state of a man in Christ: an ideal it is, just as it is an ideal in Christ; but no more. The word is inappropriate, however true in itself, if it is regarded as distinguished from the realization. The converse follows, as usual with changed terms: 'he

that sinneth,' as the characteristic of his life, and sinneth while professing to believe in Jesus, 'hath not seen Him,' never saw Him nor sees Him now, with that spiritual eye that 'beholds the glory of the Only-begotten, full of grace and truth,'—for it seems evident that St. John is thinking of his own Prologue; nor indeed has ever come to any saving knowledge of Him whatever. So far from abiding in Him, he has never had any spiritual fellowship with Him: the order with St. John is to know, to see, and to abide in the Son of God, who is eternal life. With regard to the latter deception, St. John adopts the positive tone, though a negation is implied: declaring what had been the issue in his mind from the beginning of this section, that the righteousness of Christ is through regeneration imputed to the believer. What then was the delusion to which they were exposed? That, evidently, of supposing that a man might be in a state of righteousness, accepted as 'righteous,' without doing the works of righteousness. Here then the apostle identifies the works of righteousness and the character of righteousness; still in such a way as to make the deeds evidence of the state. He whose practice, inward and outward, in thought and word and spirit, is conformed to the law, and only he, is in the sight of God righteous. There is some difficulty in the final words 'as He is righteous.' We cannot suppose that they are intended to obviate perversion of the Pauline doctrine of our 'being made the righteousness of God in Him,' as if the meaning were that we are as well as are accounted righteous in Jesus, that is, through seeing Him and knowing Him and abiding in Him. The simplest view is that Christ is the standard, as of our holiness and of our filial dignity, so also of our righteousness. 'Even as He is' refers to all the three, and in the most marked manner. How far we may conform to that standard is a question that must be answered with caution: 'as He is' does not refer to a participation in the Lord's perfect righteousness in the most absolute sense; but, on the other hand, the righteousness as a principle of universal obedience to the law is by the whole strain of the present argument supposed to be reflected in us. As our regenerate life is His life in us, so our purification is to be as He is pure, and our righteousness as He is righteous.

Vers. 8, 9. He that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. This passage is, taken altogether, unparalleled in Scripture: as deep in its mystery as it is clear in its expression. As the doing of righteousness was in chap. ii. 29 made the proof of a birth from God, so now the doing of sin, as the characteristic of the life, is made the evidence of an origination, though not a birth, from Satan. St. John here, as almost everywhere, reproduces the teaching of Christ in his own Gospel: 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do' (John viii. 44); where the same 'of' is used. The following 'begotten of God' renders it needless that he should mark the difference between the relation of the regenerate to God and the relation of sinners to the wicked one. Moreover, that difference is more than hinted at in the words ensuing, 'The devil sinneth from the beginning,' which means that all sin had its origin in him, and that, as sin began with him, and came among

men through his temptation, all who commit sin may be said to depend upon him and belong to his family, adopted into it, as it were, though not born again or from below. Wherever there is sin St. John regards it as a work of the devil, using human instruments: 'He sinneth always and everywhere.' The relation to sin, and sin in its relation to him, 'the Son of God'—thus solemnly introduced as the antagonist of Satan—was manifested 'to destroy,' that is, to dissolve or do away or break up as an organized fabric or organizing principle. He came not 'to destroy' the law of righteousness, but to fulfil it; He came to destroy the 'law of sin,' the Satanic law. The accomplishment of both designs runs on in parallel lines: the former is accomplished in him that doeth righteousness; the latter in him who ceases 'to do sin.' Nothing can be more express than the recognition of the personality of the devil; and nothing can be plainer than that the destruction of his works is strictly limited to the abolition of his power over man through the redemption of the cross, and of his power in man through the Spirit of regeneration. St. John keeps the words of Christ in view in every word he here writes. For the rest, he altogether abstains from allusion to the mystery of the origin of evil in Satan, as also from allusion to the final issues in relation to him: his organized works, as a system of anti-righteousness, shall be dissolved—for Christ cannot have appeared in vain—and that is all that is said. In fact, this dark subject is introduced solely to impress the fact that they who are Christ's are by that very fact removed from the sphere and the system of sin.

Ver. 9. *Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin; because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God.* This third view of the contrariety between sin and the estate of regeneration somewhat changes the ground. The Divine Spirit comes in, here called the seed or principle of the Divine life in the soul. He has not been mentioned as yet in the Epistle; but in the second chapter He was the chrisma or unction upon believers; now, by analogy, He is the sperma or seed within them. The abiding of 'the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' within the spirit is perpetual freedom from 'the law of sin and death' (Rom. viii. 3). This central word looks back to the former clause and forward to the latter. He who has in him the indwelling Spirit, 'doeth not sin': he abhors the remainder of it in his nature, he has renounced the works of Satan, he maintains his fellowship with Christ, and his life is governed by righteousness. He may grieve the Spirit, and may fall into sin, as the apostle himself says in chap. ii. 1; but living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit, this he will not do: 'he sinneth not,' and abstinence from the act of sin is his mark and his privilege. When it is added that 'he cannot sin,' we are to understand the word 'cannot' as referring to the moral impossibility of a regenerate soul violating the principle or, as it were, instinct of his new life. The child of God can sin; but the act of sinning, so far as he is concerned, suspends his life; and, as we are told in chap. v. 16, life must be given to him again when he sins not unto death. The three usual methods of relieving the difficulty of the passage have a certain measure of truth in them as applied to the three clauses of this verse. The first certainly gives the Christian ideal, that a regenerate soul

'sinneth not': this, however, is the normal Christian state of one who lives in the Spirit, a realized ideal. The second allows us to say that the regenerate as regenerate sins not, though he may suffer sin: the possible antinomian abuse of this truth does not invalidate it. The only sin St. John considers possible to a pure Christian is the act which he mourns over as soon as committed, which he carries to his Advocate with the Father, and which, being forgiven and washed away, is not followed by the withdrawal of the living Seed, who still preserves in him his better self. The third lays them upon the perfect tenses, 'He that has been and still is in a confirmed regenerate state cannot sin.' Undoubtedly an abiding and consummated regeneration tends to make sin more and more impossible; St. John's perfect regeneration, however, is not such as improving on or perfecting itself, but as the true Divine life of the Son consummating the preliminary spiritual movements that lead to it.

Ver. 10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* Three things are observable here. First, this conclusion of the whole matter shows that the apostle's predominant aim has been to establish clearly the signs and tokens by which the world may be distinguished from the church. The 'manifest' is not to the eye of God alone, though to His supremely and infallibly, but to all who have eyes to see. The 'doing sin' and the 'doing righteousness' are the works of the 'children of God' by regeneration, and 'the children of the devil' by imitation. St. John knows no third class; and the fact that he speaks of the broad characters that stamp the two must throw its influence back upon the interpretation of all that precedes. Secondly, he makes it plain that his chief polemic is against the spurious Christians who strove to reconcile knowledge of Christ with relaxed morality. And, thirdly, he introduces at the close the idea of 'brotherly love,' not as strictly synonymous with righteousness, but yet as in a certain sense the pith and compendium of it. This point is now taken up in what follows.

*The relation of regeneration to brotherly love.*

Ver. 11. *For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.* There is deep emphasis on the word 'message,' which seems here, as in the first utterance concerning the God of light, to introduce a fundamental truth; and it will be observed that this message is in what follows dwelt upon in its contrasts and deductions just as that early message was: it is like a second and a new great announcement. The 'commandment' of chap. ii. 7 is as it were carried higher: it is the fundamental principle of religion 'from the beginning' delivered in successive proclamations. 'That we should love' must have its force: this has been the design of all.

Ver. 12. *Not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* The construction of the first clause should not be mended by any additional words. Cain and Abel were the first historical examples of the difference between regenerate love and unregenerate hate. But the opposite to love is alone here exhibited. The first reason that he

slew his brother is that he was 'of the evil one;' he was not 'of God.' The second is the former in another form: as righteousness is the fruit and test of the new birth, Cain's evil deeds may be said to have been the reason of his murderous violence. Thirdly, in this condensed sentence is included the thought that the righteousness of the children of God evokes for ever the hatred of the unrighteous. The devil is here 'the evil one,' because of the 'evil works' following; and it must be noted that St. John here gives his authoritative interpretation of the Old Testament both as to the devil's relation to Cain and the reason of Cain's hatred.

Vers. 13, 14, 15. Cain becomes 'the world,' and Abel 'you'; the emphasis resting on these two words.

Ver. 14. There is no exhortation in this. Faithful to the thought of the great message, the apostle says: *We know that we have passed out of death into life.* Here the transition is regarded as perfect; and the evidence to ourselves is,—because we love the brethren. Not, 'We are now in the life because we love;' but, 'Because we love we know.' Love is not the cause, but the fruit and evidence of regeneration. *He that loveth not abideth in death:* the love is here general. But in the next verse it is made specific in two ways: first, it is *whosoever hateth his brother*—not to love is to hate; and, secondly, he who hateth is a murderer—with allusion to Cain, and to one behind Cain who 'was a murderer from the beginning.' The remainder of the verse must be regarded as an appeal to the Christian or human instinct: *Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* The abiding is simply an echo of the former: it says nothing about his having had it and lost it, or as to his not retaining it hereafter; but is quite general, as when our Lord said, 'Ye have not My word abiding in you.' The argument is an apostrophe: 'No man who would destroy life can have life in himself.' Mark, finally, that the last words declare 'eternal life' to be the true Divine life of regeneration or fellowship with God, not life as mere continuance in being. There would be no meaning in 'hath not abiding life abiding in him.'

Vers. 16, 17, 18. Nothing in the whole Epistle is more impressive or more affecting than the point of juncture in the following words. Against the hate and the murder is set the supreme example of self-sacrificing love. But behind this there is the transition from the principle that the life of sonship must be a life of charity to the thought of that love which gave us the life in the gift of the Son. We may here resume the words, 'Behold, what manner of love!' Here we have the standard of the charity which we must set before us as our aim.

*Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us.* Not 'the love of God' or 'of the Father' as yet, though that will come; but love in its eternal essence and solitary manifestation, as the last expression and first source of all charity. 'Because He'—there is only One to be thought of here—'sacrificed His life for our advantage:' this expression, occurring only in St. John, is chosen out of many that might have been used in order to combine His pattern in men with our imitation. 'Which thing is true in Him and in us.' And we ought refers not merely to our duty of imitation, but to the obligation resulting

from the fellowship of the love common to Him and to His people. The essence of love is the impartation of self to others; towards those who need it, it is self-sacrifice: in Christ there was the laying down or pledging His soul as an expiatory sacrifice or ransom price; but these last ideas are not expressed here, because the apostle is hastening to our imitation, which must simply be the 'having laid down our individual lives' in will and intention for the brethren, the consummate act of self-devotion being left to the will of God.

Then follow two clauses, one of contrast, the other of exhortation. 'How abideth the love of God, thus shown in Christ, as a proof of regeneration in him who, *having the world's sustenance of life, shutteth his heart against his brother's need*—which he beholds sensibly appealing to him?' The strength of the terms must not be overlooked. So far from giving himself, he will not give his mere earthly goods; and he closes his heart instead of opening it for the sacrifice of life. This betokens the utter absence of the ideal life. But the exhortation is a warning to those who have it. *Let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and truth:*—Christ loved in both, and so must we love. But more than that: the word may be a sound theory, uttered only in idle language, without reality; therefore 'let us not love in tongue only, but in truth.'

#### *The privilege of confidence.*

Vers. 19-22. *Hereby* this looks back, taking up the word 'truth,' according to the well-known habit of the writer in beginning a new theme. But he deepens the meaning of the word: as everywhere, the particle 'of' points to a source, the streams of which flow into the soul. The truth is the life of God viewed as a perfect revelation: 'the truth in us' and 'we are of the truth' are counterparts. *Shall we know* keeps up the running thought of the chapter, the personal evidence of regeneration, but with reference to a future contingency referred to in the next verse. *And shall assure our heart:* shall persuade our doubting heart to give up its doubt, or our accusing heart to appeal to God against its own accusation. *Before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us.* 'Before Him' is not in His future judgment, but in His sight before whose awful presence the Christian always lives, the supreme Lord whose vicegerent conscience is in the soul. The 'heart' as here used is the 'conscience' of St. Paul and St. Peter; but with this difference, that they use a word which makes prominent the knowledge in the moral consciousness (which is conscience), while St. John emphasizes the feeling or the pang of that knowledge. 'Whereinsoever:' a careful consideration (the detail of which cannot here be entered into) will lead to the conclusion that this is the right reading of the word translated 'For if' in our Version; and that there is no stop before it, but that 'we shall assure' runs on to the next verse.

Three things must be remembered before we proceed: first, that the word is 'accuse' and not 'condemn,' for there is an appeal to a higher court; secondly, that the accusation, while more or less limited to defects in brotherly love, has a universal reference, as the last words of ver. 22 show; and, thirdly, that the whole tone of the passage is consolatory from beginning to end. *Because God is greater than our heart:* this is

a most affecting, and unique, expression of the blessed truth that God in the evangelical economy is the Controller of conscience: it is He who really 'persuades' it, though St. John, as his manner is, gives to man's faith the office of God's mercy. **And knoweth all things.** 'And' has an obvious force: He who searcheth the heart knoweth what is the deep, hidden, inextinguishable mind of the heart. St. John heard long before an anticipatory commentary on his own words: 'Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.' Our little heart has some measure of compassion for the suffering brother; His greater heart will not fail to have compassion on us in our sincerity. It is as if the words were chosen to signify this: 'condemn' is 'to know AGAINST myself;' God may be said 'to know FOR us.' Finally, God knoweth His own Gospel of atonement, the mystery of which is that the righteous charge of conscience is righteously silenced. But this passes from pure exposition to the function of the theologian and the preacher.

Ver. 21. **Beloved:** this appeal does not mark a change in the persons spoken of; it is St. John's way of introducing a matter of deep experimental importance. He is approaching the inmost sanctuary of religious privilege. **If our heart condemn us not:** the alternative case is now marked, and it is supposed that, like St. Paul, we 'know nothing against ourselves;' but St. John never introduces an antithesis without somewhat enlarging his meaning; and here the 'not accusing' includes the 'assuring our hearts' as its ground, not without an anticipation of the faith in Jesus Christ, and the testimony of the Spirit in ver. 23. It is essential to remember this.

**We have boldness toward God.** Four times we find this word, which is the outward expression of St. Paul's 'full assurance:' twice in a more general sense as the confidence of hope as to the day of judgment; twice with its more exact meaning of 'free speech' in relation to prayer.

Here the apostle passes from the negative scolding of the conscience to the positive and higher privilege which the children of God, approving their regeneration by works, have in approaching God. Their confident speech in prayer is, however, omitted: the confidence is marked by the result of it. **Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.** In the whole Epistle prayer is mentioned only twice. It is the privilege of sonship; and, passing over everything intermediate (though 'if we confess our sins' underlies all), St. John in both cases leaps to the conclusion which our Lord teaches: 'All things, believing, ye shall receive.' We receive in asking, the present asking is the present receiving: this is the confidence, of which more hereafter. **Because we keep his commandments** in the spirit of filial obedience, and **do the things which are pleasing in his sight** in the spirit of filial zeal. This is a unique combination: the latter clause is also unique, though it is an echo of the Lord's words, 'do always the things that please Him.' In the light of these it is evident that the heart's 'not condemning' may have as its positive side such a testimony of the Father's complacency as makes prayer very bold. Thus we have a very high testimony to the possible character of the communion of the soul with God. But we must remember the 'working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight' (Heb. xiii. 21). The next verse, beginning a new section, will show that this high obedience includes faith in the Lord Jesus, and therefore is not itself the meritorious ground of our acceptance as petitioners. The same is taught by the mystical union that follows, Christ abiding in us, and we in Him: 'Apart from Me ye can do nothing.' But, after all, St. John teaches that the Hearer of prayer has a special complacency in His children's reverent obedience and endeavour to please Him. Wrought in Christ, our works are rewarded by His approval: we give our Lord what He is pleased to seek, and He gives us what we ask.

## CHAPTER III. 23-V. 17.

### *Fellowship in Faith.*

23 **AND** this is his commandment, That we should believe on <sup>a</sup>Jc vi. 29  
the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, <sup>b</sup>Ch. ii. 8.  
24 <sup>c</sup>as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his com- <sup>c</sup>Jo. vi. 56:  
mandments <sup>d</sup>dwell<sup>1</sup>eth in him, <sup>d</sup>and he in him: and hereby we <sup>ch. ii. 27,</sup>  
know that he abideth in us, <sup>iv. 12, 13,</sup>  
<sup>d</sup>by the Spirit which he hath <sup>Jo. xiv. 20,</sup>  
given us. <sup>xvii. 21,</sup>  
<sup>e</sup>Ch. iv. 13:  
<sup>f</sup>Rom. viii. 9:  
<sup>g</sup>Thes. iv. 8.

CHAP. IV. I. Beloved, <sup>f</sup>believe not every spirit, but <sup>g</sup>'try' the <sup>f</sup>Jer. xxix. 8  
spirits whether they are of God: because <sup>g</sup>many false prophets <sup>g</sup>Thes. v. 21;  
2 are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of <sup>Rev. ii. 2,</sup>  
God: <sup>h</sup>'every spirit that confesseth that <sup>h</sup>Jesus Christ is come <sup>Ch. ii. 18:</sup>  
3 in the flesh is of God: <sup>i</sup>'And every spirit that confesseth not <sup>i</sup>Mat. vii. 25:  
<sup>j</sup>Jo. 7.  
<sup>k</sup>1 Cor. xii. 3.  
<sup>l</sup>Jo. 7:  
<sup>m</sup>Jo. i. 14.  
<sup>n</sup>Ch. ii. 22.

<sup>1</sup> abideth

<sup>a</sup> gave us

<sup>b</sup> prove

- that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God:<sup>4</sup> and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should  
 4 come;<sup>5</sup> and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of  
 God, little children, and <sup>6</sup> have overcome them; <sup>7</sup> because  
 5 greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. <sup>8</sup> They  
 are of the world; therefore <sup>9</sup> speak they of the world, and <sup>10</sup> the  
 6 world heareth them. We are of God: <sup>11</sup> he that knoweth God  
 heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby  
 know we the <sup>12</sup> spirit of truth, and <sup>13</sup> the spirit of error.  
 7 Beloved, <sup>14</sup> let us love one another: for love is of God; and  
 every one that loveth is <sup>15</sup> born<sup>6</sup> of God, and knoweth God.  
 8 He that <sup>16</sup> loveth not knoweth not God; for <sup>17</sup> God is love.  
 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us,<sup>7</sup> because  
<sup>18</sup> that God sent<sup>8</sup> his only-begotten Son into the world, that we  
 10 might live through him. Herein is love, <sup>19</sup> not that we loved  
 God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be*<sup>9</sup> <sup>20</sup> the pro-  
 11 pitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought  
 12 also to love one another. <sup>21</sup> No man hath seen God at any  
 time. <sup>22</sup> If we love one another, God dwelleth<sup>10</sup> in us, and <sup>23</sup> his  
 13 love is perfected in us. <sup>24</sup> Hereby know we that we dwell<sup>11</sup> in  
 14 him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And  
<sup>25</sup> we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to*  
 15 *be* the <sup>26</sup> Saviour of the world.<sup>12</sup> <sup>27</sup> Whosoever shall confess<sup>13</sup> that  
 Jesus is the Son of God, <sup>28</sup> God dwelleth<sup>10</sup> in him, and he in  
 16 God. And we have known and believed the love that <sup>29</sup> God  
 hath to us.<sup>7</sup> <sup>30</sup> God is love; and he that dwelleth<sup>10</sup> in love  
 17 <sup>31</sup> dwelleth<sup>10</sup> in God, and God<sup>10</sup> in him. <sup>32</sup> Herein is our love  
 made perfect,<sup>13</sup> <sup>33</sup> that we may have boldness in the day of  
 18 judgment: <sup>34</sup> because as he is, so are we in this world. There  
 is no fear in love; but <sup>35</sup> perfect love casteth out fear: because  
 fear hath torment. He that<sup>14</sup> feareth is not made perfect in  
 19, 20 love. We <sup>36</sup> love him,<sup>15</sup> because he first loved us. If a  
<sup>37</sup> man say, I love God, and <sup>38</sup> hateth his brother, he is a liar: for  
 he <sup>39</sup> that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can  
 he love God<sup>16</sup> <sup>40</sup> whom he hath not seen?  
 21 And <sup>41</sup> this commandment have we from him, <sup>42</sup> That he who  
 loveth God love his brother also. CHAP. V. 1. <sup>43</sup> Whosoever  
 believeth that Jesus is the Christ is <sup>44</sup> born<sup>17</sup> of God: and every  
 one that loveth him that begat loveth <sup>45</sup> him also that is begotten  
 2 of him. <sup>46</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God,

<sup>4</sup> which confesseth not Jesus. *Some authorities read annulleth* Jesus

<sup>5</sup> cometh <sup>6</sup> begotten <sup>7</sup> in us <sup>8</sup> hath sent

<sup>9</sup> as <sup>10</sup> abideth <sup>11</sup> abide

<sup>12</sup> and we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son  
 as the Saviour of the world

<sup>13</sup> love made perfect with us <sup>14</sup> hath punishment, and he that

<sup>15</sup> omit him <sup>16</sup> *Some authorities read cannot love God* <sup>17</sup> begotten

<sup>22</sup> Thes. ii. 3

<sup>23</sup> Ch. ii. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Rom. viii.

<sup>25</sup> Jo. xii.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Cor.

<sup>27</sup> Jo. viii. 23.

<sup>28</sup> Jo. iii. 31.

<sup>29</sup> Jo. xv. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Jo. viii. 47.

<sup>31</sup> Jo. xiv. 17.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Ch. iii. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Ch. ii. 29.

<sup>35</sup> Ch. iii. 10.

<sup>36</sup> Ver. 16.

<sup>37</sup> Jo. iii. 16;

<sup>38</sup> ver. 20;

<sup>39</sup> ch. v. 11.

<sup>40</sup> Rom. v. 8,

<sup>41</sup> 10; ver. 29.

<sup>42</sup> Ch. ii. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Ver. 20.

<sup>44</sup> Ch. iii. 11.

<sup>45</sup> Ch. ii. 5;

<sup>46</sup> ver. 17, 18.

<sup>47</sup> Ch. iv. 13.

<sup>48</sup> Ch. i. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Jo. iii. 17.

<sup>50</sup> iv. 42.

<sup>51</sup> Ch. ii. 23;

<sup>52</sup> Rom. x. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Ch. v. 5.

<sup>54</sup> 1 Th. iii. 24.

<sup>55</sup> Ver. 9.

<sup>56</sup> Ver. 8.

<sup>57</sup> Ch. iii. 24.

<sup>58</sup> Ver. 12;

<sup>59</sup> ch. ii. 5.

<sup>60</sup> Ch. ii. 28.

<sup>61</sup> Ch. iii. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Jo. iii. 18;

<sup>63</sup> Rom. viii. 13.

<sup>64</sup> Ver. 10.

<sup>65</sup> Ch. i. 6.

<sup>66</sup> Ch. ii. 9, 11.

<sup>67</sup> Ch. iii. 17.

<sup>68</sup> Jo. i. 18.

<sup>69</sup> Gal. vi. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Ver. 7.

<sup>71</sup> Jo. i. 12;

<sup>72</sup> ch. ii. 22.

<sup>73</sup> Ver. 4, 18.

<sup>74</sup> Jo. viii. 44.

<sup>75</sup> Ch. ii. 5.

- 3 when <sup>1</sup>we love God, and keep <sup>18</sup>his commandments. For <sup>1</sup>Jo. i. 12.  
<sup>2</sup>this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and <sup>2</sup>Jo. 6;  
 4 his <sup>3</sup>commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born <sup>17</sup><sup>2</sup>Jo. xiv. 19.  
 of God overcometh the world: and this is the <sup>4</sup>victory that <sup>4</sup>Jo. xvi. 33.  
 5 overcometh <sup>19</sup>the world, <sup>4</sup>even our faith. Who is he that over- <sup>4</sup>Eph. vi. 16.  
 cometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son  
 of God?  
 6 <sup>4</sup>This is he that came by water and blood, <sup>even</sup> Jesus Christ; <sup>4</sup>Jo. xix. 34.  
 not by water only, but by water and blood.<sup>20</sup> And <sup>1</sup>it is the <sup>1</sup>Jo. xv. 26.  
 7 Spirit that beareth witness, <sup>21</sup>because the Spirit is <sup>21</sup>truth. For <sup>21</sup>Jo. xiv. 17.  
 there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the  
 8 Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And  
 there are three that bear witness in earth,<sup>22</sup> the spirit, and <sup>22</sup>the <sup>22</sup>Ver. 6.  
 9 water, and the blood: and these <sup>23</sup>three agree in one. <sup>1</sup>If we <sup>1</sup>Jo. v. 34, 36.  
 receive the witness of men, the <sup>2</sup>witness of God is greater: for <sup>2</sup>Ver. 6.  
 this is the witness of God which <sup>24</sup><sup>1</sup>he hath testified of <sup>25</sup>his <sup>2</sup>Mat. iii. 17.  
 10 Son. He that believeth on the Son of God <sup>2</sup>hath the witness <sup>2</sup>Rom. viii. 16;  
 in himself: <sup>26</sup>he that believeth not God hath <sup>1</sup>made him a liar; <sup>1</sup>Ch. i. 10.  
<sup>1</sup>because he believeth not the record that God gave of <sup>27</sup>his <sup>1</sup>Jo. v. 38.  
 11 Son. And this is the record,<sup>28</sup> that God hath given to us <sup>28</sup>  
 12 eternal life, and <sup>29</sup>this life is in his Son. <sup>1</sup>He that hath the Son <sup>29</sup>Jo. i. 4.  
 hath life; <sup>30</sup>and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.<sup>30</sup> <sup>29</sup>Jo. iii. 16.  
 13 <sup>31</sup>These things have I written unto you <sup>31</sup>that believe on the <sup>31</sup>Jo. xx. 31.  
 name of the Son of God,<sup>31</sup> that ye may know that ye have <sup>31</sup>Jo. i. 12.  
 eternal life, and that ye may <sup>32</sup>believe on the name of the Son  
 of God.  
 14 And this is <sup>32</sup>the confidence <sup>32</sup>that we have in him,<sup>32</sup> that, <sup>32</sup>Ch. iii. 22.  
 if <sup>33</sup>we ask any thing <sup>33</sup>according to his will, he heareth us. <sup>33</sup>Ch. iii. 22.  
 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know <sup>33</sup>Rom. viii. 27.  
 16 that we <sup>34</sup>have the petitions that we desired <sup>35</sup>of him. If any <sup>34</sup>Ch. iii. 22.  
 man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, <sup>35</sup>he shall <sup>35</sup>Jas. v. 15.  
 ask, and he <sup>36</sup>shall give him life for them that sin not unto  
 death. <sup>36</sup>There is a sin unto death: <sup>37</sup>I do not say that he shall <sup>36</sup>Mat. xii. 31.  
 17 pray for it.<sup>37</sup> All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not <sup>36</sup>Mk. iii.  
 unto death. <sup>37</sup>Lu. xii. 10;  
<sup>37</sup>Heb. vi. 4-6.  
<sup>37</sup>Jer. vii. 6.

<sup>18</sup> do<sup>19</sup> hath overcome<sup>20</sup> not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood<sup>21</sup> insert the<sup>22</sup> omit from in heaven to in earth<sup>23</sup> the<sup>24</sup> in that<sup>25</sup> borne witness concerning<sup>26</sup> within him<sup>27</sup> because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning<sup>28</sup> And the witness is this<sup>29</sup> gave unto us<sup>30</sup> the life<sup>31</sup> omit that believe on the name of the Son of God<sup>32</sup> unto you that<sup>33</sup> boldness <sup>34</sup>toward him<sup>35</sup> have asked<sup>36</sup> God<sup>37</sup> not of that do I say that he should make request

CONTENTS. The ruling idea of the third part is Faith in the Spirit's testimony concerning the Son of God incarnate. The close of chap. iii. introduces the theme by the first explicit mention of faith

and the Spirit. In chap. iv. 1-6 the two opposite confessions, resulting from two opposite hearings of two opposite classes of spirits, are dwelt upon, with the exhortation to apply the test referred to

in the second chapter. The remainder of chap. iv. is occupied with the relation between the love of God manifested in the atonement and its perfect reflection in those who received the evangelical witness of that love: the confession of the Son of God being still the leading principle. Down to chap. v. 5 we have the victory of faith in Jesus as the only source of that love to God in the strength of which we can love our brethren and overcome the world: these two being strictly interwoven. From ver. 6 to ver. 13, the apostle gives his full and final teaching as to the Spirit's witness to the manifested Christ, and the nature of that witness. The remainder, from ver. 14 to ver. 17, is occupied with the confidence in prayer inspired by this faith.

*Transition.*

**Ver. 23. And this is his commandment:** the one commandment which, as it contains all others, is especially the unity of faith and love. In this Epistle the sum of faith is in the name of Jesus, and the sum of duty is love. It is the Father's will that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ: the name stands here for the whole person and work of Christ, not without reference to the confession that follows; and the peculiarity of the phrase here, 'believe the name' with the dative, connotes strongly the ethical feeling of trust. And love one another even as he, Christ, gave us commandment. Out of the Father's command to believe sprang the commandment of Jesus to love. 'And' implies the energy of faith producing love; and 'even as' is more than 'according to His commandment,' signifying the kind of love that He exemplified and prescribed. This foundation of faith must be remembered throughout the Epistle.

**Ver. 24. And he that keepeth his commandments**—the commandments are plural again, and the obedience is individual—*abideth in him, and he in him.* The mutual indwelling is here and in chap. iv. 12 introduced: in the earlier portion it was 'we in him' chiefly, as it will be again at the close. But these two passages—one individual and the other collective, one said of Christ and the other of God—in the heart of the Epistle are the perfect expression of its keynote. And hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us: 'hereby' refers to the obedience; according to the Lord's own word, who promised, John xiv. 20-24, to manifest Himself to him, and dwell with him, who has His commandments and keepeth them. Having that passage in mind, the apostle singles out the indwelling of Christ and makes that supreme. But there is higher testimony than the works, that of the Holy Ghost whose direct assurance is added. He who 'gave' the commandment 'gave' the Spirit of obedience, whose indwelling presence is the indwelling of Christ and the perfect assurance of it.

*Episode on the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error; the test to be applied; and the sure application of it.*

**CHAP. IV. 1. Beloved** introduces an affectionate interlude, in which the apostle passes from the personal assurance of fellowship with God given by the Holy Ghost, to the assurance given by the same Spirit concerning the doctrine

on the belief of which that assurance is based. Believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. The 'spirits' and the 'false prophets' are one. They are 'antichrists' in chap. ii.; but the predominant reference to the Holy Ghost in this section gives occasion for the use of these two terms: 'spirits' as professing to be His organs, and 'false prophets' as professing to be moved by Him. As teachers they are not to be believed until tested: hence we are not to speak here of the gift of 'discerning spirits' (1 Cor. xii. 10), but of the universal duty incumbent on every Christian, of trying the doctrine brought concerning the Son of God. Many men professing to be inspired had gone out—not as in chap. ii. from the church—from the invisible realm, and from the one spirit of the lie into the world: not from the church into the world, but from the world into the church.

**Vers. 2, 3. Hereby ye know the Spirit of God:** that is, the voice of the one Holy Ghost in the various 'spirits' proclaiming a confession. The personal faith must have its outward avowal; every teacher or 'spirit' must teach on the basis of a confession of Jesus. In chap. ii. the test of antichrist was the refusal to believe that 'Jesus was the Christ' or 'the Father and the Son': the divinity and Messiahship of our Lord. Here the true faith is that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: not into the world simply, not simply into the flesh, which might connote its fallen condition, but 'in flesh,' that is, in a true humanity He appeared who existed before as the Son of God, and so 'came' that it may be said as of an abiding presence, He 'is come.' The true reading of the antithesis, every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God, is most forcible in its simplicity: the name of Jesus is enough, for the confession of a man as come from God means nothing. With the next words, this is that of antichrist, that 'matter' or that 'spirit' of antichrist refers back to chap. ii.; though ye have heard indicates a well-known doctrine. A remarkable reading of the Vulgate, 'which annulleth' or 'dissolveth Jesus,' points to the severance of Jesus from the Christ, a Gnostic notion, or the separation of Jesus into two persons, a Nestorian error; but this reading is not confirmed. It can hardly be denied, however, that this confession alluded to the Docetic heresy which denied the reality of the Lord's human nature; though that was only a temporary form of opposition to an eternal truth, the sum and standard of all truth.

**Vers. 4, 5, 6.** The apostle makes some strong assertions which have for their object to link a sound confession with a true religion. First, with reference to his Christian hearers, he connects their personal victory over the world, through the strength of Him who is greater than he that is in the world,—that is, its prince, the spirit who sent the antichrists,—with their sound faith. The indwelling God of chap. iii. 24 had given them the victory over all seducers, though they needed still to be warned. Taking up the term 'world,' he goes on to show that the same antichristian error which had come into the world is really of the world: doctrines from below which take their fashion from the earthly kingdom of darkness, breathe the spirit of fleshly

reasoning, and taught by men whom the world **heareth**, because it loves its own. The unregenerate have no sympathy with the truth; they only who are born of God can know Him, and understand the things concerning Him. But he that is of God **heareth us**: the apostles and teachers of the faith are chiefly meant; but the same is true of all who witness a good confession. By this we know, or distinguish, the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error, or the deceiving spirit. At the outset St. John spoke of the test of the confession of Jesus; now at the close the test is the religious and irreligious character of the teaching. He conjoins himself with his readers. Finally, we here have the answer to every argument against the universality of the testing privilege and duty: every Christian can discern between the true and the false confession of the Incarnate Son; and every Christian has the internal qualification of the indwelling Spirit that separates from the world.

*The love which this Faith embraces and knows: in its origin; its supreme manifestation; its perfect reflection in us; the whole section being begun, continued, and ended in this.*

Vers. 7, 8. Two sentences which exhibit the 'commandment' of brotherly love in a stronger light than hitherto shed upon it. The former is positive. Love is of God: love absolutely and in itself, in its own nature and apart from any object, is from the very being of God. This 'out of' is said of nothing but love and regeneration: here the loving in the present is evidence of a birth in the past that still continues; and the present knoweth God is the same love discerning and delighting in its source. The latter is negative, and, as usual, still strengthens the thought. All love in man, all love everywhere, is from God; but, more than that, God is love: a word that had never before been spoken since revelation began. It closes and consummates the Biblical testimony concerning God as knowable to man: it must be remembered that it is connected with **he that loveth not knoweth not**—literally, 'never has come to the knowledge of'—God. Observe that it is not said 'love is God,' any more than it was said 'light is God.' God is light in His revealing and diffusive holiness; God is love in His diffusive self-impartment: both, however, in His relation to His creatures. His eternal essence is unfathomable and behind both. Love is the bond of His perfections as revealed to the created universe. It is also the bond of the intercommunion of the Three Persons in the adorable Trinity; and in this sense His absolute nature; but this goes beyond our exposition here.

Vers. 9, 10, 11. God is love; and in this was the love of God manifested in us: it had its one supreme expression 'in our case,' 'in us' as its sphere. This explains what follows, in the perfect. That God hath sent as the permanent token of His love his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Here only is the 'Only-begotten' in the Epistle. He was sent as the eternal Son, the mystery of whose filial relation is expressed by this word: introduced here partly to indicate the greatness of the love by the measure of the gift, partly to connect our life with His. In the Gospel the Only-begotten is given as a proof of love to the world; but the life is given to those only who believe.

Here the emphasis is on 'in us;' but the life must here include, on account of the next verse, deliverance from condemnation as well as the eternal life itself: hence not 'in Him,' but 'through Him.' The apostle then goes back from the manifestation to the love itself. Herein is love: its origination is not in or through the mission, but in God Himself. Our response is in his thought throughout; but it is only as response: 'love is of God.' Not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent—going back again to the past—his Son as the propitiation for our sins: thus impressively does St. John show what he meant by 'not that we loved.' He provided and sent what not our love but our sins required. Not 'to be' a propitiation; but 'He sent His Son,' whose mission dating from heaven was atonement. Beloved—always 'beloved' in this connection,—since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another: not 'so to love,' as if the example prescribed the kind of love; but we are bound by the nature of the love common to Him and to us: it has been manifested 'in us' to that end.

Ver. 12. This verse contains three clauses, which are severally dilated on, though in a rather different order, in the seven verses which follow: the invisibility of God as the object of love; His invisible indwelling nevertheless; and the perfect operation of His love in our hearts as the representative of His invisible self.

Vers. 13-16. Remembering that this whole section has to do with faith in Jesus as the root of brotherly love, we need not be surprised that the apostle goes back to the introductory words of it. Those words, however, are amplified, as usual: the gift of the Spirit is the seal and assurance that we abide in him and he in us: our being in Him and His being in us are, so to speak, convertible terms; the Holy Ghost being the common term, common to Him and us. God the invisible is seen and known only by the Spirit's indwelling. But He abides in us as the seal of a great truth confessed. Hence the apostle, before proceeding, pays his homage again to that truth, his own and his fellow-apostle's: And we have beheld—in His Son the Invisible God 'whom no man hath beheld at any time,'—and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son, the Saviour of the world: the apostolic beholding is followed by their special witness; and this, again, by the confession of the whole Church. Here St. John returns back to the Father and the Son of the earlier chapters, and adds what occurs only here as a confession of faith that Jesus is the Saviour of the world: as in chap. ii. 3, so here it is remarkable as introduced in the midst of a special reference to the benefit of believers.

Whoever has confessed that Jesus is the Son of God—this shows that the leading theme of ver. 2 is still in the mind of the apostle,—God abideth in him, and he in God: the indwelling is individual as well as mutual, and answers to the 'no man hath seen' and every man who 'keepeth His commandments abideth in Him and He in him' (chap. iii. 24); the commandments were faith in Jesus or confession of Him and love: the former is in this verse connected with the abiding, in the next verse the latter. But, instead of proceeding immediately to the love of our obedience, St. John once more—as if never weary of it—pays his tribute to the love of redemption.

And we have known and believed: this of all believers, answering to 'And we have beheld and bear witness' of the apostles. At the basis of the apostolical announcement are beholding and bearing testimony: at the basis of the Church's confession—for the apostle joins the Church in confessing what he had witnessed to the Church—are knowing and believing, which in its proper order is, according to John vi. 69, believing and knowing: abiding faith confirmed in abiding experience. Once more God is love: the sublimity of this repetition is inexpressible; and the clause that follows is answerable. In the former case, believers received 'out of' His fulness love; now the believer that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. The triple repetition of 'abideth' speaks for itself: the love which God hath in us must have its full meaning; and the sentence as it stands carries the privilege of fellowship with God to its highest point; there is nothing beyond it, scarcely anything equal to it, in all revelation. It leads at once to the word perfection.

Vers. 17-19. Here enters the second point of ver. 12: 'His love is perfected in us.' The 'His' is omitted; *herein is love made perfect with us*, that is, in all that concerns our estate. Love is once more absolute and without object specified. 'Herein,' in our living and moving and having our being permanently in love, and in God, is our love 'made perfect': before we had 'perfected,' now 'made perfect,' afterwards 'perfect.' This is the design of the indwelling Spirit, in order that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: the same 'in order that' and the same 'confidence' as in chap. ii. 29, but 'His appearing' is now 'the day of judgment.' *Because as he is, even so are we in this world*: this also goes back to chap. ii. 29, and its sequel: from the last day the apostle returns to our life 'in this world,' not without emphasis on the wonder that we should be made through faith in Him working by love pure 'AS HE IS,' and righteous 'AS HE IS,' even in the midst of this present evil world. The next words are doubly linked with the preceding: first, they are the negative perfection of which being like Christ is the positive; and secondly, they refer to the great essential for confidence in the final day.

*There is no fear in love*: this is true of the nature of love generally. But—admitting that 'the heart may accuse,' even lovers of God—perfect love casteth out fear. This is the only instance of 'perfect love,' without any qualification or abatement. And the apostle's condensed argument shows that he is speaking of its present triumph in the economy of grace. *Because fear hath punishment*: that pain of which it is said that 'these shall go away into everlasting punishment' is already inherent in fear; and he that feareth hath not been made perfect in love: then he may 'in this world' be 'as He is' in holiness, and therefore without the least lingering vestige of fear to meet Him. Observe the change of phrase: as love is perfected in man, so he is perfected in love. The Holy Ghost, 'working by love,' brings the believer—'we have known and believed,' chap. iv. 16—to that permanent abode in the atmosphere of love to God and man from which fear is excluded because sin, the cause of fear, is excluded. Going back to 'in this world,' and remembering that 'boldness in the day of

judgment' means confidence in the expectation of His appearing (chap. ii. 29), and further that it is not said of the heavenly city, 'there shall be no more sin,' as if only there sin is absent, we are bound to understand St. John's last testimony on this subject—for he uses the word no more—in its highest meaning.

Ver. 19. *We love because he first loved us*. Looking back, this sublimely shows the possibility that our love—here once more absolute or without object, our 'perfect love'—may become supreme: the argument of 'because' is almost equal to 'even as,' which is, however, not said. But the words look forward to the next verse, and that again looks back to the first of the three points in ver. 12, which has been in suspense during the interim.

Ver. 20. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*. All the words here point, as we have seen before, to an utterly spurious Christianity, which knows nothing of the revelation of the unseen God in His Son: the first phrase and the last are used only of such false religion. The 'hating' of chap. ii. 9 became 'not loving' in chap. iii. 10; they are united as synonymous in this passage alone.

For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. There are two condensed arguments here. First, recalling ver. 10, that the invisible God perfects His love in us by the Spirit through our brotherly love, it is simply a strong repetition: the invisible Fountain of love abides in us, and has its perfect operation in our love to its visible objects, embracing all our fellow-regenerate (chap. v. 1). But we have always noted that St. John's repetitions include something more, and here something is added which the former passage did not contain; that is, the inverted argument from the easier demonstration of love to objects before our eyes. Some copies read, 'How can he?' which would be only a more vivid form of the argument: not 'how or in what way can he love the unseen save as He is represented by visible objects?' for it is the glory of religion that God can be loved in Himself; but 'it may be merely inferred that he who, supposed to be regenerate, loves not the first and most obvious claimants of his charity, cannot be a lover of the supreme source of all love.' He proves himself to be unregenerate. The more general truth that practical charity is in no case absolutely dependent upon seeing its object is not involved here, nor must the apostle's simple apostrophe be embarrassed by the consideration of it.

#### *The victory of Faith in Jesus as the victory of Love.*

Ver. 21. *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also*. The three points of chap. iii. 12 having been discussed, a new subject begins. That is the precept of love given by 'Him,' that is, Christ, whose name needs not to be mentioned, as the second part of the theme of chap. iii. 23: 'And thy neighbour as thyself' is the primitive commandment; but the next verse answers the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' as our Lord does, by inverting the order.

CHAP. V. 1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God, and whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him also that is*

**begotten of him.** Faith in Jesus as the Christ has here the only meaning that St. John ever gives it: that divinely wrought trust in the work as well as the person of Jesus which the Spirit produces, though He does not say, and which the Spirit seals, which He does say (chap. iii. 25). The exact link between faith and regeneration is untouched. In both members of the sentence our brother is meant. The argument is, like that of chap. iv. 20, derived from the general nature of the case; but it is carried to the highest region, and here has the emphasis. It may be true generally, but it must be true here.

Ver. 2. This is the converse of chap. iv. 20, and as such stands here alone: we know that we love God by the token that we love the brethren; but we also know that we love God's children by the very fact of our loving Him. The two cannot be separated. Still, remembering that the commandment is now uppermost, we must closely unite when we love God and do his commandments. The last words introduce the customary enlargement upon ver. 1, which is otherwise only repeated. We love all that are begotten of Him because we love Him: the consciousness of loving God is guarantee that we have in us all that brotherly love means; especially as that love feels in itself the energy of all obedience.

Ver. 3. For, the love of God is this—it is in us for this end,—that we should keep his commandments. Here, as constantly, some truths are suppressed. The apostle had seemed to assert that the love of brethren seen was easier than the love of God unseen. But there are some who might and who did pervert that principle: having a speculative, transcendent, emotional love of God, they might and they did undervalue the security, the depth, the universality of the self-renouncing devotion to others that brotherly love as the commandment of Christ includes. But he whose love of God is a love of universal obedience, knows that such brotherly love, as the 'fulfilment of the law,' is in itself difficult: it is indeed the 'hard' part of the love of God. And his commandments are not grievous is the reply to every suggestion of the failing heart: this is an axiomatic saying, standing here alone; of deep importance and boundless application. The laws of God are reasonable, and in harmony with the purest ethical principles of reason, even the severest of them. But apart from what follows, they are intolerable.

Vers. 4, 5. For whosoever is begotten of God—a new form of words, the 'we' of the previous verse with 'that which is born of the Spirit' (John iii. 6)—overcometh the world: is victorious over the kingdom of evil generally, and particularly that sphere of the natural man and of self in the atmosphere of which the commandment of brotherly love weighs heavily. And this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. Not love here, for faith is the leading thought: faith is the victory, its strength for that habitual overcoming of every obstacle to obedience which was in it as an original germ, and of the final attainment of which it is the pledge. The past and the present and the future are really here; but the stress is on the present. How it conquers, not in an ideal but a present and perfect victory, then follows in a sentence which takes a negative form but includes the positive reason. And who is he that overcometh the world, but—for no other can,

'he and only he'—he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? He who in union with 'the Son of God'—the name that always opposes Him to the world and its prince,—partakes His victory: 'I have overcome the world' (John xvi. 33). So much for the words: theology both dogmatic and practical takes them up, and finds in them its richest material. Observe that the discussion of our external relation ends here: the apostle's warning against love of the world, and his encouragement of opposition to the errors in the world, closes with finished and abiding victory over it.

*The Divine Testimony to Jesus Christ as the ground of faith: this is first viewed objectively, as a witness in history; then subjectively, as a witness enjoyed by the believer.*

Ver. 6. This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. It must be remembered in the exposition of this difficult passage, first, that it is governed by the idea of testimony, human and Divine, that 'Jesus is the Christ' (ver. 1), and 'that Jesus is the Son of God' (ver. 5); secondly, that the very terms used imply a symbolical meaning underlying the literal, for we cannot understand 'water' and 'blood' as pointing to merely historical facts; thirdly, that the apostle has in view the errors of his own time concerning the manifestation of Jesus in the flesh. 'This Person Jesus Christ' who 'came' not into the world, but into His Messianic office as the Christ, 'by water and blood.' There are two leading interpretations of those words. One of them understands by the 'water' the baptismal institute of John, which inaugurated Jesus into His Christly office, and by the 'blood' the passion and death. The other regards St. John as fixing his thought upon the mysterious 'sign' that he beheld after the Saviour's death: when the piercing of His side was followed by the double stream of blood and of water—the blood of expiation and the water of life—which flowed together as the symbol of one eternal life from the living death of the sacrifice. The latter we hold to as the true meaning. But let us do justice to the former: it runs thus.

The error of antichrist concerning the incarnation of the Son of God has been already condemned. The witness borne to this Son of God as the perfected Christ or Saviour is now adduced; and the two great events are made prominent which rounded the Messianic history: the Baptism with its testimony to the Son of God, and the atoning death with its testimony. Jesus came 'by' them as the accompanying media through which He discharged His ministry and the accompanying seals which authenticated Him: these being first viewed as one, giving unity to the design of His coming into His office. St. John might have said, 'He came in the baptism which to Him was the sealing of the Spirit, and in the atonement which finished the work to which He was sealed,' but he is using symbols, and makes the word 'water' stand for the whole transaction at the Jordan, and 'blood' for the whole mystery of the passion and cross. The readers of this Epistle are supposed to have the Fourth Gospel in their hands, and the doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews in their minds: moreover, Ephesian

Christians knew well the relation of John's baptism to the baptism of Jesus (Acts xix.). 'Not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood.' The 'by' now becomes 'in,' to mark more impressively the essential connection between the Messiahship of Jesus and that which the water and the blood signified.

Now let us turn to the other interpretation. We mark that the two elements are separated, and each has the article: noting not merely the sacredness of the well-known symbols, but their distinction and relations. No intelligent reader could fail to think of what the writer had certainly had in his thoughts, the mysterious and miraculous effusion of blood and water when the Saviour's side was pierced. That signified, not the fact of the real humanity or real death of the Redeemer, but that the fountain was now opened for the removal of guilt by the blood, and of death by the Spirit, of the crucified; baptism and the Lord's Supper being the abiding emblems and pledges of these gifts. But St. John leaves these reflections to his readers and to us. He simply declares that Jesus came 'not by water only,' but 'in the water and in the blood': not only was there one stream of life flowing from His death for us, but life under two essential aspects. Eternal life is the removal of the death of condemnation: that is symbolized by the 'blood'; for it is the blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin. Eternal life is also the 'well of water springing up within the soul unto everlasting life,' of which the Saviour spoke to the Samaritan woman (John iv.): in other words, it is the life of Christ Himself imparted, and of that the water is the symbol. It is usual to say that the 'water' symbolizes the washing from sin, and the 'blood' the sprinkling from guilt. But since the death of Christ is the only washing both from sin and from guilt is by blood. The water signifies here the very well-spring of eternal life itself in Christ opened up within the soul.

The advocates of the other interpretation thus expound 'not by water only.' John the Baptist bore witness to himself as baptizing 'only with water,' and to Christ as 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' The Redeemer was not only authenticated in His baptism as the Son of God, the revealer of the Father and His will, but as the Lamb of God who should die for mankind: not the one without the other. He came at the Jordan that He might go on to Calvary. The apostle silently protests against those in his own day who united the Christ to Jesus in His baptism, but separated them at the cross; and He openly protests against all who limit our own baptism into Christ to mere discipleship of obedience, and forget that He is our master only because as an atonement 'He died and revived that He might be Lord of the dead and the living.'

'And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth.' Hitherto the water and the blood have not been termed witnesses: they were facts themselves witnessed by men. But the Supreme Witness of Jesus is the Holy Ghost, to whom the Saviour Himself bore witness as 'the Spirit of the truth.' St. John singles out His testimony as the only and abiding one, with express reference to the Lord's words: 'not we, the Baptist, the apostles, but the Spirit.' And the tense is changed: the Son of God 'came'

once in the great ministry of which water and blood were the symbols; but in the Gospels, and in the preached word, and in the sacraments, the Holy Ghost gives abiding testimony.

Vers. 7, 8. For there are three who bear witness [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth], the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one. The bracketed words, if genuine, would, in their present position, be unconnected with the context, making a sudden ascent to the testimony borne by the 'Three Persons of the Trinity in heaven or from heaven to the Incarnate Son: by the Father generally and at the great crisis of the history of the Redeemer, by the Son to Himself in His exalted estate, and by the Holy Spirit in the administration of redemption. These heavenly Witnesses are but one; and to Them 'the testimony of God' in ver. 9 refers. Then the three witnesses on earth must be supposed to be, in relation to that other testimony, 'the witness of men:' testifying to the perfected Gospel of the ascended Lord under the influence of the Spirit, to the baptism of our Lord and our baptism, to the finished atonement and the sacramental commemoration of it. This introduces a very violent abruptness into the apostle's strain. Without these words the sense runs smoothly on. The Spirit now takes precedence as being still the one and only witness, who bears the testimony throughout revelation and in the history of the Christian Church. But He bears His witness to Christ now and continuously through the records which gather round His baptism 'in water' and His baptism 'in blood'; and through the effects of the faith in His name as the dispenser of pardon and renewal. 'And these three agree in one:' they had been made three, and two of them personified as witnesses, because of the supreme importance of the anointing of the human nature of Christ by the Holy Ghost and of the pouring out of His blood. If there is any allusion to the 'two or three witnesses' by which truth must be established, that allusion is very faint. The apostle hastens to say that the threefold witness converges to one truth, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, faith in whom overcomes the world.

Ver. 9. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son. The 'three witnesses' suggested the perfection of merely human testimony. The apostle supposes as a general truth that we receive the testimony of credible witnesses. But he does not set the Divine witness over against the human: the human and the Divine concur, the divine being 'greater' as accompanying and rendering infallible the human witness to the Saviour's Messiahship and salvation. For, the entire series of attestations borne in the Old Testament and in the New by evangelists and apostles is no other than one grand attestation of God Himself, who witnesseth one thing only, that all His witness by man's agency is concerning His Son. But the Divine testimony is given through the Spirit; 'we are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost.' 'Concerning His Son' is sublimely general. What the witness is we find afterwards: here it is declared that all the objective testimony of revela-

tion has but one object, the establishment of the claim of the Son of God to human faith.

Ver. 10. **He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.** The testimony has become subjective: the 'three agree in one' within the believer's consciousness. He has—for we must anticipate ver. 11—eternal life within him: the gift of the Spirit of life received by Christ for us at His baptism, the forgiveness of sin or release from the condemnation of death through His blood, and the Holy Ghost effecting and assuring both. Faith is followed by full assurance; but the assurance is here the possession of life itself.

**But he that believeth not God hath made him a liar: because he hath not believed the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son.** He is not only without the internal testimony, but he has also rejected the external testimony, which has been given to one who hears the Gospel record so abundantly that he is without excuse. Once before St. John had spoken of making God a liar: he who denies that he has sinned is a liar himself, and contradicts the express testimonies of God. Similarly, he who believes not the witness given by God concerning His Son rejects the utmost possible evidence that God, knowing man's necessity, could give him. It is supposed that he has the evidence before him, and that in the form of spoken or written evidence; it is further supposed that he deliberately rejects the testimony, knowing it to be Divine. There is nothing stronger, scarcely anything so strong, in all the Scriptures, concerning the moral wilfulness of unbelief. It is not said that he who refuses to accept the testimony to the divinity and incarnation of the Son loses the benefit; nor simply that he blinds his own mind; but that he hears the voice of God and makes Him a liar. Nor are the last words, as has been thought by some, mere vehement repetition. God is made a liar by the man who rejects the eternal life which has been once for all given. The witness rejected is not this or that saying or miraculous demonstration, but the whole strain of proof brought by the Christian revelation that both light and life are come into the world as the heritage of every man who does not wilfully reject both.

Vers. 11, 12. **And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** These closing words concerning that testimony of which the beginning of the Epistle spoke, go beyond anything yet said. They declare that the witness of the apostles concerning 'the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us' is the witness of God Himself, and moreover that it is the one supreme testimony, the sum and substance of all testimonies. Here we have the close of the whole section; and this last saying must throw its light back upon all. The witness of the water and the blood was simply this, that One had come who was the gift of eternal life to man: His baptism with the Spirit was His reception of the Spirit of life for us; His baptism of blood was our deliverance from death. The witness of the blood and water which flowed from His side was simply the testimony of heaven that deliverance from death and the impartation of new life were the one gift of His atoning passion: the one mingled stream for ever flowing from His Person lifted up. He who rejects this, resists the drawing of the Son of

man, and makes the Lord who gave the seals a liar. The next words really end the Epistle by an emphatic aphoristic saying that repeats the words concerning the subjective witness, the presence and absence of which is the final test of truth for all profession of Christianity. St. John knows no 'believing in God' which is not 'trusting in the witness'; and he knows of no trusting in the witness which is not followed by 'the witness in himself'; and the internal witness is not to have the knowledge of forgiveness, or the assurance of sonship, as in St. Paul, but these as contained in the possession of 'the life'; and, finally, the life is with him nothing less than the Son Himself possessed. The Son of God hath life in Himself eternally; He is the source of redeemed life; and He is the author or Prince of that life in every believer. The closing testimony of the Bible—for there is nothing after these words—is that **he that hath the Son hath the life**: the life which is fellowship with God, which sin forfeited, is given back to him in union with Jesus. It can by no other means be restored than by union with the Divine life which has been given to man 'bodily' in Christ: the disbeliever or unbeliever, who rejects the witness of God concerning His Son, is in this testimony said to abide in death, or rather to be without the life. **He that hath not the Son hath not the life.** There are many terrors threatened elsewhere against the despiser of God and the rejecter of Christ; but here in the final witness, the sad issue of all is stated in its awful negation, 'the life he has not.'

Ver. 13. St. John returns now to his one great design, the fulfilling of the joy of those who believe. **These things have I written to you—the whole Epistle, that is,—that ye may know that ye have eternal life, unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God.** It was not his purpose to establish their assurance, and on that to superinduce a challenge to faith, or to a higher faith, as the reading of our present translation might suggest. Assurance is the final point, and all the blessedness that assurance brings. 'That ye may know:' this is one of the watchwords of the Epistle; and it is here finally introduced in such a way as to show that, while it is the gift of God's Spirit, it is the bounden duty and privilege of every Christian to live in the enjoyment of it.

*The confidence in prayer which this faith in Jesus inspires; with its one exception.*

Vers. 14, 15. A second time the apostle dwells on the boldness of prayer: this closed the second part as the confidence of obedient love; it closes here the third part as the confidence in the Son of God, which was there introduced as the transition to the third part, and is now resumed.

**And this is the boldness,** the more specific characterization of the confidence before referred to, **that we have toward him, toward God,** whose children we are in virtue of the eternal life, the life of regeneration. Throughout the New Testament, confidence towards the Father in prayer is represented as the first privilege of the adoption: we have received 'the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father' (Rom. viii. 15). St. Paul says of that Spirit that He 'helpeth our infirmity: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts

knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.' This, and our Lord's word, 'All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive' (Matt. xxi. 22), furnish the best commentary on our passage. As Jesus, the Intercessor in heaven, presents with confidence for us the prayers which the Spirit, the Intercessor in the heart corresponding with Him, teaches us according to the will of God, we may be assured that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: He in fact heareth the voice of His own Spirit within us, and we do not really pray when we ask not according to His mind. This is the sublime perfection of the only prayer which St. John knows; and it is in harmony with the tenor of the whole Epistle, always and in everything making real the highest ideal.

And, if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, all forbidden and doubtful petitions being left out of consideration, as being suppressed before they are uttered, we know—for the hearing means hearing with acceptance—that we have the petitions that we have asked of him. These last words are very emphatic. We have in the very asking; there is a blessed sense in which the highest prayer is the very experience of the thing prayed for; such asking for forgiveness and peace and holiness is the enjoyment of holiness and peace and pardon. Moreover, 'we have,' and not, as before, 'we receive;' for the Christian life is no other than the constant inheritance of multiplied prayers 'that we have asked' from the beginning, that have been the sum of past supplications. Observe here, without being reminded by the apostle, that the 'fellowship with the Father and the Son,' the main subject of the Epistle, reaches here its highest consummation, so far as the present life and its privileges are concerned.

Vers. 16, 17. The transition from prayer in general to intercessory prayer seems to be abrupt; but it must be remembered that brotherly love is made identical with Christian life, and its offices with doing the will of God. Passing by innumerable other objects of intercession on behalf of a fellow-Christian, the apostle at once rises to its highest function, prayer for his sinning soul. Two phrases just used are still in his thoughts: 'whatsoever we ask' and 'eternal life,' which the regenerate has in himself, and may obtain by prayer for others.

If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death: already the exception is stated, the solemnity of which requires enlargement upon it afterwards. The sin not unto death is supposed to be seen in a brother, as an act and a state in which he is continuing. He shall ask: this is the imperative future, and implies more than is expressed, the admonition and penitence of the offender and the joining him in prayer; these are omitted because the great point is here, as with St. James, the power of one in close fellowship with God, who is supposed in this wonderful sentence to be the very administrant of the Divine will. And shall give—the same he in union with God shall give—him life: according to the high doctrine of the Epistle, he who sins at all is by the sin cut off from spiritual life; that life is, as it were, suspended. The words that follow, for them that sin not unto death, do not simply repeat and

generalize the former words, but at the same time qualify the 'life' given and prepare for what follows; the life is only suspended in this case. The 'him' is changed into 'them,' to show the commonness of the fault and the universality of intercession.

There is a sin unto death; which is not only suspended life, but the actual rejection of the Son of God in whom the life is, and whose rejection has been the supreme sin aimed at throughout the Epistle. It is not asserted that the Christian can know that sin to be committed; nor was it said that he knows the brother for whom he prays to have sinned not unto death: He shall give him life if he have not so sinned. The fellowship with God in prayer does not imply fellowship with God's omniscience. The sin unto death is unto eternal death, as the opposite of 'eternal life,' though death and eternal are never combined. No other death is mentioned once in this Epistle; nor is the apostle referring, as St. James does in his similar close of his Epistle, to bodily sickness and recovery of physical health. As there was in our Saviour's time an unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which was unto death because it rejected the Spirit's appeal on behalf of Christ, and as in the Epistle to the Hebrews there is a rejection of the atonement which cuts off necessarily all hope, so in this Epistle the same sin is referred to in the light of its final issue. Those who harden themselves against the Spirit's revelation of the Son are sinning unto death; and prayer for them is unavailing, because they have shut their hearts against the only power that can save them.

Not of that do I say that he should make request. With deep tenderness the apostle excludes this object of intercession, two shades of his expression pointing to his deep feeling: he changes the 'asking' into 'requesting,' as if the awful urgency of the case might prompt a stronger prayer, which would be unavailing; and he simply says, 'Concerning that I do not speak in what I say concerning intercessory prayer.' Now the difference of sins seems to require explanation, especially after what the apostle had said in chap. iii. 4, 'Sin is transgression of law,' and 'He was manifested to take away sins,' and 'He is faithful and just, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Hence St. John quotes himself, inverting the phrase, and says here, All unrighteousness is sin, substituting the deeper word 'unrighteousness' for 'lawlessness.' Even the slightest deviation from law and from the perfect principles of right is sin, whether in the believer or in the unbeliever; and therefore the possessor of eternal life must never think lightly of it, but must abhor it as contrary to the life that is in him. Nevertheless there may be traces of death that must be cleansed away, and there is a sin not unto death. In the old law there was 'sin unto death,' transgression which was punished with loss of life (Num. xviii. 22); and the Rabbins made the very distinction which St. John here makes. The apostle, however, carries it into the eternal sphere; and leaves the subject with a consolatory word which is itself very stern. He does not say that 'all unrighteousness is sin, but there is sin not unto death.' What he says is that such sin only as is forgiven and cleansed away is not unto death.

## CHAPTER V. 18-21.

*Conclusion.*

- 18 **W**E know that whosoever is born<sup>1</sup> of God sinneth not;  
 19 and 'that wicked one' toucheth him not. And<sup>2</sup> we know that  
 we are of God, and 'the whole world lieth in wickedness.'<sup>3</sup>  
 20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and <sup>4</sup>hath given  
 us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and  
 we are in<sup>5</sup> him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>This  
 21 is the true God, and eternal life. 'Little children, <sup>7</sup>keep'  
 yourselves from idols. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> begotten  
<sup>3</sup> the evil one

<sup>2</sup> *Some read* he that was begotten of God keepeth him  
<sup>4</sup> guard

<sup>a</sup> Jo. i. 12.  
<sup>b</sup> Jo. xvii. 11.  
<sup>c</sup> Ch. ii. 13.  
<sup>d</sup> Ver. 15.  
<sup>e</sup> Jo. xii. 31.  
<sup>f</sup> Lu. xxiv. 45.  
<sup>g</sup> Jo. xvii. 3.  
<sup>h</sup> Ver. 11.  
<sup>i</sup> Ch. ii. 1.  
<sup>k</sup> 1 Cor. x. 7.  
 14; Gal. v.  
 20.

The Epistle winds up with three summarizing declarations, each of which repeats the watchword, 'we know,' taken, but in a better sense, from the Gnostic 'we know': the first, ver. 18, asserts the fundamental opposition between life and sin; the second, ver. 19, the fundamental opposition between the regenerate and the world; the third, ver. 20, pays its final homage to the Son of God, in whom we are through an intelligent faith wrought of God. These three are linked, as always, one with the other; the evil one toucheth us not in the first, but in the second the world lieth in his arms, and in the third we, rescued from him, are in God and His Son. The final words close the whole, and close the Bible, with an exhortation against every false conception of God. Hence fellowship with God is the keynote into which all melts at the last: individually, it is communion with His holiness; collectively, it is perfect separation from the world; and both these go up to the Son in whom we are one with God, and safe from idols. This final 'we know' is therefore an exhibition of the Christian privileges in their highest form.

Ver. 18. *We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God keepeth himself, and the evil one toucheth him not.* Having admitted that the children of the Divine birth may sin, both unto death and not unto death, the apostle reminds them most solemnly of what had been established before, that the regenerate life is in itself inconsistent with both kinds. The characteristic and privilege of a child of God is to live without violation of law: all sin is of death, and there is no death in the regenerate life. This is a repetition of what had been said in chap. iii., but the apostle never repeats himself without some change in his thought. Here is said for the first time, that not only he who has been and is born of God, but he who has been once born of God, sinneth not. He has not been, therefore, all along speaking of the un-sinful state as the fruit of a finished regeneration, however true that may be. Again, as his manner is, he gives a specific reason for the assertion. The act of regeneration sundered the Christian

from the empire of Satan; and it is his privilege to keep himself, in sedulous watchfulness and dependence on the Keeper of his soul, from the approach of the tempter; not from his approach as a tempter, but from any such approach as shall touch him to his hurt. It is wrong to limit this great saying by interpolating 'sin wilfully' or 'sin unto death' or 'sin habitually'; it must stand as the declaration of a privilege which is an ideal, but an attainable ideal, that of living without that which God shall call sin. St. John does not rise to the word which only One could say, 'He hath nothing in Me.' Concupiscence is in the Christian still, and it may conceive and bring forth sin; not, however, if the wicked one toucheth him not. And the concupiscence that the enemy has in us must die if it have not its desire in the soul—'purified as He is pure.' This 'we know' to be the privilege of the Christian estate, as in the middle of the Epistle the apostle has established it. 'We know' is not without protest against all future doubt; it is like one of the 'faithful sayings' with which St. Paul sealed his final doctrine. To understand 'he that is born of God' of the Only-begotten who keepeth the saint, is contrary to the analogy of New Testament diction; and to suppose that the principle of regeneration keepeth him, introduces a certain harshness without obviating any difficulty. There is indeed no difficulty to the expositor who remembers that St. John never disjoins the Divine efficiency in man from man's own co-operation.

Ver. 19. *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one.* The exquisite propriety of the words must be noted here. There is no 'but,' as before: we know by infallible assurance of our regenerate life that we are of God. This is all we are assured of, and there is no emphatic 'we' opposed to the world: it is as if the apostle would avoid even the semblance of exultation against the ungodly. But the awful contrast is laid down. It is the same 'wicked one' as in the preceding verse holds the entire world, so far as the new life has not transformed it, in his power. It is not said that

the world is 'of the wicked one:' if the 'children of the devil' had been spoken of in a similar connection (chap. iii. 10), that is here explained and softened. The men of the world are 'in him that is false;' but the 'in' is not used in its bare simplicity, but 'lieth in,' a phrase nowhere else occurring, and to be interpreted according to the tenor of the Epistle. The 'whole world' is not, however, the men of the world only; but its entire constitution, its entire economy, its lusts and principles and motives, and course and end: all that is not 'of God' lies in the power and bondage of the wicked one. This the apostle adds as an old truth, never so fearfully expressed as here. The diametrical contrariety between the regenerate who have fellowship with God, and the unregenerate whose fellowship is with Satan, could not be more keenly defined.

Ver. 20. **And we know—moreover, we know finally—that the Son of God is come:** this word 'is come' St. John reserves for the end. He who was sent and was manifested is here said to 'be present' with us; and His abiding presence is as it were a sun which reveals and approves itself to all who have eyes to see. We are reminded of the only occasion on which the word is used in this sense, when our Lord declared to the Jews in one sentence the mystery of His eternal Sonship, His presence in the world by incarnation, and His mediatorial mission: 'I proceeded forth from God—I have come—He sent me' (John viii. 44). The children of God know with an assurance that is above all doubt that the Son of God is incarnate with the human race and 'dwells among us:' this is the triumphant close of the Epistle, both as it is a testimony to the manifestation of the eternal life, and as it is a protest against all anti-christian error. Keeping both these objects still in view, the apostle goes on: **and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true:** this new word 'understanding' signifies the inner faculty of the Spirit which discriminates in order to know, which is the result of the 'unction from the Holy One.' Thus inwardly enlightened by Him who is the Truth, through His Spirit, we know 'Him that is true,' that 'only true God' whom thus to know, in His unapproachable distinction from all false gods or objects of hope, is eternal life. In the words of Jesus, which St. John here quotes, 'and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent,' is added. But He 'is come' as the revelation of the Father, and St. John hastens from the spiritual knowledge to the spiritual experience of fellow-

ship with that Father, not 'and Jesus Christ,' but 'in Him.' And we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. The absence of the 'and,' leaving the plain assertion that we are in the true God by being in His Son—thus making the true God and His Son one—is the solution of the question to whom the next clause refers: **This is the true God and eternal life.** This His Son Jesus Christ is Himself the true God, His revelation and presence with us; nor know we any other. Those who see not God in Him, since He has come, serve a god of their own imagination. When the apostle adds 'and eternal life,' he turns from the protest against anti-christian error, which was silently involved in the former part of the clause, to the happy privilege of all believing Christians. They have in the Son that perfect life 'which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.' Thus the end of the Epistle revolves back to the beginning. Christian doctrine is the revelation of the true God in Christ; and Christian blessedness is life everlasting in the Father and the Son.

Ver. 21. **Little children, keep yourselves from idols.** This brief but all-comprehensive sentence closes the Epistle, the entire apostolical testimony, and probably the entire revelation of God. Accordingly it must have a large interpretation. It is a solemn warning, most affectionate but most rigorous, against everything that may invade the supremacy of 'the true God' as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, whether in the doctrine and worship of the Church or in the affections of the regenerate heart. External idols, as still retained in heathenism, though fast passing away, are not excluded from the exhortation of course; but there has been no allusion to them throughout the Epistle, nor did the danger of the 'little children' lie in that direction. Though St. John does not use the Pauline expression that Christians are the temple of the Holy Ghost, the idea of this pervades his whole doctrine. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him: therefore every thought of the mind, every feeling of the heart, and every movement of the will must be faithful in all homage to Him. As addressed to the first readers of the Epistle, the warning was against the false theosophy of the Gnostics; as a prophetic exhortation, it foresaw and guarded against all violations of the doctrine of the Mediatorial Trinity; and, as spoken to the inmost soul of every regenerate Christian, it proclaims the one immutable principle of the Christian religion, that God must be to him All in all.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN.

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### I.—EXTERNAL : AUTHORSHIP AND APOSTOLICITY.

**I**T may be taken for granted that these Epistles were written by the same author. According to the almost unanimous tenor of tradition, this was the Evangelist John. For instance, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Dionysius, and Alexander of Alexandria expressly quote from them as his. Origen and Eusebius refer to the two Epistles as suspected by many, but apparently without sharing the doubt themselves. Jerome mentions a current opinion that they were written by a Presbyter John, of whose existence we have only the insufficient witness of Papias as quoted by Eusebius. While it is easy to understand how such a man as Papias should confuse the tradition, it is hard to believe that two writers of the same name should so closely resemble each other in style and tone and authority. Erasmus revived this idea, which had never during the Middle Ages disturbed the tradition of the apostolical origin ; and in later times it has been maintained on the ground of certain phrases occurring in the two smaller documents which are absent from the larger one. But in familiar Epistles to individuals such new phrases might be expected ; and, though they are striking, they are lost in the multitude of express coincidences in phraseology. The term 'Presbyter' applied to himself by the writer has also been pleaded against the apostolical authorship. But without reason : St. John rarely mentions himself, never his apostolical authority ; and the term Presbyter might be used as St. Peter used it, or as St. Paul called himself 'Paul the elder' or 'the aged.' Granting that St. John wrote these Epistles, we may suppose that they were written after, but not long after, the First ; and from the same place, Ephesus.

### II.—INTERNAL : CHARACTERISTICS.

**I**L The Second Epistle stands alone in the New Testament as addressed to a Christian household. It is written to a Matron of note and her children, commending the piety of some members of the family whom the apostle had met, and warning them against the intrusion into their circle of false teachers. Hence it is the worthy pendant of the Third Epistle, which is written to a Christian man occupying an equally important position in his community. It was held by some in ancient times, and by many in later, that the 'lady' was a symbolical expression for the church, or a particular church. A preliminary objection to this is that there is no precedent for such an allegorical mode of expression, nor any obvious reason for it ; and then a careful comparison of the two Epistles will suggest that individuals are addressed in both.

#### 44 INTRODUCTION TO SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLES OF JOHN.

The other controversy, as to whether the term rendered 'lady' ought to be regarded as a proper name, cannot easily be settled : the balance preponderates in favour of Kyria being the name of the matron who receives the letter

II. The Third Epistle sheds an impressive light upon the state of the Church when about to lose the light of inspiration and the apostolic presence. St. John's authority in a church probably not founded by himself, was contested even as St. Paul's had been, though for a different reason : it is possible that the extreme age and venerableness which should have secured him honour encouraged a factious and bigoted enemy of the missionary Gospel to oppose him. The immediate occasion of the resistance of Diotrephes and his company was the apostle's recommendation of certain evangelists to the hospitality and general help of this community. St. John's request might have been sent by the hands of Demetrius, whose character, as opposed to that of Diotrephes, is stamped with the most emphatic approval. The issue we do not know, nor indeed anything further about the controversy. But we have a rich side light thrown on the virtue of hospitality, on the missionary activity of the church, and on the apostle's consciousness of high authority. The term church itself, mentioned so often, is important against those who misconstrue the absence of it from the First Epistle : in both the all-essential matter is fellowship with the Father and the Son in and through the Spirit ; but in both there is evidently an organized fellowship among Christians, though in the Second only is it called a Church. It is, however, the exhibition of what may be called Family Religion that gives this Epistle, by the side of the Second, so deep and lasting an interest at the close of the canonical Scriptures.

# THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

VERS. 1-13.

*Invocation.—Exhortation to Love, and Warning against False Doctrine.—  
Conclusion.*

- 1 **T**HE elder unto the <sup>b</sup> elect <sup>c</sup> lady and her children, <sup>d</sup> whom <sup>a3</sup> Jo. 1;  
I love in the <sup>1</sup> truth; and not I only, but also all they <sup>1</sup> Pet. v. 1.  
2 that <sup>e</sup> have known <sup>f</sup> the truth; For the truth's sake, which <sup>b</sup> Ver. 13;  
3 dwelleth <sup>g</sup> in us, and shall <sup>h</sup> be with us for ever. <sup>c</sup> Grace be <sup>Rom. xvi. 13</sup>  
with you, mercy, *and* peace, <sup>d</sup> from God the Father, and from <sup>c</sup> Ver. 3;  
the Lord <sup>e</sup> Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, <sup>f</sup> in truth and <sup>d1</sup> Jo. iii. 18;  
love. <sup>3</sup> Jo. 1.  
<sup>4</sup> I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children <sup>g</sup> walking in <sup>Jo. viii. 32.</sup>  
truth, as we have <sup>h</sup> received a <sup>i</sup> commandment from the Father. <sup>f</sup> Gal. iii. 1.  
5 And now I beseech thee, lady, <sup>j</sup> not as though I wrote a new <sup>g1</sup> Jo. i. 2;  
commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the <sup>Rev. i. 4;</sup>  
6 beginning, <sup>k</sup> that we love one another. <sup>h</sup> And this is love, that <sup>Jude 2.</sup>  
we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, <sup>A</sup> Vers. 1, 4, 6,  
That, <sup>i</sup> as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk <sup>Eph. iv. 15.</sup>  
7 in it. <sup>j</sup> For many deceivers are <sup>k</sup> entered into <sup>3</sup> the world, who <sup>Jo. 3, 4.</sup>  
confess not that Jesus Christ <sup>l</sup> is come <sup>m</sup> in the flesh. This is <sup>Jo. ii. 7.</sup>  
8 a <sup>n</sup> deceiver and an <sup>o</sup> antichrist. <sup>p</sup> Look to yourselves, <sup>Jo. iii. 11.</sup>  
that <sup>q</sup> we <sup>r</sup> lose not those things which we have wrought, but that <sup>m1</sup> Jo. v. 3;  
9 we <sup>s</sup> receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, <sup>t</sup> and <sup>Jo. xiv. 15.</sup>  
abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, <sup>u</sup> hath not God. He that <sup>n2</sup> Jo. ii. 24.  
10 abideth in the doctrine of Christ, <sup>v</sup> he hath both the Father <sup>Jo. ii. 18,</sup>  
and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this <sup>26.</sup>  
doctrine, <sup>w</sup> receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God <sup>Jo. iv. 1.</sup>  
11 speed: <sup>x</sup> For he that biddeth him God speed <sup>y</sup> is <sup>Jo. iv. 2.</sup>  
12 his evil deeds. <sup>z</sup> Having many things to write unto you, I <sup>Mk. xiii. 9.</sup>  
<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup> <sup>7</sup> <sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> <sup>11</sup> <sup>12</sup> <sup>13</sup> <sup>14</sup> <sup>15</sup> <sup>16</sup> <sup>17</sup> <sup>18</sup> <sup>19</sup> <sup>20</sup> <sup>21</sup> <sup>22</sup> <sup>23</sup> <sup>24</sup> <sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup> <sup>27</sup> <sup>28</sup> <sup>29</sup> <sup>30</sup> <sup>31</sup> <sup>32</sup> <sup>33</sup> <sup>34</sup> <sup>35</sup> <sup>36</sup> <sup>37</sup> <sup>38</sup> <sup>39</sup> <sup>40</sup> <sup>41</sup> <sup>42</sup> <sup>43</sup> <sup>44</sup> <sup>45</sup> <sup>46</sup> <sup>47</sup> <sup>48</sup> <sup>49</sup> <sup>50</sup> <sup>51</sup> <sup>52</sup> <sup>53</sup> <sup>54</sup> <sup>55</sup> <sup>56</sup> <sup>57</sup> <sup>58</sup> <sup>59</sup> <sup>60</sup> <sup>61</sup> <sup>62</sup> <sup>63</sup> <sup>64</sup> <sup>65</sup> <sup>66</sup> <sup>67</sup> <sup>68</sup> <sup>69</sup> <sup>70</sup> <sup>71</sup> <sup>72</sup> 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<sup>999</sup> <sup>1000</sup>

<sup>1</sup> omit the

<sup>2</sup> abideth

<sup>3</sup> and it shall

<sup>4</sup> Grace, mercy, peace, shall be with us

<sup>5</sup> omit the Lord

<sup>6</sup> I rejoice greatly that I have found of thy children

<sup>7</sup> omit have

<sup>8</sup> omit a <sup>9</sup> gone forth into <sup>10</sup> they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh

<sup>11</sup> omit of Christ

<sup>12</sup> the <sup>13</sup> e

<sup>14</sup> goeth in advance

<sup>15</sup> omit of Christ

<sup>16</sup> and give him no greeting

<sup>17</sup> giveth him greeting

would not *write* with paper and ink: "but I trust to come unto <sup>vs 3</sup> <sup>Jo. i. 24</sup> you, and speak face to face, "that our joy may be full." The <sup>vs 1</sup> <sup>Jo. i. 4:</sup> <sup>Jo. xv. 11.</sup> children of thy "elect sister greet thee. Amen. <sup>vs 1</sup> <sup>ver. 1.</sup>

"your joy may be fulfilled

*L.—Address and Greeting: From the well-known Elder to a well-known Lady.*

The greeting, with its invocation, fills a large space. It is framed after the manner of St. Paul, and remarkably incorporates the two points of truth and love which occupy the whole Epistle.

Vers. 1, 2. **The elder**—the aged Apostle John, who gives himself this title because it was the only one that combined authority with age—to the **elect Kyria and her children**: nothing is known about the two sisters introduced at the beginning and the end, save that they were influential persons, probably widows with large families. St. Paul speaks of Rufus as 'elect in the Lord,' and St. Peter of 'elect strangers': no higher term could be suggested by Christian courtesy. **Whom I love in truth**: the 'whom' in the masculine embraces all of the household addressed. They were elect or loved of God, and therefore elect and beloved of the apostle; according to his own axiom in 1 John v. 1. Again, according to his own axiom, he declares that his love was not 'in word and with the tongue,' but 'in deed and in truth': with special reference, however, to the severe caution which he is about to administer. **And not I only, but also all they that have known the truth**: this Christian matron and her children were well known at home and abroad, bearing the same relation in their own spheres as the Gaius of the next Epistle bore in his. It is obvious that knowing the truth is an expression that has two applications here. On the one hand, it defines religion as the experimental knowledge of the revelation brought into the world by Christ, who said 'I am the Truth': a definition the force of which was more felt in early times than in later. On the other, it prepared for that distinction between believers in the truth and all false teachers on which the writer purposed to insist. **For the truth's sake which abideth in us and shall be with us for ever**. Obviously the common truth is, like regeneration, regarded as the bond of love. But there is an undertone of allusion to the fact that holding fast the truth is the test of religion, and that their common fidelity endeared the faithful to each other. Hence the change to 'us,' and the quotation of the Lord's words, which applies to the truth what He spoke of the Spirit of truth, 'He abideth with you and shall be in you': with the change, however, that here the 'abiding' is 'in' us, and the 'being' is 'with' us. It is like a preliminary triumph, in prospect of the subject that is coming.

Ver. 3. **Grace, mercy, peace, shall be with us from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love**. This is the old invocation, with which the other apostles have made us familiar, but in its fullest form as found in the Pastoral Epistles. It had become the sacred benediction, as including the whole compass of the Divine blessing in the Gospel: grace refers to the fountain of favour to undeserving man revealed in Christ; mercy to the individual application of that

favour in the forgiveness of sins and the succour of all misery; peace to the result in the tranquillity of a soul one with God. These blessings come from the Father through the Son of the Father; but the repetition of the 'from' makes emphatic the distinctness and equality of the Two Persons. There is here an observable deviation from St. Paul's formula; as also in the addition of 'truth and love' the two spheres or characteristics of the Christian life in which, though not on account of which, these blessings are imparted. These last words also explain the 'shall be' of the invocation: they express the apostle's confidence that his friends, living in truth of doctrine and charity of fellowship, will ever enjoy this benediction in common with himself.

II.—*The substance of the letter follows: introduced by congratulation, it contains an earnest exhortation to practical love and warning against false teachers.*

Ver. 4. **I rejoiced greatly that I have found of thy children walking in truth**. As St. Paul always prefaced his warnings by praising what he could praise, so St. John expresses his deep joy at having found—his now present joy at having found during his past acquaintance with them—certain of her children walking in the full truth of the Christian religion. **Even as we received commandment from the Father**. 'And this is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as He gave us commandment' (1 John iii. 23). This great preliminary commandment omits the name of the Son because the reception of Him is its substance; and the particular commandments are presently to be mentioned.

Ver. 5. **And now**—this is the purport of the letter—I beseech thee, **Kyria**: the request has in it a tone of dignity as well as of courtesy; the mother is addressed, though some of her children who walked not in love are aimed at: the apostle urges his request, which is sheltered behind the evangelical law, not as though writing to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, in the first person, that we love one another. 'Let us all walk in love': this, as well as the whole strain, shows the same exquisite courtesy which pervades St. Paul's letters to individuals.

Ver. 6. Here we have once more St. John's familiar tribute to the ethical supremacy of love, the new revelation of which by Christ 'in the beginning' sways his thoughts with a peculiar power. The verse is remarkable for its circular argument: love is the walking in all the commandments, the strength to keep them all being in love, and love being their compendium; again, the one commandment heard from the beginning is 'that ye should walk in it,' that is, in love.

Ver. 7. There is no love which is not based on truth: the love which keeps the commandments keeps the doctrinal as well as the ethical commandments. And, as love is the strength of

obedience, so it is the guardian of the truth. Hence the 'for' that follows: for many deceivers are gone forth into the world—from the spiritual world, the sphere of the lie—they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. The supreme truth—as truth is in Jesus—is the incarnation. This is the deceiver and the antichrist, of whom the former Epistle spoke: the deceiver as it regards you, the antichrist as it respects Jesus. 'Cometh in the flesh' refers in the most general way to the incarnation itself: not as a past fact, 'came in the flesh' (1 John v. 6); nor as the fact with its results, 'hath come' (1 John iv. 2); but in its widest universality, though without reference to the second coming.

Ver. 8. Look to yourselves: a rare expression, intimating the deep earnestness of the warning. That ye lose not the things which we have wrought: the apostles were God's labourers; but, with refined delicacy, this apostle represents the reward of apostolic work, not as to be received by themselves, but, as to be received by their flocks. But that ye receive a full reward: of our work and your own fidelity. The reward of Christian labour is a familiar idea in the New Testament; and the last chapter of the Apocalypse represents the Saviour as coming with His 'reward' 'to render to each man according as his work is,' Rev. xxii. 12. But the labourers' reward is not dependent on the fidelity of their converts, though the converts themselves lose it if unfaithful. The word reward here seems to refer to the other world; but, before mentioning that, St. John deprecates their losing the benefits of apostolic labours, which listening to 'evil workers' would occasion. There is a beautiful contrast in the original words: 'See that ye let not slip all the fruits of our teaching, and all the benefits of your Christian discipline, in the present world; see that hereafter ye be found worthy of the completed rewards of Christian fidelity, as it is written, "Every one therefore who shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven"' (Matt. x. 32). The word 'full' has no necessary reference to degrees of recompense: it is used as a most mighty stimulant, and what it means the next verse shows.

Ver. 9. Whosoever goeth forward, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. This seems beyond doubt the true reading, and the verse thus becomes one of the utmost importance and interest. To abide in the doctrine of Christ is to remain content with His teaching or what He teaches; to go beyond it is to follow an imaginary development, and affect to be wiser than the Master Himself. The penalty is an awful one: one step beyond the commandment received in the beginning leads to the loss of God. But he that abideth in the doctrine, the same hath both the Father and the Son: the change is in St. John's manner, from God generally to

the Father and the Son. The Lord Himself declared that 'all things' were delivered unto Him for the instruction of men; and the 'all things' He explained as the knowledge of the Father through the Son (Matt. xi. 27). On this rests the whole 'doctrine' or doctrinal system of the Church, afterwards spoken of generally as 'the doctrine.'

Vers. 10, 11. There is no more impressive word concerning the importance of holding fast the simple truth of the Gospel than what we have just read; and its force is deepened by what follows. If there cometh—as come there does and certainly will—any unto you and bringeth not this doctrine: a professed teacher, therefore, coming for hospitality, after the manner shown in the next Epistle. It is important to guard the interpretation of these words on both sides. In mitigation of their severity, it must be remembered that the apostle is speaking of an antichrist coming with a doctrine opposed to Christ, and such a man ought to be excluded from the house of every servant of the Lord, whether coming in person or by his writings; but it is in his teaching capacity that he is to be excluded. But, on the other hand, and in vindication of its real strictness, the prohibition of salutation, and give him no greeting, does not by any means refer to formal Christian salutation, but forbids every kind of intercourse with him that implies friendly fellowship. The reason is expressly given, and in such a way as to show that fellowship such as hospitality is meant: a courteous salutation, or any act of charity, might be bestowed on him without involving complicity with his evil. But no such friendliness is to be shown as might further him on his way in the very least. 'He that is not with Me is against Me:' there is nothing in this rigour, so often branded as bigotry, that goes beyond the ordinary teaching of the New Testament.

### III.—Conclusion.

Vers. 12, 13. The apostle, writing on this subject, has more to say than he can write; hence this letter is not an accompaniment of the larger Epistle. He was writing on paper or Egyptian papyrus, the pressed coatings of the plant, with ink, a preparation of soot and burnt resin and oil: the Third Epistle omits the paper and says pen instead, the pen being a split reed. The brief Epistle was in fact the forerunner of his personal presence; the apostle hoped soon to speak all that he had to say, and to hear all he wished to hear, that their joy might be filled. This was the design of his writing the First Epistle; this short one had not that purpose, but needed the supplement of free conversation. The greeting from the children only of the elect sister seems to indicate that their mother was not alive, and that St. John was a guest in their house.

# THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

VERS. 1-14.

*Goodwill to Gaius, and Commendation of him.—The Factioness of Diotrophes, and the good Example of Demetrius.—Conclusion.*

1 THE elder unto <sup>a</sup>the well-beloved Gaius,<sup>1</sup> whom I love <sup>b</sup>in <sup>a</sup> Philem. 1, 2.  
<sup>b</sup> 1 Jo. iii. 28;  
<sup>c</sup> Jo. 1.  
2 the <sup>c</sup>truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that <sup>d</sup>thou  
mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.  
3 For <sup>e</sup>I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified <sup>e</sup> 1 Jo. 4  
of the truth that is in thee,<sup>f</sup> even as thou walkest in the truth.  
4 <sup>g</sup>I have no greater joy than to hear that <sup>h</sup>my children <sup>i</sup>walk <sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 15;  
<sup>h</sup> Gal. iv. 19.  
5 in truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest  
6 <sup>j</sup>to the brethren,<sup>k</sup> and to strangers; <sup>l</sup>Which have borne <sup>m</sup>wit- <sup>j</sup> Heb. xiii. 1  
<sup>k</sup> Mal. xxv. 35  
<sup>l</sup> Heb. xiii. 2  
ness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring  
forward on their journey after a godly sort,<sup>n</sup> <sup>o</sup>thou shalt do <sup>n</sup> Acts x. 35.  
<sup>o</sup> xv. 3;  
<sup>p</sup> 1 Thes. xi. 12.  
<sup>q</sup> Acts v. 41.  
7 well: Because that <sup>p</sup>for his name's sake<sup>q</sup> they went forth,  
8 <sup>r</sup>taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to <sup>r</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 12,  
15.  
9 receive<sup>s</sup> such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth. I  
wrote unto the church: but Diotrophes, <sup>t</sup>who loveth to have <sup>t</sup> 1 Jo. 9  
10 the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore,  
if I come, I will remember<sup>u</sup> his deeds which he doeth, prating  
against us with malicious words; and not content therewith,  
<sup>v</sup>neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth <sup>v</sup> Ver. 5  
11 them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church. Beloved,  
<sup>w</sup>follow<sup>x</sup> not that which is evil, but that which is good. <sup>y</sup>He <sup>w</sup> Isa. i. 16, 17;  
<sup>x</sup> 1 Pet. iii.  
<sup>y</sup> 10-13.  
<sup>z</sup> 1 Jo. ii. 29.  
<sup>aa</sup> 1 Jo. iii. 6.  
<sup>ab</sup> Acts vi. 3;  
<sup>ac</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 2.  
<sup>ad</sup> Jo. xxi. 24.  
<sup>ae</sup> 1 Jo. 22.  
that doeth good is of God: <sup>z</sup>but he that doeth evil hath not  
12 seen God. Demetrius hath <sup>aa</sup>good report<sup>ab</sup> of all *men*, and of  
the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; <sup>ac</sup><sup>ad</sup> and ye know  
13 that our record<sup>ae</sup> is true. <sup>af</sup>I had many things to write, but I

<sup>1</sup> unto Gaius the beloved      <sup>2</sup> omit the      <sup>3</sup> I pray that in all things  
<sup>4</sup> when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth  
<sup>5</sup> thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and,  
moreover, to them as strangers      <sup>6</sup> who bare      <sup>7</sup> worthily of God  
<sup>8</sup> For, for the sake of the Name      <sup>9</sup> support      <sup>10</sup> bring to remembrance  
<sup>11</sup> imitate      <sup>12</sup> the witness      <sup>13</sup> witness      <sup>14</sup> thou knowest that our witness

14 will not <sup>18</sup> with ink and pen write unto thee: 'But I trust I, *Jo. 3* shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

<sup>18</sup> am unwilling to write

#### I.—Address and Expression of Goodwill.

Vers. 1, 2. Three men called Gaius, the Latin Caius, are mentioned by St. Paul, and one of 'hem with the same acknowledgment of his large hospitality; but these lived in an earlier generation. Nothing is said as to his holding any office; he is beloved only, the ordinary term of Christian fellowship, though evidently used here in its strongest meaning, whom I love in truth, and emphatically repeated in several verses. Instead of the ordinary greeting we have an expression of goodwill, I wish, which however is really, as every Christian good wish must be, prayer to God (*Jas. v. 15*). Concerning all things must be connected with the prosper, or make good advancement; and one particular is singled out—possibly because Gaius had been sick,—and be in health. The prosperity of the soul is the standard of all prosperity: even as thy soul prospereth, or makes good advancement.

#### II.—Substance of the Letter.

The substance of the letter is, first, a tribute to the character and work of Gaius, especially his hospitality to Christ's servants, with exhortation to continue this fidelity; then follows the special offence of Diotrephes, the contrast of his conduct with that of Demetrius, and an exhortation to Gaius in relation to both.

Vers. 3, 4. The commendation of Gaius is first general: the apostle rejoices greatly to hear from brethren testimony to his interior religion, unto thy truth, as it was openly shown, even as thou walkest in truth. The apostle has no greater joy than to hear that my children—the members of the Christian family specially committed to his care—are walking in the truth. Truth and love are in both these Epistles the twofold and yet one sphere of all religion. The love with its fruits follows in the next verse.

Vers. 5-8. Thou doest a faithful work: the labour of Gaius' love is said to be faithful, as corresponding with the commandment of love and true to it. Towards the brethren, and moreover strangers: not both brethren and strangers, but, as the sequel shows, brethren who came from abroad. 'Thou doest' marks that the conduct of Gaius is supposed to be habitual, though a special instance had been brought before the apostle. Who bare witness to thy love before the church: being evangelists, they gave an account of their travels in the presence of the church where the apostle dwelt; and returning to Gaius for further travels, they are commended to him for further support, to be set forward worthily of God, their Master and the Head of their cause. Then follows a tribute to the dignity of their work, and the high claim it gave them. For the sake of the Name, the name of Christ who is God, they went forth, from the church into the world, though in a very different sense from the going out of the antichrists (1 John ii. 19), taking nothing of the Gentiles: this is stated as their fixed principle, to receive nothing from the

Gentiles as such, before they were formed into churches; but it contains no maxim for the missionary work generally. It is introduced here for the sake of what follows. We therefore ought to support such, that we may be fellow-workers with them for the truth: an important sentence, as showing that they who provide of their substance for the maintenance of the labourer are partakers of his work.

Ver. 9. I wrote somewhat to the church: not meaning either important or unimportant, but touching the maintenance of the evangelists; this communication, probably intercepted by Diotrephes, is lost or superseded by the present Epistle. But Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, the members of the church, receiveth us not; we know nothing about this man but what is contained in this graphic sketch of him. The evangelists had reported to St. John that neither his authority nor his letter was honoured by Diotrephes; that he rejected both, and spoke against the apostle publicly in a church which was almost entirely under his influence, being opposed by Demetrius and his selecter company, and Gaius keeping aloof probably through sickness.

Ver. 10. We mark here the same tone of faithful sternness which pervades the two other Epistles: in these, however, as against those who assailed the truth, in this against one who invades the order of the church. It is more than probable that Diotrephes was of the Judaizing faction which strove to thwart the publication of the Gospel to the Gentiles; and this would account for the apostle's severity. I will bring to remembrance before the church, his works which he doeth: not merely his prating against us with malicious words, as reported by the evangelists, but his actions, of more importance to the apostle than any words spoken against himself merely. He casteth them out who would receive the brethren: by using his influence to have them cut off from the Christian society, whether by formal excommunication or otherwise.

Ver. 11. Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good: this is characteristic of St. John, to trace all conduct to its highest source. The spirit and acts of Diotrephes, and those like him, are not of God, not fruits of regeneration; he that doeth evil hath not seen God, hath no spiritual knowledge of Him. Writing to Gaius, and writing to all who might possibly be swayed by such influence as that of Diotrephes, the apostle utters a strong warning: to what extent needed by Gaius we can only conjecture.

Ver. 12. The good to be imitated has its example in Demetrius, whose report had reached St. John concurrently with that of Diotrephes: 'Demetrius hath the witness of all who know him, and of all my reporters: and of the truth itself: for the truth of the Gospel reflected in his character is before yourself.' Yea, we also bear witness: the very strong testimony to Demetrius was doubtless of the greatest importance at this juncture, and the apostle adds his own witness to

that of men and to that of the truth itself : and thou knowest that our witness is true is an affecting appeal to his own personal authority, accepted, if not by Diotrephes, yet by Gaius. St. John probably knew Demetrius, who receives from him as high a commendation as is received by any individual in the New Testament. These men stand here as individuals, to whom the apostle gave his testimony, not only from the evidence of their works, but also from his sure discernment of their character. But they are also representatives of men like-minded who play their part in every age and in all communities. The apostle's warning, commendation, and exhortation therefore are, and were meant by the Spirit to be, for all the future. And this gives our Epistle its permanent value.

### III.—*Conclusion.*

Vers. 13, 14. We know not the issue of this Epistle. It was evidently written amidst circum-

stances which allowed no delay. Though the apostle would shortly visit the church of Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius, he sends this message for the present emergency.

Ver. 15. *Peace be to thee* : the only instance of this personal formula in the New Testament. *The friends salute thee* : again the only instance of the brethren being called friends. *Salute the friends by name* : as if their names were mentioned. The familiar character of the letter may explain these peculiarities ; but it must not be forgotten that these several terms carry us back to the Lord's first use and sanctification of them. There can be no higher salutation than the *PEACE* which came up out of the Old Testament to receive its deeper meaning in the New. And the Epistles of the New Testament worthily end with *Peace* to the individual saint, and the *Salutation* of the Brethren who are also 'the Friends' of *Jesus* individually and by name.