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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON
1 JOHN

by Adam Clarke.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

HOLY BIBLE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

AS the author of this epistle is the same who wrote the gospel, I need not detain the reader with any particulars of his life, having taken up the subject pretty much at large in my preface to his gospel, to which I must refer for that species of information.

Two questions have been urged relative to this epistle, which are very difficult to be solved: 1. *When* was it written? 2. To *whom* was it sent? The precise year it is impossible to determine; but it was probably written before the destruction of Jerusalem; and perhaps about the year 68 or 69, though some think not before 80. The second question *Michaelis* answers thus:—

“This question is still more difficult to decide than the preceding. In the Latin version it was formerly called *The Epistle of St. John to the Parthians*; and this title was adopted by some of the ancient fathers, and in modern times has been defended by Grotius. But if St. John had intended this epistle for the use of the Parthians, he would hardly have written it in Greek, but would have used either the language of the country, or, if he was unacquainted with it, would have written at least in Syriac, which was the language of the learned in the Parthian empire, and especially of the Christians. We know, from the history of Manes, that even the learned in that country were for the most part unacquainted with the Greek language; for to Manes, though he united literature with genius, his adversaries objected that he understood only the barbarous Syriac. That a Grecian book would not have been understood in the Parthian empire, appears from what Josephus says in the preface to his History of the Jewish War, where he declares that a work intended for Parthian Jews must be written, not in Greek, but Hebrew. However, it is worth while to examine whence the superscription ‘ad Parthos’ took its rise. Whiston conjectures that an ancient Greek superscription of this epistle was προς παρθενους, (*to virgins*,) because this epistle is chiefly addressed to uncorrupted Christians, and that this title was falsely copied προς παρθαυς, whence was derived the Latin superscription, ‘ad Parthos.’ But this conjecture is without foundation; for since the faithful are not called in a single instance throughout the whole epistle by the name of παρθενους, it is very improbable that the title προς παρθενους was ever affixed to it. I would

rather suppose, therefore, that the frequent use in this epistle of the words ‘light’ and ‘darkness,’ which occur in the Persian philosophy, and on the same occasions as those on which St. John has used them, gave rise to the opinion that St. John wrote it with a view of correcting the abuses of the Persian philosophy; whence it was inferred that he designed it for the use of the Christians in the Parthian empire. That St. John really designed his epistle as a warning to those Christians who were in danger of being infected with Zoroastrian principles, is very probable, though the language of the epistle will not permit us to place St. John’s readers in a country to the east of the Euphrates.

“LAMPE, who appeals to Theodoret, contends that it, was not designed for any particular community, but that it was written for the use of Christians of every denomination; and this is really the most probable opinions since the epistle contains no reference to any individual Church. The only difficulty attending this opinion lies in the name ‘epistle,’ because the frequent use in an epistle of the terms ‘light and darkness,’ taken in the Persian sense of these words, seems to imply that it was written to persons of a particular description. But if we call it a treatise, this difficulty will cease; and in fact, the name ‘epistle’ is improperly applied to it, since it has nothing which entitles it to this appellation. It does not begin with the salutation which is used in Greek epistles, and with which St. John himself begins his two last epistles; nor does it contain any salutations, though they are found in almost all the epistles of the apostles. It is true that St. John addresses his readers in the second person; but this mode of writing is frequently adopted in books, and especially in prefaces: for instance, in Wolfe’s Elements of Mathematics, the reader is addressed throughout in the second person, I therefore consider that which is commonly called the First Epistle of St. John as a book or treatise, in which the apostle declared to the whole world his disapprobation of the doctrines maintained by Cerinthus and the Gnostics. However, as I do not think it worth while to dispute about words, I have retained the usual title, and have called it the First Epistle of St. John.

“That the design of this epistle was to combat the doctrine delivered by certain false teachers, appears from [1 John 2:18-26](#); [1 John 3:7; 4:1-3](#): and what this false doctrine was may be inferred from the counter doctrine delivered by St. John, [1 John 5:1-6](#). The apostle here asserts that Jesus is the Christ,’ and that he was the Christ, ‘not by water only, but by water and blood.’ Now these words, which are not in themselves very

intelligible, become perfectly clear if we consider them as opposed to the doctrine of Cerinthus, who asserted that Jesus was by birth a mere man; but that the Æon, Christ, descended on him at his baptism, and left him before his death. But if what St. John says, ^{<3130>}**1 John 5:1-6**, was opposed to Cerinthus, the Antichrists of whom he speaks, ^{<3128>}**1 John 2:18, 19**, and who, according to ^{<3122>}**1 John 2:22**, denied that Jesus was the Christ, as also the false prophets, mentioned ^{<3140>}**1 John 4:1, 3**, must be Cerinthians, or at least Gnostics. That they were neither Jews nor heathens may be inferred from ^{<3119>}**1 John 2:19**, where St. John says, ‘They went out from us.’ Farther, he describes them, ^{<3128>}**1 John 2:18**, as persons who had lately appeared in the world. But this description suits neither Jews nor heathens, who, when this epistle was written, had not lately begun to deny that Jesus was the Christ. Lastly, in the same verse, he describes them as tokens of the last time, saying, ‘As ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many Antichrists, *whereby* we know that it is the last time.’ But this inference could not be drawn from the refusal of the Jews to acknowledge that Jesus was the Messiah. Now, as soon as we perceive that the position, ‘Jesus is the Christ,’ is a counter position against Cerinthus, we may infer, as I have already observed, that the Antichrists who denied that Jesus was the Christ, or who denied that Christ had appeared in the flesh, were Cerinthians; or perhaps the latter were Docetes. It is, therefore, highly probable that the whole epistle, which in various places discovers an opposition to false teachers, was written against Cerinthians, or at least against Gnostics and Magi. A proposition can never be completely understood, unless we know the author’s design in delivering it. For instance, ‘God is light, and in him is no darkness,’ appears to contain a tautology, if we consider it as a detached dogma; and if it be considered as an admonitory proposition, it may be thought to contain a severe reproof; but if we regard it in a polemical view, it will present itself under a very different form. This epistle abounds with exhortations; but no man who wishes to understand it will be satisfied without asking the following questions: Why did St. John give these admonitions? Why has he so frequently repeated them? Why has he admonished, if he thought admonition necessary, merely in general terms, to holiness and brotherly love? And why has he not sometimes descended to particulars, as other apostles have done? An answer to these questions will throw great light on the epistle; and this light I will endeavour to procure for the reader, by pointing out the several propositions which, in my opinion, are laid down in opposition to Gnostic errors.

“1. In the first chapter the four first verses are opposed to the following assertion of the Gnostics: ‘That the apostles did not deliver the doctrine of Jesus as they had received it, but made additions to it, especially in the commandments which were termed legal; whereof they themselves (the Gnostics) retained the genuine and uncorrupted mystery.’ St. John therefore says: ‘That he declared that which was from the beginning, which he himself had seen and heard;’ that is, that he taught the doctrine of Christ as it was originally delivered, as he had heard it from Christ’s own mouth, whose person he had seen and felt; and that he made no additions of his own, but only reported as a faithful witness. In like manner he appeals, ^{<1121>}**1 John 2:13, 14**, to the elder Christians, whom he calls fathers, ‘because they knew him who was from the beginning;’ that is, because they knew how Christ had taught from the beginning; and ^{<1122>}**1 John 2:24**, he says: ‘Let that abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning.’ Farther he says, ^{<1123>}**1 John 2:7**: ‘Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning.’ In the next verse he adds: ‘Again a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the light now shineth.’ Now Christ himself had given his disciples a commandment which he called a new commandment, and this was, ‘that they should love one another.’ The term ‘new commandment,’ therefore, St. John borrowed from Christ; but in the present instance he appears to have applied it to a different subject, because the special command which Christ gave to his disciples, that they should love one another, and which he called a new commandment, could not well be called an old commandment, being very different from the general commandment, that we should love our neighbour. St. John, therefore, very probably meant that the commandment of love and sanctification was no new commandment, as the Gnostics contended, but the old commandment which the Christians had heard from the beginning. It was, indeed, become a new commandment, in consequence of the false doctrines which then prevailed; or rather, it appeared to be so, because the Gnostics had endeavoured to banish it from their system of theology. But whether a new or an old commandment, St. John thought proper to enforce it.

“2. The Gnostics, who contended that those commandments which were legal were not given by Christ, but were added by the apostles without his authority, counteracted, by so doing, the whole doctrine of sanctification. St. John, therefore, devotes the greatest part of his epistle to the

confirmation and enforcement of this doctrine. In **1 John 1:5, 7**, he asserts, as a principal part of the message which he had heard from Christ, that no one who does not walk in the light has fellowship with God. In the three following verses he limits this proposition in such a manner as was necessary in arguing with an adversary; and **1 John 2:1, 2**, he removes the objection, that, according to his doctrine, a Christian who was guilty of wilful sins lost thereby all hopes of salvation. He then maintains, **1 John 2:3-5**, and apparently in allusion to the word **γνωσις**, knowledge, the favourite term of the Gnostics, that he who boasted of profound knowledge, and at the same time rejected the commandments of Christ, had not a real but only a pretended knowledge; and that in him only the love of God is perfected, **τετελειωται**, who keeps God's word. The expression **τετελειωται** is a term which was used in the schools of the philosophers, and applied to the scholars called esoterici, who had made a considerable progress in the inner school. Now the Gnostics were, in their own opinion, scholars of this description; but since they, whose imaginary system of theology annuls the commands of God, are so far from being perfect that they are not even beginners in the science, St. John very properly refuses to admit their pretensions, and opposes to them others who were perfect in a different way, and who were more justly entitled to the appellation. With respect to the expressions, 'keeping the commandments of God,' or 'not keeping his commandments,' it must be observed that, when used in a polemical work, they denote, not merely the observance or violation of God's commands in our own practice, but the teaching of others that they are to be observed or rejected. What St. John says, **1 John 2:7, 8**, has been already explained in the preceding paragraph.

"The whole of the third chapter, and part of the fourth, is devoted to the doctrine of sanctification, on which I have to make the following remarks. When St. John says, **1 John 3:7**, 'Let no man deceive you; he who doeth righteousness is righteous,' he probably intends, not merely to deliver a precept, but to oppose the doctrine of those who asserted that a man, though he sinned, might be righteous in respect to his spiritual soul, because sin proceeded only from the material body. A similar observation may be applied to **1 John 3:4**: 'Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law;' which, considered by itself, appears to be an identical proposition; but when considered as an assertion opposed to the Gnostics, it is far from being superfluous, because, evident as it appears to

be, they virtually denied it. From the passage above quoted from the works of Irenæus, we have seen that they rejected the legal commandments as parts of the Christian religion which were not warranted by the authority of Christ; consequently, they denied that sin was a transgression of the law. Farther, it was consistent with their principles to regard sins as diseases; for they believed in a metempsychosis, and imagined that the souls of men were confined in their present bodies as in a prison, and as a punishment for having offended in the region above. According to this system, the violent and irregular passions of anger, hatred, &c., were tortures for the soul; they were diseases, but not punishable transgressions of the law. I will not assert that all who believed in a transmigration of souls argued in this manner, but some of them certainly did so; and against these it was not superfluous to write, ‘Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law.’

“The love of the brethren, which St. John enforced as a chief commandment, is generally understood of that special love which Christ commanded his disciples to have towards each other. But I rather think that St. John means the love of our neighbour in general, which Christ commanded, as comprehending the half of the law; for this general love St. John might very properly call the love of our brother, since God has created us all, and is our common Father. Besides, as St. John calls Cain, Abel’s brother, he could not intend to signify by this term a person of the same religious sentiments. Nor would it have been consistent with candour to have censured the Gnostics for not having Christian brotherly love towards St. John and other true believers, for in this particular sense they were not brethren; and St. John himself, in his second epistle, **2 John 1:10**, forbids the exercise of Christian brotherly love towards those who teach false doctrines. I believe, therefore, that the brotherly love of which St. John speaks in the third chapter of this epistle, is not confined to that special love which we owe to those who are allied to us by religion, but denotes the love of our neighbour in general. Nor do I except even **1 John 3:16**, where some think that St. John would require too much, if he meant brotherly love in general, or charity toward all men. But are there not certain cases in which it is our duty to hazard and even sacrifice our lives, in order to rescue our neighbour! Is not this duty performed by the soldier? And is it not performed by him who visits those who are infected with contagious diseases? It is true that this is not a duty which every man owes in all cases to his neighbour; but then, on the other hand, is it not a

duty which every man owes to his spiritual brother? Nor was it St. John's design so much to enforce this duty, and to recommend the exercise of it, as to argue from the acknowledgment of this duty in certain cases, to the necessity of performing the less painful duty of supporting our brethren in distress, by a participation of our temporal possessions. But though I believe that in the third chapter St. John speaks of the love of our neighbour in general, I do not mean to affirm that he nowhere understands that special love which Christians owe one to another, of which we meet with an instance in ~~1 John~~ **1 John 5:1, 2.**

“With respect to the moral conduct of the Gnostics, against whom St. John wrote, we may infer, therefore, that the apostle found more reason to censure them for their want of charity toward their neighbours, than for dissoluteness or debauchery. This want of charity they probably displayed by a hatred of the true believers.

“What St. John says, ~~1 John~~ **1 John 5:3**, that ‘God’s commandments are not grievous,’ appears in the clearest light when we consider it as opposed to the Gnostics, to whom the Divine commandments, as delivered by the apostles, appeared to be too legal.

“St. John declares, ~~1 John~~ **1 John 1:5**, as the message which he had heard from Christ, that ‘God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.’ Now if this proposition had been then as generally admitted as it is at present, there could have been no necessity for declaring it at the very beginning of the epistle, with so much energy, to be the grand message of Christ. We may reasonably infer, therefore, that it was opposed to certain persons who delivered a contrary doctrine. Farther, the words ‘light’ and ‘darkness,’ which are here applied to the Deity in a manner which is not usual in the Bible, remind us of the technical terms used by the Persian Magi, and afterwards by the Manicheans. It is true that in the Bible we meet with the expressions ‘works of the light,’ ‘children of the light,’ ‘to walk in the light,’ and others of the same kind; but in these instances the term ‘light’ is not synonymous with ‘holiness;’ works of the light denoting nothing more than works which no man need be ashamed to perform openly, and in the face of the whole world. This explanation of the word ‘light’ is inapplicable in the proposition ‘God is light;’ because there would be an impropriety in representing God either as fearing or not fearing to act in the face of the whole world. St. John, therefore, uses the term ‘light’ as equivalent to holiness.

“Now, the Gnostics admitted that the supreme Being was perfectly holy and pure light; but they denied that the supreme Being was the God whom the Jews and the Christians worshipped. For the Jews and the Christians worshipped the Creator of the world; and the Gnostics asserted that the Creator of the world was either a spirit of darkness, or, if he was a spirit of light, that he was not free from darkness.

“From ~~123~~ **1 John 2:23**, where St. John says, that ‘he who denies the Son, rejects also the Father,’ it appears that his adversaries did not deny the Father in positive terms, since the apostle argues only that they virtually did so by denying the Son. Now, the Gnostics did not positively deny the Father of Christ, whom they allowed to be the supreme Being, but then they did not allow that he was the Creator. The terms, therefore, ‘God’ and the ‘Father of Christ,’ though they denote in reality the same person, must not be considered as having precisely the same import; since the adversaries of St. John admitted that the Father of Christ was the supreme Being, and pure light; but denied that the Creator, who is in fact God, was light without darkness.

“4. In some places, especially ~~104~~ **1 John 4:2, 3**, St. John opposes false teachers of another description, namely, those who denied that Christ was come in the flesh. Now they who denied this were not Cerinthians, but another kind of Gnostics, called Docetes. For as, on the one hand, Cerinthus maintained that Jesus was a mere and therefore real man, the Docetes on the other hand contended that he was an incorporeal phantom, in which the Æon, Christ, or Divine nature, presented itself to mankind. ~~101~~ **1 John 1:1**: ‘Our hands have handled,’ appears likewise to be opposed to this error of the Docetes.

“The doctrines which St. John has delivered in this epistle he has not supported, either by arguments drawn from reason, or by quotations from the Old Testament; for neither of them are necessary, since the bare assertion of an apostle of Christ is sufficient authority. It is true that, in one respect, this epistle has less energy than St. John’s gospel, because in his gospel he warrants his doctrines by the speeches of Christ. But then, on the other hand, St. John declares in this epistle, ~~103~~ **1 John 3:24; 4:4; 5:14, 16**, that God sent his Spirit to the apostolic Church, and heard their prayers. And it is evident that St. John alludes to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, and to the miraculous powers obtained by prayer.

“The close of this epistle, ‘Keep yourselves from idols,’ has no immediate connection with the preceding discourse. I am therefore in doubt whether St; John meant to warn his readers against taking part in heathen sacrifices, which was allowed by these Gnostics, who are called Nicolaitans in the Apocalypse; or whether he meant to describe the system of the Gnostics in general as a system of idolatry, which in fact it was.”

Dr. *Macknight* has some judicious observations on the authenticity of this epistle, from the similarity of the style to that of the gospel of John.

“The authenticity of any ancient writing is established, first, by the testimony of contemporary and succeeding authors, whose works have come down to us, and who speak of that writing as known to be the work of the person whose name it bears. Secondly, by the suitableness of the things contained in such writing to the character and circumstances of its supposed author, and by the similarity of its style to the style of the other acknowledged writings of that author. The former of these proofs is called the *external evidence* of the authenticity of a writing; The latter, its *internal evidence*. When these two kinds of evidence are found accompanying any writing, they render its genuineness indubitable.

“The external evidence of the authenticity of John’s first epistle has been amply detailed by Dr. Lardner, who shows that the earliest and best Christian writers have all, with one consent, and without any hesitation, ascribed the first epistle to him. And their testimony is confirmed by this circumstance, that the Syriac translator, who omitted the Second Epistle of Peter, the Second and Third Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude, because some doubts were entertained concerning them in the first age, or perhaps because they had not come to his knowledge, has translated John’s first epistle, as an apostolical writing of which there never was any doubt in that or in any other Christian Church.

“In this preface, therefore, we shall state the internal evidence of the authenticity of John’s first epistle, by showing, *first*, that, in respect of its matter, and, *secondly*, in respect of its style, it is perfectly suitable to the character and circumstances of its supposed author. In respect of the matter or subject of the epistle under consideration, the writer of it has discovered himself to be John the apostle, by introducing a number of sentiments and expressions found in the gospel, which all Christians from the beginning have acknowledged to be the work of John the apostle.

EPISTLE.	GOSPEL
<p>1 John 1:1. That which was from the beginning ο εθεασαμεθα, which we have contemplated, concerning the living Word.</p>	<p>John 1:1. In the beginning was the Word: John 1:14; And εθεασαμεθα, we beheld his glory: John 1:4; In him was light: John 1:14; The Word was made flesh</p>
<p>1 John 2:5. Whosoever keepeth his word truly, in that man the love of God is perfected.</p>	<p>John 14:23. If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him.</p>
<p>1 John 2:6. He who saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. See 1 John 3:24; 4:13-16.</p>	<p>John 15:4. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bring forth fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.</p>
<p>1 John 2:8. I write to you a new commandment.</p>	<p>John 13:34. A new commandment I give unto you,</p>
<p>1 John 3:11. This is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that ye should love one another.</p>	<p>That ye love one another, as I have loved you.</p>
<p>1 John 2:8. The darkness passeth away, and the light which is true now shineth.</p>	<p>John 1:5. The light shineth in darkness. John 1:9. That was the true light.</p>
<p>1 John 2:10. Abideth in the light, and there is no stumbling block to him.</p>	<p>John 11:10. If a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.</p>
<p>1 John 2:13. Young children, I write to you, because ye have known the Father.</p>	<p>John 17:3. This is the eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God,</p>
<p>1 John 2:14. Because ye have known him from the beginning.</p>	<p>And Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent</p>
<p>1 John 3:7-9. Every one who worketh righteousness is begotten of God. See also 1 John 5:1.</p>	<p>John 3:3. Except a man be begotten again, John 3:5; Except a man be begotten of water and of the Spirit.</p>
<p>1 John 3:1. Behold how great love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!</p>	<p>John 1:12. To them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name.</p>

<p>1 John 3:2. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.</p>	<p>John 17:24. Be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.</p>
<p>1 John 3:8. He who worketh sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.</p>	<p>John 8:44. Ye are of your father the devil; he was a murderer from the beginning.</p>
<p>1 John 3:13. Do not wonder, my brethren, that the world hateth you.</p>	<p>John 15:20. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.</p>
<p>1 John 4:9. By this the love of God was manifested, that God sent his Son, the only begotten, into the world, that we might live through him.</p>	<p>John 3:16. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life.</p>
<p>1 John 4:12. No man hath seen God at any time.</p>	<p>John 1:18. No man hath seen God at any time.</p>
<p>1 John 5:13. These things I have written to you, who believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life; and that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God.</p>	<p>John 20:31. These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.</p>
<p>1 John 5:14. If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.</p>	<p>John 14:14. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.</p>
<p>1 John 5:20. The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.</p>	<p>John 17:2. Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. John 17:3: And this is the eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.</p>

“From the above comparison of the first epistle of John with his gospel, there appears such an exact agreement of sentiment in the two writings, that no reader who is capable of discerning what is peculiar in an author’s turn of thinking, can entertain the least doubt of their being the productions of one and the same writer. Farther, since John has not mentioned his own name in his gospel, the want of his name in the epistle is no proof that it was not written by him; but rather a presumption that it is his; especially as he has sufficiently discovered himself to be an apostle, by affirming, in the

beginning of the epistle, that he was an eye and an ear witness of the things he has written concerning the living word.

“The style of this epistle being the same with the style of the gospel of John, it is, by that internal mark likewise, denoted to be his writing. In his gospel, John does not content himself with simply affirming or denying a thing; but, to strengthen his affirmation, he denies the contrary. In like manner, to strengthen his denial of a thing, he affirms its contrary. See **John 1:20; 3:36; 5:22**. The same manner of expressing things strongly, is found in this epistle; for example, **1 John 2:4**: ‘He who saith, I have known him, and doth not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’ **1 John 2:27**: ‘The same unction teacheth you concerning all things, and is truth, and is no lie.’ **1 John 4:2**: ‘Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ hath come in the flesh, is from God.’ **1 John 4:3**: ‘And every spirit which doth not confess that Jesus Christ hath come in the flesh, is not from God.’

“In his gospel likewise, John, to express things emphatically, frequently uses the demonstrative pronoun *this*. **John 1:19**; **αυτη**. ‘This is the testimony.’ **John 3:19**; **αυτη**. ‘This is the condemnation, that light,’ &c. **John 6:29**: **τουτο**. ‘This is the work of God.’ **John 6:40**: **τουτο**. ‘This is the will of him.’ **John 6:50**: **ουτος**. ‘This is the bread which cometh down from heaven.’ **John 17:3**: **αυτη**. ‘This is the eternal life.’ In the epistle the same emphatical manner of expression is found, **1 John 1:5; 2:25**: ‘This is the promise.’ **1 John 3:23**: **αυτη**. ‘This is the commandment.’ **1 John 5:3**: **αυτη**. ‘This is the love of God.’ **1 John 5:4**: ‘This is the victory.’ **1 John 5:6**: **ουτος**. ‘This is he who came by water.’ **1 John 5:14**: **αυτη**. ‘This is the boldness which we have with him.’

“Such is the internal evidence on which all Christians, from the beginning, have received the First Epistle of John as really written by him, and of Divine authority, although his name is not mentioned in the inscription, nor in any part of the epistle.”

On the term *epistle*, as applied to this work of St. John, it may be necessary to make a few remarks. There is properly nothing of the *epistolary style* in this work: it is addressed neither to any particular *person*, nor to any *Church*.

The writer does not mention himself either in the beginning or ending; and, although this can be no objection against its *authenticity*, yet it is some proof that the work was never intended to be considered in the light of an *epistle*.

1. Is it a *tract* or *dissertation* upon the more sublime parts of Christianity. 2. Is it a *polemical discourse* against *heretics*, particularly the *Gnostics*, or some of their teachers, who were disturbing the Churches where John dwelt. 3. Is it a *sermon*, the subject of which is God's love to man in the mission of Jesus Christ; from which our obligations to love and serve him are particularly inferred. 4. Or is it a *collection* of Christian *aphorisms*, made by John himself; and put together as they occurred to his mind, without any intended *order* or *method*. Much might be said on all these heads of inquiry; and the issue would be, that the idea of its being an *epistle* of any kind must be relinquished; and yet *epistle* is its general denomination through all antiquity.

It is a matter, however, of little importance what its *title* may be, or to what species of literary composition it belongs; while we know that it is the genuine work of St. John; of the holiest man who ever breathed; of one who was most intimately acquainted with the doctrine and mind of his Lord; of one who was admitted to the closest fellowship with his Saviour; and who has treated of the deepest things that can be experienced or comprehended in the Christian life.

As to *distinct heads of discourse*, it does not appear to me that any were intended by the apostle; he wrote just as the subjects occurred to his mind, or rather as the Holy Spirit gave him utterance; and, although *technical order* is not here to be expected, yet nothing like disorder or confusion can be found in the whole work.

As Professor Michaelis has considered it in the light of a *polemical treatise*, written against the *Gnostics*, and other false teachers of that time, I have thought it right to give his view of the work considered in this light; but as I, in general, pursue another plan of interpretation in the *notes*, I have inserted his elucidations in the preceding pages of this preface.

On the controverted text of the three heavenly Witnesses I have said what truth and a deep and thorough examination of the subject have obliged me to say. I am satisfied that it is not genuine, though the *doctrine* in behalf of which it has been originally introduced into the epistle is a doctrine of the

highest importance, and most positively revealed in various parts both of the Old and New Testament. The stress which has been laid on the testimony of this text in behalf of the doctrine of the Trinity has done much evil; for when its own authenticity has come to be critically examined, and has been found to rest on no sure foundation, the adversaries of the doctrine itself have thought they had full cause for triumph, and have in effect said, "If this text be to the epistle, and to the doctrine in question, what the sun is in the world, what the heart is in man, and what the needle is in the mariner's compass, then the doctrine is spurious, for the text is a most manifest forgery." I would just observe, that incautious or feeble defences of any doctrine do not affect the doctrine itself but in the view of superficial minds. The *proof* that this text is an interpolation which, first existing as an illustrative marginal note, has afterwards been unfortunately introduced into the text, has "demolished *no strong hold* of the orthodox, has taken away *no pillar* from the Christian faith." The grand defences of the doctrine of the Trinity, brought down to us from the highest Christian antiquity, stand still in all their force; not one of them was built upon this text, because the text, as a supposed part of St. John's work, did not then exist; therefore neither *evidence*, *prop*, nor *pillar* of the grand doctrine is injured. We have what we ever had in this respect, and we may make the same illustrating use of the words in reference to this doctrine which many Latin writers, since the time of St. Cyprian, made; and which was proper enough in its own place, but became useless when incorporated with the sure sayings of God.

No man, it is hoped, will be so obstinate, perverse, or disingenuous, as to say or insinuate that the man who gives up this text is unsound in the faith; it would be as reasonable to assert, on the other hand, that he who understands the mass of evidence that is against the authenticity of this verse, and who nevertheless *will contend* for its continuance in the sacred canon, is a Deist in his heart, and endeavours to discredit the truth by mixing it with error and falsehood. Those whose doubts are not removed by the dissertation at the end of his epistle had better read the late Professor *Porson's* Answer to Dean *Travis*, where it is presumed they will receive the fullest satisfaction.

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE OF JOHN.

Chronological Notes relative to this Epistle.

- Year of the Constantinopolitan era of the world, or that used by the Byzantine historians, and other eastern Writers, 5577.
- Year of the Alexandrian era of the world, 5571.
- Year of the Antiochian era of the world, 5561.
- Year of the world, according to Archbishop Usher, 4073.
- Year of the world, according to Eusebius, in his Chronicon, 4297.
- Year of the minor Jewish era of the world, or that in common use, 3829.
- Year of the Greater Rabbinical era of the world, 4428.
- Year from the Flood, according to Archbishop Usher, and the English Bible, 2417.
- Year of the Cali yuga, or Indian era of the Deluge, 3171.
- Year of the era of Iphitus, or since the first commencement of the Olympic games, 1009.
- Year of the era of Nabonassar, king of Babylon, 818.
- Year of the CCXIIth Olympiad, 1.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Fabius Pictor, 816.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Frontinus, 820.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to the Fasti Capitolini, 821.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Varro, which was that most generally used, 822.
- Year of the era of the Seleucidæ, 381.
- Year of the Cæsarean era of Antioch, 117.
- Year of the Julian era, 114.
- Year of the Spanish era, 107.
- Year from the birth of Jesus Christ, according to Archbishop Usher, 73.
- Year of the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 69.
- Year of Vologesus, king of the Parthians, 20.
- Year of the Dionysian period, or Easter Cycle, 70.

- Year of the Grecian Cycle of nineteen years, or Common Golden Number, 13; or the fifth embolismic.
- Year of the Jewish Cycle of nineteen years, 10; or the year before the fourth embolismic.
- Year of the Solar Cycle, 22.
- Dominical Letter, it being the first year after the Bissextile, or Leap Year, A.
- Day of the Jewish Passover, the twenty-fourth of March, which happened in this year on the sixth day after the Jewish Sabbath.
- Easter Sunday, the twenty-sixth of March.
- Epact, or age of the moon on the 22d of March, (the day of the earliest Easter Sunday possible,) 12.
- Epact, according to the present mode of computation, or the moon's age on New Year's day, or the Calends of January, 20.
- Monthly Epacts, or age of the moon on the Calends of each month respectively, (beginning with January,) 20, 22, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 27, 28, 0, 0, 2, 2.
- Number of Direction, or the number of days from the twenty-first of March to the Jewish Passover, 3.
- In this year reigned four Roman emperors, viz., Galba, from Jan. 1 to Jan. 15, Otho ninety days, Vitellius eight months, and Vespasian for the remainder of the year.
- Roman Consuls, Servius Sulpicius Galba Augustus, the second time, and Titus Vinius Rufinus, from Jan. 1 to the death of Galba, Jan. 15; Salvius Otho Augustus, and L. Salvius Otho Titianus, from Jan. 15 to March 1; L. Virginius Rufus, and Vopiscus Pompeius Silvanus, from March 1 to May 1; Titus Arrius Antoninus and P. Marius Celsus, the second time, from May 1 to Sept. 1; C. Fabius Valens and Aulus Alienus Cœcina, from Sept. 1, the former holding the Consulship to Nov. 1, the latter being succeeded by Roscius Regulus, on Oct. 31; Cn. Cæcilius Simplex and C. Quintius Atticus, from Nov. 1, to the end of the year.

CHAPTER 1.

The testimony of the apostle concerning the reality of the person and doctrine of Christ; and the end for which he bears this testimony, 1-4. God is light, and none can have fellowship with him who do not walk in the light; those who walk in the light are cleansed from all unrighteousness by the blood of Christ, 5-7. No man can say that he has not sinned; but God is faithful and just to cleanse from all unrighteousness them who confess their sins, 8-10.

NOTES ON CHAP. 1.

Verse 1. That which was from the beginning] That glorious personage, JESUS CHRIST *the LORD*, who was from *eternity*; him, being *manifested in the flesh*, we have heard proclaim the *doctrine of eternal life*; with our own eyes have we seen him, not transiently, for we have *looked upon him* frequently; and *our hands have handled*-frequently touched, his person; and we have had every proof of the identity and reality of this glorious being that our senses of *hearing*, ο ακηκοαμεν, *seeing*, ο εωρακαμεν τοις αφθαλμοις ημων, and *feeling*, και αι χειρες ημων εψηλαφησαν could possibly require.

Verse 2. For the Life was manifested] The Lord Jesus, who is the creator of all things, and the *fountain of life* to all sentient and intellectual beings, and from whom *eternal life* and *happiness* come, *was manifested* in the flesh, and we *have seen him*, and in consequence *bear witness* to him as the fountain and author of eternal life; for he who *was from eternity with the Father* was *manifested unto us* his apostles, and to the whole of the Jewish nation, and preached that doctrine of eternal life which I have before delivered to the world in my gospel, and which I now farther confirm by this epistle.

Verse 3. That which we have seen and heard] We deliver nothing by hearsay, nothing by tradition, nothing from conjecture; we have had the fullest certainty of all that we write and preach.

That ye also may have fellowship with us] That ye may be preserved from all false doctrine, and have a real *participation* with us apostles of the grace, peace, love, and life of God, which communion we have *with God*

the Father, who hath loved us, and given his Son Jesus Christ to redeem us; and *with his Son Jesus Christ*, who laid down his life for the life of the world and *through* whom, being God manifested in the flesh, we have union with God, are made partakers of the Divine nature and dwell in God, and God in us.

Verse 4. That your joy may be full.] Ye have already *tasted* that the Lord is good; but I am now going to show you the height of your Christian calling, that your *happiness may be complete*, being thoroughly cleansed from all sin, and filled with the fulness of God.

Verse 5. This then is the message] This is the *grand principle* on which all depends, *which we have heard of* **απαύτου**, FROM *him*; for neither Moses nor the prophets ever gave that full instruction concerning God and communion with him which Jesus Christ has given, for the only-begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, has alone declared the fulness of the truth, and the extent of the blessings, which believers on him are to receive. See <EOLIS> **John 1:18.**

God is light] The source of wisdom, knowledge, holiness, and happiness; and *in him is no darkness at all*-no ignorance, no imperfection, no sinfulness, no misery. And from him wisdom, knowledge, holiness, and happiness are received by every believing soul. This is the grand message of the Gospel, the great principle on which the happiness of man depends. LIGHT implies every essential excellence, especially wisdom, holiness, and happiness. DARKNESS implies all imperfection, and principally *ignorance, sinfulness, and misery*. LIGHT is the purest, the most subtle, the most useful, and the most diffusive of all God's creatures; it is, therefore, a very proper emblem of the *purity, perfection, and goodness* of the Divine nature. God is to human soul, what the light is to the world; without the latter all would be dismal and uncomfortable, and terror and death would universally prevail: and without an indwelling God what is religion? Without his all-penetrating and diffusive light, what is the soul of man? Religion would be an empty science, a dead letter, a system unauthoritaded and uninfluencing, and the soul a trackless wilderness, a howling waste, full of evil, of terror and dismay, and ever racked with realizing anticipations of future, successive, permanent, substantial, and endless misery. No wonder the apostle lays this down as a first and grand principle, stating it to be the essential message which he had received from Christ to deliver to the world.

Verse 6. If we say that we have fellowship] Having fellowship, **κοινωνία**, *communion*, with God, necessarily implies a *partaking of the Divine nature*. Now if a man profess to have such communion, and *walk in darkness*-live an irreligious and sinful life, *he lies*, in the profession which he makes, and *does not the truth*-does not walk according to the directions of the Gospel, on the grace of which he holds his relation to God, and his communion with him.

The *Gnostics*, against whose errors it is supposed this epistle was written, were great pretenders to *knowledge*, to the highest degrees of the Divine illumination, and the nearest communion with the fountain of holiness, while their manners were excessively corrupt.

Verse 7. But if we walk in the light] If, having received the principle of holiness from him, we live a holy and righteous life, deriving continual light, power, and life from him, then *we have fellowship one with another*; that is, we have communion with God, and God condescends to hold communion with us. This appears to be the intention of the apostle; and so he was understood by some versions and MSS., which, instead of **μετάλληλων**, *with each other*, have **μετάυτον**, *with him*. Those who are deeply experienced in Divine things converse with God, and God with them. What John says is no *figure*; God and a holy heart are in continual correspondence.

The blood of Jesus Christ] The meritorious efficacy of his passion and death has purged our consciences from dead works, *and cleanseth us*, **καθαρίζει ημας**, *continues to cleanse us*, i.e., to *keep clean* what it has made clean, (for it requires the same merit and energy to preserve holiness in the soul of man, as to produce it,) or, as several MSS. and some versions read, **καθαριει** and **καθαρισει**, *will cleanse*; speaking of those who are already justified, and are expecting *full redemption* in his blood.

And being cleansed from all sin is what every believer should look for, what he has a right to expect, and what he must have *in this life*, in order to be prepared to meet his God. Christ is not a *partial Saviour*, he saves to the uttermost, and he cleanses from *ALL sin*.

Verse 8. If we say that we have no sin] This is tantamount to **ⲙⲓⲛⲓ** **1 John 1:10**: *If we say that we have not sinned. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*; and therefore every man needs a *Saviour*, such as Christ is. It is very likely that the heretics, against whose evil doctrines the

apostle writes, denied that they had any sin, or needed any Saviour. In deed, the *Gnostics* even denied that Christ suffered: the *Æon*, or Divine Being that dwelt in the man Christ Jesus, according to them, left him when he was taken by the Jews; and he, being but a common man, his sufferings and death had neither merit nor efficacy.

We deceive ourselves] By supposing that we have no guilt, no sinfulness, and consequently have no need of the blood of Christ as an atoning sacrifice: this is the most dreadful of all deceptions, as it leaves the soul under all the guilt and pollution of sin, exposed to hell, and utterly unfit for heaven.

The truth is not in us.] We have no *knowledge* of the *Gospel* of Jesus, the whole of which is founded on this most awful truth—all have sinned, all are guilty, all are unholy; and none can redeem himself. Hence it is as necessary that Jesus Christ should become incarnated, and suffer and die to bring men to God.

Verse 9. If we confess our sins] If, from a deep sense of our guilt, impurity, and helplessness, we humble ourselves before God, acknowledging our iniquity, his holiness, and our own utter helplessness, and implore mercy for his sake who has died for us; *he is faithful*, because to such he has *promised* mercy, ^{<19316>}**Psalm 32:5;** ^{<12813>}**Proverbs 28:13;** and *just*, for Christ has died for us, and thus made an atonement to the Divine justice; so that God can now be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.] Not only to *forgive the sin*, but to *purify the heart*.

OBSERVE here, 1. Sin exists in the soul after two modes or forms: (1.) In *guilt*, which requires *forgiveness* or *pardon*. (2.) In *pollution*, which requires *cleansing*.

2. *Guilt*, to be forgiven, must be *confessed*; and *pollution*, to be *cleansed*, must be also *confessed*. In order to *find mercy*, a man must *know* and *feel* himself to be a *sinner*, that he may fervently apply to God for pardon; in order to get a *clean heart*, a man must know and feel its depravity, acknowledge and deplore it before God, in order to be *fully sanctified*.

3. Few are pardoned, because they do not feel and confess their sins; and few are sanctified or cleansed from all sin, because they do not feel and confess their own sore, and the plague of their hearts.

4. As the blood of Jesus Christ, the merit of his passion and death, applied by faith, purges the conscience from *all dead works*, so the same *cleanses the heart from all unrighteousness*.

5. As all unrighteousness is *sin*, so he that is cleansed from all unrighteousness is cleansed from all sin. To attempt to evade this, and plead for the continuance of sin in the heart through life, is ungrateful, wicked, and even blasphemous; for as he who *says he has not sinned*, ~~6D10~~ **1 John 1:10**, *makes God a liar*, who has declared the contrary through every part of his revelation; so he that says the *blood of Christ* either *cannot* or *will not cleanse us from all sin* in this life, gives also the lie to his Maker, who has declared the contrary, and thus shows that the *word-the doctrine of God is not in him*.

Reader, it is the birthright of every child of God to be cleansed from all sin, to keep himself unspotted from the world, and so to live as never more to offend his Maker. All things are possible to him that believeth; because all things are possible to the infinitely meritorious blood and energetic Spirit of the Lord Jesus. See the notes on the parallel passages in the margin; and particularly in St. John's gospel, John i.

I JOHN

CHAPTER 2.

He exhorts them not to sin; yet encourages those who may have fallen, by the hope of mercy through Christ, who is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, 1, 2. He who knows God keeps his commandments; and he who professes to abide in Christ ought to walk as Christ walked, 3-6. The old and new commandment, that we should walk in the light, and love the brethren, 7-11. The apostle's description of the different states in the family of God; little children, young men, and fathers; and directions to each, 12-15. A statement of what prevails in the world, 16, 17. Cautions against antichrists, 18-23. Exhortations to persevere in what they had received, and to continue to follow that anointing of the Divine Spirit, by which they could discern all men, and know all things necessary to their salvation, and proper to prepare them for eternal glory, 24-29.

NOTES ON CHAP. 2

Verse 1. My little children] *τεκνία μου.* My beloved children; the address of an affectionate father to children whom he tenderly loves. The term also refers to the apostle's *authority* as their spiritual father, and their *obligation* to obey as his spiritual children.

That ye sin not.] This is the language of the whole Scripture; of every dispensation, ordinance, institution, doctrine, and word of God. *Sin not*-do not run into ruin; live not so as to promote your own misery; be happy, for it is the will of God that ye should be so; therefore he wills that ye should be holy: *holiness* and *happiness* are inseparable; *sin* and *misery* are equally so.

And if any man sin] If, through ignorance, inexperience, the violence of temptation, unwatchfulness, &c., ye have fallen into sin, and grieved the Spirit of God, do not continue in the sin, nor under the guilt; do not despair of being again restored to the favour of God; your case, it is true, is deeply deplorable, but not desperate; there is still hope, for—

We have an advocate with the Father] We still have him before the throne who died for our offences, and rose again for our justification; and *there* he makes intercession for us. He is the *righteous*; he who suffered, the just for the *unjust*, that he might bring us to God. Do not, therefore, despair, but have immediate recourse to God through him.

Verse 2. And he is the propitiation] ἱλασμος. The *atonement sacrifice* for our sins. This is the proper sense of the word as used in the *Septuagint*, where it often occurs; and is the translation of מִנְחָה *asham*, an *oblation for sin*, ^{<31814>}Amos 8:14. תַּעֲבֹד *chattath*, a *sacrifice for sin*, ^{<34427>}Ezekiel 44:27. כִּפּוּר *kippur*, an *atonement*, ^{<04838>}Numbers 5:8. See Clarke's note on ^{<48325>}Romans 3:25", and particularly see Clarke's note on ^{<42183>}Luke 18:13". The word is used only here and in ^{<31410>}1 John 4:10.

And not for ours only] It is not for us *apostles* that he has died, nor exclusively for the *Jewish people*, but περι ολου του κοσμου, *for the whole world*, Gentiles as well as Jews, all the descendants of Adam. The apostle does not say that he died for any select *part* of the inhabitants of the earth, or for *some out of every nation, tribe, or kindred*; but for ALL MANKIND; and the attempt to limit this is a violent outrage against God and his word.

For the meaning of the word παρακλητος, which we here translate *advocate*, see Clarke's note on ^{<41416>}John 14:16".

From these verses we learn that a poor backslider need not despair of again finding mercy; this passage holds out sufficient encouragement for his hope. There is scarcely another such in the Bible, and why? That sinners might not *presume* on the mercy of God. And why this *one*? That no backslider might utterly despair. Here, then, is a guard against presumption on the one hand, and despondency on the other.

Verse 3. And hereby we do know that we know him] If we keep the commandments of God, loving him with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, we have the fullest proof that we have the true saving knowledge of God and his Christ. The *Gnostics* pretended to much *knowledge*, but their knowledge left them in possession of all their bad passions and unholy habits; they, therefore, gave no proof that they had known either God or his Son Jesus-nor is any man properly acquainted with God, who is still under the power of his sins.

Verse 4. He that saith, I know him] This is a severe blow against those false teachers, and against all pretenders to religious knowledge, who live under the power of their sins; and against all Antinomians, and false boasters in the righteousness of Christ as a covering for their personal unholiness. They are all *liars*, and no *truth of God* is in them.

Verse 5. But whoso keepeth his word] Conscientiously observes his doctrine, the spirit and letter of the religion of Christ.

Is the love of God perfected] The design of God's love in sending Jesus Christ into the world to die for the sin of man *τετελειωται*, *is accomplished*, in that man who receives the doctrine, and applies for the salvation provided for him. This seems to be the meaning of the apostle.

That we are in him.] That we have entered into his spirit and views, received his salvation, have been enabled to walk in the light, and have communion with him by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 6. Abideth in him] He who not only professes to have known Christ, but also that he has communion with him, and abides in his favour, should prove the truth of his profession by walking as Christ walked; living a life of devotion and obedience to God, and of benevolence and beneficence to his neighbour. Thus Christ walked; and he has left us an example that we should follow his steps.

To *be in Christ*, ~~αβδ~~ **1 John 2:5**, is to be converted to the Christian faith, and to have received the remission of sins. To *abide in Christ*, ~~αβδ~~ **1 John 2:6**, is to *continue* in that state of salvation, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 7. Brethren, I write no new commandment] There seems a contradiction between this and the next verse. But the apostle appears to speak, not so much of any difference in the *essence* of the precept itself, as in reference to the *degrees* of light and grace belonging to the Mosaic and Christian dispensations. It was *ever* the command of God that men should receive his light, walk by that light, and love him and one another. But this commandment was *renewed* by Christ with much latitude and spirituality of meaning; and also with much additional *light* to see its extent, and *grace* to observe it. It may therefore be called the *OLD commandment*, which was from the beginning; and also a *NEW commandment* revealed afresh and illustrated by Christ, with the important addition to the meaning of *Thou*

shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye shall love the brethren so as to lay down your lives for each other. See Clarke's note on "~~4133~~ John 13:34".

Instead of *αδελφοι*, *brethren*, ABC, thirteen others, with both the *Syriac*, Erpen's *Arabic*, *Coptic*, *Sahidic*, *Armenian*, *Slavonic*, and *Vulgate*, with several of the *fathers*, have *αγαπητοι*, *beloved*. This is without doubt the *true reading*.

Verse 8. Which thing is true in him and in you] It is true that Christ loved the world so well as to lay down his life for it; and it was true in them, in all his faithful followers at that time, who were ready to lay down their lives for the testimony of Jesus. There is a saying in *Synopsis Sohar*, p. 94, n. 51, that may cast some light on this passage: *That way in which the just have walked, although it be OLD, yet may be said to be NEW in the love of the righteous*. The love that the righteous bear to God and to each other is a *renewal* of the commandment.

The darkness is past] The total thick darkness of the heathen world, and the comparative darkness of the Mosaic dispensation, are now *passing away*; and the pure and superior light of Christianity is now diffusing its beams everywhere. He does not say that the darkness was *all gone by*, but *παραγεται*, *it is passing away*; he does not say that the *fulness* of the *light* had appeared, but *ηδη φαινει*, *it is now shining* and will shine more and more to the perfect day; for the darkness passes away in proportion as the light shines and increases.

Verse 9. He that saith he is in the light] He that professes to be a convert to Christianity, even in the lowest degree; *and hateth his brother*-not only does not love him, but wills and does him evil, as the Jews did the Gentiles; *is in darkness*-has received no saving knowledge of the truth; and, whatever he may pretend, is in heathen ignorance, or even worse than heathen ignorance, to the present time, notwithstanding the clear shining of the light of the Gospel.

Verse 10. He that loveth his brother] That is, his neighbour, his fellow creature, whether Jew or Gentile, so as to bear him continual good will, and to be ready to do him every kind office; *abideth in the light*-not only gives proof that he has received Christ Jesus the Lord, but that he walks in him, that he *retains* the grace of his justification, and grows therein.

And there is none occasion of stumbling in him.] **και σκανδαλον εν αυτω ουκ εστιν** *And there is no stumbling block in him; he neither gives nor receives offence: love prevents him from giving any to his neighbour; and love prevents him from receiving any from his neighbour, because it leads him to put the best construction on every thing. Besides, as he walks in the light, he sees the stumbling blocks that are in the way, and avoids them; every part of his path being illuminated. Many fall into sin because they do not see the snares that are in the way; and they do not see the snares because they either have not received, or do not abide in, the light.*

Verse 11. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness] He is still in his heathen or unconverted state; and *walketh in darkness*, his conduct being a proof of that state; *and knoweth not whither he goeth*-having no proper knowledge of God or eternal things; and *cannot tell whether he is going to heaven or hell, because that darkness has blinded his eyes*-darkened his whole soul, mind, and heart.

Verse 12. I write unto you, little children] **τεκνια.** *Beloved children,* (see Clarke on “**1 John 2:1**”), those who were probably the apostle’s own converts, and members of the Church over which he presided. But it may be applied to young converts in general; those who can call God *Abba, Father*, by the Holy Spirit: therefore he says of them, *that their sins were forgiven them for his name’s sake: i.e. on account of Jesus, the Saviour, who had died for them, and was now their Mediator at the right hand of God.*

Verse 13. I write unto you, fathers] By fathers it is very likely that the apostle means persons who had embraced Christianity on its first promulgation in Judea and in the Lesser Asia, some of them had probably seen Christ in the flesh; for this appears to be what is meant by, *Ye have known him from the beginning.* These were the *elders* and *eye witnesses*, who were of the longest standing in the Church, and well established in the truths of the Gospel, and in Christian experience. But **τον απ αρχης**, *him who is from the beginning*, may mean Jesus Christ in the eternity of his nature, see **John 1:1, 2**; but the sense is the same.

I write unto you, young men] These were confirmed disciples of Christ; persons who were well-grounded in the truth, had been thoroughly exercised in the Christian warfare, were no longer agitated by doubts and fears, but had arrived at the abiding testimony of the Spirit of God in their

consciences; hence they are said to have *overcome the wicked one*, ^{αἰνία} **1 John 2:14**. They were persons in the prime of life, and in the zenith of their faith and love.

I write unto you, little children] **παῖδια**, a very different term from that used in the 12th verse { ^{αἰνία} **1 John 2:12** }, **τεκνία**, which means *beloved children*, as we have already seen. This is another *class*, and their state is differently described: *Ye have known the Father*. If the apostle does not use these two words indifferently, *four* states instead of *three*, are here described:—

1. FATHERS, **πατέρες**. those who had been converted at the very commencement of Christianity, and had seen the eternal Word manifested in the flesh.
2. YOUNG MEN, **νεανίσκοι**. youths in the prime of their spiritual life, *valiant soldiers*, fighting under the banner of Christ, who had confounded Satan in his wiles, and overcome him by the blood of the Lamb.
3. LITTLE CHILDREN, **παῖδια**. disciples of Christ, not of very long standing in the Church, nor of much experience, but who had *known the Father*; i.e. persons who had been made sons: God had sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, whereby they cried *Abba, Father!*
4. BELOVED CHILDREN, **τεκνία**. the most recent converts, and particularly those among *young men* and *women* who, from their youth, simplicity, openheartedness, and affectionate attachment to God and his cause, were peculiarly dear to this aged apostle of Jesus Christ. These are represented as having their *sins forgiven them on account of his name*, **δία το ὄνομα αὐτοῦ**, that is, for the sake of Jesus, or on account of his merit or worthiness.

These *four classes* constituted the household or family of God; each class, in ascending gradation, seems to have had more light, experience, and holiness than the other. 1. The **τεκνία**, *beloved children*, or *infants*, are those who are just born into the heavenly family. 2. The **παῖδια**, *little children*, are those who are able to walk and speak; they know their heavenly Father, and can call him by that name. 3. The **νεανίσκοι**, *young men*, are such as are grown up to man's estate; these perform the most difficult part of the labour, and are called to fight the battles of the Lord. 4. The **πατέρες**, *fathers*, are those who are at the foundation of the spiritual

family, and have known the whole economy of the work of God in themselves and in others. These have the largest stock of spiritual wisdom and religious experience. All these answer to the component members of a perfect human family. 1. There is the *beloved infant* dandled on the knees of its parents. 2. There are the *little children* that can speak a little, run about, answer to their own names, distinguish and call on their father and mother, and are now put under *instruction*. 3. There are the *youths*, those who are grown up to man's estate, are *strong* to labour, *retain* the instructions they have received, act upon them, and are occasionally called upon to *defend* their family, property, and country, against spoilers and oppressors. 4. There are the *parents*, the *father* and *mother*, from whom the family sprang, and who are the governors and directors of the household. To these *four* classes, in a perfect family, the apostle appears to allude; and we see, considered in this light, with what delicacy and propriety he uses these images.

Verse 14. The word of God abideth in you] Ye have not only thoroughly known and digested the Divine doctrine, but your hearts are moulded into it; ye know it to be the truth of God from the *power* and happiness with which it inspires you, and from the constant abiding testimony of the Spirit of that truth which lives and witnesses wherever that truth lives and predominates.

Verse 15. Love not the world] Though these several classes were so well acquainted with Divine things, and had all tasted the powers of the world to come: yet so apt are men to be drawn aside by sensible things, that the Holy Spirit saw it necessary to caution these against the love of the world, the inordinate desire of earthly things. *Covetousness* is the predominant vice of old age: *Ye fathers, love not the world*. The things which are in the world, its profits, pleasures, and honours, have the strongest allurements for *youth*; therefore, ye *young men, little children, and babes*, love not the things of this world. Let those hearts abide faithful to God who have taken him for their portion.

The love of the Father is not in him.] The love of God and the love of earthly things are incompatible. If you give place to the love of the world, the love of God cannot dwell in you; and if you have not his love, you can have no peace, no holiness, no heaven.

Verse 16. For all that is in the world] All that it can boast of, all that it can promise, is only sensual, transient gratification, and even this promise it

cannot fulfil; so that its warmest votaries can complain loudest of their disappointment.

The lust of the flesh] Sensual and impure desires which seek their gratification in women, strong drink, delicious viands, and the like.

Lust of the eyes] Inordinate desires after *finery* of every kind, gaudy dress, splendid houses, superb furniture, expensive equipage, trappings, and decorations of all sorts.

Pride of life] Hunting after honours, titles, and pedigrees; boasting of ancestry, family connections, great offices, honourable acquaintance, and the like.

Is not of the Father] Nothing of these inordinate attachments either comes from or leads to God. They are of this world; here they begin, flourish, and end. They deprave the mind, divert it from Divine pursuits, and render it utterly incapable of spiritual enjoyments.

Verse 17. The world passeth away] All these things are continually fading and perishing; and the very *state* in which they are possessed is changing perpetually, and the earth and its works will be shortly burnt up.

And the lust thereof] The men of this world, their vain pursuits, and delusive pleasures, are passing away in their successive generations, and their very memory perishes; *but he that doeth the will of God*-that seeks the pleasure, profit, and honour that comes from above, shall abide for ever, always happy through time and eternity, because God, the unchangeable source of felicity, is his portion.

Verse 18. Little children, it is the last time] This place is variously understood. This is the *last dispensation* of grace and mercy to mankind; the *present age* is the *conclusion* of the Jewish state, as the temple and holy city are shortly to be destroyed. But as there are many who suppose that this epistle was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, consequently the words cannot, on that supposition, refer to this. Others think that *εσχατη ωρα* should be translated, a most *difficult, perilous, and wretched time*; a time in which all kinds of vices, heresies, and pollutions shall have their full reign; that time which our Lord predicted,

<0715> **Matthew 7:15**, when he said, *Beware of false prophets.* And

<0841> **Matthew 24:11, 12:** *Many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many; and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall*

wax cold. And ^{<1204>}**Matthew 24:24**: *There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders.* And ^{<1205>}**Matthew 24:25**: *Behold, I have told you before.* Now the apostle may allude to these predictions of our Lord; but all these refer to a time antecedent to the destruction of Jerusalem. I am therefore inclined to think, whatever may be here the precise meaning of the *last time*, that the epistle before us was written while Jerusalem yet stood. See what is said in the preface on this head.

Antichrist shall come] Who is this **αντιχριστος** antichrist? Is he the Emperor *Domitian*, the *Gnostics*, *Nicolaitans*, *Nazareans*, *Cerinthians*, *Romish pontiffs*, &c., &c.! Ans. Any *person, thing, doctrine, system of religion, polity, &c.*, which is *opposed to Christ*, and to the spirit and spread of his Gospel, is antichrist. We need not look for this imaginary being in any of the above exclusively. Even *Protestantism* may have its antichrist as well as *Popery*. Every *man* who opposes the spirit of the Gospel, and every *teacher* and *writer* who endeavours to lower the Gospel standard to the spirit and taste of the world, is a genuine *antichrist*, no matter *where* or *among whom* he is found. The heresies which sprang up in the days of St. John were the *antichrist* of that time. As there has been a succession of oppositions to Christianity in its spirit and spread through every age since its promulgation in the world, so there has been a succession of *antichrists*. We may bring this matter much lower; every enemy of Christ, every one who opposes his reign in the world, in others, or in himself, is an *antichrist*; and consequently every *wicked man* is an antichrist. But the name has been generally applied to whatever *person* or *thing systematically* opposes Christ and his religion.

Many antichrists] Many false prophets, false Messiahs, heretics, and corrupters of the truth.

Whereby we know that it is the last time.] That time which our Lord has predicted, and of which he has warned us.

Verse 19. They went out from us] These heretics had belonged to our Christian assemblies, they professed Christianity, and do so still; but we apostles did not commission them to preach to you, for they have disgraced the Divine doctrine with the most pernicious opinions; they have given up or explained away its most essential principles; they have mingled the rest with heathenish rites and Jewish glosses. While, therefore, we acknowledge that they once belonged to us, we assert that they are not of

us. They are not Christians; we abhor their conduct and their creed. We never sent them to teach.

They were not of us] For a considerable time before they left our assemblies they gave proofs that they had departed from the faith; *for if they had been of us*-if they had been apostles, and continued in the firm belief of the Christian doctrines, they would not have departed from us to form a sect of themselves.

That they were not all of us.] They were not expelled from the Christian Church; they were not sent out by us; but they separated from it and us. None of them had been inspired as we apostles were, though they pretended to a very high teaching; but their separating from us *manifested* that they were not taught, as we were, by the Spirit of God. These false teachers probably drew many sincere souls away with them; and to this it is probable the apostle alludes when he says, *they were not ALL of us*. Some *were*; others were not.

Verse 20. But ye have an unction] The word χρισμα signifies not an *unction*, but an *ointment*, the very thing itself by which *anointing* is effected; and so it was properly rendered in our former translations. Probably this is an allusion to the holy anointing oil of the law, and to ^{<9147>}**Psalm 14:7:** *God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness*-he hath given thee the *plenitude of the Spirit*, which none of thy *fellows*-none of the prophets, ever received in such abundance. By this it is evident that not only the gifts of the Spirit, but the Holy Spirit himself, is intended. This Spirit dwelt at that time in a peculiar manner in the Church, to teach apostles, teachers, and all the primitive believers, every thing requisite for their salvation; and to make them the instruments of handing down to posterity that glorious system of truth which is contained in the New Testament. As *oil* was used among the Asiatics for the inauguration of persons into important offices, and this oil was acknowledged to be an emblem of the *gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit*, without which the duties of those offices could not be discharged; so it is put here for the Spirit himself, who presided in the Church, and from which all gifts and graces flowed. The χρισμα, *chrism* or *ointment* here mentioned is also an allusion to the *holy anointing ointment* prescribed by God himself, ^{<02123>}**Exodus 30:23-25**, which was composed of fine *myrrh*, sweet *cinnamon*, sweet *calamus*, *cassia lignea*, and *olive oil*. This was an emblem of the gifts and

graces of the Divine Spirit. See the notes on the above place. And for the *reason* of this anointing see **Clarke's note on** “^{<12307>}**Exodus 29:7**”.

Ye know all things.] Every truth Of God necessary to your salvation and the salvation of man in general, and have no need of that knowledge of which the Gnostics boast.

But although the above is the sense in which this verse is generally understood, yet there is reason to doubt its accuracy. The adjective **παντα**, which we translate *all things*, is most probably in the accusative case singular, having **ανθρωπον**, *man*, or some such substantive, understood. The verse therefore should be translated: *Ye have an ointment from the Holy One, and ye know or discern EVERY MAN*. This interpretation appears to be confirmed by **των πλαωντων** in ^{<1226>}**1 John 2:26**, *those who are deceiving or misleading you*; and in the same sense should **παντων**, ^{<1227>}**1 John 2:27**, be understood: *But as the same anointing teacheth you παντων*, not of *all things*, but of ALL MEN. It is plain, from the whole tenor of the epistle, that St. John is guarding the Christians against seducers and deceivers, who were even then disturbing and striving to corrupt the Church. In consequence of this he desires them *to try the spirits whether they were of God*, ^{<1240>}**1 John 4:1**. But how were they to try them? Principally by that *anointing-that spiritual light and discernment* which they had received from God; and also by comparing the doctrine of these men with *what they had heard from the beginning*. The *anointing* here mentioned seems to mean the spirit of illumination, or great knowledge and discernment in spiritual things. By this they could readily distinguish the false apostles from the true.

Verse 21. I have not written, &c.] It is not because ye are *ignorant* of these things that I write to you, but because you *know them*, and can by these judge of the doctrines of those false teachers, and clearly perceive that they are *liars*; for they contradict the *truth* which ye have already received, and consequently their doctrine is a lie, and no lie can be of the truth, i.e. consistent with Christianity.

Verse 22. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?] Here we see some of the false doctrines which were then propagated in the world. There were certain persons who, while they acknowledged Jesus to be a *Divine teacher*, denied him to be the *Christ*, i.e. the MESSIAH.

He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son,] He is antichrist who denies the supernatural and miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, who denies Jesus to be the *Son of God*, and who denies God to be the Father of the Lord Jesus; thus he denies the *Father* and the *Son*. The Jews in general, and the Gnostics in particular, denied the *miraculous conception* of Jesus; with both he was accounted no more than a *common man*, the son of Joseph and Mary. But the Gnostics held that a Divine person, *Æon*, or angelical being, dwelt in him; but all things else relative to his miraculous generation and Divinity they rejected. These were antichrists, who denied *Jesus* to be the Christ.

Verse 23. Whosoever denieth the Son] He who denies Jesus to be the Son of God, and consequently the Christ or Messiah, *he hath not the Father*-he can have no birth from above, he cannot be enrolled among the children of God, because none can be a child of God but by faith in Christ Jesus.

He that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.] This clause is printed by our translators in Italics to show it to be of doubtful authority, as it was probably wanting in the chief of those MSS. which they consulted, as it was in Coverdale's Bible, printed 1535; Tindall's Text, printed 1548; and in all the early printed editions (which I have seen) previously to 1566; the Bible of *Richard Cardmarden*, printed in English at Rouen, where this clause is inserted in a different letter between brackets. But that the clause is genuine, and should be restored to the text without any mark of spuriousness, as I have done in the text of this work, is evident from the authorities by which it is supported. It is found in ABC, and in between twenty and thirty others of the best authority; as also in both the *Syriac*, Erpen's *Arabic*, *Coptic*, *Sahidic*, *Armenian*, and *Vulgate*. It is also quoted as a part of the text by *Origen*, *Meletius*, *Athanasius*, both the *Cyrils*, *Theophylact*, *Vigilius* of Tapsum, *Pelagius*, *Cerealis*, *Cassian*; and in substance by *Euthalius*, *Epiphanius*, *Cyprian*, *Hilary*, *Faustinus*, *Lucifer* of Cagliari, *Augustine*, and *Bede*. It is wanting in the *Arabic*, in the Polyglot, in a MSS. in the *Harleian* library, and in some few others. It is doubtless genuine, and Griesbach has with propriety restored it to the text, from which it never should have been separated.

Verse 24. Let that therefore abide in you] Continue in the doctrines concerning the incarnation, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, and

intercession of the Lord Jesus, which you have heard preached from the beginning by us his apostles.

Ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.] Ye who are preachers shall not only be acknowledged as ministers of the Church of Christ, but be genuine children of God, by faith in the Son of his love; and ye all, thus continuing, shall have fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

Verse 25. This is the promise] God has promised eternal life to all who believe on Christ Jesus. So they who receive his doctrine, and continue in communion with the Father and the Son, shall have this eternal life.

Verse 26. These things have I written] Either meaning the whole epistle, or what is contained in the preceding verses, from the beginning of the 18th to the end of the 25th. { <B1218> **1 John 2:18-25** }

Them that seduce you.] περι των πλανωντων υμας. That is, the *deceivers that were among them*, and who were labouring to pervert the followers of Christ.

Verse 27. But the anointing which ye have received] That *ointment*, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, mentioned <B1220> **1 John 2:20**, where see the note.

Ye need not that any man teach you] The *Gnostics*, who pretended to the highest illumination, could bring no proof that they were divinely taught, nor had they any thing in their teaching worthy the acceptance of the meanest Christian; therefore they had no need of that, nor of any other teaching but that which *the same anointing teacheth*, the same Spirit from whom they had already received the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. Whatever that taught, they needed; and whatever those taught whose teaching was according to this Spirit, they needed. St. John does not say that those who had once received the teaching of the Divine Spirit had no farther need of the ministry of the Gospel; no, but he says they had no need of such teaching as their false teachers proposed to them; nor of any other teaching that was different from *that anointing*, i.e. the teaching of the Spirit of God. No man, howsoever holy, wise, or pure, can ever be in such a state as to have no need of the Gospel ministry: they who think so give the highest proof that they have never yet learned of Christ or his Spirit.

And is truth] Because it is the Spirit of truth <B1613> **John 16:13**.

And is no lie] It has nothing like the fables of the *Gnostics*. It can neither deceive, nor be deceived.

Verse 28. And now, little children] *τεκνία*, *Beloved children, abide in him*-in Christ Jesus. Let his word and spirit continually abide in you, and have communion with the Father and the Son.

That when he shall appear] To judge the world, *we may have confidence, παρρησιαν*, *freedom of speech, liberty of access, boldness*, from a conviction that our cause is good, and that we have had proper ground for exultation; *and not be ashamed*-confounded, when it appears that those who were brought to Christ Jesus, have apostatized, and are no longer found in the congregation of the saints, and consequently are not our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Abide in him, that this may not be the case.

Verse 29. If ye know that he is righteous] That God is a holy God, *ye know also, that every one who doeth righteousness*-who lives a holy life, following the commandments of God, *is born of him*, *BEGOTTEN of him*-is made a partaker of the Divine nature, without which he could neither have a holy heart, nor live a holy life.

This verse properly belongs to the following chapter, and should not be separated from it. The subject is the same, and does not stand in any strict relation to that with which the 28th verse concludes.

THE *titles* bestowed on Christians in the New Testament have been misunderstood by many. *What belongs, strictly speaking, to the PURE and HOLY, is often applied to those who, though bound by their PROFESSION to be such, were very far from it.* This has been strongly denied by writers who should have known better. Dr. *Taylor* has handled this point well in his *Key to the Apostolic Writings*, from which I have given a copious extract in my preface to the Epistle to the Romans, from the conviction that the subject had been most dangerously misapprehended; and that several of the worst heresies which disgrace religion had sprung from this misapprehension. With some, Dr. *Taylor's* being an *Arian* was sufficient to invalidate any testimony he might offer; but it is no discovery of Dr. *Taylor*; it is what every attentive, *unprejudiced* reader finds on reading the Old Testament in connection with the New. Perhaps the testimony of a judicious *Calvinist* may be better received, not that this truth needs the testimony of either, because it everywhere speaks for itself, but because

those who have too little grace, sense, and candour to search for themselves, may be pleased that Dr. *Macknight* saves them the trouble.

After having remarked that the words *born of him*, *ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγεννηται*, should be translated *hath been BEGOTTEN of him*, which is the literal signification of the word, from *γεννωω*, *genero, gigno, I beget*, (BORN of God being nowhere found in the Scripture,) he goes on to say:—

“To understand the import of the high titles which in the New Testament are given to the disciples of Christ, viz.: *the begotten of God*, as here; *children of God*, as in the next chapter; *heirs of God*, ^{<[R17]>}**Romans 8:17**; *elect of God-adopted of God-saints-a royal priesthood-a holy nation-a peculiar people*, ^{<[P1]>}**1 Peter 2:9**; the following observations may be of use.

“1. These high titles were anciently given to the Israelites as a nation, because they were separated from mankind to be God’s visible Church, for the purpose of preserving the knowledge and worship of him in the world, as the only true God.

“This appears from God’s own words, ^{<[E13]>}**Exodus 19:3-6**, &c.: *Tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.* ^{<[E14]>}**Deuteronomy 14:1-2**, &c.: *Ye are the children of the Lord your God-for thou art a holy people to the Lord thy God.* In particular, the title of *God’s Son*, even *his first-born*, was given to the *whole Israelitish nation by God himself*, ^{<[E22]>}**Exodus 4:22**, chiefly because they were the descendants of Isaac, who was supernaturally begotten by Abraham, through the power which accompanied the promise, ^{<[G10]>}**Genesis 18:10**: *Lo, Sarah shall have a son.* So St. Paul informs us, ^{<[R9]>}**Romans 9:7**: *Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; (namely of God;) but in Isaac shall a seed be to thee-the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of promise are counted for the seed.* The apostle’s meaning is, that Ishmael and his posterity, whom Abraham procreated by his own natural strength, being children of the flesh, were not children of God; that is, they were not made the visible Church and people of God. But Isaac and his descendants, whom Abraham procreated through the strength which accompanied the promise, being more properly procreated by GOD than by *Abraham*, were *the children of God*, i.e. were made the visible Church and people of God,

because, by their supernatural generation and title to inherit Canaan, they were a fit image to represent the catholic invisible Church of God, consisting of believers of all ages and nations, who, being regenerated by the Spirit of God, are the true children of God, and heirs of the heavenly country of which Canaan was a type.

“2. As the promise, *Lo, Sarah shall have a son*, which was given to Abraham when he was a hundred years old, and Sarah was *ninety*, implied that that son was to be supernaturally procreated; so the promise given to Abraham, ^{<017B>}**Genesis 17:5**, *A father of many nations have I constituted thee*, implied that the many nations of believers who, by this promise, were given to Abraham for a seed, were to be *generated by the operation of the Spirit of God*, producing in them faith and obedience, similar to those for which Abraham was constituted the father of all believers. This higher generation, by which believers have the moral image of God communicated to them, is well described, ^{<0112>}**John 1:12**: *As many as received him, to them gave he power to be called the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name; οἱ ἐγεννηθησαν, who were BEGOTTEN, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* That is: Men become the true sons of God, not by their being naturally descended from this or that father, nor by their being called the *sons of God* by men like themselves, but by God’s bestowing on them that high appellation on account of their faith and holiness,” (which were produced in them by their regeneration through the Spirit of God.)

“3. If the Israelites, of whom the ancient visible Church and people of God were composed, were all called the *sons of God* because Isaac, from whom they were descended, was supernaturally begotten by the power of God; certainly the believers of all ages and nations, of whom the visible Church is composed, may with much greater propriety be called *the sons of God*, since they are begotten of God, and possess his moral nature.

“4. Thus it appears that the high titles above mentioned, namely, the *sons of God, the children of God, the elect of God, the adoption of sons, the election, saints, holy nation, royal priesthood, peculiar people*, were anciently given to the Israelites AS A NATION, merely on account of their being the *visible Church* and people of God, without any regard to the *personal character* of the *individuals* of whom that nation was composed. It appears, also, that under the Gospel the same high titles were bestowed on *whole Churches*, merely on account of their *profession of Christianity*,

without any regard to the *personal character* of the *individuals* who composed these Churches. But these high titles, with some others of greater importance, such as the *begotten of God, the heirs of God, the adoption*, were given in an appropriated sense to individuals likewise, on account of their faith and holiness. When given to *whole Churches*, these titles imported nothing more than that the society to which they were given was a *Church of Christ*, (i.e. professed Christianity,) and that the individuals of which that society was composed were entitled to all the privileges belonging to the visible Church of God. But when appropriated to *individuals*, these titles implied that the persons to whom they were given were really partakers of the nature of God; and that they were the objects of his paternal love, and heirs of his glory.

“Wherefore, in reading the Scriptures, by attending to the different foundations of these titles, and by considering whether they are applied to *Churches* or *individuals*, we shall easily understand their true import. Thus, when St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says, ^{<30104>}**1 Thessalonians 1:4**, *Knowing, brethren, beloved of God, your election*, he could not mean their election to eternal life, since many of them were living disorderly, ^{<30311>}**2 Thessalonians 3:11**, but their election to be the visible Church of God under the Gospel; whereas, when John, in the verse before us, says, *Every one who doeth righteousness hath been begotten of God*, by restricting the title to a specific character he teaches us that the persons of whom he speaks are the *sons of God* in the highest sense, and heirs of eternal glory.” How forcible are right words! See also the introduction to the Epistle to the Romans.

I JOHN

CHAPTER 3.

The extraordinary love of God towards mankind, and the effects of it, 1-3. Sin is the transgression of the law, and Christ was manifested to take away our sins, 4-6. The children of God are known by the holiness of their lives, the children of the devil by the sinfulness of theirs, 7-10. We should love one another, for he that hateth his brother is a murderer; as Christ laid down his life for us, so we should lay down our lives for the brethren, 11-16. Charity is a fruit of brotherly love; our love should be active, not professional merely, 17, 18. How we may know that we are of the truth, 19-21. They whose ways please God, have an answer to all their prayers, 22. The necessity of keeping the commandment of Christ, that he may dwell in us and we in him by his Spirit, 23, 24.

NOTES ON CHAP. 3.

Verse 1. Behold, what manner of love] Whole volumes might be written upon this and the two following verses, without exhausting the extraordinary subject contained in them, viz., *the love of God to man*. The apostle himself, though evidently filled with God, and walking in the fulness of his light, does not attempt to describe it; he calls on the world and the Church to *behold it*, to *look upon it*, to *contemplate it*, and *wonder at it*.

What manner of love.-**ποταπην αγαπην**. *What great love*, both as to *quantity* and *quality*; for these ideas are included in the original term. The length, the breadth, the depth, the height, he does not attempt to describe.

The Father hath bestowed] For we had neither *claim* nor *merit that we should be called*, that is, *constituted* or *made*, the *sons of God*, who were before children of the wicked one, animal, earthly, devilish; therefore, the love which brought us from such a depth of misery and degradation must appear the more extraordinary and impressive. After **κληθωμεν**, *that we might be called*, **και εσμεν**, *and we are*, is added by ABC, seventeen others, both the Syriac, Erpen's Arabic, Coptic, Sahidic, Æthiopic, Slavonic, and Vulgate.

Therefore the world] The Jews, and all who know not God, and are seeking their portion in this life; *knoweth us not*-do not *acknowledge, respect, love, or approve* of us. In this sense the word **γινώσκειν** is here to be understood. The *world* KNEW well enough that there were such persons; but they did not *approve* of them. We have often seen that this is a frequent use of the term *know*, both in *Hebrew* and *Greek*, in the Old Testament and also in the New.

Because it knew him not.] The Jews did not *acknowledge* Jesus; they neither *approved* of him, his doctrine, nor his manner of life.

Verse 2. Now are we the sons of God] He speaks of those who are *begotten* of God, and who work righteousness. See the preceding chapter.

And it doth not yet appear what we shall be] **οὐπω ἐφανερώθη.** *It is not yet manifest;* though we *know* that we are the children of God, we do not know that state of glorious excellence to which, as such, we shall be raised.

When he shall appear] **ἐν φανερώθῃ.** *When he shall be manifested;* i.e., when he comes the second time, and shall be manifested in his glorified human nature to judge the world.

We shall be like him] For our vile bodies shall be made like unto his glorious body; *we shall see him as he is*, in all the glory and majesty both of the Divine and human nature. See ^{<1012>}**Philippians 3:21**; and ^{<4172>}**John 17:24**: *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.* John had seen his glory on the mount when he was transfigured; and this we find was ineffably grand; but even this must have been partially obscured, in order to enable the disciples to bear the sight, for they were not then *like him*. But when they shall be like him, they shall see him *as he is*-in all the splendour of his infinite majesty.

Verse 3. And ever man that hath this hope in him] All who have the hope of seeing Christ as he is; that is, of *enjoying* him in his own glory; *purifieth himself*-abstains from all evil, and keeps himself from all that is in the world, viz., the lusts of the flesh, of the eye, and the pride of life. God having purified his heart, it is his business to *keep himself in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* The apostle does not here speak of any man purifying his own heart, because

this is impossible; but of his *persevering* in the state of purity into which the Lord hath brought him. The words, however, may be understood of a man's anxiously using all the means that lead to purity; and imploring God for the sanctifying Spirit, to "cleanse the thoughts of his heart by its inspiration, that he may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his name."

As he is pure.] Till he is as completely saved from his sins as Christ was free from sin. Many tell us that "this never can be done, *for* no man can be saved from sin in this life." Will these persons permit us to ask, how much sin may we be saved from in this life? Something must be *ascertained* on this subject: 1. That the soul may have some *determinate object* in view; 2. That it may not lose its time, or employ its faith and energy, in praying for what is *impossible* to be attained. Now, as he was manifested to take away our sins, ^{ⲁⲓⲃⲐⲛ} **1 John 3:5**, to destroy the works of the devil, ^{ⲁⲓⲃⲐⲛ} **1 John 3:8**; and as his blood cleanseth from all sin and unrighteousness, ^{ⲁⲓⲃⲐⲛ} **1 John 1:7, 9**; is it not evident that God means that believers in Christ shall be saved from all sin? For if his blood cleanses from all sin, if he destroys the works of the devil, (and sin is the work of the devil,) and if he who is born of God does not commit sin, ^{ⲁⲓⲃⲐⲛ} **1 John 3:9**, then he must be cleansed from all sin; and, while he continues in that state he lives without sinning against God, *for the seed of God remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born, or begotten, of God*, ^{ⲁⲓⲃⲐⲛ} **1 John 3:9**. How strangely warped and blinded by prejudice and system must men be who, in the face of such evidence as this, will still dare to maintain that no man can be saved from his sin in this life; but must daily commit sin, in thought, word, and deed, as the Westminster divines have asserted: that is, every man is laid under the *fatal necessity* of sinning as many ways against God as the devil does through his natural wickedness and malice; for even the devil himself can have no other way of sinning against God except by *thought, word, and deed*. And yet, according to these, and others of the same creed, "even the most regenerate sin thus against God as long as they live." It is a miserable salvo to say, they do not sin so much as they used to do; and they do not sin *habitually*, only occasionally. Alas for this system! Could not the grace that saved them *partially* save them *perfectly*? Could not that power of God that saved them from *habitual* sin, save them from *occasional* or accidental sin? Shall we suppose that sin, how potent soever it may be, is as potent as the Spirit and grace of Christ? And may we not ask, If it was for God's glory and their good that they were *partially*

saved, would it not have been more for God's glory and their good if they had been *perfectly saved*? But the letter and spirit of God's word, and the design and end of Christ's coming, is to save his people *from* their sins. Dr. Macknight having stated that *αγνιζει*, *purifieth*, is in the *present* tense, most ridiculously draws this conclusion from it: "In this life no one can attain to perfect purity; by this text, therefore, as well as by ^{απο} **1 John 1:8**, those fanatics are condemned who imagine they are able to live without sin." Yes, doctor, the men you call *fanatics* do most religiously believe that, by the grace of Christ cleansing and strengthening them, they can love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbour as themselves; and live without grieving the Spirit of God, and without sinning against their heavenly Father. And they believe that, if they are not thus saved, it is *their own fault*. But a blind man must ever be a bad judge of colours.

Verse 4. Sin is the transgression of the law.] The spirit of the law as well as of the Gospel is, that "we should love God with all our powers, and our neighbour as ourselves." All disobedience is contrary to love; therefore sin is the *transgression of the law*, whether the act refers immediately to God or to our neighbour.

Verse 5. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins] He came into the world to destroy the power, pardon the guilt, and cleanse from the pollution of sin. This was the very *design* of his manifestation in the flesh. He was born, suffered, and died for this very purpose; and can it be supposed that he either *cannot* or *will not* accomplish the object of his own coming?

In him is no sin.] And therefore he is properly qualified to be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of men.

Verse 6. Whosoever abideth in him] By faith, love, and obedience.

Sinneth not] Because his heart is purified by faith, and he is a worker together with God, and consequently does not receive the grace of God in vain. See Clarke on "^{απο} **1 John 3:3**".

Hath not seen him] It is no unusual thing with this apostle, both in his gospel and in his epistles, to put occasionally the *past* for the *present*, and the *present* for the *past* tense. It is very likely that here he puts, after the manner of the Hebrew, the *preterite* for the *present*: He who sins against

God *doth not see him, neither doth he know him*-the eye of his faith is darkened, so that he cannot see him as he formerly did; and he has no longer the experimental *knowledge* of God as his Father and portion.

Verse 7. Let no man deceive you] Either by asserting that “you cannot be saved from sin in this life,” or “that sin will do you no harm and cannot alter your state, if you are adopted into the family of God; for sin cannot annul this adoption.” Hear God, ye deceivers! *He that doeth righteousness is righteous*, according to his state, nature, and the extent of his moral powers.

Even as he is righteous.] Allowing for the disparity that must necessarily exist between that which is *bounded*, and that which is *without limits*. As God, in the infinitude of his nature, is righteous; so they, being filled with him, are in their limited nature righteous.

Verse 8. He that committeth sin is of the devil] Hear this, also, ye who plead for Baal, and cannot bear the thought of that doctrine that states believers are to be saved from all sin in this life! *He who committeth sin is a child of the devil*, and shows that he has still the nature of the devil in him; *for the devil sinneth from the beginning*-he was the father of sin, brought sin into the world, and maintains sin in the world by living in the hearts of his own children, and thus leading *them* to transgression; and persuading *others* that they cannot be saved from their sins in this life, that he may secure a continual residence in their heart. He knows that if he has a place there throughout life, he will probably have it at death; and, if so, throughout eternity.

For this purpose] εἰς τούτο. *For this very end*-with this very design, was Jesus manifested in the flesh, *that he might destroy, ἵνα λύσῃ, that he might loose*, the bonds of sin, and *dissolve* the power, influence, and connection of sin. See Clarke on “~~CHR~~ 1 John 3:3”.

Verse 9. Whosoever is born of God] γεγεννημενος, *Begotten* of God, *doth not commit sin*: “that is,” say some, “as he used to do, he does not sin *habitually* as he formerly did.” This is bringing the influence and privileges of the heavenly birth very low indeed. We have the most indubitable evidence that many of the heathen philosophers had acquired, by mental discipline and cultivation, an entire ascendancy over all their wonted vicious habits. Perhaps my reader will recollect the story of the physiognomist, who, coming into the place where Socrates was delivering

a lecture, his pupils, wishing to put the principles of the man's science to proof, desired him to examine the face of their master, and say what his moral character was. After a full contemplation of the philosopher's visage, he pronounced him "the most gluttonous, drunken, brutal, and libidinous old man that he had ever met." As the character of Socrates was the reverse of all this, his disciples began to insult the physiognomist. Socrates interfered, and said, "The principles of his science may be very correct, *for such I was, but I have conquered it by my philosophy.*" O ye Christian divines! ye real or pretended Gospel ministers! will ye allow the influence of the grace of Christ a sway not even so extensive as that of the philosophy of a heathen who never heard of the true God?

Verse 10. In this the children of God are manifest] Here is a fearful text. Who is a child of the devil? *He that commits sin.* Who is a child of God? *He that works righteousness.* By this text we shall stand or fall before God, whatever our particular *creed* may say to the contrary.

Neither he that loveth not his brother.] No man is of God who is not ready on all emergencies to do any act of kindness for the comfort, relief, and support of any human being. For, as God made of one blood all the nations of men to dwell upon the face of the whole earth, so all are of *one family*; and consequently all are *brethren*, and should love as brethren.

Verse 11. For this is the message] See ~~6016~~ **1 John 1:5.** From the *beginning* God hath taught men that they should *love one another*. How essentially necessary this is to the comfort and well-being of man in this state of trial and difficulty, every sensible man must see. All are dependent upon all; all upon each, and each upon all. Mutual love makes this dependence pleasant and doubly profitable. Nothing can be more pleasing to an ingenuous and generous mind than to communicate acts of kindness.

Verse 12. Not as Cain] Men should not act to each other as Cain did to his brother Abel. He murdered him because he was better than himself. But who was Cain? **εκ του πονηρου ην**, *he was of the devil.* And who are they who, through pride, lust of power, ambition, gain, &c., murder each other in *wars* and political contentions? **εκ του πονηρου εισι.** To attempt to justify the *principle*, and excuse the *instigators, authors, abettors, &c.*, of such wars, is as vain as it is wicked. They are opposed to the *nature of God*, and to that *message* which he has sent to man from the beginning: *Love one another. Love your enemies.* Surely this does not mean, *Blow out their brains, or, Cut their throats.* O, how much of the

spirit, temper, and letter of the Gospel have the nations of the world, and particularly the nations of Europe, to learn!

And wherefore slew he him?] What could induce a brother to imbrue his hands in a brother's blood? Why, his brother was righteous, and he was wicked; and the seed of the wicked one which was in him induced him to destroy his brother, because the seed of God-the Divine nature, was found in him.

Verse 13. Marvel not-if the world hate you.] Expect no better treatment from unconverted Jews and Gentiles than Abel received from his wicked and cruel brother. This was a lesson to the Church, preparatory to *martyrdom*. Expect neither justice nor mercy from the men who are enemies of God. They are either full of malice and envy, hateful, hating one another, or they are specious, hollow, false, and deceitful.

“A foe to GOD was ne'er true friend to MAN.”

Verse 14. We know that we have passed from death unto life] *Death and life* are represented here as two distinct *territories, states, or kingdoms*, to either of which the inhabitants of either may be removed. This is implied in the term *μεταβεβηκαμεν*, from *μετα*, denoting *change of place*, and *βαινω*, *I go*. It is the same figure which St. Paul uses, ^{<10113>}**Colossians 1:13:** *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love*. The believers to whom St. John writes had been once in the region and shadow of death, in the place where sin and death reigned, whose subjects they were; but they had left that kingdom of oppression, wretchedness, and wo, and had *come over* to the kingdom of *life*, whose king was the *Prince and Author of life*; where all was *liberty, prosperity, and happiness*; where *life and love* were universally prevalent, and *death and hatred* could not enter. *We know*, therefore, says the apostle, *that we are passed over from the territory of death to the kingdom of life, because we love the brethren*, which those who continue in the old kingdom-under the old covenant, can never do; for *he that loveth not his brother abideth in death*. He has never changed his original residence. He is still an unconverted, unrenewed sinner.

Verse 15. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer] He has the same principle in him which was in Cain, and it may lead to the same consequences.

No murderer hath eternal life] Eternal life springs from an *indwelling God*; and God cannot dwell in the heart where *hatred* and *malice* dwell. This text has been quoted to prove that *no murderer can be saved*. This is not said in the text; and there have been many instances of persons who have been guilty of murder having had deep and genuine repentance, and who doubtless found mercy from his hands who prayed for his murderers, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!* It is, however, an awful text for the consideration of those who shed human blood on frivolous pretences, or in those *wars* which have their origin in the worst passions of the human heart.

Verse 16. Hereby perceive we the love of God] This sixteenth verse of this third chapter of John's first epistle is, in the main, an exact counterpart of the sixteenth verse of the third chapter of St. John's gospel: *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, &c.* Here the apostle says, We perceive, **εγνωκαμεν**, *we have known*, the love of God, because he laid down his life for us. *Of God* is not in the text, but it is preserved in one MS., and in two or three of the versions; but though this does not establish its authenticity, yet **του θεου**, *of God*, is necessarily understood, or **του χριστου**, *of Christ*, as Erpen's *Arabic* has it; or **αυτου εις ημας**, *his love to us*, as is found in the Syriac. A higher proof than this of his love Christ could not have possibly given to the children of men.

We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.] We should *risk* our life to save the lives of others; and we should be ready to lay down our lives to redeem their souls when this may appear to be a means of leading them to God.

Verse 17. But whoso hath this worlds good] Here is a *test* of this love; if we do not *divide our bread* with the hungry, we certainly would not *lay down our life* for him. Whatever love we may pretend to mankind, if we are not charitable and benevolent, we give the lie to our profession. If we have not bowels of compassion, we have not the love of God in us; if we *shut up* our bowels against the poor, we shut Christ out of our hearts, and ourselves out of heaven.

This worlds good.-**του βιον του κοσμου**. *The life of this world*, i.e. *the means of life*; for so **βιος** is often used. See ^{<1124>}**Mark 12:44**; ^{<1183>}**Luke 8:43; 15:12, 30; 21:4**, and other places.

How dwelleth the love of God in him?] That is, it cannot possibly dwell in such a person. Hardheartedness and God's love never meet together, much less can they be associated.

Verse 18. My little children] *τεκνία μου*, *My beloved children, let us not love in word-*in merely allowing the general *doctrine* of love to God and man to be just and right;

Neither in tongue] In making *professions* of love, and of a charitable and humane disposition, and resting there; *but in deed-* by humane and merciful acts;

And in truth.] Feeling the disposition of which we speak. There is a good saying in *Yalcut Rubeni*, fol. 145, 4, on this point: "If love consisted in *word only*, then love ceaseth as soon as the word is pronounced. Such was the love between Balak and Balaam. But if love consisteth not in *word*, it cannot be *dissolved*; such was the love of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the rest of the patriarchs which were before them."

Verse 19. Hereby we know that we are of the truth] That we have the true religion of the Lord Jesus, *and shall assure our hearts-*be persuaded in our consciences, that we have the truth as it is in Jesus; as no man can *impose upon himself* by imagining he *loves* when he *does not*: he may make empty *professions* to *others*, but if he loves either God or man, he *knows* it because he *feels* it; and love *unfelt* is not love, it is *word* or *tongue*. This the apostle lays down as a *test* of a man's Christianity, and it is the strongest and most infallible test that can be given. He that loves *feels* that he does love; and he who *feels* that he loves God and man has true religion; and he who is careful to show the fruits of this love, in obedience to God and humane acts to man, gives *others* the fullest proof that he has the loving mind that was in Jesus.

Verse 20. If our heart condemn us] If we be *conscious* that our love is *feigned*, we shall feel inwardly condemned in professing to have what we have not. *And if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart*, for he knows every hypocritical winding and turning of the soul, he searches the heart, and tries the reins, and sees all the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart which we cannot see, and, if we could see them, could not comprehend them; and as he is the just Judge, he will condemn us more *strictly* and *extensively* than we can be by our own *conscience*.

Verse 21. If our heart condemn us not] If we be *conscious* to ourselves of our own sincerity, that we practise not deceit, and use no mask, then have we *confidence toward God*-we can appeal to him for our sincerity, and we can come with boldness to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. And therefore says the apostle,

Verse 22. Whatsoever we ask] In such a spirit, *we receive of him*, for he delights to bless the humble, upright, and sincere soul.

Because we keep his commandments] Viz., by loving him and loving our neighbour. These are the great commandments both of the old covenant and the new. And whoever is filled with this love to God and man will *do those things which are pleasing to him*; for *love* is the very soul and principle of obedience.

The word *heart* is used in the preceding verses for *conscience*; and so the Greek fathers interpret it, particularly Origen, Nicephorus, and Œcumenius; but this is not an unfrequent meaning of the word in the sacred writings.

Verse 23. That we should believe on the name of his Son] We are commanded to believe on Christ, that for the sake of his passion and death we may be justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses; and being through him redeemed from the guilt of sin, restored to the Divine favour, and made partakers of the Holy Ghost, we are enabled to *love one another as he gave us commandment*; for without a renewal of the heart, love to God and man is impossible, and this renewal comes by Christ Jesus.

Verse 24. Dwelleth in him] i.e. in God; *and he-God, in him*-the believer.

And hereby we know] We know by the Spirit which he hath given us that we dwell in God, and God in us. It was not by *conjecture* or *inference* that Christians of old knew they were in the favour of God, it was by the testimony of God's own Spirit in their hearts; and this testimony was not given in a *transient* manner, but was *constant* and *abiding* while they continued under the influence of that faith that worketh by love. Every good man is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and wherever he is, he is both *light* and *power*. By his *power* he works; by his *light* he makes both himself and his work *known*. Peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost must proceed from the indwelling of that Holy Spirit; and those who have these blessings *must know that they have them*, for we cannot have heavenly

peace and heavenly joy without *knowing* that we have them. But this Spirit in the soul of a believer is not only manifest by its *effects*, but it *bears its own witness to its own indwelling*. So that a man not only knows that he has this Spirit from the *fruits* of the Spirit, but he knows that he has it from its *own direct witness*. It may be said, “How can these things be?” And it may be answered, By the power, light, and mercy of God. But that such things are, the Scriptures uniformly attest, and the experience of the whole genuine Church of Christ, and of every truly converted soul, sufficiently proves. As the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit: the thing is certain, and fully known by its effects; but *how* this testimony is given and confirmed is inexplicable. Every good man feels it, and knows he is of God by the Spirit which God has given him.

I JOHN

CHAPTER 4.

We must not believe every teacher who professes to have a Divine commission to preach, but try such, whether they be of God; and the more so because many false prophets are gone out into the world, 1. Those who deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh have the spirit of antichrist, 2, 3. The followers of God have been enabled to discern and overcome them, 4-6. The necessity of love to God and one another shown, from God's love to us, 7-11. Though no man hath seen God, yet every genuine Christian knows him by the spirit which God has given him, 12, 13. The apostles testified that God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world; and God dwelt in those who confessed this truth, 14, 15. God is love, 16. The nature and properties of perfect love, 17, 18. We love him because he first loved us, 19. The wickedness of pretending to love God while we hate one another, 20, 21.

NOTES ON CHAP. 4.

Verse 1. Beloved, believe not every spirit] Do not be forward to believe every teacher to be a man sent of God. As in those early times every teacher professed to be *inspired* by the Spirit of God, because all the prophets had come thus accredited, the term *spirit* was used to express the man who pretended to *be* and *teach* under the Spirit's influence. See [1 Corinthians 12:1-12](#); [1 Timothy 4:1](#).

Try the Spirits] [δοκιμαζετε τα πνευματα](#). Put these teachers to the proof. Try them by that testimony which is known to have come from the Spirit of God, the word of revelation already given.

Many false prophets] Teachers not inspired by the Spirit of God, *are gone out into the world*-among the Jewish people particularly, and among them who are carnal and have not the Spirit.

Verse 2. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God] We know that the man who teaches that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah, and that he is come in

the flesh, *is of God*-is inspired by the Divine Spirit; for no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost.

Verse 3. Every spirit] Every teacher, *that confesseth not Jesus, is not of God*-has not been inspired by God. The words *εν σαρκι εληλυθοτα*, *is come in the flesh*, are wanting in AB, several others, both the Syriac, the Polyglot Arabic, Æthiopic, Coptic, Armenian, and Vulgate; in Origen, Cyril, Theodoret, Irenæus, and others. Griesbach has left them out of the text.

Spirit of antichrist] All the opponents of Christ's *incarnation*, and consequently of his *passion, death, and resurrection*, and the benefits to be derived from them.

Ye have heard that it should come] See ~~5:17~~ **2 Thessalonians 2:7.**

Even now already is it in the world.] Is working powerfully both among the Jews and Gentiles.

Verse 4. Ye are of God] Ye are under the influence of the Divine Spirit, *and have overcome them*-your testimony, proceeding from the Spirit of Christ, has invalidated theirs which has proceeded from the influence of Satan; *for greater is the Holy Spirit which is in you, than the spirit which is in the world.*

Verse 6. We are of God] We, apostles, have the Spirit of God, and speak and teach by that Spirit. *He that knoweth God*-who has a truly spiritual discernment, *heareth us*-acknowledges that our doctrine is from God; that it is spiritual, and leads from earth to heaven.

Hereby know we the Spirit of truth] The *doctrine and teacher* most prized and followed by *worldly men*, and by the *gay, giddy, and garish multitude*, are not from God; they savour of the *flesh*, lay on no restraints, prescribe no cross-bearing, and leave every one in full possession of his heart's lusts and easily besetting sins. And by this, false doctrine and false teachers are easily discerned.

Verse 7. Beloved, let us love one another] And ever be ready to promote each other's welfare, both spiritual and temporal.

For love is of God] And ever acts like him; he loves man, and daily loads him with his benefits. *He that loveth most* has most of God in him; and he that loveth God and his neighbour, as before described and commanded, *is*

born of God, εκ του θεου γεγεννηται, is begotten of God-is a true child of his heavenly Father, for he is made a partaker of the Divine nature; and this his love to God and man proves.

Verse 8. He that loveth not] As already described, *knoweth not God*-has no experimental knowledge of him.

God is love.] An infinite fountain of benevolence and beneficence to every human being. He hates no thing that he has made. He cannot *hate*, because he is *love*. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends his rain on the just and the unjust. He has made no human being for perdition, nor ever rendered it impossible, by any necessitating decree, for any fallen soul to find mercy. He has given the fullest proof of his love to the whole human race by the incarnation of his Son, who tasted death for every man. How can a *decree* of absolute, unconditional *reprobation*, of the greater part or any part of the human race, stand in the presence of such a text as this? It has been well observed that, although God is holy, just, righteous, &c., he is never called *holiness, justice, &c.*, in the *abstract*, as he is here called LOVE. This seems to be the essence of the Divine nature, and all other attributes to be only modifications of this.

Verse 9. In this was manifested the love of God] The mission of Jesus Christ was the fullest proof that God could give, or that man could receive, of his infinite love to the world.

That we might live through him.] The whole world was sentenced to *death* because of sin; and every individual was *dead in trespasses* and sins; and Jesus came to die in the stead of the world, and to *quicken* every believer, that all might live to him who died for them and rose again. This is another strong allusion to ^{<EB16>}**John 3:16:** *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;* where the reader is requested to see the note.

Verse 10. Not that we loved God] And that he was thereby induced to give his Son *to be a propitiation for our sins*. No: we were enemies to God, and yet Christ died for our ungodly souls. (See ^{<EB16>}**Romans 5:6-11**, and the notes there.) So it was God's love, not our merit, that induced him to devise means that his banished might not be expelled from him.

Verse 11. If God so loved us] Without any reason or consideration on our part, and without any *desert* in us; *we ought also*, in like manner, *to love one another*, and not suspend our love to a fellow-creature, either on his *moral worth* or his *love to us*. We should love one another for *God's sake*; and then, no unkind carriage of a brother would induce us to withdraw our love from him; for if it have GOD for its *motive* and *model*, it will *never fail*.

Verse 12. No man hath seen God at any time.] The very words, with the change of *εωρακε* for *τεθεαται*, of this apostle in his gospel, ^{<B0118>}**John 1:18**. We may *feel* him, though we cannot *see* him; and if we love one another he *dwelleth in us*, and *his love is perfected in us*-it has then its full *accomplishment*, having moulded us according to its own nature.

Verse 13. Hereby know we, &c.] See Clarke's note on "^{<B0124>}**1 John 3:24**".

Verse 14. And we have seen] Jesus Christ manifested in the flesh; see ^{<B0101>}**1 John 1:1**, &c.; *and do testify*-bear witness, in consequence of having the fullest conviction, *that the Father sent the son to be the Saviour of the world*. We have had the fullest proof of this from his *doctrine* and *miracles*, which we *heard* and *saw* during the whole time that he sojourned among men.

Verse 15. Whosoever shall confess] Much stress is laid on this confession, because the false teachers denied the reality of the incarnation; but this confession implied also such a belief in Christ as put them in possession of his pardoning mercy and indwelling Spirit.

Verse 16. God is love] See Clarke on "^{<B0118>}**1 John 4:8**". *He that dwelleth in love*-he who is full of love to God and man is full of God, for God is love; and where such love is, there is God, for he is the fountain and maintainer of it.

Verse 17. Herein is our love made perfect] By God dwelling in us, and we in him; having cast out all the carnal mind that was *enmity* against himself, and filled the whole heart with the spirit of love and purity. Thus the love is made perfect; when it thus fills the heart it has all its *degrees*; it is all in all; and all in every power, passion, and faculty of the soul.

May have boldness in the day of judgment] *παρρησιαν*. *Freedom of speech, and liberty of access; seeing in the person of our Judge, him who has died for us, regenerated our hearts, and who himself fills them.*

As he is] Pure, holy, and loving; *so are we in this world*; being saved from our sins, and made like to himself in righteousness and true holiness. No man can contemplate the *day of judgment* with any comfort or satisfaction but on this ground, that the blood of Christ hath cleansed him from all sin, and that he is kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. This will give him boldness in the day of judgment.

Verse 18. There is no fear in love] The man who feels that he loves God with all his heart can never *dread* him as his *Judge*. As he is now made a partaker of his Spirit, and carries a sense of the Divine approbation in his conscience, he has nothing of that *fear* that produces *terror* or brings *torment*. The *perfect love*-that fulness of love, which he has received, *casteth out fear*-removes all terror relative to this day of judgment, for it is of this that the apostle particularly speaks. And as it is inconsistent with the gracious design of God to have his followers miserable, and as he cannot be unhappy whose heart is full of the love of his God, this love must necessarily exclude this fear or terror; because that brings *torment*, and hence is inconsistent with that happiness which a man must have who continually enjoys the approbation of his God.

He that feareth] He who is still *uncertain* concerning his interest in Christ; who, although he has many heavenly drawings, and often sits with Christ some moments on a throne of love, yet feels from the evils of his heart a dread of the day of judgment; *is not made perfect in love*-has not yet received the abiding witness of the Spirit that he is begotten of God; nor that fulness of love to God and man which excludes the *enmity* of the *carnal mind*, and which it is his privilege to receive. But is the case of such a man *desperate*? No: it is neither *desperate* nor *deplorable*; he is in the way of salvation, and not far from the kingdom of heaven. Let such earnestly seek, and fervently believe on the Son of God; and he will soon give them another baptism of his Spirit, will purge out all the old leaven, and fill their whole souls with that love which is the fulfilling of the law. He who is not yet perfect in love may speedily become so, because God can say in a moment, *I will, be thou clean; and immediately his leprosy will depart*. Among men we find some that have neither love nor fear; others

that have fear without love; others that have love and fear; and others that have love without fear.

1. Profligates, and worldly men in general, have neither the fear nor love of God.

2. Deeply awakened and distressed penitents have the fear or terror of God without his love.

3. Babes in Christ, or young converts, have often distressing fear mixed with their love.

4. Adult Christians have love without this fear; because fear hath torment, and they are ever happy, being filled with God. See Mr. *Wesley's* note on this place.

1. We must not suppose that the love of God shed abroad in the heart is ever *imperfect* in *itself*; it is only so in *degree*. There may be a *less* or *greater degree* of what is *perfect* in itself; so it is with respect to the love which the followers of God have; they may have *measures* or *degrees* of perfect love without its *fulness*. There is nothing *imperfect* in the love of God, whether it be considered as existing in himself, or as communicated to his followers.

2. We are not to suppose that the love of God casts out *every kind of fear* from the soul; it only casts out that which has *torment*. 1. A *filial fear* is consistent with the highest degrees of love; and even necessary to the preservation of that grace. This is properly its guardian; and, without this, love would soon degenerate into listlessness, or presumptive boldness. 2. Nor does it cast out that *fear* which is so necessary to the *preservation of life*; that fear which leads a man to *flee from danger* lest his life should be destroyed. 3. Nor does it cast out that *fear* which may be engendered by *sudden alarm*. All these are necessary to our well-being. But it destroys, 1. The fear of *want*; 2. The fear of *death*; and 3. The fear or terror of *judgment*. All these fears bring torment, and are inconsistent with this perfect love.

Verse 19. We love him because he first loved us.] This is the foundation of our love to God. 1. We love him because we find he has loved us. 2. We love him from a sense of obligation and gratitude. 3. We love him from the influence of his own love; from his love shed abroad in our hearts, our love to him proceeds. It is the seed whence our love springs. The verse might be

rendered, *Let us therefore love him, because he first loved us*: thus the Syriac and Vulgate.

Verse 20. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother] This, as well as many other parts of this epistle, seems levelled against the Jews, who pretended much love to God while they hated the *Gentiles*; and even some of them who were brought into the Christian Church brought this leaven with them. It required a miracle to redeem St. Peter's mind from the influence of this principle. See Acts 10.

Whom he hath seen] We may have our love excited towards our brother, 1. By a consideration of his *excellences* or *amiable qualities*. 2. By a view of his *miseries* and *distresses*. The *first* will excite a love of *complacency* and *delight*; the *second*, a love of *compassion* and *pity*.

Whom he hath not seen?] If he love not his brother, it is a proof that the love of God is not in him; and if he have not the love of God, he cannot love God, for God can be loved only through the influence of his own love. See Clarke on "[1 John 4:19](#)". The man who hates his fellow does not love God. He who does not love God has not the love of God in him, and he who has not the love of God in him can neither love God nor man.

Verse 21. This commandment have we] We should love one another, and love our neighbour as ourselves. The love of God and the love of man can never be separated; he who loves God will love his brother; he who loves his brother gives this proof that he loves God, because he loves with a measure of that love which, in its infinitude, dwells in God.

I JOHN

CHAPTER 5.

He that believeth is born of God; loves God and his children; and keeps his commandments, which are not grievous, 1-3. Faith in Christ overcomes the world, 4, 5. The three earthly and heavenly witnesses, 6-9. He that believeth hath the witness in himself, 10. God has given unto us eternal life in his Son, 11, 12. The end for which St. John writes these things, 13-16. The sin unto death, and the sin not unto death, 16, 17. He that is born of God sinneth not, 18. The whole world lieth in the wicked one, 19. Jesus is come to give us understanding, that we may know the true God, 20. All idolatry to be avoided, 21.

NOTES ON CHAP. 5.

Verse 1. Whosoever believeth, &c.] Expressions of this kind are to be taken in *connection with the subjects necessarily implied in them. He that believeth that Jesus is the Messiah, and confides in him for the remission of sins, is begotten of God; and they who are pardoned and begotten of God love him in return for his love, and love all those who are his children.*

Verse 2. By this we know that we love the children of God] Our love of God's followers is a *proof* that we love God. Our love to God is the *cause* why we love his children, and our *keeping the commandments of God* is the *proof* that we love *him*.

Verse 3. For this is the love of God] This the love of God necessarily produces. It is vain to pretend love to God while we live in opposition to his will.

His commandments] To love him with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, *are not grievous*-are not burdensome; for no man is burdened with the duties which his own *love* imposes. The old proverb explains the meaning of the apostle's words, *Love feels no loads*. Love to God brings *strength* from God; through his *love* and his *strength*, all his commandments are not only easy and light, but pleasant and delightful.

On the love of God, as being the foundation of all religious worship, there is a good saying in *Sohar Exod.*, fol. 23, col. 91: “Rabbi Jesa said, how necessary is it that a man should love the holy blessed God! For he can bring no other worship to God than love; and whoever loves him, and worships him from a principle of love, him the holy blessed God calls his beloved.”

Verse 4. Whatsoever is born of God] παν το γεγεννημενον.

Whatsoever (the neuter for the masculine) *is begotten of God: overcometh the world.* “I understand by this,” says *Schoettgen*, “the *Jewish Church*, or *Judaism*, which is often termed $\eta\zeta\eta \mu\iota \omega\lbracket$ *olam hazzeh*, this world. The reasons which induce me to think so are, 1. Because this $\kappa\omicron\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$, *world*, denied that the Messiah was come; but the Gentiles did not oppose this principle. 2. Because he proves the truth of the Christian religion against the *Jews*, reasoning according to the *Jewish manner*; whence it is evident that he contends, not against the *Gentiles*, but against the *Jews*. The sense therefore is, he who possesses the true Christian faith can easily convict the Jewish religion of falsity.” That is, He can show the vanity of their expectations, and the falsity of their glosses and prejudices. Suppose we understand by the world the *evil principles and practices* which are among men, and in the human heart; then the influence of God in the soul may be properly said to *overcome* this; and by faith in the Son of God a man is able to overcome all that is in the world, viz., *the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life.*

Verse 5. He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?] That he is the promised Messiah, that he came by a supernatural generation; and, although truly *man*, came not *by man*, but by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The person who believes this has the privilege of applying to the Lord for the benefits of the incarnation and passion of Jesus Christ, and receives the blessings which the Jews cannot have, because they believe not the Divine mission of Christ.

Verse 6. This is he that came by water and blood] Jesus was attested to be the Son of God and promised Messiah by *water*, i.e. his *baptism*, when the Spirit of God came down from heaven upon him, and the voice from heaven said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Jesus Christ came also by *blood*. He shed his blood for the sins of the world; and this was in accordance with all that the Jewish prophets had written concerning him. Here the apostle says that the Spirit witnesses this; that *he*

came not by water only-being baptized, and baptizing men in his own name that they might be his followers and disciples; *but by blood also*-by his sacrificial death, without which the world could not be saved, and he could have had no disciples. As, therefore, the Spirit of God witnessed his being the Son of God at his baptism, and as the same Spirit in the prophets had witnessed that he should die a cruel, yet a sacrificial, death; he is said here to *bear witness*, because he is the *Spirit of truth*.

Perhaps St. John makes here a mental comparison between CHRIST, and *Moses* and *Aaron*; to both of whom he opposed our Lord, and shows his superior excellence. *Moses came by water*-all the Israelites were baptized unto him in the cloud and in the sea, and thus became his flock and his disciples; **1 Corinthians 10:1, 2**. *Aaron came by blood*-he entered into the holy of holies with the blood of the victim, to make atonement for sin. Moses initiated the people into the covenant of God by bringing them *under the cloud* and *through the water*. *Aaron* confirmed that covenant by shedding the *blood*, sprinkling part of it upon them, and the rest before the Lord in the holy of holies. *Moses* came only by *water*, *Aaron* only by *blood*; and both came as *types*. But CHRIST came both by *water* and *blood*, not typically, but really; not by the authority of *another*, but by his own. Jesus initiates his followers into the Christian covenant by the baptism of water, and confirms and seals to them the blessings of the covenant by an application of the blood of the atonement; thus purging their consciences, and purifying their souls.

Thus, his religion is of infinitely greater efficacy than that in which *Moses* and *Aaron* were ministers. See *Schoettgen*.

It may be said, also, that the *Spirit* bears witness of Jesus by his *testimony* in the *souls of genuine Christians*, and by the *spiritual gifts* and *miraculous* powers with which he endowed the apostles and primitive believers. This is agreeable to what St. John says in his gospel, **John 15:26, 27**: *When the Comforter is come, the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning*. This place the apostle seems to have in his eye; and this would naturally lead him to speak concerning the *three witnesses*, the SPIRIT, the WATER, and the BLOOD, **1 John 5:8**.

Verse 7. There are three that bear record] The FATHER, who bears testimony to his Son; the WORD or *λογος*, *Logos*, who bears testimony to

the Father; and the HOLY GHOST, which bears testimony to the Father and the Son. And *these three* are one in essence, and *agree in the one* testimony, that Jesus came to die for, and give life to, the world.

But it is likely this verse is not genuine. It is wanting in every MS. of this epistle written *before* the invention of printing, one excepted, the *Codex Montfortii*, in Trinity College, Dublin: the others which omit this verse amount to *one hundred and twelve*.

It is wanting in both the *Syriac*, all the *Arabic*, *Æthiopic*, the *Coptic*, *Sahidic*, *Armenian*, *Slavonian*, &c., in a word, in all the ancient *versions* but the *Vulgate*; and even of this version many of the most ancient and correct MSS. have it not. It is wanting also in all the ancient Greek fathers; and in most even of the Latin.

The words, as they exist in all the Greek MSS. with the exception of the *Codex Montfortii*, are the following:-

“6. This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness because the Spirit is truth. 7. For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one. 9. If we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater, &c.”

The words that are omitted by all the MSS., the above excepted, and all the *versions*, the *Vulgate* excepted, are these:—

[In heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one, and there are three which bear witness in earth.]

To make the whole more clear, that every reader may see what has been *added*, I shall set down these verses, with the *inserted* words in brackets.

“6. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. 7. For there are three that bear record [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one. 8. And there are three that bear witness in earth,] the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one. 9. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, &c.” Any man may see, on examining the *words*, that if those included in brackets, which are wanting in the MSS. and *versions*, be omitted, there is no

want of *connection*; and as to the *sense*, it is complete and perfect without them; and, indeed much more so than with them. I shall conclude this part of the note by observing, with Dr. Dodd, “that there are some internal and accidental marks which may render the passage suspected; for the sense is complete, and indeed more clear and better preserved, without it. Besides, the Spirit is mentioned, both as a witness in heaven and on earth; so that the six witnesses are thereby reduced to five, and the equality of number, or antithesis between the witnesses in heaven and on earth, is quite taken away. Besides, what need of witnesses in *heaven*? No one there doubts that Jesus is the Messiah; and if it be said that Father, Son, and Spirit are witnesses on earth, then there are five witnesses on earth, and none in heaven; not to say that there is a little difficulty in interpreting how the Word or the Son can be a witness to himself.”

It may be necessary to inquire how this verse stood in our earliest English Bibles. In COVERDALE’S Bible, printed about 1535, for it bears no date, the *seventh* verse is put in brackets thus:—

And it is the Sprete that beareth wytnes; for the Sprete is the truth. (For there are thre which beare recorde in heaven: the Father, the Woorde, and the Holy Ghost, and these thre are one.) And there are thre which beare record in earth: the Sprete, water, and bloude and these thre are one. If we receyve, &c.

TINDAL was as critical as he was conscientious; and though he admitted the words into the text of the first edition of his New Testament printed in 1526, yet he distinguished them by a different letter, and put them in brackets, as *Coverdale* has done; and also the words *in earth*, which stand in ~~AR~~ **1 John 5:8**, without proper authority, and which being excluded make the text the same as in the MSS., &c.

Two editions of this version are now before me; one printed in English and Latin, quarto, with the following title:—

The New Testament, both in Englyshe and Laten, of Master Erasmus translation-and imprinted by William Powell-the yere of our Lorde M.CCCCC.XLVII. And the fyrste yere of the kynge (Edw. VI.) moste gracious reygne.

In this edition the text stands thus:—

And it is the Spirite that beareth wytnes, because the Spirite is truth (for there are thre whiche beare recorde in heaven, the Father, the Worde, and the Holy Ghost, and these thre are one.) For there are thre which beare recorde, (in earth,) the Spirite, water, and blode, and these thre are one. If we receybe, &c.

The other printed in London "by William Tylle, 4to; without the Latin of Erasmus in M.CCCCC.XLIX. the thyrde yere of the reigne of our moost drede Soverayne Lorde Kynge Edwarde the Syxte," has, with a small variety of spelling, the text in the same order, and the same words included in brackets as above.

The English Bible, with the book of Common Prayer, printed by *Richard Cardmarden*, at Rouen in Normandy, fol. 1566, exhibits the text faithfully, but in the following singular manner:—

And it is the Spyrte that beareth witness, because the Spyrte is truth. (for there are three which beare recorde in heaven, the Father, the Woorde, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One) And three which beare recorde* (in earth) the Spirite, and water, and bloode; and these three are one.

The first English Bible which I have seen, where these *distinctions* were omitted, is that called *The Bishops' Bible*, printed by Jugge, fol. 1568. Since that time, all such distinctions have been generally disregarded.

Though a conscientious believer in the doctrine of the ever blessed, holy, and undivided Trinity, and in the proper and essential Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which doctrines I have defended by many, and even new, arguments in the course of this work, I cannot help doubting the authenticity of the text in question; and, for farther particulars, refer to the *observations* at the end of this chapter.

Verse 8. The Spirit, and the water, and the blood] This verse is supposed to mean "*the Spirit*-in the word confirmed by miracles; the *water*-in baptism, wherein we are dedicated to the Son, (with the Father and the Holy Spirit,) typifying his spotless purity, and the inward purifying of our nature; and *the blood*-represented in the Lord's Supper, and applied to the consciences of believers: and all these harmoniously agree in the same testimony, that Jesus Christ is the Divine, the complete, the only Saviour of the world."-Mr. *Wesley's* notes.

By the *written word*, which proceeded from the Holy Spirit, that Spirit is continually witnessing *upon earth*, that God hath given unto us eternal life.

By *baptism*, which points out our *regeneration*, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and which is still maintained as an initiatory rite in the Christian Church, we have another witness *on earth* of the truth, certainty, importance, and efficacy of the Christian religion. The same may be said of the *blood*, represented by the *holy eucharist*, which continues to show forth the death and atoning sacrifice of the Son of God till he comes. See Clarke's note on "~~1~~ John 5:6".

Verse 9. If we receive the witness of men] Which all are obliged to do, and which is deemed a sufficient testimony to truth in numberless cases; *the witness of God is greater*-he can neither be deceived nor deceive, but man may deceive and be deceived.

Verse 10. He that believeth on the Son of God] This is God's witness to a truth, the most important and interesting to mankind. God has witnessed that *whosoever believeth on his Son* shall be saved, and have *everlasting life*; and shall have the *witness* of it *in himself*, the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. To *know*, to *feel* his sin forgiven, to have the testimony of this in the heart from the Holy Spirit himself, is the privilege of every true believer in Christ.

Verse 11. This is the record] The great truth to which the *Spirit*, the *water*, and the *blood* bear testimony. *God hath given us eternal life*-a right to endless glory, and a *meetness* for it. *And this life is in his Son*; it comes *by* and *through* him; he is its *author* and its *purchaser*; it is only *in* and *through* HIM. No other scheme of salvation can be effectual; God has provided none other, and in such a case a man's invention must be vain.

Verse 12. He that hath the Son hath life] As the eternal life is given IN the Son of God, it follows that it cannot be enjoyed without him. No man can have it without having Christ; therefore *he that hath the Son hath life*, and *he that hath not the Son hath not life*. It is in vain to expect eternal glory, if we have not Christ in our heart. The indwelling Christ gives both a title to it, and a *meetness* for it. This is God's record. Let no man deceive himself here. An *indwelling Christ* and GLORY; *no indwelling Christ*, NO *glory*. God's record must stand.

Verse 13. That ye may know that ye have eternal life] I write to show your privileges-to lead you into this holy of holies-to show what believing on the Son of God is, by the glorious effects it produces: it is not a blind

reliance *for*, but an actual enjoyment *of*, salvation; Christ living, working, and reigning in the heart.

And that ye may believe] That is, continue to believe: for Christ dwells in the heart *only by* FAITH, and *faith* lives only by LOVE, and *love* continues only by OBEDIENCE; he who BELIEVES *loves*, and he who LOVES *obeys*. He who *obeys* loves; he who *loves* believes; he who *believes* has the witness in himself: he who has this witness has Christ in his heart, the hope of glory; and he who believes, loves, and obeys, has Christ in his heart, and is a man of prayer.

Verse 14. This is the confidence] **παρησια**, The *liberty of access and speech, that if we ask any thing according to his will, that is, which he has promised in his word.* His word is a revelation of his will, in the things which concern the salvation of man. All that God has *promised* we are justified in expecting; and what he has *promised*, and we *expect*, we should *pray for*. Prayer is the language of the children of God. He who is begotten of God *speaks* this language. He calls God Abba, Father, in the true spirit of supplication. *Prayer* is the language of dependence on God; where the soul is *dumb*, there is neither life, love, nor faith. Faith and prayer are not boldly to advance *claims* upon God; we must take heed that what we *ask* and *believe for* is agreeable to the *revealed will* of God. What we find *promised*, that we may *plead*.

Verse 15. And if we know that he hear us] Seeing we are satisfied that he hears the prayer of faith, requesting the things which himself has promised; *we know*, consequently, *that we have the petitions*-the answer to the *petitions, that we desired of him*; for he cannot deny himself; and we may consider them *as sure as if we had them*; and we shall have them *as soon* as we plead for and need them. We are not to ask *to-day* for mercy that we *now* need, and not receive it till *to-morrow*, or some *future* time. God gives it to him who prays, *when* it is needful.

Verse 16. A sin which is not unto death] This is an extremely difficult passage, and has been variously interpreted. What is the *sin not unto death*, for which we *should ask*, and life shall be given to him that commits it? And what is the *sin unto death*, for which we *should not pray*?

I shall note three of the chief opinions on this subject:—

1. It is supposed that there is here an allusion to a distinction in the Jewish law, where there was *htyml hacj chattaah lemithah*, “a sin unto death;” and *htyml al hacj chattaah lo lemithah*, “a sin not unto death;” that is, 1. A *sin*, or transgression, to which the law had assigned the punishment of *death*; such as idolatry, incest, blasphemy, breach of the Sabbath, and the like. And 2. A sin not unto death, i.e. transgressions of ignorance, inadvertence, &c., and such is, in their own nature, appear to be comparatively light and trivial. That such distinctions did exist in the Jewish synagogue both *Schoettgen* and *Carpzovius* have proved.

2. By the *sin not unto death*, for which intercession might be made, and *unto death*, for which prayer might not be made, we are to understand transgressions of the *civil law* of a particular place, some of which must be punished with *death*, according to the *statutes*, the crime admitting of *no pardon*: others *might* be punished with death, but the magistrate had the power of commuting the punishments, i.e. of changing *death* into *banishment*, &c., for reasons that might appear to him satisfactory, or at the *intercession* of powerful friends. To *intercede* in the *former case* would be useless, because the law would not relax, therefore they need *not pray for it*; but *intercession* in the *latter case might be prevalent*, therefore they *might pray*; and if they did not, the person might suffer the punishment of death. This opinion, which has been advanced by *Rosenmuller*, intimates that men should feel for each other’s distresses, and use their influence in behalf of the wretched, nor ever abandon the unfortunate but where the case is utterly hopeless.

3. *The sin unto death* means a case of transgression, particularly of grievous backsliding from the life and power of godliness, which God determines to punish with *temporal death*, while at the same time he extends mercy to the penitent soul. The *disobedient prophet*, ^{<1130>}**1 Kings 13:1-32**, is, on this interpretation, a case in point: many others occur in the history of the Church, and of every religious community. The *sin not unto death* is any sin which God does not choose *thus* to punish. This view of the subject is that taken by the late Rev. *J. Wesley*, in a sermon entitled, *A Call to Backsliders*.-WORKS, vol ii. page 239.

I do not think the passage has any thing to do with what is termed *the sin against the Holy Ghost*; much less with the popish doctrine of *purgatory*; nor with sins committed *before* and *after* baptism, the *former* pardonable, the latter *unpardonable*, according to some of the fathers. Either of the last

opinions (viz., 2 and 3) make a good sense; and the *first* (1) is not unlikely: the apostle may allude to some *maxim* or *custom* in the Jewish Church which is not now distinctly known. However, this we know, that any penitent may find mercy through Christ Jesus; for through him every kind of sin may be forgiven to man, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; which I have proved no man can now commit. See the note on

<0123> **Matthew 12:31, 39.**

Verse 17. All unrighteousness is sin] *πασα αδικια*, Every act contrary to justice is sin-is a transgression of the law which condemns all injustice.

Verse 18. Whosoever is born of God sinneth not] This is spoken of adult Christians; *they are cleansed from all unrighteousness*, consequently from all sin, <0107> **1 John 1:7-9.**

Keepeth himself] That is, *in the love of God*, <0121> **Jude 1:21**, by building up himself on his most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Ghost; *and that wicked one-the devil, toucheth him not*-finds nothing of his own nature in him on which he can work, Christ dwelling in his heart by faith.

Verse 19. We know that we are of God] Have the fullest proof of the truth of Christianity, and of our own reconciliation to God through the death of his Son.

The whole world lieth in wickedness.] *εν τω πονηρω κειται*. *Lieth in the wicked one*-is embraced in the arms of the devil, where it lies fast asleep and carnally secure, deriving its heat and power from its infernal fosterer. What a truly awful state! And do not the actions, tempers, propensities, opinions and maxims of all worldly men prove and illustrate this? "In this short expression," says Mr. Wesley, "the horrible state of the world is painted in the most lively colours; a comment on which we have in the actions, conversations, contracts, quarrels and friendships of worldly men." Yes, their ACTIONS are opposed to the law of God; their CONVERSATIONS shallow, simulous, and false; their CONTRACTS forced, interested, and deceitful; their QUARRELS puerile, ridiculous, and ferocious; and their FRIENDSHIPS hollow, insincere, capricious, and fickle:-all, all the effect of their lying in the arms of the wicked one; for thus they become instinct with his own spirit: and because they are of their father the devil, therefore his lusts they will do.

Verse 20. We know that the Son of God is come] In the flesh, and has made his soul an offering for sin; *and hath given us an understanding*-a more eminent degree of light than we ever enjoyed before; for as he lay in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him unto us; and he hath besides given us a spiritual understanding, that we may know him who is true, even the TRUE GOD, and get eternal life from him through his Son, IN whom we are by faith, as the branches in the vine, deriving all our knowledge, light, life, love, and fruitfulness from him. And it is through this revelation of Jesus that we know the ever blessed and glorious Trinity; and the Trinity, *Father, Word, and Holy Ghost*, in the eternal, undivided unity of the ineffable Godhead.

Verse 21. Little children] *τεκνία*. *Beloved children*; he concludes with the same affectionate feeling with which he commenced.

Keep yourselves from idols.] Avoid the idolatry of the heathens; not only have no *false gods*, but have the *true God*. Have no idols in your *houses*, none in your *churches*, none in your *hearts*. Have no object of idolatrous worship; no *pictures, relics, consecrated tapers, wafers, crosses, &c.*, by attending to which your minds may be divided, and prevented from worshipping the infinite Spirit in spirit and in truth.

The apostle, says Dr. Macknight cautioned his disciples against going with the heathens into the temple of their idol gods, to eat of their feasts upon the sacrifices they had offered to these gods; and against being present at any act of worship which they paid them; because, by being present, they participated of that worship, as is plain from what St. Paul has written on the subject, ^{<4810>} **1 Corinthians 8:10**, where see the notes.

That is a man's *idol* or *god* from which he seeks his *happiness*; no matter whether it be Jupiter, Juno, Apollo, Minerva, Venus, or Diana; or pleasure, wealth, fame, a fine house, superb furniture, splendid equipage, medals, curiosities, books, titles, human friendships, or any earthly or heavenly thing, God, the supreme good, only excepted. That is a man's idol which prevents him from seeking and finding his ALL in God.

Wiclif ends his epistle thus: *My little sones, kepe ye you fro mawmitis*, i.e. *puppets, dolls*, and such like; for thus Wiclif esteemed all *images* employed in religious worship. They are the *dolls* of a spurious Christianity, and the drivellings of religion in *nonage* and *dotage*. *Protestants*, keep yourselves from such *mawmets*!

Amen.] So be it! So let it be! And so it shall be, God being our helper, for ever and ever!

Subscriptions in the VERSIONS:—

The end of the Epistle of the Apostle John.-SYRIAC.

The First Epistle of John the apostle is ended.-SYR. *Philoxenian*.

Nothing in either the COPTIC or VULGATE.

Continual and eternal praise be to God!-ARABIC.

The end.-ÆTHIOPIC;

In this version the epistle is thus introduced:-

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, one God, the Epistle of John, the son of Zebedee, the evangelist and apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ; may his intercession be with us for ever and ever!

Amen.

In the MANUSCRIPTS:—

The First of John.-AB.

The First Epistle of John the evangelist.

The First catholic Epistle of St. John the divine, written from Ephesus.

The Epistle to the Parthians.-See several Latin MSS.

The word *amen* is wanting in all the best MSS. and in most of the *versions*.

For other matters relative to the epistle itself see the *preface*: and for its heavenly doctrine and unction read the *text*, in the *original* if you can; if not, in our own excellent *translation*.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE TEXT OF THE THREE DIVINE WITNESSES.

Accompanied with a plate, containing two very correct facsimiles of 1 JOHN, ^{<A>}1 John 5:7-9, as they stand in the first edition of the New Testament, printed at Complutum, 1514, and in the Codex Montfortii, a manuscript marked G. 97, in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.

παντα δοκιμαζετε, το καλον κατεχετε. ^{<A>}1 Thessalonians 5:21.

The *seventh* verse of the *fifth* chapter of 1 JOHN, has given rise to more theological disputes than any other portion of the sacred writings.

Advocates and antagonists have arisen in every quarter of the civilized world: but the dispute has been principally confined to the *Unitarians* of all classes, and those called *Orthodox*; the former asserting that it is an *interpolation*, and the latter contending that it is a *part of the original text* of St. John. It is asserted that (one excepted, which shall be noticed by and by) all the Greek MSS. written *before the invention of printing* omit the passage in dispute. How the seventh and eighth verses stand in these may be seen in the following view, where the words included between brackets are those which are wanting in the MSS.

᾽ Ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα. καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν γῆ τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα. καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσιν.

Of all the MSS. yet discovered which contain this epistle, amounting to *one hundred and twelve, three* only; two of which are of no authority, have the text, viz.:-

1. The *Codex Guelpherbytanus* G, which is demonstrably a MS. of the seventeenth century; (for it contains the Latin translation of Beza, written by the same hand,) and therefore of no use or importance in sacred criticism.
2. The *Codex Ravianus* or *Berolinensis*, which is a forgery, and only a copy of the Greek text in the *Complutensian Polyglot*, printed in 1514, and so close an imitation of it, that it copies even its typographical errors; hence, and from the similarity of the letters, it appears to have been forged that it might pass for the original MS. from which the Complutensian text was taken. In this MS. some various readings are inserted from the margin of Stevens' edition of 1550.
3. The *Codex Montfortii*, or *Codex Dubliniensis*, cited by Erasmus, under the title of *Codex Britannicus*, in Trinity College, Dublin. This may be said to be the only *genuine* MS. which contains this text; as no advocate of the sacred doctrine contained in the disputed passage would wish to lay any stress whatever on such evidence as the two preceding ones afford. *Michaelis* roundly asserts, vol. iv., page 417, of his *Introductory Lectures*, that this MS. was written after the year 1500. This, I scruple not to affirm, is a perfectly unguarded assertion, and what *no man can prove*. In 1790 I examined this MS. myself, and though I thought it to be comparatively

modern, yet I had no doubt that it existed before the invention of printing, and was never written with an intention to deceive. I am rather inclined to think it the work of an unknown bold critic, who formed a text from one or more MSS. in conjunction with the Vulgate, and was by no means sparing of his own conjectural emendations; for it contains many various readings which exist in no other MS. yet discovered. But how far the writer has in any place faithfully copied the text of any ancient MS. is more than can be determined. To give the reader a fair view of this subject, I here subjoin what I hope I may call a perfect *fac-simile* of the seventh and eighth verses, as they exist in this MS., copied by the accurate hand of the Rev. Dr. Barrett, the present learned librarian of Trinity College.

FAC-SIMILE of ~~<1007>~~ **1 John 5:7-9,**

From the Codex Montfortii in Trinity College, Dublin.

^{ὅτι τρεῖς ἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυ}
 ροῦντες ἐν τῇ οὐρῳ. πῆρς λόγος, καὶ τὰ ἀληθῆς,
 καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν ᾧ. καὶ τὰς φωνὰς μαρτυ
 ροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ, πᾶσα ὕδατος, καὶ ἄλλα, ἡ τὴν
 μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἁγίων λαμβάνομεν, ἢ μαρτυρία τοῦ
 θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐστίν, ὅτι ἀπὸ ἐκείνων μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅτι
 μεμαρτύρηκε περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ.

When I examined the original myself, though I took down a *transcript*, yet I neglected to take a *fac-simile*. That no mistake might be made in a matter of so much importance, I got a *fac-simile*, and after it was engraved, had it collated with the MS. by Dr. Barrett himself, and the plate finished according to his last corrections; so that I hope it may be said every jot and every tittle belonging to the text are here fairly and faithfully represented; nothing being *added*, and nothing *omitted*. I have examined this MS. since, and have not been able to detect any inaccuracy in my *fac-simile*. To it I have annexed a perfect *facsimile* of the same words, as they stand in the *Complutensian Polyglot*, which the curious reader will be glad to see associated with the other, as they are properly the only *Greek authorities* on which the authenticity of the text of the Three Witnesses depends.

FAC-SIMILE of ~~1 John~~ 1 John 5:7-9,

From the *Editio Princeps* of the Greek Testament, printed at
Complutum, in 1514.

^θ ὅτι Τρεῖς ^κ εἰ =

δίμοι^ι μαρτυροῦντες^ε ἐν τῷ^ο οὐρανό, / ο^ο πα-
τήρ^ρ και^ο ὁ^ο λόγος^ς και^ο τὸ^ο ἅγιον^ν πνεῦμα, ^κ και^ο
οἱ^ο Τρεῖς^ο εἰς^ο τὸ^ο ἐμ^ε εἰσί. ^θ και^ο Τρεῖς^ο εἰς^ο τὸν^ο οἱ^ο μαρ-
τυροῦντες^ε ἐπὶ^ο τῆς^ο γῆς, / τὸ^ο ὕμνεν^ν μα^κ και^ο τὸ^ο ὕ-
δωρ^ρ και^ο τὸ^ο αἷμα. ^κ εἰ^ο τῆ^ο μαρτυρίαν^ν / τῶν^ο ἀν-
θρώπων^ν λαμβάνομεν, / ἡ^ο μαρτυρία^ν τοῦ^ο θεοῦ^ν
^θ μείζων^ν ἐστίν^ν ὅτι^ο ἀντή^ο ἐστίν^ν ἡ^ο μαρτυρία^ν τοῦ^ο
θεοῦ^ν. ἡ^ο μαρτῦρηκε^ν περὶ^ο τοῦ^ο υἱοῦ^ν αὐτοῦ.

It may be necessary to observe,

First, That the *five* first lines of the fac-simile of the text in the Complutensian edition are at the top of the opposite page to that on which the other *four* lines are found. The *alphabetical letters*, mingled with the Greek text, are those which refer to the corresponding words in the Latin text, printed in a parallel column in the Complutensian Polyglot, and marked with the same letters to ascertain more easily the corresponding Greek and Latin words, for the benefit, I suppose, of learners. The column containing the Latin text, which is that of the *Vulgate*, is not introduced here, being quite unnecessary.

Second. The sixth and seventh lines of the *fac-simile* of the *Codex Montfortii* belong to the second page of that leaf on which the other *five* lines are written.

This MS. is-a thick duodecimo, written on paper, without *folios*. There is an inscription in it in these words, *Sum Thomæ Clementis, olim fratris Froyhe*. On this inscription Dr. Barrett remarks: "It appears *Froyhe* was a *Franciscan*; and I find in some blank leaves in the book these words written (by the same hand, in my opinion, that wrote the MS.) **Ἰησοῦς μαρία φραγκισκος**; by the latter, I understand the founder of that order." If *St. Francis d'Assise* be here meant, who was the founder of the order of *Franciscans*, and the inscription be written by the same who wrote the MS., then the MS. could not have been written before the thirteenth

century, as St. Francis founded his order in 1206, and died in 1226, and consequently quotes that the MS. could not have been written in the eleventh century, as Mr. *Martin* of Utrecht, and several others, have imagined.

Much stress has been laid on the dots over the *ι* and *υ* which frequently appear in this MS. Montfaucon has observed, *Palæographia Græca*, page 33, that such dots were in use a thousand years ago: hence the advocates of the antiquity of the *Codex Montfortii* have inferred that this MS. must have been written at least in the tenth or eleventh century. But as these are found in *modern* MSS. (see *Palæog.* pages 324, 333,) they are therefore no proof of antiquity. In *Michaelis' Introduction*, vol. ii., page 286, where he is describing the MSS. of the Greek Testament, he gives the text in question *as it is supposed to exist in the Codex Montfortii*, in which two dots appear over *every iota* and *upsilon* in the whole five lines there introduced; but on comparing this of Michaelis with the *fac-simile* here produced, the reader will at once perceive that the *arrangement* is false, and the dotting egregiously inaccurate. Deceived by this false representation, Dr. *Marsh*, (bishop of Peterborough,) in his notes on the passage, page 754, observes, "that no MS. written in *small characters* before the twelfth century has these dots. That a MS. written in the twelfth century has these dots *sometimes* on the *iota*, but never on the *upsilon*; but MSS. written in the fourteenth century have these dots on *both letters*, but not in all cases. Now as these letters are *dotted always* in the *Codex Montfortianus*, but not always in the MSS. of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and still less often in those of the twelfth century, we may infer that the *Codex Montfortianus* is at least as modern as the fifteenth century."

On this quotation I beg leave to make a few remarks.

Dr. Marsh says, "that no MS. written in small letters previous to the twelfth century has these dots." This excellent critic has only to consult the *Palæographia Græca*, page 293, in which he will find No. 1, a *fac-simile* of one of the Colbert MSS. (No. 4954,) written A. D. 1022, where the *iota* appears thrice dotted; and in No. 2, on the same page, another *fac-simile* of a MS. written A. D. 1045, the *iota* is dotted in the word *ιησου*. *Ibid.*, page 283, (No. 7,) a MS. written in 986, has the *iota* *twice* dotted in the word *ιμενει*. *Ibid.*, page 275, (No. 2,) a MS. of the ninth or beginning of the tenth century, has the *iota* dotted in *αχαια*. and in No. 3, a specimen

of the *Codex Reginus*, (No. 2271,) written A. D. 914, the *iota* is dotted in **θεικην**. *Ibid.*, page 271, (No. 4,) written about 890, the *iota* is dotted in **ιερων**. and in Spec. v. in the word **ποιια**. See also *Ibid.*, page 320, No. 3, another of the Colbert MSS. (4111,) written A. D. 1236, where the *iota* is dotted *seven* times. All these specimens are taken from MSS. written in *small characters*, and, as the dates show, (the last excepted,) long before the twelfth century. As to these dots being more frequent in manuscripts of the fifteenth than those of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, I cannot say much; it is certain they became more frequent towards the fourteenth century than they were in the twelfth, and yet this was not a general case. In two well-written manuscripts now before me, one of which I suppose to be of the fourteenth century, and the other of the fifteenth, these dots often occur, but they are by no means *regular*. I have noticed several pages in the oldest manuscript where they occur but *once*; and in other pages they may be met with ten or twelve times. On the contrary, in the more *recent* manuscript, *whole pages* occur without one of them; and where they do occur, they are much less frequent than in the former. So that it rather appears from this evidence; that they began to disappear in the fifteenth century. Dr. Marsh, misled by the specimen in *Michaelis*, vol. ii. page 286, says: “The letters in question are *always dotted* in the *Codex Montfortianus*.” By referring to the fac-simile, the reader will be able at once to correct this mistake. The *iota* in the fac-simile occurs *thirty* times, and is dotted only in *five* instances; and the *upsilon* occurs *nineteen* times, and is dotted only in *seven*.

But arguments *for* or *against* the age of any MS., on account of such dots, are futile in the extreme; as the most ancient MSS. have them not only on the *iota* and *upsilon*, but upon several other letters, as may be seen in the *Codex Alexandrinus*, the *Codex Rescriptus*, published by Dr. *Barrett*, and the *Codex Bezae*; in the latter of which they seem to occur more frequently than they do even in the *Codex Montfortii*.

On the evidence of these *dots*, Mr. *Martin* of Utrecht supposed the Dublin manuscript to be as old as the eleventh century and on the same evidence Dr. *Marsh* argues, “that it is at least as modern as the *fifteenth*.” Both these judgments are too hastily formed; *medio tutissimus ibis* is the best counsel in such a case; the manuscript is more likely to have been a production of the thirteenth than of either the eleventh or fifteenth. The former date is as much *too high* as the latter is *too low*; the zeal of the

critics for and against this controverted text having carried them, in my opinion; much too far on either side.

In comparing the *writing* of the *Codex Montfortii*, with the different specimens given by *Montfaucon* in the *Palæographia Græca*, it appears to approach nearest to that on page 320, No. 4, which was taken from one of the *Colbert* manuscripts, (No. 845,) written in the year of our Lord 1272, which I am led to think may be nearly about the date of the *Codex Montfortii*; but on a subject of so much difficulty, where critics of the first rank have been puzzled, I should be sorry to hazard any more than an *opinion*, which the reader is at liberty to consider either correct or incorrect, as may seem best to his own judgment.

Though a conscientious advocate for the *sacred doctrine* contained in the disputed text, and which I think expressly enough revealed in several other parts of the sacred writings, I must own the passage in question stands on a most dubious foundation. All the Greek manuscripts (the *Codex Montfortii* alone excepted) omit the passage; so do *all* the *ancient versions*; the *Vulgate* excepted; but in many of the ancient MSS. even of this version it is wanting. There is one in the British Museum, of the tenth or eleventh century, where it is added by a more recent hand in the margin; for it is wanting in the text. It is also *variously written* in those manuscripts which retain it. This will appear more plainly by comparing the following extracts taken from four manuscripts of the *Vulgate* in my own possession:-

1. — Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus, et hii tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, sanguis, et aqua. This is the same with the text in the Complutensian Polyglot, only *aqua* is placed before *sanguis*.
2. — Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, aqua, et sanguis, et hii tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus, et hii tres unum sunt.
3. — Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus, et hii tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, aqua, et sanguis.
4. — Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, aqua, et sanguis, et hii tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium

dant in cœlo, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus, et hii tres unum sunt.

5. — Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, aqua, et sanguis, et tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in cœlo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus, et hi tres unum sunt.

This last I took from an ancient manuscript in Marsh's library, St. Patrick's, Dublin.

In what has been denominated the *Editio Princeps* of the Latin Bible, and supposed to have been printed between 1455 and 1468, the text stands thus: "Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus, et hii tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra. Spiritus, aqua, et sanguis, et tres unum sunt."

In the Bible printed by *Fradin* and *Pinard*, Paris, 1497, fol., the text is the same with No. 2, only instead of *testimonium dant*, it reads *dant testimonium*.

The reader will observe that in Nos. 2, 4, and 5, the *eighth* verse is put *before* the *seventh*, and that 3 and 4 have *filius* instead of *verbum*. But both these readings are united in an ancient English manuscript of my own, which contains the Bible from the beginning of Proverbs to the end of the New Testament, written on thick strong vellum, and evidently prior to most of those copies attributed to Wiclif.

For three ben that geven witnessing in heven the Fadir, the Word or Sone and the Hooly Goost, and these three ben oon. And three ben that geven witnessing in erthe, the Spirit, Water, and Blood, and these three ben oon.

As many suppose the Complutensian editors must have had a manuscript or manuscripts which contained this disputed passage, I judge it necessary to add the *note* which they subjoin at the bottom of the page, by which (though nothing is clearly expressed) it appears they either had such a manuscript, or *wished to have it thought they had such*. However, the note is curious, and shows us how this disputed passage was read in the most approved manuscripts of the Vulgate extant in the thirteenth century, when *St. Thomas Aquinas* wrote, from whom this note is taken. The following is the whole note *literatim*:—

“Sanctus Thomas in oppositione secunde Decretalis de suma Trinitate et fide Catholica, tractans istum passum contra Abbatem

Joachim, ut tres sunt qui testimonium dant in celo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus; dicet ad literam verba sequentia. Et ad insinuandam unitatem trium personarum subditur. Et hii tres unum sunt. Quodquidem dicitur propter essentie Unitatem. Sed hoc Joachim perverse trahere volens ad unitatem charitatis et consensus, inducebat consequentem auctoritatem. Nam subditur ibidem: et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, S. Spiritus: Aqua; et sanguis. Et in quibusdam libris additur: et hii tres unum sunt. Sed hoc in veris exemplaribus non habetur: sed dicitur esse appositum ab hereticis arrianis ad pervertendum intellectem sanum auctoritatis premissae de unitate essentie trium personarum. Hec beatus Thomas ubi supra.”

If the Complutensian editors *translated* the passage into Greek from the *Vulgate*, it is strange they made no mention of it in this place, where they had so fair an opportunity while speaking so very pointedly on the doctrine in question and forming a note for the occasion, which is indeed the only *theological* note in the whole volume. It is again worthy of note that, when these editors found an important various reading in any of their Greek manuscripts, they noted it in the margin: an example occurs ^{<463B>} **1** **Corinthians 13:3**, and another, *ibid.* xvi.; why was it then that they took no notice of so important an *omission* as the text of the three witnesses, if they really had no manuscript in which it was contained? Did they intend to *deceive* the reader, and could they possibly imagine that the knavery could never be detected? If they designed to deceive, they took the most effectual way to conceal the fraud, as it is supposed they destroyed the manuscripts from which they printed their text; for the story of their being sold in 1749 to a *rocket-maker* (see *Michaelis*, vol. ii., page 440) is every way so exceptionable and unlike the truth, that I really wonder there should be found any person who would seriously give it credit. The substance of this story, as given by *Michaelis*, is as follows: “*Professor Moldenhawer*, who was in Spain in 1784, went to Alcala on purpose to discover these MSS., but was informed that a very illiterate librarian, about thirty-five years before, who *wanted room for some new books*, sold the ancient vellum MSS. as *useless parchments*, to one *Toryo* who dealt in fireworks, as materials for making rockets.” It is farther added that “*Martinez*, a man of learning, *heard of it soon after they were sold*, and *hastened* to save these treasures from destruction; but it was too late, for they were already destroyed, except a few scattered leaves which are now in the library.” On

the whole of this account, it is natural to ask the following questions: Is it likely that the management of so important a trust should be in the hands of a person so ignorant that he could not know a *Hebrew* or *Greek MS.* from a piece of *useless parchment*? Could such a person be intrusted to make a purchase of *new books* for the library, for which he wanted room? or if they were purchased by the *trustees* of the library, is it likely they would leave the classification and arrangement of these to such a *Goth* as this librarian is said to be? Would such a librarian, or indeed any other, be *permitted* to dispose of any part of the library which he might deem useless? If Mr. Martinez heard of it *soon after* they were sold, and *hastened to rescue them*, is it likely that almost the whole should have been converted into rockets before he got to the place, when we are informed they were so many as to cost originally 4,000 aurei; and that even the price which the librarian sold them for was so considerable, that it had to be paid at *two different installments*? Was it possible that in so short a time the rocket-maker could have already consumed the whole? The whole account is so improbable that I cannot help saying, *Credat Judæus Apella; non ego.*

It is more likely the manuscripts were destroyed at first, or that they are still *kept secret*, to prevent the forgery (if it be one) of the text of the three witnesses from being detected; or the librarian already mentioned may have converted them to *his own use*. If they were not destroyed by the Complutensian editors, I should not be surprised if the same manuscripts should come to light in some other part of the world, if not in the Alcala library itself.

It is worthy of remark that *Luther* never admitted the text of the three witnesses into any of the editions of his translation; it is true it was afterwards added, but never during his lifetime. On this Professor Michaelis makes the following observation: “It is uncandid in the extreme for one Protestant to condemn another for rejecting ^{ⲉⲓⲃⲟⲩ} **1 John 5:7**, since it was rejected by the author of our Reformation.” Any conscientious Trinitarian may *innocently hesitate* to receive the feebly supporting evidence of this disputed text, in confirmation of a doctrine which he finds it his duty and interest to receive on the unequivocal testimony of various other passages in the book of Gad.

Professor Griesbach, who does not appear to be an enemy to the doctrine, and who has carefully and critically examined all the evidences and arguments, pro and con, has given up the text as utterly defenceless, and

thinks that to plead for its authenticity is dangerous. “For if,” says he, “a few dubious, suspicious, and modern evidences, with such weak arguments as are usually adduced, are sufficient to demonstrate the authenticity of a *reading*, then there remains no longer any criterion by which the *spurious* may be distinguished from the *genuine*; and consequently the whole text of the New Testament is unascertained and dubious.”

Much stress has been laid on *Bengel’s* defence of this text: Michaelis has considered the strength of his arguments in a candid and satisfactory manner.

“The ancient writers which *Bengel* has produced in favour of ~~1 John 5:7~~ **1 John 5:7**, are all *Latin writers*, for he acknowledges that no *Greek father* has ever quoted it. Now, if no objection could be made to *Bengel’s* witnesses, and the most ancient *Latin fathers* had quoted in express terms the whole of the controverted passage, their quotations would prove nothing more than that the passage stood in their manuscripts of the *Latin version*, and therefore that the *Latin version* contained it in a very early age. But it will appear upon examination that their evidence is very unsatisfactory. The evidence of *Tertullian*, the oldest *Latin writer* who has been quoted in favour of ~~1 John 5:7~~ **1 John 5:7**, is contained in the following passage of his treatise against *Praxeas*, book 1:, chap. 25: *Ita connexus Patris in Filio et Filii in Paraclete, tres efficit cohærentes, alterum ex altero; qui tres unum sunt, non unus; quomodo dictum est: Ego et Pater unum sumus*. Hence it is inferred, that because *tres unum sunt* stand at present in the *Latin version*, ~~1 John 5:7~~ **1 John 5:7**, these words stood there likewise in the time of *Tertullian*, and that *Tertullian* borrowed them from the *Latin version*. But this inference is wholly without foundation; for *Tertullian* does not produce these words as a quotation, and the bare circumstance of his using the expression *tres unum sunt* will not prove that he found that expression in the Bible. On the contrary, it is evident, from what immediately follows, that ~~1 John 5:7~~ **1 John 5:7** was *not* contained in the *Latin version* when *Tertullian* wrote. For, in proof of this assertion, *qui tres unum sunt*, he immediately adds, *quomodo dictum est: Ego et Pater unum sumus*, which is a quotation from *St. John’s gospel*, ~~John 10:30~~ **John 10:30**. Now as this quotation relates only to the *Father* and the *Son*, and not to the *Holy Ghost*, surely *Tertullian* would not have proved the unity of the *Trinity* from this passage, if ~~1 John 5:7~~ **1 John 5:7**, which is much more to the purpose, had then been contained in any *Latin manuscript* with which he was acquainted. At any rate, the mere use of the words *tres unum sunt* affords no argument in favour of the

controverted passage; and if any inference is to be deduced from their agreement with our present copies of the Latin version in ^{<187>}**1 John 5:7**; it is this: that the person who afterwards fabricated this passage retained an expression which had been sanctioned by the authority of Tertullian. So much for the evidence of this Latin father, the only writer of the *second* century to whom appeal has been made.

“Of the Latin fathers who lived in the *third* century, Cyprian alone has been produced as evidence in favour of ^{<187>}**1 John 5:7**. From the writings of Cyprian two passages have been quoted as proofs that ^{<187>}**1 John 5:7** was contained in his manuscript of the Latin version. The one is from his epistle to Jubaianus; where Cyprian writes thus: *Si baptizari quis apud hæreticum potuit, utique et remissam consecutus est, et sanctificatus est, et templum Dei factus est; quæro cujus Dei? Si Creatoris; non potuit; qui in eum non credidit: si Christi, non hujus potest fieri templum, qui negat, Deum Christum: si Spiritus Sancti, cum tres unum sint, quomodo Spiritus Sanctus placatus esse ei potest, qui aut Patris aut Filii inimicus est?* Here it must be observed, that the words *cum tres unum sint*, though inserted in the later editions of Cyprian’s works, are *not* contained in that edition which was published by Erasmus; and even if they were genuine, they will prove nothing more than the same words just quoted from Tertullian. The other passage, which is much more to the purpose; is in Cyprian’s treatise, *Deuteronomy Ecclesie Unitate*, where Cyprian writes thus: *Dicit Dominus: Ego et Pater unum sumus; et iterum de Patre et Filio, et Spiritu Sancto, scriptum est: Et tres unum sunt.* Now, admitting that the words *et tres unum sunt* were quoted by Cyprian from ^{<187>}**1 John 5:7**, I seriously ask every impartial judge whether a passage found in no ancient Greek manuscript, quoted by no Greek father, and contained in no other ancient version than the Latin, (and not in all copies of this,) is therefore to be pronounced genuine; merely because one Latin father of the three first centuries, who was bishop of Carthage, where the Latin version only was used, and where Greek was unknown, has quoted it? Under these circumstances, should we conclude that the passage stood originally in the Greek autograph of St. John? Certainly not; for the only inference which could be deduced from Cyprian’s quotation would be this, that the passage had been introduced into the Latin version so early as the third century.

“The preceding answer is sufficient to invalidate Cyprian’s authority in establishing the authenticity of ^{<187>}**1 John 5:7**, on the supposition that Cyprian really quoted it; but that he did so is more than any man can prove.

The words *tres unum sunt* are contained not only in the seventh, but also in the eighth verse, which is a part of the ancient and genuine text of St. John; and therefore it is at least possible that Cyprian took them not from the seventh, but from the eighth verse. It is true that he says these words are written of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; whereas *tres unum sunt*, in the eighth verse, relates only to the spirit, the water, and the blood. But it must be observed that the Latin fathers interpreted *spiritus, aquas et sanguis*, not literally, but mystically; and some of them really understood by these words, *Pater, Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus*, taking *aqua* in the sense of *Pater*, *sanguis* in the sense of *Filius*, and *spiritus* in the sense of *Spiritus Sanctus*.

“This is expressly asserted by Eucherius in his *Questiones N. T. difficiliore*s; for after having quoted **1 John 5:8**, thus: *Tria sunt, quæ testimonium perhibent, aqua, sanguis, et spiritus*, he adds, soon after, *plures tamen hic ipsam interpretatione mystica intelligere Trinitatem; aqua Patrem, sanguine Christum, spiritu Spiritum Sanctum manifestante*. But if Cyprian really thought that *aqua, sanguis, et spiritus*, **1 John 5:8**, denoted *Pater, Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus*, he might say of *tres unum sunt*, **1 John 5:8**, that it was written, *de Patre, et Filio, et Spiritu Sancto*. And that he actually did so, that he quoted not **1 John 5:7**, but understood **1 John 5:8**, mystically, appears from the following passage of Facundus, who lived in the neighbourhood of Carthage, and consequently used the same Latin version as Cyprian. *Johannes Apostolus in epistola sua de Patre, et Filio, et Spiritu Sancto, sic dicit: Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, aqua, et sanguis, et hi tres unum sunt: in spiritu significans Patrem, &c. Quod Johannis Apostoli testimonium beatus Cyprianus, in epistola, sive libro, quem de Trinitate scripsit, de Patre, Filio, et Spiritu Sancto, dictum intelligit.*” Facundus then quotes the words of Cyprian, which are the subject of our present inquiry. From the preceding passage it is manifest that **1 John 5:7** was unknown to Facundus; for he proves the doctrine of the Trinity by a mystical interpretation of **1 John 5:8**, and appeals to the authority of Cyprian, who, he says, gave the same interpretation. But if **1 John 5:7** was unknown to Facundus, who lived in the same country as Cyprian, used the same Latin version, and wrote almost three centuries later, it is incredible that **1 John 5:7** was already introduced in the Latin manuscripts which Cyprian used. Consequently we must conclude that the assertion of Facundus is true, and that the words of Cyprian contain, not a quotation from **1 John 5:7**, but a mystical application of **1 John 5:8**. This is

farther confirmed by Augustine, who was likewise an African bishop, who lived a hundred years later than Cyprian, and still knew nothing of ~~1~~¹ **John 5:7**, for he has never quoted this passage, not even where he speaks of the Trinity, but he has mystically applied the eighth verse.”-MICHAELIS, vol. vi. p. 420.


The Greek writers who have not quoted this verse, though several of them wrote professedly on the Deity of Christ, and on the Trinity, are the following:—

Irenæus.	Cyril of Alexandria.
Clemens Alexandrinus.	The Exposition of Faith in Justin Martyr's works.
Dionysius Alexandrinus (or the writer against Paul of Samosatsa under his name.)	Cæsarius.
Athanasius.	Proclus.
The Synopsis of Scripture.	The Council of Nice, as it is represented by Gelasius
The Synod of Sardica.	Cyzicenus.
Epiphanius.	Hippolytus.
Basil.	Andreas.
Alexander of Alexandria.	Six catenæ, quoted by Simon.
Gregory Nyssen.	The marginal scholia of three MSS.
Gregory Nazianzen, with his two commentators, Elias Cretensis and Nicetas.	Hesychius.
Didysus <i>de Spiritu Sancto</i> .	John Damascenus.
Chrysostom.	Germanus of Constantinople.
An author under his name, <i>de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate</i> .	Œcumenius.
	Euthymius Zigabenus

LATIN AUTHORS.

Novatian.	Facundus.
Hilary.	Junilius.
Lucifer Calaritanus.	Cerealis.
Jerome.	Rusticus.
Augustine.	Bede.
Ambrose.	Gregogy.
Faustinus.	Philastrius.
Leo Magnus.	Paschasius.
The author <i>de Promissis</i> .	Arnobius, junior
Eucherius.	Pope Eusebius.

The writers that have quoted it are comparatively recent or spurious, for those of any note which have been supposed, from certain expressions in their works, to have had reference to this verse, have been proved by learned men to have had no such text in view. A great and good man has said that “the seventh verse, in conjunction with the sixth and eighth, has been quoted by Tertullian, Cyprian, and an uninterrupted train of fathers.” But a more incautious assertion was never made, as the preceding list will prove; and the evidence on the subject I have most carefully examined. *Bengel*, who was an excellent critic and a good man, endeavoured to defend it, but without success; and *Michaelis* demonstrated its spuriousness from *Bengel*’s *five* concessions. *Knittel* has defended its authenticity with much critical acumen; *Hezelius* with great sagacity; *David Martin*, of Utrecht, with much honest simplicity; and Dean *Travis* with abundance of zeal, without much knowledge of the critical bearings of the subject. *Socinians* need not glory that it is indefensible, and that honest Trinitarians give it up; for the sacred *doctrine* which it appears to express is diffused through every part of the Scriptures, and is as inexpungable as a rock of adamant, and will live and prevail in the Church of Christ while sun and moon endure, and till time shall be swallowed up in eternity.

SUMMARY of the whole evidence relative to the THREE HEAVENLY WITNESSES,  **1 John 5:7.**

1. ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN *Greek* MSS. are extant, containing the First Epistle of John, and the text in question is wanting in 112. It only exists in the *Codex Montfortii*, (a comparatively recent MS.,) already described. The *Codex Ravianus*, in the Royal Library at Berlin, is a *transcript* taken from the *Complutensian Polyglot*.
2. All the *GREEK fathers* omit the verse, though many of them quote both ~~GR6~~ **1 John 5:6** and ~~GR8~~ **1 John 5:8**, applying them to the Trinity, and Divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit; yea, and endeavour to prove the doctrine of the *Trinity* from ~~GR6~~ **1 John 5:6** and ~~GR8~~ **1 John 5:8**, without referring to any such verse as ~~GR7~~ **1 John 5:7**, which, had it existed, would have been a more positive proof, and one that could not have been overlooked.
3. The *first place* in which the verse appears in *Greek* is the Greek translation of the Acts of the *Council of Lateran*, held A. D. 1215.
4. Though it is found in many *Latin* copies, yet it does not appear that any written previously to the TENTH CENTURY contains it.
5. The *LATIN fathers* do not quote it, even where it would have greatly strengthened their arguments; and where, had it existed, it might have been most naturally expected.
6. *Virilius*, bishop of *Tapsum*, at the conclusion of the fifth century, is the first who seems to have referred expressly to the three heavenly witnesses; but his quotation does not agree with the present text either in *words* or in *sense*; and besides, he is a writer of very little credit, nor does the place alleged appear to learned men to be genuine.
7. The *Latin writers* who do refer to the three heavenly witnesses vary greatly in their quotations, the more *ancient* placing the *eighth verse* before the *seventh*, and very many omitting, after the earthly witnesses, the clause *these three are one*. Others who insert *these three are one* add *in Christ Jesus*; others use different terms.
8. It is wanting in all the ancient *VERSIONS*, the *Vulgate* excepted; but the more ancient copies of this have it not; and those which have it vary greatly among themselves, as may be seen in the specimens already produced.
9. It is wanting in the *first edition* of Erasmus, A. D. 1516, which is properly the *editio princeps* of the *Greek* text.

It is wanting also in his *second* edition 1519, but he added it in the *third* from the *Codex Montfortii*.

It is wanting in the editions of *Aldus*, *Gerbelius*, *Cephalæus*, &c.

It is wanting in the *German* translation of LUTHER, and in *all the editions* of it published *during his lifetime*.

It is inserted in our early *English* translations, but with marks of *doubtfulness*, as has already been shown.

10. In short, it stands on no authority sufficient to authenticate any part of a revelation professing to have come from God.

See *Griesbach's* Dissertation on this verse at the end of the second volume of his Greek text. Halæ et Londini, 1806.

In defence of this verse see "Archdeacon *Travis's* Letters to *Gibbon*;" and on the other side, "Professor *Porson's* Answer to *Travis*." The latter has left nothing farther to be said on the subject either in vindication or reply.

Finished the correction for a reimpression, Jan. 3, 1832.-A. C.