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COMMENTARY

**COMMENTARY
ON THE FIRST EPISTLE
OF JOHN**

by John Calvin

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COMMENTARY ON

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

THE ARGUMENT

THIS Epistle is altogether worthy of the spirit of that disciple who, above others, was loved by Christ, that he might exhibit him as a friend to us. But it contains doctrines mixed with exhortations; for he speaks of the eternal Deity of Christ, and at the same time of the incomparable grace which he brought with him when he appeared in the world, and generally of all his blessings; and he especially commends and extols the inestimable grace of divine adoption.

On these truths he grounds his exhortations; and at one time he admonishes us in general to lead a pious and holy life, and at another time he expressly enjoins love. But he does none of these things in a regular order; for he everywhere mixes teaching with exhortation. But he particularly urges brotherly love: he also briefly touches on other things, such as to beware of impostors, and similar things. But each particular shall be noticed in its own place.

CHAPTER 1

<620101> **1 JOHN 1:1-2**

1. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;	1. Quod erat ab initio, quod audivimus, quod vidimus oculis nostris, quod intuiti sumus, quod manus nostrae contrectaverunt, de Sermone vitae;
2. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)	2. Et vita manifesta est, et vidimus et testamur et annuntiamus vobis vitam aeternam, quae erat apud Patrem, et manifesta est nobis.

He shows, first, that life has been exhibited to us in Christ; which, as it is an incomparable good, ought to rouse and inflame all our powers with a marvelous desire for it, and with the love of it. It is said, indeed, in a few and plain words, that life is manifested; but if we consider how miserable and horrible a condition death is, and also what is the kingdom and the glory of immortality, we shall perceive that there is something here more magnificent than what can be expressed in any words.

Then the Apostle’s object, in setting before us the vast good, yea, the chief and only true happiness which God has conferred on us, in his own Son, is to raise our thoughts above; but as the greatness of the subject requires that the truth should be certain, and fully proved, this is what is here much dwelt upon. For these words, *What we have seen, what we have heard, what we have looked on*, serve to strengthen our faith in the gospel. Nor does he, indeed, without reason, make so many asseverations; for since our salvation depends on the gospel, its certainty is in the highest degree necessary; and how difficult it is for us to believe, every one of us knows too well by his own experience. To believe is not lightly to form an opinion, or to assent only to what is said, but a firm, undoubting conviction, so that we may dare to subscribe to the truth as fully proved.

It is for this reason that the Apostle heaps together so many things in confirmation of the gospel.

1. *That which was from the beginning.* As the passage is abrupt and involved, that the sense may be made clearer, the words may be thus arranged; “We announce to you the word of life, which was from the beginning and really testified to us in all manner of ways, that life has been manifested in him;” or, if you prefer, the meaning may be thus given, “What we announce to you respecting the word of life, has been from the beginning, and has been openly shewed to us, that life was manifested in him.” But the words, *That which was from the beginning*, refer doubtless to the divinity of Christ, for God manifested in the flesh was not from the beginning; but he who always was life and the eternal Word of God, appeared in the fullness of time as man. Again, what follows as to the looking on and the handling of the hands, refers to his human nature. But as the two natures constitute but one person, and Christ is one, because he came forth from the Father that he might put on our flesh, the Apostle rightly declares that he is the same, and had been invisible, and afterwards became visible. ^{f1}

Hereby the senseless cavil of Servetus is disproved, that the nature and essence of Deity became one with the flesh, and that thus the Word was transformed into flesh, because the life-giving Word was seen in the flesh.

Let us then bear in mind, that this doctrine of the Gospel is here declared, that he who in the flesh really proved himself to be the Son of God, and was acknowledged to be the Son of God, was always God’s invisible Word, for he does not refer here to the beginning of the world, but ascends much higher.

Which we have heard, which we have seen. It was not the hearing of a report, to which little credit is usually given, but John means, that he had faithfully learnt from his Master those things which he taught, so that he alleged nothing thoughtlessly and rashly. And, doubtless, no one is a fit teacher in the Church, who has not been the disciple of the Son of God, and rightly instructed in his school, since his authority alone ought to prevail.

When he says, we have seen *with our eyes*, it is no redundancy, but a fuller expression for the sake of amplifying; nay, he was not satisfied with seeing

only, but added, *which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled*. By these words he shews that he taught nothing but what had been really made known to him.

It may seem, however, that the evidence of the senses little availed on the present subject, for the power of Christ could not be perceived by the eyes nor felt by the hands. To this I answer, that the same thing is said here as in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, “We have seen his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father;” for he was not known as the Son of God by the external form of his body, but because he gave illustrious proofs of his Divine power, so that in him shone forth the majesty of the Father, as in a living and distinct image. As the words are in the plural number, and the subject equally applies to all the apostles, I am disposed to include them, especially as the authority of testimony is what is treated of.

But no less frivolous (as I have before said) than impudent is the wickedness of Servetus, who urges these words to prove that the Word of God became visible and capable of being handled; he either impiously destroys or mingles together the twofold nature of Christ. It is, therefore, a pure figment. Thus deifying the humanity of Christ, he wholly takes away the reality of his human nature, at the same time denying that Christ is for any other reason called the Son of God, except that he was conceived of his mother by the power of the Holy Spirit, and taking away his own subsistence in God. It hence follows that he was neither God nor man, though he seems to form a confused mass from both. But as the meaning of the Apostle is evident to us, let us pass by that unprincipled man.

Of the Word of life. The genitive here is used for an adjective, vivifying, or life-giving; for in him, as it is said in the first chapter of John’s Gospel, was life. At the same time, this distinction belongs to the Son of God on two accounts, because he has infused life into all creatures, and because he now restores life to us, which had perished, having been extinguished by the sin of Adam. Moreover, the term *Word* may be explained in two ways, either of Christ, or of the doctrine of the Gospel, for even by this is salvation brought to us. But as its substance is Christ, and as it contains no other thing than that he, who had been always with the Father, was at length manifested to men, the first view appears to me the more simple

and genuine. Moreover, it appears more fully from the Gospel that the wisdom which dwells in God is called the Word.

2. *For* (or, and) *the life was manifested*. The copulative is explanatory, as though he had said, “We testify of the vivifying Word, as life has been manifested.” The sense may at the same time be twofold, that Christ, who is life and the fountain of life, has been manifested, or, that life has been openly offered to us in Christ. The latter, indeed, necessarily follows from the former. Yet as to the meaning, the two things differ, as cause and effect. When he repeats, *We shew*, or announce *eternal life*, he speaks, I have no doubt, of the effect, even that he announces that life is obtained for us in Christ.

We hence learn, that when Christ is preached to us, the kingdom of heaven is opened to us, so that being raised from death we may live the life of God.

Which was with the Father. This is true, not only from the time when the world was formed, but also from eternity, for he was always God, the fountain of life; and the power and the faculty of vivifying was possessed by his eternal wisdom: but he did not actually exercise it before the creation of the world, and from the time when God began to exhibit the Word, that power which before was hid, diffused itself over all created things. Some manifestation had already been made; the Apostle had another thing in view, that is, that life was then at length manifested in Christ, when he in our flesh completed the work of redemption. For though the fathers were even under the law associates and partakers of the same life, yet we know that they were shut up under the hope that was to be revealed. It was necessary for them to seek life from the death and resurrection of Christ; but the event was not only far remote from their eyes, but also hid from their minds. They depended, then, on the hope of revelation, which at length in due time followed. They could not, indeed, have obtained life, except it was in some way manifested to them; but the difference between us and them is, that we hold him already revealed as it were in our hands, whom they sought obscurely promised to them in types.

But the object of the Apostle is, to remove the idea of novelty, which might have lessened the dignity of the Gospel; he therefore says, that life

had not now at length began to be, though it had but lately appeared, for it was always with the Father.

<620103>1 JOHN 1:3-7	
3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.	3. Quod vidimus et audivimus, annuntiamus vobis, ut et vos societatem habcatis nobiscum, et societas nostra sit cum Patre et cure filio ejus Jesu Christo.
4. And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.	4. Et hsec scribimus vobis, ut gaudium vestrum sit completum.
5. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.	5. Et haec est promissio quam annuntiamus, quod Deus lux est, et tenebrae in eo non sunt ullae.
6. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:	6. Si dixerimus quod societatem habemus cum eo, et in tenebris ambulamus, mentimur, et veritatem non facimus.
7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.	7. Si autem in luce ambulamus, sicut ipse in luce est, societatem habemus inter nos mutuam, et sanguis Jesu Christi filii ejus emundat nos ab omni peccato.

3. *That which we have seen.* He now repeats the third time the words, *seen* and *heard*, that nothing might be wanting as to the real certainty of his doctrine. And it ought to be carefully noticed, that the heralds of the Gospel chosen by Christ were those who were fit and faithful witnesses of all those things which they were to declare. He also testifies of the feeling of their heart, for he says that he was moved by no other reason to write except to invite those to whom he was writing to the participation of an inestimable good. It hence appears how much care he had for their salvation; which served not a little to induce them to believe; for extremely ungrateful we must be, if we refuse to hear him who wishes to communicate to us a part of that happiness which he has obtained.

He also sets forth the fruit received from the Gospel, even that we are united thereby to God, and to his Son Christ in whom is found the chief good. It was necessary for him to add this second clause, not only that he might represent the doctrine of the Gospel as precious and lovely, but that he might also show that he wished them to be his associates for no other end but to lead them to God, so that they might be all one in him. For the ungodly have also a mutual union between themselves, but it is without God, nay, in order to alienate themselves more and more from God, which is the extreme of all evils. It is, indeed, as it has been stated, our only true happiness, to be received into God's favor, so that we may be really united to him in Christ; of which John speaks in the seventeenth chapter of his gospel.

In short, John declares, that as the apostles were adopted by Christ as brethren, that being gathered into one body, they might together be united to God, so he does the same with other colleagues; though many, they are yet made partakers of this holy and blessed union.

4. *That your joy may be full.* By full joy, he expresses more clearly the complete and perfect happiness which we obtain through the Gospel; at the same time he reminds the faithful where they ought to fix all their affections. True is that saying,

“Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.”
(^{<400621>} Matthew 6:21.)

Whosoever, then, really perceives what fellowship with God is, will be satisfied with it alone, and will no more burn with desires for other things.

“The Lord is my cup,” says David, “and my heritage; the lines have fallen for me on an excellent lot.” (^{<191605>} Psalm 16:5, 6.)

In the same manner does Paul declare that all things were deemed by him as dung, in comparison with Christ alone. (^{<500308>} Philippians 3:8.) He, therefore, has at length made a proficiency in the Gospel, who esteems himself happy in having communion with God, and acquiesces in that alone; and thus he prefers it to the whole world, so that he is ready for its sake to relinquish all other things.

5. *This then is the message,* or promise. I do not disapprove of the rendering of the old interpreter, “This is the annunciation,” or message; for

though *ἐπαγγελία* means for the most part a promise, yet, as John speaks here generally of the testimony before mentioned, the context seems to require the other meaning, except you were to give this explanation, “The promise which we bring to you, includes this, or has this condition annexed to it.” Thus, the meaning of the Apostle would become evident to us. ¹² For his object here was not to include the whole doctrine of the Gospel, but to shew that if we desire to enjoy Christ and his blessings, it is required of us to be conformed to God in righteousness and holiness. Paul says the same thing in the second chapter of the Epistle to Titus, “Appeared has the saving grace of God to all, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we may live soberly and righteously and holily in this world;” except that here he says metaphorically, that we are to walk in the light, because God is light.

But he calls God *light*, and says that he is *in the light*; such expressions are not to be too strictly taken. Why Satan is called the prince of darkness is sufficiently evident. When, therefore, God on the other hand is called the Father of light, and also light, we first understand that there is nothing in him but what is bright, pure, and unalloyed; and, secondly, that he makes all things so manifest by his brightness, that he suffers nothing vicious or perverted, no spots or filth, no hypocrisy or fraud, to lie hid. Then the sum of what is said is, that since there is no union between light and darkness, there is a separation between us and God as long as we walk in darkness; and that the fellowship which he mentions, cannot exist except we also become pure and holy.

In him is no darkness at all. This mode of speaking is commonly used by John, to amplify what he has affirmed by a contrary negation. Then, the meaning is, that God is such a light, that no darkness belongs to him. It hence follows, that he hates an evil conscience, pollution, and wickedness, and everything that pertains to darkness.

6. *If we say.* It is, indeed, an argument from what is inconsistent, when he concludes that they are alienated from God, who walk in darkness. This doctrine, however, depends on a higher principle, that God sanctifies all who are his. For it is not a naked precept that he gives, which requires that our life should be holy; but he rather shews that the grace of Christ serves for this end to dissipate darkness, and to kindle in us the light of God; as though he had said, “What God communicates to us is not a vain fiction;

for it is necessary that the power and effect of this fellowship should shine forth in our life; otherwise the possession of the gospel is fallacious.” What he adds, *and do not the truth*, is the same as if he had said, “We do not act truthfully. We do not regard what is true and right.” And this mode of speaking, as I have before observed, is frequently used by him.

7. *But if we walk in the light.* He now says, that the proof of our union with God is certain, if we are conformable to him; not that purity of life conciliates us to God, as the prior cause; but the Apostle means, that our union with God is made evident by the effect, that is, when his purity shines forth in us. And, doubtless, such is the fact; wherever God comes, all things are so imbued with his holiness, that he washes away all filth; for without him we have nothing but filth and darkness. It is hence evident, that no one leads a holy life, except he is united to God.

In saying, *We have fellowship one with another*, he does not speak simply of men; but he sets God on one side, and us on the other.

It may, however, be asked, “Who among men can so exhibit the light of God in his life, as that this likeness which John requires should exist; for it would be thus necessary, that he should be wholly pure and free from darkness.” To this I answer, that expressions of this kind are accommodated to the capacities of men; he is therefore said to be like God, who aspires to his likeness, however distant from it he may as yet be. The example ought not to be otherwise applied than according to this passage. He walks in darkness who is not ruled by the fear of God, and who does not, with a pure conscience, devote himself wholly to God, and seek to promote his glory. Then, on the other hand, he who in sincerity of heart spends his life, yea, every part of it, in the fear and service of God, and faithfully worships him, walks in the light, for he keeps the right way, though he may in many things offend and sigh under the burden of the flesh. Then, integrity of conscience is alone that which distinguishes light from darkness.

And the blood of Jesus Christ. After having taught what is the bond of our union with God, he now shews what fruit flows from it, even that our sins are freely remitted. And this is the blessedness which David describes in the thirty-second Psalm, in order that we may know that we are most miserable until, being renewed by God’s Spirit, we serve him with a sincere heart. For who can be imagined more miserable than that man

whom God hates and abominates, and over whose head is suspended both the wrath of God and eternal death?

This passage is remarkable; and from it we first learn, that the expiation of Christ, effected by his death, does then properly belong to us, when we, in uprightness of heart, do what is right and just for Christ is no redeemer except to those who turn from iniquity, and lead a new life. If, then, we desire to have God propitious to us, so as to forgive our sins, we ought not to forgive ourselves. In short, remission of sins cannot be separated from repentance, nor can the peace of God be in those hearts, where the fear of God does not prevail.

Secondly, this passage shews that the gratuitous pardon of sins is given us not only once, but that it is a benefit perpetually residing in the Church, and daily offered to the faithful. For the Apostle here addresses the faithful; as doubtless no man has ever been, nor ever will be, who can otherwise please God, since all are guilty before him; for however strong a desire there may be in us of acting rightly, we always go haltingly to God. Yet what is half done obtains no approval with God. In the meantime, by new sins we continually separate ourselves, as far as we can, from the grace of God. Thus it is, that all the saints have need of the daily forgiveness of sins; for this alone keeps us in the family of God.

By saying, *from all sin*, he intimates that we are, on many accounts, guilty before God; so that doubtless there is no one who has not many vices. But he shews that no sins prevent the godly, and those who fear God, from obtaining his favor. He also points out the manner of obtaining pardon, and the cause of our cleansing, even because Christ expiated our sins by his blood; but he affirms that all the godly are undoubtedly partakers of this cleansing.

The whole of his doctrine has been wickedly perverted by the sophists; for they imagine that pardon of sins is given us, as it were, in baptism. They maintain that there only the blood of Christ avails; and they teach, that after baptism, God is not otherwise reconciled than by satisfactions. They, indeed, leave some part to the blood of Christ; but when they assign merit to works, even in the least degree, they wholly subvert what John teaches here, as to the way of expiating sins, and of being reconciled to God. For these two things can never harmonize together, to be cleansed by

the blood of Christ, and to be cleansed by works: for John assigns not the half, but the whole, to the blood of Christ.

The sum of what is said, then, is, that the faithful know of a certainty, that they are accepted by God, because he has been reconciled to them through the sacrifice of the death of Christ. And sacrifice includes cleansing and satisfaction. Hence the power and efficiency of these belong to the blood of Christ alone.

Hereby is disproved and exposed the sacrilegious invention of the Papists as to indulgences; for as though the blood of Christ were not sufficient, they add, as a subsidy to it, the blood and merits of martyrs. At the same time, this blasphemy advances much further among us; for as they say that their keys, by which they hold as shut up the remission of sins, open a treasure made up partly of the blood and merits of martyrs, and partly of the worlds of supererogation, by which any sinner may redeem himself, no remission of sins remains for them but what is derogatory to the blood of Christ; for if their doctrine stands, the blood of Christ does not cleanse us, but comes in, as it were, as a partial aid. Thus consciences are held in suspense, which the Apostle here bids to rely on the blood of Christ.

<620108>1 JOHN 1:8-10	
8. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the is not in us.	8. Si dixerimus quod peccatum non habemus, nos ipsos decipimus, et veritas non est in nobis.
9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.	9. Si confitemur peccata nostra, fidelis est et justus, ut nobis peccata remittat; et purget nos ab omni injustitia.
10. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.	10. Si dixerimus quod non peccavimus, mendacem facimus eum, et sermo ejus non est in nobis.

8. *If we say.* He now commends grace from its necessity; for as no one is free from sin, he intimates that we are all lost and undone, except the Lord comes to our aid with the remedy of pardon. The reason why he so much dwells on the fact, that no one is innocent, is, that all may now fully know

that they stand in need of mercy, to deliver them from punishment, and that they may thus be more roused to seek the necessary blessing.

By the word *sin*, is meant here not only corrupt and vicious inclination, but the fault or sinful act which really renders us guilty before God. Besides, as it is a universal declaration, it follows, that none of the saints, who exist now, have been, or shall be, are exempted from the number. Hence most fitly did Augustine refute the cavil of the Pelagians, by adducing against them this passage: and he wisely thought that the confession of guilt is not required for humility's sake, but lest we by lying should deceive ourselves.

When he adds, *and the truth is not in us*, he confirms, according to his usual manner, the former sentence by repeating it in other words; though it is not a simple repetition, (as elsewhere,) but he says that they are deceived who glory in falsehood.

9. *If we confess*. He again promises to the faithful that God will be propitious to them, provided they acknowledge themselves to *be* sinners. It is of great moment to be fully persuaded, that when we have sinned, there is a reconciliation with God ready and prepared for us: we shall otherwise carry always a hell within us. Few, indeed, consider how miserable and wretched is a doubting conscience; but the truth is, that hell reigns where there is no peace with God. The more, then, it becomes us to receive with the whole heart this promise which offers free pardon to all who confess their sins. Moreover, this is founded even on the justice of God, because God who promises is true and just. For they who think that he is called *just*, because he justifies us freely, reason, as I think, with too much refinement, because justice or righteousness here depends on fidelity, and both are annexed to the promise. For God might have been just, were he to deal with us with all the rigor of justice; but as he has bound himself to us by his word, he would not have himself deemed just, except he forgives. ^{f3}

But this confession, as it is made to God, must be in sincerity; and the heart cannot speak to God without newness of life. It then includes true repentance. God, indeed, forgives freely, but in such a way, that the facility of mercy does not become an enticement to sin.

And to cleanse us. The verb, to cleanse, seems to be taken in another sense than before; for he had said, that we are cleansed by the blood of Christ, because through him sins are not imputed; but now, having spoken of pardon, he also adds, that God cleanses us from iniquity: so that this second clause is different from the preceding. Thus he initiates that a twofold fruit comes to us from confession, — that God being reconciled by the sacrifice of Christ, forgives us, — and that he renews and reforms us.

Were any one to object and say, that as long as we sojourn in the world, we are never cleansed from all unrighteousness, with regard to our reformation: this is indeed true; but John does not refer to what God now performs in us. He is faithful, he says, to cleanse us, not today or tomorrow; for as long as we are surrounded with flesh, we ought to be in a continual state of progress; but what he has once begun, he goes on daily to do, until he at length completes it. So Paul says, that we are chosen, that we may appear without blame before God, (<510122>Colossians 1:22;) and in another place he says, that the Church is cleansed, that it might be without spot or wrinkle. (<490527>Ephesians 5:27.)

If yet any one prefers another explanation, that he says the same thing twice over, I shall not object. ^{f4}

10. *We make him a liar.* He goes still further, that they who claim purity for themselves blaspheme God. For we see that he everywhere represents the whole race of man as guilty of sin.

Whosoever then tries to escape this charge carries on war with God, and accuses him of falsehood, as though he condemned the undeserving. To confirm this he adds, *and his word is not in us*; as though he had said, that we reject this great truth, that all are under guilt.

We hence learn, that we then only make a due progress in the knowledge of the word of the Lord, when we become really humbled, so as to groan under the burden of our sins and learn to flee to the mercy of God, and acquiesce in nothing else but in his paternal favor.

CHAPTER 2

<620201> 1 JOHN 2:1-2	
1. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:	1. Filioli mei, haec scribo vobis, ut non peccetis; quod si quis peccaverit, advocatum habemus apud Patrein, Jesum Christum justum:
2. And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for <i>the sins of</i> the whole world.	2. Et ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris, non pro nostris autem solum, sed etiam pro totius mundi.

1. *My little children.* It is not only the sum and substance of the preceding doctrine, but the meaning of almost the whole gospel, that we are to depart from sin; and yet, though we are always exposed to God’s judgment, we are certain that Christ so intercedes by the sacrifice of his death, that the Father is propitious to us. In the meantime, he also anticipates an objection, lest any one should think that he gave license to sin when he spoke of God’s mercy, and shewed that it is presented to us all. He then joins together two parts of the gospel, which unreasonable men separate, and thus lacerate and mutilate. Besides, the doctrine of grace has always been calumniated by the ungodly. When the expiation of sins by Christ is set forth, they boastingly say that a license is given to sin.

To obviate these calumnies, the Apostle testifies first that the design of his doctrine was to keep men from sinning; for when he says, *that ye sin not*, his meaning only is, that they, according to the measure of human infirmity, should abstain from sins. And to the same purpose is what I have already said respecting fellowship with God, that we are to be conformable to him. He is not, however, silent as to the gratuitous remission of sins; for though heaven should fall and all things be confounded, yet this part of truth ought never to be omitted; but, on the contrary, what Christ is ought to be preached clearly and distinctly.

So ought we also to do at this day. As the flesh is inclined to wantonness, men ought to be carefully warned, that righteousness and salvation are provided in Christ for this end, that we may become the holy possession of God. Yet whenever it happens that men wantonly abuse the mercy of God, there are many snarlish men who load us with calumny, as though we gave loose reins to vices. We ought still boldly to go on and proclaim the grace of Christ, in which especially shines forth the glory of God, and in which consists the whole salvation of men. These barkings of the ungodly ought, I repeat it, to be wholly disregarded; for we see that the apostles were also by these barkings assailed.

For this reason he immediately adds the second clause, that when we sin we have an *advocate*. By these words he confirms what we have already said, that we are very far from being perfectly righteous, nay, that we contract new guilt daily, and that yet there is a remedy for reconciling us to God, if we flee to Christ; and this is alone that in which consciences call acquiesce, in which is included the righteousness of men, in which is founded the hope of salvation.

The conditional particle, *if*, ought to be viewed as causal; for it cannot be but that we sin. In short, John means, that we are not only called away from sin by the gospel, because God invites us to himself, and offers to us the Spirit of regeneration, but that a provision is made for miserable sinners, that they may have God always propitious to them, and that the sins by which they are entangled, do not prevent them from becoming just, because they have a Mediator to reconcile them to God. But in order to shew how we return into favor with God, he says that Christ is our advocate; for he appears before God for this end, that he may exercise towards us the power and efficacy of his sacrifice. That this may be better understood, I will speak more homely. The intercession of Christ is a continual application of his death for our salvation. That God then does not impute to us our sins, this comes to us, because he has regard to Christ as intercessor.

But the two names, by which he afterwards signalizes Christ, properly belong to the subject of this passage. He calls him *just* and a *propitiation*. It is necessary for him to be both, that he might sustain the office and person of an Advocate; for who that is a sinner could reconcile God to us? For we are excluded from access to him, because no one is pure and free from sin.

Hence no one is fit to be a high priest, except he is innocent and separated from sinners, as it is also declared in ^{<580726>}Hebrews 7:26. *Propitiation* is added, because no one is fit to be a high priest without a sacrifice. Hence, under the Law, no priest entered the sanctuary without blood; and a sacrifice, as a usual seal, was wont, according to God's appointment, to accompany prayers. By this symbol it was God's design to shew, that whosoever obtains favor for us, must be furnished with a sacrifice; for when God is offended, in order to pacify him a satisfaction is required. It hence follows, that all the saints who have ever been and shall be, have need of an advocate, and that no one except Christ is equal to undertake this office. And doubtless John ascribed these two things to Christ, to shew that he is the only true advocate.

Now, as no small consolation comes to us, when we hear that Christ not only died for us to reconcile us to the Father, but that he continually intercedes for us, so that an access in his name is open to us, that our prayers may be heard; so we ought especially to beware, lest this honor, which belongs peculiarly to him, should be transferred to another.

But we know that under the Papacy this office is ascribed indiscriminately to the saints. Thirty years ago, this so remarkable an article of our faith, that Christ is our advocate, was nearly buried; but at this day they allow that he is indeed one of many, but not the only one. They among the Papists who have a little more modesty, do not deny that Christ excels others; but they afterwards join with him a vast number of associates. But the words clearly mean that he cannot be an advocate who is not a priest; and the priesthood belongs to none but to Christ alone. In the meantime we do not take away the mutual intercessions of saints, which they exercise in love towards one another; but this has nothing to do with the dead who have removed from their intercourse with men; and nothing with that patronage which they feign for themselves, that they may not be dependent on Christ alone. For though brethren pray for brethren, yet they all, without exception, look to one advocate. There is, then, no doubt but the Papists set up against Christ so many idols as the patrons or advocates they devise for themselves.

We must also notice by the way, that those err very grossly, who imagine that Christ falls on his knees before the Father to pray for us. Such thoughts ought to be renounced, for they detract from the celestial glory of

Christ; and the simple truth ought to be retained, that the fruit of his death is ever new and perpetual, that by his intercession he renders God propitious to us, and that he sanctifies our prayers by the odor of his sacrifice, and also aids us by pleading for us.

2. *And not for ours only.* He added this for the sake of amplifying, in order that the faithful might be assured that the expiation made by Christ, extends to all who by faith embrace the gospel.

Here a question may be raised, how have the sins of the whole world been expiated? I pass by the dotages of the fanatics, who under this pretense extend salvation to all the reprobate, and therefore to Satan himself. Such a monstrous thing deserves no refutation. They who seek to avoid this absurdity, have said that Christ^{fs} suffered sufficiently for the whole world, but efficiently only for the elect. This solution has commonly prevailed in the schools. Though then I allow that what has been said is true, yet I deny that it is suitable to this passage; for the design of John was no other than to make this benefit common to the whole Church. Then under the word *all* or *whole*, he does not include the reprobate, but designates those who should believe as well as those who were then scattered through various parts of the world. For then is really made evident, as it is meet, the grace of Christ, when it is declared to be the only true salvation of the world.

1 JOHN 2: 3-6	
3. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.	3. Atque in hoc cognoscimus quod cognovimus eum, si praecepta ejus servamus.
4. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him	4. Qui dicit, Novi eum, et praecepta ejus non servat, mendax est, et in eo veritas non est.
5. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him	5. Qui vero servat ejus sermonem, vert in ipso charitas Dei perfecta est; in hoc cognoscimus quod in ipso sumus.
6. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk,even as he walked.	6. Qui dicit se in eo manere, debet, sicut ille ambulavit, ita et ipse ambulare.

3. *And hereby*, or by this. After having treated of the doctrine respecting the gratuitous remission of sins, he comes to the exhortations which belong to it, and which depend on it. And first indeed he reminds us that the knowledge of God, derived from the gospel, is not ineffectual, but that obedience proceeds from it. He then shews what God especially requires from us, what is the chief thing in life, even love to God. What we read here of the living knowledge of God, the Scripture does not without reason repeat everywhere; for nothing is more common in the world than to draw the doctrine of religion to frigid speculations. In this way theology has been adulterated by the Sorbonian sophists, so that from their whole science not even the least spark of true religion shines forth. And curious men do everywhere learn so much from God's word, as enables them to prattle for the sake of display. In short, no evil has been more common in all ages than vainly to profess God's name.

John then takes this principle as granted, that the knowledge of God is efficacious. He hence concludes, that they by no means know God who keep not his precepts or commandments. Plato, though groping in darkness, yet denied that "the beautiful" which he imagined, could be known, without filling man with the admiration of itself; so he says in his Phaedrus and in other places. How then is it possible for thee to know God, and to be moved by no feeling? Nor does it indeed proceed only from God's nature, that to know him is immediately to love him; but the Spirit also, who illuminates our minds, inspires our hearts with a feeling conformable to our knowledge. At the same time the knowledge of God leads us to fear him and to love him. For we cannot know him as Lord and Father, as he shews himself, without being dutiful children and obedient servants. In short, the doctrine of the gospel is a lively mirror in which we contemplate the image of God, and are transformed into the same, as Paul teaches us in ^{<470318>}2 Corinthians 3:18. Where, therefore, there is no pure conscience, nothing can be there but an empty phantom of knowledge.

We must notice the order when he says, *We do know that we know him*; for he intimates that obedience is so connected with knowledge, that the last is yet in order the first, as the cause is necessarily before its effect.

If we keep his commandments. But there is no one who in everything keeps them; there would thus be no knowledge of God in the world. To

this I answer, that the Apostle is by no means inconsistent with himself; since he has before shewed that all are guilty before God, he does not understand that those who keep his commandments wholly satisfy the law (no such example can be found in the world;) but that they are such as strive, according to the capacity of human infirmity, to form their life in conformity to the will of God. For whenever Scripture speaks of the righteousness of the faithful, it does not exclude the remission of sins, but on the contrary, begins with it.

But we are not hence to conclude that faith recumbs on works; for though every one receives a testimony to his faith from his works, yet it does not follow that it is founded on them, since they are added as an evidence. Then the certainty of faith depends on the grace of Christ alone; but piety and holiness of life distinguish true faith from theft knowledge of God which is fictitious and dead; for the truth is, that those who are in Christ, as Paul says, have put off the old man. (<510309> Colossians 3:9.)

4. *He that saith, I know him.* How does he prove that they are liars who boast that they have faith without piety? even by the contrary effect; for he has already said, that the knowledge of God is emcacious. For God is not known by a naked imagination, since he reveals himself inwardly to our hearts by the Spirit. Besides, as many hypocrites vainly boast that they have faith, the Apostle charges all such with falsehood; for what he says would be superfluous, were there no false and vain profession of Christianity made by man.

5. *But whoso keepeth.* He now defines what a true keeping of God's law is, even to love God. This passage is, I think, incorrectly explained by those who understand that they please the true God who keep his word. Rather take this as its meaning, "to love God in sincerity of heart, is to keep his commandments." For he intended, as I have before reminded you, briefly to shew what God requires from us, and what is the holiness of the faithful. Moses also said the same thing, when he stated the sum of the law.

"Now, O Israel, what does the Lord require of thee, but to fear and
love him, and to walk in his precepts?"
(<051012> Deuteronomy 10:12.)

And again he says,

“Choose life, even to love the Lord thy God, to serve him and to cleave to him.” (<053019> Deuteronomy 30:19, 20)

For the law, which is spiritual, does not command only external works, but enjoins this especially, to love God with the whole heart.

That no mention is here made of what is due to men, ought not to be viewed as unreasonable; for brotherly love flows immediately from the love of God, as we shall hereafter see. Whosoever, then, desires that his life should be approved by God, must have all his doings directed to this end. If any one objects and says, that no one has ever been found who loved God thus perfectly; to this I reply, that it is sufficient, provided every one aspired to this perfection according to the measure of grace given unto him. In the meantime, the definition is, that the perfect love of God is the complete keeping of his law. To make progress in this as in knowledge, is what we ought to do.

Hereby know we that we are in him. He refers to that fruit of the gospel which he had mentioned, even fellowship with the Father and the Son; and he thus confirms the former sentence, by stating what follows, as a consequence. for if it be the end of the gospel to hold communion with God, and no communion can be without love, then no one makes a real progress in faith except he who cleaves from the heart to God.

6. *He that saith he abideth in him.* As he has before set before us God as light for an example, he now calls us also to Christ, that we may imitate him. Yet he does not simply exhort us to imitate Christ; but from the union we have with him, he proves that we ought to be like him. A likeness in life and deeds, he says, will prove that we abide in Christ. But from these words he passes on to the next clause, which he immediately adds respecting love to the brethren.

1 JOHN 2: 7-11

7. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.	7. Fratres, non mandatum novum mandament scribo vobis, sed mandatum vetus, quod habuistis ab initio: mandatum vetus est sermo quem audistis ab initio.
8. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.	8. Rursum mandatum novum scribo vobis, quae est veritas in ipso et in vobis; quia tenebrae transeunt, et lumen verum jam lucet.
9. He that saith he is in the light, hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.	9. Quia dicit se in luce esse, et fratrem suum odit, in tenebris est adhuc.
10. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him:	10. Qui diligit fratrem suum, in luce manet, et offendiculum in eo non est.
11. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.	11. Qui vero fratrem suum odit, in tenebris ambulat, nec scit quo vadat, quia tenebrae excaecarunt oculos ejus.

7. *Brethren, I write no new commandment.* This is an explanation of the preceding doctrine, that to love God is to keep his commandments. And not without reason did he largely dwell on this point. First, we know that novelty is disliked or suspected. Secondly, we do not easily undertake an unwonted yoke. In addition to these things, when we have embraced any kind of doctrine, we dislike to have anything changed or made new in it. For these reasons John reminds us, that he taught nothing respecting love but what had been heard by the faithful from the beginning, and had by long usage become old.

Some explain oldness differently, even that Christ now prescribes no other rule of life under the Gospel than what God did formerly under the Law.

This is indeed most true; nor do I object but that he afterwards calls in this sense the word of the gospel *the old commandment*. But I think that he now means only, that these were the first elements of the gospel, that they had been thus taught from the beginning, that there was no reason why they should refuse that as unusual by which they ought to have been long ago imbued. For the relative seems to be used in a causative sense. He calls it then *old*, not because it was taught the fathers many ages before, but because it had been taught them on their new entrance into a religious life. And it served much to claim their faith, that it had *proceeded* from Christ himself from whom they had received the gospel.^{f6}

The old commandment. The word *old*, in this place, probably extends further; for the sentence is fuller, when he says, *the word which ye have heard from the beginning is the old commandment*. And as I, indeed, think, he means that the gospel ought not to be received as a doctrine lately born, but what has proceeded from God, and is his eternal truth; as though he had said, “Ye ought not to measure the antiquity of the gospel which is brought to you, by time; since therein is revealed to you the eternal will of God: not only then has God delivered to you this rule of a holy life, when ye were first called to the faith of Christ, but the same has always been prescribed and approved by him.” And, doubtless, this only ought to be deemed antiquity, and deserves faith and reverence, which has its origin from God. For the fictions of men, whatever long prescription of years they may have, cannot acquire so much authority as to subvert the truth of God.

8. *Again, a new commandment.* Interpreters do not appear to me to have attained the meaning of the Apostle. He says *new*, because God, as it were, renews it by daily suggesting it, so that the faithful may practice it through their whole life, for nothing more excellent can be sought for by them. The elements which children learn give place in time to what is higher and more solid. On the contrary, John denies that the doctrine respecting brotherly love is of this kind, is one which grows old with time, but that it is perpetually in force, so that it is no less the highest perfection than the very beginning.

It was, however, necessary that this should be added, for as men are more curious than what they ought to be, there are many who always seek something new. Hence there is a weariness as to simple doctrine, which

produces innumerable prodigies of errors, when every one gapes continually for new mysteries. Now, when it is known that the Lord proceeds in the same even course, in order to keep us through life in that which we have learnt, a bridle is east on desires of this kind. Let him, then, who would reach the goal of wisdom, as to the right way of living, make proficiency in love.

Which then is true, or which is truth. He proves by this reason what he had said; for this one command respecting love, as to our conduct in life, constitutes the whole truth of Christ. Besides, what other greater revelation can be expected? for Christ, doubtless, is the end and the completion of all things. Hence the word *truth* means this, that they stood, as it were at the goal, for it is to be taken for a completion or a perfect state. He joins Christ to them, as the head to the members, as though he had said, that the body of the Church has no other perfection, or, that they would then be really united to Christ, if holy love existed continually among them.

Some give another explanation, “That which is the truth in Christ, is also in you.” But I do not see what the meaning of this is.

Because the darkness is past. The present time is here instead of the past; for he means, that as soon as Christ brings light, we have the full brightness of knowledge: not that every one of the faithful becomes wise the first day as much as he ought to be, (for even Paul testifies that he labored to apprehend what he had not apprehended, (<500312> Philippians 3:12,) but that the knowledge of Christ alone is sufficient to dissipate darkness. Hence, daily progress is necessary; and the faith of every one has its dawn before it reaches the noonday. But as God continues the inculcation of the same doctrine, in which he bids us to make advances, the knowledge of the Gospel is justly said to be the true light, when Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shines. Thus the way is shut up against the audacity of those men who try to corrupt the purity of the Gospel by their own fictions; and we may safely denounce an anathema on the whole theology of the Pope, for it wholly obscures the true light.

9. *He that saith he is in the light*. He pursues the same metaphor. He said that love is the only true rule according to which our life is to be formed; he said that this rule or law is presented to us in the Gospel; he said, lastly, that it is there as the meridian light, which ought to be continually

looked on. Now, on the other hand, he concludes that all are blind and walk in darkness who are strangers to love. But that he mentioned before the love of God and now the love of the brethren, involves no more contrariety than there is between the effect and its cause. Besides, these are so connected together that they cannot be separated.

John says in the third chapter, that we falsely boast of love to God, except we love our brethren; and this is most true. But he now takes love to the brethren as a testimony by which we prove that we love God. In short, since love so regards God, that in God it embraces men, there is nothing strange in this, that the Apostle, speaking of love, should refer at one time to God, at another to the brethren; and this is what is commonly done in Scripture. The whole perfection of life is often said to consist in the love of God; and again, Paul teaches us, that the whole law is fulfilled by him who loves his neighbor, (<451308> Romans 13:8;) and Christ declares that the main points of the law are righteousness, judgment, and truth.

(<402323> Matthew 23:23.) Both these things are true and agree well together, for the love of God teaches us to love men, and we also in reality prove our love to God by loving men at his command. However this may be, it remains always certain that love is the rule of life. And this ought to be the more carefully noticed, because all choose rather almost anything else than this one command-merit of God.

To the same purpose is what follows, *and there is no occasion of stumbling in him* — that is, in him who acts in love; for, he who thus lives will never stumble. ^{f7}

11. But he that hateth his brother. He again reminds us, that whatever specious appearance of excellency thou shewest, there is yet nothing but what is sinful if love be absent. This passage may be compared with the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and no long explanation is needed. But this doctrine is not understood by the world, because the greater part are dazzled by all sorts of masks or disguises. Thus, fictitious sanctity dazzles the eyes of almost all men, while love is neglected, or, at least, driven to the farthest corner.

<620212> 1 JOHN 2:12-14

12. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.	12. Scribo vobis, filioli, quoniam remittuntur vobis peccata vestra propter hominem ejus.
13. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.	13. Scribo vobis, patres, quoniam novistis eum qui est ab initio. Scribo vobis, adolescentes, quoniam vicistis malum illum. Scribo vobis, pueri, quoniam novistis Patrem.
14. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.	14. Scripsi vobis, patres, quoniam novistis eum qui est ab initio. Scripsi vobis, adolescentes, quia fortes estis, et verbum Dei manet in vobis, et vicistis malum illum.

12. *Little children.* This is still a general declaration, for he does not address those only of a tender age, but by *little children* he means men of all ages, as in the first verse, and also hereafter. I say this, because interpreters have incorrectly applied the term to children. But John, when he speaks of children, calls them **παιδία**, a word expressive of age; but here, as a spiritual father, he calls the old as well as the young, **τεκνία**. He will, indeed, presently address special words to different ages; yet they are mistaken who think that he begins to do so here. But, on the contrary, lest the preceding exhortation should obscure the free remission of sins, he again inculcates the doctrine which peculiarly belongs to faith, in order that the foundation may with certainty be always retained, that salvation is laid up for us in Christ alone.

Holiness of life ought indeed to be urged, the fear of God ought to be carefully enjoined, men ought to be sharply goaded to repentance, newness of life, together with its fruits, ought to be commended; but still we ought ever to take heed, lest the doctrine of faith be smothered, — that doctrine which teaches that Christ is the only author of salvation and of all blessings; on the contrary, such moderation ought to be presented, that faith may ever retain its own primacy. This is the rule prescribed to us by

John: having faithfully spoken of good works, lest he should seem to give them more importance than he ought to have done, he carefully calls us back to contemplate the grace of Christ.

Your sins are forgiven you. Without this assurance, religion would not be otherwise than fading and shadowy; nay, they who pass by the free remission of sins, and dwell on other things, build without a foundation. John in the meantime intimates, that nothing is more suitable to stimulate men to fear God than when they are rightly taught what blessing Christ has brought to them, as Paul does, when he beseeches by the bowels of God's mercies. (<500201> Philippians 2:1.)

It hence appears how wicked is the calumny of the Papists, who pretend that the desire of doing what is right is frozen, when that is extolled which alone renders us obedient children to God. For the Apostle takes this as the ground of his exhortation, that we know that God is so benevolent to us as not to impute to us our sins.

For his name's sake. The material cause is mentioned, lest we should seek other means to reconcile us to God. For it would not be sufficient to know that God forgives us our sins, except we came directly to Christ, and to that price which he paid on the cross for us. And this ought the more to be observed, because we see that by the craft of Satan, and by the wicked fictions of men, this way is obstructed; for foolish men attempt to pacify God by various satisfactions, and devise innumerable kinds of expiations for the purpose of redeeming themselves. For as many means of deserving pardon we intrude on God, by so many *obstacles* are we prevented from approaching him. Hence John, not satisfied with stating simply the doctrine, that God remits to us our sins, expressly adds, that he is propitious to us from a regard to Christ, in order that he might exclude all other reasons. We also, that we may enjoy this blessing, must pass by and forget all other names, and rely only on the name of Christ.

13. *I write unto you, fathers.* He comes now to enumerate different ages, that he might shew that what he taught was suitable to every one of them. For a general address sometimes produces less effect; yea, such is our perversity, that few think that what is addressed to all belongs to them. The old for the most part excuse themselves, because they have exceeded the age of learning; children refuse to learn, as they are not yet old enough; men of middle age do not attend, because they are occupied with other

pursuits. Lest, then, any should exempt themselves, he accommodates the Gospel to all. And he mentions three ages, the most common division of human life. Hence also, the Lacedemonian chorus had three orders; the first sang, "What ye are we shall be;" the last, "What ye are we have been;" and the middle, "We are what one of you have been and the other will be." Into these three degrees John divides human life.

He, indeed, begins with the old, and says that the Gospel is suitable to them, because they learnt from it to know the eternal Son of God. Moroseness is the character of the old, but they become especially unteachable, because they measure wisdom by the number of years. Besides, Horace in his Art of Poetry, has justly noticed this fault in them, that they praise the time of their youth and reject whatever is differently done or said. This evil John wisely removes, when he reminds us that the Gospel contains not only a knowledge that is ancient, but what also leads us to the yew eternity of God. It hence follows that there is nothing here which they can dislike. He says that Christ was *from the beginning*; I refer this to his Divine presence, as being co-eternal with the Father, as well as to his power, of which the Apostle speaks in Hebrews, that he was yesterday what he is today; as though he had said,

"If antiquity delights you, ye have Christ, who is superior to all antiquity; therefore his disciples ought not to be ashamed of him who includes all ages in Himself." (^{<581308>} Hebrews 13:8)

We must, at the same time, notice what that religion is which is really ancient, even that which is founded on Christ, for otherwise it will be of no avail, however long it may have existed, if it derives its origin from error.

I write unto you, young men. Though it be a diminutive word, *νεανίσκοι*, ¹⁸ yet there is no doubt but that he directs his word to all who were in the flower of their age. We also know that those of that age are so addicted to the vain cares of the world, that they think but little of the kingdom of God; for the rigor of their minds and the strength of their bodies in a manner inebriate them. Hence the Apostle reminds them where true strength is, that they might no more exult as usual in the flesh. *Ye are strong*, he says, *because ye have overcome* Satan. The copulative here is to be rendered causatively. And, doubtless, that strength is what we ought to seek, even that which is spiritual. At the same time he intimates that it is not had otherwise than from Christ, for he mentions the blessings which

we receive through the Gospel. He says that they had conquered who were as yet engaged in the contest; but our condition is far otherwise than that of those who fight under the banners of men, for war is doubtful to them and the issue is uncertain; but we are conquerors before we engage with the enemy, for our head Christ has once for all conquered for us the whole world.

13. *I write unto you, young children.* They needed another direction. That the Gospel is well adapted to young children the Apostle concludes, because they find there the Father. We now see how diabolical is the tyranny of the Pope, which drives away by threats all ages from the doctrine of the Gospel, while the Spirit of God so carefully addresses them all.

But these things which the Apostle makes particular, are also general; for we should wholly fall off into vanity, except our infirmity were sustained by the eternal truth of God. There is nothing in us but what is frail and fading, except the power of Christ dwells in us. We are all like orphans until we attain the grace of adoption by the Gospel. Hence, what he declares respecting young children is also true as to the old. But yet his object was to apply to each what was most especially necessary for them, that he might shew that they all without exception stood in need of the doctrine of the Gospel. The particle **ὅτι** is explained in two ways, but the meaning I have given to it is the best, and agrees better with the context.

14. *I have written unto you, fathers.* These repetitions I deem superfluous; and it is probable flint when unskillful readers falsely thought that he spoke twice of little children, they rashly introduced the other two clauses. It might at the same time be that John himself, for the sake of amplifying, inserted the second time the sentence respecting the young men, (for he adds, that they were strong, which he had not said before;) but that the copyists presumptuously filled up the number. ^{f9}

<620215> 1 JOHN 2:15-17

15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.	15. Ne diligatis mundum, neque ea quae in mundo sunt: si quis diligit mundum non est charitas Patris in eo.
16. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.	16 Quia quicquid est in mundo (nempe concupiscentia carnis, concupiscentia oculorum, et superbia vitae) non est ex Patre, sed ex mundo est.
17. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.	17. Atqui mundus transit, et concupiscentia ejus; qui autem facit voluntatem Dei manet in aeternum.

15. *Love not.* He had said before that the only rule for living religiously, is to love God; but as, when we are occupied with the vain love of the world, we turn away all our thoughts and affections another way, this vanity must first be torn away from us, in order that the love of God may reign within us. Until our minds are cleansed, the former doctrine may be iterated a hundred times, but with no effect: it would be like pouring water on a ball; you can gather, no, not a drop, because there is no empty place to retain water. ^{f10}

By the *world* understand everything connected with the present life, apart from the kingdom of God and the hope of eternal life. So he includes in it corruptions of every kind, and the abyss of all evils. In the world are pleasures, delights, and all those allurements by which man is captivated, so as to withdraw himself from God. ^{f11}

Moreover, the love of the world is thus severely condemned, because we must necessarily forget God and ourselves when we regard nothing so much as the earth; and when a corrupt lust of this kind rules in man, and so holds him entangled that he thinks not of the heavenly life, he is possessed by a beastly stupidity.

If any man love the world. He proves by an argument from what is contrary, how necessary it is to cast away the love of the world, if we wish to please God; and this he afterwards confirms by an argument drawn from what is inconsistent; for what belongs to the world is wholly at

variance with God. We must bear in mind what I have already said, that a corrupt mode of life is here mentioned, which has nothing in common with the kingdom of God, that is, when men become so degenerated, that they are satisfied with the present life, and think no more of immortal life than mute animals. Whosoever, then, makes himself thus a slave to earthly lusts, cannot be of God.

16. *The lust of the flesh*, or, namely, the lust of the flesh. The old interpreter renders the verse otherwise, for from one sentence he makes two. Those Greek authors do better, who read these words together, “Whatever is in the world is not of God;” and then the three kinds of lusts they introduce parenthetically. For John, by way of explanation, inserted these three particulars as examples, that he might briefly shew what are the pursuits and thoughts of men who live for the world; but whether it be a full and complete division, it does not signify much; though you will not find a worldly man in whom these lusts do not prevail, at least one of them. It remains for us to see what he understands by each of these.

The first clause is commonly explained of all sinful lusts in general; for the flesh means the whole corrupt nature of man. Though I am unwilling to contend, yet I am unwilling to dissemble that I approve of another meaning. Paul, when forbidding, in ^{<451314>}Romans 13:14, to make provision for the flesh as to its lusts, seems to me to be the best interpreter of this place. What, then, is the flesh there? even the body and all that belongs to it. What, then, is the lust or desire of the flesh, but when worldly men, seeking to live softly and delicately, are intent only on their own advantages? Well known from Cicero and others, is the threefold division made by Epicurus; for he made this difference between lusts; he made some natural and necessary, some natural and not necessary, and some neither natural nor necessary. But John, well knowing the insubordination (ἁταξία) of the human heart unhesitatingly condemns the lust of the flesh, because it always flows out immoderately, and never observes any due medium. He afterwards comes gradually to grosser vices.

The lust of the eyes. He includes, as I think, libidinous looks as well as the vanity which delights in pomps and empty splendor.

In the last place follows ***pride*** or haughtiness; with which is connected ambition, boasting, contempt of others, blind love of self, headstrong self-confidence.

The sum of the whole is, that as soon as the world presents itself, our lusts or desires, when our heart is corrupt, are captivated by it, like unbridled wild beasts; so that various lusts, all which are adverse to God, bear rule in us. The Greek word, βίος rendered life, (*vita*,) means the way or manner of living.

17. *And the world passeth away.* As there is nothing in the world but what is fading, and as it were for a moment, he hence concludes that they who seek their happiness from it, make a wretched and miserable provision for themselves, especially when God calls us to the ineffable glory of eternal life; as though he had said, “The true happiness which God offers to his children, is eternal; it is then a shameful thing for us to be entangled with the world, which with all its benefits will soon vanish away.” I take *lust* here metonymically, as signifying what is desired or coveted, or what captivates the desires of men. The meaning is, that what is most precious in the world and deemed especially desirable, is nothing but a shadowy phantom.

By saying that they who do the will of God shall abide *for ever*, or perpetually, he means that they who seek God shall be perpetually blessed. Were any one to object and say, that no one doeth what God commands, the obvious answer is, that what is spoken of here is not the perfect keeping of the law, but the obedience of faith, which, however imperfect it may be, is yet approved by God. The will of God is first made known to us in the law; but as no one satisfies the law, no happiness can be hoped from it. But Christ comes to meet the despairing with new aid, who not only regenerates us by his Spirit that we may obey God, but makes also that our endeavor, such as it is, should obtain the praise of perfect righteousness.

<620218> 1 JOHN 2:18-19

18. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

18. Filioli, novissima hora est; et sicut audistis quod Antichristus venturus sit, etiam nunc Antichristi multi coeperunt esse: unde scimus esse novissimam horam.

19. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

19. Ex nobis egressi sunt, sed non erant ex nobis; nam si fuissent ex nobis, permansissent utique nobiscum; sed ut manifesti fierent quod non erant omnes ex nobis.

18. *It is the last time*, or hour. He confirms the faithful against offenses by which they might have been disturbed. Already many sects had risen up, which rent the unity of faith and caused disorder in the churches. But the Apostle not only fortifies the faithful, lest they should falter, but turns the whole to a contrary purpose; for he reminds them that the last time had already come, and therefore he exhorts them to a greater vigilance, as though he had said, “Whilst various errors arise, it behooves you to be awakened rather than to be overwhelmed; for we ought hence to conclude that Christ is not far distant; let us then attentively look for him, lest he should come upon us suddenly.” In the same way it behooves us to comfort ourselves at this day, and to see by faith the near advent of Christ, while Satan is causing confusion for the sake of disturbing the Church, for these are the signs of the last time.

But so many ages having passed away since the death of John, seem to prove that this prophecy is not true: to this I answer, that the Apostle, according to the common mode adopted in the Scripture, declares to the faithful, that nothing more now remained but that Christ should appear for the redemption of the world. But as he fixes no time, he did not allure the men of that age by a vain hope, nor did he intend to cut short in future the course of the Church and the many successions of years during which the Church has hitherto remained in the world. And doubtless, if the eternity of God’s kingdom be borne in mind, so long a time will appear to us as a moment. We must understand the design of the Apostle, that he calls that

the last time, during which all things shall be so completed, that nothing will remain except the last revelation of Christ.

As ye have heard that antichrist will come. He speaks as of a thing well known. We may hence conclude that the faithful had been taught and warned from the beginning respecting the future disorder of the Church, in order that they might, carefully keep themselves in the faith they professed, and also instruct posterity in the duty of watchfulness. For it was God's will that his Church should be thus tried, lest any one knowingly and willingly should be deceived, and that there might be no excuse for ignorance. But we see that almost the whole world has been miserably deceived, as though not a word had been said about Antichrist

Moreover, under the Papacy there is nothing more notorious and common than the future coming of Antichrist; and yet they are so stupid, that they perceive not that his tyranny is exercised over them. Indeed, the same thing happens altogether to them as to the Jews; for though they hold the promises respecting the Messiah, they are yet further away from Christ than if they had never heard his name; for the imaginary Messiah, whom they have invented for themselves, turns them wholly aside from the Son of God; and were any one to shew Christ to them from the Law and the Prophets, he would only spend his labor in vain. The Popes have imagined an Antichrist, who for three years and a half is to harass the Church. All the marks by which the Spirit of God has pointed out Antichrist, clearly appear in the Pope; but the triennial Antichrist lays fast hold on the foolish Papists, so that seeing they do not see. Let us then remember, that Antichrist has not only been announced by the Spirit of God, but that also the marks by which he may be distinguished have been mentioned.

Even now are there many antichrists. This may seem to have been added by way of correction, as they falsely thought that it would be some one kingdom; but it is not so. They who suppose that he would be only one man, are indeed greatly mistaken. For Paul, referring to a future defection, plainly shows that it would be a certain body or kingdom. (<530203>2 Thessalonians 2:3.) He first predicts a defection that would prevail through the whole Church, as a universal evil; he then makes the head of the apostasy the adversary of Christ, who would sit in the temple of God, claiming for himself divinity and divine honors. Except we desire willfully

to err, we may learn from Paul's description to know Antichrist. That passage I have already explained; it is enough now touch on it by the way.

But how can that passage agree with the words of John, who says that there were already many antichrists? To this I reply, that John meant no other thing than to say, that some particular sects had already risen, which were forerunners of a future Antichrist; for Cerinthus, Basilides, Marcion, Valentinus, Ebion, Arrius, and others, were members of that kingdom which the Devil afterwards raised up in opposition to Christ. Properly speaking, Antichrist was not yet in existence; but the mystery of iniquity was working secretly. But John uses the name, that he might effectually stimulate the care and solicitude of the godly to repel frauds.

But if the Spirit of God even then commanded the faithful to stand on their watch, when they saw at a distance only signs of the coming enemy, much less is it now a time for sleeping, when he holds the Church under his cruel and oppressive tyranny, and openly dishonors Christ.

19. *They went out from us.* He anticipates another objection, that the Church seemed to have produced these pests, and to have cherished them for a time in its bosom. For certainly it serves more to disturb the weak, when any one among us, professing the true faith, falls away, than when a thousand aliens conspire against us. He then confesses that they had gone out from the bosom of the Church; but he denies that they were ever of the Church. But the way of removing this objection is, to say, that the Church is always exposed to this evil, so that it is constrained to bear with many hypocrites who know not Christ, really, however much they may by the mouth profess his name.

By saying, *They went out from us*, he means that they had previously occupied a place in the Church, and were counted among the number of the godly. He, however, denies that they were of them, though they had assumed the name of believers, as chaff though mixed with wheat on the same floor cannot yet be deemed wheat.

For if they had been of us. He plainly declares that those who fell away had never been members of the Church. And doubtless the seal of God, under which he keeps his own, remains sure, as Paul says, (<550219> 2 Timothy 2:19.) But here arises a difficulty, for it happens that many who seemed to have embraced Christ, often fall away. To this I answer, that

there are three sorts of those who profess the Gospel; there are those who feign piety, while a bad conscience reproves them within; the hypocrisy of others is more deceptive, who not only seek to disguise themselves before men, but also dazzle their own eyes, so that they seem to themselves to worship God aright; the third are those who have the living root of faith, and carry a testimony of their own adoption firmly fixed in their hearts. The two first have no stability; of the last John speaks, when he says, that it is impossible that they should be separated from the Church, for the seal which God's Spirit engraves on their hearts cannot be obliterated; the incorruptible seed, which has struck roots, cannot be pulled up or destroyed.

He does not speak here of the constancy of men, but of God, whose election must be ratified. He does not then, without reason declare, that where the calling of God is effectual, perseverance would be certain. He, in short, means that they who fall away had never been thoroughly imbued with the knowledge of Christ, but had only a light and a transient taste of it.

That they might be made manifest. He shews that trial is useful and necessary for the Church. It hence follows, on the other hand, that there is no just cause for perturbation. Since the Church is like a threshing-floor, the chaff must be blown away that the pure wheat may remain. This is what God does, when he casts out hypocrites from the Church, for he then cleanses it from refuse and filth.

<620220> 1 JOHN 2:20-23

20. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.	20. Et vos unctionem habetis a Sancto, et novistis omnia.
21. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.	21. Non scripsi vobis, quia non noveritis veritatem; sed quia novistis eam, et quia omne mendacium ex veritate non est.
22. Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.	22. Quis est mendax, nisi qui negat Jesum esse Christum? Hie est antichristus, qui negat Patrem et Filium.
23. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.	23. Omnis qui negat Filium, neque Patrem habet.

20. *But ye have an unction.* The Apostle modestly excuses himself for having so earnestly warned them, lest they should think that they were indirectly reprov'd, as though they were rude and ignorant of those things which they ought to have well known. So Paul conceded wisdom to the Romans, that they were able and fit to admonish others. He at the same time shewed that they stood in need of being reminded, in order that they might rightly perform their duty. (<451514> Romans 15:14, 15.) The Apostles did not, however, speak thus in order to flatter them; but they thus wisely took heed lest their doctrine should be rejected by any, for they declared what was suitable and useful, not only to the ignorant, but also to those well instructed in the Lord's school.

Experience teaches us how fastidious the ears of men are. Such fastidiousness ought indeed to be far away from the godly; it yet behooves a faithful and wise teacher to omit nothing by which he may secure a hearing from all. And it is certain that we receive what is said with less attention and respect, when we think that he who speaks disparages the knowledge which has been given us by the Lord. The Apostle by this praise did at the same time stimulate his readers, because they who were endued with the gift of knowledge, had less excuse if they did not surpass others in their proficiency.

The state of the case is, that the Apostle did not teach them as though they were ignorant, and acquainted only with the first elements of knowledge, but reminded them of things already known, and also exhorted them to rouse up the sparks of the Spirit, that a full brightness might shine forth in them. And in the next words he explained himself, having denied that he wrote to them because they knew not the truth, but because they had been well taught in it; for had they been wholly ignorant and novices, they could not have comprehended his doctrine.

Now, when he says that they knew *all things*, it is not to be taken in the widest sense, but ought to be confined to the subject treated of here. But when he says that they had *an unction from the Holy One*, he alludes, no doubt, to the ancient types. The oil by which the priests were anointed was obtained from the sanctuary; and Daniel mentions the coming of Christ as the proper time for anointing the Most Holy. (<270924> Daniel 9:24.) For he was anointed by the Father, that he might pour forth on us a

manifold abundance from his own fullness. It hence follows that men are not rightly made wise by the acumen of their own minds, but by the illumination of the Spirit; and further, that we are not otherwise made partakers of the Spirit than through Christ, who is the true sanctuary and our only high priest. ^{f12}

21. *And that no lie is of the truth.* He concedes to them a judgment, by which they could distinguish truth from falsehood; for it is not the dialectic proposition, that falsehood differs from truth, (such as are taught as general rules in the schools;) but what is said is applied to that which is practical and useful; as though he had said, that they did not only hold what was true, but. were also so fortified against the impostures and fallacies of the ungodly, that they wisely took heed to themselves. Besides, he speaks not of this or of that kind of falsehood; but he says, that whatever deception Satan might contrive, or in whatever way he might attack them, *they* would be able readily to distinguish between light and darkness, because they had the Spirit as their guide.

22. *Who is a liar.* He does not assert that they alone were liars who denied that the Son of God appeared in the flesh, lest no one in unloosing the knot should above measure torment himself; but that they surpassed all others, as though he had said, that except this be deemed a lie, no other could be so reckoned; as we are wont commonly to say, “If perfidy towards God and men is not a crime, what else can we call a crime?” ^{f13}

What he had generally said of false prophets, he now applies to the state of his own time; for he points out, as by the finger, those who disturbed the Church. I readily agree with the ancients, who thought that Cerinthus and Carpocrates are here referred to. But the denial of Christ extends much wider; for it is not enough in words to confess that Jesus is the Christ, except he is acknowledged to be such as the Father offers him to us in the gospel. The two I have named gave the title of Christ to the Son of God, but imagined him to be man only. Others followed them, such as Arius, who, adorning him with the name of God, robbed him of his eternal divinity. Marcion dreamt that he was a mere phantom. Sabellius imagined that he differed nothing from the Father. All these denied the Son of God; for not one of them really acknowledged the true Christ; but, adulterating, as far as they could, the truth respecting him, they devised for themselves an idol instead of Christ. Then broke out Pelagius, who, indeed, raised no

dispute respecting Christ's essence, but allowed him to be true man and God; yet he transferred to us almost all the honor that belongs to him. It is, indeed, to reduce Christ to nothing, when his grace and power are set aside.

So the Papists, at this day, setting up freewill in opposition to the grace of the Holy Spirit, ascribing a part of their righteousness and salvation to the merits of works, feigning for themselves innumerable advocates, by whom they render God propitious to them, have a sort of fictitious Christ, I know not what; but the lively and genuine image of God, which shines forth in Christ, they deform by their wicked inventions; they lessen his power, subvert and pervert his office.

We now see that Christ, is denied, whenever those things which peculiarly belong to him, are taken away from him. And as Christ is the end of the law and of the gospel, and has in himself all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so he is the mark at which all heretics level and direct their arrows. Therefore the Apostle does not, without reason, *make* those the chief impostors, who fight against Christ, in whom the full truth is exhibited to us.

He is Antichrist. He speaks not of that prince of defection who was to occupy the seat of God; but all those who seek to overthrow Christ, he puts them among that impious band. And that he might amplify their crime, he asserts that the Father, no less than the Son, is denied by them; as though he had said, "They have no longer any religion, because they wholly cast away God." And this he afterwards confirms, by adding this reason, that the Father cannot be separated from the Son.

Now this is a remarkable sentence, and ought to be reckoned among the first axioms of our religion. yea, when we have confessed that there is one true God, this second article ought necessarily *to* be added, that he is no other but he who is made known in Christ. The Apostle does not here treat distinctly of the unity of essence. It is, indeed, certain, that the Son cannot be disunited from the Father, for he is of the same essence, (ὁμοούσιος;) but another thing is spoken of here, that is, that the Father, who is invisible, has revealed himself only in his Son. Hence he is called the image of the Father, (<580103> Hebrews 1:3,) because he sets forth and exhibits to us all that is necessary to be known of the Father. For the naked majesty of God would, by its immense brightness, ever dazzle our

eyes; it is therefore necessary for us to look on Christ. This is to come to the light, which is justly said to be otherwise inaccessible.

I say, again, that there is not here a distinct discussion respecting the eternal essence of Christ, which he has in common with the Father. This passage is, indeed, abundantly sufficient to prove it: but John calls us to this practical part of faith, that as God has given himself to us to be enjoyed only in Christ, he is elsewhere sought for in vain; or (if any one prefers what is clearer) that as in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Deity, there is no God apart from him. It hence follows, that Turks, Jews, and such as are like them, have a mere idol and not the true God. For by whatever titles they may honor the God whom they worship, still, as they *reject* him without whom they cannot come to God, and in whom God has really manifested himself to us, what have they but some creature or fiction of their own? They may flatter themselves as much as they please, with their own speculations, who, without Christ, philosophize on divine things; it is still certain that they do nothing but rave and rant, because, as Paul says, they hold not the Head. (<510219> Colossians 2:19.) It is obvious, hence, to conclude how necessary is the knowledge of Christ.

Many copies have the opposite sentence, “He who confesses the Son,” etc. But as I think that a note by some copyist has *crept* into the text, I hesitated not to omit it. ^{f14} But if its insertion be approved, the meaning would be, that there is no right confession of God except the Father be acknowledged in the Son.

Were any one to object and say, that many of the ancients thought rightly of God, to whom Christ was not known: I allow that the knowledge of Christ has not been always so explicitly revealed, nevertheless, I contend that it has been always true, that as the light of the sun comes to us by its rays, so the knowledge of God has been communicated through Christ.

<620224> 1 JOHN 2:24-29

24. Let that therefore abide you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.	24. Ergo quod audistis ab initio, in vobis maneat: si in vobis manserit quod ab initio audistis, et vos in Patre et Filio manebitis.
25. And this is the promise that hath promised us, even eternal life.	25. Atque haec est promissio, quam ipse nobis promisit, nempe vitae aeternae (vel, quam nobis pollicitus est vitam eternam.)
26. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.	26. Haec scripsi vobis de iis qui seducunt vos.
27. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.	27. Et unctio quam accepistis ab eo, in vobis manet; neque opus habetis ut quis vos doceat; sed quemadmodum unctio docet vos de omnibus, et veritas est, et non est mendacium; et quemadmodum docuit vos, manete in eo (vel, in ea.)
28. And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.	28. Et nunc filioli, manete in eo, ut quum apparuerit, habeamus fiduciam, neque pudefiamus ab ejus praesentia.
29. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.	29. Si nostis quod justus sit, cognoscite quod quisquis facit justitiam ex eo genitus est.

24. *Let that therefore abide in you.* He annexes an exhortation to the former doctrine; and that it might have more weight, he points out the fruit they would receive from obedience. He then exhorts them to perseverance in the faith, so that they might retain fixed in their hearts what they had learnt.

But when he says, *from the beginning*, he does not mean that antiquity alone was sufficient to prove any doctrine true; but as he has already shown that they had been rightly instructed in the pure gospel of Christ,

he concludes that they ought of right to continue in it. And this order ought to be especially noticed; for were we unwilling to depart from that doctrine which we have once embraced, whatever it may be, this would not be perseverance, but perverse obstinacy. Hence, discrimination ought to be exercised, so that a reason for our faith may be made evident from God's word: then let inflexible perseverance follow.

The Papists boast of "a beginning," because they have imbibed their superstitions from childhood. Under this pretense they allow themselves obstinately to reject the plain truth. Such perverseness shews to us, that we ought always to begin with the certainty of truth.

In that which ye have heard. Here is the fruit of perseverance, that they in whom God's truth remains, remain in God. We hence learn what we are to seek in every truth pertaining to religion. He therefore makes the greatest proficiency, who makes such progress as wholly to cleave to God. But he in whom the Father dwells not through his Son, is altogether vain and empty, whatever knowledge he may possess. Moreover, this is the highest commendation of sound doctrine, that it unites us to God, and that in it is found whatever pertains to the real fruition of God.

In the last place, he reminds us that it is real happiness when God dwells in us. The words he uses are ambiguous. They may be rendered, "This is the promise which he has promised to us, even eternal life."¹⁵ You may, however, adopt either of these renderings, for the meaning is still the same. The sum of what is said is, that we cannot live otherwise than by nourishing to the end the seed of life sown in our hearts. John insists much on this point, that not only the beginning of a blessed life is to be found in the knowledge of Christ, but also its perfection. But no repetition of it can be too much, since it is well known that it has ever been a cause of ruin to men, that being not content with Christ, they have had a hankering to wander beyond the simple doctrine of the gospel.

26. *These things have I written unto you.* The apostle excuses himself again for having admonished them who were well endued with knowledge and judgment. But he did this, that they might apply for the guidance of the Spirit, lest his admonition should be in vain; as though he had said, "I indeed do my part, but still it is necessary that the Spirit of God should direct you in all things; for in vain shall I, by the sound of my voice, beat your ears, or rather the air, unless he speaks within you."

When we hear that he wrote concerning seducers, we ought always to bear in mind, that it is the duty of a good and diligent pastor not only to gather a flock, but also to drive away wolves' for what will it avail to proclaim the pure gospel, if we connive at the impostures of Satan? No one, then, can faithfully teach the Church, except he is diligent in banishing errors whenever he finds them spread by seducers. What he says of the *unction* having been received *from him*, I refer to Christ.

27. *And ye need not.* Strange must have been the purpose of John, as I have already said, if he intended to represent teaching as useless. He did not ascribe to them so much wisdom, as to deny that they were the scholars of Christ. He only meant that they were by no means so ignorant as to need things as it were unknown to be taught them, and that he did not set before them anything which the Spirit of God might not of himself suggest to them. Absurdly, then, do fanatical men lay hold on this passage, in order to exclude from the Church the use of the outward ministry. He says that the faithful, taught by the Spirit, already understood what he delivered to them, so that they had no need to learn things unknown to them. He said this, that he might add more authority to his doctrine, while every one repeated in his heart an assent to it, engraven as it were by the finger of God. But as every one had knowledge according to the measure of his faith, and as faith in some was small, in others stronger, and in none perfect, it hence follows, that no one knew so much, that there was no room for progress.

There is also another use to be made of this doctrine, — that when men really understand what is needful for them, we are yet to warn and rouse them, that they may be more confirmed. For what John says, that they were taught all things by the Spirit, ought not to be taken generally, but to be confined to what is contained in this passage. He had, in short, no other thing in view than to strengthen their faith, while he recalled them to the examination of the Spirit, who is the only fit corrector and approver of doctrine, who seals it on our hearts, so that we may certainly know that God speaks. For while faith ought to look to God, he alone can be a witness to himself, so as to convince our hearts that what our ears receive has come from him.

And the same is the meaning of these words, *As the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth*; that is, the Spirit is like a seal, by which the

truth of God is testified to you. When he adds, *and is no lie*, he points out another office of the Spirit, even that he endues us with judgment and discernment, lest we should be deceived by lies, lest we should hesitate and be perplexed, lest we should vacillate as in doubtful things.

As it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him, or, abide in him. He had said, that the Spirit abode in them; he now exhorts them to abide in the revelation made by him, and he specifies what revelation it was, “Abide,” he says, “in Christ, as the Spirit hath taught you.” Another explanation, I know, is commonly given, “Abide in it,” that is, the unction. But as the repetition which immediately follows, cannot apply to any but to Christ, I have no doubt but that he speaks here also of Christ; and this is required by the context; for the Apostle dwells much on this point, that the faithful should retain the true knowledge of Christ, and that they should not go to God in any other way.

He at the same time shews, that the children of God are for no other end illuminated by the Spirit, but that they may know Christ. Provided they turned not aside from him, he promised them the fruit of perseverance, even confidence, so as not to be ashamed at his presence. For faith is not a naked and a frigid apprehension of Christ, but a lively and real sense of his power, which produces confidence. Indeed, faith cannot stand, while tossed daily by so many waves, except it looks to the coming of Christ, and, supported by his power, brings tranquillity to the conscience. But the nature of confidence is well expressed, when he says that it can boldly sustain the presence of Christ. For they who indulge securely in their vices, turn their backs as it were on God; nor can they otherwise obtain peace than by forgetting him. This is the security of the flesh, which stupefies men; so that turning away from God, they neither dread sin nor fear death; and in the meantime they shun the tribunal of Christ. But a godly confidence delights to look on God. Hence it is, that the godly calmly wait for Christ, nor do they dread his coming.

29. *If ye know that he is righteous*. He again passes on to exhortations, so that he mingles these continually with doctrine throughout the Epistle; but he proves by many arguments that faith is necessarily connected with a holy and pure life. The first argument is, that we are spiritually begotten after the likeness of Christ; it hence follows, that no one is born of Christ but he who lives righteously. It is at the same time uncertain whether he

means Christ or God, when he says that they who are born of him do righteousness. It is a mode of speaking certainly used in Scripture, that we are born of God in Christ; but there is nothing inconsistent in the other, that they are born of Christ, who are renewed by his Spirit. ^{f16}

CHAPTER 3

<620301> 1 JOHN 3:1-3

1. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

1. Videte (*vel*, videtis) qualem charitatem dedit nobis Pater, ut filii Dei nominemur: propterea mundus non novit nos, quia non novit ipsum.

2. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

2. Dilecti, nunc filii Dei sumus; et nondum apparuit quid erimus: scimus antea quod si apparuerit, similes ei erimus; quia videbimus eum sicuti est.

3. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

3. Et omnis qui habet hanc spem in eo, purificat seipsum, quemadmodum ille purus est.

1. *Behold*. The second argument is from the dignity and excellency of our calling; for it was not common honor, he says, that the heavenly Father bestowed on us, when he adopted us as his children. This being so great a favor, the desire for purity ought to be kindled in us, so as to be conformed to his image; nor, indeed, can it be otherwise, but that he who acknowledges himself to be one of God's children should purify himself. And to make this exhortation more forcible, he amplifies the favor of God; for when he says, that *love* has been *bestowed*, he means that it is from mere bounty and benevolence that God makes us his children; for whence comes to us such a dignity, except from the love of God? Love, then, is declared here to be gratuitous. There is, indeed, an impropriety in the language; but the Apostle preferred speaking thus rather than not to express what was necessary to be known. He, in short, means that the more abundantly God's goodness has been manifested towards us, the greater are our obligations to him, according to the teaching of Paul, when he besought the Romans by the mercies of God to present themselves as

pure sacrifices to him. (<⁴⁵¹²⁰¹> Romans 12:1.) We are at the same time taught, as I have said, that the adoption of all the godly is gratuitous, and does not depend on any regard to works.

What the sophists say, that God foresees those who are worthy to be adopted, is plainly refuted by these words, for, in this way the gift would not be gratuitous. It behooves us especially to understand this doctrine; for since the only cause of our salvation is adoption, and since the Apostle testifies that this flows from the mere love of God alone, there is nothing left to our worthiness or to the merits of works. For why are we sons? Even because God began to love us freely, when we deserved hatred rather than love. And as the Spirit is a pledge of our adoption, it hence follows, that if there be any good in us, it ought not to be set up in opposition to the grace of God, but, on the contrary, to be ascribed to him.

When he says that we are *called*, or named, the expression is not without its meaning; for it is God who with his own mouth declares us to be sons, as he gave a name to Abraham according to what he was. ^{f17}

Therefore the world. It is a trial that grievously assaults our faith, that we are not so much regarded as God's children, or that no mark of so great an excellency appears in us, but that, on the contrary, almost the whole world treats us with ridicule and contempt. Hence it can hardly be inferred from our present state that God is a Father to us, for the devil so contrives all things as to obscure this benefit. He obviates this offense by saying that we are not as yet acknowledged to be such as we are, because the world knows not God: a remarkable example of this very thing is found in Isaac and Jacob; for though both were chosen by God, yet Ishmael persecuted the former with laughter and taunts; and Esau, the latter with threats and the sword. However, then, we may be oppressed by the world, still our salvation remains safe and secure.

2. *Now are we the sons of God.* He comes now to what every one knows and feels himself; for though the ungodly may not entice us to give up our hope, yet our present condition is very short of the glow of God's children; for as to our body we are dust and a shadow, and death is always before our eyes; we are also subject to thousand miseries, and the soul is exposed to innumerable evils; so that we find always a hell within us. The more necessary it is that all our thoughts should be withdrawn from the present view of things, lest the miseries by which we are on every side

surrounded and almost overwhelmed, should shake our faith in that felicity which as yet lies hid. For the Apostle's meaning is this, that we act very foolishly when we estimate what God has bestowed on us according to the present state of things, but that we ought with undoubting faith to hold to that which does not yet appear.

But we know that when he shall appear. The conditional particle ought to be rendered as an adverb of time, *when*. But the verb *appear* means not the same thing as when he used it before. The Apostle has just said, *it does not yet appear what we shall be*, because the fruit of our adoption is as yet hid, for in heaven is our felicity, and we are now far away traveling on the earth; for this fading life, constantly exposed to hundred deaths, is far different from that eternal life which belongs to the children of God; for being enclosed as slaves in the prison of our flesh, we are far distant from the full sovereignty of heaven and earth. But the verb now refers to Christ, *when, he shall appear*; for he teaches the same thing with Paul, in (<510303> Colossians 3:3, 4, where he says,

“Your life is hid with Christ in God: when Christ, who is your life,
shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glow.”
(<510303> Colossians 3:3,4)

For our faith cannot stand otherwise than by looking to the coming of Christ. The reason why God defers the manifestation of our glory is this, because Christ is not manifested in the power of his kingdom. This, then, is the only way of sustaining our faith, so that we may wait patiently for the life promised to us. As soon as any one turns away the least from Christ, he must necessarily fail. f18

The word to *know*, shews the certainty of faith, in order to distinguish it from opinion. Neither simple nor universal knowledge is here intended, but that which every one ought to have for himself, so that he may feel assured that he will be sometime like Christ. Though, then, the manifestation of our glory is connected with the coming of Christ, yet our knowledge of this is well founded.

We shall be like him. He does not understand that we shall be equal to him; for there must be some difference between the head and the members; but we shall be like him, because he will make our vile body conformable to his glorious body, as Paul also *teaches* us in (<500321> Philipians 3:21. For the

Apostle intended shortly to shew that the final end of our adoption is, that what has in order preceded in Christ, shall at length be completed in us.

The reason that is added may, however, seem inappropriate. For if to see Christ makes us like him, we shall have this in common with the wicked, for they shall also see his glory. To this I reply, that this is to see him as a friend, which will not be the *case* with the wicked, for they will dread his presence; nay, they will shun God's presence, and be filled with terror; his glow will so dazzle their eyes, that they will be stupefied and confounded. For we see that Adam, conscious of having done wrong, dreaded the presence of God. And God declared this by Moses, as a general truth as to men,

“No man shall see me and live.” (<023320> Exodus 33:20.)

For how can it be otherwise but that God's majesty, as a consuming fire, will consume us as though we were stubble, so great is the weakness of our flesh. But as far as the image of God is renewed in us, we have eyes prepared to see God. And now, indeed, God begins to renew in us his own image, but in what a small measure! Except then we be stripped of all the corruption of the flesh, we shall not be able to behold God face to face.

And this is also expressed here, *as he is*. He does not, indeed, say, that there is no seeing of God now; but as Paul says,

“We see now through a glass, darkly.”
(<461312> 1 Corinthians 13:12.)

But he elsewhere makes a difference between this way of living, and the seeing of the eye. In short, God now presents himself to be seen by us, not such as he is, but such as we can comprehend. Thus is fulfilled what is said by Moses, that we see only as it were his back, (<023323> Exodus 33:23;) for there is too much brightness in his face.

We must further observe, that the manner which the Apostle mentions is taken from the effect, not from the cause; for he does not teach us, that we shall be like him, because we shall see him; but he hence proves that we shall be partakers of the divine glory, for except our nature were spiritual, and endued with a heavenly and blessed immortality, it could never come so nigh to God yet the perfection of glory will not be so great in us, that

our seeing will enable us to comprehend all that God is; for the distance between us and him will be even then very great.

But when the Apostle says, that we shall see him as he is, he intimates a new and an ineffable manner of seeing him, which we enjoy not now; for as long as we walk by faith, as Paul teaches us, we are absent from him. And when he appeared to the fathers, it was not in his own essence, but was ever seen under symbols. Hence the majesty of God, now hid, will then only be in itself seen, when the veil of this mortal and corruptible nature shall be removed.

Refined questions I pass by: for we see how Augustine tormented himself with these, and yet never succeeded, both in his Epistles to Paulus and Fortunatus, and in the City of God, (2:2,) and in other places. What he says, however, is worthy of being observed, that the way in which we live avails more in this inquiry than the way in which we speak, and that we must beware, lest by wrangling as to the manner in which God can be seen, we lose that peace and holiness without which no one shall see him.

3. *And every man that hath this hope.* He now draws this inference, that the desire for holiness should not grow cold in us, because our happiness has not as yet appeared, for that hope is sufficient; and we know that what is hoped for is as yet hid. The meaning then is, that though we have not Christ now present before our eyes, yet if we hope in him, it cannot be but that this hope will excite and stimulate us to follow purity, for it leads us straight to Christ, whom we know to be a perfect pattern of purity.

<620304>1 JOHN 3:4-6	
4. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.	4. Quicumque facit peccatum, etiam iniquitatem facit; et peccatum est iniquitas.
5. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.	5. Porro nostis quod ille apparuit ut peccata nostra tolleret; et peccatum in eo non est.
6. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.	6. Quisquis in eo manet, non peccat; quisquis peccat, non vidit eum, nec novit eum.

4. *Whosoever committeth*, or doeth, sin. The Apostle has already shown how ungrateful we must be to God, if we make but little account of the honor of adoption, by which he of his own goodwill anticipates us, and if we do not, at least, render him mutual love. He, at the same time, introduced this admonition, that our love ought not to be diminished, because the promised happiness is deferred. But now, as men are wont to indulge themselves more than they ought, in evils, he reproves this perverse indulgence, declaring that all they who sin are wicked and transgressors of the law. For it is probable that there were then those who extenuated their vices by this kind of flattery, “It is no wonder if we sin, because we are men; but there is a great difference between sin and iniquity.”

This frivolous excuse the Apostle now dissipates, when he defines sin to be a transgression of the divine law; for his object was to produce hatred and horror as to sin. The word *sin* seems light to some; but iniquity or transgression of the law cannot appear to be so easily forgiven. But the Apostle does not make sins equal, by charging all with iniquity who sin; but he means simply to teach us, that sin arises from a contempt of God, and that by sinning, the law is violated. Hence this doctrine of John has nothing in common with the delirious paradoxes of the Stoics.

Besides, to *sin* here, does not mean to offend in some instances; nor is the word *sin* to be taken for every fault or wrong a man may commit.; but he calls that sin, when men with their whole heart run into evil, nor does he understand that men sin, except those who are given up to sin. For the faithful, who are as yet tempted by the lusts of the flesh, are not to be deemed guilty of iniquity, though they are not pure or free from sin, but as sin does not reign in them, John says that they do not sin, as I shall presently explain more fully.

The import of the passage is, that the perverse life of those who indulge themselves in the liberty of sinning, is hateful to God, and cannot be borne with by him, because it is contrary to his Law. It does not hence follow, nor can it be hence inferred, that the faithful are iniquitous; because they desire to obey God, and abhor their own vices, and that in every instance; and they also form their own life, as much as in *them* lieth, according to the law. But when there is a deliberate purpose to sin, or a continued course in sin, then the law is transgressed? ^{f19}

5. *And ye know that he was manifested*, or, hath appeared. He shews by another argument how much sin and faith differ from one another; for it is the office of Christ to take away sins, and for this end was he sent by the Father; and it is by faith we partake of Christ's virtue. Then he who believes in Christ is necessarily cleansed from his sins. But it is said in <430129> John 1:29, that Christ takes away sins, because he atoned for them by the sacrifice of his death, that they may not be imputed to us before God: John means in this place that Christ really, and, so to speak, actually takes away sins, because through him our old man is crucified, and his Spirit, by means of repentance, mortifies the flesh with all its lusts. For the context does not allow us to explain this of the remission of sins; for, as I have said, he thus reasons, "They who cease not to sin, render void the benefits derived from Christ, since he came to destroy the reigning power of sin." This belongs to the sanctification of the Spirit.

And in him is no sin. He does not speak of Christ personally, but of his whole body. ¹²⁰ Wherever Christ diffuses his efficacious grace, he denies that there is any more room for sin. He, therefore, immediately draws this inference, that they sin not who remain in Christ. For if he dwells in us by faith, he performs his own work, that is, he cleanses us from sins. It hence appears what it is to *sin*. For Christ by his Spirit does not perfectly renew us at once, or in an instant, but he continues our renovation throughout life. It cannot then be but that the faithful are exposed to sin as long as they live in the world; but as far as the kingdom of Christ prevails in them, sin is abolished. In the meantime they are designated according to the prevailing principle, that is, they are said to be righteous and to live righteously, because they sincerely aspire to righteousness.

They are said *not to sin*, because they consent not to sin, though they labor under the infirmity of the flesh; but, on the contrary, they struggle with groaning, so that they can truly testify with Paul that they do the evil they would not.

He says that the faithful *abide* in Christ, because we are by faith united to him, and made one with him.

6. *Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him*. According to his usual manner he added the opposite clause, that we may know that faith in Christ and knowledge of him are vainly pretended, except there be newness of life. For Christ is never dormant where he reigns, but the Spirit renders

effectual his power. And it may be rightly said of him, that he puts sin to flight, not otherwise than as the sun drives away darkness by its own brightness. But we are again taught in this place how strong and efficacious is the knowledge of Christ; for it transforms us into his image. So by *seeing* and *knowing* we are to understand no other thing than faith.

<620307> 1 JOHN 3:7-10	
7. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.	7. Filioli, nemo vos decipiat; qai facit justitiam justus est, quemadmodum ille justus est.
8. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.	8. Qui facit peccatum, ex diabolo est; quia ab initio diabolus peccat: in hoc manifestus est Filius Dei, ut solvat opera diaboli.
9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.	9. Quisquis natus est ex Deo, peccatum non facit, quoniam semen ejus m ipso manet; et non potest peccare, quia ex Deo genitus est.
10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil:	10. In hoc manifesti sunt filii Dei et filii Diaboli, —

7. *He that doeth righteousness.* The Apostle shews here that newness of life is testified by good works; nor does that likeness of which he has spoken, that is between Christ and his members, appear, except by the fruits they bring forth; as though he had said, “Since it behooves us to be conformed to Christ, the truth and evidence of this must appear in our life.” The exhortation is the same with that of Paul in Galatians

“If ye live in the Spirit, walk also in the Spirit.”
(<480525> Galatians 5:25)

For many would gladly persuade themselves that they have this righteousness buried in their hearts, while iniquity evidently occupies their feet, and hands, and tongue, and eyes.

8. *He that committeth sin,* This word, to *commit*, or to do, refers also to outward works, so that the meaning is, that there is no life of God and of

Christ, where men act perversely and wickedly, but that such are, on the contrary, the slaves of the devil; and by this way of speaking he sets forth more fully how unlike they are to Christ. For as he has before represented Christ as the fountain of all righteousness, so now, on the other hand, he mentions the devil as the beginning of sin. He denied that any one belongs to Christ except he who is righteous and shews himself to be such by his works; he now assigns to the devil all others, and subjects them to his government, in order that we may know that there is no middle condition, but that Satan exercises his tyranny where the righteousness of Christ possesses not the primacy.

There are not however two adverse principles, such as the Manicheans have imagined; for we know that the devil is not wicked by nature or by creation, but became so through defection. We know also that he is not equal to God, so that he can with equal right or authority contend with him, but that he is unwillingly under restraint, so that he can do nothing except at the nod and with the permission of his Creator. John, in the last place, in saying that some were born of God and some of the devil, imagined no tradition such as the Manicheans dreamt of; but he means that the former are governed and guided by the Spirit of God, and that the others are led astray by Satan, as God grants to him this power over the unbelieving.

For the Devil sinneth from the beginning. As before he spoke not of Christ personally, when he said that he is righteous, but mentioned him as the fountain and the cause of righteousness; so now, when he says that the Devil sins, he includes his whole body, even all the reprobate; as though he had said, this belongs to the Devil, to entice men to sin. It hence follows, that his members, and all who are ruled by him, give themselves up to commit sin. But the beginning which the Apostle mentions, is not from eternity, as when he says that the Word is from the beginning, for there is a wide difference between God and creatures. Beginning as to God, refers to no time. Since, then, the Word was always with God, you can find no point of time in which he began to be, but you must necessarily admit his eternity. But here John meant no other thing than that the Devil had been an apostate since the creation of the world, and that from that time he had never ceased to scatter his poison among men.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested. He repeats in other words what he had before said, that Christ came to take away sins. Hence two conclusions are to be drawn, that those in whom sin reigns cannot be reckoned among the members of Christ, and that they can by no means belong to his body; for wherever Christ puts forth his own power, he puts the Devil to flight as well as sin. And this is what John immediately adds; for the next sentence, where he says that those who *sin not* are born of God, is a conclusion from what is gone before. It is an argument drawn from what is inconsistent, as I have already said; for the kingdom of Christ, which brings righteousness with it, cannot admit of sin. But I have already said what *not to sin* means. He does not make the children of God wholly free from all sin; but he denies that any can really glory in this distinction, except those who from the heart strive to form their life in obedience to God.

The Pelagians, indeed, and the Catharians did formerly make a wrong use of this passage, when they vainly imagined that the faithful are in this world endued with angelic purity; and in our own age some of the Anabaptists have renewed this dotage. But all those who dream of a perfection of this kind, sufficiently shew what stupid consciences they must have. But the words of the Apostle are so far from countenancing their error, that they are sufficient to confute it.

He says that they *sin not* who are born of God. Now, we must consider, whether God wholly regenerates us at once, or whether the remains of the old man continue in us until death. If regeneration is not as yet full and complete, it does not exempt us from the bondage of sin except in proportion to its own extent. It hence appears that it cannot be but that the children of God are not free from sins, and that they daily sin, that is, as far as they have still some remnants of their old nature. Nevertheless, what the Apostle contends for stands unalterable, that the design of regeneration is to destroy sin, and that all who are born of God lead a righteous and a holy life, because the Spirit of God restrains the lusting of sin.

The Apostle means the same thing by *the seed* of God; for God's Spirit so forms the hearts of the godly for holy affections, that the flesh and its lusts do not prevail, but being subdued and put as it were under a yoke, they are checked and restrained. In short, the Apostle ascribes to the Spirit

the sovereignty in the elect, who by his power represses sin and suffers it not to rule and reign.

And he cannot sin. Here the Apostle ascends higher, for he plainly declares that the hearts of the godly are so effectually governed by the Spirit of God, that through an inflexible disposition they follow his guidance. This is indeed far removed from the doctrine of the Papists. The Sorbons, it is true, confess that the will of man, unless assisted by God's Spirit, cannot desire what is right; but they imagine such a motion of the Spirit as leaves to us the free choice of good and evil. Hence they draw forth merits, because we willingly obey the influence of the Spirit, which it is in our power to resist. In short, they desire the grace of the Spirit to be only this, that we are thereby enabled to choose right if we will. John speaks here far otherwise; for he not only shews that we cannot sin, but also that the power of the Spirit is so effectual, that it necessarily retains us in continual obedience to righteousness. Nor is this the only passage of Scripture which teaches us that the will is so formed that it cannot be otherwise than right. For God testifies that he gives a new heart to his children, and promises to do this, that they may walk in his commandments. Besides, John not only shews how efficaciously God works once in man, but plainly declares that the Spirit continues his grace in us to the last, so that inflexible perseverance is added to newness of life. Let us not, then, imagine with the Sophists that it is some neutral movement, which leaves men free either to follow or to reject; but let us know that our own hearts are so ruled by God's Spirit, that they constantly cleave to righteousness.

Moreover; what the Sophists absurdly object, may be easily refuted: they say that thus the will is taken away from man; but they say so falsely: for the will is a natural power; but, as nature is corrupted, it has only depraved inclinations. It is hence necessary that the Spirit of God should renew it, in order that it may begin to be good. And, then, as men would immediately fall away from what is good, it is necessary that the same Spirit should carry on what he has begun, to the end.

As to merit, the answer is obvious, for it cannot be deemed strange that men merit nothing; and yet good works, which flow from the grace of the Spirit, do not cease to be so deemed, because they are voluntary. They have also a reward, for they are by grace ascribed to men as though they were their own.

But here a question arises, Whether the fear and love of God can be extinguished in any one who has been regenerated by the Spirit of God? for that. this cannot be, seems to be the import of the Apostle's words. They who think otherwise refer to the example of David, who for a time labored under such a beastly stupor, that not a spark of grace appeared in him. Moreover, in the fifty-first Psalm, he prays for the restoration of the Spirit. It hence follows that he was deprived of him. I, however, doubt not but that the seed, communicated when God regenerates his elect, as it is incorruptible, retains its virtue perpetually. I, indeed, grant that it may sometimes be stifled, as in the case of David; but still, when all religion seemed to be extinct in him, a live coal was hid under the ashes. Satan, indeed, labors to root out whatever is from God in the elect; but when the utmost is permitted to him, there ever remains a hidden root, which afterwards springs up. But John does not speak of one act, as they say, but of the continued course of life.

Some fanatics dream of something I know not what, that is, of an eternal seed in the elect, which they always bring from their mother's womb; but for this purpose they very outrageously pervert the words of John; for he does not speak of eternal election, but begins with regeneration.

There are also those who are doubly frantic, who hold, under this pretense, that, everything is lawful to the faithful, that is, because John says that they cannot sin. They then maintain that we may follow indiscriminately whatever our inclinations may lead us to. Thus they take the liberty to commit adultery, to steal, and to murder, because there can be no sin where God's Spirit reigns. But far otherwise is the meaning of the Apostle; for he denies that the faithful sin for this reason, because God has engraven his law on their hearts, according to what the Prophet says (^{<243133>}Jeremiah 31:33.)

10. *In this the children of God are manifest.* He shortly draws this conclusion, that those in vain claim a place and a name among the children of God, who do not prove themselves to be such by a pious and holy life, since by this evidence they shew that they differ from the children of the devil. But he does not mean that they are rims manifested, so as to be openly recognized by the whole world; but his meaning is only this, that the fruit and adoption always appear in the life.

<620310> 1 JOHN 3:10-13

10. — Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.	10. — Quisquis non facit justitiam, non est ex Deo, et qui non diligit fratrem suum.
11. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.	11. Quia haec est praedicatio quam audistis ab initio, ut mutuo nos diligamus.
12. Not as Cain, <i>who</i> was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.	12. Non sicut Cain, qui ex maligno erat, occidit fratrem suum; et qua de causa eum occidit? Quia opera ejus mala erant, fratris autem justa.
13. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.	13. Ne miremini, fratres mei, si vos mundus odit.

10. *Whosoever doeth not righteousness.* To do righteousness and to do sin, are here set in opposition the one to the other. Then, to do righteousness is no other thing than to fear God from the heart, and to walk in his commandments as far as human weakness will permit; for though righteousness in a strict sense is a perfect keeping of the law, from which the faithful are always far off; yet as offenses and fallings are not imputed to them by God, righteousness is that imperfect obedience which they render to him. But John declares that all who do not live righteously are not of God, because all those whom God calls, he regenerates by his Spirit. Hence newness of life is a perpetual evidence of divine adoption.

Neither he who loveth not his brother. He accommodates a general doctrine to his own purpose. For hitherto he has been exhorting the faithful to brotherly love; now, for the same end, he refers to true righteousness. Hence this clause is added instead of an explanation. But I have already stated the reason why the whole of righteousness is included in brotherly love. The love of God holds, indeed, the first place; but as on it depends love towards men, it is often, as a part for the whole, comprehended under it, and also the latter under the former. Then he declares that every one who is endued with benevolence and humanity, is thus just, and is to be so deemed, because love is rite fulfillment of the law. He confirms this declaration by saying that the faithful had been so *taught* from the

beginning; for by these words he intimates that the statement which he made ought not to have appeared new to them.

12. *Not as Cain.* This is another confirmation, taken from what is contrary; for in the reprobate and the children of the devil hatred reigns, and it holds, as it were, the chief place in their life; and he brings forward Cain as an instance. It served in the meantime to give them consolation, as he at length concluded by saying, *Marvel not, if the world hate you.*

This explanation ought to be carefully noticed, for men ever blunder as to the way of living, because they make holiness to consist of fictitious works, and while they torment themselves with trifles, they think themselves doubly acceptable to God, as the monks, who proudly call their mode of living a state of perfection; nor is there any other worship of God under the Papacy but a mass of superstitions. But the Apostle testifies that this righteousness alone is approved by God, that is, if we love one another; and further, that the devil reigns where hatred, dissimulation, envy, and enmity prevail. We ought, however, at the same time, to bear in mind what I have already touched upon, that brotherly love, as it proceeds from the love of God as an effect from a cause, is not disjoined from it, but on the contrary is commended by John on this account, because it is an evidence of our love to God.

By saying that *Cain* was driven to slay his brother, because his works were evil, he intimates what I have already stated, that when impiety rules, hatred occupies the first place. He refers to Abel's righteous works, that we may learn to endure patiently when the world hates us gratuitously, without any just, provocation.

<620315> 1 JOHN 3:15-18

14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

14. Nos scimus quod transierimus a morte in vitam, quia diligimus fratres: qui non diligit fratrem, manet in morte.

15. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

15. Omnis qui odit fratrem suum, homicida est; et nostis quod omnis homicida, non habet vitam aeternam in se martentem.

16. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

16. In hoc cognoscimus charitatem, quod ille pro nobis animam suam posuit: et nos debemus pro fratribus animas ponere.

17. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

17. Si quis habeat victum mundi, et videat fratrem suum egentem, et claudat viscera sua ab eo, quomodo charitas Dei in ipso manet?

18. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth.

18. Filioli mei, ne diligamus sermone, neque lingua, sed opere et veritate.

14. *We know.* He commends love to us by a remarkable eulogy, because it is an evidence of a transition from death to life. It hence follows that if we love the brethren we are blessed, but that we are miserable if we hate them. There is no one who does not wish to be freed and delivered from death. Those then who by cherishing hatred willingly give themselves up to death, must be extremely stupid and senseless. But when the Apostle says, that it is known by love that we have passed into life, he does not mean that man is his own deliverer, as though he could by loving the brethren rescue himself from death, and procure life for himself; for he does not here treat of the cause of salvation, but as love is the special fruit of the Spirit, it is also a sure symbol of regeneration. Then the Apostle draws an argument from the sign, and not from the cause. For as no one sincerely loves his brethren, except he is regenerated by the Spirit of God, he hence rightly concludes that the Spirit of God, who is life, dwells in all

who love the brethren. But it would be preposterous for ally one to infer hence, that life is obtained by love, since love is in order of time posterior to it.

The argument would be more plausible, were it said that love makes us more certain of life: then confidence as to salvation would recumb on works. But the answer to this is obvious; for though faith is confirmed by all the graces of God as aids, yet it ceases not to have its foundation in the mercy of God only. As for instance, when we enjoy the light, we are certain that the sun shines; if the sun shines on the place in which we are, we have a clearer view of it; but *yet* when the visible rays do not come to us, we are satisfied that the sun diffuses its brightness for our benefit. So when faith is founded on Christ, some things may happen to assist it, still it rests on Christ's grace alone.

15. *Is a murderer.* To stimulate us still more to love, he shews how detestable before God is hatred. There is no one who dreads not a murderer; nay, we all execrate the very name. But the Apostle declares that all who hate their brethren are murderers. He could have said nothing more atrocious; nor is what is said hyperbolical, for we wish him to perish whom we hate. It does not matter if a man keeps his hands from mischief; for the very desire to do harm, as well as the attempt, is condemned before God: nay, when we do not ourselves seek to do an injury, yet if we wish an evil to happen to our brother from some one else, we are murderers.

Then the Apostle defines the thing simply as it is, when he ascribes murder to hatred. Hence is proved the folly of men, that though they abominate the name, they yet make no account of the crime itself. Whence is this? even because the external face of things engrosses our thoughts; but the inward feeling comes to an account before God. Let no one therefore extenuate any more so grievous an evil. Let us learn to refer our judgments to the tribunal of God.

16. *Hereby perceive we,* or, By this we know. He now shews what true love is; for it would not have been enough to commend it, unless its power is understood. As an ill-stance of perfect love, he sets before us the example of Christ; for he, by not sparing his own life, testified how much he loved us. This then is the mark to which he bids them to advance. The sum of what is said is, that our love is approved, when we transfer the

love of ourselves to our brethren, so that every one, in a manner forgetting himself, should seek the good of others. ^{f21}

It is, indeed, certain, that we are far from being equal to Christ: but the Apostle recommends to us the imitation of him; for though we do not overtake him, it is yet meet, that we should follow his steps, though at a distance. Doubtless, since it was the Apostle's object to beat down the vain boasting of hypocrites, who gloried that they had faith in Christ though without brotherly love, he intimated by these words, that except this feeling prevails in our hearts, we have no connection with Christ. Nor does he yet, as I have said, set before us the love of Christ, so as to require us to be equal to him; for what would this be but to drive us all to despair? But he means that our feelings should be so formed and regulated, that we may desire to devote our life and also our death, first to God, and then to our neighbors.

There is another difference between us and Christ, — the virtue or benefit of our death cannot be the same. For the wrath of God is not pacified by our blood, nor is life procured by our death, nor is punishment due to others suffered by us. But the Apostle, in this comparison, had not in view the end or the effect of Christ's death; but he meant only that our life should be formed according to his example.

17. *But whose hath this world's good,* or, If any one has the world's sustenance. He now speaks of the common duties of love, which flow from that chief foundation, that is, when we are prepared to serve our neighbors even to death. He, at the same time, seems to reason from the greater to the less; for he who refuses to alleviate by his goods the want of his brother, while his life is safe and secure, much less would he expose for him his life to danger. Then he denies that there is love in us, if we withhold help from our neighbors. But he so recommends this external kindness, that at the same time he very fitly expresses the right way of doing good, and what sort of feeling ought to be in us.

Let this, then, be the first proposition, that no one truly loves his brethren, except he really shews this whenever an occasion occurs; the second, that as far as any one has the means, he is bound so far to assist his brethren, for the Lord thus supplies us with the opportunity to exercise love; the third, that the necessity of every one ought to be seen to, for as any one needs food and drink or other things of which we have abundance, so he

requires our aid; the fourth, that no act of kindness, except accompanied with sympathy, is pleasing to God. There are many apparently liberal, who yet do not feel for the miseries of their brethren. But the Apostle requires that our bowels should be opened; which is done, when we are endued with such a feeling as to sympathize with others in their evils, no otherwise than as though they were our own.

The love of God. Here he speaks of loving the brethren; why then does he mention the love of God? even because this principle is to be held, that it cannot be but that the love of God will generate in us the love of the brethren. ^{f22} And thus God tries our love to him, when he bids us to love men from a regard to himself, according to what is said in ^{<191602>} Psalm 16:2,

“My goodness reaches not to thee, but towards the saints who are on the earth is my will and my *care*.”

18. *Let us not love in word.* There is a concession in this first clause; for we cannot love in tongue only; but as many falsely pretend this, the Apostle *concedes*, according to what is often done, the name of the thing to their dissimulation, though, in the second clause, he reproves their vanity, when he denies that there is reality except in the deed. For thus ought the words to be explained, — Let us not profess by the tongue that we love, but prove it by the deed; for this is the only true way of shewing love. ^{f23}

^{<620319>} 1 JOHN 3:19-22	
19. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.	19. Et in hoc cognoscimus quod ex veritate summs, et coram ipso persuadebimus corda nostra.
20. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.	20. Quod si accuset nos cor nostrum, certe major est Deus corde nostro et novit omnia.
21. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, <i>then</i> have we confidence toward God.	21 Dilecti, si cor nostrum non accuset, fiduciam habemus erga Deum:
22. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing ill his sight.	22. Et siquid petierimus, accipimus ab eo, quia praecepta ejus servamus, et qute coram co placent facimus.

19. *And hereby we know*, or, by this we know. The word *truth*, he takes now in a different sense; but there is a striking similarity in the words, — If we, in truth, love our neighbors, we have an evidence that we are born of God, who is truth, or that the truth of God dwells in us. But we must ever remember, that we have not from love the knowledge which the Apostle mentions, as though we were to seek from it the certainty of salvation. And doubtless we know not otherwise that we are the children of God, than as he seals his free adoption on our hearts by his own Spirit., and as we receive by faith the sure pledge of it offered in Christ. Then love is accessory or an inferior aid, a prop to our faith, not a foundation on which it rests.

Why then does the Apostle say, *We shall assure our hearts before God*? He reminds us by these words, that faith does not exist without a good conscience; not that assurance arises from it or depends on it, but that then only we are really and not falsely assured of our union with God, when by the efficacy of his Holy Spirit he manifests himself in our love. For it is ever meet and proper to consider what the Apostle handles; for as he condemns reigned and false profession of faith, he says that a genuine assurance before God we cannot have, except his Spirit produces in us the fruit of love. Nevertheless, though a good conscience cannot be separated from faith, yet no one should hence conclude that we must look to our works in order that our assurance may be certain.

20. *For if our heart condemn us*. He proves, on the other hand, that they hi vain possess the name and appearance of Christians, who have not the testimony of a good conscience. For if any one is conscious of guilt, and is condemned by his own heart, much less can he escape the judgment of God. It hence follows, that faith is subverted by the disquiet of an evil conscience.

He says, that *God is greater than our heart*, with reference to judgment, that. is, because he sees much more keenly than we do, and searches more minutely and judges more severely. For this reason, Paul says, that though he was not conscious of wrong himself, yet he was not therefore justified, (<460404> 1 Corinthians 4:4;) for he knew that however carefully attentive he was to his office, he erred in many things, and through inadvertence was ignorant of mistakes which God perceived. What then the Apostle means

is, that he who is harassed and condemned by his own conscience, cannot escape the judgment of God.

To the same purpose is what immediately follows, that God *knoweth* or seeth *all things*. For how can those things be hid from him which we, who in comparison with him are dull and blind, are constrained to see? Then take this explanation, “Since God sees all things, he is far superior to our hearts.” For to render a copulative as a causal particle is no new thing. The meaning is now clear, that since the knowledge of God penetrates deeper than the perceptions of our conscience, no one can stand before him except the integrity of his conscience sustains him.

But here a question may be raised. It is certain that the reprobate are sometimes sunk by Satan into such stupor, that they are no longer conscious of their own evils, and, without alarm or fear, as Paul says, rush headlong into perdition; it is also certain, that hypocrites usually flatter themselves, and proudly disregard the judgment of God, for, being inebriated by a false conceit as to their own righteousness, they feel no convictions of sin. The answer to these things is not difficult; hypocrites are deceived because they shun the light; and the reprobate feel nothing, because they have departed from God; and, indeed there is no security for an evil conscience but in hiding-places.

But the Apostle speaks here of consciences which God draws forth to the light, forces to his tribunal, and fills with an apprehension of his judgment. Yet; it is at the same time generally true, that we cannot have a calm peace except that which God’s Spirit gives to purified hearts; for those who, as we have said, are stupefied, often feel secret compunctions, and torment themselves in their lethargy.

21. *If our heart condemns not.* I have already explained that this refers not to *hypocrites* nor to the gross despisers of God. For how muchsoever the reprobate may approve of their own lives, yet the Lord, as Solomon says, weigheth their hearts. (<201602> Proverbs 16:2.) This balance of God, by which he tries men, is such, that no one can boast that he has a clean heart. The meaning, then, of the Apostle’s words is, that then only we come in calm confidence into God’s presence, when we bring with us the testimony of a heart conscious of what is right and honest. That saying of Paul is indeed true, that by faith, which relies on the grace of Christ, an *access* to God with confidence is opened to us, (<490312> Ephesians 3:12;)

and also, that peace is given us by faith, that our consciences may stand peaceably before God. (<450501> Romans 5:1.) But there is not much difference between these sentences; for Paul shews the cause of confidence, but John mentions only an inseparable addition, which necessarily adheres to it, though it be not the cause.

Here, however, arises a greater difficulty, which seems to leave no confidence in the whole world; for who can be found whose heart reproves him in nothing? To this I answer, that the godly are thus reprov'd, that they may at the same time be absolved. For it is indeed necessary that they should be seriously troubled inwardly for their sins, that terror may lead them to humility and to a hatred of themselves; but they presently flee to the sacrifice of Christ, where they have sure peace. Yet the Apostle says, in another sense, that they are not condemned, because however deficient they may confess themselves to be in many things, they are still relieved by this testimony of conscience, that they truly and from the heart fear God and desire to submit to his righteousness. All who possess this godly feeling, and at the same time know that all their endeavors, how muchsoever they come short of perfection, yet please God, are justly said to have a calm or a peaceful heart, because there is no inward compunction to disturb their calm cheerfulness.

22. *And whatsoever we ask.* These two things are connected, confidence and prayer. As before he shewed that an evil conscience is inconsistent with confidence, so now he declares that none can really pray to God but those who with a pure heart, fear and rightly worship him. The latter follows from the former. It is a general truth taught in Scripture, that the ungodly are not heard by God, but that on the contrary, their sacrifices and prayers are an abomination to him. Hence the door is here closed up against hypocrites, lest they should in contempt of him rush into his presence.

He does not yet mean that a good conscience must be brought, as though it obtained favor to our prayers. Woe to us if we look on worlds, which have nothing in them but what is a cause of fear and trembling. The faithful, then, cannot otherwise come to God's tribunal than by relying on Christ the Mediator. But as the love of God is ever connected with faith, the Apostle, in order that he might the more severely reprove hypocrites, deprives them of that singular privilege with which God favors his own

children; that is, lest they should think that their prayers have an access to God.

By saying, *because we keep his commandments*, he means not that confidence in prayer is founded on our works; but he teaches this only, that true religion and the sincere worship of God cannot be separated from faith. Nor ought it to appear strange that he uses a causal particle, though he does not speak of a cause; for an inseparable addition is sometimes mentioned as a cause as when one says, Because the sun shines over us at midday, there is more heat; but it does not follow that heat comes from light.

<620323>1 JOHN 3:23-24	
23. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.	23. Et hoc est praeceptum ejus, ut eredamns riomini Filii ejus Jesu Christi, et nos diligamus invicem, sicuti praeceptum dedit nobis.
24. And he that keepeth his commandment dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.	24. Qui servat praecepta ejus, in ipso manet, et ipse in eo; atque in hoc cognoscimus quod manet in nobile, ex Spiritu quem nobile dedit.

23. *And this is his commandment.* He again accommodates a general truth to his own purpose. The meaning is, that such is the discord between us and God, that we are kept off from an access to him, except we are united by love to one another. At the same time he does not here commend love alone, as before, but joins it as the companion and attendant of faith.

The Sophists by their glosses distort these words, as though liberty to pray were obtained by us, partly by faith and partly by works. As John requires us to keep God’s commandments that we may pray aright, and afterwards teaches us that this keeping refers to faith and love, they conclude, that from these two things ought we to derive confidence in prayer. But I have already several times reminded you, that the subject here is not how or by what means men may prepare themselves so that they may have confidence to pray to God, for he speaks not here of the

cause of ills or of any worthiness. John only shews, that God favors none with the honor and privilege of intercourse with himself but his own children, even those who have been regenerated by his Spirit. The import, then, of what is said is, Where the fear and love of God do not prevail, it cannot be that God will hear prayer.

But if it be our purpose to obey his commandments, let us see what he commands. He does not, however, separate faith from love; but he requires both together from us. And this is the reason why he uses the word *commandment* in the singular number.

But this is a remarkable passage; for he defines briefly as well as lucidly in what the whole perfection of a holy life consists. There is then no reason that we should allege any difficulty, since God does by no means lead us about through long labyrinths, but simply and shortly sets before us what is right and what he approves. Besides, in this brevity there is no obscurity, for he shews to us clearly the beginning and the end of a life rightly formed. But that a mention is here only made of brotherly love, while the love of God is omitted, the reason is, as we have elsewhere said, that as brotherly love flows from the love of God, so it is a sure and real evidence of it.

On the name of his Son. The name refers to preaching; and this connection deserves to be noticed, for few understand what it is to believe on Christ; but from this mode of speaking, we may easily conclude that the only right faith is that which embraces Christ as he is set forth in the Gospel. Hence also it is, that there is no faith without teaching, as Paul also shews to us in ^{<451014>}Romans 10:14. We must at the same time observe, that the Apostle includes faith in the knowledge of Christ; for he is the living image of the Father, and in him are laid up all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. As soon, then, as we turn aside from him, we cannot do anything else but wander in error.

24. *And he that keepeth his commandments.* He confirms what. I have already stated, that the union we have with God is evident when we entertain mutual love: not that our union begins thereby, but that it cannot be fruitless or without effect whenever it begins to exist. And he proves this by adding a reason, because God does not abide in us, except his Spirit dwells in us. But wherever the Spirit is, he necessarily manifests his power

and efficiency. We hence readily conclude, that none abide in God and are united to him, but those who keep his commandments.

When, therefore, he says, *and by this we know*, the copulative, *and*, as a reason is here given, is to be rendered, “for,” or, “because.” But the character of the present reason ought to be considered; for though the sentence in words agrees with that of Paul, when he says that the Spirit testifies to our hearts that we are the children of God, and that we through him cry to God, Abba, Father, yet there is some difference in the sense; for Paul speaks of the certainty of gratuitous adoption, which the Spirit of God seals on our hearts; but John here regards the effects which the Spirit produces while dwelling in us, as Paul himself does, when he says, that those are God’s children who are led by the Spirit of God; for there also he is speaking of the mortification of the flesh and newness of life.

The sum of what is said is, that it hence appears that we are God’s children, that is, when his Spirit rules and governs our life. John at the same time teaches us, that whatever good works are done by us, proceed from the grace of the Spirit, and that the Spirit is not obtained by our righteousness, but is freely given to us.

CHAPTER 4

<620401> 1 JOHN 4:1-3

1. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

1. Dilecti, ne omni spiritui credatis, sed probate spiritus, an ex Deo sint; quia multi pseudoprophetae exierunt in mundum.

2. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

2. In hoc cognoscite Spiritum Dei; omnis spiritus qui confitetur Jesum Christum in carne venisse, ex Deo est:

3. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

3. Et omnis spiritus qui non confitetur Jesum Christum in carne venisse, ex Deo non est; et hic est antichristus, de quo audiistis quod venturus sit; et nunc jam in mundo est.

HE returns to his former doctrine, which he had touched upon in the second chapter; for many (as it is usual in new things) abused the name of Christ for the purpose of serving their own errors. Some made a half profession of Christ; and when they obtained a place among his friends, they had more opportunity to injure his cause. Satan took occasion to disturb the Church, especially through Christ himself; for he is the stone of offense, against whom all necessarily stumble who keep not on the right way, as shewn to us by God.

But what the Apostle says consists of three parts. He first shews an evil dangerous to the faithful; and therefore he exhorts them to beware. He *prescribes* how they were to beware, that is, by making a distinction between the spirits; and this is the second part. In the third place, he points out a particular error, the most dangerous to them, he therefore forbids them to hear those who denied that the Son of God appeared in the flesh. We shall now consider each in order.

But though in the passage this reason is added, that many false prophets had gone forth into the world, yet it is convenient to begin with it. The announcement contains a useful admonition; for if Satan had then already seduced many, who under the name of Christ scattered their impostures, similar instances at this day ought not to terrify us. For it is the case perpetually with the Gospel, that Satan attempts to pollute and corrupt its purity by variety of errors. This our age has brought forth some horrible and monstrous sects; and for this reason many stand amazed; and not knowing where to turn, they cast aside every care for religion; for they find no more summary way for extricating themselves from the danger of errors. They thus, indeed, act most, foolishly; for by shunning the light of truth, they cast themselves into the darkness of errors. Let, therefore, this fact remain fixed in our minds, that from the time the Gospel began to be preached, false prophets immediately appeared; and the fact will fortify us against such offenses.

The antiquity of errors keeps many, as it were, fast bound, so that they dare not emerge from them. But John points out here all intestine evil which was then in the Church. Now, if there were impostors mixed then with the Apostles and other faithful teachers, what wonder is it, that the doctrine of the Gospel has been long ago suppressed, and that many corruptions have prevailed in the world? There is, then, no reason why antiquity should hinder us to exercise our liberty in distinguishing between truth and falsehood.

1. *Believe not every spirit.* When the Church is disturbed by discords and contentions, many, as it has been said, being frightened, depart from the Gospel. But the Spirit prescribes to us a far different remedy, that is, that the faithful should not receive any doctrine thoughtlessly and without discrimination. We ought, then, to take heed lest, being offended at the variety of opinions, we should discard teachers, and, together with them, the word of God. But this precaution is sufficient, that all are not to be heard indiscriminately.

The word *spirit* I take metonymically, as signifying him who boasts that he is endowed with the gift of the Spirit to perform his office as a prophet. For as it was not permitted to any one to speak in his own name, nor was credit given to speakers but as far as they were the organs of the Holy Spirit, in order that prophets might have more authority, God honored

them with this name, as though he had separated them from mankind in general. Those, then, were called spirits, who, giving only a language to the oracles of the Holy Spirit, in a manner represented him. They brought nothing of their own, nor came they forth in their own name But the design of this honorable title was, that God's word should not lose the respect due to it through the humble condition of the minister. For God would have his word to be always received from the mouth of man no otherwise than if he himself had appeared from heaven.

Here Satan interposed, and having sent false teachers to adulterate God's word, he gave them also this name, that they might more easily deceive. Thus false prophets have always been wont superciliously and boldly to claim for themselves whatever honor God had bestowed on his own servants. But the Apostle designedly made use of this name, lest they who falsely pretend God's name should deceive us by their masks, as we see at this day; for many are so dazzled by the mere name of a Church, that they prefer, to their eternal ruin, to cleave to the Pope, than to deny him the least part of his authority.

We ought, therefore, to notice this concession: for the Apostle might have said that every sort of men ought not to be believed; but as false teachers claimed the Spirit, so he left them to do so, having at the same time reminded them that their claim was frivolous and nugatory, except they really exhibited what they professed, and that those were foolish who, being astonished at the very sound of so honorable a name, dared not to make any inquiry on the subject.

Try the spirits. As all were not true prophets, the Apostle here declares that they ought to have been examined and tried. And he addresses not only the whole Church, but also every one of the faithful.

But it may be asked, whence have we this discernment? They who answer, that the word of God is the rule by which everything that men bring forward ought to be tried, say something, but not the whole. I grant that doctrines ought to be tested by God's word; but except the Spirit of wisdom be present, to have God's word in our hands will avail little or nothing, for its meaning will not appear to us; as, for instance, gold is tried by the touchstone, but it can only be done by those who understand the art; for neither the touchstone nor the fire can be of any use to the unskillful. That we may then be fit judges, we must necessarily be

endowed with and directed by the Spirit of discernment. But as the Apostle would have commanded this in vain, were there no power of judging supplied, we may with certainty conclude, that the godly shall never be left destitute of the Spirit of wisdom as to what is necessary, provided they ask for him of the Lord. But the Spirit will only thus guide us to a right discrimination, when we render all our thoughts subject to God's word; for it is, as it has been said, like the touchstone, yea, it ought to be deemed most necessary to us; for that alone is true doctrine which is drawn from it.

But here a difficult question arises: If every one has the right and the liberty to judge, nothing can be settled as certain, but on the contrary the whole of religion will be uncertain. To this I answer, that there is a twofold trial of doctrine, private and public. The private trial is that by which every one settles his own faith, when he wholly acquiesces in that doctrine which he knows has come from God; for consciences will never find a safe and tranquil port otherwise than in God. Public trial refers to the common consent and polity of the Church; for as there is danger lest fanatics should rise up, who may presumptuously boast that they are endued with the Spirit of God, it is a necessary remedy, that the faithful meet together and seek a way by which they may agree in a holy and godly manner. But as the old proverb is too true, "So many heads, so many opinions," it is doubtless a singular work of God, when he subdues our perverseness and makes us to think the same thing, and to agree in a holy unity of faith.

But what Papists under this pretense hold, that whatever has been decreed in councils is to be deemed as certain oracles, because the Church has once proved them to be from God, is extremely frivolous. For though it be the ordinary way of seeking consent, to gather a godly and holy council, when controversies may be determined according to God's word; yet God has never bound himself to the decrees of any council. Nor does it necessarily follow, that as soon as a hundred bishops or more meet together in any place, they have duly called on God and inquired at his mouth what is true; nay, nothing is more clear that they have often departed from the pure word of God. Then in this case also the trial which the Apostle prescribes ought to take place, so that the spirits may be proved.

2. *Hereby*, or by this, *know ye*. He lays down a special mark by which they might more easily distinguish between true and false prophets. Yet he

only repeats here what we have met with before, that as Christ is the object at which faith aims, so he is the stone at which all heretics stumble. As long then as we abide in Christ, there is safety; but when we depart from him, faith is lost, and all truth is rendered void. ^{f24}

But let us consider what this confession includes; for when the Apostle says that Christ *came*, we hence conclude that he was before with the Father; by which his eternal divinity is proved. By saying that he came *in the flesh*, he means that by putting on flesh, he became a real man, of the same nature with us, that he might become our brother, except that he was free from every sin and corruption. And lastly, by saying that he came, the cause of his coming must be noticed, for he was not sent by the Father for nothing. Hence on this depend the office and merits of Christ.

As, then, the ancient heretics departed from the faith, in one instance, by denying the divine, and in another by denying the human nature of Christ; so do the Papists at this day: though they confess Christ to be God and man, yet they by no means retain the confession which the Apostle requires, because they rob Christ of his own merit; for where freewill, merits of works, fictitious modes of worship, satisfactions, the advocacy of saints, are set up, how very little remains for Christ!

The Apostle then meant this, that since the knowledge of Christ includes the sum and substance of the doctrine respecting true religion, our eyes ought to be directed to and fixed on that, so that we may not be deceived. And doubtless Christ is the end of the law and the prophets; nor do we learn anything else from the gospel but his power and grace.

3. *And this is that spirit of Antichrist.* The Apostle added this, to render more detestable the impostures which lead us away from Christ. We have already said that the doctrine respecting the kingdom of Antichrist was well known; so that the faithful had been warned as to the future scattering of the Church, in order that they might exercise vigilance. Justly then did they dread the name as something base and ominous. The Apostle says now, that all those who depreciated Christ were members of that kingdom.

And he says that the spirit of *antichrist* would *come*, and that *it was* already in the world, but in a different sense. He means that it was already in the world, because it carried on in secret its iniquity. As, however, the truth of God had not as yet been subverted by false and spurious dogmas,

as superstition had not as yet prevailed in corrupting the worship of God, as the world had not as yet perfidiously departed from Christ, as tyranny, opposed to the kingdom of Christ, had not as yet openly exalted itself, he therefore says, that it *would come*.

<620404>1 JOHN 4:4-6	
4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world	4. Vos ex Deo estis, filioli, et vicistis cos; quia major est qui est in vobis, quam qui in mundo.
5. They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.	5. Ipsi ex mundo sunt; propterea ex mundo loquuntur, et mundus eos audit.
6. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.	6. Nos ex Deo sumus; qui novit Deum, audit nos; qui non est ex Deo, non audit nos: in hoc cognoscimus spiritum veritatis et spiritum erroris.

4. *Ye are of God.* He had spoken of one antichrist; he now mentions many. But the many were the false prophets who had come forth before the head appeared. ^{f25} But the Apostle’s object was to animate the faithful, that they might courageously and boldly resist impostors, for alacrity is weakened when the issue of the contest is doubtful. Besides, it might have caused the good to fear, when they saw that hardly the kingdom of Christ had been set up, when enemies stood ready to suppress it. Though then they must contend, yet he says that they had conquered, because they would have a successful issue, as though he had said that they were already, though in the middle of the contest;, beyond any danger, because they would surely be conquerors.

But this truth ought to be farther extended, for whatever contests we may have with the world and the flesh, a certain victory is to follow. Hard and fierce conflicts indeed await us, and some continually succeed others; but as by Christ’s power we fight and are furnished with God’s weapons, we even by fighting and striving become conquerors. As to the main subject of

this passage, it is a great consolation, that with whatever wiles Satan may assail us, we shall stand through the power of God.

But we must observe the reason which is immediately added, *because greater*, or stronger, is he who is in you than he who is in the world. For such is our infirmity, that we succumb before we engage with an enemy, for we are so immersed in ignorance that we are open to all kinds of fallacies, and Satan is wonderfully artful in deceiving. Were we to hold out for one day, yet a doubt may creep into our minds as to what would be the case tomorrow; we should thus be in a state of perpetual anxiety. Therefore the Apostle reminds us that we become strong, not by our own power, but by that of God. He hence concludes, that we can no more be conquered than God himself, who has armed us with his own power to the end of the world. But in this whole spiritual warfare this thought ought; to dwell in our hearts, that; it would be all over with us immediately were we to fight in our own strength; but that as God repels our enemies while we are reposing, victory is certain. ^{f26}

5. *They are of the world.* It is no small consolation that they who dare to assail God in us, have only the world to aid and help them. And by the world the Apostle means that portion of which Satan is the prince. Another consolation is also added, when he says that the world embraces through the false prophets that which it acknowledges as its own. ^{f27} We see what great propensity to vanity and falsehood there is in men. Hence false doctrines easily penetrate and spread far and wide. The Apostle intimates that there is no reason why we should on this account be disturbed, for it is nothing new or unusual that the world, which is wholly fallacious, should readily hearken to what is false.

6. *We are of God.* Though this really applies to all the godly, yet it refers properly to the faithful ministers of the Gospel; for the Apostle, through the confidence imparted by the Spirit, glories here that he and his fellow-ministers served God in sincerity, and derived from him whatever they taught. It happens that false prophets boast of the same thing, for it is their custom to deceive under the mask of God; but faithful ministers differ much from them, who declare nothing of themselves but what they really manifest in their conduct.

We ought, however, always to bear in mind the subject which he here handles; small was the number of the godly, and unbelief prevailed almost

everywhere; few really adhered to the Gospel, the greater part were running headlong into errors. Hence was the occasion of stumbling. John, in order to obviate this, bids us to be content with the fewness of the faithful, because all God's children honored him and submitted to his doctrine. For he immediately sets in opposition to this a contrary clause, that they who are *not of God*, do not hear the pure doctrine of the Gospel. By these words he intimates that the vast multitude to whom the Gospel is not acceptable, do not hear the faithful and true servants of God, because they are alienated from God himself. It is then no diminution to the authority of the Gospel that many reject it.

But to this doctrine is added a useful admonition, that by the obedience of faith we are to prove ourselves to be of God. Nothing is easier than to boast that we are of God; and hence nothing is more common among men, as the case is at this day with the Papists, who proudly vaunt that they are the worshippers of God, and yet they no less proudly reject the word of God. For though they pretend to believe God's word, yet when they are brought to the test, they close their ears and will not hear, and yet to revere God's word is the only true evidence that we fear him. Nor can the excuse, made by many, have any place here, that they shun the doctrine of the Gospel when proclaimed to them, because they are not fit to form a judgment; for it cannot be but that every one who really fears and obeys God, knows him in his word.

Were any one to object and say, that many of the elect do not immediately attain faith, nay, that at first they stubbornly resist; to this I answer, that at that time they are not to be regarded, as I think, as God's children; for it is a sign of a reprobate man when the truth is perversely rejected by him.

And by the way, it must be observed, that the *hearing* mentioned by the Apostle, is to be understood of the inward and real hearing of the heart, which is done by faith.

Hereby know we. The antecedent to *hereby*, or, by this, is included in the two preceding clauses, as though he had said, "Hence the truth is distinguished from falsehood, because some speak from God, others from the world." But by the *spirit of truth and the spirit of error*, some think that hearers are meant, as though he had said, that those who give themselves up to be deceived by impostors, were born to error, and had in them the seed of falsehood; but that they who obey the word of God shew

themselves by this *very* fact to be the children of the truth. This view I do not approve of. For as the Apostle takes spirits here metonymically for teachers or prophets, he means, I think, no other thing than that the trial of doctrine must be referred to these two things, whether it be from God or from the world. ^{f28}

However, by thus speaking he seems to say nothing; for all are ready to declare, that they do not speak except from God. So the Papists at this day boast with magisterial gravity, that all their inventions are the oracles of the Spirit. Nor does Mahomet assert that he has drawn his dotages except from heaven. The Egyptians also, in former times, pretended that all their mad absurdities, by which they infatuated themselves and others, had been revealed from above. But, to all this I reply, that we have the word of the Lord, which ought especially to be consulted. When, therefore, false spirits pretend the name of God, we must inquire from the Scriptures whether things are so. Provided a devout attention be exercised, accompanied with humility and meekness, the spirit of discernment will be given us, who, as a faithful interpreter, will open to us the meaning of what is said in Scripture.

<620407> 1 JOHN 4:7-10	
7. Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.	7. Dilecti, diligamus nos mutuo, quia dilectio ex Deo est; et omnis qui diligit ex Deo genitus est, et cognoscit Deum.
8. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.	8. Qui non diligit, non novit Deum; quia Deus dilectio est.
9. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.	9. In hoc apparuit dilectio Dei in nobis, quod Filium suum unigenitum misit Deus in mundum, ut per eum vivamus.
10. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son <i>to be</i> the propitiation for our sins.	10. In hoc est dilectio, non quod nos dilexerimus Deum, sed quod nos ipse dilexit, et misit Filium propitiationem pro peccatis nostris.

7. *Beloved*. He returns to that exhortation which he enforces almost throughout the Epistle. We have, indeed, said, that it is filled with the doctrine of faith and exhortation to love. On these two points he so dwells, that he continually passes from the one to the other.

When he commands *mutual* love, he does not mean that we discharge this duty when we love our friends, because they love us; but as he addresses in common the faithful, he could not have spoken otherwise than that they were to exercise mutual love. He confirms this sentence by a reason often adduced before, even because no one can prove himself to be the son of God, except he loves his neighbors, and because the true knowledge of God necessarily produces love in us.

He also sets in opposition to this, according to his usual manner, the contrary clause, that there is no knowledge of God where there is no love. And he takes as granted a general principle or truth, that God is love, that is, that his nature is to love men. I know that many reason more refinedly, and that the ancients especially have perverted this passage in order to prove the divinity of the Spirit. But the meaning of the Apostle is simply this, — that as God is the fountain of love, this effect flows from him, and is diffused wherever the knowledge of him comes, as he had at the beginning called him light, because there is nothing dark in him, but on the contrary he illuminates all things by his own brightness. Here then he does not speak of the essence of God, but only shews what he is found to be by us.

But two things in the Apostle's words ought to be noticed, — that the true knowledge of God is that which regenerates and renews us, so that we become new creatures; and that hence it cannot be but that it must conform us to the image of God. Away, then, with that foolish gloss respecting unformed faith. For when any one separates faith from love, it is the same as though he attempted to take away heat from the sun.

9. *In this was manifested*, or, has appeared. We have the love of God towards us testified also by many other proofs. For if it be asked, why the world has been created, why we have been placed in it to possess the dominion of the earth, why we are preserved in life to enjoy innumerable blessings, why we are endued with light and understanding, no other reason can be adduced, except the gratuitous love of God. But the Apostle here has chosen the principal evidence of it, and what far surpasses all

other things. For it was not only an immeasurable love, that God spared not his own Son, that by his death he might restore us to life; but it was goodness the most marvelous, which ought to fill our minds with the greatest wonder and amazement. Christ, then, is so illustrious and singular a proof of divine love towards us, that whenever we look upon him, he fully confirms to us the truth that God is love.

He calls him his *only begotten*, for the sake of amplifying. For in this he more clearly shewed how singularly he loved us, because he exposed his only Son to death for our sakes. In the meantime, he who is his only Son by nature, makes many sons by grace and adoption, even all who, by faith, are united to his body. He expresses the end for which Christ has been sent by the Father, even that we may live through him, for without him we are all dead, but by his coming he brought life to us; and except our unbelief prevents the effect of his grace, we feel it in ourselves.

10. *Herein is love.* He amplifies God's love by another reason, that he gave us his own Son at the time when we were enemies, as Paul teaches us, in <450508> Romans 5:8; but he employs other words, that God, induced by no love of men, freely loved them. He meant by these words to teach us that God's love towards us has been gratuitous. And though it was the Apostle's object to set forth God as an example to be imitated by us; yet the doctrine of faith which he intermingles, ought not to be overlooked. God freely loved us, — how so? because he loved us before we were born, and also when, through depravity of nature, we had hearts turned away from him, and influenced by no right and pious feelings.

Were the prattlings of the Papists entertained, that every one is chosen by God as he foresees him to be worthy of love, this doctrine, that he first loved us, would not stand; for then our love to God would be first in order, though his time posterior. But the Apostle assumes this as an evident truth, taught in Scripture (of which these profane Sophists are ignorant,) that we are born so corrupt and depraved, that there is in us as it were an innate hatred to God, so that we desire nothing but what is displeasing to him, so that all the passions of our flesh carry on continual war with his righteousness.

And sent his Son. It was then from God's goodness alone, as from a fountain, that Christ with all his blessings has come to us. And as it is necessary to know, that we have salvation in Christ, because our heavenly

Father has freely loved us; so when a real and full certainty of divine love towards us is sought for, we must look nowhere else but to Christ. Hence all who inquire, apart from Christ, what is settled respecting them in God's secret counsel, are mad to their own ruin.

But he again points out the cause of Christ's coming and his office, when he says that he was sent to be a *propitiation for our sins*. And first, indeed, we are taught by these words, that we were all through sin alienated from God, and that this alienation and discord remains until Christ intervenes to reconcile us. We are taught, secondly, that it is the beginning of our life, when God, having been pacified by the death of his Son, receives us unto favor: for *propitiation* properly refers to the sacrifice of his death. We find, then, that this honor of expiating for the sins of the world, and of thus taking away the enmity between God and us, belongs only to Christ.

But here some appearance of inconsistency arises. For if God loved us before Christ offered himself to death for us, what need was there for another reconciliation? Thus the death of Christ may seem to be superfluous. To this I answer, that when Christ is said to have reconciled the Father to us, this is to be referred to our apprehensions; for as we are conscious of being guilty, we cannot conceive of God otherwise than as of one displeased and angry with us, until Christ absolves us from guilt. For God, wherever sin appears, would have his wrath, and the judgment of eternal death, to be apprehended. It hence follows, that we cannot be otherwise than terrified by the present prospect. as to death, until Christ by his death abolishes sin, until he delivers us by his own blood from death. Further, God's love requires righteousness; that we may then be persuaded that we are loved, we must necessarily come to Christ, in whom alone righteousness is to be found.

We now see that the variety of expressions, which occurs in Scripture, according to different aspects of things, is most appropriate and especially useful with regard to faith. God interposed his own Son to reconcile himself to us, because he loved us; but this love was hid, because we were in the meantime enemies to God, continually provoking his wrath. Besides, the fear and terror of an evil conscience took away from us all enjoyment of life. Thence as to the apprehension of our faith, God began to love us in Christ. And though the Apostle here speaks of the first reconciliation, let

us yet know that to propitiate God to us by expiating sins is a perpetual benefit proceeding from Christ.

This the Papists also in part concede; but afterwards they extenuate and almost annihilate this grace, by introducing their fictitious satisfactions. For if men redeem themselves by their works, Christ cannot be the only true propitiation, as he is called here.

<620411>1 JOHN 4:11-16	
11. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.	11. Dilecti, si ita Deus nos dilexit, nos quoque debemus invicem diligere.
12. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.	12. Deum nemo vidit unquam; si diligimus nos invicem, Deus in nobis manet, et dilectio ejus perfecta est in nobis.
13. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.	13. In hoc cognoscimus, quod in ipso manemus, et ipse in nobis, quit ex Spiritu suo dedit nobis.
14. And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.	14. Et nos vidimus et testamur, testify, quod Pater misit Filium servatorem mundi.
15. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.	15. Qui confessus fuerit, quod Jesus est Filius Dei, Deus in eo manet et ipsc in Deo.
16. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.	16. Et nos cognovimus et credimus dilectionem quam habet Deus in nobis: Deus charitas est; et qui manet in charitate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo.

11. *Beloved.* Now the Almighty accommodates to his own purpose what he has just taught us respecting the love of God; for he exhorts us by God’s example to brotherly love; as also Paul sets before us Christ, who offered himself to the Father a sacrifice of pleasant fragrance, that every

one of us might labor to benefit his neighbors. (<490502> Ephesians 5:2.) And John reminds us, that our love ought not to be mercenary, when he bids us to love our neighbors as God has loved us; for we ought to remember this, that we have been loved freely. And doubtless when we regard our own advantage, or return good offices to friends, it is self-love, and not love to others.

12. *No man hath seen God.* The same words are found in the first chapter of John's Gospel; but John the Baptist had not there exactly the same thing in view, for he meant only that God could not be otherwise known, but as he has revealed himself in Christ. The Apostle here extends the same truth farther, that the power of God is comprehended by us by faith and love, so as to know that we are his children and that he dwells in us.

He speaks, however, first of love, when he says, that God *dwells in us*, if we love one another; for perfected, or really proved to be, in us is then his love; as though he had said, that God shews himself as present, when by his Spirit he forms our hearts so that they entertain brotherly love. For the same purpose he repeats what he had already said, that we know by the Spirit whom he has given us that he dwells in us; for it is a confirmation of the former sentence, because love is the effect or fruit of the Spirit.

The sum, then, of what is said is, that since love is from the Spirit of God, we cannot truly and with a sincere heart love the brethren, except the Spirit puts forth his power. In this way he testifies that he dwells in us. But God by his Spirit dwells in us; then, by love we prove that we have God abiding in us. On the other hand, whosoever boasts that he has God and loves not the brethren, his falsehood is proved by this one thing, because he separates God from himself.

When he says, *and his love is perfected*, the conjunction is to be taken as a causative, *for*, or, *because*. And *love* here may be explained in two ways, either that which God shews to us, or that which he implants in us. That God has given his Spirit to us, or given us of his Spirit, means the same thing; for we know that the Spirit in a measure is given to each individual.

14. *And we have seen.* He now explains the other part of the knowledge of God, which we have referred to, that he communicates himself to us in his Son, and offers himself to be enjoyed in him. It hence follows, that he is by faith received by us. For the design of the Apostle is to shew, that God is

so united to us by faith and love, that he really dwells in us and renders himself in a manner visible by the effect of his power, who otherwise could not be seen by us.

When the Apostle says, *We have, seen and do testify*, he refers to himself and others. And by seeing, he does not mean any sort of seeing, but what belongs to faith by which they recognized the glory of God in Christ, according to what follows, that he was *sent* to be the *Savior of the world*; and this knowledge flows from the illumination of the Spirit.

15. *Whosoever shall confess.* He repeats the truth, that we are united to God by Christ, and that we cannot be connected with Christ except, God abides in us. *Faith* and *confession* are used indiscriminately in the same sense; for though hypocrites may wisely boast of faith, yet the apostle here acknowledges none of those who ordinarily confess, but such as truly and from the heart believe. Besides, when he says *that Jesus is the Son, of God*, he briefly includes the sum and substance of faith; for there is nothing necessary for salvation which faith finds not in Christ

After having said in general, that men are so united to Christ by faith, that Christ unites them to God, he subjoined what they themselves had seen so that he accommodated a general truth to those to whom he was writing. Then follows the exhortation, to love one another as they were loved by God. Therefore the order and connection of his discourse is this, — Faith in Christ, makes God to dwell in men, and we are partakers of this grace; but as God is love, no one dwells in him except he loves his brethren. Then love ought to reign in us, since God unites himself to us.

16. *And we have known and believed.* It is the same as though he had said, “We have known by believing;” for such knowledge is not attained but by faith. But we hence learn how different, is an uncertain or doubtful opinion from faith. Besides, though he meant here, as I have already said, to accommodate the last sentence to his readers, yet he defines faith in various ways. He had said before, that it is to confess that Jesus is the Son of God; but, he now says, We know by faith God’s love towards us. It hence appears, that the paternal love of God is found in Christ, and that nothing certain is known of Christ, except by those who know themselves to be the children of God by his grace. For the Father sets his own, Son daily before us for this end, that he may adopt us in him.

God is love. This is as it were the minor proposition in an argument; for from faith to love he reasons in this way: By faith God dwells in us, and God is love; then, wherever God abides, love ought to be there. Hence it follows that love is necessarily connected with faith.

<620417>1 JOHN 4:17-18	
17. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.	17. In hoc perfecta est charitas nobiscum, ut fiduciam habeamus in die iudicii, quod sicut ille est, nos quoque sumus in hoc mundo.
18. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.	18. Timor non est in charitate; sed perfecta charitas foras pellit timorem: quia timor tormentum habet; qui autem timet, non est perfectus in charitate.

17. *Herein is our love made perfect.* There are two clauses in this passage, — that we are then partakers of divine adoption, when we resemble God as children their father; and, secondly, that. this confidence is invaluable, for without it we must be most miserable.

Then in the first place, he shews to what purpose God has in love embraced us, and how we enjoy that grace manifested to us in Christ.. Then, God’s love to us is what is to be understood here. He says it is *perfected*, because it is abundantly poured forth and really given, that it appears to be complete. But he asserts that no others are partakers of this blessing; but those who, by being conformed to God, prove themselves to be his children. It is, then, an argument taken from what is an inseparable condition.

That we may have boldness. He now begins to shew the fruit of divine love towards us, though he afterwards shews it more clearly from the contrary effect. It is, however, an invaluable benefit, that we can dare boldly to stand before God. By nature, indeed, we dread the presence of God, and that justly; for, as he is the Judge of the world, and our sins hold us guilty, death and hell must come to our minds whenever we think of God. Hence is that dread which I have mentioned, which makes men shun God as much

as they can. But John says that the faithful do not fear, when mention is made to them of the last judgment, but that on the contrary they go to God's tribunal confidently and cheerfully, because they are assured of his paternal love. Every one, then, has made so much proficiency in faith, as he is well prepared in his mind to look forward to the day of judgment.

As he is. By these words, as it has been already said, he meant that it is required of us at our turn to resemble the image of God. What God then in heaven is, such he bids us to be in this world, in order that we may be deemed his children; for the image of God, when it appears in us, is as it were the seal of his adoption.

But he seems thus to place a part of our confidence on works. Hence the Papists raise their crests here, as though John denied that we, relying on God's grace alone, can have a sure confidence as to salvation without the help of works. But in this they are deceived, because they do not consider that the Apostle here does not refer to the cause of salvation, but to what is added to it. And we readily allow that no one is reconciled to God through Christ, except he is also renewed after God's image, and that the one cannot be disjoined from the other. Right then is what is done by the Apostle, who excludes from the confidence of grace all those in whom no image of God is seen; for it is certain that such are wholly aliens to the Spirit of God and to Christ. Nor do we deny that newness of life, as it is the effect of divine adoption, serves to confirm confidence, as a prop, so to speak, of the second order; but in the meantime we ought to have our foundation on grace alone. ^{f29} Nor indeed does the doctrine of John appear otherwise consistent with itself; for experience proves, and even Papists are forced to confess, that as to works they always give an occasion for trembling. Therefore no one can come with a tranquil mind to God's tribunal, except he believes that he is freely loved.

But that none of these things please the Papists, there is no reason for any one to wonder, since being miserable they know no faith except that which is entangled with doubts. Besides, hypocrisy brings darkness over them, so that they do not seriously consider how formidable is God's judgment when Christ the Mediator is not present, and some of them regard the resurrection as fabulous. But that we may cheerfully and joyfully go forth to meet Christ, we must have our faith fixed on his grace alone.

18. *There is no fear.* He now commends the excellency of this blessing by stating the contrary effect, for he says that we are continually tormented until God delivers us from misery and anguish by the remedy of his own love towards us. The meaning is, that as there is nothing more miserable than to be harassed by continual inquietude, we obtain by knowing God's love towards us the benefit of a peaceful calmness beyond the reach of fear. It hence appears what a singular gift of God it is to be favored with his love. Moreover from this doctrine, he will presently draw an exhortation; but before he exhorts us to duty, he commends to us this gift of God, which by faith removes our fear.

This passage, I know, is explained otherwise by many; but I regard what the Apostle means, not what others think. They say that there is no fear in love, because, when we voluntarily love God, we are not constrained by force and fear to serve him. Then according to them, servile fear is here set in opposition to voluntary reverence; and hence has arisen the distinction between servile and filial fear. I indeed allow it to be true, that when we willingly love God as a Father, we are no longer constrained by the fear of punish-merit; but this doctrine has nothing in common with this passage, for the Apostle only teaches us, that when the love of God is by us seen and known by faith, peace is given to our consciences, so that they no longer tremble and fear.

It may, however, be asked, when does perfect love expel fear, for since we are endued with some taste only of divine love towards us, we can never be wholly freed from fear? To this I answer, that, though fear is not wholly shaken off, yet when we flee to God as to a quiet harbor, safe and free from all danger of shipwreck and of tempests, fear is really expelled, for it gives way to faith. Then fear is not so expelled, but that it assails our minds, but it is so expelled that it does not torment us nor impede that peace which we obtain by faith.

Fear hath torment. Here the Apostle amplifies still further the greatness of that grace of which he speaks; for as it is a most miserable condition to suffer continual torments, there is nothing more to be wished than to present ourselves before God with a quiet conscience and a calm mind. What some say, that servants fear, because they have before their eyes punishment and the rod, and that they do not their duty except when forced, has nothing to do, as it has been already stated, with what the

Apostle says here. So in the next clause, the exposition given, that he who fears is not perfect in love, because he submits not willingly to God, but would rather free himself from his service, does not comport at all with the context. For the Apostle, on the contrary, reminds us, that it is owing to unbelief when any one fears, that is, has a disturbed mind; for the love of God, really known, tranquilizes the heart. ^{f30}

<620419> 1 JOHN 4:19-21	
19. We love him, because he first loved us.	19. Nos diligimus eum, quia prior dilexit nos.
20. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?	20. Si quis dicit, Deum diligo; et proximum suum odio habeat, mendax est: qui enim non dillgit fratrem suum quem videt; Deum quem non videt, quomodo potest diligere?
21. And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.	21. Et hoe praeceptum habemus ab ipso, ut qui Deum diligit, diligit et fratrem suum.

19. *We love him.* The verb ἀγαπῶμεν may be either in the indicative or imperative mood; but the former is the more suitable here, for the Apostle, as I think, repeats the preceding sentence, that as God has anticipated us by his free love, we ought to return to render love to him, for he immediately infers that he ought to be loved in men, or that the love we have for him ought to be manifested towards men. If, however, the imperative mood be preferred, the meaning would be nearly the same, that as God has freely loved us, we also ought now to love him.

But this love cannot exist, except it generates brotherly love. Hence he says, that they are liars who boast that they love God, when they hate their brethren.

But the reason he subjoins seems not sufficiently valid, for it is a comparison between the less and the greater: If, he says, we love not our brethren whom we see, much less can we love God who is invisible. Now there are obviously two exceptions; for the love which God has to us is from faith and does not flow from sight, as we find in ^{<600108>} 1 Peter 1:8;

and secondly, far different is the love of God from the love of men; for while God leads his people to love him through his infinite goodness, men are often worthy of hatred. To this I answer, that the Apostle takes here as granted what ought no doubt to appear evident to us, that God offers himself to us in those men who bear his image, and that he requires the duties, which he does not want himself, to be performed to them, according to ^{<191602>} Psalm 16:2, where we read,

“My goodness reaches not to thee, O Lord;
towards the saints who are on the earth is my love.”

And surely the participation of the same nature, the need of so many things, and mutual intercourse, must allure us to mutual love, except; we are harder than iron. But John meant another thing: he meant to shew how fallacious is the boast of every one who says that he loves God, and yet loves not God’s image which is before his eyes.

21. *And this commandment.* This is a stronger argument, drawn from the authority and doctrine of Christ; for he not, only gave a commandment respecting the love of God, but bade us also to love our brethren. We must therefore so begin with God, as that there may be at the same time a transition made to men.

CHAPTER 5

<620501> 1 JOHN 5:1-5

1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.	1. Omnis qui credit quod Jesus est Christus, ex Deo genitus est; et omnis qui diligit eum qui genuit, diligit etiam eum qui genitus est ab eo.
2. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.	2. In hoc cognoscimus quod diligimus filios Dei, si Deum diligimus, et praecepta ejus servamus.
3. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.	3. Haec est dilectio Dei, ut praecepta ejus servemus, et praecepta ejus gravla non sunt.
4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, <i>even</i> our faith.	4. Quoniam omne quod ex Deo genitum est, vincit mundum: et haec est victoria quae vincit mundum, fides nostra.
5. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?	5. Quis est qui vincit mundum, nisi qui credit quod Jesus est Filius Dei?

1. *Whosoever believeth.* He confirms by another reason, that faith and brotherly love are united; for since God regenerates us by faith he must necessarily be loved by us as a Father; and this love embraces all his children. Then faith cannot be separated from love.

The first truth is, that all, born of God, believe that, Jesus is the Christ; where, again, you see that Christ alone is set forth as the object of faith, as in him it finds righteousness, life, and every blessing that can be desired, and God in all that he is. ^{f31} Hence the only true way of believing is when we direct our minds to him. Besides, to believe that he is the Christ, is to

hope from him all those things which have been promised as to the Messiah.

Nor is the title, Christ, given him here without reason, for it designates the office to which he was appointed by the Father. As, under the Law, the full restoration of all things, righteousness and happiness, were promised through the Messiah; so at this day the whole of this is more clearly set forth in the gospel. Then Jesus cannot be received as Christ, except salvation be sought from him, since for this end he was sent by the Father, and is daily offered to us.

Hence the Apostle declares that all they who really believe have been born of God; for faith is far above the reach of the human mind, so that we must be drawn to Christ by our heavenly Father; for not any of us can ascend to him by his own strength. And this is what the Apostle teaches us in his Gospel, when he says, that those who believe in the name of the only-begotten, were not born of blood nor of the flesh. (<430113> John 1:13.) And Paul says, that we are endued, not with the spirit of this world, but with the Spirit that is from God, that we may know the things given us by him. (<460212> 1 Corinthians 2:12.) For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the mind conceived, the reward laid up for those who love God; but the Spirit alone penetrates into this mystery. And further, as Christ is given to us for sanctification, and brings with it the Spirit of regeneration, in short, as he unites us to his own body, it is also another reason why no one can have faith, except he is born of God.

Loveth him also that is begotten of him. Augustine and some others of the ancients have applied this to Christ, but not correctly. For though the Apostle uses the singular number, yet he includes all the faithful; and the context plainly shows that his purpose was no other than to trace up brotherly love to faith as its fountain. It is, indeed, an argument drawn from the common course of nature; but what is seen among men is transferred to God. ^{f32}

But we must observe, that the Apostle does not so speak of the faithful only, and pass by those who are without, as though the former are alone to be loved, and no care and no account to be had for the latter; but he teaches us as it were by this first exercise to love all without exception, when he bids us to make a beginning with the godly. ^{f33}

2. *By this we know.* He briefly shows in these words what true love is, even that which is towards God. He has hitherto taught us that there is never a true love to God, except when our brethren are also loved; for this is ever its effect. But he now teaches us that men are rightly and duly loved, when God holds the primacy. And it is a necessary definition; for it often happens, that we love men apart from God, as unholy and carnal friendships regard only private advantages or some other vanishing objects. As, then, he had referred first to the effect, so he now refers to the cause; for his purpose is to shew that mutual love ought to be in such a way cultivated that God may be honored.

To the love of God he joins the keeping of the law, and justly so; for when we love God as our Father and Lord, reverence must necessarily be connected with love. Besides, God cannot be separated from himself. As, then, he is the fountain of all righteousness and equity, he who loves him must necessarily have his heart prepared to render obedience to righteousness. The love of God, then, is not idle or inactive. ^{f34}

But from this passage we also learn what is the keeping of the law. For if, when constrained only by fear, we obey God by keeping his commandments, we are very far off from true obedience. Then, the first thing is, that our hearts should be devoted to God in willing reverence, and then, that our life should be formed according to the rule of the law. This is what Moses meant when, in giving a summary of the law, he said,

“O Israel, what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to love him and to obey him?” (<⁰⁵¹⁰¹²> Deuteronomy 10:12.)

3. *His commandments are not grievous.* This has been added, lest difficulties, as it is usually the case, should damp or lessen our zeal. For they who with a cheerful mind and great ardor have pursued a godly and holy life, afterwards grow weary, finding their strength inadequate. Therefore John, in order to rouse our efforts, says that God’s commandments are not grievous.

But it may, on the other hand, be objected and said that we have found it far otherwise by experience, and that Scripture testifies that the yoke of the law is insupportable. (<⁴⁴¹⁵⁰²> Acts 15:2.) The reason also is evident, for as the denial of self is, as it were, a prelude to the keeping of the law, can we say that it is easy for a man to deny himself? nay, since the law is

spiritual, as Paul, in ^{<450714>}Romans 7:14, teaches us, and we are nothing but flesh, there must be a great discord between us and the law of God. To this I answer, that this difficulty does not arise from the nature of the law, but from our corrupt flesh; and this is what Paul expressly declares; for after having said that it was impossible for the Law to confer righteousness on us, he immediately throws the blame on our flesh.

This explanation fully reconciles what is said by Paul and by David, which apparently seems wholly contradictory. Paul makes the law the master of death, declares that it effects nothing but to bring on us the wrath of God, that if, was given to increase sin, that it lives in order to kill us. David, on the other hand, says that it is sweeter than honey, and more desirable than gold; and among other recommendations he mentions the following — that it cheers hearts, converts to the Lord, and quickens. But Paul compares the law with the corrupt nature of man; hence arises the conflict: but David shews how they think and feel whom God by his Spirit has renewed; hence the sweetness and delight of which the flesh knows nothing. And John has not omitted this difference; for he confines to God's children these words, *God's commandments are not grievous*, lest any one should take them literally; and he intimates that, it comes through the power of the Spirit, that it is not grievous nor wearisome to us to obey God.

The question, however, seems not as yet to be fully answered; for the faithful, though ruled by the Spirit, of God, yet, carry on a hard contest with their own flesh; and how muchsoever they may toil, they yet hardly perform the half of their duty; nay, they almost fail under their burden, as though they stood, as they say, between the sanctuary and the steep. We see how Paul groaned as one held captive, and exclaimed that he was wretched, because he could not fully serve God. My reply to this is, that the law is said to be easy, as far as we are endued with heavenly power, and overcome the lusts of the flesh. For however the flesh may resist, yet the faithful find that there is no real enjoyment except in following God.

It must further be observed, that John does not speak of the law only, which contains nothing but commands, but connects with it the paternal indulgence of God, by which the rigor of the law is mitigated. As, then, we know that we are graciously forgiven by the Lord, when our works do not come up to the law, this renders us far more prompt to obey, according to what we find in ^{<19D004>}Psalms 130:4,

“With thee is propitiation, that thou mayest be feared.”

Hence, then, is the facility of keeping the law, because the faithful, being sustained by pardon, do not despond when they come short of what they ought to be. The Apostle, in the meantime, reminds us that we must fight, in order that we may serve the Lord; for the whole world hinders us to go where the Lord calls us. Then, he only keeps the law who courageously resists the world.

4. *This is the victory.* As he had said that all who are born of God overcome the world, he also sets forth the way of overcoming it. For it might be still asked, whence comes this victory? He then makes the victory over the world to depend on faith. ¹³⁵

This passage is remarkable for though Satan continually repeats his dreadful and horrible onsets, yet the Spirit of God, declaring that we are beyond the reach of danger, removes fear, and animates us to fight with courage. And the past time is more emphatical than the present or the future; for he says, *that has overcome*, in order that we might feel certain, as though the enemy had been already put to flight. It is, indeed, true, that our warfare continues through life, that our conflicts are daily, nay, that new and various battles are every moment on every side stirred up against us by the enemy; but as God does not arm us only for one day, and as faith is not that of one day, but is the perpetual work of the Holy Spirit, we are already partakers of victory, as though we had already conquered.

This confidence does not, however, introduce indifference, but renders us always anxiously intent on fighting. For the Lord thus bids his people to be certain, while yet he would not have them to be secure; but on the contrary, he declares that they have already overcome, in order that they may fight more courageously and more strenuously.

The term *world* has here a wide meaning, for it includes whatever is adverse to the Spirit of God: thus, the corruption of our nature is a part of the world; all lusts, all the crafts of Satan, in short, whatever leads us away from God. Having such a force to contend with, we have an immense war to carry on, and we should have been already conquered before coming to the contest, and we should be conquered a hundred times daily, had not God promised to us the victory. But God encourages us to fight by promising us the victory. But as this promise secures to us perpetually the

invincible power of God, so, on the other hand, it annihilates all the strength of men. For the Apostle does not teach us here that God only brings some help to us, so that being aided by him, we may be sufficiently able to resist; but he makes victory to depend on faith alone; and faith receives from another that by which it overcomes. They then take away from God what is his own, who sing triumph to their own power.

5. *Who is he that overcometh the world.* This is a reason for the previous sentence; that is, we conquer by faith, because we derive strength from Christ; as Paul also says,

“I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me,”
(^{<500413>}Philippians 4:13.)

He only then can conquer Satan and the world, and not succumb to his own flesh, who, diffident as to himself, recumbs on Christ’s power alone. For by *faith* he means a real apprehension of Christ, or an effectual laying hold on him, by which we apply his power to ourselves.

^{<620506>} 1 JOHN 5:6-9	
6. This is he that came by water and blood, <i>even</i> Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood: and it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.	6. Hic est qui venit per aquam et sanguinem, Jesum Christum; non in aqua solum, sed in aqua et sanguine; et Spiritus est qui testificatur, quandoquidem Spiritus est veritas.
7. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.	7. Nam tres sunt qui testificantur in coelo, Pater, Sermo, et Spiritus Sanctus; et hi tres unum sunt.
8. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.	8. Et tres sunt qui testificantur in terra, Spiritus, aqua et sanguis; et hi tres in unum conveniunt.
9. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.	9. Si testimonium hominum recipimus, testimonium Dei majus est; quoniam hoc est testimonium Dei, quod testificatus est de Filio suo.

6. *This is he than came.* That our faith may rest safely on Christ, he says the real substance of the shadows of the law appears in him. For I doubt not but that he alludes by the words *water and blood* to the ancient rites of the law. The comparison, moreover, is intended for this end, not only that we may know that the Law of Moses was abolished by the coming of Christ, but that we may seek in him the fulfillment of those things which the ceremonies formerly typified. And though they were of various kinds, yet under these two the Apostle denotes the whole perfection of holiness and righteousness, for by water was all filth washed away, so that men might come before God pure and clean, and by blood was expiation made, and a pledge given of a full reconciliation with God; but the law only adumbrated by external symbols what was to be really and fully performed by the Messiah.

John then fitly proves that Jesus is the Christ of the Lord formerly promised, because he brought. with. him that by which he sanctifies us wholly.

And, indeed, as to the blood by which Christ reconciled God, there is no doubt, but how he came by water may be questioned. But that the reference is to baptism is not probable. I certainly think that John sets forth here the fruit and effect of what he recorded in the Gospel history; for what he says there, that water and blood flowed from the side of Christ, is no doubt to be deemed a miracle. I know that such a thing does happen naturally to the dead; but it happened through God's purpose, that Christ's side became the fountain of blood and water, in order that the faithful may know that cleansing (of which the ancient baptisms were types) is found in him, and that they might know that what all the sprinklings of blood formerly presignified was fulfilled. On this subject we dwelt more at large on the ninth and tenth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

And it is the Spirit that beareth witness. He shews in this clause how the faithful know and feel the power of Christ, even because the Spirit renders them certain; and that their faith might not vacillate, he adds, that a full and real firmness or stability is produced by the testimony of the Spirit. And he calls the Spirit *truth*, because his authority is indubitable, and ought to be abundantly sufficient for us.

7. *There are three than bear record in heaven.* The whole of this verse has been by some omitted. Jerome thinks that this has happened through design rather than through mistake, and that indeed only on the part of the Latins. But as even the Greek copies do not agree, I dare not assert any thing on the subject. Since, however, the passage flows better when this clause is added, and as I see that it is found in the best and most approved copies, I am inclined to receive it as the true reading. ^{f36} And the meaning would be, that God, in order to confirm most abundantly our faith in Christ, testifies in three ways that we ought to acquiesce in him. For as our faith acknowledges three persons in the one divine essence, so it is called in so really ways to Christ that it may rest on him.

When he says, *These three are one*, he refers not to essence, but on the contrary to consent; as though he had said that the Father and his eternal Word and Spirit harmoniously testify the same thing respecting Christ. Hence some copies have εἰς ἓν, “for one.” But though you read ἐν εἰσιν, as in other copies, yet there is no doubt but that the Father, the Word and the Spirit are said to be one, in the same sense in which afterwards the blood and the water and the Spirit are said to agree in one.

But as the Spirit, who is one witness, is mentioned twice, it seems to be an unnecessary repetition. To this I reply, that since he testifies of Christ in various ways, a twofold testimony is fitly ascribed to him. For the Father, together with his eternal Wisdom and Spirit, declares Jesus to be the Christ as it were authoritatively, then, in this ease, the sole majesty of the deity is to be considered by us. But as the Spirit, dwelling in our hearts, is an earnest, a pledge, and a seal, to confirm that decree, so he thus again speaks on earth by his grace.

But inasmuch as all do not receive this reading, I will therefore so expound what follows, as though the Apostle referred to the witnesses only on the earth.

8. *There are three.* He applies what had been said of water and blood to it's own purpose, in order that they who reject Christ might have no excuse; for by testimonies abundantly strong and clear, he proves that it is he who had been formerly promised, inasmuch as water and blood, being the pledges and the effects of salvation, really testify that he had been sent by God. He adds a third witness, the Holy Spirit, who yet holds the first place, for without him the wafer and blood would have flowed without

any benefit; for it is he who seals on our hearts the testimony of the water and blood; it is he who by his power makes the fruit of Christ's death to come to us; yea, he makes the blood shed for our redemption to penetrate into our hearts, or, to say all in one word, he makes Christ with all his blessings to become ours. So Paul, in ^{<450104>}Romans 1:4, after having said that Christ by his resurrection manifested himself to be the Son of God, immediately adds, "Through the sanctification of the Spirit." For whatever signs of divine glory may shine forth in Christ, they would yet be obscure to us and escape our vision, were not the Holy Spirit to open for us the eyes of faith.

Readers may now understand why John adduced the Spirit as a witness together with the water and the blood, even because it is the peculiar office of the Spirit, to cleanse our consciences by the blood of Christ, to cause the cleansing effected by it to be efficacious. On this subject some remarks are made at the beginning of the Second Epistle of Peter, where he uses nearly the same mode of speaking, that is, that the Holy Spirit cleanses our hearts by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. ^{f37}

But from these words we may learn, that faith does not lay hold on a bare or an empty Christ, but, that his power is at the same time vivifying. For to what purpose has Christ been sent on the earth, except to reconcile God by the sacrifice of his death? except the office of washing had been allotted to him by the Father?

It may however be objected, that the distinction here mentioned is superfluous, because Christ cleansed us by expiating our sins; then the Apostle mentions the same thing twice. I indeed allow that cleansing is included in expiation; therefore I made no difference between the water and the blood, as though they were distinct; but if any one of us considers his own infirmity, he will readily acknowledge that it is not in vain or without reason that blood is distinguished from the water. Besides, the Apostle, as it has been stated, alludes to the rites of the law; and God, on account of human infirmity, had formerly appointed, not only sacrifices, but also washings. And the Apostle meant distinctly to show that the reality of both has been exhibited in Christ, and on this account he had said before, "Not by water only," for he means, that not only some part of our salvation is found in Christ, but the whole of it, so that nothing is to be sought elsewhere.

9. *If we receive the witness*, or testimony, *of men*. He proves, reasoning from the less to the greater, how ungrateful men are when they reject Christ, who has been approved, as he has related, by God; for if in worldly affairs we stand to the words of men, who may lie and deceive, how unreasonable it is that God should have less credit given to the, when sitting as it were on his own throne, where he is the supreme judge. Then our own corruption alone prevents us to receive Christ,, since he gives us full proof for believing in his power. Besides, he calls not only that the testimony of God which the Spirit imprints on our hearts, but also that which we derive from the water and the blood. For that power of cleansing and expiating was not earthly, but heavenly. Hence the blood of Christ is not to be estimated according to the common manner of men; but we must rather look to the design of God, who ordained it for blotting out sins, and also to that divine efficacy which flows from it.

<620509> 1 JOHN 5:9-12

9. — For this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

9. — Porro hoc est testimonium Dei, quod testificatus est de Filio suo.

10. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

10. Qui credit in Filium Dei, habet testimonium in seipso; qui non credit Deo, mendacem facit eum; quia non credidit in testimonium quod testificatus est Dens de Filio suo.

11. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.

11. Et hoc est testimonium, quod vitam aeternam dedit nobis Deus; et haec vita in Filio ejus est.

12. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

12. Qui habet Filium, habet vitam; qui non habet Filium Dei, vitam non habet.

9. *For this is the witness*, or testimony, *of God*. The particle **ὅτι** does not mean here the cause, but is to be taken as explanatory; for the Apostle, after having reminded us that God deserves to be believed much more than men, now adds, that we can have no faith in God, except by believing in Christ, because God sets him alone before us and makes us to stand in him.

He hence infers that we believe safely and with tranquil minds in Christ, because God by his authority warrants our faith. He does not say that God speaks outwardly, but that every one of the godly feels within that God is the author of his faith. It hence appears how different from faith is a fading opinion dependent on something else.

10. *He that believeth not.* As the faithful possess this benefit, that they know themselves to be beyond the danger of erring, because they have God as their foundation; so he makes the ungodly to be guilty of extreme blasphemy, because they charge God with falsehood. Doubtless nothing is more valued by God than his own truth, therefore no wrong more atrocious can be done to him, than to rob him of this honor. Then in order to induce us to believe, he takes an argument from the opposite side; for if to make God a liar be a horrible and execrable impiety, because then what especially belongs to him is taken away, who would not dread to withhold faith from the gospel, in which God would have himself to be counted singularly true and faithful? This ought to be carefully observed.

Some wonder why God commends faith so much, why unbelief is so severely condemned. But the glory of God is implicated in this; for since he designed to shew a special instance of his truth in the gospel, all they who reject Christ there offered to them, leave nothing to him. Therefore, though we may grant that a man in other parts of his life is like an angel, yet his sanctity is diabolical as long' as he rejects Christ. Thus we see some under the Papacy vastly pleased with the mere mask of sanctity, while they still most obstinately resist the gospel. Let us then understand, that it is the beginning of true religion, obediently to embrace this doctrine, which he has so strongly confirmed by his testimony.

11. *That God hath given, us eternal life.* Having now set, forth the benefit, he invites us to believe. It is, indeed, a reverence due to God, immediately to receive, as beyond controversy, whatever he declares to us. But since he freely offers life to us, our ingratitude will be intolerable, except with prompt faith we receive a doctrine so sweet and so lovely. And, doubtless, the words of the Apostle are intended to shew, that we ought, not only reverently to obey the gospel, lest we should affront God; but, that we ought to love it, because it brings to us eternal life. We hence also learn what is especially to be sought in the gospel, even the free gift of salvation;

for that God there exhorts us to repentance and fear, ought not to be separated from the grace of Christ

But the Apostle, that he might keep us together in Christ, again repeats that life is found in him; as though he had said, that no other way of obtaining life has been appointed for us by God the Father. And the Apostle, indeed, briefly includes here three things: that we are all given up to death until God in his gratuitous favor restores us to life; for he plainly declares that life is a gift from God: and hence also it follows that we are destitute of it, and theft it. cannot be acquired by merits; secondly, he teaches us that this life is conferred on us by the gospel, because there the goodness and the paternal love of God is made known to us; lastly, he says that we cannot otherwise become partakers of this life than by believing in Christ.

12. *He that hath not the Son.* This is a confirmation of the last sentence. It ought, indeed, to have been sufficient, that God made life to be in none but in Christ, that it might be sought in him; but lest any one should turn away to another, he excludes all from the hope of life who seek it not in Christ. We know what it is to have Christ, for he is possessed by faith. He then shews that all who are separated from the body of Christ are without life.

But this seems inconsistent with reason; for history shews that there have been great men, endued with heroic virtues, who yet were wholly unacquainted with Christ; and it seems unreasonable that men of so great eminence had no honor. To this I answer, that we are greatly mistaken if we think that whatever is eminent in our eyes is approved by God; for, as it is said in Luke,

“What is highly esteemed by men is an abomination with God.”
(^{<421615>} Luke 16:15)

For as the filthiness of the heart is hid from us, we are satisfied with the external appearance; but God sees that under this is concealed the foulest filth. It is, therefore, no wonder if specious virtues, flowing from an impure heart, and tending to no right end, have an ill odor to him. Besides, whence comes purity, whence a genuine regard for religion, except from the Spirit of Christ? There is, then, nothing worthy of praise except in Christ.

There is, further, another reason which removes every doubt; for the righteousness of men is in the remission of sins. If you take away this, the

sure curse of God and eternal death awaits all. Christ alone is he who *reconciles* the Father to us, as he has once for all pacified him by the sacrifice of the cross. It hence follows, that God is propitious to none but in Christ, nor is there righteousness but in him.

Were any one to object and say, that Cornelius, as mentioned by Luke, (<441002> Acts 10:2,) was accepted of God before he was called to the faith of the gospel: to this I answer shortly, that God sometimes so deals with us, that the seed of faith appears immediately on the first day. Cornelius had no clear and distinct knowledge of Christ; but as he had some perception of God’s mercy, he must at the same time understand something of a Mediator. But as God acts in ways hidden and wonderful, let us disregard those speculations which profit nothing, and hold only to that plain way of salvation, which he has made known to us.

<620513> 1 JOHN 5:13-15	
13. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and That ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.	13. Haec scripsi vobis credentibus in nomen Filii Dei, ut sciatis quod vitam habetis aeternam, et ut credatis in nomen Filii Dei.
14. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.	14. Atque haec est fiducia quam habemus erga eum, quod si quid petierimus secundum voluntatem ejus, audit nos.
15. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.	15. Si autem novimus quod audit nos, quum quid petierimus; novimus quod habemus petitiones quas postulavimus ab eo.

13. *These things have I written unto you.* As there ought to be a daily progress in faith, so he says that he wrote to those who had already believed, so that they might believe more firmly and with greater certainty, and thus enjoy a fuller confidence as to eternal life. Then the use of doctrine is, not only to initiate the ignorant in the knowledge of Christ, but

also to confirm those more and more who have been already taught. It therefore becomes us assiduously to attend to the duty of learning, that our faith may increase through the whole course of our life. For there are still in us many remnants of unbelief, and so weak is our faith that what we believe is not yet really believed except there be a fuller confirmation.

But we ought to observe the way in which faith is confirmed, even by having the office and power of Christ explained to us. For the Apostle says that he wrote these things, that is, that eternal life is to be sought nowhere else but in Christ, in order that they who were believers already might believe, that is, make progress in believing. It is therefore the duty of a godly teacher, in order to confirm disciples in the faith, to extol as much as possible the grace of Christ, so that being satisfied with that, we may seek nothing else.

As the Papists obscure this truth in various ways, and extenuate it, they shew sufficiently by this one thing that they care for nothing less than for the right doctrine of faith; yea, on this account, their schools ought to be more shunned than all the Scyllas and Charybdises in the world; for hardly any one can enter them without a sure shipwreck to his faith.

The Apostle teaches further in this passage, that Christ is the peculiar object of faith, and that to the faith which we have in his name is annexed the hope of salvation. For in this case the end of believing is, that we become the children and the heirs of God.

14. *And this is the confidence.* He commends the faith which he mentioned by its fruit, or he shews that in which our confidence especially is, that is, that the godly dare confidently to call on God; as also Paul speaks in ^{<490312>} Ephesians 3:12, that we have by faith access to God with confidence; and also in ^{<450815>} Romans 8:15, that the Spirit gives us a mouth to cry Abba, Father. And doubtless, were we driven away from an access to God, nothing could make us more miserable; but, on the other hand, provided this asylum be opened to us, we should be happy even in extreme evils; nay, this one thing renders our troubles blessed, because we surely know that God will be our deliverer, and relying on his paternal love towards us, we flee to him.

Let us, then, bear in mind this declaration of the Apostle, that calling on God is the chief trial of our faith, and that God is not rightly nor in faith

called upon except we be fully persuaded that our prayers will not be in vain. For the Apostle denies that those who, being doubtful, hesitate, are endued with faith.

It hence appears that the doctrine of faith is buried and nearly extinct under the Papacy, for all certainty is taken away. They indeed mutter many prayers, and prattle much about praying to God; but they pray with doubtful and fluctuating hearts, and bid us to pray; and yet they even condemn this confidence which the Apostle requires as necessary.

According to his will. By this expression he meant by the way to remind us what is the right way or rule of praying, even when men subject their own wishes to God. For though God has promised to do whatsoever his people may ask, yet he does not allow them an unbridled liberty to ask whatever may come to their minds; but he has at the same time prescribed to them a law according to which they are to pray. And doubtless nothing is better for us than this restriction; for if it was allowed to every one of us to ask what he pleased, and if God were to indulge us in our wishes, it would be to provide very badly for us. For what may be expedient we know not; nay, we boil over with corrupt and hurtful desires. But God supplies a twofold remedy, lest we should pray otherwise than according to what his own will has prescribed; for he teaches us by his word what he would have us to ask, and he has also set over us his Spirit as our guide and ruler, to restrain our feelings, so as not to suffer them to wander beyond due bounds. For what or how to pray, we know not, says Paul, but the Spirit helpeth our infirmity, and excites in us unutterable groans. (<450826> Romans 8:26.) We ought also to ask the mouth of the Lord to direct and guide our prayers; for God in his promises has fixed for us, as it has been said, the right way of praying.

15. *And if we know.* This is not a superfluous repetition, as it seems to be; for what the Apostle declared in general respecting the success of prayer, he now affirms in a special manner that the godly pray or ask for nothing from God but what they obtain. But when he says that all the petitions of the faithful are heard, he speaks of right and humble petitions, and such as are consistent with the rule of obedience. For the faithful do not give loose reins to their desires, nor indulge in anything that may please them, but always regard in their prayers what God commands.

This, then, is an application of the general doctrine to the special and private benefit of every one, lest the faithful should doubt that God is propitious to prayers of each individual, so that with quiet minds they may wait until the Lord should perform what they pray for, and that being thus relieved from all trouble and anxiety, they may cast on God the burden of their cares. This ease and security ought not, however, to abate in them their earnestness in prayer, for he who is certain of a happy event ought not to abstain from praying to God. For the certainty of faith by no means generates indifference or sloth. The Apostle meant; that every one should be tranquil in these necessities when he has deposited his sighs in the bosom of God.

<620516> 1 JOHN 5:16-18

16. If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

16. Si quis viderit fratrem suum peccantem peccato non ad mortem, petet; et dabit illi vitam peccanti, dico, non ad mortem: est peccatum ad mortem; non pro illo, dico, ut quis roget.

17. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

17. Omnis injustitia peccatum est; et est peccatum non ad mortem.

18. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

18. Novlinus quod quisquis ex Deo genitus est, non peccat; sed qui genitus est ex Deo servat seipsum, et malignus non tangit eum.

16. *If any man.* The Apostle extends still further the benefits of that faith which he has mentioned, so that our prayers may also avail for our brethren. It is a great thing, that as soon as we are oppressed, God kindly invites us to himself, and is ready to give us help; but that he hears us asking for others, is no small confirmation to our faith in order that we may be fully assured that we shall never meet with a repulse in our own case.

The Apostle in the meantime exhorts us to be mutually solicitous for the salvation of one another; and he would also have us to regard the falls of the brethren as stimulants to prayer. And surely it is an iron hardness to be touched with no pity, when we see souls redeemed by Christ's blood going to ruin. But he shews that there is at hand a remedy, by which brethren can aid brethren. He who will pray for the perishing, will, he says, restore life to him; though the words, "he shall give," may be applied to God, as though it was said, God will grant to your prayers the life of a brother. But the sense will still be the same, that the prayers of the faithful so far avail as to rescue a brother from death. If we understand man to be intended, that he will give life to a brother, it is a hyperbolical expression; it however contains nothing inconsistent; for what is given to us by the gratuitous goodness of God, yea, what is granted to others for our sake, we are said to give to others. So great a benefit ought to stimulate us not a little to ask for our brethren the forgiveness of sins. And when the Apostle recommends sympathy to us, he at the same time reminds us how much we ought to avoid the cruelty of condemning our brethren, or an extreme rigor in despairing of their salvation.

A sin which is not unto death. That we may not cast away all hope of the salvation of those who sin, he shews that God does not so grievously punish their falls as to repudiate them. It hence follows that we ought to deem them brethren, since God retains them in the number of his children. For he denies that sins are to death, not only those by which the saints daily offend, but even when it happens that God's wrath is grievously provoked by them. For as long as room for pardon is left, death does not wholly retain its dominion.

The Apostle, however, does not here distinguish between venial and mortal sin, as it was afterwards commonly done. For altogether foolish is that distinction which prevails under the Papacy. The Sorbons acknowledge that there is hardly a mortal sin, except there be the grossest baseness, such as may be, as it were, tangible. Thus in venial sins they think that there may be the greatest filth, if hidden in the soul. In short, they suppose that all the fruits of original sin, provided they appear not outwardly, are washed away by the slight sprinkling of holy water! And what wonder is it, since they regard not as blasphemous sins, doubts respecting God's grace, or any lusts or evil desires, except they are consented to? If the soul of man be assailed by unbelief, if impatience

tempts him to rage against God, whatever monstrous lusts may allure him, all these are to the Papists lighter than to be deemed sins, at least after baptism. It is then no wonder, that they make venial offenses of the greatest crimes; for they weigh them in their own balance and not in the balance of God.

But among the faithful this ought to be an indubitable truth, that whatever is contrary to God's law is sin, and in its nature mortal; for where there is a transgression of the law, there is sin and death.

What, then, is the meaning of the Apostle? He denies that sins are mortal, which, though worthy of death, are yet not thus punished by God. He therefore does not estimate sins in themselves, but forms a judgment of them according to the paternal kindness of God, which pardons the guilt, where yet the fault is. In short, God does not give over to death those whom he has restored to life, though it depends not on them that they are not alienated from life.

There is a sin unto death. I have already said that the sin to which there is no hope of pardon left, is thus called. But it may be asked, what this is; for it must be very atrocious, when God thus so severely punishes it. It may be gathered from the context, that it is not, as they say, a partial fall, or a transgression of a single commandment, but apostasy, by which men wholly alienate themselves from God. For the Apostle afterwards adds, that the children of God do not sin, that is, that they do not forsake God, and wholly surrender themselves to Satan, to be his slaves. Such a defection, it is no wonder that it is mortal; for God never thus deprives his own people of the grace of the Spirit; but they ever retain some spark of true religion. They must then be reprobate and given up to destruction, who thus fall away so as to have no fear of God.

Were any one to ask, whether the door of salvation is closed against their repentance; the answer is obvious, that as they are given up to a reprobate mind, and are destitute of the Holy Spirit, they cannot do anything else, than with obstinate minds, become worse and worse, and add sins to sins. Moreover, as the sin and blasphemy against the Spirit ever brings with it a defection of this kind, there is no doubt but that it is here pointed out.

But it may be asked again, by what evidences can we know that a man's fall is fatal; for except the knowledge of this was certain, in vain would the

Apostle have made this exception, that they were not to pray for a sin of this kind. It is then right to determine sometimes, whether the fallen is without hope, or whether there is still a place for a remedy. This, indeed, is what I allow, and what is evident beyond dispute from this passage; but as this very seldom happens, and as God sets before us the infinite riches of his grace, and bids us to be merciful according to his own example, we ought not rashly to conclude that any one has brought on himself the judgment of eternal death; on the contrary, love should dispose us to hope well. But if the impiety of some appear to us not otherwise than hopeless, as though the Lord pointed it out by the finger, we ought not to contend with the just judgment of God, or seek to be more merciful than he is.

17. *All unrighteousness.* This passage may be explained variously. If you take it adversatively, the sense would not be unsuitable, “Though all unrighteousness is sin, yet every sin is not unto death.” And equally suitable is another meaning, “As sin is every unrighteousness, hence it follows that every sin is not unto death.” Some take *all unrighteousness* for complete unrighteousness, as though the Apostle had said, that the sin of which he spoke was the summit of unrighteousness. I, however, am more disposed to embrace the first or the second explanation; and as the result is nearly the same, I leave it to the judgment of readers to determine which of the two is the more appropriate.

18. *We know that whosoever is born of God.* If you suppose that God’s children are wholly *pure* and free from all sin, as the fanatics contend, then the Apostle is inconsistent with himself; for he would thus take away the duty of mutual prayer among brethren. Then he says that those *sin not* who do not wholly fall away from the grace of God; and hence he inferred that prayer ought to be made for all the children of God, because they sin not unto death. A proof is added, That every one, born of God, keeps himself, that is, keeps himself in the fear of God; nor does he suffer himself to be so led away, as to lose all sense of religion, and to surrender himself wholly to the devil and the flesh.

For when he says, that he is not *touched by that wicked one*, reference is made to a deadly wound; for the children of God do not remain untouched by the assaults of Satan, but they ward off his strokes by the shield of faith, so that they do not penetrate into the heart. Hence spiritual life is never extinguished in them. This is not to sin. Though the faithful indeed

fall through the infirmity of the flesh, yet they groan under the burden of sin, loathe themselves, and cease not to fear God.

Keepeth himself. What properly belongs to God he transfers to us; for were any one of us the keeper of his own salvation, it would be a miserable protection. Therefore Christ asks the Father to keep us, intimating that it is not done by our own strength. The advocates of freewill lay hold on this expression, that they may thence prove, that we are preserved from sin, partly by God's grace, and partly by our own power. But they do not perceive that the faithful have not from themselves the power of preservation of which the Apostle speaks. Nor does he, indeed, speak of their power, as though they could keep themselves by their own strength; but he only shews that they ought to resist Satan, so that they may never be fatally wounded by his darts. And we know that we fight with no other weapons but those of God. Hence the faithful keep themselves from sin, as far as they are kept by God. (<431711> John 17:11.)

<620519> 1 JOHN 5:19-21	
19. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.	19. Novimus quod ex Deo sumus, et mundus torus in maligno positus est.
20. And we know that 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, <i>even</i> in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.	20. Novimus autem quod Filius Dei venit, et dedit nobis intelligentiam, ut cognoscamus illum verum; et sumus in ipso vero, in Filio ejus Jesu Christo: Hic est verus Deus, et vita aeterna.
21. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.	21. Filioli, custodite vos ab idolis. Amen.

19. *We are of God.* He deduces an exhortation from his previous doctrine; for what he had declared in common as to the children of God, he now applies to those he was writing to; and this he did, to stimulate them to beware of sin, and to encourage them to repel the onsets of Satan.

Let readers observe, that it is only true faith, that applies to us, so to speak, the grace of God; for the Apostle acknowledges none as faithful,

but those who have the dignity of being God's children. Nor does he indeed put probable conjecture, as the Sophists speak, for confidence; for he says that we *know*. The meaning is, that as we have been born of God, we ought to strive to prove by our separation from the world, and by the sanctity of our life, that we have not been in vain called to so great all honor.

Now, this is an admonition very necessary for all the godly; for wherever they turn their eyes, Satan has his allurements prepared, by which he seeks to draw them away from God. It would then be difficult for them to hold on in their course, were they not so to value their calling as to disregard all the hindrances of the world. Then, in order to be well prepared for the contest, these two things must be borne in mind, that the world is wicked, and that our calling is from God.

Under the term *world*, the Apostle no doubt includes the whole human race. By saying that it *lieth in the wicked* one, he represents it as being under the dominion of Satan. There is then no reason why we should hesitate to shun the world, which condemns God and delivers up itself into the bondage of Satan: nor is there a reason why we should fear its enmity, because it is alienated from God. In short, since corruption pervades all nature, the faithful ought to study self-denial; and since nothing is seen in the world but wickedness and corruption, they must necessarily disregard flesh and blood that they may follow God. At the same time the other thing ought to be added, that God is he who has called them, that under this protection they may oppose all the machinations of the world and Satan.

20. *And we know that the Son of God is come.* As the children of God are assailed on every side, he, as we have said, encourages and exhorts them to persevere in resisting their enemies, and for this reason, because they fight under the banner of God, and certainly know that they are ruled by his Spirit; but he now reminds them where this knowledge is especially to be found.

He then says that God has been so made known to us, that now there is no reason for doubting. The Apostle does not without reason dwell on this point; for except our faith is really founded on God, we shall never stand firm in the contest. For this purpose the Apostle shews that we have

obtained through Christ a sure knowledge of the true God, so that we may not fluctuate in uncertainty.

By *true* God he does not mean one who tells the truth, but him who is really God; and he so calls him to distinguishing him from all idols. Thus *true* is in opposition to what is fictitious; for it is *ἀληθινός*, and not *ἀληθής*. A similar passage is in John

“This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God,
and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.” (<431703> John 17:3)

And he justly ascribes to Christ this office of illuminating our minds as to the knowledge of God. For, as he is the only true image of the invisible God, as he is the only interpreter of the Father, as he is the only guide of life, yea, as he is the life and light of the world and the truth, as soon as we depart from him, we necessarily become vain in our own devices.

And Christ is said to have *given us an understanding*, not only because he shews us in the gospel what sort of being is the true God, and also illuminates us by his Spirit; but because in Christ himself we have God manifested in the flesh, as Paul says, since in him dwells all the fullness of the Deity, and are hid all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom. (<510209> Colossians 2:9.) Thus it is that the face of God in a manner appears to us in Christ; not that there was no knowledge, or a doubtful knowledge of God, before the coming of Christ,, but that now he manifests himself more fully and more clearly. And this is what Paul says in <470406> 2 Corinthians 4:6, that God, who formerly commanded light to shine out of darkness at the creation of the world, hath now shone in our hearts through the brightness of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ.

And it must be observed, that this gift is peculiar to the elect. Christ, indeed, kindles for all indiscriminately the torch of his gospel; but all have not the eyes of their minds opened to see it, but on the contrary Satan spreads the veil of blindness over many. Then the Apostle means the light which Christ kindles within in the hearts of his people, and which when once kindled, is never extinguished, though in some it may for a time be smothered.

We are in him that is true. By these words he reminds us how efficacious is that knowledge which he mentions, even because by it we are united to Christ; and become one with God; for it has a living root, fixed in the heart,

by which it comes that God lives in us and we in him. As he says, without a copulative, that: we are *in him that is true, in his Son*, he seems to express the manner of our union with God, as though he had said, that we are in God through Christ.^{f38}

This is the true God. Though the Arians have attempted to elude this passage, and some agree with them at this day, yet we have here a remarkable testimony to the divinity of Christ. The Arians apply this passage to the Father, as though the Apostle should again repeat that he is the true God. But nothing could be more frigid than such a repetition. It has already twice testified that the true God is he who has been made known to us in Christ, why should he again add, *This is the true God*? It applies, indeed, most suitably to Christ; for after having taught us that Christ is the guide by whose hand we are led to God, he now, by way of amplifying, affirms that Christ is that God, lest we should think that we are to seek further; and he confirms this view by what is added, *and eternal life*. It is doubtless the same that is spoken of, as being the true God and eternal life. I pass by this, that the relative οὗτος usually refers to the last person. I say, then, that Christ is properly called eternal life; and that this mode of speaking perpetually occurs in John, no one can deny.

The meaning is, that when we have Christ, we enjoy the true and eternal God, for nowhere else is he to be sought; and, secondly, that we become thus partakers of eternal life, because it is offered to us in Christ though hid in the Father. The origin of life is, indeed, the Father; but the fountain from which we are to draw it, is Christ.

21. *Keep yourselves from idols.* Though this be a separate sentence, yet it is as it were an appendix to the preceding doctrine. For the vivifying light of the Gospel ought to scatter and dissipate, not only darkness, but also all mists, from the minds of the godly. The Apostle not only condemns idolatry, but commands us to beware of all images and idols; by which he intimates, that the worship of God cannot continue uncorrupted and pure whenever men begin to be in love with idols or images. For so innate in us is superstition, that the least occasion will infect us with its contagion. Dry wood will not so easily burn when coals are put under it, as idolatry will lay hold on and engross the minds of men, when an occasion is given to them. And who does not see that images are the sparks? What sparks

do I say? nay, rather torches, which are sufficient to set the whole world on fire.

The Apostle at the same time does not only speak of statues, but also of altars, and includes all the instruments of superstitions. Moreover, the Papists are ridiculous, who pervert this passage and apply it to the statues of Jupiter and Mercury and the like, as though the Apostle did not teach generally, that there is a corruption of religion whenever a corporeal form is ascribed to God, or whenever statues and pictures form a part of his worship. Let us then remember that we ought carefully to continue in the spiritual worship of God, so as to banish far from us everything that may turn us aside to gross and carnal superstitions.

END OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

A TRANSLATION OF

JOHN CALVIN'S VERSION OF

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

CHAPTER 1

- 1 What has been from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked on, what our hands have handled, concerning the word of life;
- 2 (And the life has been manifested, and we have seen, and do testify, and declare to you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us) —
- 3 What we have seen and heard, declare we to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ:
- 4 And we write these things to you, that your joy may be complete.
- 5 And this is the message which we have heard from him, and declare to you, that God is light, and in him there is not any darkness.
- 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not tell the truth.
- 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.
- 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us:

- 9 If we confess our sins, faithful is he and just, so as to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness:
- 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

CHAPTER 2

- 1 My little children, I write these things to you, that you may not sin; but if any one sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one:
- 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for *the sins* of the whole world.
- 3 And by this we know that we have known him, if we *keep* his commandments.
- 4 He who says, “I know him,” and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him:
- 5 But he who keeps his word, verily in him the love of God is perfected;
- 6 By this we know that we are in him. He who says that lie abides in him, ought also himself so to walk as he walked.
- 7 Brethren, no new commandment do I write to you, but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning.
- 8 Again, a new commandment do I write to you; which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light now shines.
- 9 He who says that he is in the light, and hates his brother, is still in darkness.
- 10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and to him there is no stumbling:

- 11** But lie who hates his brother, walks in darkness; and he knows not where he goeth, because darkness hath blinded his eyes.
- 12** I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.
- 13** I write to you, fathers, because ye have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, children, because ye have known the Father.
- 14** I have written to you, fathers, because ye have known him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the evil one.
- 15** Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world: if any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
- 16** For whatever is in the world, (*even* the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,) is not from the Father, but from the world.
- 17** And the world passeth away, and the lust of it; but he who doeth the will of God, abides for ever.
- 18** Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that Antichrist is to come, even now there are many Antichrist is:
- 19** Hence we know that it is the last hour. From us have they gone out, but of us they were not, for had they been of us, they would *surely* have remained with us; but *they have gone out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us.
- 20** But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.
- 21** I have not written to you, because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that everything false is not from the truth.
- 22** Who is a liar, but he who denies Jesus to be the Christ? He is an Antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son:

- 23 Every one who denies the Son hath not the Father.
- 24 Let, then, what you have heard from the beginning remain in you: if what you have heard from the beginning remain in you, ye shall also remain in the Son, and in the Father;
- 25 And this is the promise which he hath promised to us. *even* eternal life.
- 26 These things have I written to you respecting them who seduce you: but the unction which ye have received from him remains in you, so that ye have no need that any one should teach you;
- 27 But as the unction teaches you all things, and is truth, and is not a lie, and as it has taught you? *so* remain in him.
- 28 And now, little children, continue in him, that when lie shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed at his presence.
- 29 Since ye know that he is righteous, know ye that every one who doeth righteousness has been born of him.

CHAPTER 3

- 1 See what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God! the world for this reason knoweth us not, because it did not know him.
- 2 Beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when lie shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is:
- 3 And every one who hath this hope in him purifieth himself, inasmuch as he is pure.
- 4 Whosoever doeth sin, doeth also iniquity; and sin is iniquity.
- 5 But ye know that he appeared that he might take away our sins, and sin is not in him.

- 6** Whosoever abides in him doth not sin; whosoever sins, hath not seen him, nor known him.
- 7** Little children, let no one deceive you, — he who doeth righteousness is righteous, inasmuch as he is righteous:
- 8** He who doeth sin, is of the devil, for the devil sins from the beginning. The Son of God was for this end manifested, that he might undo the works of the devil.
- 9** Whosoever has been born of God, doth not do sin, because his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.
- 10** By this are made manifest the sons of God, and the sons of the devil, — every one who doeth not righteousness, is not of God, nor he who loves not his brother.
- 11** For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we love one another:
- 12** Not as Cain, who was of the wicked one, and slew his brother; and why did he slay him? because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous.
- 13** Wonder not, my brethren, if the world hate you.
- 14** We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren; he who loves not his brother, remains in death.
- 15** Every one who hates his brother, is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.
- 16** By this we know love, that he laid down his own life for us; and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.
- 17** But when any one has this world's goods, and seeth his brother in want, and closeth up his bowels from him, how abideth the love of God in him?
- 18** My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth:

- 19** And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.
- 20** For if our heart accuse us, doubtless God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.
- 21** Beloved, if our heart do not accuse us, we have confidence towards God:
- 22** And if we ask anything, we receive *it* from him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in his sight.
- 23** And this is his commandment, that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.
- 24** And he who keepeth his commandment, abideth in him, and he in him; and by this we know that he abideth in us, *even* by the Spirit whom he hath given us.

CHAPTER 4

- 1** Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone forth into the world.
- 2** By this know ye the Spirit of God, — Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is from God;
- 3** And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is not from God; and this is the Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he is to come, and he is now already in the world.
- 4** Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.
- 5** They are of the world; therefore of the world do they speak, and the world heareth them.

- 6** We are of God; he who knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God, doth not hear us: by this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
- 7** Beloved, let us love one another; because love is from God; and every one who loveth has been born of God, and knoweth God.
- 8** He who loveth not, knoweth not God, because God is love.
- 9** In this has appeared the love of God to us, that God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we may live through him.
- 10** In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that God has loved us and sent his Son a propitiation for our sins.
- 11** Beloved, if God has so loved us, we ought also to love one another.
- 12** No one hath ever seen God: if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love has been perfected in us. **13** By this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.
- 14** And we have seen and do testify, that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.
- 15** He who shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God.
- 16** And we have known and have believed the love which God hath to us: God is love; and he who abideth in love, abideth in God, and God in him.
- 17** By this has love in us been perfected, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world.
- 18** Fear is not in love: but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment; and he who fears, has not been perfected in love.
- 19** We love him, because he has first loved us.

- 20** If any one *say*, “I love *God*,” and hate his neighbour, he is a liar; for he who loves not his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he sees not?
- 21** And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God should also love his brother.

CHAPTER 5

- 1** Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God; and every one who loves Him who has begotten, loves him also who has been begotten by Him.
- 2** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments:
- 3** For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.
- 4** For, whatever has been born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith.
- 5** Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
- 6** This is he who has come by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood; and the Spirit is
- 7** He who testifies, inasmuch as the Spirit is truth. For there are three who testify in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.
- 8** And there are three who testify on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood;
- 9** And these three agree in one. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.
- 10** Moreover, this is the testimony of God, which he hath testified respecting his own Son (He who believes on the Son of God hath the testimony in himself;

- 11** He who believes not God, makes him a liar, because he hath not believed the testimony which God hath testified respecting his own Son,) even this is the testimony, that God hath given to us eternal life;
- 12** And this life is in his Son. He who hath the Son, hath life; he who hath not the Son of God, hath not life.
- 13** These things have I 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 on the name of the Son of God.
- 14** And this is the confidence which we have towards Him, that when we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us:
- 15** And if we know that he hears us when we ask any thing, we know that we have the petitions which we have desired of him.
- 16** If any one see his brother sinning a sin not to death, he shall ask, and he will give to him life for him who sins not to death: there is a sin to death, I do not say that any one shall pray for that.
- 17** Every unrighteousness is sin; and there is a sin not to death.
- 18** We know that every one who has been born of God, sins not; but he who has been born of God, keeps himself, and the wicked one touches him not.
- 19** We know that we are of God; and the whole world lieth in the wicked one.
- 20** And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given to us an understanding, that we may know him who is true; anti we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God and eternal life.
- 21** Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 1

^{ft1} It is more consistent with the passage to take “from the beginning” here as from the beginning of the Gospel, from the beginning of the ministry of our Savior, because what had been from the beginning was what the apostles had *heard* and *seen*. That another view has been taken of these words has been owing to an over-anxiety on the part of many, especially of the Fathers, to establish the divinity of our Savior; but this is what is sufficiently evident from the second verse. See ch. 2:7, 24. — *Ed.*

^{ft2} *Griesbach* has substituted ἀγγελία for the word here used, as being most approved; but the other, ἐπαγγελία, has also a similar meaning, announcement, or message, or command, though in the New Testament it is mostly taken in the sense of a promise. — *Ed.*

^{ft3} “Faithful” and “just” are nearly of the same import, having both a regard to God’s *promise*, only the latter affords a stronger or an additional ground of confidence, inasmuch as the fulfillment of God’s gracious promise is set forth as an act of justice. So that the penitent has here two of God’s attributes, faithfulness and justice, to encourage and support his faith.

We may, at the same time, consider “just” as having reference to forgiveness, and “faithful” to cleansing, according to a very common mode of stating things both in the Old and New Testament, the order in the second clause being reversed. Then “*just*” means the same as when Paul says, “that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,” ^{<450326>}Romans 3:26. Forgiveness is thus an act of justice, then, not to us, but to Christ, who made an atonement for sins. — *Ed.*

^{ft4} That is, that he refers to forgiveness in the two clauses. — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 2

- ^{ft5} “It seems to me that the Apostle is to be understood as speaking only of all those who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, over the whole world.” — *Doddridge*. — *Ed*.
- ^{ft6} That this view is correct, appears evident from the words, “which ye had from the beginning;” he calls it “old,” because they had been taught it from “the beginning,” that is, of the gospel. Then “new” can mean no other thing than what *Calvin* states, that it continues still in force, it being, as it were, always new. — *Ed*.
- ^{ft7} Literally, “and to him there is not a stumblingblock;” that is, nothing that causes him to stumble or fall. He is not like him mentioned in the next verse, who “*walks* in darkness and knows not whither he goeth.” The sentence seems to have been taken from <19B9165>Psalm 119:165, with this only difference, that it is “*to* them,” instead of “*to* him.” There is in the *Sept.* no preposition, but in Hebrew the preposition “to” is used; and **עַל** has sometimes this meaning in the New Testament. See <510123>Colossians 1:23; <520407>1 Thessalonians 4:7. — *Ed*.
- ^{ft8} The diminutive termination often expresses affection; hence **νεανίσκοι** may properly be rendered, “dear youth,” or “dear young men;” and so **τεκνία μου**, in the first verse, may be rendered, “My dear children.” — *Ed*.
- ^{ft9} There are no different readings that can justify the supposition of an interpolation. The only reading that *Griesbach* considers probable is **ἐγραψα** for **γράφω** at the end of the 13th verse. If that be adopted, then the three characters are twice mentioned, and in regular order. The objection that **τεκνία** in ver. 12, is **παῖδια** in ver. 13, is not valid, for he uses the latter in the same sense as the former in ver. 18, as denoting Christians in general; while here, in connection with “fathers” and “young men,” they must mean those young in years or in the profession of the gospel. The repetition is for the sake of emphasis. — *Ed*.
- ^{ft10} It is considered by many, such as *Macknight* and *Scott*, that the three former verses are connected with this — that the particulars stated with regard to little children, fathers, and young men, are adduced as

reasons to enforce this exhortation, “Love not the world,” etc. And this no doubt is the best view of the passage. — *Ed.*

^{ft11} There are *two* things, the world, and the things that are in the world. The world, thus distinguished from what is in it, means, according to *Macknight*, the wicked and unbelieving, the men of the world, as when our Savior says, “the world,” that is, the unbelieving Jews, “hateth you,” <431519> John 15:19. According to this view, the contrast in verse 17 appears very suitable, “The world (the ungodly men of the world) passeth away, and its lust, (their lust;) but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” Others think that the blessings of the world are meant, the good things necessary for the support of man, and that these are not to be *loved*, though they may be rightly used. In this case, “in the world” must have a different meaning, a thing not unusual in Scripture; it must mean in the present state of things. But the most consistent view is the first, that is, to take “the world” throughout as signifying the ungodly men of the world. What prevail among them are the lusts here mentioned, — sensual gratification, avarice, and ambition, the three gods who rule and reign in mankind. — *Ed.*

^{ft12} “From the Holy One,” from the Father, say some; from the Son, say others; from the Holy Spirit, according to a third party. By comparing this verse with the 27th and the 28th verse, we see reason to conclude that the “Holy One” is Christ, who had promised the Spirit to teach his people. The unction, or the anointing, is the act of the Spirit by which the truth is taught. — *Ed.*

^{ft13} Taking this view of the passage, we may give this rendering, — “Who is a liar, except it be he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?” — *Ed.*

^{ft14} The words are found in most of the MSS., and in most of the versions, and in many of the Fathers. Besides, they wholly comport with the usual style of the Apostle, whose common practice it was to state things positively and negatively, and *vice versa*. See especially chap. 5:12. — *Ed.*

^{ft15} This, which is our version, is, no doubt, the best construction. “*Promise*” is a metonymy for what is promised: “This is the promise, which he hath promised to us, *even* eternal life.” “Eternal life” is in apposition with “which.” — *Ed.*

^{ft16} It is the character of John's style that he often passes as it were abruptly from the Son to the Father, and from the Father to the Son; and often the antecedent is not the next preceding word, but one at some distance: we find this to be the case by what the sentence contains, as in the present instance; the new birth is never ascribed to the Son, referred to in the foregoing verse, but to the Father or to the Spirit. Hence we must conclude that the righteous one spoken of here, who together with the Son is mentioned in the 22d verse, is the Father. As the intervening verses, with the exception of the 23d, which is only explanatory of the previous verse, apply to the Son, so this verse seems to refer to the Father, consistently with a mode of writing common in Scripture. — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 3

^{ft17} *Calvin*, like our version, renders τέκνα, “sons;” but the word would be better rendered “children,” “That we should be called the children of God.” The passage might be thus paraphrased, “See what great proof of love the Father hath given us, that we should be made the children of God” — *Ed.*

^{ft18} “When he shall appear,” refers to Christ, mentioned in the 28th verse of the last chapter; what intervenes seems to have been parenthetically introduced. This is often the manner of writing found in this apostle. The end of the 8th verse, in this chapter, is connected with the 16th; for the antecedent to ἐκεῖνος, *he*, in the latter verse, is “the Son of God” in the former. — *Ed.*

^{ft19} To do, or to commit, or to work, or to practice, sin, and to sin, are evidently used in the same sense by the Apostle: and to commit or practice sin, according to what he says in his Gospel, (<⁴³⁰⁸³⁴> John 8:34,) is the same with being “the servant of sin.” It is hence evident, that in the language of John, to do sin, or to sin, means a prevailing or an habitual course of sinning.

We might render the fourth verse thus, —

“Every doer of sin, is also the doer of unrighteousness; for sin is unrighteousness, or iniquity, as Calvin renders it.

The word *ἀνομία*, literally, is lawlessness, but it is never used strictly in this sense either in the *Sept.* or the New Testament. The terms by which it is commonly expressed, are, wickedness, iniquity, transgression, unrighteousness. See verse 7. — *Ed.*

^{ft20} It is generally taken as referring to Christ personally; he being mentioned here as having no sin, because he is in this respect an example to his people; or, according to some, because he was thereby fitted for the office of taking away our sins; or, because he had no sin of his own to take away. *Grotius* viewed the present as used here for the past tense, — “and sin was not in him.” See a similar instance in ^{<431527>} John 15:27 — *Ed.*

^{ft21} There is no authority for adding *of God* after *love* in this verse; nor indeed is it right, for what follows clearly shows that the love of Christ is what is referred to. The antecedent to “he,” (“because he laid down,” &c.) is “the Son of God” in the 8th verse. The passage may be thus rendered, “By this we know love, that he laid down his own life for us; and we ought to lay down *our* lives for *our* brethren.” — *Ed.*

^{ft22} “The love of God” here is love of which God is the object, that is, love to God. — *Ed.*

^{ft23} *Beza* and others regard “only,” or “merely,” as understood in the first clause, according to a mode of speaking which often occurs in Scripture, as “Labor not,” etc., (^{<430627>} John 6:27.)

“My dear children, let us love, not only by word, or with the tongue, but by work and in truth.”

That is, let us not love only by making in words fair promises, or by expressing sympathy with the tongue, but by giving effect to our sympathy by works, and by making our word true, by fulfilling it. Here we find the same arrangement as in many other instances; the “word” has its correspondence in “truth;” and “tongue in “work.”

It is justly observed by *Macknight*, that “the Apostle cannot be supposed to forbid our using affectionate speeches to our brethren in distress But he forbiddeth us to content ourselves with these. “ — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 4

- ^{ft24} It appears that by “spirit” throughout this passage, we are to understand a teacher claiming, rightly or falsely, to be influenced by God’s Spirit. Nor would it be improper, but suitable to the context, to consider the spirit of God in this verse as meaning a teacher guided by God. The meaning of the passage might be thus expressed, —
2. “By this know ye the teacher of God; every teacher who confesses Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh, is from God; and
 3. every teacher who does not confess Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh, is not from God; and this is the teacher of Antichrist, (or, the Anti Christian teacher,) of whom ye have heard that he is coming, and he is now already in the world.” — *Ed.*
- ^{ft25} When it is said, ye “have overcome them,” the antecedent to “them” is no doubt “the false prophets” in the first verse. It is usual with John to refer to antecedents at some distance. See ^{<430316>} John 3:16. — *Ed.*
- ^{ft26} “The world” is in this verse identified with “the false prophets;” true Christians had overcome these for this reason, because greater was he that was in them than he that was in the world, that is, in the unbelieving and ungodly, of whom the false prophets formed a part. Hence it follows, “They are of the world,” that is, they are of the number of those who are ungodly and wicked, who make up the kingdom of darkness. — *Ed.*
- ^{ft27} The clause, “therefore speak they of the world,” is hardly a true rendering, for **ἐκ** never means “of,” in the sense of “concerning.” *Macknight* renders it “from.” *Grotius* paraphrases the sentence thus, “They preach things agreeable to the dispositions of the world;” and *Doddridge* thus, “They speak as of the world, as taking their instructions from it.” But **ἐκ**, like *ex* in Latin, means sometimes “according to,” as in ^{<401237>} Matthew 12:37, “For by (or, according to) thy words thou shalt be justified.” See also verse 34, “but of (or, according to) the abundance,” etc. Then this sentence may be thus rendered, “Therefore speak they according to the world:” that is, according to the views and principles of the superstitious and ungodly men of the world. — *Ed.*

ft28 According to this view, “the spirit of truth” means the teacher of truth, and “the spirit of error” the teacher of error; and this is agreeable to the whole tenor of the context, the spirit throughout denoting the person who claimed, rightly or falsely, to be under the direction of the divine Spirit. “By this,” refers to what had been just stated, that is, that false teachers were of the world, and spake things agreeable to the worldly-minded, and were heard by the world, and that the true teachers were from God, and were heard or attended to by those who knew God, and were not attended to by such as were ignorant of him. It was by this statement which he had made, they could distinguish between the teacher of truth and the teacher of error. The teacher of truth was one from God, and was attended to by those who knew God, and not by those who knew him not; on the other hand, the teacher of error was from the world, preached what was agreeable to the men of the world, and was hearkened to by them. The order, as it is often the case, is inverted; the teacher of error, mentioned last, is described in the fifth verse, and the teacher of truth, mentioned first, at the beginning of the sixth. — *Ed.*

ft29 What is love? It is as much a gift, a grace, as faith; it constitutes a fitness for heaven, but is in no way meritorious; and were it perfect, there would be nothing of merit in it; for the highest degrees of it come far short of what is due to God. To set up merit of any kind on the part of man, betokens extreme blindness, for salvation from first to last is altogether gratuitous. — *Ed.*

ft30 *Beza, Doddridge, Scott*, and most commentators, regard *love* here as that which is in us, and not the love of God as apprehended by faith. The *main* subject of the Apostle is love in us, and the words “perfected” and “*perfect*,” as applied to it, seem inappropriate to God’s love towards us; and this perfection is said in verse 17th to consist in this, that as God is, so are we in this world; that is, like him in love, as God is said in the previous verse to be love.

“Fear” is the fear of judgment, mentioned in verse 17th, and he who fears is said to be not perfected or made perfect in love, which obviously refers to love in us. And then it immediately follows, “We *love* him,” and the reason is assigned, “because he first loved us.” He afterwards proceeds to show the indispensable necessity of having love to God and to the brethren — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 5

^{ft31} Literally, “and the whole God — *totum Deum.*” — *Ed.*

^{ft32} The literal rendering of the verse is as follows, —

“Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and every one who loves the begetter loves also the begotten by him.” — *Ed.*

^{ft33} The subject no doubt is love to the *brethren* throughout; and this passage shews this most clearly. Love to all is evidently a duty, but it is not taught here. — *Ed.*

^{ft34} The love of God,” here clearly means love to God: it is the love of which God is the object. — *Ed.*

^{ft35} The words literally are, —

“For every thing begotten by God overcomes the world,” etc. The neuter gender is used for the masculine, “every thing” for “every one,” as in the first verse; or according to כָּל in Hebrew, it is used in a plural sense, for πάντες as in <431702> John 17:2, “that all (πάν) which thou hast given him, he should give them (αὐτοῖς) eternal life.”

Macknight and others have said that the neuter gender is used in order to comprehend all sorts of persons, males and females, young and old, Jews and Gentiles, bond or free. Why, then, was not the neuter gender used in the first verse? It is clearly a peculiarity of style, and nothing else, and ought not to be retained in a translation.

“Victory” stands for that which brings victory, the effect for the cause; or it may designate the person, as νίκη means sometimes the goddess of victory. — “And this the conqueress who conquers the world, even our faith.” — *Ed.*

^{ft36} *Calvin* probably refers to printed copies in his day, and not to Greek MSS. As far as the authority of MSS. and versions and quotations goes, the passage is spurious, for it is not found in *any* of the Greek MSS prior to the 16th century, nor in *any* of the *early versions*, except the Latin, nor in some of the copies of that version; nor is it quoted by any of the early *Greek* fathers, nor by early *Latin* fathers, except a very few, and even their quotations have been disputed. These are *facts* which no refined conjectures can upset; and it is to be regretted that

learned men, such as the late Bishop *Burgess*, should have labored and toiled in an attempt so hopeless as to establish the genuineness of this verse, or rather of a part of this verse, and of the beginning of the following. The whole passage is as follows, the spurious part being put within crotchets, —

7. “For there are three who bear witness [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one:

8. And there are three who bear witness in earth,] the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree in one.”

As to the construction of the passage, as far as grammar and sense are concerned, it may do with or without the interpolation equally the same. What has been said to the contrary on this point, seems to be nothing of a decisive character, in no way sufficient to shew that the words are not spurious. Indeed, the passage reads better without the interpolated words; and as to the sense, that is, the sense in which they are commonly taken by the advocates of their genuineness, it has no connection whatever with the general drift of the passage. — *Ed.*

^{ft37} If we exclude the words deemed interpolated, we may read the passage thus:

“This is he who came with water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with water only, but with water and blood: the Spirit also beareth witness, for (or seeing that) the Spirit is truth (or, is true); because there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one.

We see hence a reason why the Spirit is said to be true, even because he is not alone, for the water and the blood concur with him. Thus a testimony is formed consistently with the requirement of the law. We hence also see the import of what is stated when the testimony of men is mentioned, as though he had said, The testimony of three men is received as valid, how much more valid is the testimony of God, which has three witnesses in its behalf? It is called God’s testimony, because the witnesses have been ordered and appointed by him.

When it is said that he came with water and blood, the meaning is, that he came, having water and blood; the proposition διὰ has sometimes this meaning, and it is changed in the second clause into ἐν. We meet

with similar instances in ^{<470311>}2 Corinthians 3:11, and in ^{<470411>}2 Corinthians 4:11. See ^{<450227>}Romans 2:27; 4:11.

According to this construction, the explanation of *Calvin* is alone the right one, that the water means cleansing, and the blood expiation, the terms being borrowed from the rites of the law; and a reference is also made to the law when the witness of men is mentioned. — *Ed.*

^{ft38} It is rendered by some, “through his Son Jesus Christ.” Our version, “even in his Son Jesus Christ,” seems not to be right, as it makes “him that is true,” to be the Son, while the reference is to God, as in the previous clause. The true meaning would be thus conveyed,” And we are in the true *God, being* in his Son Jesus Christ;” for to be in Christ, is to be in God. Three MSS., the Vulgate, and several of the Fathers, read thus, “and we are in his true Son Jesus Christ. — *Ed.*