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Benjamin Oswald Tracy  
for on his affectionate Father  
on his birthday  
at  
May 23-1876

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THE  
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BY

✓  
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EDINBURGH

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## PREFACE TO NEW EDITION.



IN issuing this book anew, I have scarcely anything to add to what I wrote in issuing it before. I have very carefully revised it, more than once or twice; not so much, however, it is fair to say, with a view to its being more learned or critical, as with a view to its bringing out more clearly what I thought I had ascertained to be the Apostle's general line of thought.

I have accordingly—still making my table of contents a sort of index or analysis of the teachings of the Epistle—made some slight alterations upon it. I do not think it possible indeed to reduce this warm outflow of the loving Apostle's heart into regular and exact logical order; and if I indicate successive parts, it is with the full apprehension of the thoughts and feelings brought out in them running into one another. But I fasten on three emphatic words: Light, Righteousness, Love; "God is light," "God is righteous," "God is love;" and with a preliminary statement of the general idea of the Apostolic fellow-

ship, and a fourth or concluding part about its prevalence over the fellowship of the world and the wicked one in whom the world lies, I am inclined to hope that I have indicated somewhat better than I did before "the general lie of the country."

It is fair also to say that, in revising these lectures, I have not lost sight of my teaching as to the Fatherhood of God, on which, as I have explained in the preface to my former edition, the study of this Epistle had a material influence. I hope to follow up this new issue of my exposition of 1 John, with a corresponding re-issue of my Cunningham Lectures.

## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.



Two "Expositions" of this first Epistle of John came into my hands about the end of last year (1865): the one by the Rev. John Stock, late Vicar of Finchingham, Essex; the other by Dr. Morgan of Belfast; both published in the course of that year, and both, especially the latter, of great practical interest and value. If they had appeared at an earlier date, I might have abstained from issuing this volume. But in my Lectures on the Fatherhood of God I had previously referred to these discourses of mine on this epistle, as being completed and ready for publication. And I did not see how I could well draw back, especially as I wished my views on that subject to be looked at in the light of the beloved apostle's argument in his great epistle.\*

\* At the risk of a charge of egotism, I may mention that this course of lectures was begun in October 1860, and continued, with frequent interruptions, till January 1864; that the lectures, as they were delivered, were carefully written out, in a way tolerably fit for the press; and that in preparing them for the press now, I have found little or nothing to alter beyond verbal corrections and improvements. They were all finished before the delivery of the Cunningham Lectures on the Fatherhood of God in February and March 1864. And I referred to them, as thus finished, when the Cunningham Lectures were published, about a year after.

I must frankly add, also, that on a perusal of the two works, I have not found any reason for thinking that mine may not still be a contribution of some value to the theological and exegetical study of this inspired treatise.

I speak of the theological and exegetical study of it. And I do so advisedly. For I am deeply convinced, after years of thought about it, that it can be studied aright exegetically, only when it is studied theologically.

Of course I do not mean that a cut-and-dry creed, accepted beforehand, is to rule, or overrule, the critical and grammatical interpretation of the ascertained text. But I think no one is competent to deal in detail with this wonderful book who is not familiar with the evangelical system as a whole, and able, therefore, to appreciate the bearings of John's line of thought in connection with it. I do not speak of the higher qualification of spiritual-mindedness. I make this remark simply as a theologian and an expositor.

The writer to whom I am most indebted is Dr. John H. A. Ebrard, Professor of Theology in the University of Erlangen. I must acknowledge my obligation also to Dr. Friedrich Lücke, of the Prussian University of Bonn. But it is Dr. Ebrard who has helped me most.\*

I have not met with English commentators or expositors of much value as bringing out the full sense of

\* I know both of these works through the translations published by Messrs. Clark; that of Lücke in 1837, and that of Ebrard in 1860. The last is especially valuable, and for an English reader, acquainted with theology, very easily intelligible.

this epistle.\* There are few separate expositions of it ; and when it is handled in a general commentary on the whole Bible or New Testament, it is apt to be handled somewhat perfunctorily.

An exception to this remark ought perhaps to be made. Among the "Continuators" of "Matthew Poole's Annotations," we find the name of John Howe, to whom the three epistles of John were allotted. His notes, however, are brief, and given verse by verse, without much attempt to trace the connection of the apostle's successive lines of thought. In a spiritual and practical point of view, they are interesting and edifying ; but they do not help much towards the exegetical interpretation of this book.

For myself, and as regards these lectures of mine, I must disclaim all intention of presenting to the learned anything like a critical commentary, properly so called. I do not quote authors, or discuss their different views and opinions. I attempt no minute analysis of texts, nor any elaborate verbal and grammatical construing of them. My object is a wider and broader one. It is to bring out the general scope and tenor of the apostle's teaching, as simply and clearly as I can.

I do not, therefore, discuss any questions about our Lord's titles, proper to him in his pre-existent state ;—

\* An exposition of a part of it, the first two chapters, by Dr. Nathanael Hardy, an eminent Puritan Divine (died 1670), has been recently republished in Nichol's Series of Commentaries (Edinburgh, 1865). So far as it goes, it will be read with interest by those who can appreciate the sound evangelical doctrine and thorough learning of that school of theologians.

such as "the Word of Life," or "the Life" (i. 1, 2);—titles which are better studied in the beginning of John's Gospel, and which have no material influence on his reasoning in this epistle; at least none that does not come out sufficiently in the course of his argument. For the same reason, I abstain from other critical discussions. And for an additional reason also I do so in some cases.

Thus, in regard to the doubtful reading (iii. 16), I rather evade the question; for I hold it to be of no importance whatever. I am willing that the disputed words—"of God"—should be omitted. But then the clause must run:—"Hereby perceive we this love, because he," the Son of God (ver. 8), "laid down his life for us," I might notice other points of criticism, but I forbear.

I have only to say further, that I ask special attention to the table of contents, as indicating the successive lines of thought which I have tried to trace in this epistle. I cannot say that I am quite satisfied with the divisions I have indicated, although I have followed generally some preceding authorities. Still I would like my book to be read in the light of the table of contents, as giving at least a tentative sketch of the general lie of the country.

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## PRELIMINARY CHAPTERS—GENERAL AIM OF THE BOOK.

### I.

#### THE DOCTRINE AND FELLOWSHIP OF THE APOSTLES.

“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.”—I. 3.

“They continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship.”  
—Acts ii. 42.

EVIDENTLY the desire and aim of the writer of this Epistle is to place all to whom it comes in the same advantageous position which he himself and his fellow-apostles enjoyed, as regards the knowledge of God in Christ, and the full enjoyment of the holy and divine fellowship which that knowledge implies. That is his great design throughout ; and this is his announcement of it at the very beginning of his treatise.

Some think that he is here pointing to his Gospel, and that, in fact, this Epistle was meant to accompany that previously-published narrative, either as a sort of supplement and appendix, or as an introductory letter, explaining and enforcing the lessons of his great biography of his Master. It may be so, although I incline, after some vacillation, to my early-formed opinion as to that biography being the loved disciple’s last work. And here, at any rate, I rather understand him as refer-

ring, not to that particular book at all, but to his ordinary manner of teaching, and its ordinary scope ; and as including in the reference all his brethren in the apostleship. When he says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you," I cannot doubt that he means to indicate generally the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts ii. 42)—the common doctrine of all of them alike. "That which we have seen and heard"—all of us alike—"declare we"—all of us alike—in order that we may have you, our disciples and scholars, our hearers and readers, to be sharers with us in our knowledge and in our fellowship. We would have all the privileges of both attainments common between you and us.

In regard, indeed, to knowledge, we cannot make you as well off as we ourselves have been ; not at least so far as knowledge comes through the direct information of the senses, and is verified by their testimony. We have "heard, and seen, and looked, and handled" (ver. 1). We have had a personal acquaintance with Jesus in the flesh, and have come into personal contact in the flesh with whatever of God was manifested in him, by him, through him. We have gazed into his face ; we have hung upon his lips ;—I, John, have leaned on his breast. We cannot make you partakers with us in that way of "knowing Christ after the flesh" (2 Cor. v. 16) ; nor consequently in the sort of fellowship, so satisfying and soothing, "after the flesh," for which it furnished the occasion and the means.

Even if we could, we would not consider that enough for you—enough for the expression of our good will to

you—enough to meet and satisfy the necessity of your case.

For we have ourselves experienced a great change since the sensible means and opportunities of knowledge and fellowship have been withdrawn. That former knowledge of Christ, with the fellowship that accompanied and grew out of it, ranks with us among the "old things that have passed away." We have all learned to say with our brother Paul, "Yea, though I have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know I him no more" (2 Cor. v. 16). It is not of course that we forget, or ever can forget, all the intercourse we have had in the flesh with our loved and loving Master when he was with us on the earth. Never can we cease to cherish in our hearts the holy and blessed memories of these precious historical years. But the Holy Ghost has come "to teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance, whatever Christ then said unto us" (John xiv. 26). That former knowledge does not depart; it is not obliterated or annihilated. But it has become new—altogether new—invested with a new spiritual meaning and power; presenting to the spiritual eye a new aspect of light and love.

It is true that what, under this new spiritual illumination, "we have heard, and seen, and looked at, and handled, of the Word of life," is simply what, "after the flesh," we had "heard, and seen, and looked at, and handled" before. It is nothing else—nothing more. But it is all new; radiant in new light—instinct with new life

and love. With new ears, new eyes, new hands, we have listened, and gazed, and felt. It is a new knowledge that we have got, and consequently also a new fellowship. And it is into that new knowledge and that new fellowship, not into the old, that we would have you to enter as joint participators with us.

I. As to the knowledge, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you ;" that which we have seen and heard of the "Word of life ;" "the Life ;" which "was manifested ;" "that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (vers. 1, 2).

These names and descriptions of the Son undoubtedly refer, in the first instance, to his eternal relation to the Father ; of whose nature he is the image, of whose will he is the expression, of whose life he is the partner and the communicator. But this eternal relation—what he is to the Father from everlasting—must be viewed now in connection with what he is as he dwells among us on the earth. It is "the man Christ Jesus" who is the "manifested life." He is so from first to last, during all the days of his flesh ; from his being "made of a woman, made under the law," to his being "made sin and made a curse" for us, and thereafter, "for his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, highly exalted ;" from the Baptist's introduction of him to John and others of the apostles as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," to the hour when, as John so emphatically testifies, his side was pierced, and "there came out blood and water." Every

intervening incident, every miracle, every discourse, every act of grace, every word of wisdom and of love, is a part of this manifestation. In every one of them "the eternal life which was with the Father is manifested to us." He who liveth with the Father evermore, dwelling in his bosom, is manifesting to us in himself—in his manhood, in his feelings, sayings, doings, sufferings, as a man dwelling among us—what that life is,—not liable to time's accidents and passions, but unchanging, eternal, imperturbable,—which he shares with the Everlasting Father,—and which now he shares also with us, and we with him.

In the midst of all the conditions of our death this life is thus manifested. For he who is the life takes our death. Not otherwise could "that eternal life which was with the Father be manifested unto us." For we are dead. If it were not so, what need would there be of a new manifestation of life to us? Originally the divine life was imparted to man, the divine manner of living—for he was made in the image of God. But now that image being lost or broken and marred by sin, death is our portion—our very nature; death—a manner of being the reverse and opposite of God's; having in it no element of changeless repose, but tumultuous tossings of guilt, fear, wrath, and hatred. Such are we to whom the eternal life which was with the Father is to be manifested. We are thus dead;—sentenced by a righteous doom, as transgressors, to this death;—already and hopelessly involved in its uneasy, restless darkness. How then can life, the life which is

with the Father, be manifested to us, if it be not life that overcomes this dark death,—which is itself the death of it,—which completely disposes of it, and puts it finally and for ever out of the way ?

So he who is “the eternal life which was with the Father” is “manifested to us” as “destroying this death.” He destroys it in the only way in which it can be destroyed righteously, and therefore thoroughly ;—by taking it upon himself, bearing it for us in our stead, dying the very death which we have most justly deserved and incurred. So he gives clear and certain assurance that this death of ours need not stand in the way of our having the life of God manifested to us,—and that too in even a higher sense and to higher ends than it was or could be manifested to man at first.

For now that life of God is manifested personally,—in one who is himself “the life,” being “the Son dwelling in the bosom of the Father.” He who so wondrously and so effectually takes our death from us is himself the life,—“that eternal life which was with the Father and is manifested to us ;”—so manifested that as he takes our death he gives us his life ; he being one with us and we one with him. So, in him who is “the life” we enter into life ;—into that eternal life with the Father wherein there can be no more any element of unquiet guilt or stormy passion, but only trust, and love, and peace evermore.

“The life was thus manifested” while the Word of life, “made flesh, dwelt among us full of grace and truth ; and we beheld his glory”—we, his apostles—

“the glory as of the only begotten of the Father” (John i. 14). What we beheld of his glory, as on the mount of transfiguration, we could not indeed then understand, any more than we could understand what we heard Moses and Elijah talking with him about,—“the decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem;” or what we witnessed of his agony in the garden, in the near prospect of that decease. What our bodily senses then perceived was all dark to our minds, our souls, our hearts; insomuch that when he was taken away we accounted him lost, and ourselves lost with him, and could but cry woefully—“We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel” (Luke xxiv. 21). But new senses of spiritual insight, hearing, touch, have been imparted to us, or opened up in us. And the whole meaning of that exchange of our doomed accursed death for his blessed divine life,—which all the while he was among us he was working out,—has flashed upon us;—placing in a new light, and investing with new grace and glory, all that presence of our Lord and Master with us, which otherwise must have been to us as a tale that is told.

To have declared to you what we saw and heard, as we saw and heard it at the time, would have been of little avail. The most life-like photographic painting, the most word-for-word shorthand reporting, could only have placed you in the position of our brother Philip, to whom, as representing us all, the Lord had occasion so pathetically to put the question, “Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?”

He added, however, then, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." And now we can say that we have seen him. All that we witnessed of the grace and truth of which he was full when, as the Word made flesh, he dwelt among us, we can now say that we have seen. It is all now before us in its true significancy, as the revelation of "the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us."

What that "eternal life" is; how he is that life with the Father—righteous, holy, loving; how he is that life to us, miserably dead in sin; this is what is manifested in him as he was on earth, and in all that he taught, and did, and suffered. And it is as manifesting this that we, his apostles, "declare unto you that which we have seen and heard." Taught by the Spirit, we would have you to know, taught also by the Spirit, what that eternal life is of which the Lord himself testifies in his farewell prayer for his people, when he says: "This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3).

II. So much for the communicated knowledge. The communicated fellowship comes next—"That ye may have fellowship with us." The meaning plainly is, that you may share our fellowship, which truly "is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (ver. 3). The object and the nature of this fellowship—"the apostles' fellowship" (Acts ii. 42)—fall now to be considered.

1. The object of this fellowship is the Father and the Son. I say the object, for there is but one. No



doubt the Father and the Son may be considered separately, as two distinct persons with whom you may have fellowship. And in some views and for some ends it may be quite warrantable, and even necessary, to distinguish the fellowship which you have with the Father from that which you have with his Son Jesus Christ. As Christ is the way, the true and living way, to the Father, so fellowship with him as such must evidently be preparatory to fellowship with the Father. But it is not thus that Christ is here represented. He is not put before the Father as the way to the Father, fellowship with whom is the means leading to fellowship with the Father as the end. He is associated with the Father. Together, in their mutual relation to one another and their mutual mind or heart to one another, they constitute the one object of this fellowship.

The Father and his Son Jesus Christ ; not each apart, but the two — both of them — together ; with whatever the Spirit of the Father and the Son may be commissioned to show, and your spirits may be enabled to take in, of the “counsel of peace” that is “between them” both ; that is what is presented to you as the object of your fellowship.

It is a great idea. Who can grasp it ?

A father and a son among men ; both of them wise, upright, holy, loving ; of one mind and heart ; perfectly understanding one another ; perfectly open to one another ; perfectly confiding in one another ; together bent upon some one great and good undertaking ; engrossed thoroughly in some one grand pursuit, charac-

terised by consummate genius and rare benevolence ;—that might be an impressive, an attractive picture. To be allowed to make acquaintance with them in their own dwelling where they are at home together ; to be admitted into their study where they consult together ; to watch the father's face when the son goes out on any errand or for any work agreed upon between them ; to witness the embrace awaiting him on his return ; to go with the son, as, through ignominy, and suffering, and toil, and blood, and loathsome contact with filth and crime, he makes his way to yonder outcast, and see how it is his father's pity for that outcast that is ever uppermost in his thoughts, how it is his father that he would have to get the praise of every kind word spoken and every sore wound healed ; to sit beside the father and observe with what thrilling interest his whole soul is thrown into what his son is doing ; and when they come to talk it all over together, when their glistening eyes meet, and their bosoms bound to one another, to be there to see ;—that were a privilege worth living for, worth dying for. Such as that, only in an infinitely enhanced measure of grace and glory, is the object presented to you for your fellowship.

For the illustration so fails as to be almost indecorous.

The Eternal Father and the Eternal Son ; what the Father is to the Son and the Son to the Father from everlasting ; the Father's purpose in eternity to glorify the Son as heir of all things ; the Son's consent in eternity to be the Lamb slain ; the covenant of electing

love securing the fulfilment of the Father's decree and the Son's satisfaction in the seeing of his seed ;—then, the amazing concert of that creation-week when the Son, as the Eternal Wisdom, was with the Father, being “daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth, his delights being with the children of men ;”—then, the Son's manifold ministrations as the angel of the covenant on the Father's behalf among these children of men from age to age till his coming in the flesh ;—and then, still further—more signal sight still—what the Father and his Son Jesus Christ are to one another, how they feel toward one another, what is the amazing unity between them, all through the deep humiliation of the manger, the wilderness, the synagogues and sea of Galilee, the streets and temple of Jerusalem, the garden and the cross ;—what, finally, is that sitting of the Son at the Father's right hand which is now, and that coming of the Son in his own glory and the Father's which is to be shortly ;—such is the object of “the apostles' fellowship” and yours. It is fellowship “with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.”

2. The nature of the fellowship can be truly known only by experience. In so far as it can be described, in its conditions, its practical working, and its effects, it is brought out in the whole teaching of this epistle, of which it may be said to be the theme. But a few particulars may here be indicated :—

(1.) That it implies intelligence and insight I need scarcely repeat ; such intelligence and insight as the

Spirit alone can give. No man naturally has it; no man naturally cares to have it. You may tell me, in my natural state, of tangible benefits of some sort coming to me, through some arrangement between the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, of which somehow I get the good. I can understand that, and take some interest in that. The notion of my being let off from suffering the pains of hell, and of indulgence being extended to my faults and failings, in consequence of something that Christ has done and suffered for me,—which he pleads on my behalf, and which God is pleased so far to accept as to listen favourably to his pleading,—is a notion intelligible enough, congenial and welcome enough, to my natural mind. But this is very different from my having fellowship in that matter, even as thus put and thus understood, with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Even while reckoning with reckless confidence on impunity coming to me in virtue of some transaction between the Father and the Son, I may be profoundly and most stupidly indifferent as to what that transaction really is, and what the Father and the Son are to one another in it. In such a state of mind there can be no “fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

(2.) There must be faith: personal, appropriating, and assured faith; in order that the intelligence, the insight, may be quickened by a vivid sense of real personal interest and concern. There must be faith: not a vague and doubtful reliance on the chance, one might say, of some sort of deliverance turning up at

last, through the mediation of the Son with the Father ; but faith identifying me with the Son, and shutting me up into the Son, in that very mediation itself. There can be no fellowship without this faith ; it is the ground and means of the fellowship ; it is, in fact, the fellowship itself in essence ;—in germ, embryo, or seed. For if I grasp Christ, or rather if he grasps me, in a close indissoluble union, I am to the Father, in a manner, what he is ; and the Father is to me what he is to him. What passes between the Father and the Son is now to me as if it passed—nay, as really passing—between the Father and me. It has all a personal bearing upon myself ; I am personally involved in it.

Is it then a kind of selfishness after all ?—selfishness refined and spiritualised, the care of my soul rather than my body, my eternal rather than my temporal well-being,—but still the care of myself ? Nay, it is the death of self. For, first, even in the urgency of its first almost instinctive and inarticulate cry for safety—“ What must I do ? ”—it springs from such a sight and sense of sin and ruin as carries in it an apprehension of the holy and awful name of God and the just claims of God being paramount over all. Then, secondly, in its saving efficacy, it is a going out of self to God in Christ ; an acceptance of God in Christ ; an embracing of God in Christ ;—having in it as little of what is self-regarding and self-seeking as that little child's nestling in its mother's bosom has. And thirdly, as the preparation for the fellowship, or as being itself the fellowship, it is the casting of myself, with ever-increasing cor-

diality of acquiescence and consent, into that glorious plan of everlasting love, in which I am nothing and Christ is all in all ;—of which, when I join the company of all the saved, it will be my joy and theirs to ascribe all the praise “unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.”

(3.) This fellowship is of a transforming, conforming, assimilating character. In it you become actually partakers with the Father and the Son in nature and in counsel. For fellowship is participation ; it is partnership. The Father and the Son take you into partnership with them. Plainly this cannot be, unless you are made “partakers of the divine nature ;” unless your nature is getting to be moulded into conformity with the nature of the Father and the Son. For this end in part, or chiefly, that “eternal life which was with the Father has been manifested to you” in your human nature, that through his dwelling in you by his Spirit,—and so being “revealed in you,”—that human nature may become in you what it was when he made it his. Not otherwise can there be community or identity of interest between him and you ; not otherwise than by there being community or identity of nature.

(4.) It is a fellowship of sympathy. Being of one mind, in this partnership, with the Father and the Son, you are of one heart too. Seeing all things, all persons, and all events, in the light in which the Father and the Son see them, you are affected by them and towards them, as the Father and the Son are. Judging as they judge, you feel as they feel. You do so with reference

to all that you come in contact with ; all that concerns, or may concern, that great business in which you are partners or fellows, fellow-wishers and fellow-workers, with the Father and the Son. What the business is you know. It is that of which the child of twelve years spoke to his mother and Joseph, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" In what spirit, and after what manner, the Father and the Son are "about that business," you also know. You know how, on the Father's behalf, and as having the Father always going along with him, the Son went about it all his life-long on earth. The Father and the Son welcome—nay they solicit—your fellowship, partnership, co-operation, sympathy, in that business. The Spirit is manifesting in you that "eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us," for this very end, that you may enter with us into that business which is the Father's and the Son's ;—with full sympathy and with all your hearts. It is the business of glorifying the Father. It is the business of feeding the hungry, healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, speaking a word in season to the weary. It is the business of going about to do good. It is the business of seeking and saving the lost. It is the business of laying down life for the brethren."

(5.) The fellowship is one of joy. Intelligence, faith, conformity of mind, sympathy of heart, all culminate in joy ; joy in God ; entering into the joy of the Lord. For there is joy in heaven. And if you, receiving what the apostles declare to you of what they have seen and

heard,—receiving that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to them,—have fellowship with them in their fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ,—the end of all their writing to you is fulfilled ;—“ that your joy may be full ” (ver. 4). Fulness of joy it well may be, if you share the joy of the Father and the Son : truly a joy that is “ unspeakable and full of glory.” Into that joy, as the joy of ineffable complacency between the Father and the Son from everlasting to everlasting,—in the counsels of a past eternity, in the present triumphs of grace, in the consummated glory of the eternity that is to come,—you are called to enter ;—you are to have fellowship in it with the Father and the Son.

Is the thought too vast—indistinct—infinite? Nay then, in that “ eternal life which was with the Father being manifested to you,”—in the Son coming forth from the Father,—you have the joy in which you are to have fellowship with him and with the Father brought home to you with more of definiteness.

When the earth was prepared for man, and for the acting out of all heaven’s purpose of grace to man, “ I was,” says the Son, “ with the Father,”—“ daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” When he came in the flesh to execute that purpose, once at least in his humiliation, it is testified of him that he “ rejoiced in spirit ;”—it was when he said, “ I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight ” (Luke x. 21). Into that joy of holy acquiescence



in the wise and holy sovereignty of the Father you can enter. And you can hear him and obey him, when, bringing home one and another of the poor wandering sheep he came to seek, he makes his appeal to you as knowing his mind and entering into his heart ;—" Rejoice with me for I have found that which was lost." Rejoice with me. Yes! Rejoice with me, as my Father calls me to rejoice with him! "It is meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this our brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found."

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## II.

## THE JOY OF THE LORD, AND ITS FULNESS.

“These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”—1 JOHN i. 4.

THE apostle could not write these words without having full in his memory, and in his heart, the Lord’s own thrice-repeated intimation of a similar sentiment in his farewell discourses and farewell prayer ;—“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John xv. 11) ;—“Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (xvi. 24) ;—“These things I speak in the world, that they”—“those whom thou has given me”—“might have my joy fulfilled in themselves” (xvii. 13).

It is surely very wonderful that the occasion on which Jesus manifests so intense an anxiety about his disciples having enough of joy—and of his own joy—should be the eve of his last agony. Is it really with him a time of joy? Are the bloody sweat and the cry as of one forsaken by his God the signs of joy? Is that the joy—his joy—which he prays they may have fulfilled in themselves? At all events, his joy, whatever it may be, must be of such a nature that it can be compatible with experience as dark as that. For his joy must be, like himself, “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” It cannot be fluctuating and intermittent.

It cannot be merely one of many emotions, alternating or taking its turn with others, fitfully swaying the mind at intervals, according to the shifting breezes of the outer atmosphere. His joy must partake of his own unchangeableness, as the eternal Son of the Father. It is true that in his human nature and in his earthly history he is subjected to the impulses and influences of this chequered human and earthly scene. He meets with what may move, at one time to tears, at another time to gladness. Nor is he unsusceptible of such impressions. But beneath all these his real joy must be deeper far; a fathomless, infinite ocean, whose calm repose the wildest agitations of the upper sea cannot reach or ruffle. "My joy," he says to the Father, my joy in and with thee, I would have to be theirs, through their fellowship with thee and me. Such, in substance, is the Lord's own desire, as expressed to his disciples and to his Father. And such is his beloved apostle's aim in his teaching—"that your joy may be full."

The nature of this joy, as primarily Christ's; the reality and fulness of it, as Christ's joy becoming ours;—these are the topics suggested by this text.

I. Joy, as it is commonly understood and exemplified among men, is a tumultuous feeling; a quick and lively passion or emotion, blazing up for the most part upon some sudden prosperous surprise, and apt to subside into cold indifference, if not something worse, when fortune threatens change or custom breeds familiarity. "As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of fools" (Eccles. vii. 6). It is indeed vanity; an outburst

or outbreak of exuberant hilarity, subsiding soon into weariness and vacancy ; the dull cold ashes of a brilliant but passing flame. All the joy of earth partakes, more or less, of that character ; for it is dependent upon outward circumstances, and has no deep root in the soul itself. Even what must in a sense be called spiritual joy may be of that sort. There may be joyous excitement when the glad jubilee-trumpet fills the air with its ringing echoes, and an enthusiastic multitude are hastening to keep holiday. There may be a real elevation of spirit when some affecting scene of spiritual awakening is witnessed, or some gracious ordinance is celebrated, or some stirring voice is heard. Such joy is like "the goodness which, as a morning cloud and as the early dew, goeth away." There may be the joy also of complacency in one's own success in a good and holy work ; such joy as the Baptist's disciples feared that their tidings would mar in their master's breast, when they came to tell him, "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come unto him" (John iii. 26). His answer is very memorable, and very much to the purpose of our present inquiry :—"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom ; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice ; this my joy therefore is fulfilled" (ver. 29).

It is Christ's joy that is fulfilled in him who is so truly and heartily the "bridegroom's friend ;" Christ's twofold joy ; *first*, his joy as the bridegroom possessing

the bride ; “as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee” (Isa. lxii. 9) ;—and, *secondly*, his joy as the Son possessing the Father ; as the Baptist goes on to testify so affectionately ; “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand” (ver. 35).

Now, upon the subject of this “joy of the Lord,” this joy of Christ, this double joy of Christ ; his joy as the bridegroom having the bride ; his joy as the Father’s beloved Son and trusted servant, into whose hand he giveth all things ;—I would beware of “exercising myself in things too high for me.” I would not venture so much as to imagine the ineffable joy of the Son dwelling from everlasting in the bosom of the Father, and with the Father and the Holy Spirit ordering the eternal counsels of the Godhead ;—the whole vast ideal of creative and providential goodness, all holy and all wise :—and especially the covenanted plan of electing love, for “gathering into one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth” (Ephes. i. 10). Neither dare I do more than touch on what, as the eternal wisdom, he himself says about the Father “possessing him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old ;”—“Then I was by him, as one brought up with him : and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him ; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth ; and my delights were with the sons of men” (Prov. viii. 22-31).

I come at once to his earthly course—his human experience.

And, first, I see him in the temple, when he was twelve years old. I hear his answer to his mother and Joseph, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" How intense his consciousness even already, at an age so tender, of the trust committed to him; his Father's business, the business on which his Father's heart is set, for glorifying that name of his which is light and love, and saving a people to bask in that light and love evermore! "I must be about it." There is deep joy in such a consciousness as that (Luke ii. 49).

Then, secondly, I see him as the disciples left him, faint and wayworn at Jacob's well. On their return they find him fresh and bright. Is it an outward cordial, or is it inward joy, of which he speaks as having revived him? "I have meat to eat that ye know not of: my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John iv. 32-34).

And, thirdly, I find it once, and once only, said in express terms that "Jesus rejoiced in spirit" (Luke x. 21). The statement is a very strong one; it implies inward leaping for joy. And the occasion is remarkable. It is connected with the mission of the seventy. In sending them forth, the Lord has been much exercised with thoughts of the failure, to a large extent, of their ministry and of his own, and the aggravated guilt thus entailed on the highly-favoured objects of that ministry. In receiving them back, he sympathises so far with their delight at finding even "the devils subject to them;" but he adds, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice because

your names are written in heaven." "In that hour," and in the view of the names of these his little ones being written in heaven, "Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight" (ver. 21). There is here the joy of full, filial acquiescence, for himself, in the gracious and holy will of his Father. And there is added to that the crowning joy of so making known the Father to these babes that they too may acquiesce as he does; "All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him" (ver. 22).

Thus "the joy of the Lord is his strength;" prevailing over the diffidence of extreme youth, the exhaustion of nature, and "the contradiction of sinners against himself." Nothing—either in his being a mere child, as when Jeremiah complained, "Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child" (Jerem. i. 6); or in his being overcome by distress, hunger, and fatigue, as when Elijah sat down in the wilderness and requested for himself that he might die (1 Kings xix. 4);—or in his being forced to utter triple woes against the cities of his own habitation, as when Isaiah, sent on an errand of judgment to his people, was fain to cry, "Lord, how long?" (Isa. vi. 11);—nothing, I say, in any such trials of his flesh and heart, causes either flesh or heart to faint. At least, when flesh and heart faint, his spirit is

refreshed with joy. To be about his Father's business ; to be doing the will of him that sent him, and finishing his work ; to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight ;"—such joy is his always. Throughout the whole of his painful toil and solitary suffering there may be traced an undercurrent of real joy, without which, I am persuaded, that countenance "so marred with grief" could not have worn, as it did, the aspect of one "fairer than the children of men, into whose lips grace was poured."

Nay, even of his last agony is it not said that "for the joy set before him he endured the cross?" (Heb. xii. 2). There was joy set before him, lying full in his view, in his very endurance of the cross. But what! one says—joy in that dark hour! Over the most excruciating torture of body the brave soul may rise triumphant. But when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death ; when his Father was hiding his face from him ; when the wrath of a holy God and the curse of a broken law were upon him ; when literally the pains of hell gat hold of him ; how could there be joy then ? Nay, I cannot tell how. But I bid you ask yourselves if, when he cried, "Father, glorify thy name ;" if, when he said, "The cup which my Father giveth me shall I not drink it ?" if, when in his bloody sweat these words came forth, "Father, thy will be done,"—there was no joy in his spirit. More than that, I ask if you can conceive of him, in his utmost extremity of peril, endurance, and expiatory woe, ever for a moment losing the consciousness that he was doing his Father's will and finishing



his Father's work? Could that consciousness be ever interrupted? Could it ever cease to be a source of inward joy? There is joy lying before him, beside him, as he hangs on the accursed tree; not the joy of hopeful anticipation merely, in the near prospect of victory, but the stern joy of battle in the midst of the hot and heady fight, as—true to the trust committed to him by his Father and loving to the last his own whom he came to save—he bares his bosom to the sword awaking in its righteousness to smite the willing victim. That joy no man, no devil, taketh from him; the joy with which he meets the Father's just demand of a great propitiation:—"Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O God;"—the joy with which he sees already of the travail of his soul when he says to the dying penitent, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Not in heaven only, among the angels of God, but on earth also, in one holy bosom at least, there is in that hour joy "over one sinner that repenteth."

II. This joy, "his joy," is to become ours; it is to "remain in us." "Our joy is to be full" by "his joy being fulfilled in us." Let us notice first the reality, and then the fulness, of this fellowship or partnership of joy between Christ and us.

(I.) Christ would have his joy to be really ours. The bridegroom's friend, standing and hearing him, is to rejoice greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. But that is not all. Something more than the Baptist's official joy, as the bridegroom's friend, waiting upon him as his minister, is to be ours. For the Lord says that

“to be least in the kingdom of heaven is to be greater than John the Baptist.” In all that constitutes the essence of his own joy the Lord associates us in intimate union with himself.

Thus, first, in his standing with the Father, and before the Father, he calls us to share. The position which he occupies in the Father's house and in the Father's heart is ours as well as his. It is that which opens the way to his joy being ours. And what opens the way to that? His making our standing and our position his. There is an exchange of places between him and us. Our state of guilt as criminals and prodigals, with all its misery, he takes to be his, that his state of acceptance as the Father's righteous servant, and exaltation as the Father's acknowledged Son, with all its joy, may be ours. Hence our sharing his joy begins with our sharing his cross. It begins with our mourning for our sin as piercing him. The very mourning itself has in it an element of joy; a certain feeling of calm and chastened satisfaction that the strife with God is ended, through our being moved by his Spirit to give in to him. And soon clearer, fuller joy comes. Looking still on that pierced one, pierced for us as well as by us, we see how thoroughly, by putting himself in our place, he has so met and discharged all our liabilities, that we, “being redeemed from the curse of the law,” may, by his putting us in his own place, “receive the adoption of sons.”

Then, secondly, he makes us partakers of the very same inward evidence of acceptance and sonship which

he himself had when he was on earth. The Baptist testified, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." How much the presence of the Holy Ghost, ever consciously realised, contributed to keep alive in the holy human soul of Jesus, amid all his toil and pain, a joyful sense of his being still the Father's chosen servant and beloved Son—who can tell?

Thirdly, we have the same commission with Christ; the same trust reposed in us; the same work assigned to us. Accepted and adopted in him; sealed as he was sealed by the Spirit; we are sent as he was sent into the world. This capital ingredient, this great element of his joy is ours. It was a deep, secret wellspring of joy in his heart; the feeling, never for a moment lost or interrupted, of his being the Father's fellow, the Father's agent, in carrying out that wondrous plan that had been concerted between them, in the council-chamber of the Godhead, from everlasting. There could be nothing, in all his experience, so mean but that this thought must ennoble it; nothing so dark but that this thought must enlighten it; nothing so toilsome or so tearful but that this thought must gladden it. And now, he takes us into his counsels, as the Father has him in his. "All that he has heard of the Father he makes known to us." He does not keep us, as mere servants, in the dark, about what he is doing; prescribing to us our tasks, without information or explanation, to be blindly executed by us in ignorance of what it may all mean. We are "his friends;" the men of his secret; with us he has no reserve; from us he keeps back nothing (John

xv. 14, 15). He admits us to his fullest confidence. Some matters, indeed, pertaining to "the times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own power," it may not be for us to know. They are such as he himself, in the days of his manhood, did not care to know. But as to all that is essential, we have the same intelligence that he had, and the same insight. He sends us, as the Father sent him.

Have you, let me ask,—have you duly considered what community of mind and heart between Christ and you all this implies? And what community of joy?

Ah! when you wearily pace the beaten round of certain devout observances; or when you painfully deny yourselves this or that gratification on which your inclinations remain as much set as ever; or when, with half-opened hand, you dole out your measured mite, as you call it, in a good cause, or a cause you cannot venture to put away as bad; or when you labour hard at your cheerless daily toil, or drag your lazy limbs along in some self-prescribed walk of beneficence,—as if you were doing the dullest piece-work for the scantiest wages;—and when you count such sort of service religion, as if that were the new obedience to which you are called;—can you wonder that you have no joy in the Lord? May not God say to you, as he said once to another, who, however grudgingly, must yet do his pleasure,—“Have you considered my servant Jesus?” Get something of his acquaintance with me, and with my plans and my ways. Get something of his spirit as he rejoiced to feel always the greatness of the trust com-

mitted to him. Get it from himself. Get it in himself. "Take his yoke upon you, and learn of him."

For, fourthly, here is the chiefest element of his joy. He is "meek and lowly in heart;" and therefore "his yoke is easy, and his burden is light;" so easy, so light, that he may count it joy to bear them. It is not an easy yoke in itself that is his; nor a light burden. But his meekness and lowliness in heart makes the yoke easy, and the burden light. The yoke that was laid on his neck when he took the form of a servant was hard indeed; the yoke of subjection to the law, as broken by us and demanding satisfaction from him. The burden that was lying on his shoulders all the time he was doing the work of a servant was heavy indeed; the burden of bringing in an everlasting righteousness, with full expiation of guilt on behalf of us, miserable sinners. But as the seven years of service seemed to Jacob but one day for the love he bore to Rachel, so the meek and lowly heart of Jesus makes the hard yoke easy and the heavy burden light. In his case, as in Jacob's, the charm is love; love, rejoicing in his Father, whose will he is doing; love, rejoicing over us, whom he is purchasing to be his spouse. For, in a word, it is his self-renunciation, so absolute and entire; his self-forgetting, self-sacrificing affection; his so completely losing himself, merging himself, in the Father whom he serves and the people whom he saves; this is that meekness and lowliness of heart which, making his yoke easy to him and his burden light, moves him, "rejoicing in spirit," to cry, "I thank thee, O Father." We must share that

meekness of his ; that lowliness of heart. We, like him, must be emptied of self.

For no true joy is or can be selfish. I may hug myself, and applaud myself, and pamper myself, and think to laugh all thought of others, and all care about their thoughts of me, away. I do but kick against the pricks. The task of vindicating my self-sufficiency and asserting my self-will, to my own contentment, against all and sundry, I soon find to be no child's play ; but a hard yoke indeed, and a heavy burden. Let me get out of my own narrow self into Christ, and the large heart of Christ. Let me, like him, be meek and lowly in heart ; accepting the conditions of my earthly lot ; discharging the duty of my earthly calling ; meeting the trials of my earthly pilgrimage ; not as if I were entitled selfishly to take credit for what I do, or take amiss anything I have to suffer ; but simply in loving obedience to my heavenly Father, and loving sympathy with him in his truth and holiness and wide and pure benevolence. That was Christ's way ; that was Christ's joy. Then may I have freedom, enlargement, joy, as Christ had, in walking with my Father in heaven always ; going about in my Father's name doing good ; drinking whatever cup my Father giveth me ; and on whatever cross he may see fit to nail me, saying still, as I give up the ghost, " Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

(II.) The reality of this joy,—Christ's own joy remaining in us,—may now be partly apparent. But who shall venture to describe its fulness ? " That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full ;" so he

speaks to his apostles. "That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves ;" so he speaks to the Father concerning them. "That your joy may be full ;" such is the beloved apostle's longing on behalf of his disciples, as it was his master's on behalf of his chosen ones.

Surely, one would say, it is to the future state, the life to come, the world beyond the grave, that these expressions point. And that is doubtless true. In its utmost and ultimate perfection, this full joy belongs to heaven. So it is with Christ's own personal joy. In heaven he fully rejoices with the Father and the eternal Spirit over his fulfilled work of glorious righteousness and grace, and the fulfilled fruits of it, in the fulfilled salvation of all the multitude of his redeemed.

Was it something of that joy that Paul caught a glimpse of in that strange ecstasy of his, when he was caught up into the third heaven,—into paradise,—and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter? (2 Cor. xii. 1-4.) Was it Moses and Elias that he overheard, as on a higher mount of transfiguration, talking with Jesus about the decease now accomplished at Jerusalem? Or was it Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; the everlasting Father, communing with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, now in his bosom evermore, and the blessed Spirit plying evermore his ministry between God and men? But "something sealed the lips" of Paul. Let me, therefore, be silent, and wait. Let me rather see if there is not some sense,—some humbler and more practicable point of view,—in which I have to do with that fulness of joy.

In the 45th Psalm, the Messiah, rejoicing over his church as a bridegroom over his bride, is thus saluted : "Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness ; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad." This gladness of the anointing oil and the sweet-smelling spices is all associated with his loving righteousness and hating wickedness. The secret of his full joy lies in his being, as his Father is, the holy one and the just.

Hence there can be no discrepancy of thought, or taste, or feeling, between him and the Father who has sent him. All things about his mission appear to him as they appear to the Father ; they are to him what they are to the Father. No painful effort is ever needed to bring his judgment into subjection to the Father's ; or his will into harmony with the Father's. No lurking tendency of his own nature toward evil ; no insidious suggestion of the tempter ; no impatience of subordination ; no secret longing to taste the liberty of self-will ;—can ever interfere with his walking in the light as God is in the light. And that is the perfection of blessedness. To one who is at once a servant and a son that is "fulness of joy."

Is it attainable by us here ? Yes, in measure, and in growing measure. Let our nature be assimilated to that of God ; our mind to his ; our heart to his. Let our souls learn the lesson of seeing as he sees and feeling as he feels. Let sin be to us what it is to him ; and



righteousness and truth as well. Let there be a clear understanding between him and us upon all questions ; a thorough identity of interest and inclination in all points ; an entire agreement of opinion and choice in the great strife of good and evil going on in the world. That was Christ's own joy. And it was fulness of joy, even when his personal share in that strife cost him the tears of Gethsemane and the bitter cry of Calvary. Let it be ours, more and more, through our growth in grace and in holiness. All misery lies in our judgment not being in subjection to God's ; our will not being in harmony with his. Misery ends, and fulness of joy comes, when we think and feel and wish as God does. Therefore fulness of joy may be ours ; ours more and more ; when " beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,"—this glory of his being the Father's willing servant and loyal Son,—“we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

And now, perhaps, we may see more clearly than we have been accustomed to see the propriety of this “joy of the Lord,”—this “joy in the Lord,”—being represented as not merely a privilege, but a duty. “Rejoice in the Lord ; and again I say unto you rejoice.” For this joy is not anything like that sort of mysterious incomprehensible rapture into which the spirits may be occasionally thrown under some sudden and irresistible impulse from without or from within. It is not mere excitement. It is not what many call enthusiasm, proper to high

festivals. It is a calm and sober frame of mind, suited for everyday wear and everyday work. Neither is its nature recondite, abstruse, and mystical; nor does it come and go in flashes, like the winged fire of heaven. It can be explained and accounted for; analysed and described. Its elements and causes can be specified. Its rise and progress can be traced. It is not, therefore, an attainment with which we can dispense; it is "our strength." Nor is it a grace for which we may idly wait until it drop upon us unawares from above. We have it in us, the germ of it, the essence of it, if we have Christ in us; if we have the Spirit of Christ. "And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Stir up, then, the gift that is in you. Do you ask how? Observe the different connections in which your sharing the Lord's joy stands in the farewell discourses and the farewell prayer;—as first, with your keeping his commandments and abiding in his love, as he kept the Father's commandments, and abode in the Father's love (John xv. 10, 11); secondly, with your asking in his name as you have never asked before (xvi. 24); and, thirdly, with your being kept in the Father's name, in ever-brightening disclosures of the Father's glorious perfections (xvii. 11, 13). And observe, in the fourth place, the beloved apostle's warm appreciation of this joy as realised in the communion of saints: "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full" (2 John 12).

Surely this joy of the Lord, as it is thus intimately associated ;— first with obedience, — secondly with prayer, — thirdly with the study of the divine character, — and fourthly with the cultivation of Christian communion ; — is no rare rapture, to be snatched at intervals of excited devotion. It is, on the contrary, a calm and chastened frame of mind ; — such as may be realised in every common duty, in every humble supplication, in every devout exercise of soul upon the divine word, in every greeting exchanged lovingly with any of the Lord's people.

Well therefore may the apostolic precept run thus — “ Rejoice evermore.” For this joy is independent of events and circumstances. The labours you are engaged in may be the hardest drudgery ; the people to whom you are seeking to be useful may be the most perverse of all men. Your temper, patience, love, faith, hope, may be tried to the very utmost ; all may seem dark ; friends may change, and enemies may be round about you. But Christ is the same, and his joy is the same ; the joy of doing and suffering his Father's will. “ Rejoice ye if ye are counted worthy to suffer for his sake.” “ Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations ; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience,” and that if “ patience has her perfect work ” ye shall be “ perfect and entire, lacking nothing.” Let nothing mar or damp your joy. What can mar or damp it if it is Christ's joy remaining in you ; Christ's joy fulfilled in you ; Christ's joy and yours together in his Father and your Father — his God and your God ?

“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Habak. iii. 17, 18).

That was the prophet's joy, because he apprehended it as Christ's joy, seeing his day afar off, and being glad as he saw it. Let it be your joy also, your joy in him, “whom having not seen you love, and in whom, though now you see him not, you rejoice;” with his own joy fulfilled in you; and therefore “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

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## PART FIRST.

### THE FIRST CONDITION OF THE DIVINE FELLOWSHIP—LIGHT (i. 5 ; ii. 17).

#### III.

#### THE GROUND OR REASON OF THIS FIRST CONDI- TION ; LIGHT BEING AT ONCE THE NATURE AND THE DWELLING-PLACE OF GOD.

“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. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. 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.”—1 JOHN i. 5-7.

HAVING explained the general aim of his book,—to make his readers, as disciples, partakers of the same fellowship which he and his fellow-apostles had with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and of the fulness of joy in the Lord which that implies,—the writer proceeds to open up the nature and character of this fellowship of joy. He begins by laying down the first and primary condition of it, the fundamentally necessary qualification for its possession,—that without which it cannot be. It is light ; the fellowship must be a fellowship in light. He enlarges on that requirement, and

sets it out in various points of view. First, he shows how it rests, not on any merely arbitrary or sovereign divine appointment, but on a holy necessity of the divine nature, admitting of no compromise or evasion (i. 5-7). Thereafter, with a tenderness and faithfulness all his own, he brings the man of simple, guileless spirit into the light, through the door of honest confession and righteous forgiveness (i. 8-11). And then, leading him on in the line of intelligent and loving obedience, under the unction and illumination of the Holy Ghost, making him one with the Holy Anointed One, and in him one with all the holy brethren (ii. 3-14) ;—as well as also in the line of a clear and sharp discrimination between the passing darkness and its passing world on the one hand, and the abiding of the light and of its godliness on the other (ii. 15-17) ;—he lands the man of guileless spirit in that indwelling in the Son and in the Father which ensures first, steadfastness amid all antichristian defections and apostasies ; secondly, the receiving of the promise of eternal life, and thirdly, full confidence in the expectation of the Lord's coming (ii. 18-28).

Such I take to be the topic of this first part of the Epistle ; and such the successive aspects in which it is presented.

In the verses now before us (i. 5-7), John gives the ground or reason of his primary and fundamental condition,—that the fellowship must be a fellowship in light ; and shows how it rests, not on any merely arbitrary or sovereign ordinance of God, but on his very nature and

essential perfection. Accordingly, in that view, we have first a solemn message, next a faithful warning, and lastly a gracious assurance. These are the three steps in this high argument ; a solemn message in the fifth verse ; a faithful warning in the sixth ; and a gracious assurance in the seventh.

I. The form of the announcement in the fifth verse is very peculiar ; “ This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you.” It is not a discovery which we make concerning God,—an inference or deduction which we draw for ourselves from observation of his works and ways, and which we publish in that character, and with that weight of influence, to our fellow-men. It is an authentic and authoritative communication to us, from himself. And it is to be accepted as such. It is a message, which John and his fellow-apostles have heard of him, expressly in order that they may declare it, as a message, to us. It is substantially Jehovah himself telling us, through the apostles, about himself, what in his own person he told the church of old about himself when he said, “ I am holy.” For the light is holiness ; “ I am holy ;” “ God is light.”

The message is twofold. First, positively, “ God is light ;” next, negatively, “ In him is no darkness at all.”

1. Positively, “ God is light.” This is a metaphor,—a figure of speech. And in that view, it might suggest a world of varied analogies between the nature of God and the nature of the material element of light. Light is diffusive, penetrating, searching ; spreading itself over all space, and entering into every hole and corner. It

is quickening and enlivening ; a minister of healthy vigour and growth to all living creatures, plants and animals alike, including man himself. It is pleasant also ; a source of relief and gladness to those who bask in its bright and joyous rays.

But there are two of its properties that may be singled out as specially relevant to this great comparison.

In the first place, light is clear, transparent, translucent ; patent and open, always and everywhere, as far as its free influence extends. The entrance of light, which itself is real, spreads reality all around. Clouds and shadows are unreal ; they breed and foster unrealities. Light is the naked truth. Its very invisibility is, in this view, its power. It is not seen because it is so pure.

For, secondly, a certain character of inviolability belongs to it, in respect of which, while it comes in contact with all things, it is itself affected by nothing. It kisses carrion ; it embraces foul pollution ; it enters into the innermost recesses of the rottenness in which worms uncleanly revel. It is the same clear element of light still ; taking no soil ; contracting no stain ;—its brightness not dimmed, nor its viewless beauty marred. It endureth for ever, clean and clear.

Now, when it is said, "God is light ;" when he says it of himself ; when he makes it his own personal and special message to us, which his apostles and ministers are to be always receiving of him and declaring to us ;—the one heavenly telegram, or express telegraphic despatch, which they are to be reading to us and we are



to be reading to our neighbours, that we may have fellowship, all of us together, with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ ;—let not our imaginations wander in a wilderness of fanciful resemblances. Let these two thoughts be fixed in our minds ; first, the thought of perfect openness ; and secondly, the thought of perfect inviolability. Let these be our thoughts of God, and of his essential character, as being, and declaring himself to be, “light.” Thus “God is light.”

2. Negatively “In him is no darkness at all.” I connect this part of the statement with that saying of John in his gospel ; “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not” (i. 5). In the light itself, in him who is the light,—even when shining in darkness, the darkness that comprehendeth it not,—there is still no darkness at all.

It must be to some very intimate actual contact of the light—of him who is the light—with darkness ; some close encounter and conflict between them, that this second clause of the message refers. Otherwise it is but a repetition of the first ; serving only to weaken its force.

“The light shineth in darkness.” He who is the light comes, in the person of his Son, to seek and to save us, who are in darkness ; who, as to our character, and state, and prospects, are darkness itself. For there is not now in us and around us the element of clearness, brightness, openness, in which we were created at first. Sin has entered ; and with sin, shame. There can be pure and simple nakedness no longer. The clear, open

sunshine of the presence and countenance of him who is light is no longer tolerable. The covering of fig-leaves, and the hiding-place of the trees of the garden, are preferred. Light henceforth is offensive. The unquiet and unclean soul is like that old chaos, "without form and void;" and "darkness is upon the face of the deep." With that darkness, the darkness of death, he who is light, the light of life, is brought into fellowship.

And the fellowship is no mere form or name; it is real, actual, personal. The darkness is laid hold of by the light. He who is light enters into the darkness; sounding its utmost depths; searching its inmost recesses. Where guilty fear crouches; where foul corruption festers; he penetrates. He even makes the darkness his own. He takes it upon himself. Its power, "the power of this darkness," is upon him; its power to wrap the sin-laden spirit in a horror of thickest night,—in the gloom of hell. Yes! For our sakes, in our stead, in our nature, he who is light is identified with our darkness.

And yet "in him is no darkness at all." In the very heat and crisis of this death-struggle, there is no surrender of the light to the darkness; no concession, no compromise; no making of terms; no allowance of some partial shading of the light on which the darkness presses so terribly. No! "He is light, and in him is no darkness at all." All still is clear, open, transparent, between the Son and the Father. Even when the Father hides his face, and "his sword awakes against the man that is his fellow," and the Son cries as one for-

saken ; even in that dark hour there is no evasion of heaven's light ; no trafficking with the darkness of earth or hell. There is no hiding then ; no shrinking ; no feeling as if truth might become a little less true, and holiness a little less holy, to meet the appalling emergency. The worst is unflinchingly faced. In the interest of light triumphing over darkness, not by any plausible terms of accommodation, but before the open face of eternal righteousness, pure and untainted, the Father gives the cup and the Son drains it to the dregs. In that great transaction, thus consummated, before all intelligences, between the Father and the Son, it is clearly seen and conclusively proved that "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all."

II. Such being the message in the fifth verse, the warning in the sixth verse becomes simply a self-evident inference : "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." For if it is really into the fellowship of him who testifies of himself that he is light that we enter ; and if it is in and through that wondrous way of dealing with our darkness ; the incompatibility between our claiming fellowship with him and our walking in darkness is so gross that it may well warrant the strong language, "we lie, and do not the truth." The thing indeed is in itself impossible. We cannot, if we walk in darkness, have fellowship with him ; "for what fellowship hath light with darkness ? or what communion hath Christ with Belial ?" The profession of such a thing is a lie. And it is a practical lie. He who makes

it is not speaking, but acting, an untruth. His life is a practical falsehood. The apostle's words are very plain and energetic ; but they are not more so than the case requires : " we lie, and do not the truth."

For what is this walking in darkness? What does it imply?

One answer, in the first instance, must be given, plain and simple enough. All unholy walking is walking in darkness. So far there can be no mistake. The works of darkness are the works of the flesh (Ephes. v. 3-11 ; Gal. v. 19-21). But the matter must be pressed a little more closely home.

The characteristics of light, as has been seen, are, on the one hand, clearness, openness, transparency ; and on the other hand, inviolability ; its taking no impression from anything it comes in contact with ; but retaining and preserving its own pure nature, unmodified, unmingled, unsoiled, unsullied by external influences ; everywhere and evermore the same. Now darkness is the opposite of this light, and is characterised by opposite features. Instead of openness, there is concealment and disguise ; instead of inviolability, there is facile impressibility. Any object, every object, flings its shadow across the benighted path ; shapes of all sorts haunt the gloom.

Now, without making too much of the figure, let the one thought of darkness being that which hides, dwell in our minds ; and by the test of that thought let us try ourselves. Are we living, practically, in a moral and spiritual atmosphere, such as may cause distorted

or disturbed vision, and so admit of things appearing different from what they really are? Is the room we sit in so shaded that what we care not to look for may escape our observation, and the somewhat coarse or crazy furniture may be skilfully arranged; its blemishes varnished over; its doubtful beauties magnified and made the most of?

Ah! this walking in darkness!—Is it not after all just walking deceitfully? Is it not simple insincerity,—the want of perfect openness and transparent honesty in our dealings with God and with ourselves as to the real state of our hearts towards God, and the bent and bias of our affections away from God towards selfishness and worldliness! Is it not that we have in us and about us something to conceal or to disguise; something that does not quite satisfy us; something about which we have at least occasional misgivings; something that, when we think seriously, and confess, and pray, we slur over and do not like to dwell upon; something that we try to represent to ourselves as not so bad as it seems—as indeed, in the circumstances, excusable and unavoidable?

Alas, for this “deceitfulness of the heart!” It is indeed its “desperate wickedness.”

It is not that I seek to shroud myself in a thick cloak, under cloud of night, that, unseen by my fellows, I may wield the assassin’s knife,—or hatch with an accomplice some plot against the just,—or with some frail companion do the deed of shame. It is not that I lock myself up alone in my secret and solitary chamber, to gloat over the cruel gains of griping avarice, or nurse

in imagination some unhallowed passion. That, doubtless, is walking in darkness. But it is not perhaps the most insidious, or seductive, or subtle sort of such walking. It is when I would have the darkness, more or less thick, to hide me, or some part of me, from myself, and, if it were possible, from my God, that my walking in darkness becomes most perilous; when the secret consciousness that all is not right in me with reference to my Father in heaven—or that my brother on earth may have cause of complaint against me—moves me to get something interposed between me and the pure clear light of a quickened conscience, and the purer, clearer light of omniscient holiness. It matters not what that something may be. It may be the screen of some better quality on which I flatter myself I am unassailable. Or it may be some good deeds and devout observances which I am almost unawares setting up for a shelter. Or it may be some well-adjusted scheme of self-excuse and self-justification. It is something that casts a shadow. And walking in the darkness of that shadow, however I may say, and even think, that I have fellowship with God, I “lie and do not the truth.” I do not act truly; there is guile in my spirit.

It is not merely that my walking thus in darkness is so irreconcilable with my having fellowship with him who “is light and in whom is no darkness at all,” that to claim such fellowship is to lie. That is implied in this statement; but it is not all that is implied in it. The walking in darkness is itself the lie; the acted, not spoken, untruth. It is aggravated, no doubt, by my

saying that I have fellowship with him. But my saying so is a mere aggravation ; it is not that which constitutes or makes the lie ; if it were, the lie charged would be a spoken, and not an acted untruth. It would consist in my false profession. The charge would be a charge of conscious hypocrisy ; saying that I have fellowship with him while my deliberate walking in darkness proves even to myself the contrary. That charge is not here ; at least not necessarily. It is the hypocrisy of practice rather than of profession that is denounced.

I say that I have fellowship with him, not meaning to profess an untruth. But I walk in darkness ; and in so walking I necessarily lie. Apart from anything I may say, my walking in darkness is in itself practical lying. "I do not the truth." I am not acting truly. I am not willing to have all that I do, and all that I am, brought fairly out and placed fully in the broad clear light of truth. I would wish it to be excused, or explained, or somehow obscured or coloured ; huddled up or hurried over. I am not for having it exposed in the glaring sunshine. There is something in or about it that to some extent needs and courts the shade. "I lie and do not the truth." And therefore I cannot have fellowship with him who is True, him who is Holy, him who is Light. For it is only "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, that we can have fellowship one with another ;" "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleansing us from all sin."

III. From the solemn message in the fifth verse, and the faithful warning in the sixth, the gracious assurance in the seventh fitly follows ; "We have fellowship one

with another ;” God with us and we with God. For it is not our mutual fellowship as believers among ourselves that is meant ; the introduction of that idea is irrelevant, and breaks the sense. It is our joint-fellowship with God, and his with us, that alone is to the purpose here.

The expression indeed is peculiar ; it may seem to savour of familiarity ; putting the two parties almost, as it were, on a level ; “ We have fellowship one with another ; ” we with God and God with us.

The explanation may be found in the conditional clause—“ if we walk in the light as he is in the light.” For that clause associates God and us very intimately together. Observe a certain change of phraseology. It is not “ as he is light,” but “ as he is in the light.” It is a significant change. It brings out this great thought, that the same clear and lucid atmosphere surrounds us both. We walk in the light in which God is. It is the light of his own pure truth, his own holy nature. The light in which he is, in which he dwells, is his own light ; the light which he is himself. In that light he sits enthroned. In that light he sees and knows, he surveys and judges, all things. And now the supposition is, that we walk,—as he is,—in that light. To us, the light in which we walk is identically the same as the light in which he is. The same lustrous glory of holiness shines on our walk and on his throne. The very same pure medium of vision is common to us both. “ We see light in his light.” Of old, it was written, respecting the scene at Sinai, “ The people stood afar off,



and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was" (Exod. xx. 21). But now it is all light! For it is indeed a marvellous community of light that is here indicated as subsisting between God and us; between the Holy One and his redeemed and regenerate people!

To have the same medium of vision with God himself; the same translucent, transparent atmosphere of holiness and truth and love surrounding us; penetrating our inner man and purging our mind's eye, our soul's eye, our heart's eye, that it may see as God's eye sees; illuminating all space to us,—before, behind, above, below,—with the very illumination with which it is illuminated to him; causing all objects, actions, and events, all men and things, all thoughts, words, and deeds,—our own as well as those of others,—to appear to us exactly what they appear to him; thus to "walk in the light, as he is in the light"—who may stand that? Ah me! How shall I ever venture to walk out into that light in which God is? How can I face its terrible disclosures? I can see how this "walking in the light as he is in the light," does indeed open the way to fellowship of the closest sort between him and me. Literally we see all things in the same light. We therefore cannot but understand one another; and agree with one another; and sympathise with one another; and cooperate with one another; "we have fellowship one with another." But is it possible that, with respect to all things whatsoever, I can bear to have the same light, the same medium of open vision, that God has? Sin,

for instance ; my sin ; every sin of mine ; every secret sin ; so exceeding sinful ! Oh ! with such sin, and so much, about me, upon me, in me,—how dare I go forth into that very light, so pure and piercing, in which God is ? And yet where else now am I to look for him and find him in peace ?

I thank thee, O my God, O my Father, for that most precious word in season ; “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Yes ! it is “a word in season to the weary.” For I am weary ; weary of the darkness in which I have been trying to hide or paint deformity, and get up some specious semblance of decency and beauty ; weary of all impostures and all lies ; the poor and paltry lies especially of my self-deluding, or scarcely even self-deluding, self-righteousness ; weary of all attempts to take advantage of the darkness for making evil seem a little less evil, and some show of good look a little more like reality. I would fain step forth from the darkness into light ; into thy light, O God !

Thou mayest, do I hear thee say ?—For, be thy guilt ever so deep and thy heart ever so black, the blood of Jesus Christ my Son cleanseth from all sin. He has answered for all thy guilt. He has purchased for thee a new heart. The fountain filled with his atoning blood is ever freely open and full to overflowing. Wash in that fountain and be clean. Enter into the victory of light over darkness which that blood secures. Let all compromise take end ; compromise is a work of darkness. I invite thee to have fellowship with me ; fellowship real, and not merely nominal, with me and with my Son

Jesus Christ ;—fellowship with us in our plan and purpose of saving mercy,—in all its grace and all its glory ;—a fellowship in it with us, of insight, confidence, partnership, sympathy, joy. If it is to be real fellowship, it must be a fellowship of light. I cannot modify, I cannot alter, that condition of the fellowship, any more than I can cease to be what I am—“light.” But I do what is far better. I make provision for the removal of every obstacle which your guilt and corruption might interpose in the way of your walking in the light as I am in the light. I give you the assurance that the blood of Jesus Christ my Son cleanseth from all sin.

## IV.

## THE PRIMARY CONDITION OF THE DIVINE FELLOWSHIP FULFILLED IN THE BELIEVING CONFESSION OF A GUILTESS SPIRIT. (PSALM XXXII.)

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”—1 JOHN i. 8-10.

THE gracious assurance that “the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin,” suggests the supposition of our “saying that we have no sin.” For if we, “walking in the light as God is in the light,” could say that truly, we might dispense with the relief which the assurance is fitted to give. But alas! we can say it only under the influence of self-deception, and such self-deception as implies the absence of that “truth in the inward parts” which God “desires” (Psalm li. 6). Better far to “confess our sins,” believing that God “forgiveth our sins,” and that he does so in such a way of “faithfulness and justice” as insures our being “cleansed from all unrighteousness” with regard to them,—all unfair and partial dealing with conscience or with God about them. In this full faith let us “confess our sins.” For if, after all, even in our confession, there is reserve and guile, trying to make out that in this or

that instance "we have not sinned," or not sinned so much as might appear, we are guilty still of an unbelieving distrust of God; "we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

Such is the line of the Apostle's argument, in three successive steps or stages.

I. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (ver. 8). It is not deliberate hypocrisy that we are here warned against; but a far more subtle form of falsehood, and one apt more easily to beset us, as believers, even when most seriously and earnestly bent on "walking in the light as God is in the light."

And yet our venturing to say that we have no sin might seem to be a height of presumption scarcely reconcilable with any measure of sincerity. Any such claim put forward by a child of God the world laughs to scorn. For the world itself makes no such profession. The children of the world are wonderfully ready to chime in with the general acknowledgment implied in the prayer: "Have mercy upon us miserable sinners." Others may set up for saints. We are contented to be, and to be accounted, sinners. We do not deny that we have faults, plenty of faults, some of them perhaps rather serious at times; although none of them such as we may not hope that a merciful God and Father will overlook and pardon. They too deceive themselves, these children of the world. But their self-deception is not of the same sort as that which John denounces. This last is not, like the former, a vague reliance on in-

dulgence and impunity. It may be the error of a soul working its way, through intense mortification of lust and crucifixion of self, to an ideal of perfection all but divine.

In its subtlest form, it is a kind of mysticism, more akin to the visionary cast of ancient and oriental musing than to the more practical turn of thought and feeling that commonly prevails among us. Look at yonder attenuated and etherealised recluse, who has been grasping in successive philosophic systems, or schools of varied theosophic discipline, the means of extricating himself out of the dark bondage of carnal and worldly pollution, and soaring aloft into the light of pure spiritual freedom and repose. After many trials of other schemes, Christianity is embraced by him ; not, however, as a discovery of the way in which God proposes to deal with him, but rather as an instrument by which he may deal with himself ; a medicine to be self-administered ; a remedy to be self-applied. By the laboured imitation of Christ, or by a kind of forced absorption into Christ, considered simply as the perfect model or ideal, his soul, emancipated from its bodily shackles and its earthly entanglements, is to reach a height of serene illumination which no bodily or earthly stain can dim. From such aspirations, the next step, and it is a short and ready one, is into the monstrous fanaticism which would make spiritual illumination compatible with carnal indulgence and worldly lust, and represent it as quite a possible thing for a man wallowing in outward debauchery to be still inwardly pure and sinless ; his inward and sinless purity

being so enshrined in a certain divine sublimity and transcendentalism of devotion that outward defilement cannot touch it. Church history, beginning even with the apostle's own day, furnishes more than one instance of men thus deplorably "deceiving themselves, saying they have no sin."

Such instances may not be applicable now. But they indicate the direction in which the danger lies. It lies in the line of our sanctification; our purpose and endeavour to "walk in the light, as God is in the light."

When first we come forth out of our darkness into the broad light in which God dwells; when there is no more any guile in our spirits, no more any keeping of silence; when the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ so shines in us and around us, as to make all clouds and shadows break and fly away, and leave only the bright pellucid atmosphere of God's own nature, which is light, as the medium of vision through which, in and with God, we see ourselves and all things; ah! with such discoveries of indwelling sin as then burst upon our quickened and enlightened consciences, how thankful are we for the assurance that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." There is nothing then like "saying that we have no sin." On the contrary, we are where Paul was in that deep experience of his, when the law, now loved and delighted in as "holy and just and good," so came home to him by the power of the Spirit as to bring out in terrible conflict its own spirituality and his inherent carnality;—extorting from him the groan;—"O wretched

man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Like him, we "thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," for the encouragement we have to believe, and to believe just as we are,—with the mind serving the law of God, but with the flesh still, in spite of the mind, serving the law of sin,—that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Believing this, and apprehending all the relief that there is in believing it, we "walk now not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Rom. vii. viii.) With enlargement of heart we "walk in the light as God is in the light," and so "we have fellowship one with another,"—he with us and we with him,—“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleansing us from all sin.” Our appropriation of that atoning blood, in all its cleansing efficacy, gives us courage to continue still walking in the light, instead of shrinking back, as otherwise we must be tempted to do, into the old darkness in which we used to shroud ourselves. Such walking with God, in such a fellowship of light, is as safe as it is joyous.

But the risk lies here. It is a sort of walking with God, which, if we persevere in it faithfully, may become irksome, and be felt to be humiliating. For the old uneasy nature in us, with the rankling suspicions of our old relationship to God, is apt to come in again to mar the childlike simplicity of our faith. For a time the new insight we have got, under that light in which we walk, into the spiritual law of God and into our own carnal selves, keeps us shut up into Christ; and into that continual sprinkling of his blood upon us,



without which we cannot have a moment's peace, or a moment's sense of being cleansed from sin. But gradually we come to be more at ease. We cannot be altogether insensible to the growing satisfaction of our new standing with God and our new feelings towards him. Before the fervour of our first fresh love, inward struggles are hushed. The evil that but yesterday seemed to be so unconquerable ceases to make itself so acutely felt. The crisis is past; the war, as a war to the knife, is ended; grace prevails; iniquity, as ashamed, hides its face.

Ah! then begins the secret lurking inclination to cherish within myself some thought equivalent to "saying that I have no sin." It may not so express itself. It may not be self-acknowledged, or even self-conscious. It comes insidiously as a thief to steal away my integrity before I am aware of it. Remaining corruption in me ceases gradually to give trouble or distress. A certain lethargic proneness to acquiesce in things as they are creeps over me. I am not conscious of anything very far amiss in my spiritual experience or in my practical behaviour. I begin to "say that I have no sin."

But "I deceive myself, and the truth is not in me." I am fast sinking into my old natural habit of evasion and equivocation, of self-excuse and self-justification. "Guile" is taking the place of "truth," the truth of God, "in my spirit," "in my inward parts." I cease to be as sensitively alive as I once was to whatever in me or about me cannot stand the light. I am thus incurring a serious hazard; the hazard of being again found

“walking in darkness,” and so disqualifying myself for fellowship with “him who is light.” And I am apt to lose a very precious privilege : the privilege of continual and constant confession, in order to continual and constant forgiveness. For—

II. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (ver. 9). This, I say, is a privilege. It will appear to be so if we consider the sort of confession meant, as well as the sort of forgiveness connected with it.

As to the confession, it is the confession of men “walking in the light, as God is in the light ;” having the same medium of vision that God has ; it is the continual confession of men continually so walking, and so seeing. Such confession is very different from the sort of confession in which the natural conscience seeks at intervals a lightening of its guilty burden, and a lessening of its guilty fears. That is the mere emptying of the foul stomach, that it may be filled anew with the vile stuff for which its diseased appetite and corrupt taste continue as keen as ever. This again is the laying bare always of the whole inner man to the kind and wise physician who can always thoroughly heal it all.

For the forgiveness, on the faith of which and with a view to which we are thus always to be confessing our sins, will always be found to be a very complete treatment of our case. What is the treatment ?

The sins we confess are so forgiven, that we are “cleansed from all unrighteousness” with regard to

them. This means much more than that we are let off from the punishment which they deserve, and have to answer for them no longer. That is all the absolution for which the church-penitent, at whatever confessional, naturally cares. But that is not what is here held out to us. Our sins are so forgiven as to ensure that in the very forgiveness of them we are cleansed from all unrighteousness,—all unfair, deceitful, and dishonest dealing about them; all such unrighteous dealing about them, either with our own conscience or with our God. The forgiveness is so free, so frank, so full, so unreserved, that it purges our bosom of all reserve, all *reticence*, all guile; in a word, “of all unrighteousness.” And it is so because it is dispensed in faithfulness and righteousness; “he is faithful and just in forgiving our sins.” He to whom, as always thus dealing with us, we always thus submit ourselves, is true and righteous in all his ways, and specially in his way of meeting the confidence we place in him when we confess our sins.

We open our heart to him; we are always opening it. We spread out our case before him; concealing nothing; palliating nothing. We tell him of all that is sad and distressing in our conflict with indwelling corruption, as well as of all our failures and shortcomings in our strivings after conformity to his law. We speak to him of sloth and selfishness, of worldliness and carnality, damping our zeal, quenching our love, making us miserably indifferent to the good work going on around us, and shamefully tolerant of abounding evil. On the

subject of such experiences as these we are coming always to confer with our God, in the light in which he is, and in which it is our aim to walk. We find him always "faithful and just;"—not indulgent merely, kind and complaisant, bidding us take good heart and not be so much cast down;—but "faithful and just." God is true; true to himself, and true to us; so true to himself and to us that all untruth in us becomes impossible.

Ah, brother! you may well trust him with all the secrets of your soul, for well does he requite your trust. He is "faithful;" keeping covenant and mercy; never saying to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. He is "just." He will not, in seeming pity, do you a real injustice. He will not heal your hurt slightly. He will not prophesy smooth things. "He will set your iniquities before him, your secret sins in the light of his countenance." He will keep you in his hand, and under his hand, until all partial dealing—"all unrighteousness" as to any of your sins,—is cleansed out of you. With the charm of true love he will work truth and uprightness in you; so that, as to your whole walk, inner and outer alike, all shall be clear light—light, clear as crystal—between him and you.

That is the sort of intercourse which it is my Father's good pleasure that I should keep up with him continually. It is very different from a mere endless alternation on my part of sin and confession; of confession and sin. It is not on his part a mere capricious oscillation between passion and pity,—between violent

wrath and facile fondness ;—like what is felt or fancied when I, a slave, offend and ask pardon, and offend again, reckoning on the placability of a weak master, who, however he may be moved to sudden rage, is sure to relent when he sees me prostrate at his feet. In such dealing with me there is neither faithfulness nor justice. Nor is it such dealing with me that will work faithfulness and justice in me. If that is the footing on which I am living with my God and Father, it may be consistent with my saying, in a sense, that “I have no sin ;” no sin that need disturb my quiet or distress my conscience. But “I deceive myself, and the truth is not in me.” I cast myself off from all that is real and genuine, all that is clear and open, in the fellowship of light that there must ever be between a trusting child and a loving father ; especially when that loving father has made such full provision, in so marvellous a way, for the removal of whatever element of dark estrangement my contracted guilt or his violated law might interpose. I refuse to submit myself continually anew to that faithful and just searching of my heart and reins which, if I would but suffer it, must issue continually anew in my being forgiven all my sins, and so forgiven as to be cleansed from all unrighteousness with regard to any of them. Surely such clear, bright, open, confidential fellowship between him who is light and his little child trying to walk in his light, far transcends any poor measure of accommodation which a hollow truce between us might purpose to effect. Let us have that fellowship evermore. All the rather because—

III. If, in the face of such a faithful manner of forgiveness on the part of God, we continue to shrink from that open dealing and guileless confession which our walking in the light as God is in the light implies,—we not only wrong ourselves, and do violence to our own consciousness and our own conscience ; but, “ saying that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (ver. 10).

This is a stronger statement than that in the eighth verse. It is not “ we deceive ourselves,” but “ we make God a liar ;” not generally, “ the truth is not in us,” but very pointedly and particularly, “ his word is not in us.” The difference is explained by the assurance given in the intermediate verse ;—“ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

For that assurance, as has been shown, opens the way to a very confidential intercourse of confession on the one hand, and just and faithful treatment of our case on the other, between us and our Father in heaven. If we think at any moment that we do not need this sort of intercourse, that we can dispense with it and do without it, we labour under a grievous delusion ; we deceive ourselves ; some self-excusing or self-justifying lie is expelling from within our souls the bright clear light of the truth. If, again, after all the encouragement which he himself gives, we still, at any moment, hang back and hesitate, as if we could not venture on the sort of intercourse to which he invites us, surely that is inexcusable unbelief ; refusing to trust God ; giving the lie, not

merely to his promises, but to his very character and nature ; not suffering his word to have entrance into our hearts. To prefer now, even for a single instant, or with reference to a single sin, the miserable comfort of wrapping ourselves in fig-leaves and hiding among the trees of the garden, to the unspeakable joy of coming forth naked into the light in which God is, casting ourselves into his open arms, and asking him to deal with us according to his own loving faithfulness and righteousness and truth ;—that surely is a high affront to him and to his word, as well as a fond and foolish mistake for ourselves. There can be no fellowship of light between us and him if such unworthy sentiments of dark suspicion and reserve as this implies are again, at any time and in any measure, insinuating themselves into our bosoms.

For, as one indispensable condition of that fellowship,—and indeed the primary and fundamental condition of it,—is that “ we walk in the light as he is in the light ;” so another condition of it, arising out of the first, is that “ we confess our sins.” The two indeed are one ; the last is only a particular application of the former. Walking in the light as God is in the light, we must be continually learning to see more clearly as he sees. Our medium of vision being the same as his, our vision itself must be growing more and more nearly the same. Insight and sympathy are ever brightening and deepening. Things come to be more and more in our eyes exactly what they are in his. We ourselves, and our works and ways, are more and more seen by us as they are seen by God.

Can this go on, honestly and really, without ever fresh discoveries and ever new experiences of such a sort as must always make confession, to the earnest and believing soul, a most welcome privilege indeed? It is not merely that I come to perceive in old sins a heinousness and an amount of aggravation that make me feel as if I had never adequately acknowledged them in time past, but must be ever repenting of them anew, and getting them anew disposed of by their being laid anew on him who is the sin-bearer and the cross-bearer. Nor is it merely that new forms and phases of the ungodliness and selfishness and carnality of my heart,—new shifts and windings of its deceitfulness and desperate wickedness,—must be ever coming up and coming out to vex my quickened spiritual sensibility and damp the ardour of my faith and love. Both these sources of disquietude are, alas! too common. But above and beyond all that,—in my very walking, as God's fellow; being the fellow of his son Jesus Christ; his fellow-servant, fellow-worker, fellow-sufferer, fellow-heir in his kingdom; as the Holy Spirit gives me an increasing sense and taste of what it is to walk with God in his own light; as I seek to carry that light, and him with whom I walk in fellowship in that light, into all the scenes and circumstances of my outer walk of faith, and all the fluctuations of my inner life of faith; how is my heart troubled! How many fountains of bitterness are ever freshly flowing! And then in the world, with its manifold calls that cannot be put aside, and its troublesome questions of lawfulness and expediency, I am too often at a loss and almost at a stand.



I may try to set aside all such annoyances, as not entering properly into my spiritual experience, and to keep that, as it were, isolated and pure. I may think that when I go to commune with my God and Father; when I enter into my closet and shut the door; when I seek his face and wait for his salvation;—I am to leave all my cares and troubles behind me on the threshold, and meet him in some lofty region of spiritual peace, where sorrow and sin are to find no place. But I am deceiving myself. And I am refusing to trust my God and Father, and so I am giving him the lie. From such sin as that may he himself evermore deliver me!

Let me rather, taking him at his word, try the more excellent way of carrying with me always, in the full confidence of loving fellowship, into the secret place of my God, all that is upon my mind, my conscience, my heart; all that is harassing, or burdening, or tempting me; my present matter of care or subject of thought,—whatever that may be. Let me unbosom all my grief. Let me freely and unreservedly speak to him of what is uppermost in my thoughts. There may be sin in it, or about it. There may be something wrong; some wound to be probed; some root of bitterness to be searched out; some offending right hand or right eye. Be it so. Still, let me open up all; let me confess all. Let me spread out my whole case. Let me empty and lay bare my whole soul. Let me put myself, and be ever putting myself, thoroughly, nakedly, unreservedly, into his hands. Surely I may rely on his dealing faithfully and righteously with me. Nor would I wish him to deal with me

otherwise. He may "chasten me sore, but he will not give me over to death." He may rebuke and convince; he may even smite and slay. But "though he slay me, I will trust in him." I know that he requireth truth in the inward parts. I ask him therefore to lead me into all truth; into all the truth concerning myself as well as concerning him; however painful the knowledge of it may be to my self-righteous feelings, and however deadly to my self-righteous hopes. I am for no half-measures now, no compromise, no concealment. I would keep back nothing from my God. I will not deceive myself by keeping silence about my sin. I will not make my God a liar,—I will not do my God and Father so great a wrong as to give him the lie,—by refusing entrance into my soul to that word of his which gives light, even the light of life. I will confess my sins, knowing and believing that as "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," so "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

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## V.

## SINLESS AIM OF THE GUILILESS SPIRIT—PROVISION FOR ITS CONTINUED SENSE OF SIN.

“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.”—  
1 JOHN ii. 1.

To obviate, as it might seem, an objection against his doctrine of confession, that it was liable to be turned into an allowance of sin,—the Apostle first makes a most emphatic protest as to his real design in setting forth that doctrine; and secondly puts the manner of restoration, through the advocacy of Christ, on a footing that effectually shuts out all licentious and latitudinarian abuse of it, in the line of practical antinomianism.

His first desire is to make clear the sinless aim of the guileless spirit, about the production of which he has been so much concerned.

And here his appeal is very affectionate; “My little children!” It is the appeal of a loving master to the good faith and good feeling of loving pupils; beseeching them not to misunderstand him, as if he meant to indulge or excuse them in sin. Nay, it is more than that. It is an appeal to their highest and holiest Christian ambition. Far from tolerating sin, I would have you to aim at

being sinless. "These things write I unto you that ye sin not;" that you may make it your express design and determination not to sin.

That is the full force of the Apostle's language, when he says, "I write these things unto you that ye sin not."

I. Let that be your aim,—to "sin not." Let it be deliberately set before you as your fixed and settled purpose that you are not to sin; not merely that you are to sin as little as you can; but that you are not to sin at all.

For there is a wide difference between these two ways of putting the matter. That in the business of your sanctification absolute holiness is to be your standard, you may admit. A sinless model or ideal is presented to you; and you acknowledge your obligation to be conformed to it. But is not the acknowledgment often accompanied with some sort of reserve or qualification? The measure of conformity that may be fairly expected must be limited by what your infirmity may hope to reach; nay, you even venture to add, by what God may be pleased to give you strength to reach. This is scarcely honest. It is not equivalent to an out-and-out determination not to sin. You do not really mean to be altogether without sin; but only so far as your own poor ability, aided by the Divine Spirit, may enable you to be so. Or, with reference to some specific work or trial that you have on hand, you do not really mean not to sin in it, but only not to sin in it more than you can help. Is it not so, both generally as regards your cultivation of a holy character, and particularly as regards your discharge of holy duties in detail? And what is

that at bottom, but secret, perhaps unconscious, antinomianism? You are not in love with sin; you do not choose sin; you would rather, if it were possible, avoid it, and be wholly free from it. But that, you say, is impossible. You make up your minds, therefore, to its being impossible, and reckon beforehand on its being impossible. You wish, and hope, and pray, that the evil element may be reduced to a minimum. Still it is to be there; you are quite sure it will be there; and you must accommodate yourself to what is unavoidable. However you may try, you cannot expect to be without sin—or “not to sin.”

This is a very subtle snare. And it is not easily met. For it is founded on fact. It is but too true that in all that we do we come short of the sinless aim. That, however, is no reason for our not only anticipating fault or failure, but acquiescing in the anticipation. Above all, it is no reason why we should take it for granted by anticipation that some particular fault or failure, foreseen and foreknown by ourselves, must be acquiesced in. For the special danger lies there. It is not merely that in entering on any course of holy living, or engaging in any branch of holy labour, I feel certain that I shall sin in it. I have a shrewd suspicion as to how I shall sin in it. I can guess where the breakdown is to take place. I have tried already to keep this law as I see it should be kept, and to keep it perfectly. I will try again, asking God to incline my heart to keep it. I know well enough indeed that I shall fail and fall short. And I know well enough how I shall fail and fall short.

Nevertheless, I can but try, and I will try, to do my best.

Is that, however, a really honest determination on my part not to sin? Am I not reconciling myself prospectively to some known besetting infirmity? Let us not deceive ourselves. Let us consider how inconsistent all such guileful dealing is with that "walking in the light, as God is in the light," which is the indispensable condition of our fellowship with God and his with us. The very object of all that the apostle writes on that subject is that, at the very least, we rise to the high and holy attitude of determining not to sin. All that he tells us of "the word of life," the life "which was with the Father and was manifested unto us;" all that he tells us of the divine fellowship for which the way is thus opened up; all that he tells us of the nature of him with whom our fellowship is to be, and of the provision made, through the blood of Jesus Christ his Son which cleanseth from all sin, for our coming forth out of our natural darkness into his light; all is designed to bring us up to this point, that "we sin not;" that in purpose and determination we are bent on not sinning.

II. But not only would I have you to make this your aim; I would have your aim accomplished and realised. And therefore "I write these things unto you, that ye sin not."

We are to proceed upon the anticipation, not of failure but of success, in all holy walking and in every holy duty; not of our sinning, but of our not sinning. And we are to do so, because the things which John

“ writes unto us ” make the anticipation no wild dream, but a possible attainment.

We must assume it to be possible not to sin, when we walk in the open fellowship of God, and in his pure translucent light ; especially not to sin in this or that particular way in which we have sinned before, and in which we are apt to be afraid of sinning again. For practical purposes this is really all that is needed. But this is needed.

I do not care much for any general assurance, even if I could get it, that I am not to sin at all. But, if I am in earnest, how deeply do I care for even a faint hope that, in the particular matter that lies heavy on my conscience, it may sometime and somehow become possible for me not to sin ! That is what is pressing. In some hour of calm meditation or divine contemplative speculation, the idea of a serene and stainless perfection of holiness and peace wrapping my spirit in ineffable bliss may have a certain fascinating charm, and may awaken undefined longings and aspirations. They are far too vague, however, to be practically influential. And they do not meet my case. For why am I troubled ? What is it that distresses and vexes me ? Alas ! it is no mere vague consciousness of imperfection. It is some specific “ thorn in the flesh ” that, as a “ messenger of Satan, is buffeting me.” “ When I would do good, evil is present with me.” When I would pray, my soul cleaves to the dust. When I am in my closet, with my door shut against all the world, all sorts of worldly thoughts intrude. When I read and study, I find my

mind unfixed. When God speaks to me, my attention wanders. When I should be hearing the voice of his servant, my eyes are drowsy. I take up some branch of God's service,—how soon do I grow weary, or stumble, or offend! I seek to control my temper, and some slight provocation oversets me. Try as I may, I am sure to fail. And then, when, going down to the depths of my inner nature, I seek to have my whole soul purged from lust and filled with love, alas! is there never to be any end of this weary, heartless, fruitless struggle? Is it to be always thus,—sinning and repenting; repenting and going back to sin?

Nay, let me hear John's loving words; "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not," Believe these things; realise them; act upon them; act them out. They are such things as, if believed, realised, acted upon, and acted out, will make it possible for you "not to sin." For they are such things as, if thus apprehended, change the character of the whole struggle. They transfer it to a new and higher platform. We are brought into a position, in relation to God, in which holiness is no longer a desperate negative strife, but a blessed positive achievement. "Evil is overcome with good." The heavenly walk in light with him who is light carries us upwards and onwards, above and beyond the region of dark guilt and fear, in which sin is strong; and places us in the region of peace and joy, in which grace is stronger. Sanctification is not now a mere painful process of extirpation and extermination of weeds. It will, no doubt, be that still; but it is not



that merely. It is the gracious implanting of good seed, and the cultivating of it gladly as it grows. And as we enter more and more, with larger intelligence and deeper sympathy, into the spirit of John's opening words concerning the end and means of our "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ," we come better to know experimentally what is in his heart when he says: "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not." That is what you are to aim at; and you are to aim at it as now possible.

III. Why then, it may be asked, is provision made for our sinning still after all?—"If any man"—any of us—"sin, we have an advocate with the Father." Let me in reply again appeal to any who are really exercised in resisting sin and following after holiness; "walking truly in the light, as God is in the light."

For I do not address those who take this whole matter easily; being quite contented with a very moderate measure of decent abstinence from gross vice and the perfunctory performance of some pious and charitable offices. The present theme scarcely concerns them in their present mood. John assumes that we are in earnest; that sin is to us exceeding sinful, and holiness above all things desirable. We have purposed in good faith that we will not offend. We rejoice to think that we may now form that purpose with good heart; not desperately, as if we were upon a forlorn hope; but rather as grasping the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. For he is with us. He cheers us on. He assures us of success. And when, at any time, he sees

some lurking apprehension of failure or defeat stealing into our souls again to discourage us ; when he sees that we are getting nervous about the risk of our making some mistake, or meeting with some check or reverse, and that this very nervousness is unhinging and un-manning us ; he tells us not to think too much of it, but to press on ; for he is beside us, to help us if we should stumble—to lift us if we should fall—“ If any of us sin, we have an advocate with the Father.”

Shall I then be emboldened to walk heedlessly, presuming on his advocacy ? Perish the ungenerous, the ungrateful thought ! What ! shall I make a mere convenience of that Divine Saviour, and turn his ministry of holy love into a mere pleading for indulgence and purchase of impunity ?

Lying priests, false mediators :—priests and mediators false to both the parties between whom they mediate ; to God’s high honour and man’s pure peace ; false, as not reconciling but alienating, not bringing together but keeping asunder, the yearning Father and his poor prodigal child ;—they and their offices may be so used, or abused. But Jesus is an advocate of a very different stamp. He is not content to negotiate, as a third party, between God dwelling in light and us suffered still to continue in darkness. He is one with both the parties whom he makes one in himself. By his one offering of himself, once for all, he brings us, when the Spirit unites us by faith to him, into the very light of God, his Father and ours.

But the light is such as, when our eyes are opened

to its brightness, makes our walking in it an affair of extreme delicacy. In good faith, with full purpose, right honestly and heartily to "walk in the light,"—is to face an ordeal from which a man with renovated principles and sensibilities may well sensitively shrink. True, the tendency of all this marvellous arrangement for placing us on such a footing of light with God,—admitting us into such a fellowship of light and setting us to such a walk of light,—is that we "sin not." And we are assured that if we make full proof of this light, we shall find it no such impossible thing as we might imagine "not to sin." But with a growing clearness of vision, becoming more and more alive to the inexpressible lustre and loveliness of the light, and the offensiveness of whatever partakes of the least soil or stain of the darkness which the light exposes;—how should our advance along the ascending path of heavenliness and spirituality be anything else than one continued discipline of anxious fear?

Jesus knows our frame, in its worst and in its best state. He knows what to us, with such a frame as ours at the best is, our really "walking in the light as God is in the light" must be. He knows how at every step,—in spite of all the encouragement given us beforehand to hope that we need not, that we may not, that we shall not sin,—we still may shrink and hang back; fearing with too good ground that even if, in the form we used to dread, our sin shall seem to give way, it may, in some new manifestation of our deep inward corruption, lie in wait to trouble us. Well does our sympa-

thising friend and brother know all this. And therefore he assures us that he is always beside us ; “ our advocate with the Father.” We need not therefore be afraid to walk with the Father in the light. We may walk, alas! too often, unsteadfastly. We may give new offence. We may incur new blame. But see! There is the intercessor ever pleading for us. “ If any of us sin, we have an advocate with the Father.”

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## VI.

NATURE AND GROUND OF CHRIST'S ADVOCACY  
AS MEETING THE NEED OF THE GUILTESS  
SPIRIT.

“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 : and he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.”—1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

THE manner of our restoration, if we fall short of the sinless aim, not less than the sinless aim itself, is fitted to guard against any abuse of John's doctrine of forgiveness. It is through an advocacy altogether incompatible with anything like the toleration of evil. This will appear if we consider the three things here mentioned as qualifying our advocate for his advocacy ;—I. He is “Jesus Christ the righteous ;”—II. He is “the propitiation for our sins ;”—III. He is the propitiation “not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

I. He is “Jesus Christ the righteous.”

Jesus! The name is as ointment poured forth ; fragrant, precious. “He is called Jesus because he saves his people from their sins.” Jesus! my Saviour! my Jesus! saving me from my sins ; from myself! Art thou indeed my advocate with the Father,—standing by me, pleading for me,—by thy Spirit pleading in me,—

when, in spite of my firmest purpose not to sin, and my closest clinging to thee that I may not sin, I must still, under the pressure of sin besetting me, cry, Unclean! undone! Then indeed may I hold on walking in the light, and with a sinless aim, if thou art with me. Jesus, save me from my sins!

Christ! the Anointed! whom the Father anoints through the Spirit; whom I also, through the Spirit, in sympathy with the Father, humbly venture to anoint! his Christ and mine!—"with thee, O Christ, as my advocate with the Father;—with thee, True Mediator,—Revealer, Reconciler, Ruler,—Prophet, Priest, and King;—I will not, amid all that is discouraging in the experience of my remaining darkness, despair of yet becoming all that he who is light and who dwelleth in light would have me to be; all that thou art, O Christ!

But the emphatic word here is not the proper name Jesus, nor the official name Christ, but the adjective "righteous."

This term may possibly be understood as referring to the righteousness which he has wrought out on our behalf, as our substitute and surety, and which he brings in and presents before the Father as the ground of all his pleading with him as our advocate. For his advocacy is not a mere ministry of persuasion; working as it were on the placability and fond facility of an angry but weak potentate—an offended but infirm and indulgent parent. It is his submitting to God the Father, as the righteous governor, such a service and satisfaction as may warrant, in terms of strictest law and justice,

the exercise of mercy towards his guilty but penitent children. All that is true. But it is not, I think, what John principally has in his mind. For, in the first place, the efficacious and meritorious condition of our Lord's advocacy is sufficiently brought out in the clause which follows, "he is the propitiation for our sins." And secondly, it is awkward to understand the word "righteous" in two distinct senses, as it is used in the same passage, and within the compass of a few verses, first of the Father (i. 9), and now of the Son (ii. 1). I take it therefore as pointing, not to the legal righteousness which Christ has—or rather which Christ is—but to the righteousness of his character, and of his manner of advocacy with the Father for us. That other meaning need not be excluded, for the two are by no means inconsistent. But when John commends our advocate with the Father as "Jesus Christ the righteous," it is surely upon his benignant equity that he would have us to fix our eyes.

Such an advocate becomes us ; and such alone. If we rightly consider the relation to God into which the gospel message, as John has been putting it, is designed to bring us ; the footing on which it places us with God ; the sort of divine insight, sympathy, and fellowship for which it opens up the way ; and the sort of walk on which it sets us, we may well feel that none other than such an advocate could meet our case.

In any court in which I had a cause to maintain I would wish to have a righteous advocate. Not less than I would desire a righteous judge would I welcome a

righteous advocate. I do not want an advocate who will flatter and cajole me. I do not want one to tell me smooth things and lead me on the ice ; disguising or evading the weak points of my plea ; putting a fair face on what will not stand close scrutiny, and touching tenderly what will not bear rough handling ; getting up untenable lines of defence, and keeping me in good humour till disaster or ruin comes. Give me an advocate who will tell me the truth, and tell the truth on my behalf ; one who will deal truly with me and for me, and fairly represent my case. Give me an advocate who, much as he may care for me, cares for honesty and honour, for law and justice, still more. Give me an advocate not afraid to vex or wound me for my safety, for my good. Whatever his name, let him be the honest, the upright, "the righteous."

Such an advocate is Jesus Christ for us in the high court of heaven ; for he is "Jesus Christ the righteous." In the presence of the righteous judge, and at his righteous bar, he thus appears for us ; not to bring us off as by some cunning sleight-of-hand manœuvre ; not to get the better of strict justice by some dexterous and adroit management, or some plausible and pathetic appeal to pity ; but to have the whole controversy sifted to the bottom, and all hidden causes of offence laid bare, and every just demand and outstanding claim met, and all relating to our right standing adjusted,—without any compromise or subterfuge,—upon the terms and according to the principles of perfect righteousness.

Such an advocate is Jesus Christ for us in the high



court of heaven. Such an advocate is he also when, in the capacity, as it were, of chamber-counsel, he is with us in our closet, to listen to all that we have to say ; to all our confessions and complaints ; our enumeration of grievances ; our unbosoming ourselves of all our anxieties and all our griefs. He is still "Jesus Christ the righteous ;" patient and pitiful, as he bends his ear to our wildest cry or our faintest whisper ; yet still righteous ; not dallying delicately with our sin or our sorrow ; not sparing us ; probing us to the quick ; giving us no relief till the whole matter is searched into, and spread out, and fairly and justly met. He is "Jesus Christ the righteous."

But it is not only with God as Judge that he is our advocate. He is our advocate with "the Father." His advocacy has respect not only to the Judge's court but to the Father's house. It is the advocacy of the elder brother, who has brought us home to "his Father and our Father." It is a home of love and of light ; a home of love because it is a home of light. Perfect peace should reign in it, as the fruit of perfect purity. It is not a home in which we can allow ourselves to sin. There is no darkness to hide our sin ; no room for any lie to excuse it. We are brought home, in the marvellous way in which we have been brought home, for the express purpose that we may not sin. Our elder brother, in bringing us home, has suffered enough for our sin to make it very loathsome in our esteem. He has, moreover, so suffered for it that we need have nothing to do with it, nor it with us, any more. And that our connec-

tion with the old haunts and associations of our sin may be cut clean away for ever, and we may be placed at once in the best and likeliest position for sinning no more, he concurs with the Father in our being at once embraced as children, invested as children with the robe and ring of honour, and welcomed as children to the children's table. There is to be no reproach; no upbraiding; no word or look of reference to the past any more. Our elder brother has answered for all, and all is cancelled. There is to be no more any dark servile doubt or suspicion or fear. All is to be holy light and love. There is to be no more sin.

Ah! but more sin, in spite of all this, there is; and there is the apprehension of sin evermore. The Father indeed is light, always light. And we walk in his light; the light of his reconciled countenance; the light of his pure and loving eye. But how sensitively, on that very account, is our conscience, our heart, alive to all—alas! too much—that is in us and about us still savouring of the dark tastes of our old estrangement.

Where,—we are at every moment constrained to ask,—where is that elder brother who brought us hither, and who alone can keep us here? We know that he would have us, not to put him in between the Father and us, but to be ourselves, in him, at home with the Father (John xvi. 26, 27). It should be so; and we seek to have it so. But the home is so holy, and the light is so holy, and he who is in the light is so holy; and we are so sinful, so fain to shrink from the light and court the darkness again, that we cannot stand upright. We

cannot keep our ground ; we cannot move on ; we cannot meet the Father's eye ; we stumble ; we fall. Ah ! we need that elder brother still. We need him to be our "advocate with the Father." He must not quit our side. He must not let go our hand. He must be ever leading us in to the Father, and presenting us to the Father, and speaking for us to the Father, and putting us anew right with the Father. And so he is. He is never far off. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "The righteous !" For now what sort of advocate with "the Father" would we have ? And what would we have his advocacy to be ?

The time has been when, if we cared to live at home in the Father's house at all, we would have been glad of the good offices, say of some upper servant, not very scrupulous and not over strict, who might be disposed to take our part when any breach occurred. It might be convenient to have a friend at court, an advocate with the head and master of the family, ready always to intercede for us ; to hide our faults or apologise for them ; to come in between us and the angry glance or the uplifted arm ; to put a specious colouring on the cause of offence, and get us off, no matter how, from dreaded vengeance. But no such advocacy will be welcome now. No such advocate will our elder brother be. For he is our advocate with the Father, as "Jesus Christ the righteous." Yes ! in dealing with us, as well as in dealing with the Father for us, he will deal righteously, truly, justly. He will so ply his office, and travail in his work, of advocacy between the Father and us, as to preserve the right

understanding which he has himself brought about, and obviate the risk of renewed separation. He will make it all subservient to our more thorough cleansing from sin, and our closer walk with God ;—our being “ holy as he is holy.” For—

II. “ He is the propitiation for our sins.” He is so now. He is present with us now as our advocate with the Father ; and it is as being the propitiation for our sins that he is present with us.

It is not needful to settle in what precise aspect of the sacrificial service Jesus is here spoken of as the propitiation ; whether with reference to the sacrificial victim slain, or the altar on which it was burned, or the mercy-seat on which its blood was sprinkled. Jesus is all three in one ; the lamb slain, the altar of atonement, the blood-baptized mercy-seat. The important lesson is this, that it is as the propitiation for our sins that Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father. Whenever he acts as our advocate, whether to satisfy the Father anew or to pacify our consciences anew, he acts in virtue of his being—not having been but being—the propitiation for our sins. The two, in fact, are one ; his advocacy with the Father is his being the propitiation for our sins. In every instance in which it is exercised, it is simply a new and fresh application to our case of the virtue of his being the propitiation for our sins.

For what does he do when, in some dark hour, he ministers to me and in me as my advocate with the Father ? He draws near ; the Spirit so “ taking of

what is his and showing it to me" as to bring him near. He is beside me, with me, at my right hand. He is here with me now, the propitiation for my sins now, precisely as he was on Calvary. I see him, invisible as he is, now and here, exactly as he was then and there; thorn-crowned, bleeding, in agony; bowing his head; giving up the ghost; pouring out his soul an offering for sin. Yes! that is my advocate with the Father; and that is the manner of his advocacy! Can it be other than a righteous advocacy? Can he be other than a righteous advocate? When my sin, grieving the Father's heart and vexing his Holy Spirit, has pierced his Son Jesus Christ anew, and he hastens, with blood and water freshly flowing from the re-opened wound, to wash me anew, and anew present me to the Father,—is that a sort of ministry that can lead to sin? Can I touch these hands which I have been nailing again to the accursed tree, or feel them touching me again to bless me, without my whole frame thrilling as the voice runs through my inmost soul—"Sin no more;" "Thou art dead to sin?"

III. There is a supplement added which still further explains the sort of advocacy which "Jesus Christ the righteous" carries on. He is "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." This is added, as it would seem, for this very end, to preclude the possibility of a believer thinking that, if he lapses, it is under some method of recovery different from that which is available for all mankind. Otherwise, it comes in awkwardly and irrelevantly.

For it is out of place here to introduce the subject of the bearing of the propitiation on mankind at large ; for the purpose of considering that subject for its own sake, or settling any doubtful question regarding it. It is very much in point, however, and very much to the purpose, to make a passing reference to the world-wide scope and aspect of the propitiation which Christ is ; and so to guard against the notion of there being anything like favouritism in what he does on behalf of his true followers and friends.

There is no new specific for meeting our case when we who walk in the light fall into sin, no specific different from what is provided for meeting the case of all sinners—of “the whole world.” We have no special fountain opened for our cleansing, but only the fountain opened in the house of David for all the inhabitants of Jerusalem indiscriminately ; for all the world, and all its sin, and all its uncleanness. There is no way in which we can get rid of that sin of ours,—its guilt and curse, its deadly blight and canker, eating out the very life of our soul,—except that way, patent and open to all, in which all the world, if it will, may get rid of all its sins. Doubtless when we sin we have an advocate with the Father to stand by us, and lift us up, and plead our cause, and place us again on a right footing with the Father. But he can do all this only by interposing himself as “the propitiation for our sins,” in the very same sense and manner in which he interposes himself as the propitiation “for the sins of the whole world.”

Where, then, ye children of the light and of the day,—ye fellows of the Father and of his Son Jesus Christ,—where is your peculiar privilege of sinning lightly and being easily restored? What is there in that sin of yours that should make it lie less heavily on your conscience, and afflict your souls less grievously, than the sins which, when you were of the world, you committed; of which you repented; and for which you sought and obtained forgiveness, when you came out of the world's weary wilderness, and were brought home to your Father's house? Is your sin now less heinous than were your sins then? Are there no aggravations to enhance its guilt, and to stamp with a deeper die its exceeding sinfulness? Does it demand fewer tears and less poignant searchings of heart; less of godly sorrow, less of bitter weeping?

What! when that eye which looked on Peter—that eye not of reproach so much, as of silent unutterable woe—the eye that smote him with a mortal stab,—when that eye catches mine—yes! as he is in the very act of hastening to the rescue lest my faith fail, coming quickly to be my advocate with the Father—when, fallen as I am, I feel his touch, and that open calm look of his arrests and rivets me,—Jesus! I cry, my Lord, my God, dost thou yet care for me? Wilt thou yet comfort me; me, a sinner; a sinner worse than ever; sinning more inexcusably than ever in all the days of my ignorance I sinned; more inexcusably than all the world in its ignorance can sin? Can such a one as I yet live? I ask no special favour; I plead for no partial exemption.

Let me only anew,—not as a saint,—not as a child of God,—but only as a sinner,—of sinners the chief,—betake myself to thee, the propitiation for my sin !

Yes ! I may, I do. And I find thee still the propitiation for my sin, because thou art the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Not otherwise could I take the benefit of thine advocacy. It is not as a propitiation peculiar to me that I grasp thee in my distress ; as if I had any peculiar claim to thee ; as if others were sinners more than I, or I less than they. Alas ! no. My only hope is in grasping thee as “the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.” That wide charter will take me in when nothing else can. “It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

This, and this alone, is thy refuge and revival, O poor soul ! Thou sinnest ;—as a child of God, walking in the light, thou sinnest. And in the light in which thou walkest thy sin finds thee out. Thou art overwhelmed. Can such sin as thine be forgiven ? Yes, brother. But not otherwise than through the advocacy of “Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for thy sins.” Thou must have recourse to him in that character. But not as if thy case were peculiar, and demanded or could receive peculiar treatment. No. Thou must be content to take thy place among the whole body of the sinners of mankind, for the very worst of whom the propitiation is available precisely as it is for thee ; for them as fully as for thee ; for thee as



fully as for them. That indeed is the very consideration which revives thee. He is the propitiation for all sinners and for all sins. No sin, no sinner, is at any time beyond the reach of that great atonement. It meets the case of all mankind, of all the world; and therefore it meets thy case, be thy backsliding ever so grievous, thy guilt ever so aggravated. Thou couldst not venture to appropriate Christ as the propitiation for thy sins, otherwise than as he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. It is only because thou believest and art sure that no sin, no sinner, in all the world, is debarred from that wondrous fountain filled with blood, that thou canst summon courage to plunge in it thyself afresh. Even to the last, it is not as isolating thyself from sinners of mankind, but as associating thyself with them,—feeling thyself to be the chief of them,—that thou lookest, when thou hast sinned, to “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.”\*

\* In my book on the Atonement (edition 1861, pages 66-71), I suggest an explanation of this passage that may seem to differ from that given here. The difference, however, is merely apparent. I here protest<sup>t</sup> against believers, when they fall into sin, having any method of recovery to which they may have recourse, different from, or going beyond, what all sinners called to repentance have within their reach, as freely offered to them in the Gospel. My meaning there is substantially the same. It maintains the applicability of the propitiation, as bearing on the backslidings of believers, not only to the disciples to whom John wrote;—that is to himself and his fellow disciples;—but generally to all and sundry in the like case. The only new idea which I throw out here is one which seems to me to enter into the heart of the text,—and into the heart also of any spiritual experience on which the Spirit

brings the text to bear ;—the idea, namely, that no true Christian, under a sense of sin, can ever recover his footing in the free grace of God, through any propitiation that is not common to him with “the whole world.”

The worst enemies of Calvinism are those who challenge such statements. So far as their views are at all intelligent and logical, they make faith impossible ; faith, that is, resting on a free Gospel, and without the warrant of an express personal sign, inward or outward. Whether as a sinner called, or as a backslider recalled, I can build no hope on any propitiation presented to me as peculiar to a class, and not open to the race at large. I am thankful therefore for the assurance that, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

This is my answer to certain critics who have founded on garbled extracts from this passage the charge of an unguarded and objectionable mode of expression as to the nature and extent of the atonement.

## VII.

## THE GUILLESS SPIRIT REALISING THROUGH OBEDIENCE THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS THE MEANS OF BEING AND ABIDING IN GOD.

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected : hereby know we that we are in him.”\*—1 JOHN ii. 3-5.

THIS is a more literal explanation of the divine fellowship, considered as a fellowship of light, than has been given before. The light which is the atmosphere of the fellowship, or the medium of vision and sympathy through which it is realised, is the light of knowledge ;—the light of the knowledge of God. For the

\* A doubt may be suggested as to what Divine Person is meant here when the third personal pronoun is used. Is it the Son or the Father ? One might at first be inclined to say it is the Son ; for it is he who is spoken of in the immediately preceding verses (1, 2). But throughout this whole passage John is speaking of God the Father as the object of knowledge and fellowship. It is with God in Christ that he summons us to have communion. The Son is brought in separately (i. 7, ii. 2), only to show how his ministry of sacrifice, intercession, and propitiation, by providing for our not sinning, or not sinning beyond the hope of repentance and revival, makes such communion possible. That end being served, the discourse returns to its original channel. On this account, as well as on grammatical grounds, I lean

fellowship is intelligent as well as holy—intelligent that it may be holy.

But of what sort is that knowledge? And how is it to be got hold of and made sure of? These are the questions with which John now proceeds to deal. And in the verses that form our text he introduces them very emphatically, as questions personally and practically affecting us, with reference to our claim and calling to be “walkers in the light.”

For, first, he would have us to “know that we know God” (ver. 3). He raises the question of the trustworthiness of our knowledge of God. It is as if you asked me about one of my familiars, whose name I am fond of using, whose opinions I am apt to quote, whose patronage I rather boast of;—“But do you know that you know him? Are you sure that you understand him?” The abrupt question takes me somewhat aback. I think I know him. But your doubt startles me. I

to the opinion of those who think that God the Father is the Divine Person referred to. And I do so the rather because in the verse that follows (6),—“He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked,”—there is a remarkable distinction of pronouns. It does not appear in our translation; and indeed the English tongue scarcely admits of its appearing. But it is clear in the finer idiom of the original Greek. The “he” in the last clause is different from the “him” in the first; which again agrees with the “him” and the “his” in the verses now before us (3-5). Surely this marks a change. The person indicated in the end of the sixth verse is not the same as the person indicated in the beginning of that verse, and in those that precede it. But the person indicated in the end of the sixth verse is clearly the Lord Jesus. It must therefore be God the Father who is indicated in the verses of our text.

must inquire and see. Again, secondly, John would have us to "know that we are in God" (ver. 5). This suggests still more hesitancy. I have had the idea that I am in him, in the sense of being united to him in the bonds of faith, fellowship, and friendship. But you raise misgivings. Do I indeed know that I am in him?

The two inquiries may be treated as one; requiring the same examination and admitting of the same proof.

There comes in, however, thirdly, an intermediate thought: "whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected" (ver. 5). This expression denotes a fact accomplished. The word "is perfected" points to something done; and the word "verily" or "truly" marks the reality and thoroughness of what has been done and of the doing of it.

Now it is love that is here said to be thus "perfected;" "the love of God." This can scarcely mean here the grace or affection of love; as the love of God to us, or our love to God; but rather the fellowship of love between him and us. "In the keeping of his word" that fellowship of love, so far as we are concerned, finds its completion, or "is perfected."

Most fitly does this thought come in between the other two. I. To know God; II. To have his love verily and indeed perfected in us; III. To be ourselves in him; that is our thrice holy standing, our thrice blessed privilege, in his Son Jesus Christ. If we would make sure of it, in our experience, it must

be by "keeping his commandments,"—"keeping his word."

I. There were those in John's day who affected to "know God" very deeply and intimately, in a very subtle and transcendental way. They laid great stress on thus knowing God; so much so that they took or got the name of knowing ones, or Gnostics. All about the essence of God, or his mysterious manner of being, they knew. All his attributes, and inward actings, and outward emanations, they knew. The forthgoings from everlasting of all his thoughts and volitions they knew so familiarly, and by so sublime an insight, that they could give to every one of them a local habitation and a name. They knew how heaven swarmed with these divine effluences or outcomings, as it were, of God's inner nature; to which they ascribed a sort of dreamy personality; associating them into a spiritual or ghostly hierarchy, in whose ranks they dared to place the very Son of the Highest himself. So they, after their own fashion, knew God. And through this knowledge of him, they professed to aspire to a participation of his godhead; their souls or spiritual essences being themselves effluences and emanations of his essence; and being therefore, along with all other such effluences or emanations, ultimately embraced in the Deity of which they formed part. So they "knew God."

But how did they "know that they knew him"? Was it because they "kept his commandments"? Nay, their very boast was that they knew God so well as to

be raised far above that commonplace keeping of the commandments which might do for the uninitiated, but for which they had neither time nor taste. Their knowledge of God was too mystical and ethereal—too much of a rhapsody or a rapture—to admit of its being tested in so plain and practical a way. It was a small affair for them to “keep the commandments,” and a small affair also to break them. They were occupied with higher matters. Their real life was in a higher sphere. They cared for nothing but “knowing God.”

John denounces strongly their impious pretence,—“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” The language is more forcible than ever. He not merely “lies”(i. 6); but “is a liar.” Not merely does he “not do the truth,” but in that man “the truth is not.” To affect any knowledge of God that is not to be itself known and ascertained by the keeping of his commandments,—to dream of knowing God otherwise than in the way of keeping his commandments,—is to be false to the heart’s core.

For, in fact, the question comes to be, Do I know God as a mere abstraction, about whose nature I may speculate? Or do I know him personally, as a man knows his friend? This last is the only kind of knowledge of God which John can recognise and own. It is what he starts with; his fundamental position; his postulate or axiom. God is known through or in the incarnate Word of life, as he was heard, looked upon, handled, by those who lived familiarly with Jesus. “Who-

soever hath seen him hath seen the Father." "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him." God is known in Christ. And he is known in Christ as personally interested in me, and personally dealing with me; kind to me; compassionate to me; waiting to be gracious to me; opening his arms to embrace me; seeing me afar off; meeting me; falling upon my neck and kissing me. When the Spirit opens my eyes, it is thus that I know God. And how may I know that I do really know him thus? How otherwise than by my keeping his commandments? For this knowledge is intensely practical; not theoretic and speculative at all; but only practical. I know God in the giving of his Son to me and for me; in his giving him to be my friend and brother; my surety and redeemer; giving him to die for me on the accursed tree. With the new mind and the new heart created in me by his own Spirit, I know God now in Christ, as washing me from all my guilt; taking me home; making me his child and heir. I know him by the fatherly benignity of the look he bends on me, and the fatherly warmth of the grasp in which he holds me. And I may assure myself that in any tolerable measure I thus know him, only if I keep his commandments.

Let me bless his name for that simple practical test. I am not sent to any Gnostic school to seek a certificate of scholarship from any of these knowing ones. I have not to graduate in any of their colleges. I need not aspire to any mystic insight, or visionary rapture, or sublime beatific ecstasy. A lowlier path by far is mine.



I am ignorant of many things ; ignorant of much even that it concerns me to learn of God and of his wondrous love to me ; far, very far, from knowing him as I ought. But do I so know him as to make conscience of keeping his commandments—keeping them as I did not care to keep them once? Is my proud will subdued and my independent spirit broken? Moved and melted by what I know of God, do I, as if instinctively, cry, “ Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?” Then, to me, this word is indeed a precious word in season ; “ hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments ” (ver. 3).

II. For while “ he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him ” (ver. 4) ; “ whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected ” (ver. 5).

The change of expression here is surely meant to be significant. “ His commandments,” which may be many and various, are reduced to what is one and simple—“ his word.” The meaning is doubtless in substance the same ; but there is a shade of difference. This “ keeping of his word ” is, as it were, the concentrated and condensed spirit and essence of the “ keeping of his commandments.” The thought suggested is not so much that of the things commanded, as of the command itself. It is not commandments, but God commanding ; not speech, but God speaking ; his word. The knowing ones stigmatised as liars pretended to know God, not as speaking but simply as being ; not by communication from him, but by insight into him ; not by his word, but by their

own wisdom. But you know him by his word. And that word of his, when you keep it, perfects the good understanding, the covenant of love, between him and you.

For, indeed, it must always be by word that love is truly perfected between intelligent parties; by the plighting of troth; by the interchange of pledge or promise expressed or understood; by word given and kept. How is it, when I know a friend, that his love is truly perfected in me? He gives me his word, and I keep it. I have nothing else for it but his word; his bare and naked word. I need nothing else; I desire nothing else. I keep that word of his; I keep it firm and fast. And as he is true to me, and I am true to him, I find that mere word of his, so kept by me, a sufficient warrant and assurance of all being right, and there being nothing now between us but true and perfect love, a true and perfect state of amity and peace.

When God is the party concerned, the keeping of his word on my part may well suffice for his love being thus truly perfected in me. For that word of his, the sum now to me of all his commandments, is his one simple assurance of good will in his Son. It is his word of reconciliation in Christ. It is, one might say,—“for in the word is life,”—Christ himself, the reconciler. It is “God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses.” It is a word of very complete and comprehensive sweep: embracing all on God’s part that is sovereign, efficacious, and authoritative, in the gift of his grace and in the obli-

gation of his law ; and all on our part that is humble, submissive, and obedient, in our trusting acceptance of the gift and cordial compliance with the obligation. It is a word making over to us freely from God all that is his ; for “ he that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? ” It is a word winning over to God freely from us, ourselves, and all that is ours ; for “ we are not our own but bought with a price,” and so bound to “ glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are his.” So full, complete, perfect, is this word on both sides. Only let it be kept. Kept on God’s side it cannot fail to be. Let it be kept on ours. God is faithful to keep it to us. Let us be faithful to keep it to God. Kept by us, as it is sure to be kept by him, it does indeed ratify a perfect treaty of love.

III. And thus “ we know that we are in him ” (ver. 5). This, as it would seem, is the crown and consummation of all ; first, to be in him ; and, secondly, to know that we are in him.

First, to be in him ; in a God whom we know, and between whom and us there is a real and perfect covenant of peace and love ;—that must be an attainment worth while for us to realise ; worth while for us to know or be sure that we realise.

To be in him ! This cannot mean to be in God in any mystical sense of absorption ; as if we were to lose our distinct personality, and be swallowed up in the ocean of the divine essence. All such ideas are precluded by the clear and unequivocal recognition of per-

sonal dealings, as between one intelligent being and another, implied in our knowing God, and in his love being truly perfected in us. But short of that wild and impious dream, it is not easy to urge too far the almost literal significancy of the expression,—“we are in him.” Certainly it is something very different from merely being in what is his; as in his church, his house, his family, his kingdom. It is being in himself. What, on his part, that implies is among “the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, but which God hath prepared for them that love him.” Even to them it cannot be described beforehand. It transcends all that in imagination they could previously grasp. It is so “prepared for them that love him” that only in loving him can they apprehend and prove it. To be in him! What a covering of them with his wings—what a wrapping of them round with his own divine perfections—what an identifying of them with himself, of their interests with his, their triumph with his, their joy with his; what an identifying of himself with them, his grace with their guilt, his strength with their weakness, his glory with their salvation! To be in him! What a surrounding of them on all sides as with eyes innumerable and arms invincible; clothing them, as it were, with his own omniscience, his own omnipotence! Truly “as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people.” They are in him. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

But it is rather what on our part this phrase implies,

that we are here led to consider. What insight! What sympathy! What entering into his rest! What entering into his working too! What a fellowship of light!

We are in him! We are in his mind. He lets us into his mind. If I have a friend whom I know, and between whom and me there is a truly perfected love, I long to enter into his mind; to be partaker with him in all his mental movements and exercises, as he reads, and meditates, and studies; as he lays his plans and carries them into effect. I would be so in him that there should be, as it were, but one mind between us. O to be thus in God, of one mind with God!

We are in his heart. He lets us into his heart,—that great heart of the everlasting Father so warmly and widely opened in his Son Jesus Christ. To be in him, so that that heart of his shall draw to itself my heart, and the beating of the two shall, as it were, be in unison, and the throbbing of the two shall be blended in one;—and the Father's deep earnestness shall be mine; and the Father's holy wrath shall be mine;—and the Father's pity shall be mine; and the Father's persuasive voice shall be mine; as I plead with my fellows;—"Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?"—what a thought! To be thus in God through our knowing him, and through his love being perfected in us! Surely that is about the highest reach of our fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

And therefore, secondly, to know that we are thus in God cannot but be a matter of much concern. Who, on such a point, would run the risk of self-deception—nay,

of being found "a liar, not having the truth in him"? To have some tolerable confidence, tolerably well grounded, that my being in God is a reality; that surely is desirable if it can be attained. And how am I to seek it? How am I at once to aim at being in him, more and more thoroughly and unequivocally, and also to aim at verifying more and more satisfactorily and surely my being in him? For these two aims must go together; they are one. Keep his word, is the reply. Is that then all? I may be tempted to ask. Am I to look for no clearer token, no more decisive mark and proof of my being in him? Is there to be no tangible evidence in my experience, no sign from heaven—no voice—no vision—no illapse or sliding into my soul, I know not how, of some sensible assurance, I know not what, to attest my being in him? Nay, to have such confirmation might only mislead me. I might content myself with the sign, instead of striving to realise more and more what it signifies. Better, safer, is it, that I should be directed to a humbler method, the "keeping of his word." But is that enough? Yes; for in the "keeping of his word," "his love is truly perfected" in us who thereby "know him."

Let us keep his word in that view of its power and virtue; as the seal and bond of a perfect understanding and a perfect state of peace between him and us. Let us cultivate what is the vital element of all intelligent and loving fellowship between him and us—the spirit which prompts the cry, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." In that spirit let us "keep his commandments;" the

commandments in which his word is broken up in detail ; the commandments which assure us of his love to us ; the commandments which exercise our love to him. Let us keep the commandments of his word—which, in our keeping of them, assure us of his love to us, “ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,” “ come now and let us reason together,” “ this is my beloved Son, hear him.” Let us keep also the commandments of his word, which, in our keeping of them, exercise our love to him ;—“ Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,” “ risen with Christ, seek the things which are above,” “ come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.” So keeping his word and his commandments, we more and more completely apprehend his love as truly perfected in us. We more and more clearly, brightly, hopefully, ascertain that we do know God and are in God, in some measure as he knows God and is in God, who while on earth could truly say, “ The Father knoweth me, and I know the Father ;” “ Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.”

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## VIII.

THE CHRISTLIKE WALK OF ONE WITH GUILLESS  
SPIRIT ABIDING IN GOD.

“He that saith he abideth in him [God] ought himself also so to walk even as he [Christ] walked.”—1 JOHN ii. 6. (See foot-note, pp. 91, 92.)

To “walk as Christ” walked is essential to our “abiding in God ;” not merely “being in God,” as it is put in the previous verse, but being in him permanently ; continuing or abiding in him. It is therefore the test of our truth when we “say that we abide in God ;” it is the very means by which we abide in him. Jesus tells us (John xvi. 10, 11) that he continued or abode in the Father’s love by keeping the Father’s commandments. That was his walk, by which he abode in God. If we would abide in God as he did, we must walk as he walked, keeping the Father’s commandments as he kept them. Thus this verse fits into those that go before, and completes, so far, the apostle’s description of the divine fellowship, viewed as a fellowship of holy light, and transforming, obedient, knowledge.

The walk of Christ, abiding in God, is therefore to be considered as our study and our model.

I. It is sometimes said of Christ simply that he walked, without anything to define or qualify the expres-



sion. "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee ; for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him" (John vii. 1). He says it of himself ; "Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the third day, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke xiii. 33). Again he says, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (John xii. 9, 10).

Jesus then walked. His life was a walk. The idea of earnestness, of definiteness of purpose, of decision and progress, is thus suggested. Many men live as if they were not really walking, but lounging and sauntering ; or running fitfully and by starts, with intervals of aimless, listless sloth ; or musing, or dreaming, or sleep-walking. Some are said to be fast-livers ; their life being not a walk, but a brief tumultuous rush of excitement, ending soon in vacancy, or something worse. Others again live as if life were to be all, instead of a walk, a gay and giddy dance ; alas ! they may find it the dance of death. It is something to apprehend and feel that life is a walk ; not a game, or pastime, or outburst of passion ; not a random flight, or a groping, creeping, grovelling crawl, or a mazy labyrinthine puzzle ; but a walk ; a steady walk ; an onward march and movement ; a business-like, purpose-like, step-by-step advance in front ; such a walk as a man girds himself for, and shoes himself for, and sets out upon with staff in hand, and firm-set face, and cap well fixed on the head, and holds

on in, amid stormy wind and drifting snow ; resolute to have it finished and to reach the goal. Such a walk is real life ; life in earnest. Such a walk pre-eminently was the life of Jesus. No dilletantè trifler was he ; nor a visionary ; nor a loiterer ; nor a runner to and fro ; nor a climber of cloud-capped heights ;—but a walker ; a plain pedestrian walker ; a determined walker, whom nothing could turn aside or turn back. It is said of him, on one occasion, that he “stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.” That was his way, his manner always. He walked. He steadfastly set his face to walk. On, still on, he walked, unflagging, unflinching ; he walked right on. It is a sublime spectacle to gaze on ; this Jesus, Son of God, Son of man, thus walking ; in Galilee ; in Jewry ; his face steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem.

Now, “he that saith he abideth in God, ought himself also so to walk even as Jesus walked.” It was as always “abiding in God” that he “walked.” It was his abiding always in God that constrained him to walk ; to be always walking. It was that which would not suffer him either to stand still or to make haste ; either to pause and fall behind, or to run too fast before. He abode in God. He walked as one who was abiding in God all the while he walked. While his feet were busy walking, his soul was resting in God. Outward movement, inward repose ;—the whole man Christ Jesus bent upon the road,—mind, spirit, heart, all bent upon the road ;—and yet ever, at the same time, the whole man Christ Jesus dwelling in the Father’s bosom,—mind, spirit, heart, all dwelling in the Father’s bosom ;

as calmly, tranquilly, quietly, as in that unbroken eternity, ere he became man, he had been wont to dwell there ;—so he walked, abiding in God.

So you also ought to walk even as he walked ;—“abiding in God.” Ah! this blessed combination! Outward movement, inward repose ; the feet busy, active, alert—the soul resting in God ; incessant marching up through the wilderness, amid fightings and fears—but always peace within, peace with God, peace in God ; noise and uproar often to be encountered on the open way, but silence evermore in the hidden part, the deep holy silence of God’s own secret place !

Oh! to walk as one abiding in God ; abiding in him all the while we walk ! Who can look at Jesus walking, without feeling that it is the walk of one abiding in God ? He speaks of himself as “the Son of man which is in heaven” (John iii. 13) ;—not which was, but which is, in heaven. It is as the Son of man who is in heaven even when he is on earth, that he tells of heavenly things. It is as the Son of man who is in heaven that he walks on earth. Hence his life is indeed a walk. His being, all the while he is walking on earth, himself in heaven ; abiding in God ; imparts that clear outlook and that calm confidence, without which there may be wandering up and down, but not real steady walking. Therefore he is neither as one blindly feeling his way, nor as one in doubt or in despair trying every or any path. He walks, “not as uncertainly,”—even as he fights, “not as one that beateth the air.” He walks as one who has “the mastery.” For he walks, abiding in God.

But some one may say, Is not this too high an ideal? Is it not the setting up of an inimitable model? Jesus, the Son of man, while walking on earth, is still in heaven, in a sense in which that cannot be said of any of us. His being still the eternal Son of the Highest as well as the son of Mary, may well be supposed to give him such divine insight and assurance as to make his life more like what life should be—a real walk—than ours can be expected to be.

Not so. For, first, he fully shares with us whatever disadvantage, as regards his walking, may be implied in his being a son of man. And, secondly, he would have us fully to share with him whatever advantage there is in his being the Son of God. For both reasons, our life may be as much and as truly a walk as his was.

First, it is a man whom we see walking; one who is true and very man. His being God also, gives him no exemption or immunity from any of those annoyances, or difficulties, or dangers, which might be apt to turn the walk into some sort of movement more irregular and less becoming. On the contrary, what he saw, and knew, and felt, as the Son of God, made these trials of his walk all the more formidable. He, in his walk, met with far more that was fitted to make his feet stumble and his courage fail, than any of us can ever meet with in ours. And as his divine knowledge gave him a clearer sight, so his divine holiness gave him a keener sense, of it all. If ever this great walker's firm step might totter, and his gait grow staggering, and his eye irresolute, it might well be when, with the full and

vivid apprehension he had of their real meaning and awful horror, he found his walk lying through the wilderness of satanic temptation, the garden of overwhelming agony, the shame and curse of Calvary. Truly he was no privileged walker amid earth's dark scenes of misery and sin ; having for his own share to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, and, before all was over, to taste the bitterness of death, with its cruellest sting, for the very men who cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him !" Think you not that it might have been easier for him to walk calmly and with composure if, when he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, it had been possible for him to be led blindfold ? No. There was no royal road for him to walk in. His walk was on the billows of the angry sea.

Then, secondly, if there is any advantage in the way of imparting firmness and fixedness to his walk, in his being the Son of God, is he not sharing that advantage with us ? Is it his being in God, and abiding in God, as the Son in the Father's bosom, all the time he is walking here below, that makes his walk so admirable for its serene and settled heavenliness ? Does he keep that position to himself ? Does he not make it freely ours ? Is it not as "abiding in God," even as he abides in God, that we are exhorted and expected to "walk even as he walked ?"

II. Let some particulars about this walk be noticed.

1. If we say that "we abide in God," we ought to walk as seeing God in all things and all things in God ; for so Christ walked. Nothing is more conspicuous in

the general bearing of his conduct, and in every detail, than his constant reference to God. "All things" to him "were of God" (2 Cor. v. 18). It was not that he so identified the world around him with God as to reckon devotion to the world equivalent to devotion to God; making the world's business God's worship. It was rather that, abiding in God, he so identified himself with God, that every object, every event, presented itself to him in its relation to God. What is it in God's point of view?—what does it mean as regards him?—what are its aspects towards him?—what is his estimate of it and his mind concerning it?—that is always the uppermost, the only question. And it is the same with persons as with things and circumstances. No man is "known after the flesh" (2 Cor. v. 16). The young man, with all his natural amiability and attractiveness, of whom it is said that "Jesus beholding him, loved him" (Mark x. 21), is yet not known after the flesh; Jesus will know him only in God, in whom he himself abideth. Even though he has to let him go away sorrowful,—himself more sorrowful still for having to let one so lovable go away,—he will walk towards him as himself "abiding in God." Neither the youth's great possessions, nor his all but resistless winning qualities, will counterbalance in Christ's mind what is due to the paramount claims of God and his kingdom. His walk is still, not manward at all,—however strong the temptation to decline a little, a very little, in that direction,—but Godward alone, Godward altogether. It is still always God and

not man who is in all his thoughts. Is a woman who has been a sinner behind him, washing his feet with her tears?—or before him alone, abashed, all her accusers having gone out? Not a thought of what men may think or say is in his mind; but only how his Father will feel, and what his Father will have him to do. So he walked, “abiding in God.” And “he that saith he abideth in God ought himself also so to walk.”

2. He ought to walk as one subordinating himself always in all things to God; submitting himself to God; committing himself to God. “Abiding in God,” he ought to walk as being himself nothing; God, in whom he abides, being all in all. So Christ walked. He did not seek his own glory, or do his own will, or find his own meat, or save his own life, or plead his own cause, or avenge his own wrong. Self is never a consideration with him, but always God his Father in whom he “abides.”

It is not that he is either a mad fanatic, prodigally reckless of God’s gift of life and of life’s loving comforts; or a mad enthusiast, dreaming of one knows not what absorption of individual personality in some vast and vague idea of the Godhead. He shared the joy of the marriage-feast and the hospitality of the common meal. In the home of Bethany he loved to be with “Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” He was ever, as the Son, distinct from the Father; and as the servant, subject to the Father.

But “abiding in God,” he walked as having no mind of his own, but only to know the mind of God, and to

have it done at whatever cost. It was not self-denial merely, and self-sacrifice. It was the self-denying and self-sacrificing surrender of himself to God. It was, "Lo, I come ; in the volume of the book it is written of me ; I delight to do thy will, O God" (Ps. xl. 7, 8 ; Heb. x. 7-10).

To walk in this respect as Christ walked, abiding in God as he did, is indeed to be emptied of self. But it is not that only. It is to be filled with God. It is to walk humbly, meekly, patiently, cheerfully ;—"seeking not our own, not easily provoked, bearing all things, enduring all things ;"—not as being insensible to pain and grief, or as if we affected the stoical pride of indifference to such things ; but simply as "learning obedience," where Jesus learned it, in the school of suffering and submission.

3. "He that saith he abideth in God" ought to walk in love. If we abide in God, we abide in the great source and fountain of love ; in the infinite ocean of pure and perfect benevolence.

It was thus that Jesus, "abiding in God," walked abroad among men ; the very impersonation of benevolence ; "a man approved of God, who went about doing good." His whole walk was one continuous manifestation of good will to men. And it was of the Father's good will to men that his walk was the manifestation ; for he was ever "abiding in God." No good will to men's principles and practices, while at enmity with God, did his walk manifest ; no such good will as would have their principles and practices tolerated and indulged at



the expense of the honour and the law of that God and Father in whom he was continually abiding. But good will to their persons, to themselves,—ah! how intense, how unwearied, how inexhaustible,—was that walk of his incessantly exemplifying!

Can we say that we “abide in God” as Jesus did, if our walk is not what his was; a walk of active benevolence, practically proclaiming our Father’s good will to men as our brethren? Ah! let us not forget to do good, to distribute, to be kind, to carry food to the hungry, healing to the sick, comfort to the sorrowful, hope to the sinful; to speak a word in season to the weary; to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, while we keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

4. “He that saith he abideth in God ought,” in a word, to walk in unity with God, as being of one mind with God, and of one heart. So Jesus walked. For with reference to his human walk on earth quite as much as to his divine nature, or his being in heaven, he could say “I and my Father are one.” He had no separate interest from his Father; no separate occupation; no separate joy. Whatever touched the Father, equally and in the same way affected him. “The zeal of thine house,” he cried, “hath eaten me up.” He pleased not himself; but, “as it is written: The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.” This harmony of sentiment, this conscious unity of desire and aim between him and the Father who appointed his lot,—the result of his “abiding always in God,”—made his life a walk indeed. It was not a walk through plea-

sant places. It was no holiday excursion ; no easy ramble. And yet the sense of a high and intimate community of motive, means, and end between him and the Father, which his abiding ever in God must have inspired, could scarcely fail to invest the scenery through which he passed,—at its very wildest and darkest points,—with a certain charm of divine majesty and awe ; as well as also to impart to his soul, in passing through it, I say not equanimity only, but a measure also of deep and chastened joy.

For, in fact, with all its trials and terrors, its agonies and griefs, I cannot imagine that even to the man of sorrows his walk through life was what could fairly be called unhappy. When the road led through Bethany's peaceful shades, and allowed a night's tarrying in the home he loved so well, the hallowed repose of that familiar friendly circle must have been very sweet to his taste ;—all the sweeter for the thought that, "abiding" in him who put so welcome an entertainment, so congenial a solace, in his way, he was not solitary in the enjoyment of it ;—the relish of it being common to the Father and to him. And even when in his walk he had to "tread the winepress alone ;" yet not alone, for the Father was with him ; when flesh and heart fainting would have moved him almost to put the cup away from him ;—is it conceivable that, "abiding in God," he could ever lose the apprehension of the unity of counsel between them in the great design for which he came into the world ? It could not be with any other feeling

than that of relief, of acquiescence, I will say of intensest satisfaction, that, overcoming in the Spirit the weakness of the flesh, he gave himself up to him in whom, in that dread hour, he was "abiding," if it were possible, more closely, more intimately, more lovingly than ever;—"Father, thy will be done;"—"Father, glorify thy name;"—"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

So he walked. And so it is our privilege to walk, abiding, by the power of the Spirit, in God as he did; saying always, "Not my will but thine be done."

"Who then is among you that feareth the Lord, and yet walketh in darkness, seeing no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God" (Isaiah l. 10, 11). Walk on still, in darkness if it must be so, but abiding still in God. The darkness will not last for ever. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Walk still on, I say, abiding in God as he did, who, when his walk was as of one forsaken,—through the hell which your sins and mine deserved,—cried still: "My God, my God!" My God, I abide in thee! Though thou slay me, I will trust in thee.

Who says now I "abide in God"? See that you really walk as he walked, who alone is the perfect pattern and example of "abiding in God." Ah! the notion of any other sort of abiding in God, or any other way of abiding in God, than his sort and his way of it,—which his walk so fully verified,—is wholly false and vain.

You cannot hope to abide in God, and in God's love, otherwise than as he did ;—by keeping his commandments.

I charge you, then, all of you, to keep the commandments of God ; to walk in the way of his commandments ; that you may have fellowship with him and he with you. That is the true apostolic fellowship—fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. I ask you, every one of you, how are you walking ? How, and whither ? Are you “walking after the course of this world ?” Then I have to tell you,—or rather Paul tells you,—that you are really “walking after the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” That is your fellowship, the fellowship of the devil, if that is your walk, after the course of this world. And “I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.” But “walk in the light, as God is in the light, and have fellowship with him and he with you, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleansing you from all sin !”

## IX.

THE COMMANDMENT AT ONCE OLD AND NEW TO  
ONE WALKING WITH GUILLESS SPIRIT IN  
THE LIGHT.—THE DARKNESS PASSING—THE  
TRUE LIGHT SHINING.

“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. 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.”—1 JOHN ii. 7, 8.

WHAT commandment does John mean ? Is it the same commandment throughout ? If so, in what sense is it at once old and new ?

Some will have it to be the commandment of brotherly love, introduced at the ninth verse. There is an awkwardness, however, in thus making these two verses describe a commandment not yet mentioned. It is an unnatural mode of writing. And it is unlike the apostle's usual simplicity, to be, as it were, sounding a trumpet of preparation for the precept which he so commends ;—with a sort of rhetorical paradox about its being not new but old, and yet again new ;—and all this before the precept itself is indicated. And the last clause of the seventh verse seems conclusive against that view. The apostle tells what the commandment is. It

is "the word which ye have heard from the beginning." Surely this may best be understood as referring back to the word of life (i. 1), which the apostle says he and his fellow-apostles had "from the beginning heard and seen and handled," and which, he adds, "we declare unto you." Is not that what he means here by "the word which ye have heard?"

It is not new, but old ; as old as the first preaching of the gospel. I am no setter-forth of novelties or strange doctrines. What I write (1.) concerning the fellowship of light and joy with the Father and the Son into which your believing knowledge of the word, through the teaching of the Spirit, introduces you ; (2.) concerning the indispensable condition of that fellowship, your walking in the light as he is in the light ; (3.) concerning the sacrifice and advocacy of Jesus Christ, as meeting that sense of sin and shortcoming which otherwise must be ever fatally dimming the light, and mar- ring the joy, of the fellowship ; and (4.) concerning the obligation of a sinless aim, an obedient heart, a Christ-like walk, if you would really know God, and have his love perfected in you, and be in him ;—all that, which I am writing to you, is old. It is no new discovery, no new despatch from heaven. It is "an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning."

But what of the intimation that follows,—"a new commandment I write unto you?" It is not merely a thrice-told tale that I am writing to you about. There is something fresh and new about it. And what is that ?

It is the realising of this fact, or this thing, as true, first in Christ and then in yourselves, that “the darkness is past,” or is passing, “and the true light is now shining.”

For so this clause really runs. It is not a reason for the thing which is true ; it is the very thing itself ;—“which thing is true, in him and in you ; this, namely, that the darkness is past, or is passing, and the true light now shineth.”

This is what constitutes the newness of the old commandment. It is a new thing to have this fact becoming matter of consciousness ;—the fact of its being true, in Christ and in you, that the darkness is passing and the true light is now shining. The obligation to make this good is emphatically a new commandment. It commands, or commends, what must ever be felt to be a novelty.

Thus viewed, this new commandment may bring out a singularly close parallelism or identity between Christ and all who, abiding in God, walk as Christ walked.

I. In Christ personally this is true, “that the darkness is passing and the true light is shining.” In so far as this is a continuous process, or progressive experience, it is true of Christ only as he walked on earth. Look at him then, in his human life.

A new commandment is given to him ; a new charge or commission from above. Something new is given to him to be learned as a message or lesson. It is the message or lesson of its being “true in him that the darkness passeth, and the true light now shineth.” He

is placed in new circumstances. He is plunged into the very thickest of the fight that is evermore waged here below between the two. On the one hand, darkness—the darkness that is opposed to the light which God is, and in which God is,—the light which is at once his nature and his dwelling-place,—that darkness is no stranger to him ; he no stranger to it. Neither outwardly in his history, nor inwardly in his inmost soul, is he a stranger to it or it to him. Darkness is upon him, around him, in him ; the darkness of the sin with which he comes in contact,—the sin which, in its criminality and curse, he makes his own. But, on the other hand, the true light is ever shining upon him, around him, in him ; the light of the Father's loving eye bent upon his suffering Son ; the light of his own single eye ever bent upon the Father's glory. In him this darkness and this light are incessantly meeting ; present always, both of them, vividly present to his consciousness ; felt to be real, intensely real ;—the darkness, however, always as passing ; the true light always as now shining.

For this is the peculiarity of the position. The darkness is on its way to the oblivion in which all the past lies buried, because there is now true light shining. It is no longer a doubtful struggle, or one that might issue in a drawn battle. The seed of the woman is bruising the head of the serpent. The true light now shining is causing the darkness to pass. So Jesus perseveres. Otherwise he must have given way. In him, even when in his experience and to his agonised consciousness, the darkness is deepest, it is still a darkness which is pass-



ing, and is realised as passing. In him, even then, the true light is shining. It is a present shining; it is the true light shining now. It is not merely that there might be in him, amid the darkness, some memory of the true light shining once, of old, from everlasting; or some anticipation of its shining again soon, to everlasting. But the true light is shining in him now; the light of conscious victory over the passing darkness. Therefore "for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross."

II. What is true in him should be true in us, and should be realised by us as true in us as in him. That is the apostle's new commandment. For we enter into the position of him in whom, in the first instance, that is true. The commandment to us is to enter into his position. And it is a new position. It is new to every one with whom the commandment finds acceptance, and in whom it takes effect. It is a new thing for me, in compliance with this commandment, to apprehend it to be true, in Christ and in me,—in me as in Christ,—that the darkness is evanescent, vanishing, passing, and that the true light is now shining. Nay more, it is a new thing for me every moment. Not once for all, but by a constant series of believing acts and exercises of appropriation, I recognise it as true in him and in me, that the darkness is passing and the true light is now shining.

1. "The darkness is passing." Is it so with me, to me, in me? Then all that pertains to the darkness, all that is allied to it, is passing too. It is all like a term

in course of being worked out in an algebraic question ; a vanishing quantity ; a fading colour. Is it thus that I practically regard the whole kingdom of darkness, and all the works of darkness, and all the terrors of darkness ; the power of darkness ; the darkness of this world and the rulers of it ?

Plainly there is here a thoroughly practical test. What is the darkness to me as regards my relation to it and my esteem of it ? Or the things of darkness—what are they ? I know well enough what the darkness, in this use of the word, means ; what it is. It means, it is, the shutting out of God. For darkness is the absence of light. But “God is light.” This darkness, therefore, is the absence of God, the shutting out of God. In whatever place, or scene, or company, God is shut out, there is darkness. Whatever work or way God is shut out from,—that is a work or way of darkness. Whoever shuts out God from his thoughts is a child of darkness. Now I come into contact with this darkness on every hand, at every point. Places, scenes, companies, from which God is shut out ; works and ways from which God is shut out ; people from whose minds and hearts God is shut out ;—I am in the midst of them all ; they press upon me ; I cannot get rid of them. Tempting, flattering, cajoling ; or trying, threatening, persecuting ; they are on me like the Philistines on Samson. Worse than that, they are in me, as having only too good auxiliaries in my own sinful bosom. How do I regard them ? Do I cleave to them—to any of them ? Would I have them to abide, at least a little

longer? Would it pain me to part with them and let them pass? Or is it this very feature about them all that they are passing,—that the darkness which owns them all is passing,—that I fasten upon for relief and comfort? Is it that which alone reconciles me to my being still obliged for a season to tolerate and have dealings with the darkness?

For dealings with this darkness I cannot but have. I have to go down into its depths to rescue, if it may be, its victims. And I have to resist its solicitations when its ministers come to me disguised as angels of light. My soul, like the righteous soul of Lot, must be vexed with the evil conversation and ungodly deeds that the darkness covers in Sodom. I have to stand its assaults; and when reviled, revile not again. So this darkness, this shutting out of God, with its manifold influences and agencies, besets me. How do I feel towards it? Have I still some sympathy with it in some of its less offensive aspects? Am I still inclined to make terms with it, so as to disarm its hostility, and even taste, in some safe manner and degree, its friendship? Would its instant and thorough disappearance from before me,—would my instant and thorough removal from beside it,—be altogether welcome? Would I have it stay with me or pass from me? Is the darkness of this world, with its pursuits and pleasures and amusements, its seductions, its associations, its customs and fellowships,—in which God is not, and therefore light is not,—is it a lingering friend to me, or a departing stranger—a retreating foe?

“The darkness is passing.” Is that true in me, as in Christ, with reference not merely to the darkness of this world that has such a hold on me, but also and chiefly to the darkness of my own shutting out of God; the darkness of my shutting out of God from my own conscious guilt and cherished sin? That is darkness indeed. Is it passing? Am I glad of its passing? Or am I somehow, and in some measure, loving it still?—so loving it that I would not have it altogether or all at once pass? Say that my sin is finding me out;—the sin, generally, of my state and character before God, or some particular sin. Say that I am falling away from my first love, or coming again under the dominion of some form of evil;—that, in some particular matter, my heart is not right with God. So far as that matter is concerned, I would shut out God. I would put in something between him and me; some excuse; some palliating circumstance; some countervailing aspect of goodness; some plea of self-justification of some sort. That is the darkness which, in such a case, I naturally love. And I feel myself drawn to love it, even in spite of my experience of the more excellent way of guilelessness on my part towards God, and grace on God’s part towards me. But is it passing—this darkness? Is it passing with my own consent? Do I make it free and right welcome to pass? Or do I cleave to it as if I would still have a little of it to abide with me? Ah! this darkness, this shutting out of God! How apt am I, if not to ask it, at least to suffer it, to return and remain. “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and

know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

“The darkness is passing.” Is this my stay, my hope, my joy in the hour of its fiercest power? When it gathers thickest and falls heaviest, hiding God’s face from me ; when all about me and in me is so dark that I cannot see my signs ; when a sense of guilt sinks me as in a dark pit, and “the sorrows of death compass me, and the pains of hell get hold upon me, and I find trouble and sorrow ;”—let me fasten on this “thing which is true in Christ and in me, that the darkness is passing.” I am suffering with Christ, undergoing a kind of crucifixion with him. To me, as to him,—to me conscious of sin, my own and not another’s,—the cup of wrath is presented. On me, as on him, the awful blackness of that day of doom settles down. To me, as to him, sin is indeed exceeding sinful ; and the death, which is its wages, terrible. Sold under sin, I am consciously, with a keen and nervous sensitiveness of conscience, dying that death. My faith is failing. Unbelief all but has the mastery. But “a new commandment” is given me, and a new power, at the critical moment, to realise it as a thing true in Christ, and therefore true in me, that this “darkness is passing.” In him it is true only through his draining the cup of wrath, dying the accursed death for me. O my soul, bless thou the Lord, that it is already and most graciously true in thee, because so terribly true in him, that, without cost to thee, though with infinite cost to him, this great darkness passes away for ever !

2. "The true light is now shining." This "thing also is true in Christ and in you ;" in you as in Christ ; in you because in Christ. And it is to be apprehended and felt as true now. The true light now shineth. It is not said that this true light is to shine hereafter. This is not represented as a benefit to be got, or as a reward to be reached, after the darkness shall have passed. It is a present privilege or possession,—a thing which is true in Christ and in you,—that all the time the darkness is passing the true light is shining. "Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." That is the gospel call to the church and to every member of it. It is true, as a great fact, in you as in Christ, that the true light now shineth. Its present shining is in you, as truly as in him, a blessed reality.

For this true light now shining, which is a true thing in you as in Christ, is simply what Christ found it to be ; God's loving eye upon you, and your single eye towards God. That is the true light now shining. And the fact of its now shining while the darkness is passing, is the thing which is to be recognised as true, in you as in Christ.

That is the "new commandment ;" a commandment always new ; conveying in its bosom an ever-fresh experience, pregnant with ever-fresh experimental discoveries of him who is light, and who dwells in light. Only act up to this commandment ; be ever acting up to it more and more. Enter into the spirit of it, and follow it out to its fair and full issues. The newness of it, its

constant novelty, will be more and more apparent, or at least more and more felt and relished. A loving Father's eye ever fixed upon you, and a filial eye in you ever fixed upon him ;—that, I repeat, is the true light now shining in you as in Christ. It is not outward revelation only ; it is inward illumination as well. It is the Spirit that dwelt in Christ dwelling also in you ; shedding abroad in your hearts the love of God, and calling forth the simple response of obedient love in return. Let no child of God say that this shining of the true light must be reserved for the future. The true light shineth in him as in Christ now. The new commandment concerning it is in force now. It is a great fact, a thing which is true in Christ,—not in Christ considered as glorified,—but in Christ humbling himself, in Christ walking, in Christ crucified,—that not only is the darkness passing, but the true light is now shining. It is, it should be, it must be, it shall be, a great fact, a thing that is true, in you also. Is it not so ? Why should it not be so ? Is not that great, open eye of your Father in heaven continually beholding you ? Yes ! Even when in a little wrath he hides his face from you, even when he smites you with the rod, are you not under that benignant eye ? And on your part, through grace, may not this voice be ever going upwards to the throne of grace ? “ Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress ; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us ” (Ps. cxxiii. 2).

Thus it is "true in him and in you, that the darkness is passing, and the true light shineth." And it is ever a new oracle of divine grace. It will always be so to the pilgrim on his way through the dark wilderness to divinely-lighted Canaan. It will always be so, at every step, to you who, abiding in God, walk even as Christ also walked. When faint and weary because of the way, tempted almost to give up and to give in, as if your striving against sin were all in vain, and your endurance of the contradiction of sinners against yourself more than flesh and blood can stand, call to mind this word—"Which thing is true in him and in you, that the darkness is passing, and the true light now shineth." It is a new word to you then, a new assurance, a new appeal. It dissipates the gloom that is enshrouding all things to your view. Lo! they are all new in the true light that is shining. Whenever the old shadows are flinging themselves again across your path, the old misgivings and questionings, the old doubts and fears, the old partial dealings with God's promises in the word of his gospel, the old hesitations about the freeness of his grace, and the sufficiency of his great salvation, and your title to believe in the forgiveness of your sins; call to mind this word: "Which thing is true in him and in you, that the darkness is passing, and the true light now shineth." It rings as a new Jubilee trumpet. It breathes new life into you. For "in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation;



I will trust, and not be afraid : for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song : he also is become my salvation." Are old frames coming back upon me : old ways of thinking and feeling about the service of God, and the troubles of life, and the terrors of death ; the old ideas as to God being an hard master, and his commandments being grievous ; the old spirit of bondage, the old servile grudging, the old rebelliousness,—that makes duty irksome, and self-denial hard, and labour thankless, and the whole doing of God's will a dull routine or dreary task ? Let me call to mind this word : "Which thing is true in him and in you, that the darkness is passing, and the true light now shineth." Is it not a new and spirit-stirring summons to me ? Is it not a new gospel to me ? Is it not a new quickening, a new awakening ? Is it not a new prayer that it prompts ?—"Create in me a clean heart, O Lord ; and renew a right spirit within me."

And now, connecting the two verses which we have been considering separately, we may see how John, being "a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," is "like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasury things new and old." He probably had in his view a class of men, not uncommon in his day, who thirsted for novelties, if not in the doctrines of the gospel themselves, at least in the way of setting them forth ; upon whom the primitive "simplicity that is in Christ" was beginning to pall ; by whom the commonplace preaching of the cross was

felt almost to have become effete, and to have lost its stimulating power. John will not pander to such a taste. He has been discoursing about high matters ; but he is careful to assure his readers that they are not the sort of novelties for which some have a craving. There is nothing really new in his teaching. It is the old word which has been heard from the beginning ; the same word that "Paul and Apollos and Cephas" proclaimed ; the same word that John has been always reiterating. But if any will have novelty, here is a safe receipt for it. Let them make the old word new in their own experience by the ever-fresh practical application of it, in the ever-fresh practical apprehension of the "thing which is true in Christ and in them, that the darkness is passing, and the true light now shineth." For though doctrinal Christianity is always old, experimental Christianity is always new. The gospel preached to us is old ; but the gospel realised in us is always new. Christ set forth before our eyes is always old ; but "Christ in us the hope of glory,"—"Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith,"—Christ becoming more and more, through the Spirit's teaching, part and parcel of our whole inner man—this Christ is always new.

## X.

BROTHERLY LOVE A TEST AND MEANS OF BEING  
AND ABIDING, WITH GUILLESS SPIRIT, IN THE  
LIGHT, INSTEAD OF WALKING IN DARKNESS.

“He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him: 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.”—1 JOHN ii. 9-11.

“HE that saith he is in the light” is one who professes to obey the “new commandment;” to realise in himself, personally, the new position or state of things implied in its being “true in Christ and in him,”—in him as in Christ,—“that the darkness is passing and the true light is now shining.” He says he is in the light which is now shining and chasing the darkness away. But he “hateth his brother;” one who says the same thing; one in whom, as in Christ and in him, the same thing is true. He refuses to recognise him as a brother, or to regard him with brotherly love. And that is enough to prove that he cannot really be himself one of those in whom, as in Christ, “this thing is true, that the darkness is passing and the true light is now shining.”

On the other hand, “he that loveth his brother,”—

he that loves as his brother one in whom, as in Christ and in himself, "this thing is true, that the darkness is passing and the true light is now shining,"—not only shows thereby that he speaks truth when he says he is in the light, but takes, moreover, the most effectual means for securing his continuing in the light; so "abiding in the light that there shall be in him nothing to occasion stumbling."

But let him be warned. If he is destitute of this brotherly love, he cannot be in the light; the true light which is now shining. He is in darkness; the darkness which, in all that are Christ's, as in Christ himself, is passing. And according to the darkness in which he is, must "his walk" be. It cannot be the walk of one in whom there is no "occasion of stumbling." It must be the walk of one who is darkly groping his way, "not knowing whither he is going." Nor is this his misfortune; it is his fault. There is light enough, but he refuses to see it; he allows "the darkness to blind his eyes."

This cursory analysis of these verses may suggest for consideration the following particulars respecting brotherly love:—I. Its nature as being a brotherhood of light; II. The reasonableness of its being made a test of being in the light; and III. The fitness of its continued exercise to ensure continued abiding in the light.

I. Brotherly love consists in this, that they "in whom, as in Christ, this thing is true, that the darkness is passing and the true light is shining," recognise one

another as, in that character, and on that account, brethren. That is the first aspect of brotherly love suggested in this Epistle.

Look again, in this connection, at "this thing which is true."

See the vast cauldron or wide ocean of darkness ; restless, tumultuous, angry. It is the chaos of moral evil ; the wild anarchy of ungodliness ; in which, God being shut out, spirits made in his image "wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they are not satisfied" (Ps. lix. 15). Into this darkness, into the thick of it, one plunges himself, who has no affinity with it, and over whom it has no power. But he is in it ; acquainting himself with all its terrors and sounding its utmost depths. He ransacks the chambers of the darkness. Its powers and principalities he defies ; its works and ways, its poor expedients of relief, its miserable comforters, its refuges of lies, he remorselessly lays bare. But more than that he does. He marches straight up to the fountain-head of the horrid stream that has made so vast a desolation. That shutting out of God, which is the real blackness of this darkness, he deals with. To make reconciliation, to make peace, he takes upon himself my dark death, in order that the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of life and light, may quicken and gladden me in him.

Yes ! the darkness is upon him. Its death is upon him ; the death in which there is sin's dark sting and God's dark curse.

But it is passing ; and already the true light is shining.

The eclipse is over ; and lo ! a bright cloud ! a glorious Shechinah ! The righteous God glorified ! The loving Father well pleased ! The Son himself,—yet not for himself but as “ seeing his seed,”—rejoicing and giving thanks !

Now it is with us, as with Christ when in us, as in Christ,—“ this thing is true, that the darkness is passing, and the true light is shining.”

For, first, in Christ, our position with reference to that darkness is changed from what it naturally is. It is reversed. The terrible flood is not now carrying us away ; we stem it holding him—he holding us. We see it passing.

Yesterday it was hurrying me along in its strong deep tide, to what ocean I knew not, and scarcely cared, or did not venture, to ask. Shutting my eyes, I was content to follow the stream. Or if at times some rude shock or some eddying whirl gave me pause, and a momentary alarm seized me as I saw signs of wreck and ruin on every side, I could but catch convulsively some frail stem or slippery rock ; or desperately toss and struggle like some “ strong swimmer in his agony.”

Now all is changed. By grace in Christ, I am in a new way. My head is turned up the stream, and against it.

At first it is a fearful struggle. What waves and billows go over me. No breath, no life is in me. I am lost, I perish !

But lo ! Christ is with me ; he who “ liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore.” He grasps me, and

I grasp him. Together we rise, through such a death as I never thought I could survive, to such a life as—how shall I describe it? How but in inspired words, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

“The things which God hath prepared for them that love him!” Yes! For they are prepared in order to their being presently realised. “The true light now shineth.” As my head is raised, leaning on his shoulder and his bosom; as my feet begin to touch the rock on which, though fierce floods may still try to drown me, my goings are to be established; as I feebly open my heavy eyes in the upper atmosphere I am now beginning to breathe; what bright warm beam is that which lightens up the face of him in whose arms I am, and lightens up my heart as I look and gaze on him, and cling and grow to him! It is the Father loving me as he loveth him. It is “the darkness passing and the true light now shining.”

Then, as the first confused and rapturous joy of my own narrow escape becomes collected and calm, I look around. And I see him—for he multiplies himself and is everywhere—I see him doing the same kind office to one, and another, and another still, that he is doing to me. Here, close beside me,—there, a little farther off,—is a man like myself, in whom as in me;—because in his Lord and mine;—“the darkness is passing and the true light is shining.” I look still, and my sight grows clearer as the light grows brighter. Here and there, all

over, the surface of the dark ocean-stream is studded with miracles of saving mercy, as stupendous as I am myself; I, the chief of sinners, saved by special and as it were chiefest grace. At first I feel as if all around were still thick impenetrable gloom; and I alone were in the fond embrace of one who "loved me, and gave himself for me." But he tells me that he has others; and I see that he has. I see him embracing them because he loved them, and gave himself for them. Shall I not hail them as my brethren? Can I hate, or refuse to love, one who is my brother on such a footing as that? Can any cause of coldness or estrangement have more power than the tie that should thus unite?

II. Hence it is that the existence of this brotherly love is a fitting test of our being "in the light." At all events, the absence of it is conclusive proof that we are not.

For, consider what this hating, or not loving, our brother is; and what it involves.

Here is one who but yesterday was, as we once were, carried helplessly on in the darkness that, as it passes, sweeps so many to destruction. But he has been arrested, and has got a footing. In his experience "the darkness is passing," but he is not now himself passing along with it. He stands against it and stems it. His head being raised above it catches the cheering beams of heaven's light. And yet we who say that this is exactly our case, as we admit it to be his, hate that man; look coldly or cruelly on him; refuse to count him a brother!

I do not ask if this is consistent. The question is



rather—Is it possible? The apostle says it is not. But why not?

It does not always follow that experience of a common danger and a common deliverance makes men brothers. Perhaps it should; where it does not, there is probably something wrong. The bitterest enemies, rescued in their strife from Niagara's Falls, will scarcely have the heart or the hardihood instantly to renew the fight. If they do, all around will cry shame on them. But there is really nothing in what they have undergone together that has any power, in its own nature, to alter their relations to one another, or their feelings towards one another. They are the same men that they were before; and no one has made peace between them. Here, however, there is a peacemaker. First, I find myself individually and personally embraced by him;—lifted up by him out of the darkness of my deep estrangement from God, into the light of God's reconciled countenance; the light of the love of "his Father and my Father, his God and my God." Next, I see him dealing with you, my late companion in the darkness,—my late antagonist, if you will, in some of the darkness's deadly strifes,—exactly as he deals with me. I see him embracing you as he embraces me; lifting you up, as he lifts me, out of the same dark dread and dislike of God into the same light of his love. Do I love him who has me in his arms; keeping me so that it continues to be ever "true in him and in me that the darkness is passing, and the true light is shining?" And do I still hate you whom he has in his arms as he has me, and whom

he keeps out of the darkness and in the light as he keeps me? It cannot be. I can no more hate you than I can hate him. I may say that I am in the light; but if I hate you who also are in the light, I am "in darkness even until now."

Light is in itself—in its very nature and bare shining—a great extinguisher of hatred; especially of hatred among those who should be brethren. It is in the darkness that mistakes occur, and misunderstandings arise. It is in the darkness that injuries are brooded over, and angry passions nursed. If you, brother, and I, are at variance, it is almost certain to be because there is some darkness about us that hinders us from seeing one another clearly. Hence we imagine evil of one another, and impute evil to one another. Let in the light. Let us see one another clearly. Differences between us may still remain; our views of many things may be wide as the poles asunder. But we see that we are men of like passions and like affections with one another. The light shows us that we are true brethren in spite of all.

The light here is the light which God is (i. 5) the light in which God is (i. 7). It is the light which is at once his nature and his dwelling-place.

First, the light is the divine nature; "God is light." If I am in the light, I am a partaker of the divine nature; my moral nature becomes the same with that of God. This identity is very specially realised in the department of the affections,—in the region of the heart. I cannot be in the light—meaning by the light the nature

of God, or what God is—without my heart being like his. To be in the light is to be in a high sense Godlike in our preferences, as Christ showed himself Godlike in his preferences when he was here. We know what his preferences were; they were the same as his Father's. Could it have been said truly of him that he was in the light, if they had been otherwise? Can I say truly that I am in the light if mine are otherwise? What then are my preferences? Whom do I prefer and choose? Is it they whom Christ would have preferred and chosen? Is it they whom his Father and mine prefers and chooses? Are the same persons, and the same qualities in persons, likeable and lovely to me, that would have been likeable and lovely to Christ,—that are likeable and lovely to God? If not, let me beware lest, though I say I am in the light, I may be in darkness even until now.

Again, secondly, the light is God's dwelling-place; "God is in the light." If therefore I am in the light, then I have the same medium of vision, as well as the same nature, with God. Objects appear to me as they appear to God. And so also do persons. This world's darkness obscures features and confounds distinctions. The "ruler of its darkness," the "prince of the power of its air," makes that air of such a dense thickness and of such an artificial hue, that men and things look different from what they are: softened, shaded, subdued; or else distorted and discoloured. If I am in the light, that "darkness is passing." I am as Christ was, in whom, even when he was in the midst of that darkness, it was passing, and "the true light was shining;"

showing him men and things in the light in which his Father sees them. Is it so with me? Does that poor God-fearing man appear to me as he would have appeared to Christ,—as he appears to God? Do I look at the same things in him that Christ and his Father look at? Do I fasten upon the same characteristics of the man that Christ, if he were in my place, would fasten upon,—that his Father and mine is fastening upon? Do the same qualities or adjuncts of the man bulk in my eyes that bulk in theirs? His rags, his unwashed limbs, his sores, as I see him lying a beggar at the rich man's door; or his ungainly aspect and uncouth manners, as he, a clownish rustic, meets me in my dainty path; things in him and about him that are repulsive or annoying; causes of irritation and offence for which, right or wrong, I hold him responsible: these I dwell on, and single out for contemplation, and magnify, and exaggerate. Counterbalancing excellences, redeeming virtues; graces flourishing in circumstances in which mine would languish; exercises of patience, meekness, self-denial, charity, that might put all my easy goodness to shame; escape my notice. They are overlooked, or perhaps disparaged and depreciated. These things ought not so to be. They would not be so with him who is the light of men, if he were in my place. They cannot be so with me, if I am really abiding in the light.

III. The exercise of brotherly love is fitted to be the means of our continuing in the light, so as to avoid the risk of falling (ver. 10). Two benefits are here.

First, positively, by means of brotherly love we

“abide in the light.” The law of action and reaction is here very noticeable. Being in the light begets brotherly love, and brotherly love secures abiding in the light. For this brotherly love is simply love to the true light, as I see it shining in my brother as it shines in Christ. And such love to the true light, wherever and in whomsoever it is seen shining as it shines in Christ, must needs cause me to grow up more and more into the true light myself ; to grow up into Christ, and God in Christ.

There is a well-known principle in ethics, that may furnish an illustration here. It is that of sympathy ; according to which it is found that our moral instincts, judgments, and emotions, are largely developed by our putting ourselves in our neighbour’s place, so as to see with his eye and feel with his heart. It is a most wholesome corrective of our sentiments on all questions of duty that is thus obtained. But it is more. It is a stimulus and incentive impulse also. If I wrap myself up in myself, becoming a sort of isolated being, bent chiefly or exclusively on the preservation of my own virtue and the cultivation of my own character,—my sense of obligation, however sound and alert originally, will be apt to get warped or to grow torpid. Keeping thus aloof from my fellows—self-studious, self-contained,—not only is my conscience towards man dwarfed and dimmed, but my conscience also towards God. I am by no means so sensitively alive to what he claims and what I owe, as when, even in imagination, I associate with myself a brother, and make his mind and soul, as well as my own, my standing-point.

Within the domain of spiritual light and love, a similar fact is to be noted ; a similar law or principle holds good. A selfish religionist is sure to become either morbid or stupid. It is by sympathy and brotherhood that the fire of personal Christianity is fanned. For one thing, it is always refreshing to see how the gospel works in others after it has been working, say for years, in us. To observe the process of fresh conversion or quickening, simply as a spectacle,—to watch it as an experiment,—is both interesting and edifying.

We look on, in a time of general and remarkable awakening. We read or listen to the details of some well-marked missionary movements. Here are new and fresh specimens of people born of the Spirit ; men and women created anew in Christ Jesus the Lord. Surely it is good for us to have such specimens presented to us ; especially if at any time we have been beginning to lapse into a low and languid apprehension of what living Christianity is, and almost to forget the power of a first sense of sin, and a first sight of Christ ;—a first prayer and a first love. And here brotherly love is all in all. Without it, the brightest and most vivid displays of grace, passing before our very eyes, will be all in vain. If we coldly gaze—or curiously inquire,—to criticise, to speculate, to theorise or systematise,—we simply become frozen up in our apathy more and more. Let it be assumed, however, that where God's work is hopefully going on, there our heart is ; that it is there, as a brother's heart, in full brotherly sympathy with all who are en-

gaged in it, and with all whom they are instrumental in saving;—that our fraternal fellow-feeling goes along with the evangelist, even in that warmth and enthusiastic zeal which may occasionally transgress the bounds of prudence or of etiquette;—and that the young converts and newly-enlisted recruits, even in the extremes of their grief and joy, touch a chord within us that awakens the melody of heaven's home. In a word, let brotherly love be in exercise where brethren are seeking brethren, in the Lord, from among the crowd of the ungodly in the world. Let a lively interest be felt. Let reports be earnestly pondered. Let individual cases be made the subjects of special prayer, and let individual souls be embraced as old familiar faces. We catch the contagion of the excitement into the midst of which we throw ourselves. We get a new and fresh idea of what the Spirit's movement is. The light in which these apostles and disciples of a new Pentecost dwell, becomes the light in which we also dwell. Its "clear shining after rain" dispels a world of mists and vapours in our otherwise too still and stagnant firmament. Our abiding in the light is thus more vividly realised, the more our brotherly love is exercised.

It is so, even when from necessity we are listeners and spectators merely. Many a disabled child of God, lying wakeful upon his bed in the night season, feels himself to be all the more sensibly, consciously, rejoicingly, abiding in the light, for the brotherly thought and brotherly prayer he sends far across the ocean;—to yonder missionary with burning lips, preaching Jesus to

some stricken soul,—or to some saved sinner, full of a newly-found Saviour, and shouting aloud for joy.

Much more may this be the effect when we are permitted personally to take part, as fellow-workers and fellow-helpers with the Son, in what he is doing on the earth for the scattering of hell's darkness and the spreading of heaven's light. My own soul prospers as I care for the souls of others. My abiding in the light myself is more and more to me a matter of actual joyous experience and assurance, for every brother into whose being in the light and abiding in the light I, as a brother, enter. It is as if his abiding in the light were added to mine. I appropriate his soul-exercise and make it mine. All different ways of abiding in the light may thus become mine, and I may have the good of them all. How wide and potent is the spell which my brotherly love may thus wield! It lays its hand on the dead; and I have brotherhood with Paul, and John, and Peter; and a whole host of worthies; and a dear cherished friend or two, but yesterday called home. They all abode in the light; in them all the true light shone, as in Christ. But no one of them was in this exactly as any other. They are all, however, available to enhance and intensify my abiding in the light. The sympathy of brotherly love gives me an insight into all their frames, and a fellowship with them in all their feelings. But "the living, the living, they praise God!" Let my brotherly love carry me out to living Christians, and lay me alongside of them, and win for me entrance into their hearts. Let me share their abiding in the light as



they may share mine. Let me be helpful to my brother as regards his abiding in the light. Let me, with a brother's tender hand, remove whatever trouble or sorrow or want may interfere with the bright clearness of the light in which he abides. Let me, with a brother's wise affection, win him more and more into the light's meridian glory. Let me do him all brotherly offices by which his abiding in the light may become less embarrassed and more free and joyous. The whole good is mine as much as his. Thus "he that loveth his brother abideth in the light." This is a positive benefit to himself. And it implies another benefit.

For, secondly, "there is none occasion of stumbling in him." This is a negative advantage ; but it is great. Its greatness will appear if we consider the case of him who is described as wanting it. "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" (ver. 11).

The case put must be viewed as that of one who is so far in earnest as to be really aiming heavenward. He may be even a most painstaking seeker of the heavenward way, and a plodding walker in whatever way he takes to be it. Such was many a Pharisee, like Paul in his days of elaborate self-righteousness. Such was many a Gnostic, or knowing one, among those whom John, I doubt not, had in his view when he was writing this verse. Take a devotee of that sort, engrossed in some self-purifying and self-perfecting spiritual discipline. "He hateth his brother." That means, in John's phrase-

ology, he is destitute of brotherly love. He has no warm brotherly sympathy with other believers. He may have no positive ill-will to any man ; on the contrary, in a sort of vague and general way he may think he wishes all men well. But he has no special affection for godly men, as such ; for children of the light. He is taken up with the care of his own soul, and his preparation for serving and enjoying God now and afterwards. I purposely state the case in its most favourable aspect. Now, how does such a man really walk ? One might suppose that, having nothing to do but to mind his own steps, he must walk very wisely and surely. But alas ! the dreary, dismal records of ascetic and monastic piety prove that its walk is a terrible groping in the dark. Was ever the path of any of these recluses, even the holiest, "like the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" ? Is it not rather a desperate plunging and floundering through mire and filth, amid stones and pitfalls, in the face of grisly phantoms of sin and hell ? The man is bent on righting himself ; ridding himself of lust ; leaving behind him the world, the devil, and the flesh ; working himself up into a state of serene and passionless equanimity, like that transcendental quiescence and repose in which he supposes God to dwell. It is a high though a visionary aim. For the attainment of it what efforts will he not put forth ! what sacrifices will he not make ! to what self-flagellation, self-laceration, bodily and spiritual, will he not submit ! And yet what is it all but wandering as in a starless night ? Incessant failure ; disappointment

after disappointment ; new expedients resorted to in vain ; now, for a moment, a supernatural trance, an ecstatic rapture, to be followed instantly by a fierce gust of unhallowed passion, or some horrid St. Anthony's temptation ! Truly the man knoweth not whither he goeth. His eyes become so blinded that the very light is to him as darkness. The light of the glorious gospel itself fails to illuminate and enlarge his soul. The absence of sympathy ; brotherly sympathy ; first with the elder brother, and then with the little ones in him, explains it all.

For now let brotherly love abound. Try the more excellent way, not of working in upon yourselves that you may be perfect, but of going out after Christ the Shepherd, and going forth by "the footsteps of the flock." Leave the cell, the cloister. Quit even the too exclusive use of the study, the closet. Or at least learn to make the study as wide, the closet as capacious, as the great heart of him with whom you commune in the study, to whom you pray in the closet. For that is brotherly love. It is your loving whom your Father loves ; and loving as he loves. It is the elevating, sanctifying, expanding of your heart, till it becomes, in a sense, of the same character and compass with the holy, loving heart of your Father in heaven. You are not shut up in self, any more than he is. You are abroad among men as he is. There is no longer in you that painful spirit of bondage which is for ever causing offences and the fear of them ; occasioning stumbling-blocks at every turn ; making every step nervous and

uneasy. Saved yourselves by grace, gratuitous and rich and full ; loved with an everlasting love ; grasped in the arms, in the bosom, of him in whom and in you, as now one, "the darkness is passing and the true light is now shining,"—your spirit is free ; your heart enlarged. Being loved, you love. The scales of selfishness fall from off your eyes. Christ sends you to his brethren : "Go tell my brethren." And as you go to them with Christ's message and on Christ's errand, and make them more and more your brethren as they are his, you clearly see your way. He makes it clear. And you walk at liberty when you have respect to all his commandments ; "loving your brother and so abiding in the light."

One thought may be allowed, in closing, as to the peculiar blessedness of there being no occasion of stumbling in you. Occasions of stumbling there will be, enough and to spare, till the end of your course on earth. "It must needs be that offences come." Even Jesus had his stumbling-blocks, his occasions of stumbling, in his path. Peter was one of these when he withstood his going up to Jerusalem. Even the brother you love may be an offence, an occasion of stumbling, to you by the way. But it is something to have none occasion of stumbling within ; to be purged of malice and partial counsel ; to have the narrowing and blinding influence of the love of sin and the love of self exchanged for the broad, clear, free vision and action of the love of God, and Christ, and the brethren, and all men ; to have "the eye single" and "the whole body" therefore "full of light."

## XI.

THE GUILLESS SPIRIT ABIDING IN THE LIGHT  
IN ITS THREEFOLD ASPECT OF CHILDHOOD,  
FATHERHOOD, AND YOUTH.

“ I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. 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 [have written] unto you, little children, because ye have known the father. 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.”—1 JOHN ii. 12-14.

THESE verses form, I think, a break or interruption in the apostle's line of argument. There is, as it were, a pause. John calls upon those to whom he writes to consider, not only what he is writing to them, but what they themselves are to whom he is writing; what is their character and standing; what he is entitled to assume in and about them as likely to ensure a favourable reception of his message. This is a common apostolic method. It is a courteous and complimentary way of insinuating advice; taking for granted the attainments to be enforced. But it is far more than that; and it is so emphatically here. It is a trumpet-call, summoning all the faithful to a recognition of their real and true posi-

tion before God ; and that with a view to their receiving aright what his servant is now writing to them—or, it may be, before this letter reaches them, has written to them—of the divine fellowship of light and love.

How then does John address us here? As “little children,” “fathers,” “young men.” These triads or triplets come in twice. There are two sets of propositions or statements, each of them three in number, and evidently corresponding and parallel to one another. The one set of three is introduced by the verb in the present tense “I write ;”—the other set of three by the verb in the past tense “I have written.” For the authority of manuscripts, critically weighed, as well as the whole structure and symmetry of the passage, requires us so far to amend our present text as to make the last clause of the thirteenth verse consistent with the fourteenth, “I have written unto you, little children.”

Clearly there are two parallel lines running thus :—

I. “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.”

“I have written unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.”

II. “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.”

“I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.”

III. “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.”

“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.”

In either series, in each of the two, “little children” is the endearing term first employed. It is not indeed

the same word in the original in both instances ; but the words are of the same import, and can scarcely be rendered differently. They are the words usually employed by John, and employed by him indiscriminately, when he is tenderly and affectionately addressing believers. They are, both of them, his common and customary words of love ;—"little children"—or babes,—"children"—or boys. Children, little children, they all are ; all alike to whom, as he says, he writes or has written. As such, as little children, he first addresses them all, and appeals to them all collectively. But then, secondly, he separates them into two classes,—“fathers” and “young men,”—old and spiritually exercised Christians on the one hand, and on the other hand, those who are in the fresh and vigorous prime of recent but yet manly Christian experience. All alike are “little children ;” but some are “fathers,” ripe for glory ; others are “young men,” strong for work. Such, as I apprehend, is the real primary meaning of this threefold appeal of John.

But what of the repetition of it?—and the repetition of it with a change of the tense from the present to the past ?

It is a very emphatic reiteration ; having in it a pathos that should be very affecting. The apostle first realises his own position as he is writing now, “I write.” Then he realises what may be the position of those to whom he writes when they receive what he is writing now. To you it may come as what “I have written ;” —the writer having himself been taken home. I am

now writing to you as “little children ;”—to all of you alike I am writing thus lovingly. To some of you, however, I write as to “fathers ;” to others of you I write as to “young men.” Let all that be marked and felt when you come to read what I am now writing. All the more because you may have to read it as what I have written ;—as my parting words to you. The present tense answers well enough now, when I am writing. But I am an old man ; and the past tense may be the right one very soon, even before you can be reading what I am now writing. In any view receive it as what I solemnly and deliberately write ;—or, if I am gone, as what I have solemnly and deliberately written ;—my last legacy, my dying charge. Receive it as my full and final testimony to you, on the subject of what you ought to know and to be and to do, as “little children,” as “fathers,” as “young men.” It is all I have to write : And I write it with all the earnestness of one who, before you read it, may have passed away. I write it as my farewell word.

Thus viewed, the appeal in these verses is surely very impressive and affecting. Let us look at it, first in itself, and secondly in the connection in which it stands.

I. Considered in itself, the appeal recognises, on the one hand, a common character in all believers, that of “little children,” and on the other hand a distinction between “fathers” and “young men.”

1. In addressing us all as little children, John makes a distinction between his first and his second appeal. In the first it is “because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake ;” in the second it is “because ye have



known the Father." In addressing us as separated into two classes,—as fathers and youths respectively,—he merely repeats in the second appeal almost literally what he had said in the first. But in addressing us all as his beloved little ones, he varies the thought. The variation, however, is slight. It is the same thought in reality, only put in somewhat different lights. For the Father is truly known, only in the forgiveness of our sins for his Son's name's sake. It is when we suffer the Son to take us by the hand and lead us home to the Father,—and when we discover, in our experience, how the Father deals with us when the Son presents us to him, saying, "Behold I and the little ones whom thou hast given me,"—it is then, and then only, that we begin to know the Father. Up till that time we have not known him; we have worshipped him, perhaps, but it has been ignorantly; we have misunderstood him, and done him great injustice in our esteem of him. We have had hard thoughts of him; of his character and government and law; of his treatment of us and his requirements from us; of his ways and his commandments; nay, even of his very mercy itself. But we are moved to trust in the name of Jesus, and to make trial of the power of that name with the Father. And what a gushing tide of forgiveness and fatherly love does it cause to rush in upon our souls! How rich and free is the measure and manner of the Father's pardoning grace! We do thus really know the Father; for we know him through our sense and experience of his fatherly love in the forgiveness of our sins for his Son's name's sake.

2. The appeal is next made to the two classes or companies into which we may be divided ; those who are fathers in Israel ; and those who are young men.

Ye fathers in Israel ! the argument with you is, that “ye have known him that is from the beginning.” You have reached a higher, deeper, more satisfying knowledge of Christ, as “him that is from the beginning,” than that which is common to all the household of faith,—all the little ones given to him by the Father. Your clear and calm insight into the glorious person of him for whose name’s sake your sins are forgiven, and who thus introduces you to the knowledge of the Father ; your mature acquaintance with him, in his eternal relation to the Father and oneness with the Father from the beginning ;—should move you to give the more earnest heed to this writing or epistle of mine, both now and when I am gone.

Ye youths, ye young men, the flower of the army of the Lord of Hosts ! I have a hold on you also. You I summon, “for ye have overcome the wicked one” (ver. 13) ; “ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (ver. 14). As good soldiers of Christ, I would remind you of your high vocation ; of what is committed to you ; of what is expected of you. Your sphere is the field of battle. The quiet of contemplative study may best suit aged saints, advanced disciples, “fathers ;” who may best serve the cause by enlarging—under the Spirit’s teaching—their own and the church’s knowledge of the Eternal Word ; elevating their own and the church’s

views of the Son in the bosom of the Father. But the vigour of spiritual youth points to the never-ending conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, as your special department. For you are called to wage war with the wicked one. And you have every encouragement to do so. You have overcome him already in Christ, for he has overcome him. You have but to follow up and follow out the conquest. You are strong, and the word of God abideth in you. And through that word which testifies of Christ's victory abiding in you, the foe is already vanquished. You have overcome the wicked one.

To believers of all ages, to Christians in every stage of advancement, the apostle thus appeals. He first urges arguments and considerations applicable to all alike as little children ; and then such as are proper to fathers, and such as are proper to young men. By these various and accumulated motives, he conjures us to give heed to his teaching in this epistle. It is a very solemn, as well as a very full and comprehensive appeal. And the place in which it stands in the epistle renders it still more emphatic.

II. It stands between two opposite precepts ; the one positive ; the other negative ; "Love the brotherhood" (vers. 9-11) ; "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (ver. 15). To love the Father, and the brethren as the Father's family ;—not to love the world lying in the wicked one ;—these are the contrasted commands between which the apostle's earnest and affectionate appeals occur. Doubtless these

appeals cover the whole epistle ; all that John is writing ; —all that they to whom he writes are to regard him as having written, when the writing reaches them, perhaps after the writer is no more. But they bear immediately on loving the brethren, and not loving the world.

The distinction is created by what John has just been dwelling upon ; the “thing which is true in Christ and in you, that the darkness is passing, and the true light is now shining.” For light is a divider. It was so at the first creation (Gen. i. 3, 4) : “God said, Let there be light : and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good : and God divided the light from the darkness ;” he divided between the light and the darkness. It is so in the new creation. The entrance of the light into the world : its entrance into the hearts of as many as are in Christ ; necessarily causes a division. It unites by a new bond of brotherhood the children of the light among themselves. And it separates between them and the world. The separation, or distinction, is not of their own making, but of God’s. He is in the light. He is himself the light. It is he who is the divider, and not they. Nor is the distinction of such a sort as to feed or nurse vaingloriousness on our part, or to be invidious as regards the world. Far otherwise. It is fitted to humble us in the very dust, as often as we think,—and when do we not think?—of what we are in ourselves, and but for sovereign mercy must ever have been ; of what many, very many, around us are ; less guilty, by many degrees, than we ; and more likely than we to win, not only earth’s ap-

proval, but, one would almost say, even heaven's favourable regard too. What am I? And what are they?

Ah! it is in no spirit of supercilious self-complacency, or self-congratulation, that we associate together as brethren in the Lord, if indeed the true light is shining in us as in Christ, so as to show us the blackness of the darkness that is passing, and in its passing is hurrying to a fatal shipwreck so much that is fair and generous and lovely. No! nor is it with cool indifference that we look on and see its victims struggling in its fierce tide, or sinking lethargic in its quieter and deadlier eddies—feeling, as we do, that there is not one among them who deserves the horrid doom so much as we; and knowing as we do that there is not one whom grace may not make, as grace alone makes any one of us, a member of the brotherhood of light. The division which the light occasions assuredly affords no ground of boasting or of disdain. Nevertheless, it is to be recognised and realised; we must apprehend and feel it. One great design of John, in this whole epistle, is to bring us to a full apprehension and feeling of it; of what it is; and of all that it implies. The line is sharp; the preference must be decided. We have to choose whom we are to love and like—the brethren, or the world.

Now it is for the enforcing of a firm choice and a decided preference on the right side, that John makes his double, and doubly emphatic, appeal to us, as little children, fathers, young men. It is not for our consolation merely, our personal satisfaction and comfortable assurance, that he reminds us of the exceeding great

privileges which, as little children, as fathers, as young men, we possess ; as little children, having our sins forgiven for the Son's name's sake, and in that way knowing the Father ; as fathers, knowing him that is from the beginning ; as young men, having overcome the wicked one. These are all high and blessed attainments, and the consciousness of our right to them in Christ is doubtless a legitimate source of humble, holy, thankful joy. But it is not merely in order that our joy may be full that John dwells so earnestly on these elements of our oneness with Christ in the light. It is for a more practical purpose ; that we may be roused to some adequate sense of the duty of love which we owe to every brother in whom, as in Christ and in us, the darkness is passing and the true light is now shining ; and of the attitude which it is best for us to maintain towards the world ; best with a view to our own consistency and safety ; best also in the view of what is true kindness and faithfulness to the world itself.

Let us look then again at these appeals, in the light in which John's practical design or object in introducing them may seem to place them. In so looking at them, it is not necessary now to consider the apostle as formally classifying us, according to our different stages of advancement, either in the life natural, or in the life spiritual. We all are, we all should be, little children, fathers, young men ;—all three together ;—little children, in respect of our having our sins forgiven for the Son's name's sake, and so knowing the Father ; fathers, in

respect of our loving insight into the mystery of the Son's being from the beginning ; young men, in respect of our overcoming the wicked one. By what we are, in all these three aspects of our spiritual history and experience, John solicits our attention to this letter of his, and to its teaching ; specially that we may love our brother, and not love the world.

I. We are little children, and it is the instinct of little children to cling to home, and shrink from the strange world outside. What makes us little children ? What but our being moved and made willing to accept the forgiveness of our sins for the Son's name's sake, and our coming, in that way, to know the Father ? The Lord says, " Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Our conversion therefore makes us little children. For in our conversion the Spirit takes out of us the proud, cold, hard heart of manhood ; and creates in us the meek heart of childhood, of " the holy child Jesus." For manhood's heart in me, hackneyed in suspicion and selfishness, recoils from subjection to God, and resents the idea of dependence and indebtedness. I must needs justify myself ; I will do something to put myself right. Even when I arise to go to my Father, it is with the purpose of asking a hired servant's food in recompense of a hired servant's work. I am only thoroughly subdued when I suffer my Father to forgive me freely, and take me more lovingly to his bosom than he would have done if I had never gone astray.

Then I am indeed a little child. All the pride of

manhood's self-righteousness, all the stubbornness of manhood's self-will, is gone out of me. I am fain, as when I was an infant at my mother's knee, to have my burdened and broken heart relieved by a flood of penitential tears, as I confess all, and am clasped in an embrace that assures me, oh, how feelingly! that all is pardoned. Then, at last, I know the Father,—what sort of Father he is,—when thus, for his Son's name's sake ;—who has got me, ah, with what difficulty! to let him relieve me of my load of guilt and grief, and bring me home to his Father and mine ;—that Father pardons all my iniquities.

Is it so with me? Then where now will my heart be? A little child's heart is in the home of loving parents, and brothers, and sisters ; away from that home he is uneasy and unsatisfied. Houses of rarest splendour, scenes of fairest beauty, will not reconcile him to prolonged absence from home and prolonged residence elsewhere. He pines for his father's well-known smile, and for the companionship of those who share that smile with him. As to all else on earth, he is a stranger among strangers. You are little children—are you not?—converted and become as little children ; suffering Jesus to bring you to the Father, to receive his forgiveness and to know his love. You are all of you little children ; for such treatment cannot but make you little children. And it is as little children that you are exhorted to love your brother, and not to love the world.

II. You are fathers. Babes in Christ, new-born babes at first, and in a sense always so, for you are always



renewing the experience in respect of which you are little children,—yet, “as new-born babes, you desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” Continuing to be “children always in respect of malice,” the malice of self-conceit and self-seeking, you yet “in understanding are men.” Nay, you are fathers; you attain to the wisdom and insight proper to those who are of full age, as you “grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

What makes you fathers is your “knowing him that is from the beginning;” knowing what we, his apostles, “declare to you of that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us” (i. 1-3). It is your being taught and enabled, by the Spirit, to trace up what you experience in time,—when as little children you receive forgiveness of your sins for the Son’s name’s sake and so know the Father,—to its source in the eternal counsels of the Godhead; in what the Son is to the Father from everlasting. For now you not merely look to Jesus as accomplishing for you a great work, effecting on your behalf a great deliverance, and ministering to you a great benefit. You delight to connect all this with his being from the beginning; with the love with which the Father has from the beginning loved him; and “the glory which the Father giveth him because he loved him before the foundation of the world.” You rise to a believing apprehension of the ultimate ground and reason of the whole vast economy of redemption in the deep, unfathomable, unchangeable nature of Jehovah; in the purpose of the Father’s good pleasure to consti-

tute the Son heir of all things ; in the covenant securing, from of old, to the Son, in requital of his humiliation and obedience and death, a people in whom he is to see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, and for whom, as his body, he is to be head over all things. It is such knowledge as that, of him who is from the beginning, that should make you fathers in Israel. It is when you rise, by the Spirit's teaching, to views like these of Christ and his salvation ; contemplating the gospel plan, not as a mere afterthought and expedient, to meet an emergency and serve a purpose in time, but as the bright and blessed unfolding to all eternity of what from all eternity the Son is to the Father ; dwelling in his bosom ; declaring his name ; glorifying the Father as the Father glorifies him ;—it is then, and in that way, that your Christian character acquires a certain ripe and mellow fulness, and your Christian standing comes to partake of the very stability of the Son's own position, as being from the beginning. You enter into the very mind and heart of God ; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. You are no more little children merely ; apt to be tossed about, and to be unstable. You are fathers.

The fresh feelings of childhood, it is true, must ever continue ; for its experiences are ever freshly revived. But along with these there is now the staid fixedness that should distinguish those who have a sort of fatherly place in the house, and take a sort of fatherly view of its inmates and its affairs. And so literally you do, when you "know him who is from the beginning." You look at the family, "the whole family in heaven and

earth named of him," not now merely from a little child's standing-ground or point of view, but from a father's standing-ground or point of view ; even from the standing-ground or point of view of the great Father himself. Yes ! you come to see Christ the Son as the Father sees him ; not as it were from before only ; from the front ; from where your foot is at this moment planted ; but from behind, from where the Father sits enthroned in his eternal majesty. Your fatherhood is thus, in a sense, your participation, or at least your sympathy, with the Father in his. You are fathers when, knowing him who is from the beginning, you contemplate the whole of his mighty undertaking, with its results and issues, not merely in the aspect presented to poor sinners on earth, but in the aspect presented to the Eternal Father in heaven. As little children, you let the Son lead you up to the Father, that you may receive forgiveness for his name's sake, and so may know the Father. As fathers, able now to sympathise with the Father, you find him giving you new knowledge of the Son, as being with him from the beginning. For as "no man knoweth the Father but the Son and he to whom the Son shall reveal him,"—so "no man knoweth the Son but the Father." And you, when as fathers "you know him who is from the beginning," become truly sharers of the Father's knowledge of the Son. This, I repeat, is your fatherhood. It is your entering in a sense into the fatherhood of God.

Need I take any pains to show how such a fatherhood as this may well be appealed to as a reason why

every one of the family should be to you a brother beloved, and you should not love the world that knows not either the Father or the Son? A father's intelligent interest, as well as a child's loving instinct, must keep your affections always at home.

III. You are "young men." As such, "you are strong." The vigour of manly prime is yours. And you need it all. For the home of brotherhood which you are to love, and the world which you are not to love, are not far apart; at least not yet. They shall be one day, when there shall be a great impassable gulf between them. But they are near one another now. They meet; in my heart within, as well as everywhere without and around me, they meet. Hence, for myself, I have a constant battle to fight, to keep the world out of my heart. Ah! how may that be? How but by "the word of God abiding in me?" Let that word dwell in me richly. Let it so richly dwell in me that the world when it comes to solicit admittance, or to challenge surrender, or to make a breach, or to spring a mine, shall find no access, no open door, no weak defence,—no treacherous longings and lingering likings for some of its good things,—ready to betray the citadel, and capitulate to the foe.

But alas for me! The world is so strong; so apt to draw me away from loving my brother and his fellowship; to draw me into conformity to its own still too congenial ways!

Shall I then faint and grow weary and cease to resist? Nay, "let me be strong," and quit me like a strong

young man : "the word of God abiding in me." For, let me remember, "I have overcome the wicked one." He is the prince of this world ; it lies in his arms ; it is he who, by means of it, is strong to overcome me. But I have overcome him.

So I am assured by that "word of God which abideth in me." He has nothing in me now, any more than he has in Christ. He cannot accuse me now ; he has no right to rule me now. I am not now at his mercy, fain to comply with his terms ; to win a delusive peace by some poor compromise with him ; to be dependent on his lies for a wretched respite from the stings of conscience. I stand now in God's favour, and may bid defiance to the charges and assaults of the wicked one. And therefore I can afford and venture to break all terms of truce or amity with the world which lieth in him, and to avow henceforth that I love the Father and the Son and the brethren, in the Holy Spirit. By my youth and manhood, I am summoned to maintain this attitude always. And that not for myself only ; that the home of my childhood and fatherhood may be kept from the invasion of the world ; but for the sake of other little children, who are still such as I once was, and who are struggling in the dark flood, as I once did. The wicked one would claim them as his own. Let me claim them for my Father. And in stretching out to them a helping hand, let me hear John exhorting me, as a young man, to do so resolutely, because, as he reminds me, "I am strong, and the word of God abideth in me, and I have overcome the wicked one."

To sum up all, I can imagine John, at the point at which he has arrived in the composing of this letter,—the point of enforcing the brotherhood of believers and its antagonism to the world,—pausing to ask himself, Will these counsels of mine be understood and obeyed? Will those to whom they are addressed receive them as they are given, in faithfulness and affection? He is moved to make an earnest, and what may be a last appeal to them.

What I am writing to you, I write in the fulness of my heart. I know that you believe in Jesus; I give you all credit for being Christians indeed. I appeal to you, by all the motives and considerations that should weigh with you as such. I appeal to you in every view of your Christianity, as little children, fathers, young men. And by all that is implied in your being little children, fathers, young men, I beseech you to hear me. So “I write unto you.” Take kindly what I write unto you, as little children, fathers, young men.

But, it occurs to him to think, I am old—John the aged. Before the ink I am now using is dry I may have been summoned to my rest. Be it so. Then take it, O my beloved, as what “I have written;” as my last legacy to you. Take it as what I wrote when I felt as if I was bidding you adieu. Take it as my final parting testimony and prayer.

As little children, knowing the Father by ever-fresh experience of his rich and free love in forgiving you for his Son’s name’s sake; as fathers, entering intelligently and sympathisingly into the Father’s knowledge of the

Son as being from the beginning in his bosom ; as young men, strong in him who is the Lord your righteousness, and therefore the Lord your strength ; fortified by his word always abiding in you richly ; bold and brave in asserting the victory over the wicked one that is already yours as it is Christ's ;—by all that is simple in your childhood, by all that is godlike in your fatherhood, by all that is divinely strong in your manhood ;—be persuaded to give heed to what I write or have written ; to love the brotherhood ; and not to love the world.

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## XII.

THE GUILTELESS SPIRIT LOVING NOT THE WORLD,  
WHICH IS DARKNESS, BUT GOD, WHO IS LIGHT.

“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. 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.”—  
1 JOHN ii. 15, 16.

THE love of the world is here declared to be irreconcilable with the love of the Father. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (ver. 15). And the declaration applies to “the things that are in the world,” comprehending “all that is in the world.” These are represented under three categories or heads, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (ver. 16). They are afterwards reduced to one, “the lust of the world” (ver. 17); but in the meantime we have to consider them as three. And, in that view, the sixteenth verse is to be regarded, not as giving the reason for the command in the fifteenth, but rather as explanatory of its nature; bringing out the contrast between the two incompatible objects of love,—the Father on the one hand, and on the other hand the world, whatever form its lust may take.

Plainly the world is here represented as an order of



things very thoroughly complete in itself ; self-contained and self-developing. "All that is in the world" is "of the world." No foreign elements are suffered to intrude ; or if they do, the world speedily accommodates and assimilates them to itself. For the world,—what is it ? Fallen human nature acting itself out in the human family ; moulding and fashioning the framework of human society in accordance with its own tendencies. It is fallen human nature making the ongoings of human thought, feeling, and action its own. It is the reign or kingdom of "the carnal mind," which is "enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Wherever that mind prevails, there is the world.

"The things that are in the world" correspond in character to the world itself. The love, therefore, of any of them is equivalent to the love of the world.

I may seem to be, and may suppose that I am, separated from the world. I may have renounced companionship with that visible outstanding circle, in regard to which, as a whole, it may be too plainly seen that it does not admit the true light to shine in it, but is still in the darkness which that light chases away. For there is a circle which may be thus collectively identified. There is a tolerably well-defined mode of life which a spiritual man cannot but recognise as worldly ; and there are a set of people who so manifestly conform themselves to that mode of life, and that alone, as to make it impossible for the most tolerant Christian charity to characterise them otherwise than as worldly persons. Let

that then be the world, broadly considered. Now I have withdrawn myself from that world ; I have no sympathy with its general tone and spirit ; I am attached to another order of things. So far, I think I may say that I do not love the world. In its corporate capacity, as it were, it has lost its hold over me.

But "the things that are in the world," viewed separately and in detail, may have attractions for me still. I may love them, or some of them, or one of them. If so, it is the same thing to me as if I loved the world itself in the mass. The love of what is in the world, is really the love of the world. Hence the necessity for breaking up the general notion of "the world" into its contents, "the things that are in the world."

The things that are in the world which may attract love, as distinct objects of desire, even when the world as a whole seems to be discarded, are too manifold to be enumerated. But they may be classified ; if not according to their own properties or qualities ; at any rate according to the inward dispositions to which they appeal. The apostle thus classifies them under three heads. "All that is in the world" is distributed into "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." To these three harpies of the soul the world ministers.

First, there is "the lust of the flesh." The genitive or possessive here—"of the flesh"—denotes, not the object of the desire, but its nature. It is lust or desire of a carnal sort ; such as "the flesh" prompts or occasions. It is the appetite of sense out of order, or in

excess. It is not, of course, the appetite of sense itself ; that is of God, as the provision for its satisfaction is also of God. The appetite for which food is God's appointed ordinance, and the appetite for which marriage is God's appointed ordinance,—the general needs and cravings of the body which the laws of nature and the gifts of providence so fully meet,—the higher tastes which fair forms and sweet sounds delight,—the eye for beauty and the ear or the soul for music ;—these are not, any of them, the lust of the flesh. But they all, every one of them, may become the lust of the flesh. And in the world they do become the lust of the flesh. It is the world's aim to pervert them into the lust of the flesh, and to pander to them in that character, either grossly or with refinement. All its arrangements, its giddy sports and anxious toils, tend in that direction. Sensuality, or that modification of it now spoken of as sensuousness, enters largely into the world's fascinating cup. And it may be detached plausibly from what is avowedly and confessedly the world ; it may be covertly loved, while the world, as such, is apparently hated. Gluttony, drunkenness, uncleanness ; the rage for physical or æsthetical excitement which the ball, the theatre, the gaming-table, if not worse excesses, must appease ;—these forms or modifications of the lust of the flesh may not be for us the most insidious. It may creep into our affections disguised almost as an angel of light. A certain fondness for the good things of this life,—an unwillingness to forego them,—a pleasant feeling of fulness in the enjoyment of them,—a growing impatience of any

interruption of that enjoyment,—how soon may such a way of tasting even the lawful gratifications of sense grow into selfishness and sin! And then how readily does the imagination admit ideas and fancies the reverse of pure! Through how many channels,—the news of the day, the gems of literature, the choicest trophies of the fine arts,—poesy, sculpture, song,—may unholy desire be kindled! I may be out of the world; but this that is in the world, “the lust of the flesh,” may not be out of me.

There is, secondly, “the lust of the eyes.” This must be distinct from the lust of the flesh. It cannot therefore be that “looking on a woman to lust after her,” which the Lord holds to be the commission of adultery in the heart; or that “looking upon the wine-cup when it is red,” against which Solomon warns us. The lust of the eyes is something different. It is lust or desire having its proper seat in the region of contemplation, or of onlooking. It is not merely that the flesh lusts through the eyes, or that the eyes minister to the lust of the flesh. The eyes themselves have their own lust. It is lust that can be satisfied with mere sight; which the lust of the flesh never is, nor can be. It is a feeling of such a sort that a bare look or gaze may please or may offend it. For example, I cannot stand the sight of more good in my neighbour’s possession than in my own. I would be relieved if I saw him worse off than I am. That is to a great extent the instinct of corrupt humanity; it is the way of the world. And it is one of the world’s ways that, even when I renounce the world, I am still

apt to follow, or that is apt to follow me. I may be one in whom the world's sensual or sensuous delights no longer stimulate "the lust of the flesh." But my eyes are pained when I see the giddy crowd so happy and secure. My bosom swells and my blood boils when I am forced to look on villany triumphant and vice carressed. It may be all righteous zeal and virtuous wrath; a pure desire to witness wrong redressed and justice done. But, alas! as I yield to it, I find it fast assuming a worse character. I would not myself be partaker of the sinful happiness I see the world enjoying; but I grudge the world's enjoyment of it. "I was envious," says David (Ps. lxxiii.), "at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." That was his temptation; it was his infirmity; it formed the sad burden of more than one of his most plaintive Psalms. It was the love of the world in one of its most stealthy and dangerous forms, winning its way into his heart, and supplanting there, for a time, the love of God.

Once more, thirdly, there is "the pride of life." Self-indulgence, or "the lust of the flesh,"—and envious grudging, or "the lust of the eyes,"—might seem to exhaust "all that is in the world." The whole substance of "the world and the things of the world" is reducible to these two heads, or may be regarded in these two lights: what I long to possess and enjoy myself, and what I cannot calmly bear to see possessed and enjoyed by another. These two views of it exhaust the whole of what is substantial in the world. But the show, the shadow, the semblance, as well as the substance, is

something to the world's vanity, or to my vanity with reference to the world. Nay, it is much ; the world's manifold conventionalisms, for they are indeed manifold, prove it to be much. What pains are taken in the world to save appearances and keep up a seemly and goodly state ! It is a business all but reduced to system. Its means and appliances are ceremony and feigned civility. Life is to be ostensibly, nay even ostentatiously, all right. All is to be in good taste and in good style ; correct, creditable, commendable. It is the world's pride to have it so. What is otherwise must be somehow toned down or shaded off ; concealed or coloured. Falsehood may be necessary ; a false code of honour ; false notions of duty, as between man and man, or between man and woman ; false liberality and spurious delicacy. Still the world does contrive, by means of all that, to get up and keep up a proud life of its own ; a life grand and graceful ; having its decencies and respectabilities ; yes, and its charities, courtesies, and chivalries too ; all very imposing in themselves, and all together contributing to make the world's life very imposing as a whole.

That I take to be "the pride of life" in the world. In one aspect, it is undoubtedly mean enough. It sets in motion a game of diplomacy and a race of emulation most destructive of all the truer and finer instincts even of unrenewed humanity. It debauches conscience, and is fatal to high aims. It puts the men and women of the world on a poor struggle to out-manceuvre and out-shine one another,—to outdo one another, for the most

part, in mere externals ; while, with all manner of politeness, they affect to give one another credit for what they all know to be little better than shams. Nevertheless, the general effect, I repeat, is imposing. The world's "pride of life" is something to be proud of after all.

Now of this "pride of life" it is by no means easy even for those who do not love the world to keep themselves altogether clear. It is, as it were, their last worldly weakness. The lust of the flesh may be mortified, crucified, nailed to the cross of Christ ; the lust of the eyes may be overcome by the mighty power of love, the love which "envieth not ;" and yet the pride of life may cleave to me. It is so difficult to have done with the world's seemings, and to come out simply as what I am.

Need I suggest how many sad instances of religious inconsistency and worldly conformity spring from this source ? I may acquit you of sensuality or sensuousness, and of selfish jealousy ; you are free, as to both of these instruments of the world's power. But what of its opinion ? Have you learned to defy it, or to be independent of it ? Can you dispense with the world's approval and brave its frown ? Do you not sometimes find yourselves more afraid or ashamed of a breach of worldly etiquette,—some apparent descent from the customary platform of worldly respectability,—than of such a concession to the world's forms and fashions as may compromise your integrity in the sight of God, and your right to acquit yourselves of guile ? The opinion of the

world! What the world will think or say! Ah! that pitiful consideration may often sway or embarrass you when you have no selfish longing or envious grudge to gratify. To a large extent, it is identical with that "fear of man which bringeth a snare." It puts you at the mercy of the idle thoughts and idle words of any onlooker who may presume to judge you. You cannot acquit yourselves altogether of the love of the world so long as you have in your hearts that liking for the world's good report, or that sensitiveness to the world's censure, which "the pride of life" implies.

And now, for practical use, let three remarks be made.

1. Of "all that is in the world" it is said that "it is not of the Father, but of the world." This may be true of things good in themselves, the best things even, when they come to be things "in the world." They may be of the Father originally, in their true and proper nature; but the world appropriates them and makes them its own; and so they cease to be of the Father, and are now simply of the world. The choicest blessings of home, the holiest ordinances of religion, the very gospel itself, may thus come, when once "in the world," to be "of the world." Be not then deceived. Much that meets your eye, as you look on the world and the world's ways, may seem fair and excellent; graces most attractive, devotions most comely and fervent, amenities most winning, philanthropies most admirable. But God is not really in them all. They "are not of the Father." A pure and simple regard to his will is not their ani-



mating spirit. They are "of the world." There is nothing in them that rises above the natural influences of self-love and social, as these are blended "in the world."

Again, 2, "All that is in the world is of the world," wherever it may be found. The three world-powers or world-principles are, always and everywhere, "not of the Father but of the world." They may be in the Father's house; they may be in the hearts of the Father's children; but they are none the better for their being there. They are not themselves cleansed or hallowed by what they come in contact with, however pure and however holy. But all that they touch they smite with leprosy and wither into impotent paralysis. Let us beware, then, of letting into the sanctuary and shrine of our soul, now become the dwelling-place of God by his Spirit, anything that savours of the world's sloth and self-indulgence, or of the world's jealousy and envy, or of the world's vain pomp and pride. No matter though, as we think, we do not now love the world, but are separated from its friendship, if still we love any of the things of the world. For "all that is in the world is not of the Father, but of the world." And "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Finally, 3. Let us remember that the world which we are not to love, because "all that is in it is not of the Father but is of the world," is yet itself the object of a love on the part of the Father, with which, as his children, having in us his love, we are to sympathise. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,

but have everlasting life." This is said of the very world which we are commanded not to love; and of that world viewed in the very aspect on account of which we are commanded not to love it; as having nothing in it that is really "of the Father." "God so loved this world," this very world, thus viewed, having nothing in it or about it that he can recognise as his own,—as what he made and meant it originally to be,—“that he gave his only begotten Son” on its behalf. And he calls upon us so to love it too; with the same sort of love, and with love moving us to the same sort of effort and the same sort of sacrifice. And it is our so loving the world as the Father has loved it, that will be our best security against loving it as the Father forbids us to love it. Let the world be to us what it is to the Father. Let us look at it as the Father looks at it; as a deep dark mass of guilt, ungodliness, and woe. Let us plunge in to the rescue. Let us lay hold of that young man, whom, as we behold him, like Jesus, we cannot help loving. Let us snatch him, for he is not safe, as a brand out of the burning. If we love the world as God loves it, we will have no heart for loving it in any other way. Its attractions, its fascinations, its amiabilities, its sentimentalisms, will have no charm for us. We see in them only snares to catch and ruin souls that we,—that God,—would have to be saved. We cannot love, with any love of complacency, the world which we love in sympathy with him who “sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

## XIII.

THE GUILILESS SPIRIT, AMID THE DARK WORLD'S  
FLOW, ESTABLISHED IN THE LIGHT OF GOD-  
LINESS.

“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”—I JOHN ii. 17.

THE expression here used concerning the world and its lust, is the same as that used in the eighth verse concerning the darkness: it is “passing away.” The world, with its lust, is in this respect identical with the darkness. They partake at least of a common quality or property; they pass, or are passing.

There is more meant here than merely that “the things which are seen are temporal.” The fleeting nature of this whole earthly scene is doubtless a useful topic of reflection; but it is not exactly what is suggested in this verse. The idea of the darkness being a vanishing element is still the leading thought. The prince of darkness, though he may keep up appearances for a while, is like a beaten foe, drawing off from the disputed territory. Through the shining of the true light, the darkness is passing; and in the same sense “the world passeth away, and the lust thereof.” “But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever,” for he

is one in whom, as in Christ, "the darkness is passing, and the true light now shineth."

I. The characteristic of the world is that it does not "do the will of God;" it is the sphere or region in which the will of God is not done. The lust of the world is not doing the will of God. Take it in any of its forms. Let it be the lust of the flesh; as "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," you are doing your own will and not God's. Let it be the lust of the eyes, envying others who prosper more than you; then it is the thwarting of their will, not the doing of God's will, that your mind is bent on. Let it be the pride of life, hanging on opinion's idle breath; you have no freedom to do the will of God, for you are at the mercy of the will of your fellow-men.

As not doing the will of God, the world and its lust must pass away; for it is identical with the darkness which is passing. Passing! Whence? and whither? Whence, but from off the stage of this redeemed earth, the final blessed meeting-ground of all the Lord's children? And whither? I cannot tell. This only I know, it must be to where it shall do no harm any more for ever. I read of everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Is that the final resting-place of the darkness?—of the world and its lust? There it is to be no longer passing, but permanent, abiding. "The worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

O ye lovers of the world, or of what is in the world, have you considered what the end is to be? It may well move you to be told that the whole of that economy

with which you are mixed up is fleeting, transitory, evanescent. "What shadows you are and what shadows you pursue!" It is a deep knell that is rung over the grave of all merely temporal prosperity, all earthly hope and joy;—"the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." But it is a knell that, ringing out life's present and precarious dreams, rings in a terrible reality. The world, with its lust, is passing here; passing and changing always. But it is passing to where it will pass no more, but stay;—fixed unchangeably for ever. It is not annihilated; it does not cease to be; it only ceases to be passing.

Have you ever thought how much of the world's endurableness; I say not its attractiveness but its endurableness; depends on its being a world that passes, and therefore changes? Is it not, after all, its being changeable that makes it tolerable even to you who like it best? Can you lay your hand, your memory's hand, on any one feeling you have ever had of intensest worldly gratification, and say that you could be content, with that feeling alone, to spend eternity? Is there any sensation, any delight, any rapture of worldly joy, however engrossing, that you could bear to have prolonged, indefinitely, for ever, unaltered, unalterable?

But I put the case too favourably. I speak of your finding the world with its lust, not passing but abiding, in the place whither you yourselves pass, when you pass hence. True, you find it there. But you find it not as you have it here. There are means and appliances here

for quenching by gratification, or mitigating by variety, its impetuous fires. But there you find it where these fires burn, unslaked, unslaced; the world being all within, and the world's lust; and nothing outside but the Holy One.

Again I ask—Have you ever thought how much of the world's endurableness depends on the fact that, with its lust, it has its seat for a while here in the midst of a transition process, as it were, which is going on,—“the darkness passing and the true light shining?” What keeps this earth from being, at this moment, hell, or a part of hell? What but its being a place of preparation for heaven; destined ere long to become to myriads of the saved heaven itself?

When in that heaven where the angels dwell, sudden darkness sought to dim the light, and wilful creatures would not do the will of God, not an instant was lost. Swiftly, summarily, the world is cast out, and its lust. There is no room for it there, no, not for an hour. The lovers of it, and of its lust; the doers of another will than God's; their own, or their leader's; are no more found there; but somewhere else in the universe of God, where they are “reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” That holy heaven is full of light alone, and in it is no darkness at all. The will of God is always done there.

We are taught to pray that his will may be done on earth as in heaven; and we believe that it shall be so. But the time is not yet. The darkness is only passing, not past; “the world is passing away, and the lust there-

of." For it has pleased God not to deal with this earth where we dwell, as he dealt with that heaven where the angels dwell. If he had, he must have left it empty. The darkness must needs be tolerated ; the world, with its lusts, not doing the will of God, must be allowed to continue ; till the race for whom the earth was made, the family of man meant to fill it, is complete. But all is not to be darkness ; a world lusting its own lust and not doing the will of God. There is to be light ; there are to be children of the light. For the light and its children, as well as for the darkness and its world, the earth is to be adapted. Its order and laws ; its arrangements and accommodations ; must be such as suit its present mixed occupancy. And such also must be God's general providence over it. Hence you who love the world and its lust, and do not the will of God, find yourselves in a position here, under these conditions, which does not give the world and its lust full swing ; or, as it were, "ample scope and verge enough."

Not to speak of the direct shining of the light, in gospel means and ordinances, which tells upon you in spite of yourselves, in some vague way, for your partial respite from the pangs of conscience,—I point to the elements of good that there are in the institutions which God has sanctioned, and which he blesses, for alleviating pain and giving happiness on this earth on which he suffers you to dwell for a season with the righteous ; healthy labour, alternating with such sleep as God gives his beloved ; family relationships ; social ties ; domestic endearments ; spheres also of public activity and useful-

ness and generous ambition ; outlets for native energy and amiability, and lofty thought and fine feeling, and the stirrings of kind pity, and the flights of genius. Do not imagine that these form part of the world or its lust, which you are to carry with you when it and you together pass hence. This earth is not furnished with these conveniences for your sakes, but for their sakes who find in them the choicest apparatus and machinery for doing the will of God. You have the use, you have the benefit of them, for a brief space. Your world, with its triple lust, is permitted for a little to have to do with these contrivances of God for making earth a school for heaven. Alas ! what harm does it often work among them ; blighting what is pure, blasting what is peaceful, desolating hearths and homes and hearts. Still your loved world, and you who love it, are the better and the happier for your contact with what on earth is even now allied to heaven.

But have you ever thought what it will be to pass hence and go where nothing of all that can follow you ? No holy beauty ; no virgin innocency ; no guiltless, guileless love of parents, spouse, child, brother, friend ; no virtue ; no decency even ; none of the decorum which at least serves to make vice less hideous ; no soothing balm of pure hand laid on the fevered brow ; no faintly-whispered hope or wish of pure lips blessing you in your despair ; nothing of the sort of comely veil which, down to the last breath of the dying sinner's godless career, may hide the real truth from his view.

Let that real truth burst upon you. Place yourself,



with your loved world and its cherished lust, where you and it and God are alone together, with nothing of God's providing that you can use or abuse for your relief. Your creature comforts are not there with you. Nothing of this earth, which is the Lord's, is there ; nothing of its beauty or its bounty ; its grace or loveliness or warm affection ; nothing of that very bustle and distraction and change which dissipates reflection and drowns remorse ; nothing but your worldly lust, your conscience, and your God. That is hell ; the hell to which the world is passing, and its lust ; and whence it never passes more ; a dreary monotony of banishment from all that God has made to be chosen and enjoyed. It is yourselves, ye lovers of the world, filled with the lust of the world,—its vulture appetites and stormy passions,—shut up for ever in the darkness, as it were, of empty space ; the desolate unfurnished prison-house of eternal justice.

II. But now let us turn to a brighter picture. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Suppose that the world has passed away and the lust thereof. Does it follow that the earth is dissolved or perishes ? Nay, it remains. And whatever in it or about it is of God remains. There may be a temporary baptism of fire, to purge away the pollution contracted while the world has been tolerated in it and the world's lust ; to regenerate it and transform it into the "new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." But the earth thus cleansed and renovated does not pass away. It surely must continue, under the condition of

the petition, at last fully answered ; “Thy will be done in earth as in heaven.” For surely that is a petition which is yet to be fully answered ; and not in time only, but for eternity. This abode of men is to be assimilated thoroughly to yonder abode of angels, in respect of the will of God being alike done in both. That at all events is the heavenly state, let its localities be adjusted as they may ; that is its eternal crown and joy ; angels and men together doing the will of God ; they in their heaven, we in our earth. That is the blessed consummation to which the apostle would have us to look forward when he urges this encouragement and motive : “he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

But the precise point of his statement is not adequately brought out unless we connect and identify the future and the present. It is not merely said that he who doeth the will of God may hope to be hereafter in a place or in a state in which he shall abide for ever. It is plainly implied that he is in it now. The world, with its lust, is passing ; but he is in possession. The world, as it were, has forfeited its title, and is tolerated on sufferance merely, for a time and for a temporary purpose ; he is a proprietor, having a good and valid right to remain for ever. The world must go—he stays ; it has notice to quit—he abides. Doing the will of God, therefore, you are already in your abiding state ; in the state in which you are to abide for ever. No essential change is before you. There may be stages of advancement and varieties of experience ; a temporary break, perhaps, in the outer continuity of your thread of life,

between the soul's quitting the body to be with Christ where now he is and its receiving the body anew at his coming hither again. But substantially you are now as you are to be always.

For there is this difference between you in whom the love of the Father is, and those in whom there is only the love of the world. The world which they love, with its lust, is a foreign element in this earth, considered as the creation of God, and an element, therefore, which must be cast out, as the land of Canaan is said to have "vomited out" its inhabitants when their "iniquity was full." There is really nothing of hell in this earth viewed as the creation of God,—or in its arrangements viewed as God's ordinances; however much there may be of hell in the world with its lust, which is not God's creation or God's ordinance, but fallen man's, or his tempter's. From all that is of God's making or of God's ordaining in the earth, they who love the world must pass, with the world and its lust; carrying no good of it hence; quitting it all, and going to be with devils in eternal, unquenchable fire. But in this earth as God's creation, and in its arrangements as God's ordinances, what may there not be of heaven? And whatever of heaven is in it, and in them, is yours, if you are doing the will of God. Neither does it pass from you nor you from it. You and it together abide for ever.

Here, therefore, is the great alternative between "loving the world and its lust" and "doing the will of God." Here is the solution of what we are sometimes apt to regard as a hard problem in Christian morals.

What is that separation from the world which I must keep up, if I would prove myself to be one who does not love the world, but who does love the Father? A hundred minute points of detail may come into discussion here. Is it lawful? is it expedient? might be asked to weariness, of this or that pursuit, this or that pleasure, this or that party, or company, or occupation. I meet these and all similar inquiries with the broad appeal to consciousness and conscience: Are you doing the will of God? It is not—Are you doing what, as to the matter of it, may be consistent, or not altogether inconsistent, with the will of God? But are you, in doing it, doing the will of God? You may be where the will of God would appoint or allow you to be. Are you there because it is the will of God that you should be there? Are you there on set purpose, there and then to do the will of God? This test will carry you through all entanglements, and raise you above all compromises. Only be sure that you apply it fairly. For, in this matter, the prince of this world is very wily. If possible, he will have you to substitute something of God's instead of what is his, as being what you are not to love. He will allow and encourage you to abstain from meats and from marriage; to withdraw from your fellows and retire into the desert; to abandon the affairs of active life; to assume an ascetic severity, frowning on the ordinary ongoings of society. He is pleased when he sees you counting that to be coming out from the world. For he knows that all the while it is really God's creation and God's ordinance, and not his world with its lust, that you are putting away.

Ah! it is a great thing to draw the line clear and sharp between what here and now is "of God," and what is "of the world and its lust." And if the line is to be drawn clear and sharp, it must be drawn, not from without, but from within. It must be drawn, not by external routine or regulation, but by a living spirit in the inner man; the spirit of love and loyalty to the Father; the spirit that moved Jesus to say, "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." He had no perplexities, no misgivings, in going in and out among his fellow-men. He moved freely where the Pharisees were censorious and straitlaced. For everywhere and always, wherever he was,—in the house, on the road, at the hospitable table, beside the open grave; with whomsoever he met,—publicans, sinners, harlots, as well as Scribes, and Sadducees, and Herodians;—he was doing the will of God; he was about his Father's business; doing his will. It was not with him—Where shall I go? whom shall I meet? so much as,—Go where I may, meet whom I may, what business would my Father have me to be about? Something, surely, bearing on the great work for which I came into the world; something to glorify my Father; something for the saving of lost sinners; something for the comfort of weary souls. Ah! let this same mind that was in him be in you. Let it become a delight with you, as well as a business, to be everywhere and always doing the will of God. That, and that alone, is "not loving the world, nor the things of the world."

For the world which, with its lust, is passing away,

is just the darkness whose passing you are to apprehend as a thing "true in you as in Christ." And the doing of the will of God, which is your "abiding for ever," is just "the true light now shining ;" which shining of the true light, as well as the passing of the darkness, you are also to apprehend as "true in you as in Christ."

There is a twofold movement going on in the earth ; the moving off of the darkness, or of the world and its lust, and the moving in of the true light and its gracious, glorious kingdom. Christ, and all of you in whom, as in Christ, "that thing is true, that the darkness is passing and the true light is now shining," are engaged in the advancing movement and identified with it. It is the movement that is regaining, reconquering, recovering the earth for God. Into that movement you are to throw yourselves. With all who are in it you are to have a common brotherhood, and to make common cause. That is the will of God which you are to do. With the other movement, the moving off from the stage of the darkness and the prince of darkness, with his trappings and troops, you have nothing to do, save only to rescue, in the Father's name, all whom you can reach, ere that movement carries them away. For yourselves, you have no concern with it. You love not the darkness, nor anything in it or about it. Your whole soul is bent on doing the will of God, and so falling in with the advancing march and movement which is to issue ere long in the universal shining of the true light over all the earth.

Surely that is a noble course for you, and one that

must ensure your abiding for ever. It may seem indeed that you have no abiding place here. You may be called hence quickly at any time, while the darkness may seem to be passing very slowly ; and the world with its lust may be still holding its ground stoutly, and showing an imposing front. But you lose not the fruit of your doing the will of God. “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” You have cast in your lot with a cause which does not pass away, but abideth for ever ; and a leader who does not pass away, but abideth for ever,—“the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” It is but a little while. Lo, he comes quickly, and you who have departed to be with him come in his train. He comes, and you come, to triumph over the complete and final passing away of the darkness,—of the world and its lust,—of all doing of any will but the will of God ; and to abide for ever in the earth, in which thenceforth for ever the will of God is to be done, even as it is in heaven.

## XIV.

## THE GUILLELESS SPIRIT, AMID ANTICHRISTIAN DEFECTIONS, ESTABLISHED BY A MESSIANIC UNCTION AND ILLUMINATION.

“Little children, it is the last time : and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists ; whereby we know that it is the last time. 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. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.”—1 JOHN ii. 18-20.

“YE have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” This is represented as our security against such apostasy or desertion as John has occasion to lament. We live, he says, in perilous circumstances. What has been foretold as characteristic of the last time may be seen virtually realised in our own day. The warning against antichrist need not be put off to a distant date. Already, in too many instances, the spirit of antichrist is discovering itself. To all practical intents and purposes, it is even now the last time to us. It is proved to be so by the prevalence of the very sort of opposition to Christ which in some gigantic shape is to signalise that era. We need not be setting up the phantom or ideal of a coming antichrist that is to torment and try



the church of the future. We have enough of antichrists around and beside us now. And they are very near and close ;—almost of kin with us. But yesterday they were among us ; one with ourselves in privilege, profession, and outward character. The keenest eye could not discriminate between us and them. True, their having “gone out from us” is a presumption, and indeed a proof, that “they were not really of us.” That very fact, however, making it plain that they who are still among us are not all of us, may not unnaturally cause uneasiness as to our own standing. But it need not. For there is a difference ; “Ye have an unction from the Holy One,” which they have not, “and ye know all things.”

I do not at this stage inquire either into the nature and character of the coming antichrist, or into the common feature identifying all antichrists. I wish rather to dwell upon the ground of confidence here indicated, with special reference to trying times ; and in that view I notice these four particulars : I. The anointing or unction ; II. The knowledge connected with it ; III. The nature of the connection ; and IV. The security afforded by the unction and the knowledge against heresy and apostasy.

I. I begin with the anointing : “Ye have an unction,” or the unction, or generally, unction. The term may literally denote anointing oil ; so that “having unction” may mean being anointed with oil. This anointing, or being anointed with oil, you have “from the Holy One ;” from Christ Jesus our Lord. For it is he who is meant.

The title indeed of "the Holy One" may with all propriety be applied to God absolutely ;—to the undivided Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And if the persons are distinguished, it may be applied to the Father and the Holy Ghost as well as to the Son. But the sense of the passage, as well as the general usage of Scripture, points to the Son. In his humiliation, the devils acknowledged him as the Holy One (Mark i. 24). In his exaltation Peter preaches him as such (Acts iii. 14). And indeed, before his incarnation, the people worshipped him in his divinity, and the prophets foretold him in his humanity, as the Holy One ; the Holy One of God ; the Holy One of Israel (Psalm xvi. 10, etc.) The same application of the term best suits the present text. The Holy One is Christ ; the unction or anointing is from Christ, who is himself, as Christ, the anointed One.

There is great significancy in the unction thus viewed as coming from this Holy One. Antichrists are spoken of. These are antagonists to Christ ; to the anointed One ; to him who is anointed to be the Holy One. You, on the other hand, have anointing from him. The unction which he himself receives, he communicates to you ; consecrating you to be holy ones, as he is the Holy One. Thus you are joint-christs with him, while they are antichrists. They are against the anointed Holy One ;—you share with him in his anointing as the Holy One. They set at nought the unction which he has as the Holy One ;—you have this very unction from him. Such really is the antithesis. They are

antichrists, you are joint-christs; for you have an unction from him as the Holy One, making you "holy as he is holy."

The holiness here meant is consecration. It is what the Lord indicates in his farewell prayer: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world; and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." This is the unction which you have from the Holy One; from him whom "the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world."

The anointing is with the Holy Ghost. He is the anointing oil; "the oil of gladness with which God has anointed Christ above his fellows;" "the precious ointment poured out upon him, as the head, that runs down over all his body, even to the skirts of his garments." The unction therefore which "you have from the Holy One" is his own unction; it is identically the same with what was his. He sheds forth upon you and in you the very same presence, power, and influence of the Holy Ghost that was shed forth upon and in himself, when he was about the business for which, as the Holy One, he was consecrated.

In his case that unction was real, sensible, manifest. If we have it from him, it must be so in ours also. It was in him and to him the seal of his acceptance, and the witness of his Sonship; for when the voice from heaven proclaimed him to be "the Father's beloved Son in whom he is well pleased," "the Spirit descended on

him like a dove." We have acceptance in him, and the adoption of sons. And the unction which we have from him is our being sealed, as justified ones, by "the Holy Ghost shedding abroad in our hearts the love of God;" and our receiving, as sons, "not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father,—the Spirit witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God."

In Jesus this unction was, on the one hand, his having always the Holy Spirit helping, comforting, and strengthening him; imparting to him, amid all his toils and tears, such fresh communications out of his Father's heart,—such assurances of his Father's love and his Father's nearness to him,—as never failed to nerve his soul for its utmost trial; to keep him trusting still in God; and to turn every prayer of nature's prompting: "Father, if it be possible let the cup pass," into the resignation of filial obedience: "Nevertheless, Father, not my will but thine be done." The unction which we have from him as the Holy One, is our being in the same way upheld by the Holy Spirit in all our goings; our being enabled therefore to show "the meekness and gentleness of Christ;" our making it thus manifest that "the same mind is in us that was also in him."

Again, on the other hand, in Jesus the Holy One, this unction was his constant and abiding apprehension or realisation of the Spirit moving him to the work for which he was sent into the world. That work was to do the will of him that sent him; to preach glad tidings to the meek; to bind up the broken-hearted; to fulfil

all righteousness ; to suffer, the just for the unjust ; to give his life a ransom for many. The unction which we have from him, that we may be consecrated to be holy ones as he is the Holy One, is our feeling and owning the inward call of the Holy Spirit, moving us in our sphere to give ourselves to the same life-work that always occupied him ; to carry out the great design of his coming into the world ; to be his wholly and unreservedly, as he was always and altogether the Father's.

Thus, in all that it can be held to imply of consciously apprehended and sensibly enjoyed favour and fellowship with God,—as well as of sacred destination and devotion to God,—we share with Christ his own very unction. Whatever is implied in his being anointed with the Holy Ghost we are to realise in ourselves, as having “an unction from the Holy One.” Thus we are christs, as he is the Christ ; anointed ones, as he is the Anointed One ; the Lord's anointed, the Lord's christs, in somewhat of the same sense in which he is so. For we share his anointing ; we “have unction from the Holy One.”

II. As thus anointed, we “know all things.” This is not of course omniscience ; but full and complete knowledge of the matter in hand, as opposed to knowledge that is fragmentary and partial. The question is between Christ and antichrist ; between the truth of Christ and the lie of antichrist. That lie is a denial of Jesus as the Christ ; and therefore a denial of him as the Son, involving necessarily a denial of the Father also (ver. 22, 23). But we know the truth ; we “know

all things" about it. The whole truth concerning Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Father, in all its relations to the divine character and counsels as well as to human experience and hope, we know. We have mastered it, not piecemeal, but entire; or it has thus mastered us. Not a corner of the field, but the field itself is ours. We know Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, in all the rich and ample significance of these titles or designations. So we know all things; all things concerning the truth that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This, in one view, may not be knowing much; but it is knowing what we do know well and thoroughly. And much depends on our knowledge being of that sort; not universal in its range; but, be its range ever so limited, universal in its kind, so far as it goes; universal;—full-orbed, as it were, and all round,—as opposed to what is one-sided. The anointing of Jesus, his being the Christ,—what it is, and what it means; his consecration as the Holy One; his oneness as the Son with the Father; all that we know. And we know it, not by catching at some one aspect of the mighty plan,—the great "mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh,"—that may happen to suit our convenience, or to strike our fancy, but by a calm, clear, and comprehensive insight into all that it unfolds of the highest glory of God, and all that it contemplates of highest good to man. We look at this great theme, or rather this great fact, in all its bearings; as it vindicates the righteous sovereignty of the Lord of all, while it secures full and

free salvation to the worst and guiltiest of his creatures, if they will but own that sovereignty and submit to it.

Hence it is a knowledge having eyes, as it were, on all sides, all round ; open to what touches the prerogatives and rights of heaven, no less than to what concerns the interests of earth ; full of thoughtfulness about God and what is due to God, as well as about sinful man and what sinful man requires ; well balanced, therefore, and guarded against both extremes,—the extreme of mere arbitrary rule, or a sort of fatalism, ascribed to God, on the one hand, and that of accommodation and compromise, assumed to meet man's case, on the other.

We know all things ; all the principles of God's government, all the attributes of his nature, all the features of his character ;—as well as all the miseries and necessities of man's lost and guilty state ;—so as to take them all into account in forming our conception of the plan of mercy, the reign of grace, the method of redemption and salvation. Hence our conception of that economy of righteous love, however far from being perfect, is yet, to the extent to which it carries us, consistent, and, from its consistency, sure and satisfying. We know, indeed, only in part after all. All the things that we know, we know only dimly and faintly. We know none of them fully, or as we hope to know them one day, when we shall know even as you are known. But still we know them all. For, as Paul testifies (1 Cor. ii. 9-12), although “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,”—yet

“God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.” And “we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” We thus know them all, the deep things of God, the things freely given to us of God, in virtue of the unction which we have from the Holy One.

III. For the unction which we have from the Holy One, and our knowing all things, 'are intimately connected.

One might imagine, perhaps, that the knowledge which I have been describing as so comprehensive and complete, must be the fruit of leisurely and learned study; of academic training and scholarly research. But it is really not so. If it were, it would be but little trustworthy, especially in any advent or development of the last time, in which antichrist may be coming, or there may be already many antichrists. All experience proves, that of our own day as well as of older ecclesiastical history, that the knowledge of the schools, even when it seems almost to be, humanly speaking, omniscience, is no security for those who have it continuing with us, as John puts it, in our genuine apostolic fellowship. Much study may be a weariness of the flesh, without being either strength or steadfastness to the spirit. The knowledge which alone can be relied on, must be not only the knowledge of all things; but such a knowledge of all things as only “unction from the Holy One” can give.



In fact, we cannot have true knowledge of any of these things unless we have it by "unction from the Holy One." For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness to him ; neither can he know them ; because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 13). It is only "he who is spiritual" who "judgeth all things,"—who can know them so as to judge them. For he alone is in a position and has the capacity to form a fair estimate or judgment of the relations among the things of God. And it is by their mutual relations that things are really known and judged.

This is a maxim true in all sciences ; and not least manifestly so in the science of divinity. If, in the science of astronomy, we would know all its things, all its truths,—to any satisfactory end, theoretical or practical,—we must get, not the eye of a clown or vulgar stargazer, nor that of Chaldean sage or poetic dreamer, nor that of one to whom the clear calm midnight sky is a confused galaxy of bright gems, a brilliant shower of diamonds shed in rich disorder on the dark brow of nature's sleeping beauty,—but the eye of Newton's scholar and Laplace's, who has learned of them to calculate planetary magnitudes and distances and forces, and to bring the whole splendid chaos under the sway of the one simple law that reigns supreme throughout all space. So, in the region of what is spiritual and divine, the faculty of seeing things in their true relations is not elsewhere or otherwise to be acquired, than in the school and under the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

It is his anointing of the eye with eye-salve that gives spiritual discernment, not only to understand separately, as distinct objects of contemplation and thought, many of the truths proclaimed and the objects exhibited in revelation, but to perceive how, under the leading and guiding principle of the free, full, and sovereign grace of the glorious gospel, they all assume their fitting places and proportions, and form together one consistent whole. Mere human study might master all that has been ever said or written about God and his works and ways. But still knowledge thus got always runs the risk of being prejudiced and partial. All the articles of all the creeds may be thoroughly sifted, in all their doctrinal, controversial, and historical bearings. The all-knowing theologian may be able to discuss them all, and all about them. But left to himself, and without "unction from the Holy One," how apt is he to let some peculiar leaning, some personal bias or idiosyncrasy of his own, prevail; exaggerating some one portion, or aspect, or feature of the divine plan, and raising many a cloud of lettered dust, such as may cause endless perplexity and doubt, and sadly mar "the simplicity which is in Christ." It is not, therefore, any such knowledge of all things that is here commended. Rather, it is that of which our Lord himself speaks when he says: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. xi. 25, 26).

For how does that Holy One, the Son, reveal to these

“babes” the Father, and “all things delivered unto him of his Father?” How but by imparting to them that anointing which he has himself? It is as the Holy One, the Christ, the Anointed, that the Son has all things delivered unto him of his Father, and knows the Father so as to reveal him to us. And it is by making us partakers with himself in his own anointing; by making us christs, the Lord’s anointed, as he himself is the Christ, the Lord’s anointed; by causing us to have the same unction with himself;—that he reveals to us the Father.

How wonderfully, in this view of it, does this unction which we have from the Holy One unite and identify us with the Holy One himself, in respect of our knowing all things! It is indeed a marvellous way of grace and condescension in which the great Teacher teaches us. He does not stand on an elevated platform apart handing down to us the lessons we have to learn, and reporting, as it were, the observations and discoveries he makes. He lifts us up to be beside himself. He puts his own glass into our hand: he puts his own eye into our head: he puts his own intensity of loving gaze into our heart; and bids us look for ourselves; and see the Father as he sees him, and know all things as he knows them; “all things delivered to him of his Father.” Well might Paul say of the spiritual man, thus—by such a spiritual discernment as this—judging all things; himself judged of none: “Who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” For the unction of the Spirit which we thus share with

him,—or rather he with us,—gives us the same knowledge of the Father—of all things—that Christ the Son had when he himself received the unction of the Spirit; the same, I mean, in kind, not in degree;—not yet the same in measure, though gradually coming more and more nearly to be so; meanwhile, the same in manner.

What was his manner of knowing the Father and all things about the Father's will and purpose, when he was here, as the Holy One anointed by the Spirit? Ah! how practical it was! how experimental! how thoroughly a learning of it all by obedience; by suffering; by unreserved submission and acquiescence; by patience; by waiting; by faith, and love, and hope! Therefore, and only therefore, it was in his case a knowledge thoroughly simple, and in its simplicity thoroughly complete. "Little children," let it be so in our case too. Let us remember his own saying: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." It was as a doer of God's will that he, in his human experience, having the Spirit's unction, knew all things. Let it be as doers of God's will that we learn to know them too.

And let us remember, "This is the will of God, that ye believe in him whom he has sent." Believing in Jesus we attain to his clear knowledge of the Father and of all things. Clouds of guilt and wrath, of misconception and suspicion, of doubt and fear, are driven away before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings. We walk no more benighted and befooled; stumbling in the dark, amid unseen stones and pitfalls, and dire visionary phantoms. We walk

safely and at liberty, knowing all things, seeing all things in the light of God ; in the light of his reconciled countenance ; in the light of that love wherewith he “loveth us even as he loveth Christ.” It is by the love with which the Father loves him that the Son knows the Father, and all things which the Father has, and which also are his. It is by the love with which the Father loves us as he loves him, that we, having “unction from him who is the Holy One,” know all things ; “the love with which the Father hath loved him being in us, and he in us ” (John xvii. 17-26).

IV. The security which our “having an unction from the Holy One and knowing all things” affords, in trying times, must now surely be seen to be very ample and firm. Others may “go out from us ;” it being thus “made manifest that they were not of us ;” and may become antichrists, or the prey of antichrists. But “will ye also go away ?”—ye who share the very unction and the very knowledge which the Holy One himself has ? Is not this your preservative against all error and apostasy ? Is it not a sufficient preservative ? “To whom will ye go ? He has the words of eternal life ; and you believe and are sure that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And you are joint-Christ with him ; and joint-sons with him ; and joint-heirs with him. What have you to do any more with idols ?—or with the husks of the swine-trough, to which citizens of the far country may be for sending you ?—or with seducing lies and doctrines of devils to which you may be tempted to give heed ?—or, in a word, with any of the modifications

of the way of grace and salvation,—any of the readjustments of the terms of acceptance,—any of the devices for pacifying conscience,—any of the new lights, mystical or rationalistic, sacramental or sentimental,—by which men would fain seek to be wiser than God, and even holier than God, and better than God? Ye who have found Christ, or whom Christ has found; ye who have the same anointing that Christ had; ye who taste and see how good his Father and yours is,—loving you even as he loveth him,—“will ye also go away?”

And be sure that this is the only preservative; the one specific. Much learning, great enlightenment, the intelligence of an age of progress in all that relates to high mental culture and social improvement; intense earnestness, profound study, patient inquiry; anxious searching of the heart and of all that has been proposed for meeting the heart's wants; devotional feeling; self-renouncing and self-sacrificing humility;—these, and other equally promising means and tokens of good, are found to be no effectual safeguards. Nay, at any season when men's minds are stirred, their consciences moved, and their souls melted; when the deadness of an age of formalism is giving place to a time of inquiry, of awakening, of thought and sensibility, of speculation and discourse, on things spiritual and divine; the very shaking of the dry bones caused by the wind of heaven may only make you more susceptible of influences, and more open to suggestions, carrying you away from the old paths and the footsteps of the flock, into wanderings in search of rest or of revival,—of peace or of perfection,—that may

issue in your being fain at last to believe any prophet and follow any guide, even if he lead you into the arms of an infallible church, or down the steep bank that ends in the dreary void of scepticism and unbelief.

At such an era ;—when “it is now the last time, of which ye have heard that antichrist shall come ; when even now already there are many antichrists ; whereby ye may know that it is the last time ;” when, on all hands, too many who seemed to be of us—as serious and as safe as ourselves—are going out from us ;—“Little children,”—see that ye have indeed “unction from the Holy One and know all things.” Be very sure that no ignorance, no emptiness, no vacancy ; no unhealed sore and unanointed eye ; no halting or hesitating belief ; no “vague and doubtful faith ;” will stand in the midst of such peril. Nothing will stand but what is real, positive, satisfying, in your personal acquaintance with God, and your saving knowledge of the things of God ;—nothing but your having yourselves found the Messiah, the Christ, and your bringing others to find him : that they and you may really become partakers with him in all that he is to the Father as his Holy One, and all that as his beloved Son he knows of the things of the Father delivered to him for us.

## XV.

## THE GULELESS SPIRIT, AMID ANTICHRISTIAN DENIAL OF THE SON, ACKNOWLEDGING THE SON SO AS TO HAVE THE FATHER ALSO.

“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. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father [*but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*”]—1 JOHN ii. 21, 22, 23.

THE last part of the 23d verse, although considered doubtful by our translators, and therefore put by them in italics and within brackets, is now admitted to be genuine. It completes the sense of the passage. To deny the Son is not to have the Father ; to acknowledge the Son is to have the Father. And this is the ultimate difference between an antichrist and a joint-christ ; between those who are against the Anointed One, and you who share his anointing ; “having unction from the Holy One and knowing all things.” By that unction or anointing, which passes to you from the anointed Holy One, you know all things ; all the truth ; the truth in all its bearings ; and therefore you can discriminate between the truth and every lie. If it were not so, it would be needless for me to write to you (ver. 21). I cannot expect you to detect a liar unless you know the



truth yourselves. For the test by which you detect a liar, or the liar, is the truth which you know. He contradicts the truth ; he denies that Jesus is the Christ ; and that denial is enough to mark the liar. It marks him also as an antichrist, or, in spirit, the antichrist. For it amounts to what is the criterion or characteristic of antichrist, a denial of the Father and the Son (ver. 22). The denial, indeed, so far at least as the Father is concerned, is not express and avowed, but virtual rather and by implication. The lie touches immediately the Son alone ; and reaches the Father only through the Son. It is not, however, on that account, less really a denial of the Father as well as of the Son. For the Father and the Son are one ; and therefore, he that “denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father,” while “he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.”

Two questions naturally occur here. I. How is a denial that Jesus is the Christ equivalent to a denial of the Son ? And II. How is a denial of the Son a denial of the Father, so that to deny the Son is not to have the Father ; and how, on the other hand, does the acknowledgment of the Son secure our having the Father ?

I. Plainly, in John’s view, to deny that Jesus is the Christ is to deny the Son ; the two denials are declared to be one and the same. And yet there is a difference. The object of the one denial is a proposition ; the object of the other is a person. Nor is the difference accidental or unimportant ; on the contrary, it is very significant.

One thing, at least, is very clear. If the denial of a proposition concerning any person is to be viewed as

identical with the denial of the person himself, the proposition must be one that vitally affects his nature and character. Take any illustrious personage who may be supposed to occupy my thoughts ; the heir-apparent to the throne, for instance. If I choose to deny that he is what you believe, or even know him to be, as to his height, or complexion, or turn of mind, or habit of body, you may charge me with falsehood, or even say that I lie. But you would scarcely allege that in denying any affirmation of that sort about him, I deny the prince. It must be something far more deeply touching his birth, or his birthright, or his worthiness of either, that I deny, before you can construe my denial of it into a disloyal and traitorous denial of himself. So here,—if to deny the proposition that “Jesus is the Christ” is to deny the Son ; the proposition itself must mean more than at first appears.

1. It cannot mean simply that he is the person foretold in the Old Testament under the name of the Messiah ; there is more in it than a mere identification of the individual. The official designation, Christ, or Messiah, or Anointed, marks not only a certain relation to the Jewish Scriptures, but also and still more a certain relation to God, whose Christ he is.

In the dreamy and misty theosophy of the Gnostic antichrists, any Christ whom they would acknowledge at all could be nothing else than a sort of efflux or emanation of Deity, a detached portion of the divine nature, or a mysterious outgoing of the divine power, or wisdom, or love ; altogether visionary and unsubstantial ;

but withal very sublime. The idea of such a transcendental Christ being identical with the historical man, the man of "flesh and bones," Jesus, was an outrage on their philosophy. They might admit an occasional and temporary illapse. Now and then, or perhaps generally, all through his life and ministry, Jesus might be in a certain spiritual relation to this Christ. There might be upon him, and in him, moving and inspiring him, what of God they thought proper to call the Christ. But that he was truly and personally himself the Christ,—in his manhood and his manhood's history and experience,—especially in his birth and in his death, their subtle notions of spirit and matter compelled them strenuously to deny. This denial necessarily reduced Jesus to the level of a mere man; a representative man perhaps, the ground and type and head of restored or perfected humanity;—a divine man, too, in some vague use of the phrase;—but still really not more than a man; his birth no real incarnation; his death no real propitiation. It is this which stamps value on the confession that "Jesus is the Christ;" that from his being born of the Virgin to his expiring on Calvary, he is the Christ. And it is this which makes the denial of the proposition so serious. It is the denial of his vicarious character and position; his being in any fair sense, or to any substantial effect, the substitute of men;—of men viewed as guilty, condemned, and lost.

I have said that he might be owned, after a fashion, as a representative man, or the representative man. Humanity in its best state, whether of development or

of recovery,—perfect humanity, if you will,—might have its culminating grace and glory in him. And as the model man,—or something more,—as the man in whom human nature and the human race, as such, are elevated,—he might be so visited by the overshadowing of a divine energy as to be in some sense partaker of the divine nature. But as to what he is himself personally, he differs in no material or essential respect from other men. Born like them, like them he dies. Not only has he all in common with them ; but he has nothing in him or about him but what is in common. He is not “separate from sinners.”\* For there the stress of this great controversy lies, in our own day, as well as in that of John.

Jesus must be acknowledged as not only one with us, but “separate from us.” Not otherwise can he save us by being our substitute ; redeem us by being our ransom ; reconcile us to God by the sacrifice of himself in our stead. He must be “separate from us” in his birth ; exempt, by special miracle, from all participation in the sin of humanity, whose guilt he is to expiate. He must be “separate from us” in his death ; his death being what no other death ever was, or ever can be, a real

\* So Jesus is described in the Epistle to the Hebrews : “For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (vii. 26). Here the three epithets, “holy, harmless, undefiled,” exhaust the account of his pure and perfect moral character. The phrases that follow, “separate from sinners,” and “made higher than the heavens,” must refer, I think, the former to the manner of his birth, the latter to his exaltation after his death.

satisfaction to offended justice ; a valid atonement for the offence ; an actual enduring and exhausting of what the penal severity of law requires ; a true and literal “ suffering, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

The denial of the proposition that “ Jesus is the Christ,” according to the notions then current, precluded all such views of the way in which he saves sinners. Under a different form, a similar mysticism precludes them now.

There has always indeed been a school in the church tending in that direction ; willing to exalt Jesus as high as any one would wish, in one aspect of his mediatorship, his being one with us, and so qualified to represent us ; but ever stopping short of that other aspect of it, his being “ separate from us,” and so qualified to atone for us. Of Jesus personally much appears to be made. Not too much certainly ; for that is impossible. Jesus, personally, the real, living Jesus, cannot be too much thought of. His very name is as ointment poured forth. He is the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. The church, the spouse,—every soul that as a chaste virgin is espoused to Jesus,—is ravished with the beauty of his person and the endearments of his fellowship. But it is a snare to forget, it is a sin to deny, that he is the Christ ; or, in other words, to overlook or set aside that real and actual work of substitution and satisfaction, of vicarious suffering and obedience, in respect of which he is the Christ. Ah ! will not every true lover of Jesus feel that, apart from his being thus

the Christ, he has in fact no Jesus at all to love? "Dear, dying Lamb!" is his adoring and grateful invocation; "Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us," is his song; "Thou hast redeemed us with thy blood," is his worship. He, therefore, is at no loss to see how the denial of the proposition that "Jesus is the Christ," thus viewed in its bearing on his work, is substantially and most sadly a denial of the person.

2. This will appear still more clearly when we consider that the person is the Son. As the Son he stands in a distinct and definite relation to the Father. He must be owned in that relation if he is to be owned at all;—otherwise he is to all intents and purposes denied.

The Gnostic dreamers fancied that they could get a notion of a Son of God from a mere contemplation of the divine nature in the abstract. By a sort of effort of imagination they personified a divine attribute—or emanation, calling it the Son; sometimes distinguishing that idea from the idea of the Christ, sometimes identifying them. Nor did they hesitate to allow the title Son of God to Jesus, considered as the representative man, or type of perfect humanity, who, as such, enjoyed the presence of somewhat of the Divinity with him and in him. Between these two conceptions of a Son of God they may be said to have oscillated; the one high, but indistinct; the other, more distinct perhaps, and intelligible, but comparatively low. They are the two conceptions, on this great theme of the Sonship, between which, as opposite extremes, I am apt to be tossed to and fro.

I fix my thoughts on the everlasting God considered abstractly as he is in himself. I try to body forth in my imagination the idea of their being in the essence of the Divine nature, from all eternity, a Son of the Father ; “ God of God ; light of light ; very God of very God ; begotten, not made ; of one substance with the Father ;” his only begotten. Abstracting my mind from earth and time, I gaze on the Eternal Three in One ;—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. I would pierce the mystery of high heaven ;—how “ the Son is of the Father ;” and “ the Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son.” Alas ! it is impenetrable. The distinction of persons in the Godhead I may believe, though I cannot comprehend. The second person I may be taught to call the Word, or the Son. But the name tells me nothing. I am lost in the dark sublimity of the infinite unknown. Coming down from heaven to earth and time, I see Jesus, “ a man approved of God, who went about doing good ;” and I can understand why, as a good and holy man, the perfect model of human goodness, the restorer and perfecter of all humanity’s excellence, after the divine ideal,—he should be specially and above all others honoured with the title of Son of God. Such a view of sonship, however, scarcely rises above what is matter of mere figure or sentiment. Thus, on the one hand, considering the nature of God apart, in the deep, dark wonder of the eternal generation,—the Son being eternally begotten of the Father ; or, on the other hand, considering the nature of man apart, in the clear light of the history of Jesus, and his being found pre-eminently

and exclusively worthy to be called God's Son ;—I am either soaring up to what is too high for me, or I am apt to acquiesce in what is too low for him.

But let me fully realise the fact that Jesus is the Christ. And let me fully enter into the great transaction between the Father and the Son, of which that fact is the expression. Then a new and blessed sight of this divine sonship breaks upon my soul. For now, as I am carried back, in rapt musing, to the remotest point of possible retrospection, along the vista of the ages of a past eternity, before all worlds, the Father and the Son are seen, not in repose, but in council at least, if not in action. A momentous consultation is going on. A great covenant is negotiated. The Father and the Son, with the Spirit, are, if one may dare to say so, in solemn conference together. From the bosom of the Father, in which he is dwelling evermore, the Son receives a commission to come forth. He is appointed heir of all things. Creation is assigned to him as his proper work. All providence is to be his care ; and, above all, the providence of this spot of earth. Here, on this earth, from among a fallen race, he is to purchase for himself, and for his Father, at a great price, a seed given him by the Father, to share with him in the blessedness of his being the Son. So it is arranged between the Father and the Son from everlasting ; the Holy Spirit being a party to the arrangement, as he is to have a large share in carrying it out. And so, accordingly, in the fulness of time, the Son appears among men. He appears as the Son ; on his Father's behalf ; entrusted with his Father's com-



mission ; to be about his Father's business. Thus Jesus is seen as the Son. And it is in the character of the Christ that he is seen to be the Son. He is the Son, not merely in respect of his being the holy Jesus, receiving proofs and tokens of God's fatherly presence and approval, as any holy being might. He is the Son also, and chiefly, in respect of the work or office with a view to which he is the Christ. He is the Son consenting to be the Father's servant, and as such anointed of the Father for the accomplishment of the Father's purpose. Only, therefore, in so far as you acknowledge Jesus as the Christ do you really receive him as the Son. Any denial, whether practical or doctrinal, of the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, is tantamount to a disowning of him personally as the Son. It is only when you recognise him as anointed to do his Father's will in the sacrifice of himself that you really own him, in any distinct sense, as the Son.

Such, then, is the import and significancy of the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, considered in itself ; and such its bearing on the owning of him personally as the Saviour and as the Son. It is a proposition which so vitally affects the essential character of him to whom it relates, that the denial of it is virtually a denial of himself. For the completeness of this illustrious personage depends on a full and adequate recognition of his double relation ; to us sinners, as our Jesus, and to God the Father, as his Son. And neither of these relations can be fully and adequately recognised, unless his being the Christ is recognised, with all that his being

the Christ must be held fairly to imply. Neither what he is to us as our Jesus, nor what he is to God as his Son, can be otherwise known than by what he is anointed to do, and actually does, as the Christ. Set aside his being the Christ; the anointed sacrificer and anointed sacrifice; the anointed priest and anointed victim; set aside his actual work for which he is anointed,—the work of redeeming us by his obedience, and the shedding of his blood, or the giving of his life, in our stead; and we have neither any Jesus fit to be our saviour, nor any Son of God worth the owning. The stress must always, for practical purposes, be laid upon his office and ministry as the Christ.\*

Hence he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ is not only a liar; he is antichrist. And being antichrist,—setting himself against the Christ,—thrusting him aside from his blessed office and ministry of real and effectual reconciliation for which he is anointed,—he, as antichrist, denies the Father and the Son.

II. This raises the second question: How is it that to deny the Son is to deny the Father,—so that “whosoever denieth the Son the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also?”

1. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not,” and cannot have, “the Father.” This may be regarded in one view as matter of positive appointment. In the exercise of his absolute sovereignty, God is entitled to say upon what terms and in what way any of his crea-

\* See note at the end of this Lecture.

tures shall have him;—have him, that is, as theirs; have him so as to have an interest in him, a hold upon him, and a bond of union with him. He may set forth any one he pleases, and say, If you deny him you cannot have me. In this case, however, he sets forth his Son, and therefore the appointment must be allowed to be in the highest degree reasonable and fair. One would say, even, it is natural that this law should be in force;—You cannot have the Father otherwise than through your owning the Son. The disowning or denial of the Son cannot but be an offence to the Father; deeply wounding and grieving his heart. It will be so all the more if the Son is disowned or denied, not merely in a personal, but, if one may so say, in an official capacity; not merely in respect of something connected with his own manner of being with the Father, but in respect of his exercising a great ministry, as bearing the Father's commission and executing the Father's purpose.

If the Son remained at home with the Father, in the inscrutable privacy of inaccessible light, which to us is impenetrable darkness,—so that beyond the fact of the Father having a Son of his own nature, dwelling in his bosom for ever, nothing of what they are to one another was ever to be known,—then to deny, or not to acknowledge the Son, might not be so culpable in us, or so justly displeasing to the Father. In that case we might possibly have the Father irrespectively of our knowing and owning the Son. It is otherwise when the Father “bringeth in the first-begotten into the world,” with the proclamation, “Let all the angels of God worship him.”

It is otherwise still when to you, perishing in your sins, the Father sends the Son on a mission of richest grace. Now it must be very palpable that if you deny the Son you cannot have the Father ;—especially if your denial of the Son take the form of a denial that Jesus is the Christ. For that is a denial of the Son in the very character in which he comes to you from the Father, sent, sealed, and anointed, to save you from your sins, by his being “separate from sinners ;” separate in the manner of his holy birth, in the merit of his vicarious obedience, and in the efficacy of his atoning death and justifying resurrection.

Here it becomes especially important to observe that the object of your denial is not a proposition merely, but a person. It is not with a statement about Jesus that you deal ; but with himself personally. And he with whom you deal is the Son. And he is the Son in the very act of coming, as he says, “to do the Father’s will ;” which will is “your being sanctified or cleansed by the offering of himself, once for all, a sacrifice to take away your sins” (Heb. x. 10).

Yes ! it is a living person who is now before you ; showing himself to you ; addressing you. You see him as he was when Pilate brought him out, his head all bleeding from the crown of thorns, and exclaimed, Behold the man ! or when John saw his side pierced, and blood and water coming forth ; or when the Roman soldier gazed on his meek pale face of agony, and murmured, “Truly this was the Son of God ;” or when the dying thief prayed, “Lord, remember me when thou

comest into thy kingdom." The same now as then, he draws near to you ; bleeding still ; his freshly-pierced side still giving forth fresh blood and water ; his face as woeful as when he cried, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me ? his voice as calm as when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, and said, It is finished. He draws near, "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities." And you deny him. He tells you he is the Son in all this, doing the Father's will, carrying out the Father's purpose of infinite compassion and benignity toward you a miserable sinner. And you deny him ; you deny the Son. He stands still beside you, knocking at the door of your conscience, of your heart ; assuring you that he is the Son ; that at the Father's bidding he takes your place, and bears your sin ; that for the Father's love to you he is with you to take you home with him to the Father ; now ; immediately ; this very instant ; as you are ; altogether vile and polluted, and helpless in your guilty state. He pledges himself to you that you have nothing now to fear ; that a full pardon is freely yours ; and a perfect peace ; and a new heart ; and a right spirit. And you deny him ; you deny the Son. How can you have the Father ? Is it not in the very nature of things an impossibility ? It is no abstract truth that you deny ; but the true and living Son ;—and that too in the very execution of his commission from the Father on your behalf. It cannot be that so denying the Son you can have, or ever hope to have, the Father.

2. "But he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the

Father also." He hath the Father ; how surely, how fully, may partly appear, if we consider, not only what Jesus is to us, as our anointed Saviour, but also what he is to the Father as his beloved Son.

For whatever is implied in his being the Son, in so far as it is compatible with human nature and a human condition,—whatever of grace, whatever of glory there is in the relation in which he who is the Christ stands as the Son to the Father,—he shares with you who acknowledge him. The Father makes you partakers of it all with the Son. You therefore have the Father as he has the Father ; after the same manner, and largely after the same measure too.

How would you say that Jesus, as the Son, when he was as you are now, had the Father ? All through his humiliation, how has he the Father ? On what footing is he with the Father ? What is his habit of intercourse with the Father ? The Father's love he has ; his love of boundless complacency, approval, delight. He is sure of it. The assurance of it is never lost or interrupted ; not even when he is made to taste the bitterness of the cup of wrath, and know the doom of a God-forsaken soul. He has the Father's gracious presence with him always. He has the Father's consolation and support, in the ministry of angels sent to comfort him, and in the constant abiding of the Spirit with him. He has the Father ; having right of access and appeal to him always ; and using that right always. "Abba Father" is on his lips always, and in his heart always. It is "Abba Father" when there is work to do ; when there

is contradiction of sinners against himself to bear ; when there is resisting unto death in the strife against sin ; when the voice is heard, Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd ; it is "Abba Father" still always. It is "Abba Father" when he for once rejoices in spirit,—“ I thank thee, O Father.” It is "Abba Father" when he soothes the sisters and gives them back their brother,—“ Father ! I thank thee.” It is "Abba Father" when he takes leave of his sorrowing followers, and commends them to the Father. It is "Abba Father" when hanging on the cross he prays for his murderers,—“ Father forgive them,”—and for himself, “ Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

So he, as the Son, had the Father, when he was as you are. So he would have you, acknowledging him, to have the Father also. You own him as Jesus, the Christ of God, the Son of the Father ; the Christ of God, washing you in his blood, clothing you with his righteousness, and presenting you with acceptance to God whose Christ he is ; the Son of the Father ; your own elder brother ; come out to seek you in the far country, and to bring you home to his Father and yours. Nor will he be satisfied unless you have the Father even as he has the Father. He shows you what it is to have the Father in the state in which you now are ; amid the trials of earth, the enmity of the world, the very pains of hell. He shows you how even here you can have the Father as, in a work and warfare infinitely harder than yours, he had the Father ; how you, in all your toil and tribulation, can rest in the consciousness of the Father's

favour ; and rejoice in the doing of the Father's will ; and resign yourself contentedly to the Father's disposal ; and quietly wait the Father's pleasure to call you hence when the time comes.

And what shall I say of your having the Father then?—not as the Son on earth had, but as the Son in heaven now has, the Father? Even now he says, “If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” So you have the Father now. But more, far more, is yours. “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” He comes to receive you to himself ; to take you to be with him where he is, that you may have the Father as he has the Father.

O glorious day ! O blessed consummation ! Is this indeed the end of your not denying but acknowledging that Jesus is the Christ, and so not denying but acknowledging the Son ?

Low he stoops,—how low none but a holy God and lost souls can tell,—as Jesus who is the Christ. Down into the depths of sin's guilt and doom he goes. Over the head of the anointed righteous One, the obedient servant, the billows of wrath roll. And you deny him not, but acknowledge him, as thus redeeming you. You confess that “Jesus is the Christ.” You are not ashamed of his cross. It is your glory. And well it may be. For what fruit is yours through your not denying, but



acknowledging, the Son, in his coming forth from the Father as his Christ to such humiliation for you? Is it that you escape punishment merely, and are saved from hell? That would be no mean boon. But what privilege is yours now,—what hope hereafter? It is the Son whom you acknowledge. He has the Father. He has the Father's kingdom; the Father's riches; the Father's joys. He has the Father's heart. He has the Father himself. And nothing will content him but that you, who acknowledge him, shall have the Father as he has the Father. Surely of the future, as well as of the present fruit of your acknowledging the Son, it may be said; "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And surely, beyond question, the whole plan and system of saving mercy is surpassingly gracious and glorious,—according to which, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

## NOTE REFERRED TO AT PAGE 218.

I have always had an impression that neither the doctrine of the Trinity nor that of the Incarnation, with its correlative, the Resurrection, can long continue to be really held by those who deny that of the Atonement, in the ordinary orthodox sense of it. If the Second Person in the Godhead has not an office to execute, and a work to do, effecting a real change in the relation of fallen man to God, and bringing him, upon his consenting to be brought, out of a state of condemnation and estrangement, into a state of acceptance and reconciliation,—and if the Third Person has not an office to execute, and a work to do, for obtain-

ing the consent needed ; in other words, if Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not to be regarded as sustaining different, and distinctly defined, parts in the economy of grace ;—I see not how distinct personality, in respect of being or essence, can well be conceived as either necessary or even possible. If they present themselves to me as acting differently and distinctly, each doing some specific thing which neither of the others does, or, according to the Divine arrangement, is competent to do,—then, with all its mystery, the Trinity becomes so far intelligible as a reality, if not in its nature, at least in its manner of actual working or doing. Otherwise, if the whole process of man's restoration or education is to be resolved into discovery and influence—the discovery of what he already is in relation to God, and the influence of that discovery—the distinction of the Divine Persons is to me merely nominal ; I am driven into virtual Sabellianism. So also, if Jesus, when on earth, had no special work of redemption to accomplish,—special, I mean, in the sense of its being what none but a real Divine Person, having a real human nature, could do,—the work, in short, of the actual substitution of himself in the room and stead of the guilty, to meet legal demands on them, and answer for them judicially,—I confess myself unable to form any idea of the propriety or meaning of the hypostatical union of the two distinct natures in one person. It becomes to me quite notional or nominal, not real ; I am apt to resolve it into a sort of figure of speech ; or to substitute a mystical “divine man,” for the real Son of God become the real son of man, or “the Word made flesh.” This has always appeared to me to be the dangerous tendency of the speculations of that school which some broad-church divines of our day represent. Giving them all credit for sincerity in holding, or thinking that they hold, the old orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, I am persuaded that their view of the Atonement and kindred subjects, must evacuate these doctrines of their sense and significance, and land its adherents in some modification of the Sabellian and the Gnostic heresies, if not ultimately in Socinianism itself. It is on that account that, having given some attention formerly to the subject in an examination of certain essays, I attach much importance now to the *Formula* employed by John here and elsewhere—“Jesus is the Christ”—“Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,” as I understand and have ventured to expound it.

## XVI.

## THE GUILLESS SPIRIT ABIDING THROUGH THE WORD IN THE SON AND IN THE FATHER, SO AS TO RECEIVE THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE.

“Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain [abide] in you, ye also shall continue [abide] in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.”—1 JOHN ii. 24, 25.\*

THIS practical appeal, concluding the previous argument, has a singularly close resemblance to the opening statement of the epistle. The same remarkable phraseology prevails. There is a “hearing from the beginning,” and a “declaration” or promise connected with it. “That which was from the beginning,” “that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you;” so the apostle speaks of the apostolic position and commission (i. 1-3). “That which ye have heard from the beginning”—“the promise which he hath promised;”—so he speaks here of the standing of those to whom he writes. And as, in the former passage, it is “the Word of life that is seen and heard and handled,”—it is “the life,” “the eternal

\* It is the same word in the original that is differently rendered in our version,—“abide,” “remain,” “continue” (ver. 24). This is an instance of the sacrifice of exactness to variety, not to be justified.

life," that is "manifested" and "declared,"—so here, "this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." The appeal runs exactly thus: "You, therefore, what ye have heard from the beginning, let it abide in you." For you must now perceive that "if what ye have heard from the beginning shall abide in you," then, and only then, shall ye "abide in the Son and in the Father." And this is the secret of your having fellowship with us in what is common to both of us: "the promise of eternal life" (ver. 25).

I. "Let that therefore which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you." The phrase "from the beginning" must here refer to the first preaching of the gospel. It cannot be understood in the same absolute sense in which it is used in the opening of the epistle. And yet John, I am persuaded, has that great thought in his mind. His object is to identify your position with that of himself and his fellow apostles. You are to "have fellowship with us" (i. 3). We would have you to be upon the same footing with us; in the same boat, as it were; the boat tossed on the Galilean sea, to whose troubled crew no phantom ghost but the living Jesus appears and says—"It is I; be not afraid." It was given to us to see, to hear, to touch and handle, "that which was from the beginning"—"of the Word of life." And this is that which we have declared unto you, and which "ye have heard from the beginning." Let it abide in you.

For this end, that it may abide in you, let "that which ye have heard from the beginning" be not only

known but felt ; not only known as a matter of fact or doctrine, but felt as a matter of experience. Let it so lay hold of you, that it shall be the nature of God becoming in a sense part and parcel of your nature ; the great heart of the Father entering in a measure into union with your heart.

The nature of God is light ; the heart of the Father is love. Light, pure and unsullied, is the essence of God, and his dwelling-place. He is light and he dwells in light. It is light which no darkness can invade. It is light, moreover, in which nothing but love can be at home. It is light before which,—the true light shining,—the darkness of the world, and all that is in it, must be passing away, and only he that doeth the will of God can abide for ever. It is in Christ that this true light now shines. Without him you cannot come to the light, or dwell in the light, or walk in the light ; without his blood which cleanseth from all sin, without himself as your advocate with the Father, the righteous one, the propitiation for your sins.

This is what “you have heard from the beginning ;” and have believed ; and have found experimentally to be true. Let it so “abide in you ;” let it be “Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith” (Eph. iii. 17).

For otherwise you cannot face the light ; you cannot meet with clear and open eye the light of that clear and open eye of God ; you quail beneath its truth and love. If at any moment you in any measure lose Christ, you so far lose both truth and love—the truth and love which alone can bear the light. You fall into darkness

again, and come under its power,—the power of its untrue and unloving ways. The old dark doubts and fears of guilt beset you : the old dark refuges of lies tempt you ; the old dark devices of self-justification return upon you ; the old dark habit of tampering with the world's lusts, and listening to the world's palliations of them, seduces you ; and the old dark disquietudes of a peevish and angry discontent with yourselves, with your God, and with your fellow-men, begin again to rankle in your bosom. Instead of the light of truth, there is dark guile in your spirits. Instead of the light of love, there is dark suspicion and enmity and alienation.

Ah ! if you would have all to be always clear and bright in the spiritual atmosphere around you ; all open between your God and you ; open truth and open love ; “let that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you.” Let all of Christ you have ever known, seen, heard, handled, tasted, “abide in you.” Let all you have learned of Christ,—as being with the Father, from everlasting, in his bosom,—as coming forth from the Father to reveal and reconcile,—as purging your sin with blood, and bringing you to be all to the Father that he is himself to the Father,—let it all “abide in you ;” always, everywhere.

II. So “ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father.”

First, “Ye shall abide in the Son.” What the Lord elsewhere enjoins as in itself a duty, “Abide in me” (John xv. 4), the apostle describes as the consequence of another duty being rightly discharged. He points out

the condition or the means of our abiding in the Son ; as indeed Jesus also may be held to do when he says, " If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will " (John xv. 7). The meaning clearly is :—" Ye abide in me through my words abiding in you ;"—the Lord's expression, " my words," being equivalent to the apostle's, " that which ye have heard " of the word of life " from the beginning."

Thus it is by faith that we " abide in the Son ;" for it is by faith that what we have heard of him from the beginning abides in us. The manner, therefore, of our abiding in the Son is neither sacramental on the one hand, nor mystical on the other ;—neither physically ritual, nor metaphysically transcendental.

We do not " abide in the Son " by any sacramental act on our part, or any sacramental grace or virtue on his. The Lord's Supper may be a help to our abiding in the Son ;—but only indirectly, through its being a help to our having " that which we have heard of him from the beginning abiding in us." It is the expressive sign and sure seal of it, and therefore may contribute to its abiding in us, and so to our abiding in the Son. But that is all. There is no charm or efficacy in the rite itself to secure our abiding in the Son. The relation described by our " abiding in the Son " is not of such a sort as can be kept up by any act or process apart from intelligence, consciousness, and volition.

And therefore this " abiding in the Son " cannot be mystical or transcendental, any more than it can be ritual or sacramental. It cannot be such as the vision-

aries of John's day imagined in their splendid dreams ; in which abiding in the Christ, or in the Son, considered as an emanation or efflux of Deity, was a kind of absorption ; a height of self-identification with some portion or manifestation of the Divine essence, or self-annihilation in it, to be reached by a long course of abstract musing on the first principles of things, or deep but vague contemplation of the eternal, infinite Being.

John's idea of "abiding in the Son" is much humbler and more practical. We "abide in the Son" as we may be said to abide in any one when his words abide in us, —or when that which we have heard of him, or from him, from the beginning, abides in us ; when we understand and know him, by what he says and what we hear ; when what we thus understand and know of him takes hold of us, carries our conviction, commands our confidence and love, fastens and rivets itself in our mind and heart, and so abides in us. Thus we abide in the Son precisely as we abide in a friend whom we know, and trust, and love.

Doubtless the Son in whom we abide transcends infinitely any such friend. In him are excellences which are to be found in no other. In himself personally, and in his relation as the Son to the Father, there are riches of wisdom, knowledge, goodness, grace, and glory, which our "abiding in him" through eternity will not enable us thoroughly to search or ransack. Not when myriads of blessed ages in yonder realms of light have rolled over our heads will one tithe of all the wonders of him whose "name is Wonderful" have been discovered ; no, not



though our "abiding in him" there will be without a break and without a cloud. And what shall I say of the raptures of that personal intercourse and interchange of thought, feeling, and affection, in which our "abiding in the Son" then must mainly consist? Can any limit be set to the ravishing joy of our walking with him and his walking with us in Paradise,—when we go in and out together,—we seeing him without a veil,—and he, as he talks with us without reserve, causing our hearts to burn within us? And what comparison can there be, even now, between our "abiding in him" and our abiding in any other, even the best of friends?

Still it is important to remember, that we do "abide in the Son" very much as we abide in any other friend; it is important now, as well as in the apostle's time. For there is a fancy abroad of a sort of "abiding in the Son" that may be to a large extent independent of "his words," or words about him, abiding in us. There is a tendency to put a sort of sentimental pietism,—itself undefined and hating definition,—gazing with rapt and fascinated eye on a soul-melting "Agnus Dei" or "Ecce Homo,"—seen in dim, religious light,—in the place of intelligent faith, or the engagement of mind and heart in personal converse with one who speaks and would be spoken to; of whom and from whom and about whom we hear and read, in the teaching of his own apostles, in the Scriptures of his own Spirit's inspiration. These are practically set aside; or, at least, any attempt to make their statements yield precise information concerning Christ and his work is disparaged. A Son of God and Son of

man, rising out of some deep soundings of divinity and humanity, is substituted for the Son of whom apostles spoke and disciples heard from the beginning. And abiding in him is not a plain, practical, personal dealing with him about that for which he came into the world and has been manifested to us ; to us as individuals one by one ;—but an attempt somehow to grasp the notion of abstract divinity and universal humanity being in him mysteriously at one. Let no such speculations beguile us. Rather “let that which we have heard from the beginning abide in us ;” and let us thereby “abide in the Son ;” using as the means of our “abiding in him” the Scriptures which we search, and which testify of him. Let us thus turn all that we learn into the materials of that personal communing of him with us and us with him, which is indeed the essence of “our abiding in the Son.”

All the rather let us do so because, secondly, this “abiding in the Son” is “abiding in the Father ;” for the Father and the Son are one. “Abiding in the Son,” we enter into his relation to the Father—into the whole of it and into all its fruits. We enter into all that the Son is to the Father as his chosen servant—as the man of his right hand—as his anointed—as his lamb, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world—as his fellow, against whom his sword of justice awakes—as his smitten shepherd—as his victorious king set on his holy hill of Zion—as his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased—declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead. Into all that

the Son is to the Father, in these and other similar views of his mediatorial character and ministry as the Son, we enter, when we "abide in the Son." And so we come to be to the Father all that the Son is to the Father. We abide in the Father as the Son abides in the Father. So we abide in the Son and in the Father.

And still all this depends on our letting "that which we have heard from the beginning abide in us." It depends on that "faith which cometh by hearing, as hearing cometh by the word of God." In vain we look for any other mode of indwelling in God than that which is through the Spirit giving us a sympathising insight into what we have heard and may always hear in the gospel,—into what we have read and may always read in the Scriptures,—of the great transaction between the Father and the Son on which depend the expiation of our guilt, the forgiveness of our sin, the ending of our long estrangement, and the ratifying of our reconciliation and peace. By study, meditation and prayer, let us get more and more,—the Spirit helping us in our musings,—into the very heart of all "that we have heard from the beginning," from the Father, of the Son; from the Son, of the Father. So "we abide," more and more intelligently, more and more consciously, more and more believingly, lovingly, rejoicingly, "in the Son and in the Father."

III. Of all this "the fruit is unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." For "this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."

The meaning here may be that "the promise of eter-

nal life" is superadded to the privilege or condition of our "abiding in the Son and in the Father,"—that it is something over and above that, held out to us in prospect; or it may be that our "abiding in the Son and in the Father" is itself the very "life eternal" that is promised. The difference is not material; the two thoughts, or rather the two modifications of the same thought, run into one. "The promise that he hath promised us is eternal life." And "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3).

Hence we need inquire no farther at present into the nature of eternal life; nor need we conceive of it as an unknown boon held out in dim and distant prospect before us. We have only to work out what is implied in our "knowing the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." We have only to prove and realise more and more, in our experience, what it is to "abide in the Son and in the Father." And that is the promise already fulfilled. That is "eternal life." It is in a real and valid sense, the very life of God himself made ours.

For the life of God alone can be truly said to be life at all; it alone can be "life eternal." All other life is but death; either death possibly impending, or death actually inflicted. At the very best, the life of an intelligent and responsible creature is, as it was in unfallen Adam, precarious; and if not doomed, at least liable, to death. In fallen Adam and his race, it is simply death; "the wages of sin is death"—"in the day thou eatest

thou diest." "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord;" "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." For the Son liveth. It is "given to the Son to have life in himself, even as the Father hath life in himself." This is a gift even to the Son, in our nature and in our stead. It is given to him, as one with us,—our kinsman-redeemer; for he says, "Because I live ye shall live also." Let us enter then into the life which the Son has by the gift of the Father; his past life of obedience to the Father and acceptance with the Father, on earth,—his present life of fellowship with the Father in heaven. Let us apprehend that life as a reality. Let us apprehend the essence of it, which is really intercourse, blessed intercourse, between the Father and the Son; converse; communion; conversation. We have materials for this in "that which we have heard from the beginning," if we let it "abide in us." We have the Father speaking of and to the Son, and the Son speaking of and to the Father. That is the life of the Father and the Son;—that is "life eternal." And it is that which he has promised to us,—even that very "life eternal,"—the Father so speaking of and to us as he speaks of and to the Son; and we speaking of and to the Father as the Son speaks of and to the Father. It is that very life that is promised to us when we, "letting that which we have heard from the beginning abide in us, ourselves abide in the Father and the Son."\*

\* See Lectures xl. and xli. for a fuller discussion as to the nature of "eternal life."

Hence the Lord says (John xv. 7): "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." To ask; to be ever asking, and asking freely, confidently, boldly; is one way in which "eternal life," or "abiding in the Son," acts itself out. The very breath of that life is prayer. Hence also the Lord says (ver. 5): "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit;" for he partakes of my life; and my life is fruitful—abundantly, richly fruitful. The life which I have with God my Father is fruitful in all good works, to the praise of his glory. And if that very life is yours, through your abiding in me and in my Father; if your life is hid with me in God; then it must now be fruitful in you, as it was in me when I was as you now are; fruitful in all the fruit of the Spirit, which is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

## XVII.

THE GUILLESS SPIRIT, THROUGH THE ABIDING MESSIANIC UNCTION AND ILLUMINATION OF THE HOLY GHOST, ABIDING IN CHRIST, SO AS TO HAVE CONFIDENCE AT HIS COMING.

“ These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 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. 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.”—  
1 JOHN ii. 26-28.

THE discourse is still about abiding in God,—in the Son and in the Father. And the special lesson taught is, that the security for our thus abiding in God is to be found, not in our resisting outward solicitations drawing us away from him, but in our having in ourselves an inward principle to keep us near and close to him. If we have not that, no warning, however faithful, against seducers will avail. If we have that, no such warning should be needed.

And what is that? It is what has been already indicated in the twentieth verse ; the “unction” or anointing which we “have from the Holy One.” Of that unction or anointing it is here testified, that its teaching

is both thoroughly comprehensive and infallibly true ; “ It teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie.” The effect of its teaching is our abiding in him ; “ Even as it has taught you, ye shall abide in him ;” or it may be put imperatively,—“ abide in him,”—“ having this unction, and being taught by it,” “ abide in him” with whom you share it. And you have the strongest inducement to “ abide in him ;” you and we alike. For we all look for his appearing ; and must surely wish that, “ when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”

Two topics here occur for consideration—I. The provision made for our abiding in him ; II. The motive urged for our abiding in him.

I. The provision made for our abiding in him is the “ anointing which we receive of him abiding in us.” That anointing, as we have seen, is our sharing with him in the gift of the Holy Ghost. And it is an anointing which abideth in us. “ I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.” So the Lord gives the promise of which John here attests the fulfilment. And it is with special reference to his teaching, illuminating, and enlightening grace, that both the Lord and the apostle speak of the Holy Ghost and his unction abiding in us. “ He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you ;” —“ he shall guide you into all truth ;”—“ he shall take of mine and show it unto you.” That is the Lord’s way of describing the Spirit’s abiding presence and its use.



And to that the apostle agrees. This anointing “teacheth you” and “hath taught you,” so that you need no farther teaching; for “it teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie.” There is a fulness in its teaching that admits of no supplement, and an assurance that excludes all doubt.

Observe the manifold worth and value of this anointing.

1. It is in us; it is an inward anointing. Not with oil on the head, but with the Holy Ghost in the heart, we are anointed; as he from whom we receive the anointing was himself anointed. It is not an application or appeal from without; it is a gracious influence, a gracious movement or experience, in the inner man. It is beyond the world’s cognisance; “the world cannot receive the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him;” and it is only what it sees and knows by the palpable evidence of sense that the world can take in. But the inward work and witness of the Holy Ghost is apprehended by faith as real; as being really the indwelling in us of the Spirit that dwelt in Christ.

2. This anointing is permanent; “it abideth in you.” It is not a fitful emotion or wayward impulse, a rapture of excitement, alternating perhaps with deep depression. It partakes more of the nature of a calm, constant, settled conviction. Frames, feelings, fancies, are all fluctuating; they are like the surface waters of the ocean, agitated by every wind. But this inward anointing is far down in the still depths beneath. It “abideth

in us ;” the same always in its own inherent stillness and strength, amid whatever tossings its contact with the upper air may cause. Through tears and cries, as well as smiles and laughter, it abides in us the same ; as it did in him who “rejoiced in the Spirit,” and who also “groaned in the Spirit.” “With our groanings which cannot be uttered,” the anointing Spirit, abiding in us, “maketh intercession for us ;” and our joy, like Christ’s, is “in the Holy Ghost.” This unction, then, is not to be confounded with our own varying moods of mind, or the varying impressions made on us by things without. It is something far more stable. It gives a certain firm and fixed apprehension of divine things and persons, which these vicissitudes can scarcely interrupt or weaken, and cannot destroy. There may be more or less of the vivid sense of this anointing, at different seasons and in different circumstances ; the signs of it may be more or less clearly discernible, and the hold we have of it in our consciousness may be more or less strong. But it “abideth in us ;” keeping God and eternity still before us as realities, in our sorest trials and darkest hours ; causing us, as we fall back upon it, like David in his recovery from doubting despondency, to exclaim :—“ I said, This is my infirmity : but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High” (Ps. lxxvii. 10).

3. This anointing is sufficient in and of itself ; its teaching needs no corroboration from any one ; it has a divine self-evidencing power of its own that makes him who receives it independent of human testimony : “ ye

need not that any man teach you." The gospel is its own witness; it carries in itself, as apprehended by this anointing, its own credentials. Like its author, it speaks as having authority, and approves itself experimentally to all who make trial of it. All this is through the anointing Spirit. It is by the Spirit that we are moved to make trial of the gospel; it is by the Spirit that the gospel is so applied and brought home to us,—in its sovereignty, as God speaking, and in its special and pointed adaptation to our case, as God speaking to us,—that we cannot but say in our hearts, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." This is "the anointing which we have received of him;" it is the Holy Ghost causing us to "taste and see how good he is." And this is the real ground and evidence of our faith; that faith which realises the fulfilment of the great covenant promise—"They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

4. The teaching of this anointing is complete and thorough—all-embracing; all-comprehensive; "it teacheth you of all things." It is not partial, or one-sided, as human teaching on divine subjects is apt to be; but full-orbed, well-rounded, like a perfect circle. It is not, of course, all things absolutely that this anointing teaches; but all things about the theme or subject of the teaching: about him from whom you

receive it, and whose it is. Of the very best of human systems, I suppose that every spiritual man will feel and confess, that it is not on all points satisfying ; it cannot but bear the marks of man's confined standing-ground and restricted range of vision. This is no disparagement of such human systems, when used as helps to the orderly understanding and right arrangement of the several parts of the truth of God. But it indicates the limit to their use. They cannot come in place of the Holy Spirit's teaching us the words of Christ. Even at the best, when the intellect is most pleased with the symmetry and beauty of a finished theological scheme, the spiritual mind, or rather the spiritual heart, feels that all is not there ; that there is something wanting of what passes between the living God and the living soul when peace is made between them ; that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in man's best divinity. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant." It needs the divine anointing of which we speak to teach, to unfold, to exhaust, all that is in the song of the angels—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

5. Finally, this anointing "is truth, and is no lie." It carries with it, and in it, an assurance not to be called in question or shaken ;—an assurance, one may say, infallibly sure.

But you ask,—Though I may be assured of the anointing itself that "it is truth and no lie,"—how may I be assured that my "having it" is truth and no

lie? And without this last assurance what will the other avail? Nay, it avails much. Even apart from the question of your assured personal interest in it and your assured personal experience of it, is it not much to know and believe assuredly that in itself, in its own proper nature and working, this anointing is very truth, and verily is no lie? Is it not something to be told that there is such an oil of gladness, such a precious ointment, poured out upon the High-Priest's head, and running over upon all his members; the oil, the ointment of the Spirit, "teaching of all things," and teaching of them with absolute certainty? You know what the things are of which his anointing teaches; they are the things which belong to God's glory and your peace. But you will not be content with knowing them merely as discoveries of your own, or as communicated by others. Know them as taught to you and attested to you; above all, as wrought out and acted out in you; by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. Proceed upon the faith of your thus knowing them, in the expectation of your thus knowing them, more and more. And do so, not doubting, but believing assuredly, that "the anointing which teacheth you of them is truth and is no lie."

Yes! "There is truth and no lie" in what the Spirit shows you of the love of God in Christ, and sheds abroad in your heart of that love; be sure of that, and be not afraid to act upon the assurance of it. "There is truth and no lie" in what the Spirit opens up to you of the freeness and fulness of the Father's overtures of mercy in the Son; be sure of that, and be not afraid to act

upon the assurance of it. "There is truth and no lie" in what the Spirit would have you to grasp of "the peace which passeth understanding, the hope that maketh not ashamed, and the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory;" be sure of that, and be not afraid to act upon the assurance of it. "There is truth and no lie" in "that which ye have heard from the beginning so abiding in you that you abide in the Son and in the Father." That really is "the anointing which is truth and is no lie." Be sure of that, and be not afraid to act out and out upon the assurance of it.

Thus receiving of the Lord Christ this anointing, you may well be proof against all "seducing antichrists" (ver. 26). And not otherwise can you be proof against them; for not otherwise can you "abide in him." "Abide in me," he says, "and I in you." Abide in me; and that you may abide in me, let me abide in you. Let my word dwell in you richly; and my Spirit,—giving to my word fragrance to fill the whole heart with the sweet savour of my name, as well as also penetrating power to reach every hard corner of the heart with the softening influence of my grace. Yes; let Christ dwell in your hearts by faith. Let the anointing Spirit infuse into your whole inner man the holy beauty, the meekness, the gentleness of Christ. Let his anointing mould and mellow your whole moral nature into a real identity with that of Christ. Thus becoming assimilated to him, growing up into him, you more and more closely and surely abide in him, and so are safe from "all them that would seduce you." No other security, in fact, will

suffice ; not your utmost vigilance against their lies, but the full indwelling in you of the truth, and the Spirit of the truth.

II. The motive urged for your abiding in Christ is the hope or prospect of “his appearing,” “his coming.” It is urged very earnestly and affectionately. There is a tender emphasis in the appeal—“And now, little children!” Nor is the change of person, from the second to the first, insignificant—“that we—”

John might have kept to the mode of address which he has been using, and to which in the next verse he returns ; as an apostle exhorting his disciples ; a teacher instructing his scholars ; speaking authoritatively or *ex cathedra*. But when the end of all comes in view, he cannot separate himself from them. We are to be together with the Lord, you and we ; you disciples and we apostles ; you scholars and we teachers. And for this end we would have you to abide in him, that we may have confidence together when he appears.

John had said at the outset, “That which we,” who are apostles, “have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us,” the same fellowship that we have, “with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Our object is to make you joint partakers with us in what might seem to be our distinctive privilege as apostles,—our having seen the Lord. That is our aim in all that we write to you. With a view to that we tell you of the light in which we may jointly walk together, and of the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which cleanseth us all alike from

all sin. With a view to that we warn you against having any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. With a view to that we remind you of the anointing which you as well as we have received of Christ, the Holy One. With a view to that we counsel you to abide in him ; that as there is no real difference now between you and us, there may be none hereafter, when it would be final and fatal ; that when he shall appear, we may all together appear with him in glory ; that you and we alike “ may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” For we all alike need to be admonished of this risk.

And what a thought ! what a contingency or possibility to be imagined ! “ To be ashamed before him at his coming ! ” It is a very strong expression. It carries us back to that old scene in Paradise when it was lost. The guilty pair “ hear the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, in the cool of the day.” And they shrink with shame from him “ at his coming.” Is it thus that we would shrink at his coming now ? Were he at this moment to appear, how would we feel ? What would be our first impulse, our instinct ? To run to meet him—or to shrink from him in shame ? There are those who at the coming of the Lord shall “ hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb ; for the great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand ? ” Would we be among that terrified multitude,—that woeful crowd ?



It is to have in it not a little of the pomp and fashion of the world ; “kings of the earth, great men, rich men, chief captains, mighty men, as well as bond and free men, without number.” They may know no shame or fear now ; unused to blush, or be abashed, or tremble in any presence, however they may force others to blush, and be abashed, and tremble before them. But at the Lord’s appearing, their brave, bold looks are gone. Ashamed, alarmed, despairing, they shrink from him. Surely we would not be of that miserable crew. Nay, fear apart, we who believe and love him would not wish to be found by him, at his coming, in any mood of mind, in any attitude of body, in any company, at any work, in any pleasure, over any book, that would cause even a momentary shrinking from him in shame. We would not choose to be so caught by him and taken by surprise ;—when we were not thinking of him, or serving him ; when perhaps we were tempted to be ashamed of him, or of one of his saints, or of some things about his cause and kingdom, before those who happened to be our associates at the time ;—so caught, I say, and taken by surprise, as to wish for a moment’s delay,—that we might get over our nervous flutter and confusion, and summon courage to bid him welcome.

Who is he who comes ? And for what ? Is it not “he whom our soul loveth,”—our Saviour, friend, brother,—who has gone to prepare a place for us among the many mansions of his Father’s house ? And for what does he come ? To take us to himself, that where he is we may be also. Can we tolerate the idea of being

ashamed before him when he comes, and comes on such an errand? Ah! if we would be safe from any such risk then, let us "abide in him" now; "abide in him" always. So, "when he shall appear, we may have confidence."

Let me be ever asking myself, at every moment, If he were to appear now, would I have confidence? If he were to come into my house, my room,—and show himself,—and speak to me face to face,—would I have confidence? Could I meet his look of love without embarrassment? Only if he found me "abiding in him;" doing whatever I might be doing "in his name, giving thanks unto God even the Father by him;"—only if he found me keeping him in my heart.

Let us then be always abiding in him; every day, every hour, every instant; even as we would wish to be found abiding in him, were he to appear this very day, this very hour, this very instant. He is about to appear; to appear suddenly; to come quickly. Oh! let us see to it, that as we would not wish him to come when we were in such a state as to cause shrinking from him in shame; as we would rather that when he appears we were in a position to spring forward with keen eye and outstretched arm—to welcome in all confidence him whom we love; let us see to it that we "abide in him." Let us be always in the posture in which he who gives his "little children" this counsel was himself when he closed the book of the Revelation. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

## PART SECOND.

### INTERMEDIATE CONDITION OF THE DIVINE FELLOWSHIP—RIGHTEOUSNESS (II. 28—IV. 6).

#### XVIII.

#### GROUND OR REASON OF THIS CONDITION IN THE RIGHTEOUS NATURE OF GOD—THE NEW BIRTH UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God.”—1 John ii. 29 ; iii. 1.

THE apostle passes to a new thought or theme ; a new view of the fellowship in which he would have us to be partakers with himself and all the apostles. It is “fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” He has viewed it as a fellowship of light. He now views it as a fellowship of righteousness. “God is light,”—that is the key-note to the former view. “God is righteous,”—that is the key-note to the present view. It is introductory to the third,—“God is love.”

For it is an indispensable condition of this fellowship with God that we realise in ourselves, and in our doings, what is in accordance with his nature. If therefore it is his nature to be righteous, it must be our nature to do

righteousness. But that to us is a new nature. It implies that we are born of him to whose nature ours is to be conformed ; that we are “born of God.”\*

“Born of God !” The idea seems to strike John’s mind with fresh astonishment. Familiar as it is, he sees in it, as it here occurs to him, new cause of wonder ; “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God !” For this rapturous exclamation in the beginning of the third chapter is based on the principle of sonship brought out in the last verse of the second ; “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.”

The starting-point in this new line of argument is the statement that “God is righteous.” It is anala-

\* It is thus that the last verse of the second chapter is connected with what goes before ; and thus also the abrupt change, as regards the person spoken of, between that last verse and the preceding one, may be explained. In the one (28th) it is Christ the Son ; in the other (29th) it is God the Father. There could be no misunderstanding among John’s readers, as if it was Christ that was meant in the latter verse as well as in the former ; for not only would it be contrary to all gospel usage, and to the very gospel itself, to speak of believers as being born of Christ ; but the very next verse (iii. 1) makes all plain. Besides, the verse in question (29th) is to be read in the light of one farther back (24th). Our abiding in the Son is there represented as carrying with it our abiding in the Father ; it is our abiding in the Father as manifested in the Son. And the condition of this abiding in the Father is being born of him ; that our righteous doing may be in harmony with his righteous nature. The doer of righteousness alone can abide in the righteous God. And the doer of righteousness is “born of God.”

gous to that given before, that "God is light." And as there, so here, the inference is obvious. Only the doer of righteousness can be really born of him, and the doer of righteousness certainly is so.

For to be born of God implies community of nature between him and us. I cannot be really his child unless I am possessed of the same nature with him. So the Lord Jesus himself teaches in two remarkable passages (Mat. v. 43-45, Johu viii. 38-44). In both of these passages, but especially in the last, there is a general principle involved. A family likeness, in features of character as well as of countenance, will betray an evil paternity, and must prove a good one;—"I speak that which I have seen with my Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father." You say that you are Abraham's children. If that were true, you would do the works of Abraham. He would not like you, have sought to kill me, for telling the truth which I have heard of God. But I will tell you whose children you are, and who is your father. It is he whose deeds you do. You reply, We have one Father, even God. Nay; if God were your Father, you would do the work of your Father, which is "loving me;" for he loveth me. But you reject me, and so prove that, in spite of your claim to be God's children, your actual paternity is very different; "Ye are of your father the devil."

John may have had these words of his master in his mind when he wrote down the brief and pithy maxim, "God is righteous, and every one that doeth

righteousness is born of him." His object is to supply a searching test by which our abiding in God may be surely tried. For our abiding in God is our abiding in the Son; and through our abiding in the Son, abiding in the Father, as the Son abides in the Father. But that implies our being "born of God." It is as "born of God" that the Son abides in the Father. And it must be as "born of God" that we, abiding in the Son, abide in the Father as he does.

The practical way of proving so high and holy a filiation is very simple: "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."

It is a mode of proof which may, without irreverence, be applied in the first instance to the Son himself. We have his own warrant for so applying it (1 John xv. 9, 10). It is by keeping his Father's commandments that he, as the Son, born of the Father, abides in the Father's love. As the Father is known by him as righteous, so he, doing righteousness, is proved to be born of him. He doeth the works of his Father, and so evinces his sonship.

All through, the stress is laid on righteousness. That is the distinguishing characteristic which identifies him that is born of God; the common quality connecting what he does as born of God with the nature of him of whom he is born. Already this attribute of righteousness has been brought prominently forward in this epistle. God is righteous in forgiving sin (i. 9). Jesus Christ is righteous as our advocate with the Father (ii. 1). But it

is in the section on which we are now entering that righteousness bulks most largely.

“God is righteous ;” that is his perfection. We are to “know that he is righteous.” His Son, born of him, knew this ; “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee.” I have known that thou art righteous. It is a great matter to know that, in the midst of a world that knows it not.

For does the world know that God is righteous? Have “the workers of iniquity” that knowledge, when “they eat up God’s people like bread, and say God seeth not?” when they call not upon the name of the Lord? when they do deeds of darkness, and, because he keeps silence, think that he is altogether such an one as themselves? Do we know that God is righteous? that God is kind, compassionate, merciful, bountiful,—all that we can easily know. Such knowledge is not too wonderful for us ; it is not high or unattainable. But that he is righteous! Have we a fixed and firm knowledge of that? Do we understand what it means? Do we grasp the meaning of it and hold it fast?

Ah! it is not natural for us to do so. That God is righteous, absolutely and perfectly righteous ;—that he thinks and feels and purposes and acts, always according to what ought to be, and never in accommodation to what is ; that he makes uncompromising rectitude the rule of all his judgments and proceedings in all his dealings with men ;—that he is not facile and bending, open to appeals and appliances from without, but inherently and unalterably righteous ;—to know that ; really to know

it, as a fact, and a great fact ; true now and true for eternity ;—ah ! such knowledge is not easy for me, a guilty and fallen man. It is not possible, unless I am “ born of God.”

Jesus knew it ; he knew “ the righteous Father.” “ Born of God,” he knew that “ God is righteous ;” and “ he did righteousness” accordingly. How thoroughly he did so, let some cases in which he might have been tempted to do otherwise attest.

1. I cite an instance already referred to in a somewhat different connection. A young man comes to him asking the way to eternal life. He is rich, amiable, good ; a keeper of the commandments from his youth ; ingenuous, attractive, sincere ; so that Jesus beholding him loveth him. May he not stretch a point in this goodly youth’s favour ? May he not accept his goodness as being, if not all that strict law requires, yet on the whole sufficient ? No. He knows that God is righteous. And, knowing that, he “ doeth righteousness,” though his doing it drives the youth away—with what issue who can tell ?

2. He draws near Jerusalem, and beholds the city. It is inexpressibly dear to him. If other Israelites hailed it as beautiful for situation, and boasted of it as the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great king,—the great king himself may well have a favour for it. The anguish of his human soul, as he contemplates its present security and coming desolation, must be all but intolerable. Can there be no help ? Is no indulgence possible for his own chosen city’s sin ? May no miracle be wrought sufficient



to rouse it to repentance? He knows that God is righteous; and he "doeth righteousness." He weeps in the doing of it. The city's fate wrings his heart. But what can he say? What but "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!"

3. He is in the garden; praying the prayer of agony; sweating great drops of blood. The cup is handed to him; the cup of woe; the cup of wrath; the cup of his Father's judicial reckoning with him as answerable for all his people's sins. "Father, if it be possible!" May it not be possible? Is there no way of salvation but through the shedding of my blood? No. He knows that God is righteous; and he "doeth righteousness." "Father, thy will be done!"

Thus it is plainly seen that he is born of God. He knows the righteous Father. And knowing him as the righteous Father, he "doeth righteousness" as his only begotten Son.

You who believe are born of God as he is. I speak of his human birth,—in which you, in your new birth, are partakers with him,—the same Spirit of God being the agent in both, and originating in both the same new life. His birth was humiliation to him, though it was of God:—your new birth is exaltation to you, because it is of God. His being born of God by the Spirit made him partaker of your human nature;—your being born again of God by the Spirit makes you partakers of his "divine nature." You, thus born of God, come to be of the same mind with him who is the first begotten of the Father; especially as regards your knowing that God is righteous, and that it is, therefore, and must be, the im-

pulse and characteristic of every one that is born of him to do righteousness. For if you are thus born of God, must you not be as thoroughly on his side,—as unreservedly in his interest,—in the great outstanding controversy between his righteousness and man's sin, as is his well-beloved Son himself?

Is it really so? Was he ever seen as infirm and irresolute, as weak and wavering, in his moral judgments, as you too frequently are in yours? Was he ever equivocal or feeble in his utterances about God's claims, and man's duty, and man's guilt? Did he ever hesitate to act upon the principle: "Let God be true and every man a liar?"

Nor will it do to say that he had not so much inducement as you have to tamper with God's righteousness, and be disloyal to his throne. Personally, it is true that he had no need to have recourse to any expedient of accommodation or compromise. God's judicial righteousness and his acceptance in God's sight never could come into collision. Never could he have occasion to desire that God were less righteous than he is, in order that there might be hope for him. But when I think of him as taking my place, bearing my sin, receiving in his bosom the sword that should have smitten me,—can I say that he had no cause to wish, had it been possible, that God might be less inflexibly and inexorably righteous than he there and then found him to be? And when I think of the exquisite tenderness of his sensibility;—how he could not witness human suffering unmoved, or see a human soul perish, or run the hazard of

perishing, without a tear ;—I can scarcely fancy it less difficult for him than for me to acquiesce complacently in God's righteousness "reigning," as it must reign, not only "through grace unto eternal life," but through wrath unto everlasting death. But that is what is implied in knowing that God is righteous. And to do righteousness, is to think and speak and act accordingly. It is to be unflinching and unfaltering in preferring God's righteousness to man's sin. It is to justify God's righteousness and condemn man's sin, with an entire and utter abandonment of all attempts, and even of all desire, to make terms between them. It is to proclaim internecine war between them ; yes, even though the issue should be the triumph of God's righteousness in the sinner's inevitable ruin.

A hard saying this ! who can hear it ? A heavy burden ! who can bear it ? Who that is not born of God ? Who but one who reaches, by the new birth, the position which the Son, in his birth, took as his ? Who but one who, born again of the Spirit as he was born of the Spirit, comes to occupy the same point of view that he did ; to see righteousness and sin—God's righteousness and man's sin—as he saw them ; and to deal with them as he dealt with them in all his ministry, and especially on the cross ?

First, in him, and with him,—born of God into fellowship with him in his birth,—you enter into that doing of righteousness on his part, which was the main design of his being born ; which brings into perfect harmony, not God's righteousness and man's sin, but

God's righteousness and man's salvation from sin. This is your first step, as born of God ; and it is all-important for yourselves, and for your fellow-men. It places you on the very vantage-ground on which the Son himself stood, when, coming into the world, he surveyed its sad, sinful case, in the light of the will of God which he came to do, and the righteousness of God which he came to vindicate and fulfil. It enables you to draw the line, sharp and clear, as he did, between that loving embrace of him and his cross which wins salvation for the chief of sinners from a righteous God, and in a way of perfect righteousness,—and that rejection of him which seals the fate of the very best of those who, refusing his righteous justifying mercy, brave his righteous retributive wrath. Thus, knowing for yourselves, in and with Christ, that God is righteous, you do righteousness, as he did.

And thus also, in your customary intercourse with other men, you act upon the deep conviction that God is righteous ; that his righteousness admits of no relaxation ; that there is between it and all manner of iniquity a terrible incompatibility ; that there is one only way in which the workers of iniquity can be righteously delivered ; and that all who are not found in that way, be they ever so respectable, ever so amiable, are righteously condemned.

Fully to realise that assurance, and to act upon it, without any wavering ;—as if you still regarded being in Christ of little moment or being out of Christ of little peril ;—so to live in your closet and in the world, at home and abroad, under the constant urgent sense of

there being safety only in Christ, and only ruin out of Christ, for you, for all, for any ;—that is to “do righteousness,” in the knowledge that “God is righteous.”

Ah! what an insight into the righteous nature and character of God; what a measure of cordial oneness of principle and sentiment with him; entering into his very mind and heart; does all this involve! How far removed is it from that loose, easy-going sort of Christian virtue which would not itself do iniquity, but is very tolerant of those who do it; not, like Lot’s “righteous soul,” “vexed with evil;” nor, like Lot, “preaching righteousness;” but rather prone to look on sin with indifference or complacency, and to let the sinner go on, without warning or entreaty, to his doom. If you know that God is righteous, and make conscience of doing righteousness accordingly, you cannot be thus tame and acquiescent; thus cold and callous. To you, righteousness, God’s righteousness, is not a name but a reality. To be conformed to it, to submit to it, is life. To be ignorant of it, or opposed to it, or far from it, is death. Do you know that? Do you know it so as to feel it for others as well as for yourselves? Can you look out upon the world that knows not the righteous Father, and not be more in earnest than you are?

“Who is on the Lord’s side—who?” Who is in the interest of the “righteous Father?” Who is he whose soul burns within him at the thought of the righteous Father being so little known?—whose bowels of compassion melt at the sight of men perishing in the world that knows him not? Truly he is “born of God.”

None but one born of God can be so like his only-begotten Son.

Is not this a position eminently high and holy? Is it not a position, our occupancy of which may well be matter of surprise even to ourselves? Does it not imply a wondrous "manner of love bestowed on us by the Father," that on such a footing, in such a sense, and for such an end, "we should be called the sons of God?"—born of him; so born of him as to do righteousness, even as he is righteous; to uphold practically the very righteousness which is his essential characteristic,—the peculiar and consummate glory of his infinitely perfect nature?

I do not speak now—at least not yet—of the amazing love manifested by the Father in the provision made for our being called or constituted his sons, through the giving up of his own dear Son for us, to bear our guilt as criminals, that we may share with him his grace and glory as the Son. What at present we have to consider, is not how we become sons of God, but rather what it is to be sons of God; what oneness of nature and character, of sentiment and sympathy, of feeling and action, between God and us,—especially in respect of that righteousness of his which we thus come to know,—our being his sons, or being born of him, implies. He would have us to be his sons, as he had Jesus to be his Son, when he was on the earth; knowing him as the "righteous Father," and doing righteousness as he is righteous. He would have us, as his sons, to be true

and loyal to him, as Jesus his Son was, in the great outstanding controversy of his righteousness with the world's sin ; as faithful ; and as tender too. He would have us, as his sons, to go on the very errand on which his Son, as his righteous servant, went ; and in his very spirit ; with the law of God in our heart, and rivers of water running down our eyes because men will not keep that law.

Ah ! to be thus the sons of God ; as thoroughly at one with God as Jesus his Son was ; witnessing everywhere and evermore that God is righteous ; righteous to punish ; righteous to forgive and save ! What an attainment ! What a responsibility ! What a rank ! Well may it prompt the abrupt ejaculation,—“ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God.”

## XIX.

## THE DIVINE BIRTH—THE FAMILY LIKENESS.

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called [the] sons” [children] “of God!” [and so we are!] “Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him” [God] “not. Beloved, now are we [the] sons” [children] “of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear” [when that shall appear] “we shall be like him” [God]; “for we shall see him as he is.”—1 John ii. 29—iii. 2.\*

THE first verses of the third chapter are to be viewed as inseparable from the last verse of the second. It is that verse which starts the new line of thought ; our “knowing that God is righteous, and doing righteousness ac-

\* As explanatory of my exposition, I must advert to one or two points of verbal detail, in regard to the reading and interpretation of these verses. First, in almost all the most authoritative manuscripts of this book,—though not in that which is called the received text, and which was in use when our translation was made,—there is a brief phrase inserted after “that we should be called the sons of God ;”—“and so we are.” These words are now generally admitted to be genuine. The sense is not really affected, whether they are allowed or excluded ; for undoubtedly, according to common usage, “being called the sons of God” means actually becoming the sons of God. But they add to the emphasis of this noble appeal ; and they are characteristic of the writer. Secondly, the pronoun “he,” “him,” is in these verses to be understood always of God the Father. It must be so understood in the first verse of the third chapter ; and consistency



cordingly," in virtue of our "being born of him." Born of him! That is what awakens John's grateful surprise, and occasions his exclamation, "Behold, what manner of love!" His discourse now is an expansion of that thought.

I. In every view that can be taken of it, our being called the sons of God is a wonderful instance of the Father's love. That we—Who? The lost and guilty; who have forfeited by sin whatever claim we might have on God originally; who have become rebels against his authority and criminals under the sentence of his law; who, if left to ourselves, would rather continue estranged from him for ever than consent to return and be reconciled to him in peace:—That such as we should be called the sons of God! And then how? Through his own Son making common cause with us, that we may have a common standing with him; and by his own Spirit making us willing, almost against our wills, to acquiesce in that arrangement. And to what effect? That we may be to him what his own Son is to him;

requires it to be so understood throughout; all the rather since otherwise the sense is broken, instead of being complete. But thirdly, what is most important is the phrase, "when he shall appear." It is that which leads readers of our translation to bring in our Lord Jesus Christ, as if he must be the party referred to; especially as they are apt to connect the phrase with what is said before of "his coming" (ii. 28). But there is no pronoun at all here in the original; and what is supplied should be "it," rather than "he." The connection is not with the remoter passage, in a previous section, now ended, but with what goes before in the very same verse: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when that does appear, we shall be like him;" like God whose sons we are; "for we shall see him as he is."

the objects of the same love ; sharers of the same rank. Well may we exclaim, "Behold what manner of love!"

But it is chiefly one element or feature in this high calling that the apostle has before him when he breaks out into this rapturous exclamation ; our being the sons of God as "born of him" (ii. 29) ; our undergoing a divine birth which, making us partakers of the divine nature, makes us thereby really and truly children of God ; children, in a sense, by nature ; and therefore fitly acknowledged as children.

Observe the peculiar turn of expression. As exactly rendered, it is not that we should be called "the sons," but rather, that we should be called "children," of God. It is not said merely that we are called his sons, as having him standing to us in the relation of a Father ; but that we are called his children ; his divinely-born children ; deriving from a divine birth a divine nature ; children of God, in respect of our being born of God.\*

Of course this last view does not exclude the other ; on the contrary, they virtually coincide. The thought of our being born of God immediately suggests the thought of the Father's love. It is fatherly love that explains our being called children of God in virtue of our being born of God. It is the very glory and perfection of the love which the Father bestows on us, that we are thus called or constituted children of God.

\* A reference to the original will confirm this criticism. Τέκνα Θεοῦ is the phrase ; not *υἱοὶ Πατρὸς*. And there is no definite article, as in the English. The expression suggests something more than mere legal and relational filiation ; it points to communication of nature.

For it is conceivable that in some other way, and on some other footing, we might be called children of God.

In point of fact, men dream of their being God's children altogether irrespectively of any new divine birth,—anything like “being born of God.” Paul, at Athens, quoted a Greek poet as saying, “We are all his offspring.” From him we have our origin, and “in him we live, and move, and have our being.” Simply as his dependent offspring, we may think that we are entitled to be called his children, and to call him Father. We may speak of his love in creating us and caring for us as fatherly love. It is not, however, really so, in any valid scriptural sense. At any rate it is not the “manner of love” which John thinks it so amazing a wonder that the Father should have “bestowed upon us in our being called children of God.”

Again, our being “called children of God” may be considered simply as an act of adoption, very much analogous to what is practised among men. Viewed in that light, it is unquestionably an instance of fatherly love; and fatherly love of no ordinary kind. It is as if a judge were not only to procure a pardon for the criminal he has doomed to death, and hand it to him on the scaffold as he is awaiting execution,—but were to take him home, and, by a legal deed, constitute him his son and heir; or as if the monarch were to admit into the royal household a vanquished and forgiven rebel, to be on the same filial terms with him, and enjoy the same filial privileges, as his own first-begotten.

Or take the better example of the reception of the

prodigal son. The sympathising witnesses of that scene of reconciliation might well utter the ejaculation, Behold, what manner of love the father has bestowed on him! He himself could never cease to feel the wonder of it. And yet even this is not the manner of love that awakens John's admiring rapture; or at least not the whole of it. The parable, for its purpose, is complete, although it takes no express notice of anything on the father's part but his welcoming his son, "once dead but now alive,—once lost but now found;" or anything on the son's part but his "coming to himself and going to his father." But he who uttered the parable spoke of our being "born again;" "born of the Spirit;" as explicitly as his beloved disciple speaks here of our being "born of God." And we cannot know what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us in our being called the children of God, unless we realise our being so in virtue of this new divine birth. Here the parable does not help; it may even, if taken alone, mislead. It teaches its own lesson; but it does not teach the whole truth of God on the subject of our being "called children of God." The prodigal's mind underwent a mighty revolution with reference to his father and his father's house. It must have done so before he could be willing, either to accept the father's terms of pardon and peace, or to accommodate himself afterwards to the father's character and way of life; and without such willingness he could not have been really his son. That surely implied a great change of mind, which the parable, however, does not fully, or, indeed, at all explain.

But we know well, as spiritual men, how the corresponding change in our nature must be wrought. We must be "born of God;" so born of God that it shall be as truly our nature "to do righteousness" as it is his nature "to be righteous." It is not merely that we need to be made willing to embrace his righteous overtures of mercy, in order to our personal acceptance in his sight. That doubtless requires that we should be born of God; for no man ever yet was found willing to "know and submit to the righteousness of God," or unreservedly to consent to be "justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ," without so thorough a revolution in his whole inner man,—so complete an abandonment of his own way of peace, and such entire acquiescence in that of God,—as could only come from his being indeed born of God. To be born of God to this effect;—to the effect of our coming to be of the same mind with him, in the great and vital matter of a sinner's justification, and our justification as sinners;—that is much. It is the proof or manifestation of a fatherly love bestowed on us that is of a very wonderful sort indeed. But that is not all. Not only are we to be of one mind with the righteous Father as to the manner of our return and reconciliation to him; we are so born of God as to be ever after of the same mind with him, as to the whole of his righteous laws, and his righteous administration of them; "doing righteousness as we know that he is righteous." That is what his heart is set upon; that is his fatherly love. It goes far beyond his simply consenting to regard us, in spite of all our

estrangement, as still his children, if we consent to be so regarded. It is very different from his merely passing an act of indemnity, and by a summary and sovereign process of will, executing, as it were, a deed whereby we are declared to be in law his children. That is all the love which a father can bestow in adopting a child, according to the usages of earth. But it is not all that our Father in heaven bestows upon us, when we are called children of God. He contemplates a far more thorough filiation, a more intensely real sonship, than what can result from any such transaction outside of us ;—any agreement between him and us, however generous and gracious. He “begets us” to himself (James i. 18) ; “we are born of God,” by an inward communication of his nature to us. He must have us to be, not titular, but real and actual children ; children by participation of nature as well as by deed of adoption ; by a new creation as well as a new covenant ; of one mind and heart, of one character and moral frame with himself ; “doing righteousness,” as we “know that he is righteous ;”—so, and no otherwise, “born of him.”

“Behold what manner of love” is this that “the Father hath bestowed upon us !” That in such a sense, and to such an effect, the righteous God should be bent on our “being called his children ;” his very children ; his children in respect of our being made partakers of his righteous nature as God ! Truly it is a love which it would never have entered into man’s heart to conceive, that in this marvellous way of such a new birth, “we should be called children of God.”

II. And we are his children; "Beloved, now are we children of God." Our being called children of God is a reality; our being born of God makes it so. "The world may not know us in that character, for "it knows not God," and has never known him. We "know that God is righteous;"—but the world does not so know him, has not so known him, will not and cannot so know him. How then should it know us, when, "born of God," we "do righteousness as he is righteous?" On the contrary, for this very reason, because we are called children of God, and indeed are so,—therefore "the world knoweth us not."

In this respect our position in the world is identical with that of Christ himself. He was called the Son of God, and was so; therefore the world did not own him any more than it owns us; because "it knew not him whose Son he was."\* The world could not understand his thorough sympathy with God; his burning zeal for God; his holy anger kindled at the sight of whatever outraged the righteous character and claims of God; his lofty, uncompromising loyalty to God's righteous government and law; his tender concern for the little ones given to him by God, that they might be shielded from man's wrong and led in God's righteous way. His being

\* Here especially the reference of the pronoun, in the last clause of the first verse, to the Father, is to be noted. I introduce the thought of the world's disowning of the Son, not under that clause, but rather under the previous "us," in virtue of the filial oneness of Christ and his people. The clause in question explains the world's ignorance of both, as arising out of its ignorance of the righteous God whose sons or children he, and in him we, are.

the Son of God, not in name only but in nature also ;— his being so constantly and consistently true, in all his life, and in his death, to what his sonship involved ;— was the very thing which made him incomprehensible to the world. Even his own chosen ones, when he was in the crisis and agony of “doing righteousness,” knew him not. The three who should have watched with him in the garden, slept. When he was on his way to trial and death, they all forsook him and fled. They knew him not as the Father’s “righteous servant, by his righteousness justifying many, through bearing their iniquities ;” because they knew not the righteous Father himself, laying upon him their iniquities. He was left alone with the Father in that last scene of all (John xvi. 32). All throughout he was constrained painfully to realise the fact that his mission from the righteous Father, and the righteous meaning of it, were but dimly apprehended by his closest friends, and were wholly set at nought by a world “that by wisdom knew not God.”

That same world has not known God since, any more than it did before ; his children have still to live in the midst of a world that knows not him, and therefore will not know them. This is their trial, as it was Christ’s. And in one respect it is to them, if not a sorer or more painful, yet a more perilous trial, than it was to him. If the world knew not him, he in a corresponding sense knew not it. If the world had no sympathy with him in what he knew of the righteous Father, he had no sympathy with the world in what it



thought of the righteous Father. If men, not knowing God whose only begotten and well beloved Son he was, could not enter into his deep views of God's righteous character and claims, he had no leaning toward their loose notion of all in 'God's government being made to bend and give way to them, that they "might not die." That never could be his infirmity. But it is ours; it is our temptation. Children of God as we are called, and really are; "born of God," so as to be partakers of his nature, and to "do righteousness as he is righteous;" we are not so thoroughly rid of the old nature but that still we have too strong an inclination to think as the world thinks, and feel as the world feels, about the righteous God and his righteousness.

Especially when there comes to be a heavy strain upon us as God's children; and a strong case is made out for some concession; and we begin to doubt if we have not been too stiff and strict in refusing this or that compliance, or condemning this or that liberty; and ask if we might not perhaps do more good, and better serve the cause of righteousness and a righteous God, by being a little less precise and more accommodating. Yes; we might in that way disarm somewhat the world's hostility, and win a character for amiable courtesy and a liberal spirit. The world might come to know us, so as to like us better than it does now; better than it likes our more scrupulous brethren. But would not its knowing us in that way be just in proportion to our ceasing so far practically to be God's children, "doing righteousness as he is righteous?" Let us be upon our

guard against so great a danger. Let us lay our account with having to judge and act on principles which the world cannot understand. Let us be God's children indeed; though on that very account the world that has not known God should not know us.

III. For, whatever the world may think or say, "we are the children of God," his dear children; sharers of his divine nature; the objects of his fatherly love. It concerns us to bear this in mind; to apprehend and feel it to be true. It is our safety to do so. It is what is due to ourselves; it is what God expects, and has a right to expect, from us.

And it is especially on our community of nature with God, as being "born of him" and so "called his children," that we are to dwell. It is not so much with a view to heighten our sense of privilege, as to deepen our sense of obligation, that John so emphatically repeats this assertion;—"Now are we the children of God." It is our nature, as such, being born of God, to "do righteousness, as we know him to be righteous." That is a new nature in us, and it is to be cultivated, exercised, developed, ripened. The field in which it is to grow and be matured is not at all congenial or favourable. It is the world which, not knowing him who begets, cannot be expected to know us who are begotten of him. It is the world, whose influences are all hostile to what is the great characteristic of the new nature in us which our being born of God creates,—our "doing righteousness as we know that God is righteous." Still that is our nature; our new nature: "Now are we the children of God."

And be the world ever so unpropitious in its atmosphere and soil, we are here in it as “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord,” to grow as his children, “that he may be glorified.”

That is what is John’s chief design, in reminding us, in this connection, that we are the children of God. Other views are not to be excluded. The high rank in God’s kingdom; the intimate, familiar footing in his house; the warm place in his heart; which that wondrous manner of love bestowed upon us in our being called his children implies;—these all are animating and spirit-stirring motives to face the worst the world can do to us, through its not knowing us any more than it knows him whose children we are. It is a legitimate source of comfort and encouragement when, disallowed of men, we have to fall back upon “the witness of the Spirit, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God; and if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” It is, moreover, a strong and telling appeal that is made to our sense of honour, to every noble and generous impulse of the new nature in us, when we are reminded that we are sent as God’s children into the very midst of a world that knows neither our Father nor ourselves; and sent for this very end, that we may approve ourselves to be his children indeed; and may “let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.” In the face of the world’s ignorance of us and of our Father, and its ignorant opposition to us and to our Father; though the world may

refuse to acknowledge us as God's children, and give us credit for being what we profess to be; still let us not lose our own sense of the reality of what we are. Let us stay ourselves on the conviction that our being God's children is not a matter of opinion, dependent on the world's vote, but a matter of fact, flowing from the amazing manner of love which the Father hath bestowed upon us. And let us be put, as the saying is, upon our mettle, to make good our claim to be God's children, by such a manifestation of our oneness of nature with him of whom we are born, as may, by God's blessing, overcome some of the world's ignorant unbelief, and lead some of the world's children to try that manner of love for themselves,—to “taste and see how good the Lord is.”

These are important and relevant practical considerations, to which we do well to give heed.

But they must not thrust aside the apostle's main design, which is that our own personal holiness may be preserved and may grow. We are the children of God, as born of him; so born of him as to have the great fundamental principle of his righteous nature wrought and implanted in us. And our task, our trial, our probation, is, to give that principle fair play and full scope, in opposition to the world which disowns it; to act out all that is implied in our being God's children, in the very heart of the world which knows neither him nor us; to grow in filial likeness and filial love to God amid all the adverse influences of the world's ignorant ungodlines. “Now are we the children of God,” as being “born of him;” having his moral image stamped upon

us; his moral nature formed in us. That is what we are ever more and more to realise ourselves to be, amid all the drawbacks and disadvantages of our present state.

IV. And we are to do so all the rather, because these drawbacks and disadvantages will not last long. We are only at the beginning of our life as God's children. What we are, in that character, we grasp, or try to grasp, by faith; "what we shall be does not yet appear." But it is to appear soon. And one thing we know about it is, that our participation in God's nature, as his children, must then be perfect, for our knowledge of him will be perfect;—"We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." This suggests two thoughts.

In the first place, what is set before us, as matter of hope in the future life, is not something different from what is to be attained, enjoyed, and improved by us, as matter of faith, and of the experience of faith, in the present life. It is not that now we are the children of God, and that hereafter we are to be something else, or something more. No. The sole and simple contrast is between what we are now, as children of God, and what we shall be hereafter as such. "Now we are the children of God;" "born of him;" partakers of his nature; "doing righteousness, as he is righteous," in the midst of a world that knows us not as doing righteousness, any more than it knows him, the righteous Father, whose righteousness we do. But "the world passes away, and the lust thereof;" and, lo! "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness!" What shall we then be as children of God,—in a new world,

that knows both him and us,—all whose arrangements and ongoings are in sympathy with him and us? “It doth not yet appear.” There is a veil hiding that glory from our eyes; and John does not lift it.

But, secondly, one thing he tells us plainly enough. When it does appear what we are to be; when that is no more hidden but disclosed; we shall be “like God” whose children we are as being born of him; “for we shall see him as he is.”

We shall be like him; we shall be such as he is; not almost, but altogether. We are like him now. We are of his mind and on his side in all that pertains to his righteous character and government; his righteous condemnation of all iniquity; his righteous way of saving sinners. But the likeness is broken and imperfect. It is a real family likeness so far as it goes, a real oneness of nature; it identifies us as his children. But the features of resemblance are faint at the best, and marred by traces ever reappearing of our old likeness to the world and its prince, whose children we once were. It will be otherwise when “what we shall be” is made manifest or “appears.” Then our likeness to God will be complete; for then “we shall see him as he is.”

“We shall see him as he is;” for “the pure in heart shall see God.” The full light of all his perfection as the righteous God will open upon our view;—we shall know the righteous Father as the Son knows him.

The Son knows him;—“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee; and these have known that thou hast sent me.” Here are

the two extremes :—"The world hath not known thee ; but I have known thee." And here also is, as it were, the intermediate position occupied by us :—"these have known that thou hast sent me." They do not know thee yet, as I, O righteous Father, know thee. But they are in the way of learning thus to know thee ; for they know me as sent by thee. I am educating and training them in that knowledge of thee which I would have them to possess as perfectly as I possess it myself ;—"I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it." Nor will I desist until they know thee, as I know thee, by experience of thy love ; "the love wherewith thou hast loved me dwelling in them and I in them" (John xvii. 25, 26).

So Jesus, "the first-begotten among many brethren," is teaching us now to know, as he knows, the righteous Father, through "the love wherewith the Father loveth him dwelling in us, and himself dwelling in us." The school is ill-suited, in many respects, to the teaching ; and the scholars are not so apt as might be wished. The school is but dimly lighted and badly aired ; the atmosphere is too full of dust and smoke ; the learners also are often drowsy ; and the lesson-object is seen through a glass darkly. But lo ! the hour comes when the benign master, the loving elder brother, leads us into the spacious, lofty, bright hall of his Father's many-mansioned house, and presents us to the Father, face to face, saying, "Behold I and the little ones whom thou hast given me." Then there is clear sight ; unclouded vision ; a full and perfect understanding of the righteous Father ; a full and perfect understanding between him and us ;

as full and perfect an understanding as there is in the case of his own beloved Son himself. All that is dark or doubtful about his character and ways is cleared up. There is nothing anywhere to awaken a suspicion or suggest a question; nothing to give a partial or distorted view of what he is or what he does. We see him as he is; and so seeing him, we approve, and love, and are like him evermore!

Is not this a hope "full of glory?" And is it not a hope full of holiness too? Surely it must be true that "every man that hath this hope in God," the righteous Father,—the hope of being like him through seeing him as he is,—"purifieth himself even as Jesus, the Son, is pure."



## XX.

THE DIVINE HOPE PERFECTING THE SINLESS  
FAMILY LIKENESS.

“Beloved, now are we the sons [children] of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when he shall appear” [when that shall appear] “we shall be like him [God], for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him [God], purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.”  
—1 JOHN iii. 2, 4.

THE crowning glory and joy of sonship is to be like him whose sons we are; and that glory, that joy, is set before us. What we are to be, as sons of God, does not now appear. But it is to appear. And when it does appear, we know that we shall be like him. That one element or feature of our future state as children of God, hidden as that state is, we know. What more, or what besides, there may be in it to make it blessed, we cannot know; for “what we are to be does not yet appear.” Only we do know that when it does appear, it will be found to have this blessedness in it; that “we shall be like God.”

It must be so; for “we shall see God as he is.” Other things about our future state as children of God we cannot know until what we are to be, which does not now appear, shall appear. But one thing we do know,

that we are to "see God as he is," and therefore to "be like him." That is our hope ; a divine hope ; "hope in God ;" tending towards the perfecting, even here, of the family likeness that attests our divine filiation, or our being "born of God." For "every man that hath this hope in him,—that is, in God,—purifieth himself, even as he,—that is, Christ,—is pure" (ver. 3).

There is, as usual, some difficulty here as to the pronouns "him" and "he." The first—"him"—evidently points to God the Father, whose children we are. The hope which we have of being like God, because we shall see him as he is, is a hope "in him," or upon him, having him as its object and its ground. It is the last—"he"—that may seem uncertain. It is a different word in the original from the previous word "him ;" which again is the same as that used in the previous verse about God. The "he" in the close of the verse,— "even as he is pure,"—is emphatically demonstrative. It means "that one,"—"that child of God,"—"that Son." So clear is the identification of the person. Both pronouns, it is to be noticed,—the "him" and the "he,"—are expressed in the original, and not left to be supplied. The first naturally refers to the person previously spoken of, God the Father, whose children we are. The second as naturally refers to some other person, already distinctly enough indicated, in whom the ideal of our ultimate perfection in respect of likeness to God is realised, and in whom, therefore, the model and standard of our duty, as aiming at that likeness, is to be found. That person is evidently Christ

the Son. The verse, accordingly, interpreted in strict consistency with the exact grammatical construction, may and must run thus:—Every man, every one, every one of God's children, every child of God,—having this hope in God, the hope of seeing him as he is and being like him,—purifieth himself, even as that child of God, that Son of God, that Christ, is pure.

Thus the apostle, having set before us the high ideal, brings in the model of its actual realisation. The ideal is our being therefore like God whose children we are ; our being like him, because we shall see him as he is. This ideal as to what we shall be implies a striving after it as we now are. For "every one who hath this hope in God purifieth himself." And we strive all the better because we have a model of its realisation ; "even as the Son is pure."

I. We must look then here, as always, to Christ. He had a hope in God, or upon God ; a hope having God for its object, and God for its ground and warrant. "Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts" (Ps. xxii. 9). "My flesh shall rest in hope" (Ps. xvi. 9). It was hope for himself as the Son ; and it was hope in and upon God his Father. And it was substantially the same hope that we have as children that he had as the Son. True ; he could not say, with reference to himself, and his own knowledge or consciousness,—It doth not yet appear what I shall be ; at least not exactly as we say it. He knew better what he was to be, than we can know what we are to be. But even he, in his human nature and human experience,

did not adequately know this; for even he walked by faith and not by sight. It really did not yet appear what he was to be. There was much, very much, of the joy set before him, that his human soul, in its earthly condition, could not comprehend. The Father had in store for him as his beloved Son such a recompense,—such a fulness of consummated joy and glory,—that, Son as he was, he could not beforehand comprehend or imagine it. One thing, however, he did know, that whatever the future discovery or development, to himself or others, of his sonship was to be, it would be all in the line of his being like the Father; and being like the Father through seeing him as he is.

I would speak with reverence and diffidence here. I try to put myself in the position of him who, as regards this very matter, is held up before me as my pattern; I mean, as regards my purifying myself now, in virtue of my having this hope in or upon God my Father, that I am to be like him hereafter, when I shall see him as he is. Christ was as I am; else the reference to him here is vain. He had the same hope in or upon God that I have; the hope of seeing him as he is, and being therefore like him. Is it wrong to say that he did not always see God as he is, while he was on earth? I speak of him as man; and it is as man that he is here set before me. Was he not in circumstances in which what he actually saw of God was to a large extent identical with what we see of God? Did he always see him as he is, any more than we do? He saw him in his actings; and in whatever explanation of his actings he was pleased

by revelation to give. He saw him, in that way, more clearly than we see him. But did he see him otherwise, any more than we see him otherwise? Did he see him as he is? Were there not to him the same clouds and darkness around the throne of God his Father that there are to us? Was not God's way to him, as to us, in the deep, and his path in the mighty waters? The medium of vision, at all events, was the same to him that it is to us. It was through the dim and hazy atmosphere of things as they are, with what light revelation sheds on them, that he, like us, had to see God; not as he is in himself; but as he is in his dealings with a world whose fall has made his providence of forbearance, grace, and judgment, a strange and awful mystery to all intelligences;—a mystery which the last day alone is to unfold. Jesus lived under that providence, as we do; and saw God, through it, as we do. That is not quite seeing him as he is.

To see God as he is, when the present strange problem—a dispensation of long-suffering patience, subservient to a dispensation of present mercy and salvation, and preparatory to a dispensation of retribution and reward,—is at last solved;—to see God as he is, when the shifting shadows of time flee away, and the repose of the final settlement of all things comes;—that was to Christ a matter of hope; exactly as it is to us. It must have been so. And if it was so, is it too much to say that this included, even in his case, the idea of his hoping to be like God, when he was thus to see him as he is, in a sense and to an extent not within the reach

and range of his human experience, when it was among the ordinary conditions of humanity here on earth that he had to see him? Is there no trace of a conflict between his natural human will and the divine will of the Father, in the deep movements of his soul in its agony? Was it never an effort with him to bring his own mind into harmony, or to keep his own mind in harmony, with the mind of the Father? Is he not now more like the Father,—I speak of his human consciousness, his human sense and feeling,—now that he fully “sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied,” and sees therefore God the Father as he is, in the consummated issue of his mighty plan,—than he could be when he had to bow his meek and uncomplaining neck to the untried yoke; to meet the experimentally-unknown doom; when, “though he was a Son, he had to learn obedience by the things which he suffered;” when, “in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared?”

That was his trial, as it is ours; to be in a position in which, seeing God as he is, and being consequently thoroughly like him, in respect of full and ultimate contentment, complacency, satisfaction, and joy, is “a thing hoped for.” It is in such a position that our “purifying of ourselves” is to be wrought out, even as it was in such a position that his “being pure” was manifested and approved. We, having this hope in God our Father, are to purify ourselves even as he, having this hope also in God his Father—how shall the sentence run to a

close?—purified himself?—nay, that will not do,—was pure?—that might do but it is not enough,—“is pure?” Yes; that is the way of putting it that pleases the disciple who records the Son’s own saying; “Before Abraham was, I am.”

“He is pure.” It is not enough to say that he was pure; that in the condition and experience in respect of which he is here held out as an encouragement and example to us, he kept himself pure, as we have to make ourselves pure. The use of the present tense is most significant, “he is pure.” It is the essential purity of his human nature, as then and now eternally welded into his divine, that is set before us. And the precise lesson is this. The task of purifying ourselves is assigned to us in such circumstances, however unpropitious and unfavourable, as were yet not found to be incompatible or inconsistent with his essential purity. His being pure, in such circumstances, is a motive for our purifying ourselves; his purity, moreover, in these circumstances is the model and measure of what we should wish ours to be. We, having the same hope in God that he had; the hope of being like God because we shall see him as he is; are to purify ourselves as he is pure.

“He is pure.” It is with reference to his being a model to us that he is said to be so; we are “to purify ourselves as he is pure.” And we are to purify ourselves as he is pure, in the very same world which he, in his perfect purity, defied,—“Which of you convinceth me of sin?” He has really, in this matter, no advantage over

us. He, as to his being pure ; and we, as to our purifying ourselves ; are on the same footing. We have to realise our sonship, as he had to realise his sonship, in a world that knows not God ; and we have to realise it, like him, in hope. So realising it, and having this joint hope with him in God, we “purify ourselves as he is pure.”

II. With all this, the commission of sin is incompatible. “He that doeth righteousness,” and he alone, “is born of God” (ii. 29). For God is righteous ; and every one that is born of God must partake of his righteous nature ; and be a doer of righteousness, as God his Father is righteous. The doing of sin is inconsistent with so righteous a parentage ; for it is the doing of that which is against law ; “Whosoever committed sin transgresseth also the law : for sin is the transgression of the law” (ver. 4).

Sin is lawlessness ; insubordination to law. It is to be so regarded ; especially by us who, on the one hand, being born of God, make conscience of doing righteousness as God is righteous (ii. 29) ; and who, on the other hand, having this hope in God,—that we are to be like him when we shall see him as he is,—make conscience of purifying ourselves, as our model, his own beloved Son, is pure (iii. 2, 3). We are to look upon sin as a breach of law. That is our security against committing sin, and so compromising the righteousness which we do, and the purity to which we aspire.

There are other views that may be taken of sin ; and some that may even seem more spiritual than this, and



more in keeping with our character and position as sons of God. For there is a temptation to over-refining here; a temptation to which many in John's day yielded, with most disastrous results to the interests of righteousness and purity; a temptation which may even yet beset us. Am I a child of God,—born of him,—standing to him in the same relation with his beloved Son? I seem to be raised above the commonplace consideration of sin being wrong because it is against the law. Sin should be offensive to me on higher grounds. Does it not shock the heavenly instincts of my new-born nature? Do I not feel it now to be beneath me to commit sin? It is a degradation unworthy of my rank and prospects. There can be no need of law to restrain me. Sin is not to be shunned by me merely because some legal enactment prohibits and condemns it. I loathe its foulness; I despise its baseness; I spurn its ingratitude.

So far, such feelings are gracious, generous, honourable; and they are to be cherished accordingly. But it is dangerous to trust to them, as if they might supersede what may seem the homelier and humbler reason for not committing sin; that it is against the law.

Do I feel or fancy that that is not altogether a filial motive,—that it somewhat grates upon my ear and wounds my sensibility,—that it scarcely comes up to my notion of what a filial frame of mind should be,—and almost subjects me again to the bondage of legal constraint and a legal covenant? Trust me, I may be inclined to say; leave me to myself; and you may be very sure that I shall not commit sin. I have no wish for it;

no heart for it. I am upon honour not to commit sin. But why bring in again the element of law? Why be ever reminding me not to break the law? Let me beware of the insidious entrance of such a thought into my heart. Am I not, in suffering it even for a moment, already committing sin? Am I not committing the very sin by which Adam fell,—the sin by which the angels fell,—the sin of counting it an irksome thing to be governed by law as being under authority, and aspiring to a sort of liberty of independence which no created being can ever assume or usurp without just offence to God and inevitable ruin to himself.

And let me look to that Pure One, who is to be my pattern in my life-task of purifying myself. How did he keep his purity intact when he was in the midst of that world which has not known God? Was he above law? Was he not “made under the law?” Was it not “obedience” that “he learned by the things which he suffered?” Shall I aspire to a more transcendental style of purity than he exemplified? Shall I adopt a method of self-purification more refined than that Pure One himself has by his practice sanctioned? Is the disciple to be above his master,—the servant above his lord? Ah! let me remember that if I have to sustain the character of a child of God here; to prove myself to be born of God and partaker of his righteous nature; to purify myself as hoping hereafter to be like God when I shall see him as he is; it is in the midst of a world that has not known him that I have all this to do. And what is more, it is in the midst of a world that has known me,

and that I have known, too well. Let me think of the sympathy that there still is between that world and me; how far too congenial its ungodly and unholy spirit still is to my spirit. How am I to keep myself unspotted from the world, and purify myself in it as Christ is pure? How but by entering into his mind as he takes upon him the form of a servant, and becomes obedient? He who is himself pure; immaculately, incorruptibly, inviolably pure; essentially pure in his human nature as well as his divine; manifested and maintained this purity in the attitude of one saying: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. xl. 7, 8). Much more must it be in that attitude that I purify myself; I, who am not by nature "separate from sinners;" I, in whom there is still always too much of a leaning to their side. How shall I guard against worldly conformity, against compromises and compliances, against ingenious casuistry or special pleading, that would try to reconcile with a high-toned spirituality more or less of indifference or indulgence towards the world and its lusts? "To the law and to the testimony" let me be ever subject. Let me be true and loyal to the law. Let me love and fear the law. Let me take my stand on the law of my God; doing righteousness according to the law of the righteous Father; unsparingly and unflinchingly, without equivocation or evasion, condemning, shunning, hating sin as "the transgression of the law."

## XXI.

## THE SECRET OF SINLESSNESS—ABIDING IN THE SINLESS ONE AS MANIFESTED TO TAKE AWAY OUR SINS.

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law ; for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins ; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.”—1 JOHN iii. 4-6.

FOUR arguments against committing sin, or transgressing the law, are here suggested ; all of them connected with him whose essential purity is to be our model in purifying ourselves : I. The end or design of his manifestation,—“to take away our sins ;” II. His own sinlessness,—“in him is no sin ;” III. Our oneness with him,—“whosoever abideth in him sinneth not ;” IV. The incompatibility of sin with any real acquaintance with him,—“whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.” The four may be reduced to two : the first and second being, as it were, doctrinal ; the third and fourth experimental : the former turning on what he is to us, as our Saviour ; the latter, on what we are in him as his saved ones.

I. “Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins ; and in him is no sin” (ver. 5).

Let us consider, in the first place, for what end he was

manifested ; it was “to take away our sins.” Some would understand this phrase as denoting here exclusively the cleansing of our nature from its sinful lusts and habits ; and as having no distinct reference at all to the removal of contracted guilt. It is admitted that when the phrase occurs elsewhere it is the taking away of guilt by means of atoning blood that is meant ; as in the Baptist’s testimony, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ” (John i. 29). But it is contended that here that thought is somewhat irrelevant, since it is moral purification, and not legal satisfaction or legal purging,—sanctification in a moral, and not in a legal or sacrificial sense,—that John is speaking of ; and since, moreover, he seems to make that depend rather on what the Son is manifested to be, than on what he is manifested to do ; on his person rather than on his work. There is no doubt truth in these remarks. But I cannot help thinking that they have led to an unnecessary and undue limitation of the force and fulness of this pregnant phrase. I would not, in that other passage, restrict it to the mere legal removal of the guilt of the world’s sin, without including in it also the removal of the sin itself, in its moral pollution and power. Nor am I inclined here to shut out the idea of the expiation of the guilt of our sins, though the other idea of moral purification from them is confessedly the uppermost or leading one. In fact, the two are inseparable : they are really one. I can scarcely conceive of John pointing to the manifestation of him in whom is no sin, as a source of moral purity,—as taking away our sins out of our nature,—

without having in his mind, and wishing us to have in our mind, as a material part of the process by which that object is attained, his taking away our sins out of the record of their guilt, "the book of God's remembrance."

It confirms this view to remember that John has just described sin as "the transgression of the law" (ver. 4). He has fastened upon this as constituting the essence of sin, that it is against law. He is of the same mind with Paul, in that saying of his,—*"The carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"* (Rom. viii. 7). He, like Paul, knows that as our sins are against the law, so the law is against our sins. It is against our sins, in such a sense and to such an effect as to keep us, on account of them, helplessly under condemnation. We are under the law's just sentence of death. Nay, more, the law, of which our sins are the transgression, is so against our sins as by a natural reaction to stir up in us more and more, the more closely it is brought to bear upon us, that very opposition to itself, and rebellion against itself, in which the sinfulness of our sins consists. In the grasp and under the power of the law, as condemned criminals, we are fettered ; and can no more get rid of our sins than a doomed felon can shake off his irons.

If we are spiritual men at all, we know this well. We know and have felt, that the more the law approves itself to us, as "holy, and just, and good,"—the more it comes home to us, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in

its high excellency and deep spirituality,—the more our conscience and our heart are on its side,—the more we see and apprehend of its just authority and holy beauty,—the more we strive after complete conformity to it,—the more we “would do good;”—so much the more, while we are thus under the law, is “evil present with us” (Rom. vii.) An impotent sense of failure deadens and depresses us, while the feeling of our prostrate bondage in our sins irritates our natural enmity against God. And if we do not relapse into indifference, or take refuge in formality, or sink into sullen gloom, we are shut up to the one only effectual way of ending this miserable struggle between the law and our sinful nature; the way of free grace and sovereign mercy; the way of embracing him whom “God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;” “in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” Then indeed “sin shall no more have dominion over us, when we are not under the law but under grace;” when “there is now to us no condemnation because we are in Christ Jesus;” when we know him as “his own self bearing our sins in his own body on the cross, that we being dead to sin might live unto righteousness.”

All this, I think, must be held to be comprehended in the fact stated;—“he was manifested to take away our sins.” And it is all consistent with the object for which John reminds us of it; our “purifying ourselves, as he is pure.” He was manifested to take away our sins, root and branch. The very completeness of that

work of atonement by which he takes them away, in respect of the condemnation and punishment which as transgressions of the law they bind upon us, secures also his completely taking them away, in respect of the carnal mind in us, of whose enmity against God and insubordination to his law they are the fruits. His purging our conscience from the guilt of them, is the very means of his purging our heart from the pollution of them. Their power to condemn us he takes away ; and so he takes away also their power to rule over us. They can never again subject us to the law's curse ; and therefore they can never again provoke in us resistance or resentment of the law's authority.

Nor is this all. In virtue of his being manifested to take away our sins, we receive the Holy Ghost. The obstacle which our sin, as a breach of the law, interposed to his being graciously present with us and in us is taken away. The Divine Spirit dwells and works in us ; causing us to love the law which is now magnified, not in our destruction but in our salvation,—not in our death but in our life ; and to hate the thought of transgressing it any more. A new nature, a new heart, a new spirit, as respects the law of God and God the lawgiver,—a new character as well as a new state,—is the result of Christ being manifested to take away our sins. We know that, personally, practically, experimentally ; and our knowledge of it is what enables as well as moves us to “purify ourselves as Christ is pure.”

It is so all the rather because, secondly, we are to consider that he is manifested as himself the sinless one :



“In him is no sin.” Here again let us remember that sin is viewed in the light of the law : it is the transgression of the law : it is against law. The precise point of this declaration concerning the sinless one lies in that declaration concerning sin. In him is no sin, because in him is no lawlessness ; nothing that is against the law. It is his being manifested as in that sense without sin, that makes his manifestation to us,—or our looking to what he is, as well as our looking to what he does,—effectual towards the taking away of our sins out of our heart and nature. In him, as “manifested to take away our sins,” “there is no sin ;” nothing of what needs to be taken away from us ; nothing of that sin which is the transgression of the law.

I do not ask you now to dwell on the thought that this sinlessness of his ; his being himself free from all liability to the law as a transgressor ; was an essential condition of his taking upon himself our liabilities, so as to take them away from us. I ask you rather to consider the mighty moral power which his being manifested as the sinless one has, in itself and of itself, to take away our sins ; not merely to take away their guilt lying upon us, but to take them bodily, as it were, as to their very substance and spirit, from within us. In that view, it is all-important that we look at his sinlessness in strict and definite connection with the law.

How do we conceive of him as without sin ? He is before us as one in whom there is no sympathy with what is vile and polluting ; or with what is mean and base ; or with what is unfair and untrue ; or with what is dis-

honourable and unhandsome ; or with what is unkind, ungenerous, unloving. Not a thought, not a feeling, not an affection is in him that could offend the purest taste, the most fastidious delicacy. Benevolence without the slightest alloy of selfishness ; integrity such as the breath of suspicion cannot touch ; seraphic mildness, sweetness, calmness, that no storm of passion has ever ruffled ; a soul attuned to all the melodies of heaven, on which no jarring note of earth's discord can ever strike ; a divine dignity ; a divine gracefulness in look and mien, in air and carriage, infinitely removed from man's uncertain temper and the rude strife of tongues ;—some such ideal, some such picture, rises before our eye. And the contemplation of it may be profitable as well as pleasant ; for all these representations of the one only perfectly sinless man are true ; and contemplating them, we may to some extent be moved to imitate as well as admire. But we do not thus, “with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord,” so as to be really “changed into the same image, from glory to glory.” For the glory of the Lord, manifested in and by him as the sinless one, is his never “transgressing the law.” In him is no sin ; nothing of what is against the law ; against the law under which he was made when he was made of a woman. It is into the image of that glory that we, beholding it, are to be changed “by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Does this seem to be a lowering of our high ideal of perfect sinlessness, as exemplified in him ? Does it sound strange to hear it spoken of as his glory ? Do we feel it

to be almost a sort of outrage and offence to speak of this as his moral glory, that he never broke the law, and never wished to break it? What glory, what moral grandeur, is there in that? Much, I answer; much every way. It is man's highest glory. It is the highest glory of angels. It is the highest glory of the Son himself, manifested to take away our sins, that in him, in this sense, is no sin. "He learned obedience," I repeat, "by the things which he suffered." And he learned it perfectly; for in him is no sin; no possibility of any thought adverse to the learning of obedience, entering into, or rising up in, his mind. That is his essential impeccability; his being incapable of even the faintest surmise of impatience under the law of his God and Father, or the most remote approach to a desire that it were anything else than obedience, anything less or anything more, that he had to learn. Is not that "a glory which excels?" Is it not worth while to behold it,—and to aim at being changed into the same image with it, from one degree of it to another, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord? Behold it! See! It is no mere negation; no mere abstinence from evil, or absence of evil. Nor is it any mere spontaneous development of native, innate good. It is positive, practical, perfect obedience to God's holy law. It is the doing of his will with the whole heart. It is to live for no other end but that his will be done. So in his life did he manifest his sinlessness who said, "I must be about my Father's business:" "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall

I not drink it?" Thus it is seen that "in him is no sin."\*

II. With this sinless person we are one ; " abiding in him as the sinless one manifested to take away our sins." And that is our security against sinning ;— " Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not."

This is the statement of a fact. It is not the enforcing of a duty, as if it were said,—whosoever abideth in him should not sin, and must not sin ; let him not sin. It is not even the drawing of an inference or the announcement of what will probably be, and may be expected to be, the issue of oneness with the Lord, as if it ran thus,—whosoever abideth in him will not sin, or is not likely to sin. It is the broad statement of a present fact,— " Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not ;" as is also the converse—" Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." Between abiding in Christ and sinning there is such an absolute incompatibility, that whosoever sinneth is for the time not merely in the position of not abiding in Christ, but in the position of not having seen or known him. In so far as he is sinning, his is virtually the very same case with that of the man who has never either seen or known Christ. The statement is very emphatic and very categorical. It is more than a mere assertion of a sort of moral inconsistency or incongruity, a certain manifest unsuitableness, in the view of common-sense and right feeling. It is an assertion of absolute incompatibility, in the nature of

\* See "Cunningham Lectures on the Fatherhood of God," appendix, expositions of Rev. xx. 3, and Heb. v. 8, 9.

things ; and it is a very strong assertion of that, put in two forms, positively and negatively, to make it all the stronger. Let us see how it must be so.

1. We abide in Christ by faith ; by that faith, wrought in us by the Spirit, which unites us to Christ. Our abiding in him by this faith implies oneness ; real and actual oneness ; not oneness only in the eye of the law,—so that we are regarded and treated as one, in the Judge’s dealings with him for us, and with us in him ; not oneness merely in the sense of an ordinary alliance or partnership, with a community of goods and interests, of lives and fortunes ; but real and actual oneness of nature. As the husband and the wife are made of twain one flesh ; so Christ and we are one spirit. “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” Our abiding in him is our realising this oneness. It is our apprehending ourselves to be consciously one with him,—of the same nature, of the same mind, with him,—of the same way of thinking and feeling with him. It implies our taking the same view that he does of all things,—of God and his law, of righteousness and sin, of guilt and judgment, of holiness and grace and love ;—our entertaining the same sentiments with reference to them all. It is this which secures our closing with him, at first, as our Saviour, and carries our consent to his saving us in his own way and on his own terms, so glorifying to the Father, so costly to him, so gracious to us. It is this also which ever after secures our not sinning. We cannot be thus abiding in Christ, realising our oneness of mind and nature with him, and at the same time sinning. The thought or feeling of opposition to the law,

or of impatience under it ; the wish that we were more free to act as we choose ; is no thought or feeling or wish of his: for “in him is no sin.” When we sin,—when we suffer any such thought or feeling or wish to find harbour in our breasts,—we cease for the time to be abiding in him. Between him and us, not then and there abiding in him, there is really as entire a separation as if we had never seen or known him : as wide and deep a gulph as that which lay between the rich man in hell and Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom. It is not fixed like that gulph ; not yet. But let us beware lest it become fixed. Let us be thankful that it may still be made to disappear. And let us remember that this can only be through our repenting again, as at the beginning,—believing again, as if we had never believed before,—embracing the Lord Jesus, as if now for the first time we saw and knew him,—“doing the first works,”—becoming anew and afresh, by the grace of the Spirit, “members of Christ’s body, of his flesh and of his bones,”—getting shut up into him anew and afresh, so as to be again of one mind and heart with him, abiding once more in him in whom is no sin. For we may be very sure that when we sin, we are none the better for all that we have seen or known of Christ ; none the safer. It is the same thing to us as if we had never seen him, neither known him at all.\*

2. We abide in Christ by his Spirit abiding in us. That is a filial spirit ;—the Spirit of God’s Son in us crying Abba Father ;—the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba Father. A servile frame of mind grieves and

\* Compare the exposition in Lecture vi.

vexes the Holy Spirit, and hinders his continuing to dwell in us. He dwells in us only when we cry Abba Father, and therefore sin not. Sin is ever the fruit of that servile frame of mind which is characteristic of one that has not seen or known the Son. Abiding in him, through his Spirit abiding in us, we have a filial heart towards God. And a filial heart "sinneth not." For a filial heart has no temptation and no desire to go against the will, or the law, of the righteous Father.

From all this we may see how the stress of practical exhortations against sin is to be brought to bear upon a child of God ; upon us, who are children in the Son. For it is very important that there should be exhortation, direct and pointed. It is not enough to put the matter in the form of doctrinal statement or anticipated consequence ; as if we said : Being God's children in Christ you do not sin ; or you will not sin. It is good for you to hear a voice of authority and command : Sin not. And yet that is not the way in which the matter is put here. It is not an order issued, but a fact announced ; "whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." What then ? Is the hortatory method to be given up ? Nay ; it is only necessary to shift a little, as it were, the point of its application. I state it as a fact that whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. And therefore I issue the command : Abide in him. It is his own command : "Abide in me." And that is the right position for the hortatory or commanding mode of appeal. If you would not sin ; that you may not sin ; that it may be impossible for you to sin ;—"abide in him who was manifested to take

away your sins, and in whom is no sin." Cleave to him ; grow up into him ; get into his mind ; drink into his spirit. Enter into the design of his being manifested, and into the way in which, being manifested, he accomplishes that design. Enter into the secret of his sinlessness. Keep close to him, abide in him, and sin not.

And forget not the positive, any more than the negative, result of your abiding in him ; your " bringing forth much fruit " (John xv. 5). For it is only in the line of the positive, in the line of bearing fruit, that you can be sure even of the negative,—not sinning. Nay, if your negatively not sinning is the effect of your abiding in Christ, it really resolves itself into your actually and positively bearing fruit, and becomes identical with it. " In him is no sin ; " no rebellion against that will of God which he comes to do ; no insubordination to that law of God which is within his heart ; nothing that hinders, or possibly can hinder, his doing that will and keeping that law always and thoroughly. You " abide in him and sin not. " You have in you now nothing more than he had, in so far as you abide in him, of that sullen, slavish, selfish frame of mind ; bent on getting its own way, and doing its own pleasure ; grudging God and men their due ; which hinders all cheerful, loyal obedience. You therefore, abiding in him in whom is no sin, that there may be no sin in you, go about with him doing good. Yours is that " pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, " which is this, " to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, " as well as to keep " yourselves unspotted from the world. "



## XXII.

THE SECRET OF SINLESSNESS—OUR ABIDING IN  
CHRIST—THE SEED OF GOD ABIDING IN US—  
OUR BEING BORN OF GOD.

“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him neither known him. . . . Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth [abideth] in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”—1. JOHN iii. 6 and 9.\*

THESE strong statements ;—that one abiding in Christ does not sin, and that one born of God cannot sin ;—are often perplexing, not to say distressing, to serious minds. How is it ? I am forced to ask. I sin,—every day, every hour, every moment, I may say,—in thought or word or deed. Must I therefore conclude that I am not in Christ ; not born of God ? It is a real practical difficulty. Let us fairly grapple with it.

I. These texts do not teach, either the doctrine of perfection, or that other doctrine which is apt to usurp its place ; the doctrine that God sees no sin in his people, or that what would be sin in others is not sin in them. When I say that this latter doctrine is apt to

\* I reserve the exposition of the intermediate verses, because I think they can be best considered after we have as far as possible ascertained the sense in which it is said of believers in Christ that they do not and cannot sin.

supplant the other, I do not mean that all who believe in the perfection or perfectibility of the saints on earth are antinomians. I speak simply of what I hold to be a strong tendency in the nature of things. I am told that it is possible for a Christian to live without sinning; that he may be so sanctified as to be incapable of sinning; that such holiness is attainable; nay, that no one can be long a Christian without attaining it; that no one can be sure of his Christianity unless he has attained it. But I see in the most Christian of men, I feel in myself in my most Christian mood, much that is not easily reconcilable with this immaculate sinlessness, unless I can persuade myself that what looks very like sin is not really sin. I am tempted to do so;—to defend, on the ground of Christian character, what otherwise I would give over to just condemnation; to stand up for the harmlessness in a believer of ways that would confessedly hurt or ruin the unconverted. And so I really open the door to those perversions of such texts as, “He that is spiritual is judged of no man,” “To the pure all things are pure,” which have wrought sad havoc with the plain morality of the Bible.

II. There is another mode of dealing with the statements before us which I cannot feel to be satisfactory. It is to limit or restrict their comprehensiveness; and to understand the apostle as speaking, not of sin absolutely and universally, but of sin more or less voluntary and presumptuous. According to this view, one “abiding in Christ” and “born of God” does not and cannot sin deliberately, intentionally, knowingly. He may be over-

taken in a fault ; he may be compassed about with infirmities ; he may have his occasional aberrations and failings. But he does not lay plans and go into evil with his eyes open.

Is that true ? Was it true of David ? Or of the man in Corinth who was excommunicated for incest, and upon repentance restored ? Is it any relief to me, when I am staggered by the hard saying that the true Christian does not and cannot commit sin, to be told that it may be so modified as to mean that he does not and cannot sin voluntarily ? Will that modification meet my case ? Alas ! no. For I dare not persuade myself that I never sin voluntarily. The saying excludes me, and tells against me, as much as ever. And then, is it safe to make such a distinction as this between two sorts of sin—and to make it for such a purpose as this ? May it not again let in the notion of some evil being tolerable and venial after all in a child of God ? Where and how is the line to be drawn ?

III. It may help us out of the difficulty if we first look at the statements before us in the light, not of what we are now by grace, but of what we are to be in the future state of glory. It will be true then that we sin not ; it will be impossible for us then to sin. What will make it true that we sin not ? What will make it impossible for us to sin ? Simply, our “ abiding in Christ ;” our being “ born of God ;” “ his seed abiding in us.”

It is most important that we should endeavour to form some distinct idea of this feature or characteristic of heaven’s holiness ; its absolute inviolability ; its being

perfectly secure against the possibility of sin ever marring it. Saints in glory do not and cannot sin. Wherein consists this impossibility of sinning? Of what sort is it? Plainly it cannot be a merely physical or natural inability; it must be of a moral kind. It is not outward coercion or prevention; it is not enforced sinlessness, which would be no sinlessness at all. Neither is it sinlessness dependent on external circumstances; such as want of opportunity or absence of temptation. The impeccability is and must be an attribute of the inner man; of the saint himself, as perfectly sanctified in his whole nature. If in the heavenly world I am not to sin; to be incapable of sinning; that cannot be in consequence of any mere change in my outward position; any mere translation from one locality to another, from one system of things to another. It was not his expulsion from Paradise that made Adam peccable, or capable of committing sin. He was so from the first in Paradise, for there he sinned. It is not his return to Paradise, nor his promotion to a better state than that of Paradise, that will make him impeccable. His impeccability must be otherwise attained and secured.

It is true that change of place and of circumstances may do much; and it is a great change that is before us. "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." It will, indeed, be a very different atmosphere that we breathe in heaven from what so often deadens, stupifies, and paralyzes our Christian life on earth. We shall be there under other influences and in the midst of other companionships. No more is there

any course of this world for us to walk after ; no more any prince of the power of the air to intoxicate us with the poisonous vapour of his ungodliness ; no more any children of disobedience, seducing us to have our conversation among them. It will, unquestionably, be a blessed relief. To be rid of Satan and of Satan's wiles ; to be for ever quit of those worldly ways and habits around us here that are so apt to draw us into conformity with themselves ; to be where there is no more any antagonism between what is and what ought to be ; to be where God is all in all ;—it may well be imagined to be like “ a bird escaping out of the snare of the fowler ; the snare is broken ; and we are escaped ! ” “ Oh ! that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest ! ” “ Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar ! ” But let me beware. If I imagine that it is my being in heaven that is to make me pure and sinless, or render it impossible for me to sin, I am under a sad and most unsafe delusion. Let it be granted that then all I come in contact with will be holy, and all conducive to holiness ; with “ nothing' to hurt or to destroy in all God's holy mountain. ” Still, place me there, continuing simply such as I am here ; and not only is it not true of me that I cannot sin ; but it is true of me that I cannot but sin. Evidently, therefore, its being impossible for me to sin in the future state, must depend upon something else than mere change of scene. And what follows ? It must depend upon something that may be actually realised more or less perfectly here. It must depend upon what may be

and must be realised here, in the inner spiritual history and experience of every child of God.

Let me remind you that this impeccability lies in the will ; the seat of it is the will. It is because, in the state of glory, my will is made " perfectly and immutably free to do good alone," that my will is, or that I myself am, incapable of doing evil.\* And let me also remind you that sin, the sin which it will then be impossible for me to commit, is " the transgression of the law ;" of the law of God which is the expression of his will. His will is perfectly and immutably free. His law is its free utterance ; the free forth-going of his free will. Your impeccability,—its being impossible for you to sin,—is its being impossible for you to will otherwise than he wills ; to think or feel otherwise than he does, as to that law of his which is his will. And if it is your will that is to be thus free ; free, as his will is free, to do good alone ; and therefore incapable of an evil choice ; then your impeccability must be, if I may say so, itself voluntary ; voluntarily accepted and realised. The position in which I find it impossible to sin must be attested by my own consciousness as a position that is freely and voluntarily mine.

Let me try to imagine myself as regards this matter in the heavenly state. I cannot sin. Why not ? What

\* See Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter ix., " Of Free Will." In the state of glory, the will is still free : " neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil." But it is so thoroughly renewed as to be incapable of an evil choice, " being made perfectly and immutably free to do good alone."

hinders me? Is it that my hands are tied? Is it that my will is fettered? Am I not free? Yes; I am free as God is free. And therefore I can no more sin than God can sin. In the very same sense in which God cannot sin, I cannot sin. My will can no more go against his law than his own will can go against it. For why is it that God cannot sin?—that his will cannot go against his law? Is it not because the law is his will? Is it not because the law is his nature? Yes. The law is his will, his spontaneous will. And it is his nature; the very essence of his moral character and being is in his law. For the law is love; and God is love. The law is holy; and God is holy. He cannot sin, or transgress the law, because he cannot go against his own will, or against his nature. Sin in him, were the thought admissible, would be self-contradictory; suicidal. “He cannot deny himself.” Now, in heaven am I, in this respect, such as he is?—really, literally, absolutely such as he is? Yes, that is my heaven! It is my being thus “like him when I see him as he is.” When, clear from the darkness in which now he hides himself in a world that knows him not, his glory shines unclouded,—then I “see him as he is” so as to be “satisfied when I awake with his likeness.” It is the likeness of him who cannot sin.

IV. Let me try to bring out more clearly this principle as one that must connect the future with the present. Why is it that in heaven, my will being free as God’s will is free, I can no more sin than he can sin? What answer would John give to that question if you could put it to him now?—As thus;—‘In whatever

sense, and with whatever modifications, thou didst, in thy experience when here, find that to be true which thou hast so emphatically put,—as the test, apparently, of real Christianity,—it is all true of thee there, where thou art now! How is it so? Why is it so?’ ‘Because I abide in the Son of God, and God’s own seed abides in me, as being born of God;’—is not that his reply? What other reply can he give?

No doubt, he may also say, ‘I am no more in a world that knows not God; exposed to its flattery or its rage. I have nothing now to apprehend from Satan’s subtilty. I have laid aside the body of corruption that used to weigh me down. The lusts of the flesh solicit and trouble me no more. Evil propensities, the remains of my old original and inveterate depravity, are all thoroughly put away. Not a vestige of any root of bitterness remains in me; nor is there any exposure to trial or temptation from without.’ These are great and inestimable advantages. ‘But,’ he would add, ‘not one of them secures, nor do they all together secure, my impeccability; or its being impossible for me to sin. Excepting only immunity from Satan’s subtilty, man, in Paradise, enjoyed them all;—and yet he was peccable; he sinned. Without any exception, the unfallen angels enjoyed them all;—and yet they showed themselves peccable; some of their number fell. My heaven is no heaven at all, if in respect of this matter of my not sinning, or its being impossible for me to sin, I am no better off than Adam was in the garden, or the angelic hosts in their first estate. But I am better off. And



what, you ask, makes me better off? My abiding in the Son of God, and having God's own seed abiding in me, as being born of him. First, I "abide in the Son of God" evermore, uninterruptedly; and therefore I see God as his Son sees him; I feel towards God as his Son feels. Secondly, as born of God, I have "his seed abiding in me," evermore, uninterruptedly; his seed, conveying and imparting to me his nature, as truly as a plant's seed imparts its nature to its successor, or a man's seed imparts his nature to his child.'

'These two causes combined,' John might say, 'ensure my not sinning; make it impossible for me to sin by transgressing the law. For, in virtue of the first, the law is to me what it is to the Son of God, the God-man; not merely an enforced rule; far less a yoke of bondage; but an inward principle also of free, spontaneous choice. It is within my heart, as it is within his. There can no more spring up in my heart than there can spring up in his, the slightest or faintest feeling of impatience under it, or of a longing to be without it or above it. And then, in virtue of the other, the law is to me what it is to God himself. It is the expression of my nature, as it is of his. Being what I am, as born of him, his seed abiding in me, I can no more go against it than he, being what he is, can go against it himself.'

Is this the secret of the saint's impeccability in heaven? Is it at all a true and fair account of his not sinning, of its being impossible for him to sin?

Then, does it not follow that it is an impeccability that may be realised on earth? For the causes of it are

realised on earth ; first, your abiding in the Son of God ; secondly, your being born of God so as to have his seed abiding in you. And so far as they are realised on earth, they cannot but make it impossible for you to sin here, in the very same way in which, when realised perfectly in heaven, they will make it impossible for you to sin there. For they are causes whose efficacy does not at all depend on time or place or circumstances. They act here and now as they will act then and there. They make God's will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven.

V. Viewed thus in the light of "what we shall be," and of the bearing of what we shall be on what we are, John's statements assume a somewhat different aspect from what they are apt to wear when taken by themselves. They become not one whit less solemn but greatly more encouraging.

For one thing, you may now regard them as describing a precious privilege, as well as imposing a searching test. They show you the way of perfect holiness ; how you are to be righteous, even as Christ is righteous,—even as God is righteous.

I suppose that it is your desire to be so ; if it is not, you are "none of Christ's," and are not children of God. Your earnest longing is, I assume, that you were placed in such circumstances, or that there were wrought in you such a frame of spirit, as would make it impossible for you ever to sin any more.

Well, if it is so, should it not be matter of satisfaction to you to be told that you have even now within your reach, realisable in your experience, the elements

or conditions, so to speak, of that very state of things which you so warmly covet? John takes it for granted, that "having this hope in God;"—the hope that when "it does appear what you shall be," it will imply your being "like him whose children you are, because you shall see him as he is;"—"you purify yourselves even as his own Son is pure." And surely in that view he does you a kindness when he tells you how this purifying of yourselves as Christ is pure may become possible, even to the extent of its being as impossible for you as for him to commit sin or to transgress the law. He does no sin; he can do no sin; he cannot have a thought or wish to transgress the law. Why? Because he is the Son of God, his only begotten Son, of one nature with the Father. Even when he takes your nature, he is, on that account, sinless and impeccable. And the good news here is, that you also are becoming impeccable in him. Of course, it is good news to you only if impeccability is really the object of your desire; your hope; your heaven. Is it so? Would it be heaven to you not to sin; to be incapable of sinning; to be so situated and so minded, that for you to sin would be as truly and really an impossibility as for Christ or for God? Then these texts are for you. They let you into the secret of this impeccability; they show you wherein it consists. They set it before you, not as something to be reached some time, somewhere, somehow,—in some other world,—through some mysterious unknown processes to be gone through at death and the resurrection; but as what you may have experience of, and must have experience of, in this

present world, and under this present dispensation of the Holy Ghost. For the Holy Ghost makes you really one with the Son of God, so that, abiding in him, you partake of his sonship ;—his filial relation to the Father and filial heart towards the Father. And the Holy Ghost also implants in you and puts within you the seed of God, the germ of God's own nature and God's own life, so that you are in very truth born of God. When thus in your adoption, rightly viewed, and in your regeneration, the Holy Ghost unites you to the Son, and assimilates you to the Father ;—when thus you abide in the Son, in whose sonship you share, and the seed of God your Father, of whom you are born, abides in you ;—you have already, in present possession and for present use, all that is essential to impeccability.

VI. Taking this view, I confess I do not feel so much concern as otherwise I might feel about reconciling such strong statements as that “one abiding in Christ sinneth not,” or that “one born of God cannot sin,” with the acknowledged and lamented fact that he does sin. John has dealt with that fact already, and told us how to deal with it. It is not his business here to be making allowance for it. It would be beside his purpose altogether, and indeed against it, to be qualifying his high and bold appeal to honest aspirants after perfection, by concessions to those whose object would seem to be to ascertain, not how, and how far, perfection may be reached, but how far they may stop short of it. John has not any such Christians in his eye. Or if he has, it is to bring to bear upon them the whole artillery of these startling

statements, in all their strictest and most literal force. They are to be solemnly warned that sin is absolutely incompatible with abiding in Christ and being born of God—all sin, any sin, every sin ; that “whosoever sinneth hath not seen Christ, neither known him.” To them John has nothing else to say. He cannot otherwise meet their question as to the extent to which sin, still cleaving to a child of God, may be admitted not to vitiate his title. For indeed it is most dangerous to be considering the matter in that light or on that side at all. It is almost sure to lead, first to calculations, and then to compromises, fatal to singleness of eye and the holy ambition that ought to fire the breast ; calculations first, about the quantity and quality of the residuum of old corruption which we must lay our account with finding in the purest God-born soul ; and then compromises, under the sort of feeling that, as the proverb says, what cannot be cured must be endured.

I beseech you to turn from that downward, earthward way of looking at this great theme ; and to look upward and heavenward. I speak to you as believing you to be in earnest about “purifying yourselves even as Christ is pure.” I tell you that the gospel makes full provision for holiness ; and no provision at all for sin. It contemplates, not your sinning, but your not sinning ; nay, its being impossible for you to sin. If it did not, it would be no gospel to you. For you are weary of sinning ; weary of finding it always so possible, so easy to sin. The risings of a rebellious spirit in you against God, and his will, and his law ; your feelings of

irksomeness, as if his commandments were grievous, his ways dark, his sayings harsh, his service hard, himself austere ; are a continual grief to you. Well, may it not be some consolation, some encouragement, to know, that you have within you, if you will but stir up the gift that is in you, the elements of a holier and happier life? For these are indeed, when rightly considered, most precious assurances ; “Whosoever abideth in Christ sinneth not ;” “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for God’s seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

Let a few practical inferences be suggested.

1. I think the texts teach, or imply, the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints ; the impossibility of their either wholly or permanently falling away from a state of grace. I cannot understand statements so strong as “sinneth not,” or “cannot sin,” especially when taken in connection with the reasons given,—“abiding in Christ ;” “being born of God ;” “the seed of God abiding in him,”—in any sense consistent with the idea of one who by faith has been united to Christ, and by adoption and regeneration made a child of God, proving ultimately a castaway. It may be quite true that it is not John’s immediate design to dwell on that tenet. But nevertheless he uses words that seem very plainly to assume it. It is not easy to see how any one could be called upon to recognise in himself, as actually his now in possession and experience, the principle, if I may so speak, of impeccability, excepting upon grounds precluding the risk of his losing altogether his character and standing in Christ.

2. The texts teach, however, very plainly, that this doctrine, whatever may be its practical use and value in its right place, and when turned to legitimate account, cannot give to any man security in sin; cannot make him safe when he is sinning, when he is committing sin or transgressing the law. When he is sinning, he can draw no assurance whatever from his "having seen and known Christ." Virtually, to all intents and purposes, he is exactly in the same position with one who "has not seen him, neither known him" (ver. 6). Never, at any moment, may I reckon on a past act of God towards me,—his calling me, justifying me, adopting me in his Son; or a past work of God in me,—his regenerating me by his Spirit;—as giving me any present confidence, if my present state is one of sin. Not only is this not right; I believe it to be impossible. I believe that no man ever yet felt himself secure in sinning now, on the ground of his having been brought to "see and know" Christ long ago. His feeling of security, in so far as he has such a feeling, does not really spring from that belief as to the past, but from ignorance now of Christ and of God; from present unbelief. For the present, he is an unbeliever, not seeing or knowing Christ; no better than if he had never seen or known him. The moment he comes again to believe, and has his eyes opened to see and know Christ; Christ looking on him when he is sinning as he looked on Peter;—security there is none; confidence there is none; only bitter weeping. He repents, and does the first works. He believes, as if he had never believed before. He realises again, as at the

first, his "abiding in Christ" and "God's seed abiding in him." Our sinning, therefore; our feeling it to be possible for us to sin; is in fact, and as a practical matter, absolutely incompatible with our abiding in Christ and being born of God. We are only really abiding in Christ, and consciously and influentially, if I may say so, born of God so as to have his seed abiding in us,—in so far as we do not sin,—in so far as we cannot sin.

3. For this, let me again remind you, is John's true design and purpose; it is to put you in the way of not sinning; of its being impossible for you to sin. It is to let you into the secret of sinlessness, of impeccability; that you may be successful in purifying yourselves as Christ is pure. Realise your abiding in Christ, your being born of God, his seed abiding in you. And realise all that, as you may realise it, not as what is to be in heaven; when "it will appear what you shall be;" but as what may be, and must be, and is on earth; even when "it doth not yet appear what you shall be." Do not imagine that you must wait till you get to heaven until you can know what it is not to sin; to be beyond the possibility of sinning. No doubt it is only in heaven that you can know that perfectly. But you may know something of it on earth. You need not imagine that if you know nothing of it on earth, you can know anything of it in heaven. For it is not, I repeat, any change of scene that will make you know it. Some have fancied that by getting out of the world into the wilderness they might come not to sin; nay, might get themselves into a state in which they could not sin. Away from society's



pomps and vanities, its pleasures and vices,—in the solitude of the desert,—they have sought for immaculate and impeccable holiness ; they have sought for it painfully, with tears and stripes. Alas ! they have sought for it in vain. But you may find it, in the midst of all evil, if you seek it aright, in the way of “abiding in Christ, and having God’s seed abiding in you, as being born of him.” And you will find it, if you apprehend the force of the Lord’s own words : “As thou, Father, hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth.”

## XXIII.

THE SECRET OF SINLESSNESS — THE CONTRASTED  
 “DOINGS”—DOING RIGHTEOUSNESS AND DOING  
 SIN—THEIR INCOMPATIBILITY IN RESPECT OF  
 THEIR OPPOSITE ORIGINS OR PARENTAGES—  
 GOD AND THE DEVIL.

“Little children, let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he [Christ] is righteous. He that committeth [doeth] 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.”—I JOHN iii. 7, 8.

THESE verses are imbedded, as it were, between the two already considered (6 and 9); which teach what may be called the secret of sinlessness as a possible attainment, and one that a child of God must apprehend and realise. They fit into that theme, placing in marked contrast the two opposite lines of conduct,—“doing righteousness and doing sin,”—and tracing them up to their respective sources,—a righteous nature on the one hand, indicating a divine birth, and a sinful nature on the other, betraying a devilish origin. Thus they shut out the very idea of any mixture of the two characters, or anything intermediate between the two. Thus also they connect the argument with the introductory statement at the beginning of this second part of the epistle, “If ye know that God is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth

righteousness is born of God" (ii. 29). For this "doing righteousness," which at once implies and tests our being born of him who is righteous, must evince a family likeness to him, or a participation of nature with him. It must, therefore, be very thorough and complete, and cannot be compatible with "doing sin." For that,—evincing an opposite family likeness and participation in an opposite nature,—points not to a divine birth or our being "born of God," but to a very different parentage, our "being of the devil."

The passage before us opens accordingly with a very solemn warning: "Little children, let no man deceive you." It assumes an urgent and serious danger. There are those who will do their utmost to deceive you, and the point on which they will try to deceive you is a very vital one. It is so all the rather because it is one on which your own hearts may be but too willing to be deceived. It turns upon the indissoluble connection that there is between being and doing; between character and conduct; between what a man is and how he acts.

The false teachers of John's day held that one might reach in some mysterious way a height of serene, inviolable, inward purity and peace, such as no things without, not even his own actions, could stain. In a less transcendental form, the same sort of notion practically prevails in the world. It used perhaps to be more common than it is now to give a person credit for having right principles, though his practice might be often wrong; to admit his claim to a good heart, in spite of his

habits being to a large extent bad. But the delusion is one against which we still need to be cautioned.

John meets it by bringing out in marked contrast the two opposite natures, one or other of which we must all share;—that of God and that of the devil. As it is the nature of God to be righteous, so it is the nature of every one who is born of God to be righteous also. So he who is pre-eminently the Son of God is righteous; and we who are children of God in him are “righteous as he is righteous.” But his being righteous necessitates his doing righteousness; to imagine otherwise in his case would be a profane calumny. So also to think that we can be righteous as he is righteous, if our being righteous does not necessitate our doing righteousness, must be a gross and grievous delusion. On the other hand, it is the devil’s nature to be evil; and being evil, he cannot but be doing evil. If we are doing evil, “doing sin,”—that proves our identity of nature with the devil; we are “of the devil.” And being of the devil, the originator of sin,—“sinning from the beginning,”—we cannot be children of God as Christ is his Son. For he was “manifested for this very purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

Let us consider the three steps in this argument, as thus adjusted.

I. “He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as Christ is righteous.” It is clearly moral character that is here in question, not legal standing. There is no reference to Christ’s vicarious righteousness; its imputation to us through our oneness with him by faith, and our consequent justification in the sight of God.

That doctrine, so clearly revealed elsewhere, underlies, as we have already seen, the whole of John's teaching in this epistle. But to import it into this passage is to destroy the sense. Of course it is equally destructive of the sense to use the passage as a support to the doctrine of justification by works, as if it meant that the doer of righteousness is thereby, on the ground of his personal doing of righteousness, justified or accounted righteous before God. John is not thinking of justification at all, but rather of sanctification; of holiness of life being inseparable from holiness of nature. The precise lesson taught, the great principle asserted, is that righteousness, moral righteousness, cannot possibly exist in a quiescent or inactive state; that it never can be a latent power or undeveloped quality; that wherever it is it must be operative. It must be working, and working according to its own essential nature. Moreover, it must be working, not partially but universally; working everywhere and always; working in and upon whatever it comes in contact with, in the mind within and the world without. Otherwise, it is not righteousness at all; certainly not such as we see in Jesus; it is not "being righteous as he is righteous." Therefore being righteous and doing righteousness are not "twain, but one;" one in the very nature of things, by divine ordination and arrangement. God has joined them; and what God has joined man may not put asunder. The attempt to separate them on either side, or to confound them, is a fatal error.

Hence those err who would sink the "being" in the "doing" as if the "doing" were all in all,—quite as

much as those who would divorce the "doing" from the "being," and leave the "being" all alone.

"He can't be wrong whose life is in the right," is a perilous half-truth. "Doing righteousness," in the sense of merely leading what is called a virtuous life, being irreproachable in manners, and performing acts of kindness, may thus be made to constitute the sum and substance of religion and morality. Evidently that is not John's teaching. On the contrary, it is with the inward frame of mind that he is chiefly occupied; it is about the heart being right with God that he is concerned. The very righteousness, pure and holy, which is the distinguishing characteristic or attribute of the moral character of God, is to become the attribute of ours, as it is of Christ's. Far from undervaluing, or as it were postponing, the inward,—or "being righteous,"—he lays on that the whole stress of his appeal about the outward,—or "doing righteousness." For the very reason of his appeal is this, that if there be not the "being" there cannot be the "doing;" and therefore, on the other hand, if there be the "doing," it proves and insures the "being."

This last is the important practical consideration here. But it is so only when we rightly understand what "doing righteousness," in John's notion of it, really is. It is not merely performing righteous actions; doing things that are in themselves, or in their own essential nature, right and good. The abstract form "righteousness" is significant and all-important. To do a righteous deed is one thing;—to be doing righteousness in the doing of it is another. The difference may be immense.

Jesus "went about doing good." And in doing good he was ever "doing righteousness." For he did good because he knew that to do good is to do what is righteous in the judgment of the righteous Father. He did good, not as doing himself a pleasure or his fellow-men a service, but as doing the Father's righteous will. To do good thus is to "do righteousness" indeed. Viewing it in that light, we cannot err, or go too far, in the way of identifying it with "being righteous." So to do righteousness is really to be righteous; in the highest and holiest sense; according to the most perfect type and model; "even as Christ is righteous." It is a vain dream, a fond imagination, for any of us to aspire to being righteous in any other manner or after any other fashion. The humble path of obedience to the righteous Father,—the consistent doing of righteousness as we know, and because we know, that God is righteous (ii. 29),—is practically being righteous. So Christ, the Son of God, is the Father's righteous servant, doing the Father's righteousness. So let us, as born of God, be the Father's righteous servants in Christ; doing righteousness as Christ does righteousness, and being righteous as Christ is righteous.

II. As "doing righteousness,"—through its being thus associated or identified with "being righteous as the Son is righteous,"—proves our being "born of God;" so "doing sin" proves a very different relationship, a very different paternity. "He that committeth" or doeth "sin is of the devil." That is his genealogy or pedigree. And the reason is plain. The devil is the author of sin; it is he who "sinneth from the beginning." The "doer of

sin" cannot, as such, have any other father than the originator of sin. And he cannot repudiate the ancestry. It is fastened upon him by the same law or principle which enables "the doer of righteousness" to claim kindred with the righteous Father, in respect of his "being righteous as his own Son is righteous." The medium of proof is the same. It is this, that what one does is really what one is; the doing being the index or identification of the being. "He that committeth" or doeth "sin is of the devil;" for, by doing sin, he shows his identity of nature with him who is a sinner from the beginning. And it is upon identity of nature, proved practically, that the question of moral and spiritual parentage must ultimately turn.

That is the question which John raises here, and to which he afterwards returns (ver. 10). It is with a view to that question that he lays down the essential moral truth involved in his two contrasted propositions or arguments; first, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he, the Son, is righteous," and so, as "born of God," may assert a divine paternity; secondly, "He that doeth sin is of the devil,"—the original and archetypal sinner;—he must consent, therefore, to trace his genealogical line from a devilish beginning and in a devilish stream.

And still the test is the consistency or identity of the doing with the being. The doer of righteousness is righteous, as Christ the Son, who is one in nature with the Father, is righteous. The doer of sin is not so, but on the contrary is of the same nature with the devil,



who "sinneth from the beginning." He who is born of God, knowing that God is righteous, can do nothing but righteousness, in so far as he realises his position; being himself righteous as Christ is righteous. He that is of the devil can do nothing but sin, as the devil has been doing all along from the beginning. So far as his nature is allowed full development, that is its working. But that proves a paternity the opposite of divine.

Thus two parentages are here contrasted. Two fathers, as it were, desire to have us as children. They are wide as the poles asunder. Of the one relationship it is the characteristic not to sin; of the other, to be always sinning. The one father never has sinned, never could sin, being the "righteous Father." The other has been always a sinner; sinning from the beginning; his first act being to sin. Each father imparts his own character to his children. The virtue or the vice; the wholesome purity or the poisonous matter; the sweet charm or the sour taint; runs in the blood. The children of the one father have infused into them the seed or germ of his impeccability; his being of such a nature that it is impossible for him to sin. The children of the other inherit his absolute incapacity of not sinning; his being of such a nature that it is morally impossible for him not to sin.

It is a terrible inheritance. It is the devil's nature to sin. When we sin we give proof of its being our nature too. And it is a nature which we derive from him. It was he that communicated it to us. Our relation to him, therefore, in respect of our thus sharing

his nature, is very close. It may be true that it is only in a figurative sense that we can be called "children of the devil," or said to be "of the devil." Still the figure has in it a sad reality. If it is natural for us to sin, he is the father of that nature in us. His seed is in us ; the seed of his nature, his natural life, which is to sin, to do nothing but commit sin.

And let us remember John's definition of sin (ver. 4), and Paul's (Rom. viii. 7). The essence of sin is refusing to be subject to law. That is the sin which "the devil sinneth from the beginning ;" he sinneth by insubordination. That is his nature, his natural life. And he put the seed of it in us when he said to Eve, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?"

This phrase, therefore,—“being of the devil,”—as used here and elsewhere in Scripture, does not imply what in human opinion would be accounted great criminality or gross immorality. To call any one a devil, or a child of the devil, is to impute to him, according to ordinary notions, an extreme depravity. We paint the great Apostate Spirit in the blackest colours of foul pollution, rancorous hate, and wanton cruelty ; and it is only monsters of vice among ourselves that we characterise as satanic. Thus we extricate ourselves from the shame of so discreditable a lineage as is involved in "being of the devil." But neither John nor his Master will let us off so easily. The sin which lost Satan heaven was neither lust nor murder. It was not carnal at all, but merely spiritual. It was not even lying, at least not at first,—though "he is a liar, and the father

of it." It was pure and simple insubordination and rebellion ; the setting of his will against God's ; the proud refusal, at the Father's bidding, to worship the Son. So "the devil sinneth from the beginning." And when you so sin, you are of your father the devil. Peter was sinning in that way when Jesus called him Satan. There was nothing of what we might be inclined to stigmatise as satanic in his very natural wish to arrest his master's fatal journey. It was an impulse of generous affection which burst out in the expostulation, "Be it far from thee." But he was "of the devil" then, notwithstanding. Therefore Jesus said to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan ; thou art an offence unto me" (Matt. xvi. 23). Not saying it thyself, thou wouldst hinder me from saying to my Father, "Thy will be done." And that is devil's work.

In order then to enter into the full meaning of John's solemn testimony, it is not needful to wait till some horrid access of diabolic fury or frenzy seizes us. It is enough if "the tongue speaketh proud things," or the heart conceives them. "Our lips are our own ; who is lord over us?" Or, why are they not our own? May they not at least occasionally be our own,—this once ; for singing one vain song, or uttering one idle word, or joining in an hour's not very profitable, but yet not very objectionable, talk? Is there any rising up in us of such a feeling as this,—as if it were hard that we may not occasionally take our own way and be our own masters? It is the devil's seed abiding in us ; the seed of the devil's sin, and of his sinful nature.

Thus this testimony is of wide range and searching power, when the Spirit brings it home. The law says—Thou shalt love God with all thy heart ; thou shalt not covet. Let that commandment come to me, in its real spiritual force ; and how thoroughly, how helplessly, how miserably, does it make me out to be a very child of the devil ! Many laws I cannot charge myself with breaking ; I do not feel them to be irksome ;—the laws of my country and of society, for example ; the laws of just dealing between man and man ; the laws of kindness, courtesy, good breeding, good taste and feeling ; the law of chivalry ; the law of honour. Of all such laws I can cheerfully acknowledge the authority. But this law,—the law binding me by peremptory statute to love God supremely, and not to covet, not to love at all except as he loves,—I feel that I cannot own. There is that in me which makes me rebel against what it enjoins being made matter of law at all. I would have it left to my own discretion. I object to love upon compulsion, or to worship, or to obey. Yes, there it is ! That is it ! I have in me the seed, the root, the germ, of the satanic spirit and the satanic nature. I cannot bring myself to be thoroughly under authority and law, when the authority and law are God's. And why ? Why but “because the carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” ?

III. “But for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

The expression,—“to destroy the works of the devil,”—if it is to meet the previous statement, must be under-

stood as meaning, in substance, that the Son of God was manifested to undo what the devil has done and is doing ; to counteract and counterwork him, in respect of all his doings generally ; but especially in respect of his imparting to us, as his children, the germ or seed of his own sin of insubordination to the authority and law of God. The phrase, indeed, might be taken in a wide sense ; and might lead us to consider the many various ways in which the gospel tends to redress, and has actually to a large extent redressed, the manifold wrongs and mischiefs that the devil, by introducing moral evil and turning it to account, has wrought in the earth. But evidently the reference here is rather to the one inherent quality, than to the various effects, of the devil's working. The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil—to destroy in you that sort of doing, or working, which you have derived from the devil ; that sinning, or committing sin, which is his nature, and of which he has implanted in you the seed.

It is a work of destruction which he is manifested to do, or which his being manifested does ; for we need not be very particular as to which of these ways of putting the matter is to be preferred : they are virtually the same. Execution is to be done upon what is the essence of all the devil's works, so far as our sharing in them as his children is concerned ; the spirit of suspicion, impatience, and rankling discontent, under God's loving rule, which the devil insinuates into our hearts, and fosters, inflames, and irritates there.

In thus destroying the works of the devil, in this

sense and to this effect, his being manifested as the Son of God was, in itself alone, a great step. For he was manifested, in the very form, in the very position, which the devil had himself felt, and had persuaded us to feel, to be grievous, irksome, and intolerable. He, being the Son, "took upon him the form of a servant." He was so manifested as to make it plain, beyond all question, that there is no such root of bitterness as the devil would insinuate that there is, in a creature's subjection as a servant to the law of God his Creator, in a Son's subjection as a servant to the law of God his Father. The Son of God is manifested as submitting to that place of subordination to authority which the devil and his angels spurned; giving himself to a service infinitely more humiliating than they were called to when they were commanded to worship him. It was a great blow to the works of the devil; it cut up by the roots the very pith and staple of his power to work at all; when the Son of God was thus manifested; when it was made patent to all the universe that it was no degradation or bondage for the Son himself to be the servant of the Father; when it was seen that his being so was not incompatible with sonship, but was in fact its very perfection.\*

This, however, is not all; it is only a small part of what he does in destroying, to me and to all his people, the works of the devil. The Son of God might have been manifested as sustaining the very character of a servant, under authority and law, which the devil found, and which the devil makes me find, so provocative of an inward sense

\* See the *Fatherhood of God*; Appendix I. Exposition of Rev. xxii. 3.

of impatience and spirit of rebellion ; and he might have been manifested as sustaining that character in such a way as to win me over to the conviction that it is,—if I can but reach it,—my highest freedom and joy. But what of that, if I cannot reach it ? And I cannot reach it, unless the Son of God, thus manifested, does two things on my behalf.

In the first place, he must make my relation to the Father such as his own is. In order to that, and as an indispensable preliminary to that, he must abolish and destroy the relation in which the devil has got me, along with himself, to stand to God ; the relation of a guilty criminal to a righteous and avenging judge. Fain would the devil keep me in that relation to my God ; scowling impotent defiance, or writhing under the lashings of despair. Or he would set me to the task of painfully working out for myself deliverance ; and all in vain. The Son of God is manifested to make short work of all that. I see him taking my relation to God as his, that I may take his relation to God as mine. And I have literally nothing to do but say Yes ! Yes ; I allow him to take my relation to God as his, the relation of a condemned criminal, a sentenced transgressor of the law!—to take it, so as to exhaust all the curse of it, and destroy it, as the devil's work, for so it is, utterly and for ever ! Wondrous condescension, is it not, on my part ! And I accept his relation to God, the relation of a beloved son and faithful servant, as mine ! More wondrous condescension still ! Ah ! let me be ashamed to hesitate here. Let me be willing to be to the Father

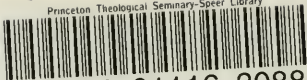
all that his own Son is, in both views of this wonderful substitution and most blessed union.

But, secondly, that I may be willing, he must put within me his own heart towards God, as well as place me in his own relation to God. For this purpose also the Son of God is manifested ; not only that through his entering into my guilty relation to God the righteous judge, and making an end of it for me, I may enter into his relation to God the righteous Father, and make full proof of it, in him ; but also that, through the Spirit dwelling in me, as in him, I may have the same heart that he has to cry, "Abba, Father."

Let me never forget that it is for this double purpose that the Son of God is manifested. Root and branch, "the works of the devil must be destroyed." The seed, the germ, the principle of all his works must be eradicated. Suspicion, dislike, servile dread, criminal sullenness, self-justifying pride, must all be scotched and killed. These are the devil's works. They must be all destroyed. Let me look to the Son of God as he has been and is manifested ; and are they not, through my so looking, destroyed ? I cannot think and feel, with reference to God and his authority and law, as the devil does, when I look to the Son of God manifested for this very purpose, that I may think and feel as he does ; that God may be to me what he is to him, and his law to me what it is to him ; that thus in me he may "destroy the works of the devil."







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