

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.
I. JOHN.

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR:

OR,

ANECDOTES, SIMILES, EMBLEMS, ILLUSTRATIONS, EXPOSITORY,
SCIENTIFIC, GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND HOMILETIC,
GATHERED FROM A WIDE RANGE OF HOME AND
FOREIGN LITERATURE, ON THE VERSES
OF THE BIBLE.

BY

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

I. JOHN.

London :

JAMES NISBET & CO., BERNERS STREET, W.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE AND HIS WRITINGS.—As compared with St. Peter, St. John exhibits to us a calm and reflective nature, with a pre-eminent receptivity: every word of his beloved Master, which tends to solve to his heart the mystery which he pondered, he apprehends in his deepest soul, and holds it fast, and meditates upon it, blessedly losing himself in the contemplation of the glory of the Son of Man. He was lost in the pondering, affectionate contemplation of Jesus, as a bride in the contemplation of the bridegroom; in the most profound and purest love, he sank into the person of his Master (hence he was chosen as an individual friend rather than the others, John xiii. 23, &c.). St. John had the nature of a living mirror, which not merely received the full brightness of the Lord's glory, but could also reflect it back. Plainly, and altogether without artificial attractions—often, it might seem, wearisomely—he faithfully gives back “that which he had seen and heard” (1 John i. 1). We are conducted to another side of St. John's nature by the comparison with the Apostle Paul. In inwardness St. Paul is much more like St. John than St. Peter is; but it is another kind of inwardness: in St. Paul it is dialectic, in St. John purely contemplative. St. Paul's is a much gentler character than that of the *υἱὸς βορρῆς* (Mark iii. 17). St. John, indeed, has often been called “the apostle of love,” because the word *ἀγάπη* often occurs in his writings as an important term in his doctrine. But this *ἀγάπη* occurs at least as often in St. Paul's writings: in St. Paul, in its relation to faith as its outward expression; in St. John, in its opposition to hatred and wickedness. St. John has even been regarded by many as a sentimental man of feeling, and he has been painted as a youth with soft and effeminate features; but thus his personal character has been most egregiously misconceived. On the other hand, the passage (Luke ix. 51 *seq.*) by no means justifies those who describe him as a man of violent temperament. Rather he was that which the French describe in their expression, “*il est entier*”; he had no mind or sense for relativities and mediating modes; and hence was not a man of middle courses. He had never moved in contradicories. He had been from earliest youth piously trained; for his mother, Salome (Mark xvi. 1; Matt. xx. 20), belonged to the circle of those few souls who found their consolation as true Israelites in the promises of the Old Covenant, and who longed for the coming of the Messiah. The family was not without substance; for Zebedee had hired servants for his fishing trade (Mark i. 20), Salome ministered to Jesus, St. John possessed *τά ἴδια*, a dwelling (John xix. 17), and was personally known in the house of the high-priest (John xviii. 15). As soon as the Baptist came into trouble, St. John adhered to him with all the energy of his receptive inwardness. His relation to the Baptist was analogous to that which he afterwards bore to Christ; he apprehended those profounder views of the preaching of John which were comparatively concealed from others. The Synoptists dwelt largely on the Baptist's

preaching of repentance; and added only a brief notice, that he pointed also to the coming Messiah. But this last point is taken up by St. John as the centre of the Baptist's work; and he has preserved and recorded his prophetic discourses concerning the nature and the passion of Christ which no other has preserved. From the Baptist he had further received the fundamental categories of his own subsequent doctrine—the antithesis of heaven and earth (John iii. 31), the love and wrath of God (ver. 36); and even the word in ver. 29 may have sounded afterwards in his soul as a prophetic note of his own relation to Christ. But with the same decision of will and absoluteness of purpose with which he had joined himself to the Baptist, and at his command fully renounced all fellowship with the *σκηρία*, he now joined himself to Jesus, when to Him he was directed by the Baptist (John i. 35 *seq.*). This fixed decision, this absolutism in the best sense, manifested itself in his whole nature—so far as that nature was not yet entirely purified and shone through, or was still under the influence of erroneous views. When the inhabitants of a Samaritan village would not receive Jesus, his Jesus, he does not break out into reproach—that would have been the reaction or vehemence of a hot temperament—but he goes with his brother to Jesus, and asks—again purely receptive and self-resigning; but what he asks testifies to the internal absoluteness with which he apprehends the two perfect opposites—he asks whether he should not call fire down from heaven. In his nature and temperament he is everywhere and always receptive: not prominent, active, interfering, challenging; but expectant, observant, listening, and self-devoting. But in his internal distinctive character he is always most fixed and decided. His is a self-devoting nature; but it is devoted only to one object, and to that altogether and absolutely devoted. And, because his nature was so self-denying, therefore it needed such strong decision. (*J. H. A. Ebrard.*)

THE GOSPEL AND EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.—This Epistle is quoted by two of the Fathers who had been disciples of the Apostle John, viz. Polycarp and Papias. It is also recognised, and quoted, as John's by Irenæus, who had been a disciple of Polycarp. It is freely quoted by Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian; it is referred to in the Muratorian Fragment, and it is one of the books contained in the old Syriac Version. Its internal character is such as to confirm us in the belief that it was written by the author of the Fourth Gospel. Not only has it many verbal similarities, *e.g.*, cf. i. 1, John i. 1, 14, xx. 27; i. 2, John iii. 11; i. 3, John xvii. 21; i. 4, John xvi. 24; i. 5, 6, John i. 5, iii. 21, viii. 12; ii. 11, John xii. 35; iii. 14, John v. 24; iv. 9, John i. 14, iii. 16; iv. 14, John iv. 42; v. 6, John xix. 34; but it is dominated by the same Christian idealism which refers all things in human life to the ultimate principles of light and darkness, truth and error, good and evil, love and hatred, life and death, God and the devil. So intimate is the connection between the two books that the Epistle was regarded by the late Bishop Lightfoot as forming a postscript to the Gospel. (*J. A. McClymont, D.D.*)

CHARACTER AND CONTENTS.—In this Epistle—probably the last inspired utterance of the New Testament excepting the two brief missives that follow it—we have the translation into the Christian life of those great truths, regarding the fellowship of God with man, that are found in the Fourth Gospel in connection with the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. That Gospel is doctrinal as well as historical, but its doctrines are here applied to the lives of Christ's followers. The Epistle is thus in advance of the Gospel, being designed to lead Christians to a conscious realisation of the new life to which they are called in fellowship with Christ (*cf.* v. 13 and i. 4 with John xx. 31). Its thought springs mainly out of a twofold conception of the Divine Nature as "light" (i. ii.), and as "love" (iv. 7-v.), united by a bond of righteousness (ii. 29-iv. 6). There is no laboured argument such as we find in some of Paul's Epistles, but simply an appeal to first principles that are to be seen with the spiritual eye, not to be proved by means of logic. Although lofty and spiritual, the teaching in the Epistle is at the same time intensely practical. It was evidently intended to counteract the growing tendency to magnify knowledge at the expense of practice (i. 6-7; ii. 3-6; iii. vi. 10; *cf.* ii. 18-19). One form of this incipient gnosticism was associated with the name of Cerinthus, who lived at Ephesus in the time of the apostle. Cerinthus, like many others, denied the reality of Christ's humanity, maintaining, in particular, that the Divine Being only entered into the man Jesus at His baptism and left him on the eve of His passion. Hence the emphatic statement of the apostle (v. 6), "This is He that came by

water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood"—that is to say, the Saviour fulfilled His Divine mission in His death upon the Cross as well as in His baptism. Again and again, in other passages, the apostle insists on the reality of the union between Jesus and the Christ, as an essential element of the Christian faith (ii. 22; iv. 2-3, 15; v. 1, 5; cf. i. 1-4). While it gives no quarter to evil and falsehood, the Epistle overflows with exhortations to the love of God and man (ii. 9-11; iii. 11-18; iv. 7-13, 16-21; v. 1-2). As we read the apostle's language here, we find it easy to believe the story told of him by Jerome, that when he was too old to preach he used to be carried to church, simply to repeat in the hearing of the congregation, "Little children, love one another." And when some one asked him, "Master, why dost thou always speak thus?" he answered, "Because it is the Lord's command; and if only this be done, it is enough." (*Ibid.*)

TEACHING OF THE EPISTLE.—Out of this Epistle we may gather an abstract of the things to be known, and that concerning God, ourselves, and Christ. 1. Concerning God. We may hence be instructed in His nature, attributes, and person: as to His nature, that "He is light, and in Him no darkness"; His attributes, that He is faithful, just, holy, righteous, pure, invisible, knowing all things, and love itself; the persons, that "there are three which bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." 2. Concerning ourselves. We may here learn what we are by nature, namely, "lying in wickedness"; what we are by grace, to wit, "born of God"; and what we shall be in glory, "like to Him, seeing Him as He is." 3. Concerning Christ. We have Him here characterised in His natures, offices, acts, and benefits. (1) In respect of His natures, He is as to His Deity called "true God," and yet more distinctly, with reference to His Personality, "the only begotten Son of God"; as to His humanity, He is said to be "sent into the world," and so truly man, that He was "seen, heard, and handled" by the apostles. (2) As to His offices, He is here asserted in general to be the Christ, and so anointed to those offices; and in particular, as priest, "to take away sin," to be "the propitiation for our sins," and "our advocate with the Father"; as prophet, by His Spirit to "teach us all things"; and as a king, to "destroy the works of the devil." (3) Most of His mediatorial acts are here specified: His incarnation, where He is said to "come in the flesh"; passion, in that He "layeth down His life for us"; His resurrection, inasmuch as "eternal life" is said to be "in Him"; and His ascension and intercession, because He is affirmed to be an "advocate with the Father," and His coming again in the day of judgment to appear as Judge of the world. (4) Lastly, we need not go further than this Epistle to meet with those benefits we obtain by Him, in that He "giveth His Spirit to us," whereby, "we dwelling in Him, and He in us, have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ," and by virtue of this "forgiveness of our sins for His name's sake"; "adoption," whereby we are called the "sons of God"; finally, justification by blood, sanctification by water, and eternal life. 2. Nor are only doctrines of faith, but rules of practice, deducible from this Epistle. (1) Would we know what to avoid? This book teacheth us in general to eschew all sin, both describing what it is, a transgression of the law, and dehorting us from the commission of it; in particular, to expel the love of the world, to abandon hatred, malice, and envy, to keep ourselves from idols, and especially to beware of the sin unto death. (2) Would we be instructed what we are to put in practice in this Epistle? We are called upon to "believe in the name of Jesus Christ," to "love God who hath begotten us, and to love those who are begotten of Him"; to have the "hope of glory" fixed in us, to declare our repentance, by "confessing our sins, and purifying ourselves"; to "overcome the wicked one and the world"; to conquer the "lusts of the flesh"; to "walk as Christ walked," by imitation of Him, and to "abide in Him" by perseverance! to "hear the word preached by the ministers of Christ; to "ask the things we want according to His will"; to "open bowels of compassion," and distribute our worldly goods to our needy brethren; finally, to "do righteousness, keep God's commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight." (*N. Hardy, D.D.*)

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

I. JOHN.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1-4. That which was from the beginning.—*The preface to the First Epistle of John*:—This is a homiletical Epistle, the address of an absent pastor to his flock, or to disciples widely scattered and beyond the reach of his voice. It is a specimen of apostolic preaching to believers, a masterpiece in the art of edification. The address is based on the gospel history, which it presupposes throughout. Some have thought the Epistle written on purpose to accompany St. John's Gospel, in order to serve as its practical application and enforcement. The two lie so near to each other in their cast of thought and dialect, and are connected by so many turns of expression, that it is evident they are the outcome of the same mind, and, we may safely say, of the same stage and state of mind. The preface to the Epistle is, in effect, a summary of the Gospel according to John, as we see at once when we compare it with the opening and closing words of that narrative (John i. 1-18, xx. 30, 31). The revelation of God through His Son Jesus Christ, a revelation entirely human and apprehended already by his readers, is that which the writer desires to communicate and set forth in its living effect. This revelation is the spring of a new eternal life for all men, a life of fellowship with God Himself, in which St. John would fain make his fellows sharers with him. It is this preface that we have now to consider, consisting of chap. i. 1-4. Its subject is the eternal life manifested. We adopt the revised translation of these four verses, preferring, however, in ver. 1 the marginal "*word of life*," without the capital. For it is on *life* rather than *word* that the stress of the sentence lies ("for the life was manifested," John continues); and Word must have stood alone to be recognised as a personal title, or could at most be qualified as it is in the Apocalypse (xix. 13): "His name is called the Word of God." John's "*word of life*" resembles the "*word of life*" that Paul bids the Philippian "hold forth" (ii. 16), "the words of life eternal" which Peter declared his Master to possess (John vi. 68), and "all the words of this life" which the apostles were bidden to "speak in the temple to the people" (Acts v. 20). It is synonymous with "the gospel," the message of the new life which those bear witness to and report who have first "heard" it and proved its living power. "Concerning the word of life" stands in opposition to the four preceding relative clauses ("that which we have heard . . . our hands handled") and states their general subject-matter and import; while the first clause, "That which was from the beginning," stands alone in its sublime completeness. "Declare," in vers. 2, 3 more precisely understood, signifies "report" (ἀπαγγέλλομεν). It is the carrying of tidings or messages from the authentic source: "What we have seen and heard we report also to you" (cf. ver. 5)—we are the bearers to you of the word we received from Him. So in ver. 2: "We bear witness and report"; where, as Haupt acutely says, in the former expression the emphasis lies on the communication of *truth*, in the latter on the *communication* of truth. Readers of the Greek will note the expressive transition from the perfect to the aorist tense and back again, that takes place in vers. 1-3. When John writes, "That which we have heard" and "have seen with our eyes," he asserts the abiding reality of the audible and visible manifestation of

God in Christ. This is now the fixed possession of himself and of his readers, the past realised in the present; and to this immovable certainty he reverts once and again in vers. 2, 3. The sudden change of tense in the middle of ver. 1, missed by our authorised translation, carries us back to the historical fact. Looking with John's eyes upon this mysterious Person, feeling and grasping with his hands its flesh and blood reality, and pondering its meaning, we say with him: "The life was manifested, the eternal life that was with the Father, was manifested to us." While *θεασάμεθα* (we beheld) implies an intent contemplative gaze, *ψηλάφησαν*, occurring, in the New Testament, only in Acts xvii. 27, and Heb. xii. 18 beside these two passages, denotes not the bare handling, but the searching, exploring use of the hands, that tests by handling. So much for the verbal elucidation of the passage. Let us look at its substantial content. I. ST. JOHN HAD WITNESSED, AS HE BELIEVED, THE SUPREME MANIFESTATION OF GOD. The secret of the universe stood unveiled before his eyes, the everlasting fact and truth of things, the reality underlying all appearances, "that which was from the beginning." Here he touched the spring of being, the principle that animates creation from star to farthest star, from the archangel to the worm in the sod: "The life was manifested, the life eternal which existed with the Father, was manifested to us." If "the life" of this passage is identical with that of the Gospel prologue, it has all this breadth of meaning; it receives a limitless extension when it is defined as "that which was from the beginning." The source of spiritual life to men is that which was, in the first instance, the source of natural life to all creatures. Here lies the foundation of St. John's theology. It assumes the solidarity of being, the unity of the seen and unseen. It contradicts and excludes, from the outset, all Gnostical, dualistic, and docetic conceptions of the world. This essential and aboriginal life, he tells us, became incarnate, that it may have fellowship with men; it was slain, that its blood may cleanse them from iniquity—for the cross is not far off, we shall find it in the next paragraph. It is the fourth verse, rather than the first of the Gospel, which supplies the text for the Epistle: "That which hath come to be, in Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (R.V. margin). II. In the second place, observe the energy with which the apostle asserts THE ACTUALITY of the manifestation of the life of God in Jesus Christ. Thrice in three verses he reiterates, "we have seen" it, twice "we have heard"; and twice he repeats, "the life was manifested." This stupendous fact has, naturally, always had its doubters and deniers. In any age of the world, and under any system of thought, such a revelation as that made in Jesus Christ was sure to be met with incredulity. It is equally opposed to the superstitions and to the scepticisms natural to the human mind. In truth, the mind that is not surprised and sometimes staggered by the claims of Christ and the doctrines of Christianity, that has not felt the shock they give to our ordinary experience and native convictions, has hardly awakened yet to their full import. St. John feels that the things he declares demand the strongest evidence. He has not believed them lightly, and he does not expect others to believe them lightly. This passage, like many besides in the New Testament record, goes to show that the apostles were well aware of the importance of historical truth; they were conscientious and jealously observant in regard to this cardinal requirement. Their faith was calm, rational, and sagacious. They were perfectly certain of the things they attested, and believed only upon commanding and irresistible proof, that covered the whole extent of the case. But the facts they built their faith upon are so largely of the spiritual order, that without a corresponding spiritual sense and faculty they can never be absolutely convincing. Already, in St. John's old age, the solvents of philosophical analysis were being applied to the gospel history and doctrine. The Godhead incarnate, the manifestation of the infinite in the finite, was pronounced impossible and self-contradictory; we know beforehand, the wise of the world said, that it cannot be. The incarnation, the miracles, the resurrection, the ascension—what are they but a myth, a beautiful poetic dream, a pictorial representation of spiritual truth, from which we must extract for ourselves a higher creed, leaving behind all the supernatural as so much mere wrappage and imaginative dress! So the Apostle John confronts them, and their like in every time, with his impressive and authoritative declaration. Behind him lies the whole weight of the character, intelligence, and disciplined experience of the witnesses of Jesus. Of what use was it for men at a distance to argue that this thing and that thing could not be? "I tell you," says the great apostle, "we have seen it with our eyes, we have heard Him with our very ears; we have touched and tested and handled these things at every point, and we know that they are so."

As he puts it, at the end of his letter, "We know that the Son of God is come; and He hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true." The men who have founded Christianity and written the New Testament were no fools. They knew what they were talking about. No dreamer, no fanatic, no deceiver, since the world began, ever wrote like the author of this Epistle. III. And now, in the third place, there is founded upon the facts thus attested, there is derived from the eternal life revealed in Christ, A NEW DIVINE FELLOWSHIP FOR MEN. To promote this end St. John writes; "That you also may have fellowship with us." To communicate these truths, to see this fellowship established and perfected amongst men, is the apostle's one delight, the business and delight of all those who share his faith and serve his Master: "These things we write, that our joy may be fulfilled." We have a great secret in common, we and the apostles. The Father told it to Jesus, Jesus to them, they to us, and we to others. Those who have seen and heard such things, cannot keep the knowledge to themselves. These truths belong not to us only, but to "the whole world" (ii. 2); they concern every man who has a soul to save, who has sins to confess and death to meet, who has work to do for his Maker in this world, and a way to find for himself through its darkness and perils. The Apostle John is writing to Greeks, to men far removed from him in native sympathy and instinct; but he has long since forgotten all that, and the difference between Jew and Greek never once crosses his mind in writing his letter. He has risen above it, and left it behind through his fellowship with Christ. The only difference he knows is that existing between men who "are of God" and men who "are of the world." In St. John the idea of the Church catholic as a spiritual brotherhood is perfected. But our fellowship is not only with prophets, apostles, martyrs, saints of God. We do not hold with the apostle merely such fellowship as we have with other great minds of the past; nor was John's communion with his Lord that which we cherish with our beloved dead, the communion of memory, or at best of hope. If the facts the apostles test are true, they are true for us as for them. If the life manifested in the Lord Jesus was eternal, then it is living and real to-day. As it "was from the beginning," it will be to the end. Jesus Christ had brought His disciples into spiritual union and fellowship with the living God. He had shown them the Father. He had made them individually children of God, with Himself for elder brother. He had passed away from their sight, to be with them for ever in His Spirit. In this way He had really come to them, and the Father with Him, when He seemed to be going (John xiv. 18-23, R.V.). They felt themselves to be in direct communion and communication, every day they lived, with the Almighty Father in heaven, and with His Son Jesus Christ whom they had known and loved on earth. To this fellowship they invite and summon all mankind. The manifestation of God in Christ makes fellowship with God possible in an altogether new and richer way. Does not the very distinction revealed in the Godhead render such communion accessible, as it could not be otherwise to human thought? "Our communion," writes John, "is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"—with each distinctly, with each in and through and for the other. We have fellowship with Christ in the Father. He has explained the Father (John i. 18), and talked to us about Him; and we are entering into His views. We share Christ's thoughts about God. On the other hand, we have fellowship with God in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is God's; but He is ours as well! God has told us what He thinks about His Son, and wishes us to think with Him. Showing Him to the world, He says: "This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I am ever well pleased." And we agree to that: we are well pleased with Him too! We solemnly accept the testimony of God concerning His Son. Then we are at one with God in respect to Christ. And all harmony and peace centre there. "The Father Himself loveth you," said Jesus to His disciples, "because you have loved Me, and believed that I came out from the Father." In Him God is reconciling the world to Himself. Only when we think aright of Christ, and are rightly disposed toward Him, can we have fellowship with each other, and work together with God for the world's redemption. (*George G. Findlay, B.A.*) *John's testimony to Christ*:—I. THE FAITH WHICH CAME BY SEEING JESUS. Too often intimate acquaintance lowers our reverence even for the great. How different the result of John's close friendship with Christ! Such was the faith which came by seeing Christ. What a faith it was! It breathes in all his writings; it breathed in his actions; it fitted him to look through heaven's open door and tell us what he saw. II. THE FAITH WHICH COMES BY HEARING OF JESUS. We cannot as yet rise to the level of the faith which grew by

seeing Jesus; but we, too, hope to see, hear, handle Christ. And even now there is a special blessing promised to them "who have not seen, and yet have believed."

III. THE JOY OF FAITH. Clearly the writer's joy was full. A faith so vigorous could not be otherwise. And St. John seeks to fill us with the same. We are unworthy servants, weary pilgrims, fainting soldiers, desponding amid sorrows, led astray by deceptive joys. We want a faith which shall make our courage strong, and our joy full. (*T. M. Herbert, M.A.*) *The apostles' doctrine*:—The very mistakes of the primitive Churches have been to us the sources of unspeakable advantage. Principally to refute existing errors, the apostles gave out those beautiful expositions of Christian doctrine and duty which make the glory of the epistolary scriptures. Thus we see how, under the reign of omnipotent love, error itself is made to elicit truth, and the evils of a day to work out forms of good that shall brighten and unfold for ever.

I. THE DECLARATION RESPECTING CHRIST. 1. The eternal existence of Christ. He says, He is "that eternal life"; and at the close of his appeal he adds the assertion, "This is the true God and eternal life." Try to take in the meaning of the word "eternal"! You are unable to do it. We can explain nothing which lies beyond the horizon of our limited life. To us, that which is infinite never can be definite. Mysterious as is the word eternity, this one thing is clear—He who is eternal must be Divine. He who is "before all things" must be the cause of all things; and creation, however wide in range or rich in splendour, must be less by infinity than its author. 2. Jesus assumed human nature. The mystery is no argument against its truth. You are unable to explain the wonderful union of God and man in the nature of Christ; but are you more perfectly able to explain the union of matter and spirit in your own? 3. Jesus is the Word. What words are to thought, Christ is to God? He utters God; and of every imaginable manifestation of God, He is the manifestor. Nature shows the Divine perfections, but we may still doubt if it proves the Divine personality. The personal man yearns for the knowledge of a personal God. Age after age rose the ceaseless cry of man, "For God, for the living God!" Christ heard that cry, and said, "Lo, I come, I come!" In the earliest times He shadowed out the Divine personality by His appearance as the Angel of the Presence; and when the fulness of time arrived He broke the silence of ages, and in Him, at last, "the unutterable" found utterance. But Christ has given a yet more advanced revelation than this. He has uttered the Divine love to sinners. Great God! conscience threatens us; the law threatens us; death threatens us, and we deserve it all. "Art thou with us, or with our adversaries?" The Cross furnishes the reply. 4. Jesus is our Life. As the Word, He is the Revealer of what we need; as the Life, He is the Communicator of what we need. As the Word, He is God uttering Himself; as the Life, He is God giving Himself. As the Word, He is God without us; as the Life, He is God within us. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) *Fellowship with the Father*:—I. St. John was now an old man in a new world. It was an age of busy thought and daring speculation. It had its realists, who held that Jesus was but a man, and Christianity but one of the religious movements of the last century. It had its dreamy idealists, who spiritualised away all the facts of Christianity. The age, in fact, called for a restatement of Christian truth. We too have our realists in art and literature—painters who strip the halo from Christ's brow, and set before us simply the man Jesus, the peasant-saint of Galilee—authors who write "lives of Jesus" as the Son of Mary, but not of Christ the Son of the living God. We too have our idealists, who regard Christianity as a dream of man's spirit—a beautiful dream, yet capable of being improved, and so they wish, not to destroy, but to remake the Christ, to pull the Gospels to pieces, but only to put them together again after a better fashion. Here we have the last word of inspiration. The revelation that began in Genesis ends here.

II. We have in our text the substance of the Gospel—what it is in the last analysis. 1. It is something eternal—"that which was from the beginning." Christianity is not one of the religious movements of a recent age. It is not one of a class. It cannot be compared with other religions. Its sources are out of sight. It was manifested in time, but it was from the beginning. 2. It is something historical. "That which we have heard, that which we have seen [not in vision] with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, . . . declare we unto you." We do not announce fancies of our own. We bear witness to facts—to an eternal truth revealed in time. 3. It is something absolutely unique. "The word of life, the eternal life, which was with the Father." Christ approaches humanity. He comes not, as one of many, on a common errand of sympathy with sorrow. His mission is unique. He comes

alone. He comes to give men life—eternal life—life as it was with the Father—the very life of God Himself in its purest form. III. Again, we have THE END AIMED AT IN THE GOSPEL stated in its largest, fullest form. “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us.” Men are to be saved for something as well as from something, and that is for the fellowship of holy spirits, the commonwealth of souls, the city of God. Truth says to all who possess it, “I am sacramental bread and wine; eat of me, drink of me, and pass me on to others.” As every stream of water makes for the sea, every rill of truth is making for fellowship. The missionary spirit is often spoken of as something separate, peculiar to certain people. No! it is the spirit of all truth. Get Christ into men, and the Christ in them will straightway want to get into other men; for the great end for which every Christian truth is making, is fellowship—the perfect brotherhood of all souls. IV. Yes! But BROTHERHOOD CAN ONLY BE THROUGH FATHERHOOD. “And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Union is union with God. Cicero has said that there can be no friendship but between good men. Bad men may combine, but cannot unite. Their combination is a rope of sand. God only unites. “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” The hope of the world lies not in agitation, nor in revolution, nor in reformation, but in regeneration. V. COMMUNION WITH MEN MUST THEN BEGIN AS UNION WITH GOD. “And this is the message”—“God is light”—is holiness and love. Do you say, “It is a message that crushes”? Nay, it consoles too, it inspires. There is a gospel in it. The sun looking down at the green wheat-blade, says, “You must be like me.” But how? “By looking at me. I, by shining on you, will make you to be what I want you to be.” God is light! If He is holiness without spot, He is also love without measure. He gives Himself away like the light. (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *The perfect Saviour*:—I. THE APOSTLES’ TESTIMONY CONCERNING CHRIST AS A PERFECT SAVIOUR (vers. 1, 2). 1. No stronger evidence can be conceived. 2. The statement of such evidence proves the importance of giving facts as the foundation of Christianity. 3. The terms of this statement deserve careful study. (1) The pre-existence of our Lord. (2) The real, objective humanity of our Lord. (3) The life-giving power of our Lord. II. THE DESIGN OF THIS TESTIMONY—that others might participate in the peculiar privileges of the apostles of Christ (ver. 3). 1. Fellowship. 2. Fulness of joy. III. THE EVIDENCES OF REAL UNION WITH CHRIST AS PERFECT SAVIOUR. 1. A life of practical holiness (vers. 5-7). 2. A Scriptural sentiment (vers. 8-10). 3. Compliance with the condition of forgiveness and cleansing (ver. 9). Lessons: 1. The solid basis of Christianity—a historical Christ, attested by unimpeachable witnesses. 2. The distinguished privileges of a believer in Christ. (1) Divine fellowship. (2) Divine cleansing. (3) Divine forgiveness. 3. The blessed and royal life of the Christian. To “walk in the light.” (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Witnesses of the Word of life*:—These words are as a head to the body, a gate to the field, a porch to the building of this epistle; an introduction which very much speaketh the writer to be St John, because it is as it were a resounding to the poem of his Gospel. I. THE APOSTLE’S CARE OF PUBLISHING THE GOSPEL is that which St. John doth here insert in the behalf not only of himself, but his fellow-apostles, for it is not the singular “I,” but the plural “we.” 1. The first we meet with is *μαρτυροῦμεν*, “bear witness.” This was indeed the chief office to which the apostles were designed by Christ, to bear witness of Him; and that they might be enabled to the faithful discharge of it, He promised the power of the Holy Ghost (John xv. 26, 27; Acts i. 8). 2. The next expression, *ἀπαγγέλλομεν*, is twice repeated, vers. 2, 3, but Englished by two several words, “we show” and “we declare,” it is that which intimateth what kind of bearing witness the apostle here intended. The nature of light is to discover, the business of an ambassador is to impart his message; and accordingly the work of an apostle is to reveal the gospel. We declare, as being sent by God to publish this errand; and that which hereby is intimated to us is that these holy apostles did not run before they were sent, but had a mission and commission to show and declare the things of the gospel. 3. There is yet one term more behind, ver. 4, and that is *γράφομεν*, “we write unto you”: and as declaring sheweth what kind of bearing witness the apostle chiefly relateth to, so this writing what kind of declaring he especially speaketh of; for whereas there are but two ways of declaring the gospel, to wit, *sermo* and *scriptio*, word and writing, by the tongue and the pen, this latter is that which the apostle principally intendeth when he saith, We declare, we write; that is, we declare by writing. (1) By this it is we speak to many, very many, even those that are absent

and far distant from us; in which respect writing is wittily styled an invention to deceive absence. (2) Again, by this it is we speak, not only whilst alive, but when we are dead, and so declare the truth, not only to them who are coetaneous with us, but shall in future ages succeed after us; in which regard that of the Psalmist is very suitable (Psa. cii. 18). II. THE GOSPEL'S EXCELLENCY. 1. The appellation here affixed to the gospel is choice and comfortable, it is the word of life; a title which is made use of by St. Paul (Phil. ii. 15, 16). 2. The reason of this appellation is fit and pregnant, because those words, "eternal life is manifested to us," are such a confirmation that they are withal an explication of the title in both the branches of it. (1) Would we know what this life is, whereof the gospel is the word? The answer is, it is eternal life; in which respect St. Peter saith to Christ (John vi. 68). (2) Would we know in what respect the gospel is the word of this life? The answer is, because this eternal life which was with the Father is by it manifested to us. To apply this, what should the consideration teach us but—1. Thankfully to acknowledge what a rich treasure, a precious pearl, God hath vouchsafed to us in bestowing the gospel on us! 2. To endeavour that what this word of life is in itself it may be to every one of us; and as it is the word of life by way of manifestation, so it may be also by way of operation, effectual to bring us to that life which it revealeth to us. (N. Hardy, D.D.) *Christ the revealer of God:—I. HIM OF WHOM JOHN IS HERE SPEAKING—"that which was from the beginning."* What God is in His nature, persons, life, blessedness, glory, immortality, and eternity, is, and ever will be, incomprehensible (Job xi. 7, 8, 9). The person of Christ was from the beginning. He was as God-man before the world, and had a glory with the Father before the world was (John viii. 58). This most glorious one, who was God-man before the world was, became incarnate in the fulness of time. John lived in the days of Christ's Incarnation; he had the honour to see Christ, the Messiah, and was favoured with communion with Him. This was grace and glory inexpressible. II. *HE HAD HEARD, HE HAD SEEN, HE HAD HANDLED HIM.* So had others also. These various terms of hearing, seeing, looking, handling, are designed to express the reality of our Lord's Incarnation. That He had a real body. It was a palpable one; it was seen; it was touched; it was heard. The truth of this was denied by some heretics in the apostolic age; to refute which the apostle expresseth himself as he here doth. There was satisfaction given, and such demonstration given to every sense of body and mind, that Christ had a body like our own, that no greater proof could be given. He was made in all things like unto His brethren. It was in our nature He obeyed. Bore the sins of many in His own body on the tree. The person of Christ is a most transcendently excellent subject. The Incarnation of Christ, a deep and most momentous subject. III. *THE PERSONS WHO HAD THUS SEEN HIM—"which we have heard," &c.* They were the apostles themselves. He speaks in their and his own name here. Not but other saints beside them saw the Lord in His incarnate state; yet they were not called and appointed to be witnesses of this, as the apostles were. The evidence the apostles had of His person and Incarnation was different from ours. We receive ours from them: and that in a way of believing. They had the evidence of sense as truly as we have the evidence of faith. True believers hear the voice of Christ in His Word, and in hearing it their souls live. They see Christ in the light of the gospel, and behold salvation and everlasting life in Him; but this is with the eyes of their mind. They touch, they taste, and handle Christ mystically and representatively in their fellowship with Him in His holy supper, yet this is quite different from what the apostle is here speaking. Yet it is as effectual to us for our souls' benefit as theirs was. Yet notwithstanding this, the different ends answered by the same are so essential, that they ought to be distinguished. They were to record His life, His words, His miracles, His threatenings, His promises, His prophecies, His holiness, His righteousness, His passion, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension into heaven, His session at the right hand of the Majesty on high, His coronation in glory, and His sending down the Holy Ghost from heaven, to prove Him to be the Lord's Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Now the apostles who were to be witnesses of all this unto the people, saw God incarnate, and conversed with Him in His incarnate state—a sight we shall never behold. It is everlastingly impossible we should, that state being past. We shall see God incarnate, God-man, in heaven—we shall see Him in the state of ultimate glory. We see Him now, in the glass of the everlasting gospel, as truly as the apostles did, in our measure and degree, though not as they did with their bodily eyes. We see Him with the eye of faith, as certainly as those persons did with the eyes of their body, and as truly,

yet not so clearly and fully, as saints in heaven do by sense and vision. IV. THE TITLE JOHN GIVES THIS MOST WONDERFUL ONE. He styles Him "The Word of life." The word is the index of the mind. By what is contained in the mind is expressed. So Christ, as one in the self-existing Essence, speaks out the mind of the eternal Father. It was by His Almighty fiat the heavens and the earth were created, and all the host of them. It was by Him all the secrets of the Most High were spoken out and proclaimed, and the invisible God brought out of His invisibility. It is in Him the full revelation of Godhead is made known. It is in the essential Word all the mind of God is opened, all the love of God expressed, the whole of God declared. It is as this essential Word, and only begotten Son of God, shines forth as God-man, in His most glorious person, mediation, work, grace, and salvation, in the everlasting gospel, and enlightens His Church therewith, that they in His light see light. (S. E. Pierce.)

The Incarnation of Christ, before and after:—Midway down the Simplon Pass, the traveller pauses to read upon a stone by the wayside the single word "Italia." The Alpine pines cling to the mountain-sides between whose steep the rough way winds. The snow covers the peaks, and the brooks are frozen to the precipices. The traveller wraps his cloak about him against the frost that reigns undisputed upon those ancient thrones of icebound rock. But at the point where that stone with the word "Italia" stands, he passes a boundary-line. From there the way begins into another world. Soon every step makes plainer how great has been the change from Switzerland to Italy. Humanity has crossed a boundary-line between two eras. Up to Bethlehem was one way, growing bleaker, and more barren, and colder, as man hastened on. Down from Bethlehem has been another and a happier time. The one civilisation was as Switzerland shut in among its icy Alps; the other is as Lombardy's fruitful plain. The one led up to Stoicism; the other opens into charity. Judaism, also, and the gospel are as two different climes. We need deny no pagan virtue, we need exaggerate no pagan vice, in order to bring out the greatness of the change which began at Bethlehem. For it is not simply a difference in men, or in civilisation, which we have to observe, great as, without historical exaggeration, that may be shown to be; but the advent of Christ works a difference in motives, and in the motive-powers, which make human life, and which are creative of civilisations. It was the coming of a new power to change the world. The impulse which was imparted to humanity by the presence among men of Jesus Christ can be compared to nothing less potential than the impulse which was given, we may suppose, to the creation when motion first became a fact and law of primeval matter. And from the advent of motion dates the order of the worlds. (Newman Smyth, D.D.)

The Divine and human in Christ:—The picture produced in the stereopticon is fuller, rounder and more natural than the same picture seen without the use of that instrument. But to produce the stereoscopic picture there must be two pictures blended into one by the use of the stereopticon, and both the eyes of the observer are brought into requisition at the same time, looking each through a separate lens. Thus Christ is only seen in His true and proper light, when the record of His human nature and the statement of His Divine are blended. It is a flat, unfinished Christ with either left out. But it is as seen in the Word, with the moral and mental powers of our being both engaged in the consideration, and thus only, that we get the full and true result. **Which we have heard.**—*Obedient hearing:*—The word translated "heard" often signifies with the inspired writers an obedient hearing. It is such a hearing of the proposed truth as issues in the conviction of the mind, and more than this, such a hearing as disposes the mind to submit itself to the doctrine presented: it is in this way that faith springs up, and from hence its origin. The Lord by His special grace induces this result. "Faith is of the operation of God" (James i. 16-18). When addressing the gracious Author of his faith, the favoured child of man thus speaks: "Mine ears hast Thou opened" (John x. 3).

Which we have looked upon.—*Contemplative faith:*—The apostle is not weary of describing faith's various actings in the soul. And it is for our edification that he sets before us his own experience in this matter. It is in order that such of us as have heard and seen Jesus may still fix on Him the eyes of our understanding with an intent and protracted gaze. And can one view of "the King in His beauty" satisfy the spiritual eye? No; it will rest with a mingled feeling of sorrow and joy on Him whom our sins have pierced. When Jesus has been seen as "full of grace and truth"—"fairer than the children of men"—the believer will surely look upon Him with a steady contemplation of the soul and fixed devotion of the heart. It may be that it is not given to all believers to attain to the full

experience of the beloved disciple, or to realise all He felt when He says "which we have looked upon"; but in a measure the same contemplative faith is proper to all the saints. And without it there could be no due assimilation to the image of Christ. It is by the contemplation of Christ's person that we become in a measure changed into His likeness. *Christ looked upon as a wondrous spectacle, steadfastly, deeply, contemplatively.* Appropriate to John's contemplative character. (*A. R. Fausset, M.A.*) **And our hands have handled of the Word of life.**—*Appropriating faith*:—Without this concluding sentence the apostle's description of the experience of faith had been imperfect; for wherever the Lord carries on "the work of faith with power," there is on the believer's part an appropriation to himself of that eternal life which he has heard, seen, and looked upon by faith. There is, as John expresses it, "a handling" of the Word of life. And probably the expression, "which our hands have handled," denotes some sensible experience of our union with the Lord Jesus, and a consciousness that we are within the bonds of the covenant of grace, so that by the aid of the Holy Ghost we can say with Paul, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." "Laying hold on eternal life," and apprehending Christ with a faith which says, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me," we are blessed indeed, and exclaim in the language of faith's assurance, "My Lord and my God!" (*Anon.*) *The realisation of faith*:—Consider what impressions we gain from the sense of touch. It is touch which, more than any other sense, convinces us of the reality of matter. What you see might be merely a phantom, an optical illusion, a picture painted on the retina of the eye, and nothing more; but if you go up to the thing you see, and touch it, and handle it, you become assured of its existence, you know that it is substantial. Now what is faith? It may be defined as the faculty by which we realise unseen things. I say the faculty (not by which we conceive, but) by which we realise these things, feel them to have a body and a substance. To imagine the truths of religion is not to believe them. We may from time to time imagine God as He is in heaven, surrounded by myriads of glorious angels—we may imagine Christ looking down upon us from God's right hand, interceding for us, calling us to account at the last day, and awarding to us our final doom; but the mere picturing these things to ourselves is not the same thing as believing them; the believing them is the having such a conviction of their reality as to live under their influence, and to be in some measure, at least, governed by them. In short, to imagine the truths of religion is like surveying things by the eye; to believe in the truths of religion is like grasping the same things with the hand, and thus proving them to have substance and consistency. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *The mystery of the holy Incarnation*:—There is not in Scripture a more amazing statement than this. "The Word of life" is God the Son. And now speaking of this eternal and Divine Person, the evangelist affirms that he and other men had heard Him, had seen Him with their eyes, had looked upon Him, and had handled Him. Well may such expressions trouble the mind; they are so real, so physical, so material, so intense. But the whole force of the gospel is in them. That gospel is no philosophy, no human invention; but the mystery of godliness meeting man's deepest needs. Among those needs is that of a real access to God and communion with Him; not by way of thought merely, not through the chill avenue of the intellect, but as body with body, and flesh with flesh; by the hearing of the ear, and the seeing of the eye; by taste and touch, by emotion and sensation; in short, through the entire nature, and not only through one part of it. This is the need of which the apostle here declares that it has been satisfied: and in the fact that it has thus been met lies the power of the gospel. I begin with this proposition: that in the proportion in which religious belief becomes intellectualised and refined, in that same proportion does it lose its power over men and cease to control the practical order of their lives. This will best appear by contrasting two types of religion: the first is that of the vulgar idolater, the second that of the advanced philosophical mind: the former a superstition, the latter a rationalistic theory; but of the two the former has the greater power, and, as a religion, is better than the latter. 1. First, look at the lowest form of idolatry. Here is a man who makes an image of wood or stone. This is to him a god. The man has, after all, what lies at the basis of true religion; the faith in a power, outside of him, above him, and acting on him directly; capable of being approached, prayed to, propitiated; "a very present help in trouble." He thinks the power to be somehow in a carved stone or a bit of painted and gilded wood: but at least he believes in the power; he has a religion; and it is practical and positive; it affects his actions, it comes home to him in his

dark life. 2. Secondly, let us take another type of religion. It is that of the man whose belief in God has been attenuated into a mere intellectual assent to the proposition that there is something somewhere or other, to which he is willing to concede the sacred name. This God of his has no personality; it cannot hear or see or feel, it cannot be heard or seen or felt; it cannot think, it cannot love; it has neither heart, nor will, nor memory; no relation to us such as we have toward each other. This is the opposite extreme: and of the two the lower is better than the higher. The poor heathen's religion is still a religion. It is a link (that blind, gross, material notion) between him and a higher world, whose invisible powers he reveres, dreads, and trusts; it has the elements of Christian faith, and needs only to be purified by grace. But the notions of the acute philosophic mind have in them no reality. The refinement has gone too far; the evaporation has produced a thin film, without light, without warmth, without value to any human being. Such are two extremes, whereof every age of the world thus far affords illustrations. The truth is in neither of them: it lies between. Going from the former towards the latter, there is a point at which we must stop, having found what we need. We want what is above the first, but stops short of the second; the reality of the idolater's faith and the spirituality of that of the philosopher; the material and the immaterial together; a religion meeting man as a body, and meeting him also as a spirit; helping and upholding him on the physical and spiritual side at once. All these wants are met, in the gospel and theology of the Incarnation. When the Word was made flesh there stood before men, first, what could not have been more real to the senses than it was. The Son of God took flesh; He dwelt among us in a true body; He did not abhor such material tabernacle. In that flesh dwelt He who is a spirit and whom men are to worship in spirit and truth (John iv. 24). God, immaterial and spiritual, without parts, or passions, was manifested in a body having members, in a humanity like unto our own, sin only excepted, in and under sensible and material forms, to the senses first, and through them to the spirit and heart of men. This is the mystery of the Incarnation, which whosoever looketh upon with faith and love shall find the extreme terms in the problem of religion brought together and harmonised therein. Thus far I have been speaking mainly of the days when Christ was here on earth. All that began so strangely has been carried on no less strangely among us since He went away. Still is the Lord unto us very Man and very God in one. Christianity, rightly understood, is Christ; and Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever, still God and man in one. Christianity, therefore, being ultimately resolvable into Him, and being, in fact, the perpetual and abiding manifestation in Him, must be what He is, Divine and human at once. It must also have two sides, two elements, the physical and the spiritual, the material and the immaterial, the body akin to the dust, the spirit out of heaven. Neither of these can be spared; religion without the latter would be a gross and carnal system; without the former a cold abstraction. The Church of Christ is a visible body; from her it was intended that a visible and outward glory should shine through this dark world. Let us understand our mission; we are the apostles, the representatives of a religion which should give to the world not only the grandest ideas, the holiest thoughts, the most powerful inspirations, the deepest truths, and the most practical and valuable maxims, but also the most splendid sights, the most elevating sounds, and all that can cheer and sustain the heart of pilgrim man. It is Christianity, on its physical side, which has given us the cathedrals of the world, grand creeds and anthems at once in stone and sculpture, reflecting the spiritual glory of the Lord in their solemn magnificence, and praising Him as far as their towers, domes, and cross-topped spires can be seen; it is from that side of religion that men have drawn the fulness of that refreshment which a simple and unsophisticated humanity craves. It boots not to say by way of objection that these are material things; they are, of course. Even so Christ was Man, and beautiful in His humanity to the eye of faith; and these things represent the Word made flesh, the human Christ. This visible side of religion, all glory and magnificence, was intended to correspond to the human side in Christ, that body wherein dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead. (*Morgan Dix, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. **For the life was manifested.**—*Christ the manifestation of the eternal* :—

1. We may think of Christ as the manifestation of that eternal life whence has come all that has ever been—all creation, all nature, all time, all history; of that mysterious life which ever beats at the heart of the universe, which ever feeds its

unfailing springs. 2. Christ is the manifestation of the eternal, in the extent to which He has brought more fully to light, and more practically established, the spiritual kingdom of likeness to God, of fellowship with God, for which all hearts are intended and required. He at once so guaranteed and illustrated its existence and meaning, as everywhere to lift this spiritual kingdom to a higher plane. He made it far more possible and certain than any other teacher or messenger from God had ever desired or conceived. He brought it within the reach not alone of the chiefest and the best, but also of the commonest and the lowest. He showed it to be the proper life of every man—showed that purity, righteousness, justice, mercy, patience, love, are as essential and necessary to every man as they are to God; that the true and blessed life for man means supremely this—after His own example, fellowship with God, likeness to God, sonship to God. 3. Christ manifested the eternal, not alone by the transcendent excellence and spiritual elevation of His life, but also by the power which He displayed of showing the inherent oneness of material and moral forces—in other words, of proving the rightful control of spirit over matter. What to us may look like signs or wonders or unusual phenomena, to Him were but natural facts, natural revelations or efforts of the deep, underlying oneness between things outward and inward, between all nature and life. 4. Christ manifested the eternal by revealing to us the after-life, the future world. Of the two, that world seemed to Him even more real than this. He spoke of it with even the same deep intensity, and yet with the same calm, self-evident truthfulness as He did of the existence, and name, and character, and purpose of His Father. To Him the future world, the immortal life, were but the natural outcome of the existence and kingdom and purpose of His Father. To Him, because God is, and ever will be, man, His child, will continue to be as living, as personal as He. Jesus, knowing Himself to be the outcome, the evidence, the gift of all spiritual and eternal realities, could look beyond the seeming defeat and dread suffering of His last days, beyond the bitterness and sting of His own death, beyond the gloom and corruption of His own grave, to an existence for Himself that should be as changeless and lasting as the Father's, whose presence and truth and love He declared; nay, more—He could look beyond all the failure, pain, and death with which any of His brothers or sisters on earth should have to struggle, or to which they should succumb, and could give to them the offer, the assurance, the possession of a life as spiritual, as blessed, as immortal as His own. (*J. T. Stannard.*)

The only life worth living:—What is the conception that St. John had of the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ? In his gospel he looks upon it as the manifestation of God: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." But in the Epistle he looks upon the Incarnation as the manifestation of life. He here declares the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was toward the Father—for so it literally should be—which was Fatherward and was manifested unto us. Now, it is no uncommon thing for a young man setting out in life to set some high ideal before him. You can understand a young man in business setting before him the ideal of a George Peabody or a George Moore. It is not so much the success the man has achieved, as the way in which he spent the well-earned wealth, which fires the ambition of the youth. But what was St. John's ideal? The Lord Jesus Christ. There was the life. The life was manifested, and we have seen it. It is a question often asked, Is life worth living? And that depends very much upon the kind of life you mean to live. If you mean a life of selfishness and self-pleasing, the answer must be distinctly, No! Or a life of worldliness or luxury? No! A life of avarice and covetousness? No! For these kinds of lives are very disappointing now, and the issue of them hereafter is terrible to contemplate. If you think of life simply as amassing wealth, if you think of life simply as acquiring esteem, as winning pleasure, you have not seen life. But the life has been manifested, the only life worth living, and he points you back to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, what were the characteristics of the life which was thus manifested to us? It was a life Fatherward, that was the life, that eternal life, which was toward the Father. There are some who live a life towards the world; their whole inspiration is drawn from the world; their whole pleasure is found in the world. You have a very striking picture of such a life in Ezek. xvii. 6, where Israel is likened unto a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him. Towards whom? Toward the great Assyrian power, and so it became a vine, and brought forth branches and shot forth sprigs. Instead of seeking all their strength from

God, they turned their roots towards Assyria, and tried to draw strength from Assyria. Now, there are a great number of people living who have these earthward lives, their roots turning towards the world—drawing in all their strength, all their sustenance, all their pleasure from the world. St. John says: Life which was manifested was not towards the world, it was towards the Father. This implies absolute obedience. The work that my Father hath given me to do, shall I not do it? This life implies perfect trust. "Your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." This life implies perfect, complete resignation. "Father, not My will, but Thine be done." This life implies the most blessed intercourse. Our Lord Jesus Christ is able to go out on the mountain-side and continue all night in prayer to God. Why? Because God was His Father. This life Fatherward means also love to the brethren, for if God is our Father we must love one another. It is not our Father's will that one of these little ones should perish. This life Fatherward implies ambition for the Father's glory. We must let our light so shine before men that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven. And this life Fatherward contains the blessed hope of a reunion. I go to My Father. "If ye loved Me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." So you see how, during all our Lord Jesus Christ's life, it was a life Fatherwards. And St. John says, We have seen it. Oh, it is a different life to what we see in the world. If you look at a man living towards the world, what a life of fear it is, what a life of terror: he is afraid lest he should break the customs of the world; he is afraid lest he should endure obloquy from the world. A life which is lived towards the world is always a slavish life, because it must be in entire accord with the dictates of worldly policy. But a life towards the Father is without fear. "Perfect love casteth out fear." Now St. John says, "We have seen that life; we walked with Him three and a half years, and we saw all through His life this was His great characteristic—What would my Father wish Me to do? And he goes on to say, Not only did we see it, but we bear witness of it—that is to say, We have tried to follow it ourselves; and now we want to tell you that there is no life worth living compared with this; that we can bear witness to it, and have learned something of what it means. More than that, we come to tell you about it, because we want you to have fellowship in this life. We have seen this life towards the Father; we have tasted it, and can bear witness that it is the sweetest life, that it is the purest life, that it is the life most worth living, and now we want you to have fellowship with us. And one thing more he goes on to say: "And this is eternal life." It is life not only on the earth here, but in heaven. (*E. A. Stuart, M.A.*)

Christ the life:—Christ, God-man, Mediator, is the life, that eternal life, in respect of His threefold offices of king, priest, and prophet. As prophet, He is the life by way of revelation, discovering this eternal life to us; as priest, by way of impetration; securing this eternal life for us; as king, by way of collation, conferring this eternal life on us. And as the fulness of water is dispensed by the sea to the earth, and the fulness of light is communicated by the sun to the air, and the fulness of corn was divided by Joseph among the people, so the fulness of grace and glory, of life, even eternal life, is conveyed by Christ to His Church, and therefore very justly doth this character belong to Him. And now, what should this consideration teach us? 1. To bewail our sad condition whilst we are without Christ; for if Christ be the life, all that know Him not, or believe not in Him, must needs be in a state of death and damnation. 2. To seek after this life, because it is eternal, and to seek it by union with Christ, who is the life. 3. To set an high value upon Christ, and give Him the glory of this great mercy, even eternal life. (*N. Hardy, D.D.*)

The incarnate life:—I. THE PERSON SPOKEN OF, THE TITLES GIVEN HIM, AND WHAT IS HERE SAID CONCERNING HIM. For the life was manifested—that Eternal Life which was with the Father. I. It is Christ, God-Man, is the Person spoken of. 2. I will next glance at the titles given Him in the words before us. He is entitled, "The Life." He is so most emphatically. He is expressly called the living God by the apostle (Heb. iii. 12). He is life essentially, He is life communicatively, He is life spiritually, He is life eternally. He is the life of the whole creation, the life of grace, the life of glory. And He is all this as God-Man, the Lord, the Creator, the Proprietor of every creature. He is "Eternal Life." His life never decays. He lives in all generations, and His Name and memorial are from everlasting to everlasting. Our spiritual and eternal life cometh from Christ only. He is the fountain of it. The knowledge of Him is our eternal life. Communion with Him is the means whereby the blessedness contained in the knowledge of Him is imparted to us and enjoyed by us. II. THE APOSTLES' HAVING

SEEN THIS GREAT SIGHT, GOD-INCARNATE. "We have seen it," or rather Him. We have seen Him as manifested in the flesh. We have seen and bear witness, and show the truth of this in our ministry of the gospel unto you. To have seen Christ, God manifest in the flesh, must have been a great sight. To retain the true sense and apprehension of what they saw in Him, and heard and received from Him, must have been to them life everlasting. Their whole ministry was filled up with giving a simple narrative of the Person, Incarnation, Life and Actions, Crucifixion, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Ascension and Exaltation of the Lord Jesus. This they were called to bear their immediate testimony unto. This forms the foundation of the four Gospels. And it is by the spiritual apprehension of Christ, as set forth therein, we live. Nor must the history, nor the mystery of Christ be rejected, nor neglected by us. The one being the foundation of the other, therefore the one must be of as great importance as the other. III. WHAT THE APOSTLES DECLARED OF HIM, WHICH WAS WHAT THEY KNEW, FROM THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE WHICH THEY HAD OF HIM, THAT HE WAS THAT ETERNAL LIFE WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER. This must be the fruit of Divine revelation and inspiration: by which, their minds being renewed by the Holy Ghost, they were, under His further illumination, enabled to receive true apprehensions of the Person, Incarnation, Mission and Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ into their minds. They found real blessedness in the subject—in declaring the same, in bearing their witness and testimony to the truth thereof, in showing forth the eternity, the dignity, the personal glories of their, and our, Lord Jesus Christ. IV. THIS WAS A VERY PARTICULAR PART OF THE WITNESS WHICH THEY BARE OF HIM—THAT HE WAS MANIFESTED UNTO THEM. A very singular favour. Such as I conceive we can form no adequate ideas of. How should we? That age is past. It will never return. All the Lord's ministers and people, and that to the end of time, will be witnesses for Him, and show forth the truths of His gospel, some in a greater, some in a less measure and degree, yet not in the same way, nor to answer the same end, for which the apostles were appointed. (*S. E. Pierce.*) *The manifested life*:—This chapter, this verse, concerning the life which was manifested, is the record of St. John's whole Christian experience given in the last years of his life; it is St. John's full thought, his mature, final testimony to the Christ. Think of the phrase which he uses—the word of life. A word is a means of expression, a way of disclosing some secret thought, a manifestation of mind to mind. The word of life, then, is the expression of life, the means of making the life known, the revelation of its nature. And the word, or revealing, of life, of which John speaks, was not a writing from heaven, not even a voice becoming articulate from out the skies; it was the life manifested in a person, it was the personal Word of God; it was the eternal life, the life with the Father, making itself known in the person of the Lord. The life—what is it? What is its nature? What has it been from the beginning? We have seen and heard, says John, what it is, what it has been from the beginning—it is such a life as we have seen Christ live; He is its spoken word, He is its manifestation; we declare unto you that which we have seen and heard. So much, then, in general as to what this text meant to John himself. Following the leading of St. John's experience of the Christ in this passage, let us think, in the second place, what it may mean to us. John saw the life in its personal manifestation in the Christ; we see it in its increasing spiritual attraction and universal beneficence. Let us think more closely what this eternal life, which was with the Father, may be, the life from the beginning, concerning the personal word of which St. John bore witness, and of whose continuous and increasing power the world, becoming Christian, witnesses. The word "life," which St. John uses, is still, even in its lowest physical manifestations, the unexplained word of our science. Our best definitions of life are but learned words thrown out into the darkness. Our clearest-cut conceptions of the nature of living matter run out into the indefinite and the unimaginable. The life that awakens from the wintry sleep, that gives colour and grace to the tops of the elm-trees which we have seen for months as dark lines etched against the sky; the life that turns the prose of the dull landscape into the poetry of fresh meadows and waving forests; the life with which this earth has been for ages richly endowed, and whose abundant energy fails not nor grows dim with the centuries; it is a manifestation of energy which even more directly than other forms of force seems to be the touch thrilling through nature of the living God! And this life which we behold manifested in the world around us, we know more intimately in our own self-consciousness. For this is the additional marvel, this the wonder of it all—that the life which was from

the beginning, which stirs in the least portion of living matter, at last feels itself throbbing in our veins, and grows conscious of its own power in our wills, and rises to its perfection of spirit in the love of our human hearts. And beyond our knowledge of personal life in us, according to the witness of the apostles, and all the world's subsequent spiritual verification of the truth of their gospel, another even higher, richer manifestation has been given of the life which was from the beginning. The life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, has summed up all its revelations, completed its ages of working, carried its whole manifestation to utmost perfection in the word of life, in Him who at last, standing upon this earth, could say, "I am the life of the world!" "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it abundantly." Thus the world leads at last to the perfect man, and the perfect man is God's explanation of the world. Thus the manifested life of the world reveals its eternal purpose and end. It is from the Father, and it goes to the Father. But from these thoughts which carry us far and deep, let me turn to some nearer, perhaps plainer, applications of our Scripture. One immediately following is this: it is of the utmost practical importance for us to be impressed with the fact that the life which we may live is the sacred thing. Death is not the supreme power, but the life is. Death is not the end, but the new beginning of life. It was not possible for the Holy One to see corruption. Henceforth life shall be strong and pure, sacred as the true word of the living God, and full of promise as of love, because Christ has shown how life may be lived and death overcome; and Christ is risen as the firstfruits of the resurrection. The one further application which I would now make of this most fruitful subject is this: The one single object of all the Scriptures, of the whole gospel, of all true preaching of it, is to bring us into fellowship with the life, even that life which from the beginning was with the Father, and which has been lived perfectly in the Son, and which is glorified in Him and all who live with Him. (*N. Smyth, D.D.*) *The manifested life*:—"Like draws to like," is man's maxim, and man's principle of action. But such is not the heavenly law. The principle of Divine action, the regulating power of the infinite heart above, is the reverse of this. The law of grace is what man would call the law of unfitness, and unworthiness, and unlikeness. Well for us that it is so! What would have been our hope had it been otherwise? In God's dealings with man, it is the unlike that we see uniting. What more dissimilar than heaven and earth? yet they have come together! The life has been manifested! This is our gospel. It is not "the life is," but "the life" has come forth from its eternal mystery. The life has been manifested! What has given it opportunity to come forth? Death! It is not life that has attracted life, nor light that has given occasion for the outshining of light. Thus God, the God of all grace, revealed to us the breadth and length of His infinite love. As it needs darkness to bring out the glory of the starry heavens, so it needed death to show forth the life—life such as had not been possessed before, nor could be, by man unfallen, or upon a sinless earth. Hence the deep significance of the Lord's words (John x. 10). Thus and then the life entered! Not like a monarch, to take possession of a fitting palace; but like a physician, to take possession of an hospital; like spring, coming to take possession of a wintry earth; like dayspring, coming to take possession of the darkened skies. What an entrance! Not invited by kindred life, still lingering among men; but uninvited, nay, repelled. It is the absence of life here that is the cause of its manifestation from on high. The life was manifested! And we have seen it! Life in the realms of the dead; light in the land of darkness; God manifest in flesh: this is what our eyes have seen. Yes; at the cradle, and the cross, and the tomb, the life has been manifested! Blessed manifestation for us, the dead in sin! The life has come; and because He liveth, we shall live also; for he that hath the Son hath life. Surely there is no lack of life for us. But what if it be rejected and despised? Here is life for you; but is it in you? Here is life come down to earth; but has it quickened you? Life died that death might live. Immortality went down into the tomb, to bring up thence for us immortality and incorruption. Life for the dead! This is our message to the sons of men. This is our gospel; a gospel for the dead, not for the living. It is the gospel of the "manifested life." You say, perhaps, that it is just your state of death that makes this no gospel to you. Your consciousness of death leads to despondency. Ah! were you not so dead you would not need the life, and would present fewer attractions, as well as fewer necessities, to the living One; there would be less in you to call out the life. The danger lies, not in your being too dead, but in your not knowing how thoroughly dead you are. So long as there is the unconsciousness of death, there is a barrier, a non-conducting

medium between you and the Life. The Holy Spirit, in revealing to you your true condition of utter death, is throwing down that barrier, and substituting a conducting for a non-conducting medium. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." His Son is the "manifested life," the "resurrection and the life," and "he that hath the Son hath life." What have you found in it? Have you read in it the love of God? Have you obtained from it the life of your soul? But the manifestation of this Life is not yet over. The Life has, as it were, retired for a season, and gone within the veil; but this same Jesus, who came the first time, as the Life, shall come, as such, the second time also; and that day of His manifestation shall be the day of ours as well. The "resurrection unto life" shall be the completion of the great manifestation. As His first coming was its alpha, or beginning, so shall His second coming be its omega, or end. He comes to give His Church the full benefit of the manifested life. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The manifested life to be observed*:—I know a great scientific man whose greatest cause of regret is that on one occasion there were brought under his observation certain phenomena of human disease which might have enabled him to anticipate a great discovery which was made in Germany in late years. He had the very facts under his eye, and he did not notice them. What would be our feeling if we should find that in a region more important than any with which science is concerned, we had had under our eye, in the intelligible revelation of Jesus Christ, a disclosure of the character of God, and from mere lack of moral observation, had refused to take notice of it? (*Canon Gore, M.A.*) *The eternal life manifested*:—His unlikeness to this world implies His likeness to another world. One evening you find among the reeds of your lake an unknown bird, whose broad breast and powerful pinions are not meant for this inland scene. It is resting midway between two oceans, and by to-morrow will have gone. Does not that bird prove the ocean it left? does it not prove the ocean whither it has flown? "Jesus, knowing . . . that He was come from God, and went to God," is the revelation and confirmation of ageless life. (*John Watson, M.A.*)

Ver. 3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.—*The gospel ministry; its spirituality, motive, and object*:—Our text presents a work, a motive, and an object. A work to declare Christ unto you; a motive, to become your spiritual benefactors; an object, to bring you into fellowship with us, "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." I. A PERSONAL AND EXPERIMENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST EMINENTLY FITS US TO DECLARE HIM UNTO YOU. This is our work, and for this experimental qualification there can be no substitute; neither training, learning, nor natural talent may be put in its place. Spiritual knowledge and experience is a mighty power here; without it, all is feeble. 1. It implies a revelation of Christ. The age for personal manifestation is passed away; this book supplies its place. This is the Christ we declare—a Divine Christ, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 2. It implies real and experimental knowledge of Christ. We have seen Him, not with mortal eyes, but by spiritual sight, seen Him through an adapted medium, as set forth in revelation, as apprehended by faith; seen Him so as to know, love, and trust in Him. 3. It implies appreciation. "We have handled Him," heard with our own ears, seen with our own eyes; handled with our own hands, and tested with our senses, and now we appreciate Him as Saviour. He has saved us—we feel it, we know it. As such, we present Him to you; we appreciate Him as able to do all things for us: what He has done, guarantees ability to do all that is needful. Being justified by His death, we shall be saved by His life. II. IN DECLARING CHRIST TO YOU, WE ARE MOVED BY A SACRED AND DIVINE FEELING OF BENEVOLENCE. 1. It is love. The love of Christ constrains us. That love is without parallel or comparison; it was love to enemies, and manifested in intense suffering. I enjoy the benefit of it; I want you to do the same. 2. To this we are moved by sympathy. We know your state; we see you strangers and aliens from God; we know your woes, disappointments, and dissatisfaction; yes, and we know your danger—we were once in the same state. We have found great spoil, we want you to come and share it; we have found great joy, we want you to come and be glad with us; we have found Christ, we want you to find Him too: hence we declare Him unto you. 3. In this we are moved by a sense of duty. Thus it becomes a motive here. Every servant has work to do. Christ bids us preach, we may not be silent; the Church requires the gospel, and we must preach it; the world is perishing for lack of knowledge, and we must teach it. A field, waste and desolate, lays at our feet—we must cultivate it; souls are in

danger, and we must not parley nor trifle. III. IN A SPIRITUAL PARTICIPATION AND FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON, THE WANTS OF MAN ARE MET. 1. We have fellowship with Christ by faith; this meets our necessity as sinners. 2. We have fellowship in labour and honour; this meets our wants as probationers. 3. We have fellowship in blessedness; and this meets our necessities as sufferers. 4. We have fellowship in the things of eternity; and this meets our necessity as immortal beings. (*C. Talbot.*) *The testimony of the beloved disciple to the person and offices of Christ:*—I. THE PRE-EMINENT SUBJECT OF THE APOSTLE'S INSTRUCTIONS.

In the expression, "That which we have seen and heard," he briefly recapitulates that which he had more fully described in the first verse. His subject, then, was Christ, the Word of life. He preached the eternal Word as being absolutely and in Himself the possessor of life. II. THE PURPOSE AND OBJECT WHICH HE HAD IN VIEW WHEN HE THUS DECLARED THE NATURE AND OFFICES OF CHRIST. His desire was that the privilege which he himself enjoyed might be shared by all the people of God. "That which we have seen," &c. 1. St. John was not only an apostle, but a peculiarly distinguished and favoured apostle; yet this exalted office did not induce him to lose sight of that which he was in common with all the other children of God. (1) By declaring Christ he sought to promote a fellowship with himself in judgment. (2) The apostle also desired by his instructions to promote, on the part of those whom he addressed, a fellowship with himself, and with other believers in affection. (3) The apostle moreover desired the fellowship of others with himself in the enjoyment of Christian privileges. 2. But the beloved apostle states the reason for which he desired that others might be joined in fellowship with himself. It was because fellowship with him involved that highest of blessings—fellowship with God. (1) It implies a reciprocity of mutual affection and love. (2) This sacred and mysterious fellowship comprehends also a reciprocity of mutual interests. (3) The fellowship of believers with the Father and the Son consists, moreover, in the freedom of mutual intercourse. III. THE SUBJECT MAY SUGGEST SEVERAL PRACTICAL TOPICS OF REFLECTION. 1. If we are partakers of this sacred fellowship, we need not regret the absence of those opportunities of seeing and hearing the incarnate Saviour which St. John enjoyed. 2. Nor must it be forgotten that this fellowship must be a personal and individual experience. 3. It is further worthy of remark, that this fellowship has an assimilating effect on those who partake of it. 4. Nor must the happiness of this Divine fellowship be forgotten. Trials may depress the natural spirits; but the soul which maintains fellowship with the Father and the Son shall rejoice in the Lord, and that joy shall be its strength. (*J. Hill, M.A.*) *God's message to be declared:*—We ought to speak out the messages given us for others. God puts something into the heart of every one of His creatures that He would have that creature utter. He puts into the star a message of light, and you look up into the heavens at night, and it tells you its secret. Who knows what a benediction a star may be to the weary traveller who finds his way by it, or to the sick man lying by his window, and in his sleeplessness looking up at the glimmering point of light in the calm, deep heavens? God gives to a flower a mission of beauty and sweetness, and for its brief life it tells out its message to all who can read it. Wordsworth says:

"To me the meanest flower that blooms can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Especially does God give to every human soul a message to deliver. . . . Each friend of Christ living close to Him learns something from Him and of Him which no one has learned before, which he is to forthtell to the world. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*) *An influential testimony:*—Before the Australian goldfields were opened a party of experts were sent to explore the district. They made their survey, and sent in their report that gold would be found. But somehow nobody was greatly interested. Some time after some lads came from the Bush to Melbourne with some lumps of yellow ore in their pockets. "Why," said those to whom they showed it, "that's gold; where did you get it from?" "Oh," said they, "there's plenty of it up our way." Next morning every one who could was off to the diggings. As witnesses to Christ our lives must show we have the "nuggets." (*The Railway Signal.*) *The charm of testimony:*—A report of a report, says Manton, is a cold thing and of small value; but of a report what we have witnessed and experienced ourselves comes warmly upon men's hearts. So a mere formal description, observes Spurgeon, of faith and its blessings falls flat on the ear; but when a sincere believer tells of

his own experience of the Lord's faithfulness, it has a great charm about it. We like to hear the narrative of a journey from the traveller himself. In a court of law they will have no hearsay evidence. "Tell us," says the judge, "not what your neighbour said, but what you saw yourself." Personal evidence of the power of grace has a wonderfully convincing force upon the conscience. "I sought the Lord, and He heard me," is better argument than all the Butler's Analogies that will ever be written, good as they are in their place. (*Proctor's Gems of Thought.*)

The argument from experience.—The validity of such an argument lies on the surface. It is useless to tell the famishing wanderer that the pool into which he has dipped his cup is but a mirage of the desert, when the refreshing fluid is already moistening his parched lips. (*J. Watson, M.A.*)

Experience helpful to a teacher.—The pictures of struggling poverty which enriched the early writings of Dickens with such freshness of original humour and quite unstudied pathos, and which gave them such sudden popularity, he had witnessed when he lived in Bayham Street, Camden Town. They came with all the dewy novelty of one who had seen every detail continually and could wondrously reproduce it. (*W. M. Statham.*)

That ye also may have fellowship.—*Fellowship in Christ*.—The knowledge of Christ is the basis of fellowship. If, like the apostle Paul, we can say, "It hath pleased God to reveal His Son in me," we will, after his example, "assay to join ourselves to the disciples." I. IT IS THE BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGE TO HAVE "FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER." He has been enabled to behold God in the light of a Father, and to cherish towards Him the feelings of a child. And herein consists the essence of the fellowship which he maintains with Him. As a child has near access to his father, so has he to God. This privilege, and the grounds of it, are set forth with peculiar richness in the Divine word (Heb. iv. 14-16, x. 19-22). These gracious words and powerful arguments are put into our mouth by God Himself, that we may approach Him with all the confidence of children. As a child enjoys the assurance of his father's favour, so has the believer that of God. He knows he is sinful and unworthy, but he believes that in Christ "he has redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." As a child cherishes the love which he bears to his father, so does the believer toward God. He feels the force of that irresistible appeal (2 Cor. v. 20, 21). He must say, "We love Him because He first loved us." In a word, the believer is exhorted, "delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." And this is the height of the fellowship to which he should aspire—to be able to say, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Let it not be forgotten, too, that it is a duty as well as a privilege to maintain it, and there are many ways in which it may be done. We should have fellowship with God in His works. So had David when he said (Psa. viii. 3, 4). How blessed to look on all the works of nature, and say, "My Father made them all." We should more particularly seek to hold fellowship with God in His Word. His will is more plainly revealed there, as well as His character and government. We may have similar fellowship in the ordinances of grace. In them we may pray (Psa. cvi. 4, 5). It would be alike our duty and wisdom to say with the Psalmist (xxvii. 4). So also should we see and hear Him in the dispensations of His providence. Whatever they may be, joyous or sorrowful, we should recognise their author and learn their lessons.

II. THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BELIEVER "WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST." In the text this is pointedly distinguished from that which has been already considered. Nor is it difficult to perceive the reason of the distinction. Fellowship with the Father can be held only through Christ. He has said expressly, "I am the Way—no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." On the other hand fellowship with the Son is direct. The reason is that He has taken our nature, and converses with us in it. He was in the beginning with the Father. He is therefore possessed of all Divine perfections. His wisdom is unerring, His power almighty, and His love infinite. This is the Being who came to us in the capacity of a Saviour. Again He is described in His humanity. He was seen, heard, and handled. He assumed that humanity for the very purpose of qualifying Him to be the Saviour of men. He has felt all that man can feel. He has the sympathy of a brother. Especially He endured all the sorrows of humanity. He suffered from poverty, neglect, reproach, injustice, and cruelty. He agonised under mental grief, as well as bodily tortures. He was tried by temptations the most harassing and powerful. Well, therefore, does He understand our trials. Not merely, however, is He described in His deity to encourage our confidence, and in His humanity to assure us of His sympathy, but in His office also as "the Word of Life," He has "eternal

life" as the Saviour of men. It is His to dispense it to sinners. He says to all who believe in Him, "Because I live ye shall live also." Surely if we are encouraged to have fellowship with the Father, we may be specially encouraged to maintain it with His Son Jesus Christ. There is everything in Him to invite us to cultivate it.

III. THE FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS WITH ONE ANOTHER. If we have fellowship with the Father, then we are His children, and are animated by their spirit. If we have fellowship with Jesus Christ, then we are His redeemed ones, and the subjects of His grace. It follows, therefore, as a necessary consequence, that wherever there is fellowship with the Father and the Son, there must also be fellowship with those who believe in them. What, then, is the fellowship of believers? Let the apostle Paul reply (Eph. iv. 4-6). The communion arising out of such unity must be universal, and pervading throughout all who are bound by it. They are one in Christ Jesus, and we just name some of the forms in which their fellowship will appear. 1. They have a community of nature. They are all "partakers of the Divine nature," and obey its impulses. Their tastes and habits are therefore alike heavenly. 2. They have a community of views. They can all say, "To them that believe Christ is precious," "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." 3. They have communion in feelings. Loving Christ, they love one another (chap. v. 1). 4. They have communion in joy and sorrow (1 Cor. xii. 26). As it is with the members of the body, so it is in the church. 5. They have communion in the kind offices of brotherly love (1 Cor. xii. 21). 6. They have fellowship in the progress of true religion. 7. They have fellowship in the prospects of heaven and eternity (1 Pet. i. 3). It ought to be the aim of believers to cultivate such fellowship as this. There are many reasons to enforce it. 1. One is their own good (Psa. cxxxiii.). 2. Another is the advancement of religion on the earth. Jesus prayed (John xvii. 21). 3. And to these let it be added, that it is vain to speak of fellowship with the Father and the Son if we have not fellowship with one another. Wherever one of these is they must all be. They are inseparable. They will all be found, too, in an equal measure. (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*)

Christian fellowship:—I. THE PRIVILEGE. 1. A peculiar state of blessedness, in relation to God, described by Paul, as "this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. v. 2). This is the true "kingdom of God on earth"—a restoration to the knowledge, favour, and image of God, not perfectly, but really and extensively. 'Tis the state of men elevated above all low, earthly, and grovelling desires; maintaining sweet and sanctifying intercourse with God, as their Father in Christ. 2. The means of its realisation.

II. THE MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP ESSENTIALLY INVOLVED IN THIS FELLOWSHIP.

1. One holy brotherhood is established among all saints. The various characters of their several occupations, the diversity of their mental capabilities, the distance of their several residences, and other circumstances, preclude continual and intimate intercourse. But while even on earth it is not wholly so, and might be much less so than it is, all these circumstances of earth shall, in the future state, be wholly unknown. 2. A prevailing sympathy actually subsists among all the true followers of Christ; differing indeed in intensity, but real, and, if healthy and Scriptural, rising above the narrow and temporary distinctions which obtain among men. III. THE DUTIES DEVOLVING ON CHRISTIANS AS BRETHREN IN CHRIST.

1. The cultivation of brotherly love is obvious and paramount. A oneness of experience creates mutual interest in all by whom such experience is shared. Their feelings, as they resemble our own, encourage our hope and strengthen our faith. 2. The cultivation of mutual intercourse is an obvious and natural obligation devolving on all the brethren. (1) As individuals. All should remember the beautiful and imperative law of heaven, "Be courteous." (2) Social intercourse, too, will not be disregarded. 3. Mutual aid is obligatory, and this both in temporal and spiritual matters. 4. Mutual supervision is also incumbent on Christians with the view of preventing, or reclaiming from spiritual delusion. (*J. Richard.*) *Fellowship*:—If two of us know one thing we are thus far in fellowship, and this may be and often is the closest tie which can bind men together for good or evil. We see this if we think of two men knowing of a crime, or of the hiding place of a treasure. The bond, too, is strong just as the thing known is great. Here the tie which makes us one with the apostles is the knowledge that life has come into our dead world, and that this life may be ours. No knowledge can be of greater value to us than this. To share it, is the closest bond that can join us to each other, for all who have it are therefore among the living and not with the dead (John xvii. 3). To know, then, what St. John knew is to have life as he had it: it is to know God, in so far as we can know Him, as God knows Himself, to

have no false thoughts of Him, and thus to have fellowship with Him, in clearly seeing that He is holy and just, but also that He is full of love and of boundless pity. This knowledge, once gained, brings with it a joy, which St. John tells us we share with all those who have that knowledge. (*C. Watson, D.D.*)

The internal basis of Christian fellowship:—Thus the final and highest positive end which St. John aimed to attain by his gospel was this, that the high-priestly prayer of Jesus (John xvii. 21) should have its fulfilment in his readers; that they (1) should grow as living members into that fellowship, the mother-stem and centre of which was the disciples themselves—into that fellowship the members of which among themselves were one, but the common unity of which (2) has its internal ground of life in the unity in which every individual stands with the Father and the Son. It is obvious, accordingly, that the two members of this final statement of the design do not simply stand side by side in external conjunction, but are most internally and livingly one. The latter specifies the internal living ground and principle of life, on which the former grows, and on which alone it can be brought to perfection. (*J. H. A. Ebrard.*)

Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.—*Believers' communion with the Father and Son*:—1. Union. This is the basis of communion. Believers are united to the Father and the Son, and the Father and the Son to them. 2. Community. (1) Of enjoyments. The Lord is ours, and we are His. (2) Community of affections. The Lord and His saints have the same affections, running in the same channel, fixed on the same objects. (3) A community of interest. The Lord and saints have the same ends, the same friends and enemies. (4) Community of privileges. It is His privilege to be omnipotent, and the saint Paul glories that he can do all things, Christ strengthening him. It is the Lord's privilege to be omniscient, yet He vouchsafes some shadow of this to us, when He promiseth the Spirit shall lead us into all truth (chap. ii. 20). It is His privilege to be all-sufficient. And what does He promise less to us, when He assures us we shall want no good thing? (2 Cor. ix. 8). And as we partake of the privileges of the Father, so also of the Son. He is king, priest, and prophet, and so are we. Again, Christ is the Son of God, and so are we. What honour is this! (chap. iii. 1). Christ is the heir of all things, and we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 17). Christ is the object of His Father's love, and so are we (Lev. xxvi. 11). Christ is the glory of God, the brightness of His glory, and we are the glory of God (Psa. xi. 10). Christ is a judge, and so are we (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3). 3. Familiar converse. (1) The Lord visits us, and we visit Him (Rev. iii. 20). (2) A saint walks with God, and God with him; so He promises (2 Cor. vi. 16; Lev. xxvi. 12; Isa. xliii. 2). The familiarity of this walking is held forth in this expression (Psa. lxxiii. 23). (3) The Lord talks with us, and we with Him; He speaks to us by His Word, by His providence, by the sweet whisperings of the Holy Ghost—that still voice comforts, directs, encourages. (4) The Lord feasts the saints, and they feast Him (Isa. xxv. 6). And what is that which the Lord counts a feast? (Isa. lvii. 15). Use 1. If believers have communion with the Father and the Son, then unbelievers hath communion with the devil and his angels. Use 2. An exhortation to get this fellowship, and continue it. (1) It is most for God's glory. (2) It is best for us. (*D. Clarkson, B.D.*)

The nature of communion:—Men are formed for society. To social enjoyments religion is no enemy. On the contrary, it sanctifies friendship, and renders it subservient for promoting our best interests. No society among men can be compared with the fellowship which every genuine believer enjoys "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." This, in so far as it is enjoyed, is a source of pure and exalted happiness. Its pleasures are not accompanied with the alloy of disappointment. The strong asseveration "truly," here used, points out the importance and certainty of what is affirmed. The men of the world are apt to call in question the reality of such an intercourse. In this, however, they are much mistaken. The pleasures which the saints enjoy are the genuine pleasures of life, and the only enjoyments that deserve that name.

I. THE NATURE OF THAT FELLOWSHIP WHICH BELIEVERS HAVE WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. 1. Union to His person is part of that fellowship which believers have with the Lord Jesus Christ. So long as they continue in their natural state, dead in trespasses and sins, they can have no fellowship with Jesus. 2. Reciprocal communion is included in the fellowship which believers have with Christ. There is nothing that can be properly called His in which they have not an interest, nor are they possessed of anything which He does not consider as His own. Are they men? He too has assumed the human nature. Is He God? They also, in consequence of His Spirit dwelling in them, are in some measure "made

partakers of the Divine nature." Their poverty is His, and His riches are theirs. If they bear His reproach, they share also in His honour; if they be conformed unto His death, they have also a part in His resurrection. 3. The fellowship with Christ which believers enjoy includes in it every species of friendly and familiar intercourse. 4. The last thing included in the fellowship believers have with Christ is an interchange of good offices. To Him they are indebted for all the blessings they possess, and for all that they hope to enjoy. Their health, their strength, their time, their talents, their substance, and their influence, when they act in character, are all employed to promote the interest of His kingdom in the world. II. SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES WHICH BELIEVERS DERIVE FROM THEIR FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST. 1. In consequence of this fellowship, they have the best instruction. (1) The wonders He reveals. (2) He opens their dark understandings, removes their unfounded prejudices, and enables them to embrace redeeming truth in all its beauty and simplicity. 2. This fellowship is a source of the most refined delight. They walk in the light of His countenance, in the joy of heaven. 3. The fellowship of believers with Christ is a source of the highest honour. All His companions are "kings and priests unto God"; more honourable than the most exalted among men. 4. Believers derive many great and precious benefits from fellowship with Christ. 5. This fellowship is in every respect a source of the most exalted happiness. Lessons: 1. See and admire the condescension and kindness of the Son of God. 2. Let believers learn to esteem and rejoice in this precious privilege. 3. From this subject let believers learn their duty. This will be found always to correspond, in some measure, to the privileges they enjoy. (G. Campbell.) *On communion with God*:—I. Fellowship with God implies CONVERSE WITH HIM. Who does not feel the charm of those hours which are spent in the society of a friend? Of our converse with God, a prominent example is the ordinance of prayer. II. The fellowship implies in it RESEMBLANCE TO GOD. In confidential intercourse there must be agreement on the great principles of human conduct. The fellowship also which we have with God implies, as indispensable for its first formation, a desire to resemble Him. The perfections of the Divine nature are offered to our imitation with softened glory in the character of Jesus Christ. III. This fellowship implies a PARTICIPATION IN ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE DIVINE BOUNTY. Every noble purpose, every generous resolution that man can form, is given by the inspiration of the Highest. If, then, He hath enabled human friendship to think thus disinterestedly, and to act thus nobly, much more will He manifest the riches of His own love toward those whom He honours in fellowship with Himself. "We are filled," saith the apostle, "with all the fullness of God." (A. Brunton, D.D.) *Fellowship with the Father and with the Son*:—Do the saints above enjoy a most intimate fellowship or communion with God and His Son? Saints on earth enjoy fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. I. ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS ENJOY A KIND OF FELLOWSHIP OR COMMUNION WITH GOD AND CHRIST, TO WHICH MANKIND ARE, IN THEIR NATURAL STATE, TOTAL STRANGERS. The High and Holy One, who inhabits eternity, condescends to dwell with those who are of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the heart of the contrite ones. The inspired writers invariably use the strongest language when they would show the intimate union which subsists between Christ and His Church. He is the Shepherd, and they the sheep; He is the Vine, and they are the branches; He is the Head, and they are His members; He is the Soul, and they are the body. II. WHAT THIS COMMUNION IMPLIES AND IN WHAT IT CONSISTS. The original word, which is here rendered fellowship, and which is elsewhere rendered communion, signifies that reciprocal intercourse, or communion, which subsists between beings who are partakers of the same nature, whose moral characters are similar, and who mutually know and esteem each other. It is an observation no less just than common, that like rejoices in like, and where there is no likeness there can be no communion. Thus, for instance, there can be no communion between the inhabitants of the water and those of the air; for what is life to the one is death to the other. But, on the other hand, when persons meet who resemble each other in temper, character, age, and situation, who love and hate the same things, and pursue and avoid the same objects, they readily unite, like drops of dew when brought into contact, and appear to compose but one soul in different bodies. Similitude, similarity of nature, of character and pursuits, must therefore be the basis of all true fellowship or communion. Hence it appears that no creatures can enjoy communion with God and His Son but those who are partakers of His Divine nature, who resemble Him in their moral character, and who love, hate, and pursue

those things which are respectively the objects of His love, hatred, and pursuit. 1. Christians enjoy communion with God in the works of creation. They contemplate the universe as a temple in which the Most High sits enthroned; as a body, of which God is in a certain sense the soul; and as we love the bodies of our friends for the sake of the souls which inhabit them, as we are peculiarly pleased with the works of our friends for the sake of the hands which formed them, so Christians are ineffably pleased and delighted with the great work of creation, because it was formed and is filled by their Father and their God. 2. The Christian enjoys communion with God in all the dispensations of His providence. 3. The Christian enjoys communion with God in His Word, read and preached. 4. Christians enjoy communion with God and His Son in the public exercises of religious worship. 5. Christians enjoy communion with God and Christ in the exercise of private meditation, prayer and praise. As children, they have liberty of access to God at all times. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Fellowship*:—I. THE DECLARATION EXPRESSED IN MY TEXT, which contains the whole subject of the apostles' ministry. Beyond which they could not go. Nor could greater things be expressed. Our apostle, using the plural number, shows that the whole testimony borne by all the apostles, was one and the same. It was one and the same gospel in each of their mouths. The communion they had with Him they made known. The declaration which they made of this, was to saints. Not to others. No. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." Who are holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. A most noble instance of spiritual generosity. Worthy of imitation by the servants and ministers of Christ in every age. To utter forth the memory of His great goodness. They cannot but act thus, if they have conversed with Him, if they have heard Him. II. THE END AND DESIGN OF THE APOSTLE IN THIS. "That ye also may have fellowship with us." Church fellowship, which is the communion of saints, is an inexpressible blessing. It consists in imparting to each other an account of what the Lord hath done for our souls. We have fellowship with each other in the same Spirit; with the same Christ; in the same salvation; with the same God and Father; in the same ordinances. We are one family to the Lord. I conceive we may distinguish the real fellowship the apostles had with Christ from what other saints have. They were favoured with personal converses with Christ. They received their knowledge of Him, more immediately and intuitively, from the Holy Spirit. In consequence of which their faith was more simple. All other saints, and we with them, receive the grace of faith and the subject of faith from the written word. That is the glass, and the ordinance of worship, in which we behold the Lord. There was an absolute necessity it should be thus with them. They were to speak and write on every article of faith, and state the same as exactly as it was stated in the mind and will of God. III. THOSE WITH WHOM THE APOSTLES HAD FELLOWSHIP. In the first place, the apostle speaks in a very positive manner, and asserts, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Communion with God—it must be the supreme corner-stone of Christianity. I would here ask, what is communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ? The answer is this. It is a unity of mind. So as for God to let in Himself upon our minds, as to give us such apprehensions of His love, as afford us a real, spiritual knowledge of and acquaintance with the same, so as for us to partake of the reality thereof (chap. xiv. 20). There is a variety of unions in which Christ and His Church are related to each other. There is first an election union, which is that comprehensive one by which Christ and His Church were united together from everlasting. He the Head, and they His members. On this followed a marriage union. Christ and His Bride were set up in heaven from eternity (Prov. viii. 30, 31). There is also a representative union between Christ and the Elect. He represented them and acted for them, as their Head and Surety, in the everlasting covenant. This He gave full evidence of in the fulness of time, when He came into our world, and became thereby one with His people (Heb. ii. 11-14). There is also a grace union. Mr. Joseph Hussey says, "There are three unions in Christ, suited to the three operations of the three persons in God. I mean three unions of God's children, and all of them before faith, viz., election union, representation union, and regeneration union. Out of all these ariseth a fourth union, which is a union with Christ, distinct from union in Christ; this consists in union and cleaving to Him by faith." There is also a glory union (John xvii. 22, 23). This glory union will break forth upon the Church in her resurrection state. Now in consequence of all these unions, there is a proportional communion

with all the Persons in Godhead, in the Person of Christ, with the Church.

IV. THE TRUTH AND REALITY OF THIS, WHICH IS THUS CONFIRMED. "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Ghost, who dwells personally in the saints, is a most glorious mystery of grace. Nature cannot apprehend it. Sense must have nothing to do with it. None can have the least conception of the nature, the importance, the excellency, the blessedness of the same, but such as are born from above. No. Nor these either, but as enlightened, inspired, and supernaturally lifted up into the true knowledge and enjoyment of the same. Spiritual life is a great mystery, the whole essence of which consists in communion with God. The Father is He with whom we have this communion. The God-Man is the Mediator of all our union and communion with God. The more, therefore, we eye Him, and have our hearts drawn out after Him, and fixed on Him as our centre, so we the more clearly understand the grace of fellowship with God. (*S. E. Pierce.*) *Communion with God*: I. THIS COMMUNION PRE-SUPPOSES MUCH. It takes for granted that the suspicions and doubts which by nature encompass us have been removed by the work of the Spirit. II. THE WAYS IN WHICH WE HAVE THIS FELLOWSHIP ARE INNUMERABLE. In the silence of the individual heart, in the secrecy of the closet, in the social circle where the brethren meet for prayer, in the churches, &c. III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS FELLOWSHIP ARE BLESSED AND SATISFACTORY IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE. Sin becomes more and more hateful: the world loses its charm over us, and the flesh its power. (*W. Graham.*) *Fellowship with God*:—I. First, let us see if it be not so, that we have had, and do have real FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. Now, we have had fellowship with the Father. 1. In order to have fellowship with any man there must be a concord of heart. "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" 2. Again, we have fellowship with God in the object for which the purpose was first formed, namely, His own glory. The highest aspiration of our spirit, when it is most enlarged, is that He in all things may be glorified. 3. And have we not fellowship with Him in the plan by which He effects that purpose? Does it not strike you as being the wisest, the most gracious, the most glorious scheme that could have been devised? 4. And I think we may add, we have fellowship with God in the most prominent characteristics of that plan. Throughout the whole way of salvation you have seen displayed the justice and the mercy of God, each with undimmed lustre. You have seen His grace in forgiving the sinner, but you have seen His holiness in avenging sin upon the substitute. You have seen His truthfulness acting in two ways; His truth in threatening—by no means sparing the guilty; His truth in the promise—"passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin." And do not you and I feel we have fellowship with God in this? 5. We have a most Divine and precious communion with the Father in the objects of His love. When two persons love the same thing, their affection becomes a tie between them. Now, there is a tie between God the Father and our souls, for did not He say, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"? And cannot you and I add, "Yes, He is our beloved Saviour, in whom we are well pleased"? 6. But the word "fellowship" not only signifies concord of heart, but it implies a carrying out of that concord a little further, in converse or mutual communication. Furthermore, we can say we have had fellowship with God in this respect, that the very thing which is His happiness has been our happiness. That which has been the delight of His Holy Being has been a delight to us. "And what is that?" say you. Why, doth not God delight in holiness, in goodness, in mercy, and in lovingkindness, and has not that been our delight too? 7. And so, also, that which is the Father's employment is our employment. He doeth good to all His creatures; and we can do good also. He beareth witness to His Son Jesus, and we can bear witness too. "The Father worketh hitherto" that His Son may be glorified, and we work too. "O thou Eternal Worker! it is thine to save souls, and we are co-workers with Thee. And now I must affirm the fact, that we have fellowship with the Son as well as with the Father. In both these matters we are like little children that have begun to speak or learn their letters. We have not yet attained, though I say we have fellowship with the Father; yet how little we have of it compared with what we hope to have! Well, now we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, I think we can say, for our hearts are united to Him. "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." At any rate, it is strange that I should never be happy without Thee, it is singular that I can find no peace anywhere but in Thee. If I did not love Thee,

should I have such longings after Thee? Further, we have had some small degree of fellowship with Him in His sufferings. We have not yet "resisted unto blood striving against sin," but we have carried His cross, and we have suffered His reproach. But our fellowship has assumed also a practical form, in that the same desires and aspirations which were in Christ when He was on the earth are in us now. Oh! we have uttered feelingly the very words of Christ, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And when there seemed to be some insuperable obstacle in the path of our usefulness, we have nevertheless said, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him that sent me." And yet, further, as I have said, fellowship requires converse. Oh! ye daughters of Jerusalem, have we not had converse with Him? II. There is, secondly, AN AFFECTIONATE DESIRE, LEADING TO APPROPRIATE EFFORT. 1. This affectionate desire is that others might have fellowship with us. Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, it is one of the first instincts of the new-born nature to send us out crying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c. We wish to gather up all in one, that in everything which is lovely and of good repute, in everything which is happy, ennobling, Divine, and everlasting, you might be made partakers and have fellowship with us! 2. And this desire leads the child of God to make use of an appropriate effort, and what is that? It is to tell to others what he has seen and what he has heard. (*C. H. Spurgeon*).

Fellowship with God.—I. THE NATURE OF THIS FELLOWSHIP. 1. Partnership, a sharing with another in anything, the possessing of it in common with him. In this sense we have all fellowship one with another; as Englishmen we participate together in the many blessings a bountiful Providence has showered down on our native land. In this sense the merchant too has fellowship with his partners in business—he has the same interests with them, he shares with them in the same gains and losses. Now transfer this idea to the text. What a lofty declaration does it in one moment become! There is a fellowship, it tells us, between the great God and us, a partnership, a sharing together of the same things. And what things are these? There is no limit to this partnership, except that which our finite nature makes on the one hand, and that which His holy nature makes on the other. He sends His Spirit down into our hearts to regenerate them; and then not to leave our hearts, but to dwell and rule in them. We are raised in the scale of being or soon shall be, we know not how high, nearer to God than any other creatures, and made more like Him. And with His nature He gives us an interest in all His glorious perfections. Not only are His mercy and love ours, we may look on His wisdom, and power, and greatness, as ours. They are all pledged for our everlasting happiness. 2. It signifies intercourse, converse, and a free and familiar converse. We make known our thoughts and feelings one to another by outward signs, chiefly by words. We have no other way of making them known. But suppose any one to possess the power of looking into our hearts, and seeing every thought there as it rises up, and this whether he is present with us or not, then words and outward signs would not be needed; we could speak to him within our own minds, and he would understand us better than any one besides, more readily and fully. Now God does possess this power, and the Christian knows that He possesses it; and he acts like one who knows it. This fellowship consists, on his part, in the turning of his soul to God, in a habit he has acquired of speaking within himself to God, just as another man speaks by outward expressions to his neighbour or friend. 3. And these two things are never separated. There can be no real communion between Him and us till we are spiritually united to Him, and this union with Him is never real without leading at once to this intercourse and communion. And for both these things we are indebted altogether to the Lord Jesus Christ. In His human nature He stands nearer to us than His Father, and His Father has ordained Him to be the one great Mediator between Himself and us. "Through Him we have access to the Father." II. THE ENDS THIS APOSTLE HAS IN VIEW, IN SPEAKING TO US SO ASSUREDLY OF HIS POSSESSING THIS BLESSED FELLOWSHIP. 1. That we may desire to have our portion with him and the real followers of our Lord. And what a stamp of dignity this puts on the disciples of Christ and their condition! 2. That his fellow-believers in Christ may be happier in Him. He thinks first of those who are far off from Christ. "We tell you," he says, "of this happy fellowship to bring you to desire it;" and then he turns round to those who are already near Christ, and says, "We tell you of it, that your joy may be full." 3. To save us from self-deception. Almost in the same sentence in which he tells us that we have fellowship with Christ, he warns us against thinking it ours while we have fellowship with sin. "God is light," he says, "and in Him is no dark-

ness," &c. "And is there nothing in this text," some of you may say, "for us who long for a share in this heavenly fellowship and cannot obtain it?" Yes, there is. It bids you dismiss from your minds the thought that you cannot obtain it. Why are you told of it? (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The doctrine and fellowship of the apostles*:—I. 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." 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? 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. II. THE COMMUNICATED FELLOWSHIP—"that ye may have fellowship with us." 1. The object of this fellowship is the Father and the Son. 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. 2. The nature of the fellowship can be truly known only by experience. (1) It implies intelligence and insight. No man naturally has it; no man naturally cares to have it. (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. (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. (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. (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. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *Fellowship with God*:—I. THE BELIEVER'S FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IS AN ACTUAL AND LITERAL THING, an unfigurative fact, a reality; it is not an idea, an imagination merely. Between God and the believer there is an intercourse of spirit, an interchange of spiritual thought, a community of spiritual feeling, actual, though unseen; a communication on the one hand, and a reception on the other, of positive spiritual influences, comforting, strengthening, and purifying. The mode of this spiritual intercourse we do not profess to describe. But our inability to do this affords no presumption against the fact. We know not even how our own spirits operate upon each other; much less, therefore, how the Divine spirit acts upon ours. Nor do we profess to demonstrate even the fact of this fellowship by any sensible evidence or logical proof; it is a matter of pure consciousness, concerning which we can only testify. II. WHEREIN DOES THIS FELLOWSHIP CONSIST? The most prominent idea of "fellowship" is that of mutual sympathy, reciprocal affection. Yea, just in proportion to the affection of the one party will fellowship be disabled, and anguish increased, by the apathy of the other. In order to be fellowship there must be interchange—a reciprocity of thought and affection. Nothing can constitute fellowship but this: nothing can compensate for the lack of it: not even the most familiar knowledge of God. Take the man who knows Him best, who has come nearest to God in the sense of understanding His works and ways: if he have no love for God, however minute and accurate his knowledge, he has no fellowship with Him. To give then a practical application to this thought, you see the great

and only requirement for your individual fellowship with God. You cannot doubt affection on His part, and therefore the only necessity is a reciprocal love on yours. Would you but love God, an instant and intimate fellowship with Him might even now commence. III. ON WHAT GROUNDS MUST SUCH FELLOWSHIP OF SINNERS WITH A HOLY GOD PROCEED? Will the holy God advance to sinful man? or must sinful man advance to the holy God? In other words, must God compromise His holiness and accommodate it to the moral degeneracy of man? or must man abandon his sinfulness and render fellowship possible by a conformity to the holiness of God? and in either case, how is the common character and sympathy to be produced? And here we point to the Saviour's mediation as the indispensable means of our fellowship with God. "In Him we have access with confidence through the faith of Him." And it is easy to see how, through Him, this fellowship is rendered possible. Before there can be fellowship there must be peace, reconciliation. But how is this to be accomplished? "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." But still the question returns, How shall man have fellowship with God? Here is reconciliation and pardon; but there must also be congruity of disposition; a reciprocal affection; a common sympathy. Here then is the remedy, the Holy Spirit renews our moral nature, gives us new principles and new dispositions, the possession of which assimilates us to God, and thus enables communion with Him. IV. HOW IS IT TO BE CULTIVATED? We see that all preventing hindrances have been removed, now point out the appropriating means. It is evident that all our intercourse with God must be by faith; we have no sensible vision of Him; we come into no palpable contact with Him; He is the invisible, the spiritual God. Faith therefore is the only faculty by which we can recognise Him and lay hold upon Him—"the life that we live in the flesh is a life of faith in the Son of God." We believe, and through our faith we realise, the thoughts and feelings which conscious presence produces and which constitute fellowship; fellowship is nothing more than the interchange of thoughts and feelings; and that which produces them, which makes the intercourse real, which distinguishes it from mere imagination or sentiment, is faith. But while the holy feelings which constitute fellowship with God are exclusively dependent upon faith, they are capable of various excitements. To produce these is the purpose of the various means of grace. Constituted as we are, we are peculiarly susceptible of sensible impressions; and the means of grace are intended to aid or to occasion holy thoughts, by appealing to our senses. We have the Bible to supply by its teachings material for our communion with God. It is the record which furnishes all our ideas of God, and which faith believes, and by believing which gratitude and love are excited. V. THE ADVANTAGES AND ISSUE OF THIS FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. 1. Perhaps the most obvious is the promotion of holy affections. It is the peculiar characteristic and glory of Christianity that it provides for the right adjustment and balancing of our feelings. The emotions excited by its truths and privileges are alike removed from fanaticism on the one hand, and from indifference on the other. And this cannot be said of other religious systems. The believer's fellowship, while it is the intimate intercourse of the most endeared friendship, is not a rude familiarity. The solemn and subduing sense of God is inseparable from it. It alone exhibits the compatibility of the profoundest reverence and the most trusting confidence; it is reverence, but without dread—it is confidence, but without familiarity—it is awe, but without coldness—it is warmth, but without freedom. 2. Fellowship with God will tend to soothe our anxieties, and to inspire our confidence in the arrangements of His providence. Fellowship implies mutual confidence, and it necessarily ceases when we begin to distrust. Again: Fellowship supposes sympathy, interest in our well-being, and, assured of this, we can communicate our sorrows and unburden our hearts; and who can tell the inestimable advantage of this? 3. Fellowship with God is a most eminent and essential preparative for heaven. It is in part an anticipation of its blessedness: and who shall say that without such foretaste of heaven the soul, new burst from its mortality, would not be dazzled and overpowered by it? (*H. Alton, D.D.*) *Fellowship with God*.—Is this not too good to be true? Is it not exaggerated? Is it possible for a man to have heaven with him while on earth, and, amid the bustle and cares of life, to realise close communion with God? I can understand how, in times of deep sorrow, something of true fellowship may be enjoyed, in answer to the heart's need. The sound of the tempest may make a man take shelter in the cleft of the rock. But this constant communion, this realisation at all times, this living in God, many of you cannot see how it can be compassed. How, you ask again,

can such fellowship be continued in the outer world, when one is distracted by a thousand cares? Perhaps an illustration or two will help us to understand how fellowship with God is not only possible, but a Christian necessity. Think of the public speaker. In order to impress his audience with his subject, many processes are carried on within his mind while he is speaking: memory in recalling, abstraction in arranging, judgment in delivering; yet not for a moment does he let go his argument, not for a moment does he forget his audience, and if he is a skilful orator, he adapts his words to the effect he is producing. Now, what the presence of an audience is to the speaker, is there any extravagance in supposing the presence of God may be to a believer? With our whole heart in our business, we may yet be conscious of the presence of Him who knows our every thought and sees our every action, so that all we do may be influenced by Him. The working man, toiling for his family, often has them in his thoughts, and, instead of being a hindrance to his work, his thoughts help him to ply his task the busier. The servant may always have the remembrance of his master in his mind, even though that master is not present. So thoughts of God may run like golden threads through the web of our life. It is a good thing at times to force ourselves, as it were, to think of God's presence. When we are about to enter on a duty let us pray that we may do this duty as unto God, and say, Lord, direct us; and as we join in some innocent pleasure, say, Lord, let me use this, as not abusing it. Even our commonest work will then have something of God in it, the outcome of dwelling in Him and working with Him. Believing in a loving Saviour, you will come in time to give Him the strong attachment of personal friendship, and amid the shifting scenes of life will but grasp His arm the closer. (*J. C. Lees, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **That your joy may be full.**—*The joy of the Lord, and its fulness*:—I. THE NATURE OF THIS JOY AS PRIMARILY CHRIST'S. Joy, as 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 (*Eccles. vii. 6*). 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. 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." 1. Christ would have His joy to be really ours. In all that constitutes the essence of His own joy the Lord associates us in intimate union with Himself. (1) In His standing with the Father, and before the Father, He calls us to share. (2) He makes us partakers of the very same inward evidence of acceptance and sonship which He Himself had when He was on earth. (3) 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. (4) 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. 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. We, like Him, must be emptied of self. 2. 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? 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," &c. 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. 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. III. THE PROPRIETY OF THIS "JOY OF THE LORD"—THIS "JOY IN THE LORD"—IS 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 a calm and sober frame of mind, suited for everyday wear and everyday work. Its elements and causes can be specified. Its rise and progress can be traced. 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. 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 (2 John 12). (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *Our happiness*:—I. WHAT WE MEAN BY IT. Not comfortable circumstances. If we did the counsel would hardly suit anybody for long. Nor Stoicism. Some people are almost irritated by any reference to joy or even peace. To "rejoice evermore" is a precept which comes to us not as an addition to our suffering, but as an anodyne to enable us to bear it. For whatever is taken away we may "joy in God," and therefore our resources are never exhausted. II. WHAT WE GAIN BY IT. Souls immortal and capable themselves of these feelings of joy. The world is like Leander in the old Greek story, swimming for bare life across from Sestos to Abydos by night, his only attraction being the love of Hero, his only means of assuring himself that he was in the right course being her torch. While that lamp was throwing its light upon the Hellespont he knew that his beloved was there, and the hope and certainty of welcome bore him through the waves. There is many "a strong swimmer in his agony" buffeting the billows of this world's temptations who looks to you for light. He wants not only the love, but the lamp, remember. Not only your compassion, but your joy. Let it burn bright and clear, and many a poor soul may find grace and courage to swim on. Fulness of joy will not only help you to win other souls, it will help you as to your own. "In your patience possess ye your souls," said the Master. We cease to possess them when we become impatient. That patience, and its twin sister peace and their daughter joy, are essential to our obedience to Christ. And besides the souls of others and your own, the soul of Christ will be gladdened by your gladness. "He meeteth him that rejoiceth." III. HOW WE COME BY IT. When we see Jesus and know that He hath loved us, when we see that through Him we are treading a pathway of promise, then the common stones of life's causeway become changed into chalcedony and jacinth and emerald, and the gates through which we go in and out are transmuted into pearls. (*J. B. Figgis, M.A.*) *Joy in believing*:—I.

ITS NATURE. 1. As predicted (Isa. lvi. 7). What folly it is to seek pleasure otherwise than in God! 2. As encouraged. When the angel came to the shepherds he brought tidings of joy. According to St. Paul, the great end of the ministry is to assist believers to realise this joy. "We are helpers of your joy." 3. As illustrated. Samaria received the gospel, and "there was great joy in that city." The Ethiopian received the gospel and went on his way rejoicing. St. Peter, in speaking of tribulation, adds, "wherein we greatly rejoice"; "ye rejoice with joy unspeakable." II. THE USE AND ADVANTAGES OF THIS JOY. 1. The principal graces can only exist in the preserver of Christian joy. 2. The praise of God can only be properly expressed in the presence of Christian joy. What the heart does not feel it cannot speak, what the mind does not realise it cannot express. 3. We cannot honour our Master without feeling Christian joy. 4. We cannot exercise becoming strength without Christian joy. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Sorrow makes the hands hang down and the knees become feeble. 5. We can only realise the blessedness of heaven by the exercise of Christian joy. Heaven will be the consummation of the present, and unless the seed is sown here it can never blossom hereafter. 6. We can only be kept from error and sin when feeling the power of Christian joy. If we wish to make a flower droop, and wither, and fade, and die, what do we do? We remove it from the sunlight. The plant will make an effort to grow, but it will soon die away. It is so with the soul. In the atmosphere of darkness and desolation it must droop and eventually die. It will be liable to disease and to be eaten with cankerworm. (*Homilist.*) *The joyfulness of a Christian life*:—Nothing is more familiar to us in life than the different feelings with which the same object of pursuit is regarded by different persons. To some it is attrac-

tive and delightful, to others it is a matter of entire indifference, or is even repulsive. We see this in childhood. Of the children in the same household not infrequently it will be true that to one the schoolroom is full of invitation and of delight, while to others it is simply repellent. We see the same thing in mature life continually, so that a form of business which to one is delightful to another presents no attractiveness. The same law holds in the department of religious activity. To most men the religious life on earth appears like a tedious journey to a distant mine. They hope to find great riches, but instead of that the journey is merely one of fatigue and discomfort. To others the religious life on earth for its own sake is delightful and precious, containing in itself riches and rewards which belong to no other form of human activity. When we look carefully into the elements of this peculiar and rich experience in the religious life, they are not difficult to ascertain. 1. There is a sense of worth in character which comes with the full and vivid experience of the life of God, manifested in Christ and wrought in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. This, in itself, is an element of gladness and delight. A man when he has overcome a temptation and conquered a passion feels himself ennobled in a measure by that fact. When he has cherished in himself and brought to supremacy a trait difficult to be attained, and to which his nature seemed averse at the outset, he feels that he has gained in dignity and sweetness and strength of spirit. He rejoices in the fact. When the Christian feels that, by his consecrating faith toward the Divine Master, he has reached a point of moral supremacy which before he had not gained, he cannot help having the sense of a new birth in himself. There is nothing of self-righteousness in this. It has not come from his own endeavour, except as that endeavour has co-operated with the grace and power of the Most High working in him by the energy of the Holy Ghost. 2. Then there is a sense of his holy relationship to God—a sense by which He who builded and guides the universe becomes the guardian of our interests; His power, wisdom, universal presence and universal government become the guarantee of our security. Sometimes there is a sweet and triumphant sense of this in the midst of the utmost peril and sorrow. There is a consciousness that He who governs all things from the infinite throne will make our very sorrow work for our glory, work for the welfare of others through us, work for our own more triumphant peace and more happy and holy vision in the world beyond. 3. Then, beyond this, there is a sense of intimate fellowship with God; not merely of external relationship, which comes in intervals at least of Christian experience, and in which there is a thrilling and unspeakable delight. In that is joy, surpassing all joy of music, all delights of friendship; surpassing all other joys known on the earth, a gleam of the celestial breaking into the darkness of the world. 4. And then there is the consciousness of gladness in doing the work of God on earth, in co-operating with Him in our small measure, yet with a true consecration of the spirit to Him, which He accepts and blesses, and the result of which He secures and furthers by His providence and the energy of His Spirit. So it is that the grandest workers have been the happiest Christians. Luther, how he sings in his conversations and in his letters! 5. Then there comes a joy in all that helps toward this, which makes this state of experience and effort possible to man—joy in the Word of God; not merely because it is full of interesting narrative, charming biography, marvellous prophecy, grand argument of doctrine, grand revelation of the future, but because here God meets the human spirit which has been seeking Him, and has found it in order to lift it nearer Himself, to give it His own secret thought, if we may say so. The soul feels itself brought by the Word into fellowship with the Divine mind. It has an intense gladness of heart meditating upon the Word, whose mysteries then become to it arguments for its Divine origin, whose transcendent promises flash before it as with the effulgence of the Divine mind. So with the Church. How sacred and lovely it is when it contributes to these results! (*R. S. Storrs, D.D.*) *Fulness of joy*:—"These things." What things? The mediatorial person and office of Christ and the fellowship to which they lead. It is assumed that the fulness of joy arises out of the fellowship which is produced by the knowledge of Christ. I. THE FULNESS OF JOY SPRINGS OUT OF "FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER." This is self-evident. Suppose a sinner so to see and confide in God as his Father that he may be said to have fellowship with Him, enjoying a sense of His favour, and reciprocating it with a feeling of love, it is plain he must be happy in God. It is ever so regarded in the Scriptures. When God invites sinners to forsake the fellowship of the ungodly and to come into communion with Himself, it is in these words (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18). The promise by

which the invitation is enforced is supposed to secure true blessedness to all who shall enjoy it. A brief contemplation of what may be expected from God as a Father will make this statement plain. A father is ready to pardon his children. A father has tender sympathy with his children. Their joys and sorrows are all his own. A father teaches his children. What he knows himself he makes known to them. He does so that they may know how to choose the good and refuse the evil. A father corrects his children. Observe, then, how an inspired apostle applies this thought (Heb. xii. 9). A father encourages his children. A father protects his children. A father provides for his children. Suppose, now, that this view of God is realised. What, then, ought to be his joy? II. **FULNESS OF JOY SPRINGS OUT OF "FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST."** Besides the happiness thus derived from God, however, there is a fresh source of joy opened up to the believer in Christ Himself. 1. First, His person is such as to call forth this affection. He is "God manifest in the flesh." He has become such for the very purpose of being a Saviour of men. 2. Again, the work of Christ affords matter of joy. "He died the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." His work is perfect, and the sinner who is willing to accept it is presented with a full and free salvation. 3. His gracious offices, still continued, must farther heighten the joy of all who have fellowship with Him in them. 4. Once more we have the Spirit of Christ and the blessed promises of which He is the fulfiller. 5. To all this must be added His everlasting covenant. All the blessings He bestows are secured by covenant, and nothing is omitted which is needful for His people. III. **THE FULNESS OF JOY IS GREATLY CONFIRMED BY FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS.** They instruct one another. How much we owe to the society of the wise and good! The interchange of thought is a principal means of advancement in knowledge. Believers encourage one another. We should aim at being useful to those with whom we are associated. Believers should warn one another. "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy brother, but rebuke him." By pursuing such a course it is easy to see how the fellowship of Christians would tend to the fulness of their joy. (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*) *The full joy of Christian fellowship*:—1. The joy which believers have for the present in this fellowship is a full joy, it being true of this joy, and no other, that it is a full joy. (1) There are two adjuncts peculiar to this joy which demonstrate its fulness, to wit, the sincerity and the permanency of it. This joy is a sincere, cordial joy. A full shower of rain is that which doth not only wet the surface, but sink into the ground, bedew the branches, but go down to the root. That is a full joy which doth not only fill the face with laughter but the heart with comfort, and such, yea, such alone is joy. The joy of religion is not a light joy, which only swimmeth at the top, but weighty, and sinks down to the bottom of the heart, so that it exhilarateth the inmost parts. This joy is a permanent, lasting joy. That is most truly said to be full which doth not fail, and such only is this Divine joy. Other joys are such as, before they come, we make great account of, but when they are come we cannot keep, nay, we quickly grow weary of, and as the flower often sheds before the leaf fade, so the joy vanisheth while yet the thing remaineth. In this respect we may say of worldly joy it is satiating but not satisfying, glutting and yet not filling; but Christian joy is that which we can never have enough of. (2) Not only the adjuncts, but the effects commend this joy, it being deservedly called a full because a strong joy, able to sustain the spirit under, and bear it up against affliction. Other joys at best carry in them only a partial emolument, and therefore it is the joy of wealth is no antidote against sickness, nor can the joy of health cure the sorrow of poverty, but this joy is the universal medicine, the catholic remedy against all sorts of miseries. It maketh a prison sweet and pain easy, it maketh a man cheerful in want and comfortable in losses, it turneth a wilderness into a garden, and finally, it supports in life, yea, it comforts in death. (3) The fulness of this joy chiefly depends on the ground and object whereabout it is conversant. It is an undoubted maxim that the object of all joy is good, and therefore such as is the good such is the joy. If the good be only so in appearance the joy must needs be false and empty, but if it be a real, full good, the joy must needs be both true and full. Now, as for worldly joy, it is only in vain, empty things (Eccl. i. 2), whereas this joy is fixed on God our Creator, Christ our Redeemer, and so is a true and solid joy. 2. Though this joy we have for the present be a full joy in opposition to carnal and worldly joy, yet in comparison of that celestial joy it is but empty, and rather filling than full; and therefore some conceive joy here to be, by a metonymy of the effect for the

cause, put for blessedness, because then alone it is that we shall have full and perfect joy. (*N. Hardy, D.D.*) *Religion a joy*:—I remember a friend of mine who had gone far into what is called "a life of pleasure" telling me, when he became a Christian, that what surprised him most of all was this—he had always looked on religion as a burden which he knew he ought to carry, but he found that it was something that carried him and his burden too. He said also that he had enjoyed in a single week after he was a Christian more real pleasure than in all the years he had devoted to what is termed the pursuit of pleasure. I am convinced this is the view of religion needed in a great city where the individual is lost in the great multitude. (*James Stalker, D.D.*) *Open the heart to joy*:—God offers to fill our homes and our hearts with joy and gladness if we will only let Him do it. We cannot create the canary birds, but we can provide cages for them and fill our dwellings with their music. Even so we cannot create the heavenly gifts which Jesus offers, but they are ours if we provide heart-room for them. The birds of peace, and contentment, and joy, and praise will fly in fast enough if we will only invite Jesus Christ and set the windows of our souls open for His coming. (*T. C. Cuyler.*) *Joy givers*:—The world has a right to expect a great many things from all of us who call ourselves Christians. It is the business of a Christian not to smoke but to shine. The dark-lantern religion that never makes itself visible to others will never guide you or me to heaven. We ought to reflect our Saviour as light-givers. We ought to live above the fog-belt. The higher up the holier, the higher up the happier. A churlish, croaking, gloomy professor of gospel-religion is a living libel; he haunts society like a ghost. But there is One who says to us, "I am come that your joy may be full." Let us open our souls to Him and our faces will shine; He can make even tears to sparkle; we shall carry sunshine into the darkest hours; we shall catch instalments of heaven in advance. (*Ibid.*) *Happiness helpful to holiness*:—There is an intimate connection between happiness and holiness. If you are striving to attain the other port to which John would pilot you, that port of "Sin not," remember that patience and peace and joy in the Lord are sailors of which it is hardly too much to say, "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." At all events, full salvation demands fulness of joy. (*J. B. Figgis, M.A.*) *Knowledge of Christ the foundation of joy*:—High thoughts of Christ constitute the essentials of a sinner's religion. They are the foundation of his hopes and the materials of his happiness. (*C. Bradley.*)

Vers. 5-10. This then is the message . . . that God is light.—*The clergy God's messengers*:—All rightly ordained ministers of Christ are God's messengers. Our office is not merely of man's appointment; we hold it from the Lord. We are sent to remind you of God's will, to be His witnesses unto you (Heb. ii. 1-4). Consider, then, the message which we bring unto you, whence it comes, and upon what authority. "I have a message from God unto thee." That message began to be preached by the Lord Himself, by Him who said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." The apostles, who were eye-witnesses of His majesty and glory, have handed down His words to us in the New Testament. To show that they were sent by God they wrought miracles (Mark xvi. 16). We are invested with God's authority to warn, to teach, to rebuke, to comfort (2 Cor. v. 20). And as our message is from God, so we must be faithful in delivering it. Christ's ministers are put in trust with the gospel, and they must fulfil that trust (Exek. iii. 11). They who refuse to hear the messenger refuse to hear Him who sent him (Matt. x. 40). It remains for me to say what my message is to each of you. 1. And, first, I speak to those who are careless, thoughtless, and unconcerned about religion. You have not known God as a Father, Christ as a Saviour, the Holy Spirit as a Sanctifier. I have a message from God to you. He says, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." "Consider your ways." "Boast not thyself of to-morrow: for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Remember that word, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you." 2. Next, I speak to those who are living in known sin. I have a message from God unto you. Break off your sin by repentance, turn to God through Christ earnestly, seriously, and at once; for remember that the unbelieving must have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. We beseech you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 3. But is there one here who is humbly desiring to learn the way of salvation, who is sorry and ashamed to have lived so long without God, and to have so grievously provoked Him by sin and folly? I have a message from God unto thee, and it is one full of love and full of comfort—"Be of good cheer";

"They that seek shall find." 4. But there may also be some who, having once known the way of righteousness, have since fallen away and gone backwards. I have a message from God to you also. "If any man draw back," He says, "My soul shall have no pleasure in him. Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do thy first works." "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you." 5. Or is there one amongst us whose heart is troubled with a sense of sin and guilt? who is asking in sorrow, What must I do to be saved? There is a message from God to you. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." He came into the world to save sinners. 6. There are yet some to whom I may especially say I have a message from God unto you—you who have fled to Christ, who are living a Christian life in communion with God and hope of heaven. You are still surrounded with temptations from within and from without. Therefore be sober, be vigilant. Walk humbly with God, pray without ceasing. Abound in all good works. God expects you to attend to what He says, to give earnest heed to the things which you have heard, lest at any time you should let them slip. (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*) *A glorious message* :—I. A MESSAGE. 1. How was this message obtained? "We have heard it, and disclose it unto you," says John. Heard it; from whom? Unquestionably from the Lord Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the Great Teacher sent from God. He delivered it to His disciples, and they to others. 2. What does this message express? God is Light, He makes us wise unto salvation. 3. What does this light exclude? It excludes all darkness, for "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." This shows the supremacy of God, and His sovereign perfection in distinction from all orders of His creatures. II. THE AWFUL DECISION. "If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." 1. Now men may say this by profession of it to others; and they may say it to their own souls, persuading themselves that they are real Christians, when they have "no part or lot in the matter," their hearts not being right in the sight of God. 2. Congeniality must precede "fellowship," and resemblance must precede fellowship. And therefore it will follow that a change of heart is necessary, for without this change we can neither enjoy God, nor serve Him acceptably. III. THE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE. 1. It takes in fellowship. "We have fellowship one with another." There is a fellowship belonging to all the people of God wherever they live. But this is not the fellowship referred to here. Here the "fellowship one with another" means the fellowship that exists between God and us. He is their God, and they are His people. 2. The other article here is the assurance of pardon. "And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1) Observe the procurer, the Son of God. However this term may be explained, it always in Scripture means dignity. (2) Mark the efficacy of His death: "His blood cleanseth us from all sin." It delivers us from the heinousness of it, however offensive it is in the eyes of a holy God; and from the love of sin, and make us "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." (3) Then mark the extent of it: it "cleanseth us from all sin"—from original sin and actual sin; from all sin, however aggravated. His blood cleanseth perfectly from all sin, and completely from all transgression. (*W. Jay.*) *The conditions of Divine fellowship* :—I. A LESSON OF INSTRUCTION (ver. 5). Both the manner and the matter of this lesson are very impressive. 1. The apostle adopts the manner of the deliverer of Israel (Judges iii. 20). It is indeed the style of our Lord Himself (John vii. 16). It is intended to remind us that the word and ministry are to be understood and treated as a message from God (1 Thess. iv. 8). It is observable that no mention is here made by name of the Being from whom the message comes. "We have heard of him." Of whom? No doubt the glorious Being described in the previous verses. It is Jesus the Mediator. 2. Impressive, however, as is the manner of the lesson before us, its matter is of far higher moment. (1) "God is light." Its simplicity and comprehensiveness are amazing. There are three principal ideas suggested by the figure. (a) Light is the emblem of knowledge. God is omniscient. He sees all things as they are, in their true nature and real influence. He cannot be deceived. Matter and mind are alike plain to His perception. Our motives and feelings and purposes are as palpable to Him as our bodies. (b) So also is light the emblem of holiness. God is "the Holy One," implying that none but He is absolutely and infinitely holy. All He does is in undeviating correspondence with perfect purity. (c) Light is the emblem of happiness. Infinite knowledge and holiness must be productive of infinite happiness. He possesses within Himself all the sources of unmingled blessedness. His perfections are never-failing springs of joy. (2) "And in Him is no darkness

at all." Nor is this without its meaning. It is designed to teach us that no element enters into His light to obscure it. He is intellectually and morally perfect. II. A WARNING AGAINST SELF-DECEPTION (ver. 6). 1. "If we say that we have fellowship." We say it, but we may herein be uttering what is untrue. Profession is not principle. We may be self-deceived, or we may be hypocrites. 2. "And walk in darkness." Darkness is the emblem of ignorance, error, and sin. And so far may the spirit of self-deception or hypocrisy prevail, that with the highest professions on our lips, our walk may be utterly inconsistent with them. It is not merely that we may be betrayed by the force of temptation into some inconsistent action, but that our habit of life is contrary to sound principle and true godliness. 3. "We lie" in such a case. Our outward profession is contrary to the inward reality. 4. "And do not the truth." If such be our department, we are disobedient to the truth. The language reminds us of the words of Christ (John iii. 19-21). 5. It is plain that the warning of the apostle is designed to stand in contrast to the lesson which he had just delivered. Looking at it, then, in this light, how powerful is his appeal! God is light. Who, then, can have fellowship with such a Being? Is it he who is walking in darkness, which is the emblem of ignorance, and error, and sin? Impossible! "And what communion hath light with darkness?" 6. With these solemn words before us, let us inquire who they are that belie their profession of fellowship with God? (1) The ignorant do so. They have no adequate conception of sin, or of themselves, or of the Saviour, or of God, or of the world, or of eternity. They are walking in darkness, yet they have no fear. (2) The erroneous present a more aggravated case. What a description does Isaiah (xliv. 20) give of such! St. Paul describes the same (Rom. x. 3). The forms in which they do so are very various, and sometimes the very opposite of one another. One trusts in his innocence or righteousness. He does not see anything in himself why God should cast him off, but thinks he has done much to commend himself to His fellowship. Another relies not on himself at all, but in the creed which he has learned from his youth, and which he holds tenaciously in the letter, while a stranger to its power and spirit. Many more rest in the formality of outward rites and ceremonies (Matt. xv. 8). (3) Above all, they who allow themselves in sin, fall under the censure of the apostle. Nor are such always sensible of their own inconsistencies. It is to be feared many are going to the judgment with their sins without alarm. III. THE SEASONABLE AND ENCOURAGING DIRECTION which the apostle gives to those who would have the enjoyment and advantage of real fellowship (ver. 7). 1. A clear apprehension of the truth is essential to fellowship. No one can have solid and permanent enjoyment of God who does not well understand the doctrine of justification by faith. 2. The believer, thus enlightened and brought into fellowship with God, must exercise the utmost watchfulness against sin. Whatever sin is allowed, and in whatever measure, it will obscure the object of faith, and darken the evidence of his interest in it. 3. He who would walk in the light and enjoy the fellowship of God must abound in well-doing. This is the secret of religious enjoyment. "He that watereth others, shall himself be watered." Exercise is essential to health. (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*) *Light the nature and dwelling-place of God*:—I. The form of THE ANNOUNCEMENT in the fifth verse is very peculiar: "This, then, is the message," &c. 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. 1. Positively, "God is light." Let these two thoughts be fixed in our minds; first, the thought of perfect openness; and secondly, the thought of perfect inviolability. 2. Negatively, "In Him is no darkness at all." I connect this part of the statement with that saying of John in his Gospel (chap. i. 5). In the light itself, in Him who is the light—even when shining in darkness, the darkness which comprehendeth it not—there is still no darkness at all. "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 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 allowance of some partial shading of the light on which the darkness presses so terribly. All still is clear, open, transparent, between the Son and the Father. 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 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." What is this walking in darkness? Our answer is simple enough. All unholiness is walking in darkness (Eph. v. 3-11; Gal. v. 19-21). But the matter must be pressed a little more closely home. The characteristics of light are clearness, openness, transparency, and inviolability, retaining and preserving its own pure nature, unmodified, unmingled, unsullied by external influences. Now darkness is the opposite of this light. Instead of openness there is concealment and disguise; instead of inviolability there is facile impressibility. 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 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; 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? III. From the solemn message in the fifth verse, and the faithful warning in the sixth, THE GRACIOUS ASSURANCE in the seventh fully follows: "We have fellowship one with another"; God with us and we with God. The expression may seem to savour of familiarity. The explanation may be found in the conditional clause—"if we walk in the light, as He is in the light." We walk in the light in which God is. It is the light of His own pure truth, His own holy nature. In that light He sees and knows 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." (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *God is light*.—1. When the source of light is considered we have an emblem of the vastness, the ubiquity of God. How insignificant is man in his lofty aspirations and his feeble powers as he walks in the midst of this vastness! 2. The analysis of the spectrum unfolds to us the fact that a ray (called white) is made up of a number of coloured rays; and further observations show that combined with this white ray there is also a ray of heat, and the chemical ray called actinism, which gives vitality and paints the lines of life and beauty. The natural and moral attributes of God, such as His omnipresence, eternity, spirituality, and His benevolence, justice, truth, and others, form to us the only conceptions of God's character which we can realise. Without a knowledge of these God has no appreciable relation to us, and we fail in our attempt to conceive it. But as we look to the analysis of the white light, and of the combined ray, to tell us of the physical properties of the sun's rays, so we need such intermediate knowledge of God's attributes to realise a knowledge of the perfections of His character, and of the unity of the mysterious persons in One, that God may be known to us. 3. When the diffusion of light is considered, we have the most perfect illustration which nature can afford of the immediateness of God's communications with us. John here, when the undulatory theory was unknown, and any notion of the velocity of its influence, conceived light as emanating from the sun—"shining forth," filling the heavens and pervading the face of the earth, and at times intercepted and darkness intervened. But how much higher than this are our conceptions of this diffusion raised, under more exact knowledge, when we learn that the actual velocity of light in its passage from the sun to the earth is at the rate of one hundred and ninety-three thousand miles per second, a speed which would belt the earth in the space of one-eighth of a second. Yet, quick as this velocity may appear, it is tardy in comparison with God's communications with us. "When they call I will answer!" Here is no waiting, no passage through an intercepting medium. 4. With equal force does the figure unfold to us a view of God's universal knowledge. Light is like God, inasmuch as it reveals and exposes to view every object upon which it falls. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro

throughout the whole earth." "His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men." "For the Lord God is a sun," discovering, enlightening, and cheering the whole created universe. 5. But the most prominent feature in this analogy is the relation of light with God's infinite purity and goodness. 6. But the teaching of the text is not all hidden under these material comparisons and contrasts; for, lifting us to a higher view, the relation in which God stands to the Christian in his daily course of spiritual life—a life of purity—is directly intimated. (1) The Christian is here supposed to be walking before God in harmony and perfect confidence with Him, in a walk comprising the sum of his motives, his aspirations, his actions. (2) Not only does he walk with God in the light of Divine knowledge, but also in that of Divine purity. (3) This walk is, like light, to be constant and unvarying, as the little intruding preposition "if" preceding the sentence implies—"if we walk in the light." (*D. Smith.*) *God is light*:—1. In this view, are we not warranted in laying stress on the fact that light is an entirely open thing? It is the first property of light to manifest itself and all else on which it rests. It is here the direct antithesis of darkness. Darkness hides; but light lays bare everything it reaches. Moreover, its whole tendency is to expand its influence all around the source whence it proceeds. Here, I think, we have set before us, first of all, the blessed fact that God is the God of revelation. He has not hid Himself from us as in our sin we deserved. But He has unveiled Himself to us that we may know His nature and character, His method of dealing with us now, and His plans for our destiny hereafter. This was done in many different ways from the beginning of the world; it reached its climax in the advent of Christ. The sun is set on high for the illumination of the heavens and the earth. No portion of our globe is exempted from his beams. So the Lord manifestly intends to diffuse the knowledge of Himself over the whole world. It is His very nature to penetrate by His Word into the remotest corners of human existence. Yet wherever His Word does penetrate, He is found true to Himself. As Light alone, He has the power of distinguishing betwixt truth and falsehood, purity and impurity. 2. On the other hand, is not light also an inviolable thing? This tells us that the nature of God also is inviolably pure. As the light streams into contact with the world and all that is in it, so God is now by His Spirit alike in providence and redemption in the closest contact with the heart and life of men. But in this action on His creatures He never catches anything of the moral corruption by which the world is saturated. 3. But, last of all, is not light also a glorious thing? Thus it suggests to us the moral and spiritual glory of the Divine nature. (*J. P. Lilley, M.A.*) *God is light*:—I. WE LOOK AT THE TEXT AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER. 1. Light is perhaps the nearest approach of anything with which we are acquainted to immateriality. It seems to fill all nature, to surround all worlds, and so to bear a fit resemblance to its glorious Maker, who says, "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" 2. Then, again, how fine an emblem is it of the Divine purity! 3. Does it not also portray to our minds His all-searching knowledge? 4. It is important also to observe that light is exhibited to us in the text as the emblem of the essential perfection of the Divine nature. II. OUR TEXT MAY NOW BE CONTEMPLATED AS CONTAINING AN INTIMATION OF WHAT GOD DOES FOR MAN. 1. Light is a revealer. 2. Light communicates enjoyment; for a "pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." 3. Light clothes all things with beauty. Dark providences brighten when God shines upon them, and the manifestation of His wisdom and love, His faithfulness and power, please our eyes and comfort our hearts. 4. Light purifies the atmosphere in which we live, which without it would be but ill adapted to sustain our existence in comfort. III. THE SUBJECT IS ADAPTED TO FURNISH US WITH A FEW SERIOUS AND PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS. 1. How blind are men that do not see God in all things! The light of heaven shines all around them. 2. How great are our obligations to God for the light which He has given us! 3. How great the duty which rests upon us, to pity and endeavour to enlighten those who are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death! (*The Evangelical Preacher.*) *The perfect light of God*:—It seems a very simple thing to say that "God is light," &c. We almost wonder at the Bible taking so much trouble to say it. For, we might think, how could God be otherwise? How could we imagine God to be imperfect, wanting in goodness, and holiness, and wisdom, and truth? How could God be God unless He were all-perfect—light without a shade of darkness? And this is true. But how is it that we have come to have these thoughts of God? It is that the gospel has become so much a matter of course to us, that its truth has come to seem to us our own thoughts. But it was by

no means so plain a truth to the world when St. John wrote his Epistle. He wrote when the world believed in idols and false gods without number. And those false gods were not thought of as we think of God. They were believed to be not more perfect, not more holy, not more good, than the men who worshipped them. But those days of idolatry and ignorance are past; and perhaps we think that we do not need to be reminded that God is light—perfectly pure and holy and true and good. We do want to be reminded that there are those still who do not in their hearts believe that God is light; for is it not so, that instead of really believing that God is light, without stain, or shade of sin, we often make Him out in our thoughts to be what we like and wish Him to be? What does the sinner wish God to be? He wishes God to be kind and indulgent to his sin; to be a God who always rewards and never punishes; who will do good to us, whether we obey Him or not. Do we never sin, hoping that after all God will not think so severely of our sin as the Bible seems to make out that He will? Do we never comfort and flatter ourselves with such general excuses as that God is merciful, and will not be hard upon us? Do we not, instead of taking the Bible, and reading there the true character of the God whom we worship, make an image according to our own imperfections and sins, and call it God? Is this the God who “is light, and in Him is no darkness”? Can we be said really to believe in Him when we treat Him as if He were foolish, and could not see through our cunning devices, and could be flattered into good humour with us, and be prevailed upon to treat us as favourites? Again, what a sad show of our real thoughts about God is to be found in the manner of our worship and in our prayers! If He “is light, and in Him is no darkness at all,” what must He think of worship which only pretends to worship and honour Him? of prayer which does not really ask in spirit for the thing it speaks about? God is what He is, whatever we may think; and earnestly ought we to strive and pray that we may know Him as He is, and always think of Him as He is. (*Dean Church.*)

No substitute for light:—Clear and brilliant light often brings out exquisite colours, as happens among the Alps and also in the north frigid zone, where the humble little plants called lichens and mosses are in many cases dyed of the most brilliant hues, purple and gold predominating. Warmth, in like manner, will stimulate vegetable growth in the most astonishing manner, but it is growth not necessarily accompanied by the secretion of valuable substances, such as give quality and real importance to the plant. In English hothouses, for example, we have plenty of spice-trees, those generous plants that yield cinnamon and cassia, the nutmeg and the clove; but although healthy and blossoming freely, they never mature their aromatic secretions. Though they have artificial heat equal to that of their native islands, which burn beneath the sun of the Indian Ocean, we cannot supply them with similar and proportionate solar light.

God the satisfying light:—Suppose the case of a cripple who had spent his life in a room where the sun was never seen. He has heard of its existence, he believes in it, and, indeed, has seen enough of its light to give high ideas of its glory. Wishing to see the sun, he is taken out at night into the streets of an illuminated city. At first he is delighted, dazzled; but after he has had time to reflect, he finds darkness spread amid the lights, and he asks, “Is this the sun?” He is taken out under the starry sky, and is enraptured; but on reflection finds that night covers the earth, and again asks, “Is this the sun?” He is carried out some bright day at noontide, and no sooner does his eye open on the sky than all question is at an end. There is but one sun. His eye is content; it has seen its highest object, and feels that there is nothing brighter. So with the soul: it enjoys all lights, yet amid those of art and nature is still inquiring for something greater. But when it is led by the reconciling Christ into the presence of the Father, and He lifts up upon it the light of His countenance, all thought of anything greater disappears. As there is but one sun, so there is but one God. The soul which once discerns and knows Him, feels that greater or brighter there is none, and that the only possibility of ever beholding more glory is by drawing nearer. (*W. Arthur.*)

Light in the hour of darkness:—When Charles Kingsley was dying he said, “It is not darkness I am going to, for God is light.” (*E. W. Bibb.*)

No darkness in God:—*Skotia ouk estin oudemia* (“no, not even one speck of darkness”); no ignorance, error, untruthfulness, sin, death. (*A. R. Fausset, M.A.*)

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie.—*Light and darkness: sin and purification:*—“Light” and “Darkness” are very living expressions. They belong to the life of us all. Moreover, these expressions were

wonderfully suitable for those to whom St. John wrote. The Ephesians had paid an especial worship to Artemis or Diana. They connected her with the moon, the night-ruler. They had paid a worship, in common with the other Greeks, to Apollo; him they connected with the sun, that rules the day. They connected them, I say, with these beautiful objects; but they were never satisfied with doing so. The god of light was the god whom they went to consult how they should manage states, conduct wars, make peace. They felt that a higher light than the light which the eyes could see must proceed from him. So these old Greeks thought. They were continually exalting the lower light above the higher light, and supposing the higher to come from the lower. This was their idolatry. They worshipped the visible things from which they thought that the light proceeded. St. John had been taught almost from his birth that he was not to worship things in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, or the works of his own hands. He had been taught that the Lord his God was one Lord, that He was the Unseen Deliverer, Guide, Teacher, King of Israel. He had clung to this teaching. Now he had believed that this God had revealed Himself to them, not in the sun or in the moon, but in a humble and crucified Man. With this conviction becoming every hour deeper and deeper in his mind, he had settled in the city where Apollo and Diana were worshipped. He saw the mischiefs and dangers of that worship more clearly and fully than he did when people told him about it on the Lake of Galilee. But he did not think that these Ephesians had been wrong because they had dreamt of a God of Light. That was a true dream. Christ had come to fulfil it. The God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, whom Jesus had revealed, was this God of Light. But there is another reason closely connected with this, why St. John could not abandon the word "light" for any that was more formal and less living. A man may easily fancy that goodness, wisdom, truth, are possessions of his own. Whether he thinks he has got them for himself, or that some god has given them to him, he may still believe that he holds them just as he holds a freehold house or a purse of money. But you can never suppose that you hold light in this way. That I can never boast that I possess. Now the message which St. John brought to the Ephesians was not concerning a blessing of the first kind, but of this last kind. He did not tell them that God had given them certain possessions here, or had promised them certain possessions hereafter, which they could call theirs. That is the subject of the next verse—"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Walking in darkness is, alas! the phrase about which we have the least need of an interpreter. Every one interprets it himself. It is possible for a man to be in this dark selfish state, and yet to say that he has fellowship with God. He may repeat prayers, he may offer sacrifices, he may pass for a religious man. But his life, the apostle says, is a lie. It is not only that he speaks a lie; he acts a lie. He does not the truth. This, indeed, he would have us to understand is falsehood—the very root of falsehood. "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." The darkness of which St. John speaks is an utterly unsocial condition. A man thinks about himself, dwells in himself; the rest of the universe lies in shadow. What, then, is the opposite state to this? "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." The light is all around us, while we are most dark. I cannot extinguish the creation because I do not think about it or care about it. But this recollection is not enough to bring me out of my dark pit. My selfishness is too strong for all, however bright, in earth, and sea, and air to overcome. It is not too strong for God to overcome. All those strange intimations which come to me that I am not what I am meant to be, must be flashes of light from the source of light. They are painful flashes. They are just what men have tried by their false religions—by their insincere professions of fellowship with God—to drive away. But if, instead of doing that, we will hail them, if we will receive them as His messengers, we may enter into His true order. The proper social life is restored to us, even if we are far away from our brethren. "And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanse us from all sin." St. John appeals to our experience. You desire to be true yourself; you desire to have fellowship with other men. The moment that first desire is awakened in me, then arises along with it a sense of falsehood: "I have done false acts. I have been false. I have an inclination to do false acts and to be false now. I have something in me which violently resists my craving to be true." And about the seriousness, the terribleness of this fact there is no doubt. It must be at the bottom of the insincerity, discord, and hatred of the world. But how shall I

describe this fact? I am at a loss; I cannot find a name. But I discover something more about the strange fact. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness"; I am intended to walk in this light. This inclination not to be true, not to have fellowship with my fellow-men, is an inclination not to walk in this light, not to be in that state in which He has intended men to be. Now I am, perhaps, better able to express this inclination of mine, and what has been the fruit of it. One name, however, does not satisfy me. I try several. I call it transgression; that is, the passing over a boundary which was marked out for me. I call it iniquity; that is, an uneven, zigzag course, a departure from the straight, even course. I call it sin; that is, the missing of an aim; the going aside from the goal which I was intended to reach. All these words imply that there is One who has marked the boundary for me, who has drawn the line for me, who has fixed the goal or aim for me. All imply a disobedience to a Will which I am meant to obey. Now, the message which St. John brought to the Ephesians was, "God has revealed Himself to us in Jesus Christ as the perfect Truth. God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ as the God who has created men to be one. Therefore it is a revelation to us of our sin; for it shows us how we have fought and do fight against this mind and purpose of God; how, in doing so, we fight against our own proper state, our own proper blessedness." I do not mean that this sense of sin did not exist before that full revelation of God in Christ. But how much deeper did it become in those who learnt that God was light, and in Him was no darkness—that He had sent His Son to bring them into His light! What a sense of sin must have been in them! How they must have felt, "It is our own fault, our own choice, that we have been walking in darkness. We have been striving against a God who has been at every moment plotting for our good!" If, then, the men in the times of old cried out for a purification, those who heard this revelation must have felt the need of it immeasurably more. But what kind of purification could they have? "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." There is a new life-blood put into this nature of ours. God Himself has infused it. The Son of God has taken our flesh and blood. He is the Head of our race. When we seek to rise out of ourselves—to be delivered from our falsehood—to have fellowship with God, and fellowship with our brother, then His blood is an assurance that we have that fellowship. It removes the sense of sin against God which is in us; it removes the sense of sin against men. It gives that atonement and that purification which nothing else in earth and heaven can give. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Instead of this fancy that you are without sin being a proof how clearly the light is shining into you, it is a proof that you are shutting out the light, for that would reveal to you your own inclination to fly from it and to choose the darkness. The truth makes us aware of our falsehoods. Is that hard doctrine? No; for "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." His faithfulness and justice are the enemies of our sins; therefore to them we may turn from our sins. They are the refuges from the darkness that is in us. A faithful and righteous Being is "therefore" a forgiving Being. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us." If we will not confess the evil in us, we impute that evil to Him. We thrust away that Word which is shedding abroad His light in us; we bury ourselves in our own darkness. This is the effect of trying to make out a good case for ourselves, when it is our interest, our privilege, our blessedness, to justify God and to condemn ourselves; to say, "Thou hast been true, and we have been liars. Deliver us from our lies! Help us to walk in Thy truth!" (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *The child of light walking in light*:—The apostle warns us against saying more than we have made our own by experience. To have fellowship with God is a great matter; but merely to say that we have fellowship with Him is a totally different thing. John warns us that if we say that which our characters do not support, we lie. He leaves it just so, without a word of softening or excuse. Let us now speak of the real thing—the fellowship with God, which comes of walking in the light. The Christian life is described as walking, which implies activity. Chiefly in the character of active workers, or in that of willing sufferers, we must maintain fellowship with God. Walking implies activity; but it must be of a continuous kind. Neither this step, nor that, nor the next, can make a walk. Not he that begins, but he that continues, is the true Christian; final perseverance enters into the very essence of the believer's life; the true pilgrims of Zion go from strength to strength. This suggests that walking implies progress. He that takes one step and

another step, and still stands where he was, has not walked. I. Consider, first, **THE LIGHT OF OUR WALK.** True believers do not walk in darkness; they have found the road, and they see it before them. Moral darkness is contrary to their new-born nature: they cannot endure it. What is this light, then, in which the Christian walks? 1. I answer, first, it is the light of grace. The Holy Spirit brings us out from under the dominion of the old nature by creating within us a new life, and He brings us out from under the tyranny of the Prince of Darkness by opening our eyes to see and our minds to understand celestial truth. The result of this light is seen in various ways. It causes deep sorrow in the beginning, for its first discoveries are grievous to the conscience. Light is painful to eyes long accustomed to darkness. Anon the light brings great joy, for the soul perceives deliverance from the evils which it mourned. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." 2. Ever, in each condition, you observe conspicuously that the light of grace is seen as the light of sincerity. Hypocrisy and pretence fly before sincere belief and feeling. 3. Next to sincerity I regard a willingness to know and to be known as an early result of walking in the light of God. A religion which we will not submit to the test of self-examination cannot be worth much. No one is afraid to have a genuine sovereign submitted to any test: it is the coiner who is afraid. We must build on truth, and nothing else but truth. 4. A still surer evidence of grace is the mind's perception of revealed truth and its obedience to it. Are the doctrines of grace essential verities with thee? Whatever God has said about sin, righteousness, judgment to come, art thou ready to accept it at once? Whatever He has revealed concerning Himself, His Son, His Holy Spirit, the Cross, life, death, hell, and the eternal future, dost thou believe it unfeignedly? This is to walk in the light. 5. This leads to a transparency and simplicity of character. The man who does in reality what he seems to do; the man who says what he means, and means what he says; the man who is truthful, artless, and sincere in all his general dealings both before God and man, he it is whose conduct leads us to hope that the light of grace shines within. 6. This is very evident in the man's cessation from all guile towards himself. Remember how David pronounces him blessed "in whose spirit there is no guile." He knew painfully what it was to be full of guile. "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation." He is in the light now, for deceit has gone, and now God can speak comfortably to him, and wash him and make him whiter than snow. 7. The man who is walking in the light, as God is in the light, is full of abhorrence of sin. Sin is practical falsehood; it is moral darkness. "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." Forget not this practical truth. II. I come, secondly, to **THE COMMUNION OF OUR WALK.** Those who are in the light shall not be alone. God Himself will be with them, and be their God. What honour! What joy is this! Thus is the mischief of the Fall removed, and Paradise is restored. God in the light and man in the light have much in common. Now are they abiding in one element, for they are dwelling in one light. Now are they both concerned about the same thing, and their aims are undivided: God loves truth, and so do those who are renewed in heart. Now we partake with God in sympathy, having a fellow-feeling with Him. Does the great Father mourn His prodigal child? So do we mourn over sinners. Do we see Jesus weeping over Jerusalem? So do we mourn for the perishing who will not be saved. Again, as God rejoices over sinners that repent, so do we rejoice in sympathy with Him. III. **THE GLORY OF THIS COMMUNION.** "We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." I gather from the way in which this sentence grows out of the text that this very thing, which looks as if it were the death of all communion with God, is made by infinite grace to be a wide and open channel of communion with Him. This stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulchre, and the angel of communion sits down upon it as on a throne. 1. To begin with, here is sin! What an evil thing it is! How our soul hates it! "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" Listen! You are having fellowship with God in this. God hates it also; and herein you are agreed. 2. Sin being once perceived, the next step is that it should be got rid of. "Ah!" say you, "I wish I could be cleansed from it—cleansed from all of it; but how can this be? It is not possible for me to purge away my sin." The sacrifice of the Only-Begotten is the unique hope of sinners. The laying of our iniquity upon Him who deigned to be the great scape-goat of His people is the sole means for the taking away of the sins of the world. That inward persuasion of the impossibility of the purgation of sin

by any doings or feelings of our own, and the consequent perception that in Christ only lies the help of men, has brought us through the light of truth to walk in fellowship with the thrice holy God. 3. The glorious Son of God condescends to become the atonement for sin. Standing by the tree of doom, we look up to that blessed Saviour with all-absorbing admiration and love. In the putting away of sin by the blood of Jesus the Father has an infinite content, and so have we. A step further. 4. Many of us have come to Jesus Christ by faith; we have looked to Him, and have accepted Him as our Saviour cleansing us from all sin. We rejoice in perfect whiteness, for the Lord has made us whiter than snow. Yes, we have fellowship with God in this cleansing, for God accepts us in the Beloved. God that made Him to be the Lord our Righteousness, God Himself justifies us in His Son. He will in the last great day make the whole universe a witness to the righteousness of the salvation of believers. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

*Communion with God:—*I. THE NATURE AND THE MEANS OF COMMUNION WITH GOD. 1. We have communion with God in personal intercourse. 2. We have communion with God in the exercise and interchange of mutual thoughts and affections. 3. We have communion with God in the reception of His gifts and blessings. 4. We have communion with God in the exercise of mutual love to Christ. The heart of God and our hearts unite in their affections, and fix them on the Lamb. 5. We have communion with God in His works of nature. Never does the face of nature appear so lovely as when we thus behold in it the beauty of the Lord. 6. We have communion with God in the dispensations of His providence. II. THE CONNECTION WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN COMMUNION WITH GOD AND HOLINESS. 1. A man may say that he has communion with God whilst he is walking in darkness and living in sin. He may say it literally with his lips, or he may say it by assuming the external forms of religion. He is a liar against his own experience, which has never enjoyed the communion he professes; he is a liar against his own affections, which are holding communion with sin and Satan and the world; and he is a liar against God Himself, who declares that He has no communion with darkness and with sin. 2. "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." Such persons have communion with their God. God Himself is light, and they are children of light—and as the sun has communion with surrounding stars, because their beams of light resemble each other in nature, though they differ in degrees of glory, so there is a similarity, and a sympathy, and a harmony of character and pursuit, between God and His people, which is the origin and the means of their communion with each other. The holiness of the one attracts the holiness of the other. Their holy minds, their holy thoughts, their holy affections, and their holy pursuits meet and mingle. III. THE IMPORTANCE AND SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES OF COMMUNION WITH GOD. 1. Communion with God is connected with an interest in the blood of Christ. Even the man who holds communion with God needs and finds a refuge in the great atonement. He does indeed walk in the light; but that very light discovers to him more and more clearly his numerous imperfections and sins, and his abundant need of pardoning mercy. 2. Communion with God is the means of promoting our holiness. Those who most associate with God most resemble Him, and partake most fully of the Divine nature. 3. Communion with God is a source of the sweetest pleasure. Those who walk with God in the light of purity, walk with Him also in the light of joy. Matthew Henry, just before he expired, declared, as his dying testimony, that "a life spent in the service of God, and in communion with Him, is the happiest life that any one can live in this world." And it must be so. There are no intelligent beings in the universe, whether men or angels, who can find true happiness in any place where God is not, or in any communion from which God is excluded. (J. Alexander.) *The right way of obtaining and maintaining communion with God:—*"Why is God called 'Light without Darkness'? And what is this Light?" 1. Wisdom is light, and folly is darkness. 2. Knowledge is light, and ignorance is darkness. 3. Truth is light, and error is darkness. 4. Holiness is light, and sin and wickedness are darkness. I. WHAT THIS COMMUNION WITH GOD IS. 1. Active on our part, which consisteth in the Divine operations of our souls toward God; when the mind is exercised in the contemplation of Him, the will in choosing and embracing Him; when the affections are fixed upon Him and centre in Him; when by our desires we pursue after Him, by our love we cleave to Him, and by delight we acquiesce and solace ourselves in Him. 2. Passive on God's part. This communication of God to us in our communion with Him is specially in these three things. (1) In

light (2 Cor. iv. 6; Psa. xxxvi. 9). (2) In life (Eph. iv. 18). (3) In love (Rom. v. 5). II. SOME DISTINCTIONS ABOUT COMMUNION WITH GOD. 1. Communion with God may be considered either with respect to this world, or the world to come; the one is imperfect, the other is perfect; one is mediate, the other immediate; the one is inconstant, the other without any interruption for ever. 2. This communion with God hath higher and lower degrees; both among the saints here below, and the saints and angels above. 3. This communion with God is either internal or external; by internal I mean that sacred intercourse between God and the soul which is managed only in the inward man; and by external I mean this communion with God managed in some external ordinance of His worship in the communion of saints. III. HOW THIS COMMUNION WITH GOD IS ATTAINED AND THEN MAINTAINED. 1. By Jesus Christ. (1) By virtue of His incarnation. (2) By virtue of His life which He lived here in the world. Considered either in the holy example that He has left us to walk by, or the doctrine that He here preached—by both which He did guide and lead men in the right way to fellowship with His Father. (3) By virtue of His death, and making reconciliation for us by His blood. Without agreement made between God and us, we could never have had communion with Him. (4) By virtue of His resurrection, whereby believers come to be raised up to newness of life (Rom. vi. 4). (5) By virtue also of His ascension into heaven (Col. iii. 1). (6) By virtue of His intercession. For this is one great thing that He intercedes for with His Father in heaven, that His people might have union and communion with them (John xvii. 21). 2. This communion with God is also by the Spirit of God. As the apostle speaks of “the communion of the Holy Ghost” (2 Cor. xiii. 14). Now the Spirit doth effect this communion with God. (1) By sanctifying our hearts, and assimilating our natures to the nature of God. For there can be no communion where there is no likeness of nature. (2) By elevating and raising the soul above its natural power and reach. 3. These are the principal ways for communion with God. But then there are subordinate ways, which are the ordinances and institutions of God for that end. For God hath in all ages been training up His people to have communion with Himself, and therefore He did appoint ordinances for that end under the law. There were sacrifices, and altars, and solemn feasts appointed of God, all for this end. And so, in the New Testament, God hath His ordinances also appointed for this end; as prayer, hearing the Word, &c. (*M. Barker, M.A.*) *Fellowship with God*:—I. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS FELLOWSHIP? II. WHAT IS THE GREAT HINDRANCE TO THIS FELLOWSHIP? It is here described as walking in darkness. III. WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS OF THIS FELLOWSHIP? “If we walk in the light we have fellowship with Him.” This implies—1. Activity. 2. Progress. There is no finality in the experience of holiness. 3. Definiteness. 4. Completeness. 5. Pleasantness. “In the light.” 6. Safety. He that walketh in the darkness stumbleth (John xi. 10). IV. WHAT IS THE RESULT OF FELLOWSHIP? It is evidently cleansing. (*H. Thorne.*)

Ver. 7. But if we walk in the light . . . we have fellowship one with another. *The Christian life a walk*:—1. The first aspect of the Christian life which this figure suggests is that it is a life begun in connection with a public profession. A man who goes out to walk does something in the face of the world. The eye of man can watch your steps, and observe your gait and your whole demeanour. Thus also is it in relation as Christian disciples. From the moment we take the side of Christ the eye of the world is upon us. 2. On the other hand, this figure also reminds us that the Christian life is a life with a definite goal in view. You consider it hardly worthy of you to be seen wandering about aimlessly and listlessly. 3. Not less distinctly, however, does this phrase remind us that the Christian life is to be a life of dauntless spirit and self-girt energy. When a man sets a walk before him, he goes out with the air of one who has a task to accomplish and is determined to carry it through. No other spirit will suffice in the course of the Christian life. (*J. P. Lilley, M.A.*) *Christian fellowship with God*:—It is here explained that a Christian man is enabled to maintain that habitual fellowship with God which is the very life of his spirit. The apostle thus speaks as one who pursues a great end, and seeks to attain it by two specified means. I. THE END—fellowship with God. This is described in the text as “fellowship one with another.” The fellowship of which the apostle speaks is not that between Christian and Christian, but rather that between the individual believer and his God. In the previous verse fellowship with God is the

subject of remark, and it is natural to suppose that the subject is the same in the following sentence, which is simply a continuation of the train of thoughts. Then it will be observed that all the parties mentioned in the first clause of the text are Christians who walk in the light, and God who is in the light. It is reasonable to assume that it is of these same parties fellowship is predicated in the second clause of the sentence. Finally, the expression "His Son" in the last clause points to the same conclusion. Were the fellowship spoken of that between Christians, the pronoun "His" would be inappropriate. Instead of "His Son," it should have read "God's Son." The expression "one with another," used with reference to the Christian's fellowship with God, conveys the idea that this fellowship is not a one-sided affair, of man with God, but mutual, of man with God and of God with man. To aspire to fellowship with God, therefore, in the fullest sense of the word, is not presumption; it is simply seeking to live up to our privilege as children of the era of grace. The aim set before us here, however, is too high for the taste of many. They are content with a more distant relation. They would have God be only "the high, lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy," and desire not to know Him as one who dwelleth "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Such awe-struck reverence, when sincere, is not to be condemned; on the contrary, it may be admitted to be an essential element of Christian piety. But, on the other hand, we must equally be on our guard against ignoring the gracious, social side of the Divine nature. We have to remember that God desireth not to dwell alone in solitude, however august; that He is a Father as well as a King, that He is as gracious as He is mighty, as loving as He is holy. Then shall we trust in and converse with God, as a man trusts in and converses with a fellow-man who is a bosom friend, and be able to say without presumption, "we have fellowship one with another." II. THE MEANS TOWARDS THIS HIGH END. 1. "If we walk in the light, we have fellowship." Walking in the light means living holily. Light, in the vocabulary of the apostle John, is the emblem of holiness, and darkness of sin. (1) Obviously, on good grounds, fellowship is based on congeniality of spirit. Righteous beings have fellowship with each other as soon as they understand each other. No being is indifferent to his kind, least of all a good, holy being. Good men are lovers of good men. As good men have fellowship with each other, so have they one and all fellowship with the one absolutely good Being. With God alone is perfect fellowship possible. Why? Because God alone is light, without any admixture of darkness. There is perfect moral simplicity and purity in Him. For this reason He can be better known than any brother man can be, and we can be better known by Him. (2) Another important condition of abiding fellowship is satisfaction in each other's character and company. Fellowship with friends is very refreshing. Yet there is a limit to the joy to be found in human fellowship. The most gifted man's stock of thought is apt to become exhausted, the most affectionate man's love may have too great a strain put upon it, and human tempers are often frail. But there is One whose mind hath inexhaustible riches whose love can bear the heaviest burden, who knows nothing of moods and tempers and caprices; in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. That unique Being is God. In Him is no satiety, no disappointment. You can ever lift up to Him your soul in meditation, praise, or prayer, and find ever new delight, and a satisfaction to the heart you seek in vain elsewhere. 2. The other means for maintaining fellowship with God is habitual recourse to the blood of Christ. "And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." Of no child of light can it be affirmed, as of God, that in him is no darkness at all. It is in truth a part of our holiness (as distinct from that of God) to see and acknowledge our sinfulness. Such owning of darkness is, in its own way, light; it is the light of truthfulness, sincerity, guilelessness. This is always a prominent feature of saintly character, because, though the quantity of sin may be steadily diminishing, the saint sees his sin in its darkness, with ever-increasing clearness, as he advances in the way of light, and hates it with ever-increasing intensity. How, then, is the sin that cleaveth to the Christian, and mars his fellowship with God, to be dealt with so that fellowship may not be disturbed thereby? The answer of the text is, it is to be cleansed away by habitual recourse to the blood of Christ. Consider the tendency of sin, of every single sin we commit. It is to make us plunge again into the darkness. An evil conscience very readily puts a man on one or other of two courses, both fatal—hiding his sin, or hiding himself from God. In the one case he virtually says he has no sin, that he may have boldness before God; in the other he admits his sin, and flees, like Adam, from the presence of God. Christ's blood,

regarded by the eye of faith, keeps a Christian from both these bad courses. It keeps from denying sin by removing the temptation to do so. What tempts man to deny sin is fear. One who keeps his eye ever fixed on the Cross of Christ has no need to fear. Faith in the power of Christ's death to cancel much guilt keeps his soul free from guile. The same faith preserves the Christian from the other fatal course, that of hiding himself from God, and, so to speak, breaking of all fellowship with Him. There is great danger in this direction. Evil habits are a fruitful source of apostasy and irreligion. The sinner is too honest to deny his guilt, but he makes the acknowledgment in a wrong, ruinous way—by ceasing from faith, prayer, and all profession of piety. The Christian who has sinned does not act thus. Faith enables him to solve a very difficult, delicate problem, that of steering safely between hypocrisy and irreligion; the denial of sin on the one hand and the denial of God on the other. Through faith he can at once confess sin and hope for mercy. Every new application to the merits of Christ makes him more tender in conscience, more anxious to sin no more, were it only to avoid the scandal and disgrace of even seeming to trample under foot the Son of God and to treat the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified as a common thing. 3. These, then, are the appointed means for maintaining a close fellowship with God. The combination is not to be mistaken for legalism. Legalism means the practical abandonment of Christ's merits as an aid to sanctification, and the substitution in its place of painful ascetic efforts at self-sanctification. Finding himself exposed to new visitations of sinful desire after conversion and initial forgiveness, the young Christian draws the conclusion that while he must depend on Christ for justification he must look to himself for sanctification. It is another by-path leading into darkness, into which earnest souls are strongly tempted to err, after first fervours and joys are past. The very emphatic language used by the apostle in appraising the merits of Christ's blood supplies a valuable antidote against the delusion. The blood of Jesus Christ, he declares, cleanseth from all sin. He would have every one hope for forgiveness, for Christ's sake, of whatever sin or crime he may have been guilty. Then he represents Christ's blood as possessed of a continuous cleansing power. The fountain is ever open for sin and for uncleanness. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*)

Walking in the light:—I. We are to live under the abiding impression of God's HOLINESS (ver. 8). Other lights than that from God might not show us how spotted we are. Here, then, is the first evidence that we are living, not in the light of our own conceit, but in that which comes from without and above our lives—the God-light: we will be very humble and penitent sort of people. But this light of holiness of God, if it really falls upon us, will show itself in another way besides; it will stir us up to a resolution to cease from sin. Read chap. ii. 3-5. A man who is contented with any negligence of duty is not in the light. Light is poured through the universe not merely as a luminator, that eyes may see in it; it has also a chemical power. It bleaches some things, it quickens others. Plants that would be but dry stalks are stirred by its touch in their finest atoms, and draw up nourishment from the earth, and shoot out leaves which turn as in gratefulness toward their benefactor, the quickening ray. So the light of God's holiness quickens the soul morally. It stirs every fibre of conscience. It makes it rejoice in every true, noble, pure aspiration. It hungers and thirsts after righteousness. It lifts itself up toward the light. II. But the other ray of the Divine character seems to have more impressed the mind of John—viz., THAT OF GOD'S LOVE AND GRACE, OR WE MAY BETTER SAY HIS LOVE AS SHOWN IN HIS GRACE. Here is the sublimest light that ever fell out of the heavens upon men. "And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Light is cheering to the eye. Some men are miserable without a flood of it. Professor Clifford, the great scientist, used to draw his table close to the window; his strong, clear eye delighted in the day-radiance almost as the eagle's does. Augustine tells us that he had the same passionate fondness for it; "This queen of colours, the pure light, bathing all I behold, soothes me. . . . If absent, it saddens my mind"; and then he longs for the soul-light it signified—the light, he says, "which Isaac saw when his fleshly eyes were heavy, which Jacob, when blind through great age, saw with his illumined heart. . . . So, O all-creating Lord, I lift mine invisible eyes to Thee." But both these great men were especially enamoured of the light of the Cross. They knew, what some of us have found out, that the darkest spot on earth is not some dungeon or cavern, but the centre of our moral being where it enwraps the conscience. You can get rays for mental satisfaction by studying the wonders of the world about you; you may light up your loneliness by the beauty of loved

faces; but no crack or crevice in the soul lets in cheering light upon the natural man's sense of sin. Expedients of human invention for the enlightening of this dark spot are as ineffectual as the candles which are put out by the darkness of the cavern into which they are dropped. But sunshine is not put out if its ray drop into a cavern. Having come ninety millions of miles through space, it could gleam on to the very centre of the earth if the opening were straight and facing the sun itself. So the God-light gleaming from the Cross goes to the innermost and darkest spot in a man's soul if only the soul opens straight towards the Cross. And that opening straight towards the Cross is what is meant by faith; as the Bible expresses it, "whose heart is perfectly toward Him." Note, by the way, the exact meaning of the word John uses here to express the cleansing of sin. "The blood of Jesus cleanseth"; present tense, is cleansing, not merely has cleansed. We are being cleansed continually. This is just the very ray of light some of you need to see. But note another effect of this grace-light. It, too, like the light of righteousness, is not only an illuminator, but a force, making a change in the heart upon which it falls. It not only reveals God's love and grace to us, but makes us loving and gracious to others (ch. ii. 9, 10). No Christian can be a hard man, a cold and indifferent man, a proud and selfish man, any more than ice can abide in the summer sunshine. Alas for those about whom the darkness of doubts, regrets, remorse, and fears is gathering! And what but darkness does the natural world cast about the soul? Some will say with Tennyson's Rizzpah, "The night has crept into my heart, and begun to darken mine eyes." But think not of the night. The day bursts above you; the heaven is breaking through the sky which shuts down so closely over you. Look up! (*J. M. Ludlow, D.D.*)

Walking in the light:—1. I have said that the representation of the nature of God as light set Him forth to us as the God of revelation. Hence a leading element of walking in the light must be the subjection of our own spiritual nature to the action of God's Word. 2. Another feature of the nature of God as light was seen to be His absolute purity. This also, therefore, must be a characteristic of our walk as His children. 3. The last characteristic of the Divine nature suggested by the phrase "God is light" was moral and spiritual glory. To walk in the light, then, must be so to walk as that this glory may be reflected through us in the view of the world. In other terms, every element of the moral glory of God must be seen in our life and conduct. Hence, for instance, we are to walk in wisdom. We have also to walk in righteousness. No less manifestly are we to walk in love. (*J. P. Lilley, M.A.*)

Walking in the light and washed in the blood:—You perceive in the text that the Christian is spoken of as a man who is in the light; but there is something more said of him than this. He is practically in the light, "if we walk in the light." He walks in the light of faith, in another path than that which is trodden by men who have nothing but the light of sense. He sees Him who is invisible, and the sight of the invisible God operates upon his soul; he looks into eternity, he marks the dread reward of sin, and the blessed gift of God to those who trust in Jesus, and eternal realities have an effect upon his whole manner and conversation: hence he is a man in the light, walking in that light. There is a very strong description given here—"If we walk in the light as He is in the light." When a schoolmaster writes the copy at the head of the page, he does not expect that the boy will come up to the copy; but then if the copy be not a perfect one, it is not fit to be imitated by a child; and so our God gives us Himself as the pattern and copy, "Be ye imitators of God as dear children," for nothing short of Himself would be a worthy model. But what does it mean, that the Christian is to walk in the light as God is in the light? We conceive it to import likeness, but not degree. We are as truly in the light, we are as heartily in the light, we are as sincerely in the light, though we cannot be there in the same degree. Having thus briefly sketched the character of the genuine Christian, observe that he is the possessor of two privileges; the first is, fellowship with God. "We have fellowship one with another"; and the second is, complete cleansing from sin—"and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." The first privilege we will have but a word upon; it is fellowship with God. He opens His heart to us and we open our heart to Him; we become friends; we are bound and knit together, so that being made partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, we live like Enoch, having our conversation above the skies. I. The first thing that struck me was the GREATNESS of everything in the text. To what a magnificent scale everything is

drawn. 1. Think how great the sin of God's people is! 2. Then observe the greatness of the atonement offered. It must be no man, merely; it must be the God-man mediator, the fellow of Jehovah, co-equal and co-eternal with Him, who must bear the bitterness of Divine wrath which was due to sin. 3. Think again: we have here great love which provided such a sacrifice. II. The next thing which sparkles in the text, is its SIMPLE SOLITARINESS, "We have fellowship one with another"; and then it is added, as a gloriously simple statement, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1. Observe, here is nothing said about rites and ceremonies or about Christian experience as a means of cleansing. 2. Observe, again, that in the verse there is no hint given of any emotions, feelings, or attainments, as co-operating with the blood to take away sin. The blood is the alone atonement, the blood without any mixture of aught beside, completes and finishes the work, "For ye are complete in Him." III. A third brilliant flashes in the light, viz., THE COMPLETENESS of the cleansing. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"—not from some sin, but "from all sin." IV. The next gem that studs the text is the thought of PRESENTNESS. "Cleanseth," says the text, not "shall cleanse." The moment a sinner trusts Jesus, that sinner is as fully forgiven as he will be when the light of the glory of God shall shine upon his resurrection countenance. V. Now, in the fifth place, the text presents to us very blessedly the thought of CERTAINTY. It is not "perhaps the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from sin," the text speaks of it as a fact not to be disputed—it does do so. VI. The sixth gem which adorns the text is the DIVINITY of it. Does it not strike you that the verse is written in a God-like style? God seems to put away His pearls as if they were but common pebbles. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"—as if it were as much a matter of every-day work as for a man to wash his hands. VII. In the last place, just a hint upon the wisdom of the text. I cannot see sin pardoned by the substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus, without dedicating myself to the praise and glory of the great God of redeeming love. If God had devised a scheme by which sin could be pardoned, and yet the sinner live to himself, I do not know that the world or the man would be advantaged. Now henceforth at the foot of the Cross the bands which bound our soul to earth are loosened. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The supreme importance of moral purity*:—First, that Christianity is based upon the palpable facts in the history of an extraordinary person. The person is here said to be "from the beginning"—"which was with the Father"; is called "the Word of life," "Eternal life." Secondly, that these palpable facts were observed by competent witnesses, who have transmitted them to us for moral ends. The apostles were intellectually and morally competent. I. MORAL PURITY IS THE ESSENCE OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER. "God is light." Light is mysterious in its essence. "Who, by searching, can find out God?" Light is revealing in its power; through it we see all things. The universe can only be rightly seen through God. Light is felicitating; the animal creation feels it. He is the one "blessed" God. Light is pure, and in this sense God is called light. There are three things which distinguish God's holiness from that of any creature:—First, it is absolutely perfect. Not only has He never thought an erroneous thought, felt a wrong emotion, performed a wrong act, but He never can. In Him there is no darkness at all. Secondly, it is eternally independent. The holiness of all creatures is derived from without, and depends greatly upon the influences and aids of other beings. But God's holiness is uncreated. The holiness of creatures is susceptible of change. Thirdly, it is universally felt. Where is it not felt? It is felt in heaven. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," is one of the anthems that resound through the upper world. It is felt in hell. All guilty consciences feel its burning flash. It is the consuming fire. It is felt on earth. The compunctions of conscience. II. THAT MORAL PURITY IS THE CONDITION OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him," &c. Three things are implied here:—First, that fellowship with God is a possible thing. John assumes this as something that need scarcely be argued. 1. That the fellowship of a moral being with its Creator is antecedently probable. God is the Father of all intelligent spirits; and is it not probable that the Father and the child should have intercourse with each other? 2. Man is in possession of means suited to this end. If it be said that God is invisible—that we cannot commune with Him—we may reply by saying that man is invisible, and we do not commune with him. The spirit with which we commune in man we see not. How do we commune with man? Through his works. Through his words. Through memorials. We have something in our

possession which belonged to another; given, perhaps, to us as a keepsake. Secondly, that fellowship with God is a desirable thing. John assumes this. Nothing is more desirable for man than this. Thirdly, that this fellowship will ever be characterised by a holy life. Purity is the condition of fellowship. III. THAT MORAL PURITY IS THE END OF CHRIST'S MEDIATION. "The blood of Jesus Christ," &c. (*Homilist*.) *Children of light* :—There are children of light and children of darkness. The latter shun the bright, the pure azure shining sky of truth with all its loving beams. Their world is like the world of insects, and is the world of night. Insects are all light-shunners. Even those which, like the bee, labour during the daytime, prefer the shades of obscurity. The children of light are like the birds. The world of birds is the world of light—of song. Nearly all of them, says Michelet, live in the sun, fill themselves with it, or are inspired by it. Those of the south carry its reflected radiance on their wings; those of our colder climates in their songs; many of them follow it from land to land. (*Scientific Illustrations*, &c.) *The best life the product of the best light* :—A manufacturer of carmine, who was aware of the superiority of the French colour, went to Lyons and bargained with the most celebrated manufacturer in that city for the acquisition of his secret, for which he was to pay one thousand pounds. He was shown all the process, and saw a beautiful colour produced; but he found not the least difference in the French mode of fabrication and that which had been constantly adopted by himself. He appealed to his instructor, and insisted that he must have concealed something. The man assured him that he had not, and invited him to see the process a second time. He minutely examined the water and the materials, which were in every respect similar to his own, and then, very much surprised, said, "I have lost my labour and my money, for the air of England does not permit us to make good carmine." "Stay," said the Frenchman, "don't deceive yourself—what kind of weather is it now?" "A bright, sunny day," replied the Englishman. "And such are the days," said the Frenchman, "on which I make my colour. Were I to attempt to manufacture it on a dark or cloudy day my results would be the same as yours. Let me advise you always to make carmine on bright, sunny days." *Interrupted fellowship* :—When they were laying the Atlantic cable the engineers found the communication interrupted, and when they had taken it up sufficiently they found the difficulty was occasioned by a small piece of wire, only about twice the length of a pin, which, by some means, had been driven through the covering of the cable, and carried off the electric fluid. So a very small thing will put us out of fellowship with God, and interrupt our communion with heaven, and the only secret of a constant communion is a constant cleansing from all sin. (*Fellowship*.) *The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin*.—*The evil and its remedy* (with Ezek. ix. 9):—I shall have two texts this morning—the evil and its remedy. "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great"; and "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." I. I begin with the first doctrine, "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great." Some men imagine that the gospel was devised, in some way or other, to soften down the harshness of God towards sin. There is no more harsh condemnation of sin anywhere than in the gospel. Moses charges you with sin, and tells you that you are without excuse; but as for the gospel, it rends away from you every shadow of a covering. Nor does the gospel in any way whatever give man a hope that the claims of the law will be in any way loosened. What God hath said to the sinner in the law, He saith to the sinner in the gospel. If He declareth that "the soul that sinneth it shall die," the testimony of the gospel is not contrary to the testimony of the law. Do you reply to this, that Christ has certainly softened down the law? I reply, that ye know not, then, the mission of Christ. Before Christ came sin seemed unto me to be but little; but when He came sin became exceeding sinful, and all its dread heinousness started out before the light. But, says one, surely the gospel does in some degree remove the greatness of our sin. Does it not soften the punishment of sin? Ah! no. Moses says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." And now comes Jesus Christ, the man of a loving countenance. What other prophet was the author of such dread expressions as these?—"He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," or, "Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." The proclamation of Christ to-day is the same as the utterance of Ezekiel, "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great." One sin, remember, destroyed the whole human race. Think again what an imprudent and impertinent thing sin is. It is a thing so audacious, so full of pride, that one need not marvel that even a sin in

the little eye of man, should, when it is looked upon by the conscience in the light of heaven, appear to be great indeed. But think again, how great does your sin and mine seem, if we will but think of the ingratitude which has marked it. Oh, if we set our secret sins in the light of His mercy, if our transgressions are set side by side with His favours, we must each of us say, our sins indeed are exceeding great! II. "Well," cries one, "there is very little comfort in that. It is enough to drive one to despair." Ah! such is the very design of this text. If I may have the pleasure of driving you to a despair of your self-righteousness and a despair of saving your own soul, I shall be thrice happy. We turn, therefore, from that terrible text to the second one, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." There lies the blackness; here stands the Lord Jesus Christ. What will He do with it? He will do a far better thing than make an excuse or pretend in any way to speak lightly of it. He will cleanse it all away. Dwell on the word "all." Our sins are great; every sin is great; but there are some that in our apprehension seem to be greater than others. There may be some sins of which a man cannot speak, but there is no sin which the blood of Christ cannot wash away. Blasphemy, however profane; lust, however bestial; covetousness, however far it may have gone into theft and rapine; breach of the commandments of God, however much of riot it may have run, all this may be pardoned and washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ. Just take the word "all" in another sense, not only as taking in all sorts of sin, but as comprehending the great aggregate mass of sin. Come here, sinner, thou with the grey head. Couldst thou bear to read thine own diary if thou hadst written there all thy acts? No; for though thou be the purest of mankind, thy thoughts, if they could have been recorded, would now, if thou couldst read them, make thee startle and wonder that thou art demon enough to have had such imaginations within thy soul. But put them all here, and all these sins the blood of Christ can wash away. Yet, once more, in the praise of this blood we must notice one further feature. There be some of you here who are saying, "Ah! that shall be my hope when I come to die, that in the last hour of my extremity the blood of Christ will take my sins away; it is now my comfort to think that the blood of Christ shall wash, and purge, and purify the transgressions of life." But, mark! my text saith not so; it does not say the blood of Christ shall cleanse—that were a truth—but it says something greater than that—it says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth"—cleanseth now. Come, soul, this moment come to Him that hung upon the Cross of Calvary! come now and be washed. But what meanest thou by coming? I mean this: come thou and put thy trust in Christ, and thou shalt be saved. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The atonement of Christ:—Let us view the text—I. AS POINTING OUT ITS VALUE. It declares the way of pardon to be by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is the blood of Him whose name is Jesus; a name which causeth those who know it to be joyful in Him that bears it. It is the blood of one appointed and commissioned to save His people from the guilt, the power, the practice, and the love of sin.

II. AS DECLARING ITS CONTINUAL EFFICACY. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin; it has a cleansing quality. Oh! what great reason have we all to lament the polluted state of man. When the apostle says, "The blood of Christ cleanseth," it evidently implies that His blood is the only means of obtaining pardon. And this efficacy is perpetual.

III. AS ASSERTING ITS UNIVERSAL INFLUENCE. It cleanseth, not all persons, but from all sin. Since it was the blood of so great a person as the Son of God, it is as powerful to cleanse us from the greatest sin as from the least. It is a universal remedy. (*F. Spencer.*)

The Passion of our Lord our cleansing:—I. THE INSTRUMENT OF OUR CLEANSING IS SAID TO BE THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST. 1. Now the blood is the life thereof, and therefore, in the first place, we obtain the idea that Christ's life has been given in expiation of our sins, and we get the idea of satisfaction, inasmuch as the life of an innocent person has been taken in atonement for the sins of those of whom that innocent person is a constituent member. 2. But next, the idea of blood especially conveys to us that element of self-immolation and self-sacrifice which so markedly distinguishes the work of Christ. The blood is the most intimate and precious thing which a man can have. 3. Again, the idea of blood conveys to us the notion of priestly lustration and cleansing. It places before us the present office of Christ, who, having entered into the holy place once for all, for ever appears before the celestial altar pleading His Passion before the eternal Father, and presenting His perpetual sacrifice. II. WHOSE BLOOD IT IS THAT CLEANSETH FROM ALL SIN. Whose

blood? It is the blood of Jesus Christ! The apostle speaks of the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. God's own blood! What an awful and wonderful expression! and yet it only enunciates the truth, that God the Son has taken to Himself a human body, not to reign in, but to suffer in; not to be glorified in, but to die in; to suffer that we might rejoice, to die that we might live for ever. III. THE EFFECT OF THIS POTENT OUTPOURING OF THE LIFE OF GOD. It cleanseth us from all sin. It is not mere remission. It is not mere averting the punishment. It is not mere pronouncing man just when he is in fact unjust. It is all this and more. By cleansing we mean making that pure which before was foul, and this is what we attribute to the blood of Christ. We believe that in that blood there is such a virtue as to be able to transform the sinful nature of man into an imperfect but real image of the holiness of God; that before its might all that is base and unclean fades away, and that, like the chemist's potent elixer, it transmutes the baser elements with which it comes into contact into a new and more perfect substance. Again, the blood of Christ suggests to us such cleansing as comes from washing. That sea of blood which flowed from the Saviour's veins is the laver wherein our souls are washed from all the soils with which the indulgence of sin defiles them. No harboured guilt, no vain delight, no bosom iniquity can withstand the rushing flood of grace that pours into the soul. God will not save us without ourselves, as St. Augustine bears witness; and therefore the efficacy of all that God has done for us depends in one sense upon ourselves. (*Bp. A. P. Forbes.*) *The efficacy of the Redeemer's blood*:—I. The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses us from all sin by making an atonement for all the guilt of sin; by providing for our JUSTIFICATION. Pardon is never partial; and for this simple reason—the atoning blood of Christ reaches to one sin as well as to another; it is satisfaction in full, and therefore, when the merit of it is received by faith, all past sin is freely, fully forgiven. II. The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin, by procuring for us that measure of the gracious influence of God's Holy Spirit, which may deliver us from all the power and from all the principle of sin. In other words, it provides for our SANCTIFICATION. 1. This doctrine of deliverance from all sin contains nothing more than what the nature of sin, if properly understood, makes imperatively necessary. The evangelical covenant does not speak of the expulsion of degrees of sin, but of the expulsion of its principle. 2. The doctrine in question contains nothing beyond what it must be admitted the Divine Spirit is competent to perform. 3. Whatever exception may be taken to this doctrine of deliverance from all the power and principle of sin, the thing itself is indispensably necessary to our happiness. 4. We say nothing but what all orthodox Christians admit must be done sometime. The controversy, therefore, only turns upon the point when this momentous work is to be accomplished. If this work be done at all, it must be either in eternity or in time. If the work cannot take place in eternity, then it must in time. Shall I ask, How long before the spirit quit its tabernacle? Five minutes? an hour? a day? a week? Why then not a year? why then not now? 5. When we insist upon this principle, we insist on nothing but what uniformly appears on the inspired page (*Psa. li. 10; Matt. v. 8; Eph. iii. 19.*) (*Jas. Bromley.*) *Cleansing virtue of Christ's blood*:—It is a short but a full panegyric of the virtue of the blood of Christ. 1. In regard of the effect—cleansing. 2. In regard of the cause of its efficacy. It is the blood of Jesus, a Saviour. The blood of the Son of God, of one in a special relation to the Father. 3. In regard to the extensiveness of it—all sin. No guilt so high but it can master; no stain so deep but it can purge. Doctrine: The blood of Christ hath a perpetual virtue, and doth actually and perfectly cleanse believers from all guilt. This blood is the expiation of our sin and the unlocking our chains, the price of our liberty and of the purity of our souls. The redemption we have through it is expressly called the forgiveness of sin (*Eph. i. 7*). As the blood of the typical sacrifices purified from ceremonial, so the blood of the Anti-typical Offering purifies from moral uncleanness. The Scripture places remission wholly in this blood of the Redeemer. 1. The blood of Christ is to be considered morally in this act. 2. The cleansing is to be doubly considered. There is a cleansing from guilt and a cleansing from filth—both are the fruits of this blood. The guilt is removed by remission, the filth by purification. Christ doth both. The one upon the account of His merit, the other by His efficacy which He exerts by His Spirit. These both spring up from the death of Christ, yet they belong to two distinct offices of Christ. He justifies us as a surety, a sacrifice by suffering, as a Priest by merit. But He sanctifies us as a King by sending His Spirit to work efficaciously in

our hearts. By virtue of His death there is no condemnation for sin (Rom. viii. 1-3). By virtue of the grace of His Spirit there is no dominion of sin (Rom. vi. 4-14). 3. This cleansing from guilt may be considered as meritorious or applicative. As the blood of Christ was offered to God this purification was meritoriously wrought; as particularly pleaded for a person it is actually wrought; as sprinkled upon the conscience it is sensibly wrought. The first merits the removal of guilt, the second solicits it, the third ensures it. The one was wrought upon the Cross, the other is acted upon His throne, and the third pronounced in the conscience. The first is expressed Rom. iii. 25: His blood rendered God propitious. The second, Heb. ix. 12: As He is entered into the holy of holies. The third, Heb. ix. 14: Christ justifies as a sacrifice in a way of merit, and when this is pleaded God justifies as a Judge in a way of authority. 4. The evidence of this truth well appears. 5. From the credit it had for the expiation and cleansing of guilt before it was actually shed and reliance of believers in all ages on it. The blood of Christ was applied from the foundation of the world, though it was not shed till the fulness of time. We must distinguish the virtue of redemption from the work of redemption. The work was appointed in a certain time, but the virtue was not restrained to a certain time. Several considerations will clear this. (1) The Scripture speaks but of one person designed for this great work (John i. 29). As God is the God of all that died before Christ came, as well as of those that lived after; so Christ is the Mediator of all that died before His coming, as well as of those that saw His day. (2) This one Mediator was set forth ever since the fall of man, as the foundation of pardon and recovery. (3) Though these promises and prophecies of the expiation and cleansing of sin were something obscure to them and though they did not exactly know the method, how it would be accomplished, yet that sin should be pardoned was fully revealed, and something of the method of it might be known unto them. (4) The ancient patriarchs had faith, and were actually pardoned. (5) And this might well be upon the account of the compact between the Father the Judge and the Son the Redeemer. Had he not promised the shedding of His blood, justice had dislodged the sinner from the world. This was the true and sole end of His incarnation and death. All the ends mentioned by the Angel Gabriel to Daniel centre in this and refer to it. "To finish the transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. ix. 24), and thereby should all the visions and prophecies concerning the Messiah and His work be fulfilled. (6) This is the fundamental doctrine of the gospel. The apostle, therefore, with a particular emphasis, tells them this is a thing to be known and acknowledged by all that own Christianity (chap. iii. 5). (7) There could be no other end of His shedding His blood but this. Since His death is called a sacrifice (Eph. v. 2), a propitiation (chap. ii. 2; Rom. iii. 25), it can be for no other end but the cleansing of sin. 6. The cleansing sin is wrought solely by His own worth, as He is the Son of God. It is, therefore, said in the text the blood, not only of Jesus Christ but of the Son of God. The blood of Jesus received its value from His Sonship, the eternal relation He stood in to His Father. Since sin is an infinite evil no mere creature can satisfy for it, nor can all the holy works of all the creatures be a compensation for one act of sin, because the vastest heap of all the holy actions of men and angels would never amount to an infinite goodness, which is necessary for the satisfaction of an infinite wrong. 1. Hence it follows that sin is perfectly cleansed by this blood. (1) The blood of Christ doth not perfectly cleanse us here from sin, in regard of the sense of it. Some sparks of the fiery law will sometimes flash in our consciences and the peace of the gospel be put under a veil. Evidences may be blurred and guilt revived. Satan may accuse, and conscience knows not how to answer him. There will be startlings of unbelief, distrusts of God, and misty steams from the miry lake of nature. But it hath laid a perfect foundation, and the top stone of a full sense and comfort will be laid at last. Peace shall be as an illustrious sunshine without a cloud; a sweet calm without any whisper of a blustering tempest. As God's justice shall read nothing for condemnation, so conscience shall read nothing for accusation. The blood of Christ will be perfect in the effects of it. The soul shall be without fault before the throne of God (Rev. xiv. 5). (2) The blood of Christ doth not perfectly cleanse us here from sin in regard of the stirrings of it. The Old Serpent will be sometimes stinging us and sometimes foiling us. But this blood shall perfect what it hath begun, and the troubled sea of corruption that sends forth mire and dirt shall be totally removed (Heb. xii. 23). (3) But the blood of Christ perfectly cleanseth us from sin here in regard of condemnation and punishment. Thus it blots it out of the book of God's

justice; it is no more to be remembered in a way of legal and judicial sentence against the sinner. Though the nature of sin doth not cease to be sinful, yet the power of sin ceaseth to be condemning. Where the crime is not imputed the punishment ought not to be inflicted. It is inconsistent with the righteousness of God to be an appeased and yet a revenging Judge. When the cause of His anger is removed the effects of His anger are extinguished. Herein doth the pardon of sin properly consist in a remission of punishment. The crime cannot be remitted, but only in regard of punishment merited by it. If God should punish a man that is sprinkled with the blood of Christ it would be contrary both to His justice and mercy. To His justice because He hath accepted of the satisfaction made by Christ who paid the debt. It would be contrary to His mercy, for it would be cruelty to adjudge a person to punishment who is legally discharged. (4) The effect of this blood shall appear perfect at the last in the final sentence. It cleanseth us initially here, completely hereafter. It cleanseth us here in law. Its virtue shall be manifest by a final sentence. There is here a secret grant passed in our consciences; there, a solemn publication of it before men and angels. (5) Hence it cleanseth from all sin universally. He was delivered for our offences (Rom. iv. 25)—not for some few offences, but for all; and as He was delivered for them so He is accepted for them. Men have different sins, according to their various dispositions or constitutions. Every man hath his own way. And the iniquity of all those various sins of a different stamp and a contrary nature in regard of the acts and objects God hath made to meet at the Cross of Christ, and laid them all upon Him (Isa. liii. 6)—the sins of all believing persons, in all parts, in all ages of the world, from the first moment of man's sinning to the last sin committed on the earth. I. **HOW CHRIST'S BLOOD CLEANSETH FROM SIN.** God the Father doth actually and efficiently justify; Christ's blood doth meritoriously justify. God the Father is considered as Judge, Christ is considered as Priest and Sacrifice. This is done—1. By taking sin upon Himself. 2. By accounting the righteousness and sufficiency of His sufferings to us. (1) This cleansing of us by imputing this blood to us is by virtue of union and communion with Him. (2) This union is made by faith, and upon this account we are said to be justified by faith. II. **THE USE.** If the blood of Christ hath the only and perpetual virtue and doth actually and perfectly cleanse believers from all sin, then it affords us—1. A use of instruction. (1) Every man uninterested by faith in the blood of Christ is hopeless of a freedom from guilt while he continues in that state. (2) No freedom from the guilt of sin is to be expected from mere mercy. The figure of this was notable in the legal economy. The mercy-seat was not to be approached by the high priest without blood (Deut. ix. 7). Christ Himself typified by the high priest expects no mercy for any of His followers but by the merit of His blood. The very title of justification implies not only mercy but justice; and more justice than mercy, for justification is not upon a bare petition but a propitiation. (3) There is no ground for the merits of saints or a cleansing purgatory. (4) No mere creature can cleanse from sin. No finite thing can satisfy an infinite justice; no finite thing can remit or purchase the remission of an injury against an Infinite Being. A creature can no more cleanse a soul than it can frame and govern a world and redeem a captive sinner. (5) There is no righteousness of our own, no services we can do, sufficient for so great a concern. To depend upon any or all of them, or anything in ourselves, is injurious to the value and worth of this blood; it is injurious also to ourselves; it is like the setting up a paper wall to keep off a dreadful fire, even that consuming one of God's justice. And there is good reason for it. (a) No righteousness of man is perfect, and therefore no righteousness of man is justifying. (b) The design of God was to justify us in such a way as to strip us of all matter of glorying in ourselves, and therefore it is not by any righteousness of our own. (6) We are therefore justified by a righteousness imputed to us. The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. It is not physically or corporally applied to us, but juridically, and therefore imputed to us, and that for justification (Rom. v. 9). III. **USE OF COMFORT.** The comfort of a believer hath a strong and lasting foundation in the blood of Christ. 1. The title is cheering. The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son. The titles of the blood of God and the righteousness of God are enough to answer all objections, and testify a virtue in it as incomprehensible as that of His Godhead which elevated it to an infinite value. What wounds are so deep that they cannot be healed by the sovereign balsam of so rich a blood? The blood of Christ is as much above the guilt of our sins as the excellency of His person is above the meanness of ours. 2. And who can fathom the comfort that is in the extensiveness of the object? All sin. All transgressions to it are like a grain of

sand or the drop of a bucket to the ocean—no more seen or distinguished when it is swallowed up by that mass of waters. It is a plenteous redemption. 3. And doth not the word "cleanseth" deserve a particular consideration? What doth that note but—(1) Perfection? It cleanseth their guilt so that it shall not be found (Jer. l. 20). What can justice demand more of us, more of our Saviour, than what hath been already paid? (2) Continuance of justification. The present tense implies a continued act. Hence will follow security at the last judgment. His blood cleanseth from all sin here, and His voice shall absolve from all sin hereafter.

IV. USE OF EXHORTATION. Have recourse only to this blood upon all occasions since it only is able to cleanse us from all our guilt. (*Bp. Hackett.*) *The cleansing blood*:—1. The blood of the Cross was royal blood. It is called an honour to have in one's veins the blood of the house of Stuart, or of the house of Hapsburg. It is nothing when I point you to the outpouring blood of the King of the Universe? It is said that the Unitarians make too much of the humanity of Christ. I respond that we make too little. If some Roman surgeon, standing under the Cross, had caught one drop of the blood on his hand and analysed it, it would have been found to have the same plasma, the same disc, the same fibrine, the same albumen. 2. It was unmistakably human blood. 3. I go still further, and say it was a brother's blood. If you saw an entire stranger maltreated, and his life oozing away on the pavement, you would feel indignant. But if, coming along the street, you saw a company of villains beating out the life of your own brother the sight of his blood would make you mad. You would bound into the affray. That is your brother, maltreated on the Cross. 4. It was substitutionary blood. Our sins cried to heaven for vengeance. Some one must die. Shall it be us or Christ? "Let it be me," said Jesus. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

The cleansing blood:—I. CONSIDER THE CONNECTION OF THE TEXT. The blood of Christ and its cleansing efficacy are associated with fellowship. The question is, what is the relation between them to which the apostle adverts? Without it we can have no fellowship with the Father (Heb. ix., x.). The penitent sinner, carrying the blood of Jesus in the hand of faith, and sprinkling the mercy-seat, may have fellowship with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The same law obtains in holding fellowship with the Son also. How impressively this lesson is taught in His own ordinance of the Supper. That ordinance is the outward expression of fellowship with Him, and it thus teaches how that fellowship is to be enjoyed. Nor is there any other basis on which believers can hold fellowship with one another as the followers of Christ. They may truly say, "The cup of blessing which we bless," &c. The death of Christ is the bond of their union. They are alike sinners, and have no hope but the death of Jesus. It is to be borne in mind also that fellowship in all these views with the Father, and the Son, and believers, as it is begun by the reception of this doctrine, must ever be maintained by the application of it. We can never come to God otherwise, and we may always come to Him by the peace-speaking blood of Jesus. II. THE BLESSED DOCTRINE ITSELF. The statement expresses both the efficacy of the blood of Christ and the reason of it. 1. Whence does the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin arise? Not merely from Divine appointment, although there was a Divine appointment. That appointment was made because it was seen by the Omniscient mind to be effectual. It constituted at once the "power of God and the wisdom of God." 2. The efficacy itself—"It cleanseth from all sin." (1) There is original sin. (2) There is again actual sin. Alas! how mightily does it prevail. (3) There is, farther, the guilt of sin. How fearfully is it accumulated! Which of God's commandments has not the sinner broken? (4) So also is there the power of sin. It might be supposed this was not to be overcome. (5) Yet again there are the sins of believers. (6) Even the best services of believers, however, are not faultless. Often, while others applaud them, they are ashamed to lift up their faces to the Lord. They can look for acceptance only through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ. 3. Blood must be sprinkled before it is made effectual. Under the law, all things were purged by blood. The book, the people, the tabernacle, and the vessels of the ministry, were sprinkled with blood. So must it be with our souls. It will not suffice that the blood of Christ has been shed. It must be applied to the conscience. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Cleanseth from all sin*, so that men are made like to God, in whom is no darkness (ver. 5). The thought here is of "sin" and not of "sins"; of the spring, the principle, and not of the separate manifestations. (*Bp. Westcott.*) "*Cleanseth.*" Not a coming to the fountain to be cleansed only, but a remaining in it, so that it may and can go on cleansing; the force of the tense a continuous

present, always a present tense, not a present which the next moment becomes a past. (*Frances R. Havergal.*) "*The blood*":—This word declares more vividly than any other could the three great realities of the Christian belief—the reality of the manhood of Jesus, the reality of His sufferings, the reality of His sacrifice. (*Expositor's Bible.*)

Vers. 8-10. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.—*Assumptions of sinlessness*:—This is a strong and clear statement, the utterance of an apostle who speaks out of the fulness of a long and ripe Christian experience, not simply in his own name, but as the organ or representative of the whole Church. Let us consider its bearing:—I. ON OUR CONCEPTIONS OF TRUTH. Truth is a wide word, but I use it here in St. John's sense as equivalent to the truth of the gospel—the truth which regulates the kingdom of God. It is only by patient study and the contributions furnished by prayerful research on the part of her members, the Church can enrich herself with the full contents of Divine revelation. An infallible judgment can only exist in a perfect or sinless character. Prejudice prejudices a question in accordance with its own bias, and unduly discounts the evidence that looks in another direction. Personal feeling blinds us to considerations whose force would otherwise be recognised. Attachment to a theory, or a traditional interpretation, makes us unwilling to acknowledge frankly what tells against it, and tempts us to do violence to the natural meaning of words. To assume, therefore, that because a man is a Christian, sincere, devout, and earnest in his faith, he must be unquestionably right in his views of Scripture, is to assume what the apostle here condemns. It is to suppose that he is absolutely free from all that can limit, warp, or obscure the understanding, that is, that he has no sin. But you may ask—Does not this destroy the infallibility of the apostles themselves? They never claimed to be sinless. I answer to this that for special purposes the apostles were enriched with supernatural gifts. But still farther you may ask—What, then, does St. John mean when he says: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things"? "All things," if you look at the verse that follows, St. John uses as equivalent to "the truth"—the distinctive truth of the gospel. As a man who does not know his own mind is at the mercy of every wind of opinion, and exercises no determining influence upon events, so the Church of Christ unless it knew her Lord, and the peculiar truths which centre in His Person, would be simply and hopelessly lost amid the conflicting eddies of the world. But this is quite a different matter from affirming that every individual Christian will come to correct conclusions on all the debatable subjects that lie within the compass of revelation. Let us, therefore, while we hold fast the faith and rest upon it, as the broad foundation of all our hope, ever remember our own proneness to go astray and to attach a disproportionate importance to secondary truths. II. IN RELATION TO GUIDANCE IN PRACTICAL CONDUCT. When we know the gospel we wish to act in accordance with it. In other words, we desire not only to be led into right views of truths, but also into right conceptions of duty. In reality these two are one. To think truly will secure our acting rightly. If we should require to be perfect or sinless men in order to be sure that our conclusions in regard to all matters connected with Revelation are certainly right, we should require to be the same kind of men to be sure that our decisions in points of duty are never wrong. In both cases we must remember that if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and that wherever sin is there is liability to error, just as there is to pride, or hatred, or open transgression. Perhaps you will say: "Nobody seriously doubts this; but do we not receive in answer to prayer what will neutralise this confessed liability, and guide us to a right decision?" How, then, does God answer our prayer for guidance? He gives us what the Scripture calls grace, inward enlightenment, or strength, according as the occasion may require. But you must not imagine that grace, any more than sin, is a physical quantity which may occupy a definite space within a man's nature. Grace operates throughout our whole nature, renewing the will, cleansing the affections, stimulating and purifying thought, acting as an antidote in all these directions to the power of sin. Without it sin works unqualified by any Divine control, with it sin is always under restraint. Hence no act or perception on the part of a Christian man is wholly the result of grace, but more or less of grace and more or less of sin. In short, it is the outcome or exercise of a sinful nature in which both co-exist. We may interpose an obstacle that will seriously hinder His working or wholly arrest it. Conscience may have been deadened through previous inconsistency or unfaithfulness. The heart may have grown

sluggish through neglect. Our affections may have spent themselves too lavishly upon earthly things, and grown dull and indifferent towards things above. Temptation may have prevailed against us, and through pride or unwatchfulness we may have admitted strange and alien guests into the sanctuary of the soul. Is it possible that in such circumstances we should be keenly sensitive to the motions of the Divine Spirit? May we not miss the intimations we might otherwise detect, or yield but a halting and imperfect response to their monitions? The truth is, we conceive of prayer and its results in too mechanical and unspiritual a way. We imagine we are always ready and able to receive, no matter what our petitions may include. It does not always occur to us that spiritual blessings must be spiritually discerned and spiritually used. And hence a double danger ensues. When Christians pray, and the answer does not correspond to the request, their faith in prayer is apt to be shaken. They fail to realise that His answer can never be heard so long as the ear is stopped; that His grace can never enter as long as the heart is pre-occupied with other things, and unwilling to surrender itself wholly to Him. Or, on the other hand, they may assume that a Divine light is leading them on, where they are following in reality the sparks of their own kindling. They become dogmatic and opinionative, when there is no warrant for their being so. They contract a self-confidence, and conviction that they are always right, which is apt to blind them to many pitfalls, and dig a ditch for their own feet. (*C. Moinet, M.A.*)

Self-delusion as to our state before God:—It is among the most potent of the energies of sin, that it leads astray by blinding, and blinds by leading astray. I. THE APOSTLE DECLARES THAT THE IMAGINATION OF OUR OWN SINLESSNESS IS AN INWARD LIE. To believe or to deny the possibility of Christian "perfection" is to leave the motives of the spiritual life almost wholly unchanged, as long as each man believes (and who on any side doubts this?) that it is the unceasing duty of each to be as perfect as he can, and, in the holy ambition of yet completer conquest, to "think nothing gained while aught remains to gain." Were a perfect man to exist, he himself would be the last to know it; for the highest stage of advancement is the lowest descent in humility. As long as this humility is necessary to the fulness of the Christian character, it would seem that it is of the essence of the constant growth in grace to see itself lowlier as God exalts it higher. Besides this operation of humility, it must be remembered that the spiritual life involves a progressively increasing knowledge of God. Now, though the spirit of man assuredly must brighten in purity as thus in faith and love it approaches the great Source of all holiness, it must also appreciate far more accurately the force of the contrast between itself and its mighty model; and thus, as it becomes relatively more perfect, it may be said to feel itself absolutely less so. Nay, I doubt not but it is the very genius of that Divine love which is the bond of perfectness, to be lovingly dissatisfied with its own inadequacy; and such a worshipper in his best hours will feel that, though "love" be, indeed, as these divines so earnestly insist, the "fulfilling of the law," his love is itself imperfect, deficient in degree, and deficient in constancy; and that in this life it can, at best, be only the germ of that charity which, "never-failing," is to form the moving principle of the life of eternity. But it is not of those, whom some would not only pronounce "perfect," but enjoin to feel and know themselves such; it is not of those, who (as I would rather represent it) doubt all in themselves while they doubt nothing in Christ, that I have now to speak, but of those whose cold hearts and neglectful lives utter the bold denial of a sinlessness which the lips dare not deny; who "cry out of the depths," indeed, but not for rescue or redemption; who cannot know God as a Redeemer, for they cannot feel from what He is to redeem! II. IT WOULD BE VAIN TO THINK OF SPECIFYING THE PARTICULAR CAUSES OF THE EVIL; WE CAN ONLY SPEAK OF SOME OF THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES ON WHICH IT RESTS. The whole mystery of deceit must be primarily referred to the governing agency of Satan—in this sense, as in every other, "the ruler of the darkness of this world." It is a living spirit with whom we have to contend, as it is a "living God" whom we have to aid us. The cunning of the Serpent alone can reach the master-subtlety of making the soul of man do his work by being its own un pitying enemy, and traitor, and cheat; it is only the "father of lies" that thus can make the wretched heart a liar to itself. But then it is certain, that as God is pleased to work by means, and to approach circuitously to His ends, so, still more, is His enemy bound to the same law; and that, therefore, as the Creator's path of light, through providence and grace, is occasionally discoverable by experience, and directed on principles already prepared to His Almighty purposes, so also may the crooked ways of the Evil One, similarly

adjusted, be similarly sought and known. 1. The first and darkest of his works on earth is also the first and deepest fountain of the misfortune we are now lamenting—the original and inherited corruption of the human soul itself. It is ignorant of sin, just because it is naturally sinful. We cannot know our degradation, we cannot struggle, or even wish, to rise, if we have never been led to conceive the possibility of a state higher than our own. Nature can teach discontent with this world, but there her lesson well-nigh closes; she talks but vaguely, and feebly, and falsely of another! Now, if this be so, have we not for this mournful unconsciousness of our personal depravity a powerful cause in that depravity itself? 2. If Nature alone—treacherous and degraded nature—is silent in denouncing sin—if she has no instinctive power to arouse herself, what shall she be when doubly and trebly indured by habit; when the malformed limb becomes ossified; when that faculty which was destined to be, under Divine guidance, the antagonist of nature, “a second nature,” as it is truly called, to reform, and resist, and overlay the first—is perverted into the traitorous auxiliary of its corruption? We know not ourselves sinners, because from infancy we have breathed the atmosphere of sin; and we now breathe it, as we do the outward air, unceasingly, yet with scarcely a consciousness of the act! The professional man, for example, who may become habituated to the use of falsehood or duplicity, as little knows how to disentangle this, even in conception, from the bulk and substance of his customary business—to regard it as something separately and distinctively wrong—as men think of mentally decomposing into their chemical constituents the common water or air, every time they imbibe them. The mass of men know these, as they know their own hearts, only in the gross and the compound. Is it not thus that constant habit persuades us “we have no sin” by making us unceasingly sin; and increases our self-content in direct proportion as it makes it more and more perilous? 3. As men copy themselves by force of habit, they copy others by force of example; and both almost equally foster ignorance of the virulence of the evil they familiarise, and perpetually reconcile the sinner to himself. Mankind in crowds and communities tend to uniformity; as the torrents of a thousand hills, from as many different heights, meet to blend in one unbroken level. And in that union, the source of so much happiness and of so much guilt, each countenances the other to console himself; we are mutual flatterers only that the flattery may soothingly revert to our own corruptions. 4. How the power of this universality of sin around us to paralyse the sensibility of conscience is augmented by the influence of fashion and of rank—not merely to silence its voice, but to bestow grace, and attraction, and authority upon deadly sin—I need not now insist. Philosophers tell us that the least oscillation in the system of the material universe propagates a secret thrill to its extremity; it is so in the every act of social man; but the disorders of the upper classes are publicly and manifestly influential—they are as if the central mass itself of the system were shaken loose, and all its retinue of dependent worlds hurled in confusion around it. 5. But to example and authority, thus enlisted in the ranks of evil, and thus fortifying the false security of our imaginary innocence, must be added such considerations as the tendency of pleasure itself, or of indolence, to prolong this deception, and our natural impatience of the pain of self-disapproval. Now you know there are two ways of easing an aching joint—by healing its disease or by paralysing the limb. And there are two ways of escaping an angry conscience—by ceasing from the evil that provokes it or by resolutely refusing to hear its voice, which soon amounts to silencing it for ever. And all this proceeds in mysterious silence! There are no immediate visible attestations of God’s displeasure to startle or affright. All our customary conceptions of the justice of heaven are taken from the tribunals of earth, and on earth punishment ordinarily dogs the heels of crime. Hence, where the punishment is not direct, we forget that the guilt can have existed. The very immutability of the laws of visible nature, the ceaseless recurrence of those vast revolutions that make the annals of the physical universe, and the confidence that we instinctively entertain of the stability of the whole material system around us, while they are the ground of all our earthly blessings, and while they are, to the reason, a strong proof of Divine superintendence, are as certainly to the imagination a constant means of deadening our impressions of the possibility or probability of Divine interposition. Surely the God will break forth at length from His hidden sanctuary, and break forth, as of old upon the Mount, “in fire and the smoke of a furnace.” (*Prof. W. A. Butler.*)

Deceiving ourselves:—How many are there in this congregation, I wonder, who would really say to themselves, “We have no sin”? I do not mean, would say it

just in that form. Of course not. We are too well educated for that. But practically would say it, and would resent with considerable indignation that any one else should call them sinners. I want you to consider how thus we do deceive ourselves. 1. In the first place, we balance off against our sins certain pseudo virtues. We keep, not very correctly, and certainly not with very good bookkeeping, a debtor and creditor account. Over against the evil in our lives we set certain credit marks. We attend church with regularity—perhaps we say our prayers, as the phrase is; perhaps we read our Bible, if we are not too much driven in the morning with engagements, or too sleepy at night to take it in. And therefore we are virtuous. It is very curious how loth men are to accept this most fundamental and simple truth of religion that God is a righteous God and demands righteousness of His children, and demands nothing else. So the ancient Jew was ready to give Him sacrifice and fast-days and pilgrimages; and the ancient Pharisee stood up and prayed within himself, saying, "I thank God I am not as these other men are, extortioners, adulterers, unjust, or even as this publican; I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all I possess." "Mr. Pharisee, are you fair-minded in your dealing and honourable in your work with other men?" "I fast twice a week." "Are you kind in your family, patient with your children, chivalric to your wife?" "I fast twice every week." "Did you ever cheat a man in a bargain?" "I give tithes of all I possess." "Have you ever had a share in political corruption?" Oh, it is an old trick, this balancing of one thing over against another, and thinking ourselves excused from righteousness by something else than righteousness. We wonder that in the Middle Ages men would put money into the coffers of the Church and think that balanced their iniquity. We will have no such system of indulgences as that; but there is many a person to-day in the nineteenth century who lives a life as grasping, as selfish, as covetous, as greedy, as ambitious as his neighbour, and thinks the account is balanced because he goes to church and says his prayers, or because he has at times ideals in which he rejoices. He thinks he is a Christian because he admires Christ; because sometimes his heart fills with emotion as he sings. 2. We assume virtues that are not our own, and think ourselves virtuous because of them. Men pride themselves on their family. Yes, it is a good thing to belong to a good family. But what have you and I done in our family? How much wiser or richer or better or nobler or worthier is it because we are members of it? Men glorify themselves because they are Americans. "I thank God that I am not a Turk, that I am not a Russian, that I am not even an Englishman—I am an American." What have you done that is worthy of the name America? That is the real question. What have you done to make politics purer, to make honour brighter, to make the America of the future more assured? So men pride themselves on their Church. "I am a member of a benevolent church—look at the list of its contributions; I am a member of a working Church—see its activities, how much it is doing." How much are you doing? How much did you put into that list of benefactions? You are not generous because you belong to a generous Church. Men that laugh openly at the theological doctrine of imputation practise it continually, only they impute to themselves, not the virtues of their God or of their Christ, but the virtues of their fellow-men. Men believe in the solidarity of the race for the purpose of satisfying their pride, but not for the purpose of developing their humility. 3. As men take the virtues that do not belong to them, see them and rejoice in them, so they do not take the vices that belong to them. They see the sins of others—not their own. The spendthrift can read you a homily on the vices of the miser, but it never occurs to him that there is any vice in the life he is leading; the miser will read you an eloquent sermon on the vices of the spendthrift, but it never occurs to him that there is no sin in clutching a dollar until it cries. How quick are we to see the vices of our neighbours; how slow to turn our eyes upon our own! 4. We disguise our vices. We give them false names; we dress them up as virtues and call them such, and really think they are. And this young man who never has earned a dollar in his life by solid, honest industry, takes the money that his father has earned by hard industry and throws it freely, hither and yon, among his fellows, and calls it generosity, and thinks it is. He does not know that it is mean to spend in lavish living what another has toiled to acquire. 5. We change the form of our sin, and then think we are done with it. We think that sin consists in the shape it assumes; we do not know that it consists in the evil heart that beats within. We read our Ten Commandments over and say to ourselves, "Thou shalt not kill." "Thank God we do not live in a murdering age, when men go forth to

slay and kill." "Thou shalt not steal." "Thank God there are no robber barons left that ravage the land and leave it desolate." "Thou shalt not commit adultery." "We are in America, and we will have no polygamy under our flag." And still the cry of the children goes up from the slums, and the polluted air squeezes the life out of the little ones, and they die three times as fast as they would in healthy atmosphere, because greed walks the earth. Lust there, as in polygamy. Covetousness there, as in robber barons. Murder there, as in unsheathed swords. We have not ceased to sin because we have changed the form of our sinning. 6. And when we can no longer disguise from ourselves that we are doing wrong, we hide behind all manner of excuses. We say: "Yes, I admit this is not quite right, but everybody does it." Or, "I admit this is not quite according to the Gospel ideal, but the Gospel ideals are not practicable in the nineteenth century." Or, "I could not help it; I was made so." And so, little by little, we creep up to that excuse so common in our day: "There is no real moral evil, there is no real sin." What men call sin is only good in the making. It is the greenness of an apple that by and by will be ripe. It is the foolishness of a child who by and by will be wiser. The fall is only a fall upward. Let us not trouble ourselves, therefore, but wait. There is a good God, and by and by He will bring all things right. Think Canada thistles are wheat in the making; think a broken arm is an athlete's arm in the making; think that diphtheria and scarlet fever are health in the making; but do not think that to be estranged, self-willed, and self-indulgent is holiness and righteousness and goodness in the making. But more than of any other class deceive themselves by not thinking about the matter at all. They cast up accounts to see how their finances balance; disease comes into the house, and the doctor inquires as to their health, and so they ascertain their physical health-balance, but they never strike a balance in the moral realm. No captain on the Atlantic Ocean will allow twenty-four hours to go by without taking his reckoning, if he can, and finding out where he is. But it will be very strange if in this congregation this Sabbath morning, large as is the proportion of professing Christians, there are not many of us that never have taken an observation and do not know or even ask ourselves what is our moral latitude and longitude. (*Lyman Abbott.*) *The heart sinful*:—The seeds of all my sins are in my heart, and perhaps the more dangerous that I do not see them. (*R. McChyne.*) *Sins of heart*:—Motives that seem to you as white as the light may prove, when seen through His prism, to be many-coloured. Aims that seem straight as a line may, when tested by the right standard, prove indirect and tortuous. We shall find at last that, in many cases, what we have thought devotion was indeavour; what we have thought love was struck through with the taint of selfishness; what we have thought faith was utterly vitiated with the poison of unbelief. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive.**—*The primary condition of the Divine fellowship fulfilled in the believing confession of a guileless spirit*:—I. It is not deliberate hypocrisy that we are (ver. 8) warned against; but a far more SUTLE FORM OF FALSEHOOD, and one apt more easily to beset us, as believers, even when most earnestly bent on "walking in the light as God is in the light." 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 etherialised 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 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 one, is into the monstrous fanaticism which would make spiritual illumination compatible with carnal indulgence and worldly lust; 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 no apostle's own day, furnishes more than one instance of men thus deplorably "deceiving themselves, saying they have no sin." II. As to THE CONFESSION (ver. 9),

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. 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. 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. 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). 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 and asking God 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 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 insinuating themselves into our bosoms. 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. 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. (R. S. Candlish, D.D.)

*Denial of sin and confession of sin with their respective consequences:—*I. THE DENIAL OF SIN. "If we say that we have no sin," &c. To the enlightened Christian mind it is a matter of wonder how any sane man could deny his own sinfulness. 1. Some claim an absolute exemption from sin. Such were the Pharisees of old. 2. Some say they have no sin, by claiming a relative exemption from sin. They lay stress upon their religious observances, their morality, their benevolence, their fair-dealing, &c. II. THE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS DENIAL OF SIN. "We deceive ourselves," &c. In worldly matters to be deceived is a grave consideration. For thus to deny our sin is—1. To deny indisputable facts. 2. To deny the infallible testimony of the Word of God. 3. To deny the moral propriety of the scheme of redemption. The whole need not a physician, &c. No sinner, no Saviour. III. THE CONFESSION OF SIN. "If we confess our sin," &c. IV. THE CONSEQUENCE OF CONFESSION OF SIN. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (D. Clark.)

Honest dealing with God:—"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all"; and consequently He cannot have fellowship with darkness. Our tendency to be false is illustrated in the chapter before us, for we find three grades of it there. There is first the man who lies; "If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." We say and do that which is untrue if while abiding under the influence of sin and falsehood we claim to have fellowship with God. If this tendency is unchecked, you will find the man growing worse and doing according to the eighth verse, wherein it is written, "We deceive ourselves." Here the utterer of the falsehood has come to believe his own lie; he has blinded his understanding and befooled his conscience till he has become his own dupe. He will soon reach the complete development of his sin, which is described in the tenth verse, when the man, who first lied, and then, secondly, deceived himself, becomes so audacious in his falseness as to blaspheme the Most Holy by making Him a liar. It is impossible to say where sin will end; the beginning of it is as a little water in which a bird may wash, and scatter half the pool in drops, but in its progress sin, like the brook, swells into a torrent deep and broad. Our only safe course is to come to God as we are, and ask Him to deal with us, in Christ Jesus, according to our actual condition. I. LET US CONSIDER

THE THREE COURSES laid open before us in the text. I will suppose that we are all earnestly anxious to be in fellowship with God. Our deceitful heart suggests to us, first, that we should deny our present sinfulness, and so claim fellowship with God, on the ground that we are holy, and so may draw near to the Holy God. I mind not how honest your parentage, nor how noble your ancestry, there is in you a bias towards evil; your animal passions, nay more, your mental faculties are unhinged and out of order, and unless some power beyond your own shall keep your desires in check, you will soon prove by overt acts of transgression the depravity of your nature. It is not uncommon for others to arrive at the same conclusion by another road. They have attained to the audacity to say that they have no sin by divers feelings and beliefs which they, as a rule, ascribe to the Holy Spirit. Now, if any man says that all tendency to sin is gone from him, that his heart is at all times perfect and his desires always pure, so that he has no sin in him whatsoever, he may have travelled a very different road from the character we just now warned, but he has reached the same conclusion, and we have but one word for both boasters, it is the word of our text—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Some, however, have reached this position by another route. They plead that though it may be they have sin, yet they are not bad at heart; they look upon sin as a technical term, and though they admit in words that they have sin, yet they practically deny it by saying, "I have a good heart at bottom; I always was well-intentioned from the very first. I know I have—of course we all have—erred here and there, but you cannot expect a fellow to be perfect. I can't say I see anything to find fault with." In so saying or feeling you prove that the truth is not in you—you are either deplorably ignorant as to what holiness is, or else you are wilfully uttering a falsehood; in either case the truth is not in you. A fourth sort of persons say the same thing, for albeit they confess that they have sinned, they think themselves now to be in a proper and fit condition to receive pardon. "We have prayed," say they; "we have repented, we have read the Scriptures, we have attended public worship, and are as right as we can be: we have tenderness and contrition, and every right and proper feeling; our wonder is that we do not receive salvation." The idea of fitness is only another form of the vain notion of merit, and it cannot find an inch of foothold in the gospel. True penitents can see nothing in themselves to commend them to mercy, and therefore they cast themselves upon undeserved favour, feeling both unworthy and unfit, but hoping to receive forgiveness freely. The second course which is open to us is the one which I trust the Divine Spirit may lead us to follow, to lay bare our case before God exactly as it stands. "Lord, I own with shame that as my nature is corrupt such has my life been; I am a sinner both by nature and by practice." Make the confession of the two things, of the cause and the effect, of the original depravity—the foul source, and then of the actual sin which is the polluted stream. When a sinner feels he has no natural fitness for receiving the grace of God; when a broken spirit cries, "Oh, what a wretch I am! Not only my past sin but my present feelings disqualify me for the love of God; I seem to be made of hell-hardened steel," he is confessing that sin is in him. It is in your vileness that sovereign grace o'er sin abounding will come to you and cleanse you, and therefore the sooner you come to the honest truth the better for you, for the sooner will you obtain joy and peace through believing in Christ. The text means just this—treat God truthfully, and He will treat you truthfully. The blood of Jesus Christ has made a full atonement, and God will be faithful to that atonement. He will deal with you on the grounds of the covenant of grace, of which the sacrifice of Jesus is the seal, and therein also He will be true to you. Now, there are still some who say, "Well, yes, I think I could go to God in that way, sir, but oh! my past sins prevent me. I could tell Him I am sinful, I could ask Him to renew my nature, I could lay myself bare before Him, but oh! my past sins; all might yet be well if I had not so sinned! Ah, that brings out a third course which lies before you, which I hope you will not follow, namely, to deny actual sin. The very thing which you cannot do would seal your doom, for it would lead you to make God a liar, and so His Word could not abide in you. II. LET US NOW CONSIDER HOW WE CAN FOLLOW THIS course, which is the only right one, namely, to confess our sin. Do not shirk the facts or shrink from knowing their full force, but feel the power of the condemning law. Then recollect your individual sins; recall them one by one—those greater sins, those huge blotches upon your character, do not try to forget them. If you have forgotten them, raise them from the grave and think them over, and feel them as your own sins. Think of your sins of omission, your failures in duty, your short-

comings in spirit. Repent of what you have done, and what you have not done. Think of your sins of heart. How cold has that heart been towards your Saviour! Your sins of thought, how wrongly your mind has often judged; your sins of imagination, what filthy creatures your imagination has portrayed in lively colours on the wall. Think of all the sins of your desires and delights, and hopes and fears. Let us take care that we confess all. And then let us try to see the heinousness of all sin as an offence against a kind, good, loving God, a sin against a perfect law, intended for our good. III. LET US CONSIDER WHY WE SHOULD CONFESS SIN. 1. I shall say first, do so because it is right. Religious lie-telling is a dreadful thing, and there is plenty of it; but if I could be saved by masking my condition before God, I would not like to be saved in that way. 2. Moreover, upon some of us it is imperative, because we cannot do anything else. 3. Besides, suppose we have tried to appear before God what we are not, God has not been deceived, for He is not mocked. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The conviction and confession of sin*:—The apostle had said, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." But who are understood by "us"? Certainly not all men. The impenitent, and unbelieving, and ungodly, have not been cleansed from their sin. I. CONVICTION OF SIN. "If we say that we have no sin," &c. Many will own they are sinners, and yet think they may come to God as they are, independent of Christ and His blood. They do not say so, but they act so. Listen to their prayers, and they call upon God without any mention of His Son. It is obvious they have no sense of their real position in His sight. They have not entered into the spirit of Christ's words, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." In this sense they say "they have no sin." The same may be said of their fellowship with Christ. They may think of Him as a model of perfection. But His death does not specially affect them. They attach no peculiar efficacy to the shedding of His blood. And the reason is, they have no adequate sense of their sin. So also as to fellowship with believers. They can meet them as friends, and neighbours, and brethren, but they have no perception of the communion arising out of the blood of Christ. They do not feel either its necessity or influence as a bond of union. Of all such the apostle testifies "they deceive themselves." They are deceived by an imagination of their own excellence, while in reality they are dead in sin. It is said of them farther, "the truth is not in them." Its light may be all around them, but it has never penetrated to the inner man. Such was the condition of the church at Laodicea (Rev. iii. 17, 18). The same admonition and counsel are applicable to all who have not an adequate idea of their sinfulness, such an idea as to make them feel that their only hope is the blood of Christ. II. CONFESSION OF SIN. "If we confess," &c. There is a close and natural connection between conviction and confession. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If the heart be touched by a sense of sin it cannot be restrained from pouring forth the accents of humiliation. What are the features of such confession? It is sincere, coming from the heart. It is full, no attempt being made to hide anything from God or ourselves. It is special, not satisfied with acknowledging sin generally, but noting special offences and dwelling on their aggravations. It fills the mind with grief for sin. It rouses to the hatred of it. It constrains to an immediate and total abandonment of it. It is such as was exemplified by David (Psa. li.). To such confession there is the most gracious encouragement in the text, "If we confess our sins." This is all we are required to do. We are not sent on some toilsome pilgrimage, or subjected to some round of self-mortification. We are to come to God as we are—now—and with the whole burden of our sin upon our hearts. Then God is "faithful to forgive us our sins." He has said in His Word "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." It is not presumption, therefore, to expect pardon on confession. On the contrary, it is distrust of God to doubt it. And observe the gracious yet warning words that follow, "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." They are designed to meet the jealousy of the awakened soul. We are taught that God will accompany His pardon with sanctifying grace. Our plan would be to put purity first and pardon next. But God's plan is the reverse. We are to accept pardon at once, and it will be accompanied and followed by holiness. III. HABITUAL PENITENCE FOR SIN. "If we say we have not sinned," &c. Observe the difference between this verse and the eighth. There the expression is, "if we say we have no sin"; here it is, "if we say that we have not sinned." The former describes the condition of the man who does not feel his present sinfulness, the latter of him who justifies his past conduct. The former needs to be convinced of his sinfulness, the latter to be exercised aright about his past transgressions. In

the one verse there is reference to the beginning of the Divine life, in the other to the maintenance of it. The one consists in the conviction which brings the sinner to the blood of Christ for salvation, the other in the habit of penitence which must accompany him as long as he lives. Let me exhort you to cultivate this habit. Many important ends are served by it. It will keep us mindful of what we once were, and of how much we are debtors to Divine grace. It will stimulate us to devote ourselves more unreservedly to God in the future. It will promote watchfulness against temptation. It will strengthen faith. Calling to mind how graciously God dealt with us in other days, we are encouraged to trust Him to the end. It will kindle repentance. Like Ephraim of old, it will lead us to say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" It will promote holiness. It will urge perseverance.

(*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*) *Confession of sin*:—There are two ways in which men are wont to make confession of their sins, which appear to my mind the same as making no true confession at all. One is to acknowledge sin, in general terms, as a customary and proper part of public, domestic, or private devotion, but without any accompanying feeling of contrition, desire of amendment, or even thought of personal application. The other is to confess our sinfulness in such extravagant terms that the force of the confession is destroyed by its palpable discordance with nature and truth. It is to confess that we are all utterly vile and abominable. In a common congregation of worshippers such language is senseless and nugatory. It is so, because it is felt to be inapplicable, even by those who think it religious to use and assent to it.

I. DO WE THEN SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN? Certainly not. If we say so, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. There is not one of us who will not see loads of sin pressing heavily upon his life if he will send his reflections back and impartially retrace its history.

1. We can all of us look back on our childhood. And what see we there? Perfect innocence, spotless virtue, blameless affections? Who is there of us who never caused his parents' hearts to ache—I do not mean ignorantly, but knowingly and recklessly?

2. Is our survey more or less satisfactory, do our reflections become more or less gratifying, when we leave the days of our childhood and come forward to those of our youth? Youth is life's seedtime. Did we prepare ourselves for the harvest as we ought to have done? Did we acquire all the knowledge that was within our reach? What attention did we pay to the formation of our character? Did we guard it anxiously, and mould it carefully, and keep it away from polluting influences, and lay strong foundations for it, and build it up, and beautify it, after the best and purest models; or did we give it over to chance, to custom, and to the world? Did our Maker have as much of our time, thoughts, desires and obedience as was due to Him?

3. And I call on those who have advanced into the middle regions of life to say whether, when youth passed away, folly and sin went with it, and left their maturer years to the peaceful and undisturbed dominion of wisdom and virtue. Have they acquired such habitual self-command that they constantly and willingly obey the commandments of God? Do they walk within their houses with perfect hearts? Do they never take a hard and griping advantage of their neighbour's weakness, or ignorance, or necessity?

II. WHAT THEN WILL BE THE EFFECT OF A TRUE CONFESSION OF SIN? The mere verbal confession of sin can be of no possible benefit to us; can do us no more good than the repetition of any other words, with or without meaning. But if our confession is accompanied by a sincere conviction of sin, we shall be forgiven and cleansed by a faithful and just God. There is nothing vindictive in the government of God. We shall not be made to suffer for sins which we have renounced, and which our spirit now looks upon with abhorrence, as foreign and hateful to it. The character which we have formed here will accompany us to the unseen world; and as it has worked out our pardon here, so has it prepared for us eternal felicity.

(*F. W. P. Greenwood, D.D.*) *Confession*:—Prayer (in the wide sense of the word) is a varied melody, now rising, now falling upon the ear. It has its bass notes and its high notes, its plaintive cadences and its jubilant cadences, or (to transfer the imagery from the domain of sound to that of sight), it has its gleams of sunlight and its depths of shadow. It is with the low and plaintive cadences of prayer that we purpose to deal, in other words, we shall speak of confession of sin.

I. Confession of sin should be a REAL ELEMENT IN THE DEVOTIONAL SYSTEM OF EACH ONE OF US. Confession is nothing more nor less than the practical recognition of our sinfulness and of our sins. Now both our sinfulness and our sins are always with us in this life. As saith the Scripture, "There is no man that sinneth not."

II. If Confession is to become in reality part and parcel of the religious system of each individual—if it is to enter

as an element into his devotion—IT MUST NOT BE POINTLESS AND VAGUE, BUT DEFINITE AND PRECISE. It must turn upon those particular faults of conduct and character, of which we are personally conscious. It must aim, not merely at bringing to light erroneous conduct, but at ascertaining the general drift and current of our character. It must not rest contented with a general survey of our faults; but must unmask, if possible, the ruling passion. But it may be asked, Does not our Church place in the forefront of her public worship a general confession; a confession whose ample terms embrace all mankind universally, and which seems to eschew all details of wrong sentiment and wrong action? No doubt she does so; but her intention, here and elsewhere in her formularies, is that under the general expression should be represented in the mind of each individual that individual's case. Each man is to glance mentally at his own sins as he repeats the general confession; at his own wants as he follows the collects and Lord's Prayer; at his own mercies as he follows the general thanksgiving. It is to be found in that ordinance of the Levitical law, which prescribes the expiation of the sin of the whole congregation of Israel. In every genuine act of public confession, hearts from all quarters encircle the Victim, and bring each one its own burden and each one its own bitterness, to lay it with the outstretched hand of faith on that sacred and devoted Head.

III. BUT DOES THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND RECOMMEND TO HER SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN THE MATTER OF CONFESSION NOTHING OF A MORE SPECIFIC CHARACTER THAN WHAT WE HAVE ANNOUNCED? What the Prayer-book says amounts to this: "If, on examination of your state of health, you find yourself sick, I recommend your seeking out and resorting to a discreet and learned physician." The implication clearly is, whatever some devout and good men may have conceived to the contrary, that, if we find ourselves well, or at least able to treat our own case, we shall not resort to him. Is not this the plain rule of reason in the analogous case of the treatment of the body? I am not ignorant of the answer which may be made. Is there any one of us, our opponents ask triumphantly, who enjoys spiritual health, who has not a sin-sick soul—any one of us who has not to take up into his mouth this testimony respecting himself, "There is no health in me?" Then, if all be spiritual invalids, all should resort regularly and habitually to the physician. We reply by admitting fully that every soul of man is sinful, and as such has in it the seeds of spiritual disease. But this is a totally different thing from saying that every conscience of man is morbid, perplexed with scruples, agitated with timid doubts, and unable by God's grace to guide itself. Confession to our Lord Jesus Christ, and that self-scrutiny which must precede it, are most healthful practices; but they require to have their tendencies counterbalanced and held in equipoise by devotional exercises of a contrary kind. Self-introspection may easily, and will certainly, become morbid if it be not checked by a constant outlooking of the mind. Look into yourself to see your own vileness, look out of yourself to Christ. The knowledge and deep consciousness of thy dark guilt is only valuable as a background on which to paint more vividly to thy mind's eye the rainbow colours of the love of Jesus. Walk abroad ever and anon, and expatiate freely in the sunlight of God's grace and love in Christ. A religion, if it is to be strong, must be joyous; and joyous it cannot be without the light of God's love in Christ shining freely into every corner of the soul. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

The true comfort:—Suppose the case of a man, the victim of a mortal disease, yet clinging eagerly to life: that man may find comfort from persuading himself that his complaint is but trifling and will speedily disappear; this is a false, deceitful comfort. Or he may derive comfort from knowing that, though his complaint be in itself deadly, yet he has at hand an infallible specific, in the use of which his disease will be eradicated, and his health restored. This is a true and solid comfort. It is even so in the concerns of the soul. The sinner may find comfort from trying to persuade himself that his sins, if any, are inconsiderable, and do not seriously affect the safety of the soul. This is a false and unscriptural source of comfort. Or else he may have a deep, overwhelming sense of his own vileness, of his naturally guilty, hopeless state, and yet be comforted by the assurance of God's forgiving love in Christ. This is a sure, Scriptural, and solid ground of comfort.

I. THERE IS A FALSE GROUND OF COMFORT THAT IS HERE CONDEMNED. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." While all, in so many words, allow that they are sinners, yet very many so qualify that confession as in effect to say "that they have no sin." 1. One, for example, when appealed to, says, "Oh, I know, of course, that I'm a sinner. All are sinners, but I'm not a great sinner. I am not, perhaps, what I ought to

be; I have no doubt done many things that were wrong. Every one does the same; but I have committed no sin of a gross or heinous character." 2. Others, while admitting that they are sinners—grievous sinners—yet so extenuate and explain away their sins as virtually to affirm that they "have no sin." They have done very wickedly; but then it has been through surprise, or ignorance, or the influence of others: the temptation has been so strong, and their natural weakness so great, that they were overcome; they had, however, no deliberately wicked purpose, and God will, they trust, on that ground, mercifully overlook their sins. 3. Others, again, while admitting that their sins are neither few nor trifling, yet trust that their good deeds so preponderate as that God will in His mercy overlook what they have done amiss. They open a kind of debtor and creditor account with heaven. May it not be feared that much of almsgiving, much of attendance at the house of God, and at sacraments, is to be ascribed to motives not very different from these? II. "IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS." The confession here meant must be, of course, not a mere cold and formal one—the mere confession of the lip. No; it must be sincere and earnest, the unveiling of the heart to Him "to whom all hearts be open." It must, furthermore, be penitent and contrite; we must be taught to mourn over sin. We must confess our sins, then, with a sincere, penitent, believing heart; and, if so, "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But are not God's faithfulness and justice pledged to punish sin and to destroy the sinner? Yes, out of Christ it is so, but in Christ God stands to the sinner in a new covenant relationship, and He who was "faithful and just" to destroy is, in Christ, "faithful and just to forgive us our sins." God is "faithful to forgive"; for God has promised, through Christ, forgiveness to the believing penitent; and "He is faithful that promised." (*W. A. Cornwall, M.A.*) *Confession of sins and the power of absolution*:—If we say that we have no sin, we sin in saying so, for we give God the lie (ver. 10). I. THE NECESSITY OF CONFESSION. If we confess God will forgive, not otherwise. Though we cannot of ourselves avoid those sins without the grace of God, yet we might, if we would have that grace which would enable us to avoid them. And if man hath not this grace of God, the want is not in God, but in ourselves. Our confession must be with a purpose of obedience for the time to come. Not every one that confesseth, "but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy." II. WHERE IS ANY TO TAKE OUR CONFESSIONS? Here is none in the text to confess to, if we had a mind to it. None indeed expressly named, but here is one plainly enough described, that can pardon our sins and purge us from all our iniquities; to whom can we better confess than to Him that hath the power of absolution? Would you know who this He is? "I, even I," saith God, "am He who blotteth out all your iniquities, and that forgiveth your sins" (Isa. xlii. 25). (*Bp. Sparrow.*) *Confession of sins the sure condition of forgiveness and cleansing*:—I. CONFESSION OF SIN. WHAT IS IT? Every one admits, in a general way, that confession of sin is a necessary condition of forgiveness. But in how many cases is this confession altogether unreal! 1. Every sin must be confessed. We must deal honestly with God. We must tell Him all that is in our hearts. 2. No sin must be excused. It must be confessed precisely as it is. Nothing must be added to it, nothing taken from it; there must be no false or affected exaggeration, and still less must there be any attempt at palliation. 3. Sin when once confessed must be at once forsaken. Joined with this inward abandonment of sin there must of necessity be the outward abandonment also. We must forsake our sins, both in disposition and in action. We must forsake our sin and follow righteousness. II. FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND CLEANSING FROM UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. God bestows this double blessing on those who confess their sins. Two benefits are spoken of; yet, though separable in idea, they are not divided in fact. 1. Forgiveness of sins. To understand what this is we must consider what effects sin produces on those who commit it in their relations towards God. (1) It calls forth the anger of God. (2) It condemns the sinner to the punishment of death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"; "the wages of sin is death." 2. Cleansing from unrighteousness is the second benefit which God bestows on those who confess their sins. Righteousness is not only imputed to us, it is also implanted within us. We are renewed unto righteousness. III. THE CERTAINTY THAT WHERE SIN IS CONFESSED, IT WILL BE FORGIVEN AND CLEANSED AWAY. 1. Because He is faithful. God is always true to Himself; He cannot deny Himself. One is true to himself when he does that which he must

do, according to the constitution of his whole being. And so it is with God—"God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all"; He is only, altogether, and always, Light; He must, therefore, ever manifest Himself as such. He has bound Himself to us by His covenant of mercy, and His covenant is inviolable. If we confess our sins, we are walking in the Light; and God, who is Light, cannot deny Himself, cannot prove unfaithful to that fellowship of Light. 2. But, again, our confidence rests not only upon the faithfulness of God, but also upon His righteousness. The righteousness of God not only prompts Him to punish unrighteousness; it also prompts Him to cleanse and deliver from unrighteousness. And surely, if the righteousness of God is vindicated and magnified in the punishment of men for their unrighteousness, much more thoroughly is it vindicated, and much more illustriously is it magnified, in delivering men from their unrighteousness. Have we not here a hopeless schism, a division of righteousness against itself? The solution of this problem depends on the following considerations: (1) All things are possible with God. His resources are infinite. His wisdom is unsearchable. We may be sure that He is able to solve the problem, that He is able to meet and satisfy both demands of righteousness. (2) God, in His manifold wisdom, has solved the problem. The Cross of Christ, the death of God's Son, supplies a full answer to every question. Righteousness has been satisfied, in all its requirements, by the sacrifice which was offered once for all on the accursed tree. All unrighteousness of men has been judged, condemned, and punished in the death of Christ; all unrighteousness of men has been abolished, cleansed, and purged away in the death of Christ. (3) But, again, both aspects of righteousness are conserved by the way in which we become partakers of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It is, as we have seen, by confession of our sins that we attain this. Now, when we confess our sins we do two things: we condemn our sins, and we renounce them. We cease to yield our members as weapons of unrighteousness unto sin; we henceforth yield our members as weapons of righteousness unto God. Being made free from sin, we become the servants of righteousness. All this is brought about through our being made partakers of Christ's death. (*J. J. Glen-Kippen.*)

Confession of sin:—I. Confession must be PARTICULAR. While you confess only in general terms, you confess others' sins rather than yours; but this is it to descend into our own hearts, and find out our just and real debt; to charge ourselves as narrowly as we can, that He may discharge us fully, and forgive us freely. II. Confession must be UNIVERSAL, that is, of all sin, without partiality or respect to any sin. I doubt if a man can truly repent of any sin, except he in a manner repent of all sin, or truly forsake one sin, except there be a divorcement of the heart from and forsaking of all sin; therefore the apostle saith, "If we confess our sins," not sin taking in all the body and collection of them. Then there lies a necessity upon us to confess what we have; we have all sin, and so should confess all sins. III. Confession should be PERPETUATED and CONTINUED as long as we are in this life. That stream of corruption runs continually, let the stream of your contrition and confession run as incessantly; and there is another stream of Christ's blood, that runs constantly too, to cleanse you. (*H. Binning.*)

Honest confession best:—If you have done wrong, don't go days and weeks under conviction of sin. Suppose that I had lied to my partner in business. Suppose he were to charge it upon me, and I were to try to evade the matter, and were to oblige him to chase me through a whole week, until at last he cornered me so closely that, seeing escape to be impossible, I gave in, and said, "Well, I have lied, and I am sorry," just because I could not help yielding. How mean a spirit should I thus show! How much better if, upon sudden press of temptation I had sinned, for me to stop at once when the lie was charged upon me, and say honestly, blushing with shame, "Yes, I am wrong, all wrong. I am sorry, and will do so no more." Why will not men, when they see their guilt and danger, face right about, and make short work with themselves? (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Insincere confession:—Pastor R., of Elberfeld, was once sent for to see a dying man. He found the patient really very ill, and entered at once into an earnest conversation about the state of his soul. The patient began, in the strongest terms, to describe himself as the very chief of sinners, and declared that his past life filled him with abhorrence. He continued so long in this strain that the pastor could scarcely find an opportunity to speak. At last, taking advantage of a pause, he remarked gently, "It was then really true what I heard of you?" The patient raised himself in the bed, stared in astonishment at the pastor, and demanded, "What, then, have you heard? No one, in truth, can say anything against me;" and continued, in a strain of unbounded self-

satisfaction, to tell of his virtues, and recount all his good deeds, pouring out at the same time a torrent of execrations against the slanderers who had tried to injure his character. "It was not from foes or slanderers," said the pastor, "that I heard it, but from yourself; and now it grieves me to hear that you do not believe what you said." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Divine forgiveness:—Consciousness of sin in every man. Hence the inevitable need of forgiveness. Is there any answer on the part of God to this need? Current answers—1. He never forgives: He cannot, in the nature of the case. Moral forces are as irresistible, moral laws as inexorable as physical laws. The man who breaks law must take the consequences. This is the answer of the positivist and the Deist. A terrible response to our keen need. 2. He forgives capriciously: Those born of good parents, who have lived in Christian society, who have a fortunate mental constitution, who have done nothing flagrantly bad, such are forgiven. This answer is still more terrible than the other; it shows favour to those who have had better opportunities. It cannot be admitted. 3. He forgives universally: without reference to circumstances, or distinction of character, because He is kind. This is the worst answer of all. By it moral law is annulled, and chaos comes into the spiritual universe. God ceases to have regard to His holiness. It is incredible that this should be the answer to man's need of forgiveness. 4. The answer of the gospel: God forgives universally on the ground of the atonement, on the condition of repentance and faith. This answer suits God's character and man's need. It makes forgiveness attainable, and upholds moral order. It shows the preciousness of the Bible, argues its Divine origin, the privilege of accepting God's offer, and the infinite hazard of neglecting or refusing it. (*R. S. Storrs.*) *Justice satisfied* (with Rom. iii. 27):—When the soul is seriously impressed with the conviction of its guilt, it is afraid of God. It dreads at that time every attribute of Divinity. But most of all the sinner is afraid of God's justice. The sinner is right in his conviction that God is just, and he is moreover right in the inference which follows from it, that because God is just his sin must be punished. Except through the gospel, justice is thine antagonist. It cannot suffer thee to enter heaven, for thou hast sinned. Is it possible, then, that the sinner cannot be saved? This is the great riddle of the law, and the grand discovery of the gospel. I. HOW HAS JUSTICE BEEN PUT ASIDE? OR RATHER, HOW HAS IT BEEN SO SATISFIED THAT IT NO LONGER STANDS IN THE WAY OF GOD'S JUSTIFYING THE SINNER? And through that second representative of manhood, Jesus, the second Adam, God is now able and willing to forgive the vilest and justify even the ungodly, and He is able to do so without the slightest violation of His justice. 1. Note the dignity of the victim who offered Himself up to Divine justice. 2. Think of the relationship which Jesus Christ had towards the great Judge of all the earth, and then you will see again that the law must have been fully satisfied thereby. 3. Furthermore, consider how terrible were the agonies of Christ, which, mark you, He endured in the stead of all poor penitent sinners, of all those who confess their sins and believe in Him; I say when you mark these agonies, you will readily see why justice does not stand in the sinner's way. II. IT IS AN ACT OF JUSTICE ON GOD'S PART TO FORGIVE THE SINNER WHO MAKES A CONFESSION OF HIS SIN TO GOD. The same Justice that just now stood with a fiery sword in his hand, like the cherubim of old keeping the way of the tree of life, now goes hand in hand with the sinner. "Sinner," he says, "I will go with thee. When thou goest to plead for pardon I will go and plead for thee. Once I spoke against thee; but now I am so satisfied with what Christ has done that I will go with thee and plead for thee. I will not say a word to oppose thy pardon, but I will go with thee and demand it. It is but an act of justice that God should now forgive." Sinner! go to God with a promise in your hand—"Lord, thou hast said, 'He that confesseth his sin, and forsaketh it, shall find mercy.' I confess my sin, and I forsake it: Lord, give me mercy!" Don't doubt but that God will give it you. Take that pledge and that bond before His throne of mercy, and that bond never shall be cancelled till it has been honoured. But, again, not only did God make the promise, but according to the text man has been induced to act upon it; and, therefore, this becomes a double bond upon the justice of God. Do you imagine when God has brought you through much pain and agony of mind to repent of sin, to give up self-righteousness, and rely on Christ, He will afterwards turn round and tell you He did not mean what He said? It cannot be. No, He is a just God, "Faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." One more aspect of this case. God's justice demands that the sinner should be forgiven if he seeks mercy, for this reason: Christ died on purpose to secure pardon for every seeking soul. Now, I hold it to

be an axiom that whatever Christ died for he will have. III. I must just enter into some little EXPLANATION OF THE TWO GREAT DUTIES THAT ARE TAUGHT IN THE TWO TEXTS. The first duty is faith—"believeth in Christ"; the second text is confession—"if we confess our sins." I will begin with confession first. Whenever grace comes into the heart it will lead you to make amends for any injury which you have done either by word or deed to any of your fellow-men; and you cannot expect that you shall be forgiven of God until you have forgiven men, and have been ready to make peace with those who are now your enemies. If you have done aught, then, against any man, leave thy gift before the altar, and go and make peace with him, and then come and make peace with God. You are to make confession of your sin to God. Let that be humble and sincere. Then the next duty is faith. "Whosoever believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life, and shall never come into condemnation." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's justice in forgiveness*:—Any consideration of the justice of forgiveness must be based upon a true estimate of what sin is, and what punishment is. We must clearly recognise that sin is evil in itself and in its inherent effects and not merely evil by the arbitrary decree of the lawgiver. Sin is that which is absolutely bad for man, and generally speaking it is not bad because forbidden, but forbidden because bad. When man sins he is doing something unworthy of himself, something contrary to nature, (if by nature we understand the original nature in which God first created him). Sin being thus man's evil, the good God, because He is good, will do all that is possible to keep His children from sin. And one of the ways of keeping man from sin is by ordaining punishment for sin. Punishment is made conditional on sin in three ways. Sometimes it is simply a sentence pronounced upon sin by arbitrary decree. Sometimes it is the fruit of sin, growing out of and resulting from the sin, in the nature of things. Sometimes it is the sin itself intensified, robbed of its pleasure and pressed as a burden and a curse upon the man. For example: if a schoolboy is habitually idle and neglects his studies we may trace out a retribution connected with the sin in each of these three several ways. 1. The master punishes the boy for his idleness. This is a punishment which comes a simple sentence upon the sin, not as a natural or necessary consequence of the sin. 2. A worse retribution comes upon the boy when he grows up. He finds himself not fitted for the position in life which he might have occupied if he had had a better education. 3. He may experience a still more terrible punishment. He did not learn industry at school and his idleness clings to him all his life. Thus he has a triple punishment. I may give you from the Bible an allusion to each of these. For the first case we have the sentence pronounced upon the murderer in Genesis (ix. 6). For the second we may think of idleness leading to want, that natural law endorsed by St. Paul when he wrote (2 Thess. ii. 10). For the third we may take the solemn sentence (Rev. xxii. 11). With this third class of punishment the human legislator and the human judge have little or nothing to do. God alone can make sin to be its own punishment. With the second class the legislator rather than the judge is concerned, lest unwise legislation should promote wrong doing by viciously shielding the offender from the natural consequences of his sin. The first class of punishment, attending upon the wisdom of the lawgiver and the sentence of the judge, is that which man can ordinarily inflict or remit. And it is in studying the application of such punishment that we shall find that human justice which is to be a light to show us something of Divine justice. God's ordinance in punishment may operate to keep men from sin in either of two ways: (1) by exhibiting God's sense of the badness of sin, and so training men to see for themselves the badness of sin, and to avoid it; or (2) by holding forth retribution as a terror, that those who are too degraded to recognise the evil of sin may be deterred from sin by fear of the evil which they do recognise, the evil of pain or loss. This is the purpose of righteous punishment. However wicked a person may be, to inflict pain or loss upon him, which is not calculated to do some good in the way of remedying sin, either by reforming the particular offender or by deterring others from wrong, would be torture, not correction, cruelty and not righteousness. It follows that if the end which punishment is designed to accomplish has been attained by some other means, punishment becomes unrighteous, for it is only the end which justifies our infliction of pain or loss upon our brother. If no good will come either to the individual or to the world from our inflicting the punishment, it is right to remit the punishment. This surely must be the key to our interpretation of the statement that God is righteous or just to forgive us our

sins. If His justice is analogous to man's justice then His purpose in punishment is to exhibit His own sense of the sinfulness of sin and to deter from sin. It is plain that before He can remit the punishment which we deserve, some other means must be taken to show the world how God esteems sin. It is plain that the lesson of God's true regard for sin must be learned by the sinner, and it must produce in him the penitence which will restrain him from sin. A simple gospel of the forgiveness of the penitent without the death of Christ would not have fulfilled these three conditions. If the gospel proclaims the remission of the punishment which was to evidence God's condemnation of sin, this evidence must be displayed to the world in some other way. It is displayed from the Cross of Christ. God exhibits the deathliness of sin, not in the death of the sinner but in the death of Christ. But the sinner to be forgiven must have learnt this lesson. Here you see the necessity of faith in Christ crucified as a condition of pardon. And your faith in the Cross must produce penitence: otherwise there is nothing to supply the place of punishment to deter from sin. But it is obvious that if the final penalty of sin is not merely attached to it by arbitrary decree, but is something which follows as the fruit and consequence of sin, the pardon which is given us must be something more than an arbitrary warrant of acquittal; it must involve in some way a change in our spiritual growth and bearing; for the fig-tree cannot bear olive berries neither the vine figs, nor can sin grow into holiness nor a wicked heart bear fruit unto eternal life. This teaches us again that repentance is an absolute necessity as a condition of pardon. Perhaps we may sometimes have thought of repentance as a condition arbitrarily imposed: we may have said that God does not choose to forgive us unless we repent. But in the light of our present consideration this would seem to be an imperfect statement of the case. We must rather say that in the nature of things (if punishment is the growth and fruit of sin) there can be no such thing as the remission of punishment without a change—a conversion—of the man. It is this thought of sin becoming ultimately its own punishment that stands in the way of a belief in a universal restoration, a universal salvation. But even if we take the other view of hell and think of it simply as pain arbitrarily imposed as a penalty for sin and capable of being arbitrarily withdrawn, there is yet an objection to our believing in any ultimate restoration. We might, of course, believe that when a sufficiency of punishment has been inflicted, the soul might then be delivered from hell. But what then? If it be still evil, it will be a hell to ITSELF. Yet again, the good God will do all that may be for us; for He is just to forgive us our sins. But it may be said—if the forgiveness of our sins is thus a matter of justice, what have we to do with prayer for pardon? God will forgive us if it is right: He will not forgive us if it is not right to forgive us. What is the use of confession and prayer? The answer is, that the right or wrong of forgiveness depends on the disposition of the sinner. Has he or has he not learned the lesson of the Cross? Is he or is he not firmly convinced of the deathliness of sin? that it is an evil upon which God cannot look with indifference? that it is and ever must be the object of God's wrath and condemnation? And if the sinner is in that state of heart and mind which makes forgiveness fit for him, then confession and prayer are the spontaneous expression of his penitence. (*W. A. Whitworth, M.A.*)

God's justice in forgiveness:—In a conversation which the Rev. Mr. Innes had with an infidel on his sick-bed, he told him that when he was taken ill he thought he would rely on the general mercy of God; that as he had never done anything very bad, he hoped all would be well. "But as my weakness increased," he added, "I began to think, 'Is not God a just being as well as merciful? Now what reason have I to think He will treat me with mercy, and not with justice?' and if I am treated with justice," he said, with much emotion, "WHERE AM I?" "I showed him," says Mr. Innes, "that this was the very difficulty the gospel was sent to remove, as it showed how mercy could be exercised in perfect consistency with the strictest demands of justice, while it was bestowed through the atonement made by Jesus Christ. After explaining this doctrine, and pressing it on his attention and acceptance, one of the last things he said to me before leaving him was, 'Well, I believe it must come to this. I confess I see here a solid footing to rest on, which, on my former principles, I could never find.'" (*K. Arvine.*)

Spiritual cleansing:—The trees and the fields are clothed new every year in the freshest and purest hues. In the spring all the colours are bright and clean. As the summer goes on the leaves get dark and grimy. Sometimes a shower of rain makes them a little fresher, but they are soon dirtier than ever again. They all fall in the winter. The tree cannot cleanse its own leaves, dirty with the city's smoke, but God in His own time

cleanses it, and gives it an entirely new suit. The little rain cleansings, soon to be dirtied again, are the partial reformation which men make for themselves, saying: "I will stop this habit, or that other. I will be a better man"—yet not doing it in God's strength. The new white robe which God gives the trees is the robe of Christ's righteousness. The difference is that in the eternal kingdom our robe of Christ's righteousness will never be soiled, for there is none of the defilement of the earth.

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1-6. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.—Preventatives against sin.—The connection between chapters i. and ii. seems to be this: I have taught you something of the nature and universality of sin, and of the deceivers who say they have no sin, but you are not to understand me as teaching that sin is an element of our being, or attached to us by any absolute necessity, or infused into us by the will or authority of the Deity, or of such might that resistance is vain; on the contrary, the main object of my epistle is, "That ye sin not." Ye are not to yield to sin, but to resist it to the uttermost. **I. THE CHILDREN AND THE ADVOCATE.** 1. The word *τεκνία*, "little children," is a diminutive from *τέκνον*, and we, having no principle in our language for forming diminutives, or perhaps having lost it, must translate by the two words "little children." The Latins say "Filioli," the Germans "Kindlein," the Italians "Filioletti." The French are as poor as ourselves in this respect, and must say "Mes petits enfans." Such forms of expression in all languages denote endearment and affection. All the most valuable articles in nature are small—the iron, the lead, the silver, the gold, the diamonds of the mine, are all diminutives compared with the rocks, the mountains, and the strata of the globe. It is so in grace also, for the Church of the Son of God, though forming an innumerable company in the heavenly Jerusalem, yet, when compared with the millions of mankind who live and die in their sins, are "a little flock" (Luke xii. 32), but in them and with them are found all the riches of Jehovah's mercy, all the wondrous manifestations of His love, all the glories of the eternal kingdom. (1) The name, therefore, refers to the believer as an object of special and tender care. Ye are the children of my warmest love over whom I rejoice continually. Ye are separated from the world, but ye are of more value in the sight of God than the great world with its vanities, which are all destined to perish. (2) The purpose of my writing you is, that ye sin not. Ye are not the slaves of sin any more, but the freemen of the Lord Jesus. (3) I take "these things" to refer generally to the substance of the whole Epistle, but more especially to the first chapter; and hence we may learn what, in the mind of the apostle, are the best preventatives against sin. The preventatives are not in us, but in God. 2. Jesus, the "Advocate," is now brought before the mind of the children of God as the one all-sufficient fountain of forgiveness for the transgressions of mankind. **II. JESUS THE PROPITIATION.** 1. Then it is a fact that the eternal mercy has reached us in the person of our adorable Redeemer, and that in the shedding of His blood we have the means and the seal of peace with God. 2. But it is asserted that He is the propitiation for "our" sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (1) In the fullest, freest, and most admirable manner He has removed every barrier between us and God, and expiated for ever all our sins. (2) His love, His Cross, His religion, is not for one age, but for all ages, not for one nation or country, but for the whole world, and the promises of God give us assurance beforehand of its final triumph. **III. THE KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.** 1. There is but one way of knowing with certainty that we have known God, and that is by keeping His commandments. The knowledge which does not lead to holiness is not the knowledge of God. 2. There are two great centres in the moral universe around which the events, characters, histories, and destinies of the species gather, the true one and the false one, Christ and Satan, the author of all truth and the father of lies. The "lie" is the black bond which unites us to the prince of darkness, and "truth" is the golden chain which binds us to our Head and Master in heaven. The truth signifies in the New Testament the Christian religion—the genuine faith and practice of the gospel (John i. 14, 17, viii. 32, 40,

45, 46, xvi. 13, xvii. 17, xviii. 37; Rom. i. 8). IV. KEEPING GOD'S WORD. 1. The only way to arrive at perfection is by keeping the Word of God. (1) Love begins in the circle of the heart, and flows forth upon its objects in proportion to its fervour and strength. We cannot, therefore, even pretend to love God if He is not frequently the object of our thoughts, if He does not occupy a conspicuous place in our hearts. (2) Love is a strong passion. Its existence is easily traced by the joy which it gives, by the difficulties it surmounts, by the trials which it endures, and by the deeds which it accomplishes. Love should increase and strengthen by every fresh discovery of the beauty and excellence of its object. (3) How can we best increase this love to God? The answer is suggested in our text, namely, by "keeping the Word of God." The Bible is the directory of the saints, and holiness consists in obedience to its commands. V. THE BELIEVER'S COMMUNION WITH CHRIST AND WALK IN HIM. (*W. Graham.*) *Sinless aim of the guileless spirit—provision for its continued sense of sin:—*I. LET THAT BE YOUR AIM, TO "SIN NOT." Let it be your fixed purpose, not merely that you are to sin as little as you can, but that you are not to sin at all. 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. Believe these things, realise them, act them out. 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. III. WHY, THEN, IS PROVISION MADE FOR OUR SINNING STILL AFTER ALL? 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 cheers us on. He knows how at every step, in spite of all the encouragement given us beforehand, that we may 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 lie in wait to trouble us. 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. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *Warning and encouragement:—*I. THE SPIRIT OF THE APOSTLE'S ADDRESS. "My little children." Such words are felt to be peculiarly appropriate in him. They are suited to his character. He was gentle and loving. They are suited also to his age. He lived to be the oldest of all his companions in the apostolic ministry. It is a noble triumph of godliness when age is redolent with piety and retains the earnestness and diligence of youth. We may be also assured his words were suited to the success of his ministry. Of those whom he addressed it might be presumed there were many whom he might regard as "his children" in the highest and best sense. He was their spiritual father. In this there is an example to all who would be the teachers of others, whether pastors or parents, or any who would be their "helpers in Christ Jesus." Their spirit should be affectionate, "speaking the truth in love," ever "in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves." And their object should be the conversion of souls. II. THE DESIGN OF HIS WRITINGS. "These things write I unto you that ye sin not." His reference is manifestly to what he had written in the preceding chapter. And it is only necessary to look back on what he had written and see how fitted it was to discourage sin. Either the doctrine of the apostle or the practice of sin must be abandoned. They are wholly incompatible with one another. In this view he is not singular. Everywhere in the Divine Word the gospel of Christ is represented to be "a doctrine which is according to godliness." III. THE WORDS OF WARNING. "If any man sin," implying that, notwithstanding all he had said, "any man" might sin. The man in the apostle's view is the believing man. He may sin. Alas! no proof is necessary. One source is the remaining sinfulness of his nature. There is no doubt, also, that this tendency to sin in the believer is mightily strengthened by the temptation of the wicked one. His enmity is specially directed against the godly. Nor must we omit to notice the extreme danger to which the believer is exposed from the world. Its pleasures and honours and riches are dangerous in the extreme. In harmony with these views the Divine life is described in the Scriptures as a constant warfare. It need scarcely be said how necessary it is to be vigilant in maintaining it. Great interests are at stake. The law is that as sin

enters peace departs. The credit of religion, too, is bound up in the fidelity of those who profess it. Above all, the honour of Christ is concerned. He is calumniated as the "minister of sin" when those who bear His name dishonour Him. IV. THE DUTY AND REFUGE OF THOSE WHO ARE OVERCOME BY TEMPTATION AND BETRAYED INTO SIN. "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Such is the believer's privilege, but let us not overlook the duty involved in it. We must bring our cause to our great Advocate and commit it to His hands. V. THE ENCOURAGEMENT HELD OUT TO US TO MAKE OUR SUIT TO OUR GREAT ADVOCATE. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (*Jus. Morgan, D.D.*) *Believers exhorted not to sin* :—I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS COMMAND—"That ye sin not"? The general meaning of the word "sin" is intelligible to all. It is sin to violate the commands of God; but many things beside the direct breach in act of a positive injunction are sin against God. It is sin, according to the language of St. James, if any man "knoweth to do good and doeth it not." Not merely are sinful words condemned, but we are admonished that God regards the state of the heart. The Word of God enlarges the sense of this term beyond what is convenient to the self-righteousness of men to allow, and tells us that even ignorance of that which is right may be criminal before Him. The precept which bids us not to sin enjoins upon us that we make ourselves acquainted with what is sin and what is duty. II. Let us weigh well some of those many CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SHOULD INDUCE US DILIGENTLY TO SEEK TO ACCOMPLISH IT PERFECTLY. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." 1. We should not sin because God is a holy God and cannot endure sin. It is contrary to His nature, to His perfections, to His supremacy. It would involve the universe in ruin if permitted. 2. We should not sin, because that Saviour by whom we hope to reach eternal happiness hates sin. It dishonours Him amongst men. 3. Let us take care not to sin, because by that we grieve and we quench the Holy Spirit. 4. Again, we should not sin because sin indulged involves the soul in everlasting ruin. 5. That even if sin did not impair the hopes that a Christian entertains, it is certain to diminish the glorious reward which remains for those who serve Christ. 6. Moreover, in sinning we separate ourselves from communion with Him altogether while the sin lasts. 7. Let us recollect that when we sin against God we sin against our fellow-creatures too, because it is almost certain that our own sins involve others in our guilt and lead them to sin too. (*B. W. Noel, M.A.*) *The gospel prohibits sin* :—It is not asserted that you must be sinless before you are safe, but only that you must not presume that you are safe before the grace of God makes you long to be sinless. A soldier's uniform is to be worn only by a soldier, a student's gown only by a student, a saint's robe only by a saint. As we call him a soldier who has only just enlisted, as we call him a student who has only just entered college, we call him a saint who has only just begun to believe and has yet everything to learn and everything to feel that belongs to the sanctified life. Still a saint he must be, one whose vocation it is to be holy, and who strives daily to obey the Divine voice within him that is ever saying "Sin not, sin not, sin not," or he can have no interest in the Saviour's righteousness. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) *The knowledge of God preventive of sin* :—All the revelations of God and all His works in every department of His agency cry out to the justified man in one language and say to him, "Sin not." Call God what you will, name all His names, styles, and titles, spell all the characters of His glory, and you find in every one of them the charge, "Sin not." Is He light? then sin not, for sin is darkness. Is He life? then sin not, for sin will darken your souls and kill them. Is He love? then sin not, for sin against Him is not simple disobedience, it hath the abominable stain of ingratitude on it. Is He holy? then sin not, for this is most repugnant to His holiness, and if thou wouldst have Him look upon thee with favour thou must not look upon sin with favour or entertain it with delight. Is He great and powerful? then sin not, for that were madness. Is He good and gracious? then sin not, for that were abominable wickedness. Is He just? then sin not, for He will not acquit the wicked, nor hold them guiltless who do acquit themselves and yet hold by their sins. Is He merciful? Oh, then sin not, for wilt thou sin against the mercy that saveth thee? Look upon all His particular acts of care and favour towards thee; consider His judgments upon the world, upon the nation, and upon thine own person; put to thine ear and hear—this is the joint harmonious melody, this is the proclamation of all, that we sin not. (*Hugh Binning.*) *Christians have delicate perceptions of sin* :—A soul washed in the blood of Christ has very delicate percep-

tions. (*Steinhöfer*.) “*Sin not*”—Once I was travelling in Scotland, and I saw two people at a railway station hunting on a large time-table of the train service for a local train. Written on the time-table in great big letters were the words, “*SUNDAY TRAINS ONLY.*” These people wanted the week-day train, and ignored altogether the great big, bold letters which declared all the trains on the list to be special trains for Sunday. They were hunting in some out-of-the-way corner for a suitable train, utterly ignoring the words, “*Sunday trains only.*” Whose fault would it be if they came to a wrong conclusion? I thought to myself that this was just the mistake so many Christians make. God has written right across the Bible in great big words that no one should mistake, “*Sin not,*” and people look in some corner to see if they cannot find a text that can be made to say that we must sin a little. The whole Bible must be read in the light of the words, “*These things have I written unto you that ye sin not.*” The Bible is a holy book, and woe be to the man that would make it the minister of sin! (*Dudley Kidd*.) *Christian sin*:—A friend of mine was staying with a leader of a certain section of Christ’s Church who believed deeply in the necessity of daily “*Christian sin.*” On Sunday my friend spoke about the splendid deliverance at our disposal in Christ’s full salvation. On returning home to dinner my friend saw that he had offended his host by his bold words. “*I am sorry you spoke such unsound words this morning, as you will lead the young people especially into error, and discourage the little ones that believe in Christ,*” said the host. When my friend was alone, the daughter of the host, about sixteen years of age, came and said, “*Oh, I do wish I had only heard such words long ago. You spoke so differently from father; he tells us we must go on sinning all our life, and that thought always discourages me, so that I have never given my heart to Christ, but I want to tell you that I did so this morning as you were speaking, for the salvation you told us of was just what I want.*” Soon dinner was announced, and the morning’s service was the general topic. At once the daughter told of her new joy, and explained how that the offer of such a full salvation was the point that won her. Her father’s face fell as he explained that, in spite of the unpleasantness, he was bound, as a Christian, to expose the error taught by the guest, but loyalty to the truth compelled him to disregard any feelings of difficulty. The daughter felt very awkward, and said in her girlish way, “*Then how much must I sin every day, father? For I want to sin as little as possible.*” The question went like an arrow to the father’s heart. How could he tell his child to sin even a little every day? He burst into tears as he rushed out of the room, and was not seen till late in the afternoon, when he came in with a beaming face to beg pardon of his child, and to tell from a glad heart the power of Jesus to keep from all sin. (*Ibid.*) **And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.**—*Nature and ground of Christ’s advocacy as meeting the need of the guiltless spirit*:—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. I. He is “*JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS.*” Jesus! He is called Jesus because He saves His people from their 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! But the emphatic word here is “*righteous.*” This term may be understood 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. In any court in which I had a cause to maintain I would wish to have a righteous advocate. I do not want one to tell me smooth things, putting a fair face on what will not stand close scrutiny, getting up untenable lines of defence, and keeping me in good humour till ruin comes. Give me an advocate who, much as he may care for me, cares for honesty and honour, for law and justice, still more. Such an advocate is Jesus Christ for us in the high court of heaven; for He is “*Jesus Christ the righteous.*” 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 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.*” 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. He draws near; the Spirit so taking of what is His and showing it to me as to bring Him near. 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 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. Where, then, ye children of the light and of the day—ye followers 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? (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *The advocacy of Christ*:—I. OUR FAILURE. We are prone every moment to transgression. Oh, if we could take a survey of all the consequences to which every transgression on our part gives birth in an unseen world we should feel a force in these words, "if any man sin," that would prepare our hearts to contemplate with admiring gratitude the provision which even in such a case is made for ourselves. II. OUR SECURITY. "We have an Advocate with the Father." The law of God does not condemn any man before it hears him, and as the accused cannot appear in the courts of heaven to answer for themselves, they are heard there in the person of their Advocate. There are three qualifications necessary to constitute a powerful and successful advocate. 1. The first is zeal. If zeal in one who pleads a cause be a just requisite, then where would you find an advocate so admirably qualified for his office, in this respect, as the blessed Saviour? Think of His love for your soul. He redeemed us to God by His blood. Will He not plead for that which He has purchased with His own blood? Think of the relation in which He stands to you. It is your friend, your brother, who is your advocate with the Father. Can He be otherwise than zealously affected in your favour? Be not faithless, but believing. 2. There is another qualification for the work of an advocate not less needful than zeal—I mean wisdom. As the ability of a general consists much in his skill in choosing his position and in disposing of his troops, so an advocate has need of wisdom in selecting the ground on which he may act with advantage for his client. What consummate wisdom did Moses display in pleading the cause of Israel when they had made them a molten image in Horeb, and worshipped the golden calf! But in the text we have one greater than Moses, even Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 3. In order to preclude all possibility of failure, there is one further qualification requisite in an advocate, and that is merit. The intercession of one who has a claim upon the person with whom he pleads partakes of the nature of a demand, it has a force which is irresistible. Our cause is in the hands of Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. What further can we desire? Now, in conclusion, this text affords no ground for—1. Presumption. 2. Despair. (*J. Williams, M.A.*) *Christ our advocate with the Father*:—I. THE FACT AND PRESENCE OF SIN. Consider the true nature of the exhortation, "that ye sin not." Our fellowship with God does not influence His holy nature as the fellowship of men often influences us. The latter makes us blind to their faults. But our fellowship with God cannot lessen in any degree the grief for sin, or anger against it, which He felt at first when the rebel angels were driven from His presence. Now, the sins which believers commit against God may be divided into these two great classes:—1. Sins of ignorance and weakness. 2. Sins of presumption committed in face of the teaching of God's Word and the promptings of His Holy Spirit. The teaching of Scripture with regard to this subject is fitted to strike us with fear and trembling (Numb. xv. 30, 31; Heb. x. 26). And further, is there not much cause for serious alarm, seeing that acts of wilful sin soon develop the habit of wilful sinning, which is nothing short of apostasy from the faith as it is in Christ? II. THE PROVISION FOR SIN: AN ADVOCATE. It is quite true that God is ready to forgive; still, He is ready to forgive, not as an indulgent father nor as a lax judge, but only through the irresistible might and right of Christ's advocacy. III. THE BELIEVER'S ADVOCATE JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS. It is a common remark about law-courts that "he who appears as his own advocate has a fool for

his client." If this be true in an earthly court of justice, it is no less true in the court of heaven. 1. For he who is arraigned at God's bar is altogether unfit to plead his own case. Let us here consider, first, the unfitness of the unbeliever for this work. (1) He is ignorant of God's law. (2) He is ignorant of his own sin. (3) He is ignorant of the ruin which sin works. (4) He is ignorant of the holiness and justice of God. It is manifest that the unbeliever is altogether unfit to be his own advocate, and yet this is the office which those who reject Christ try to fill for themselves. 2. But the question may now perhaps be asked, Does the believer really require an advocate? He is not entirely ignorant of God's law and his own sin. But, what is more to the point, his knowledge of these, however imperfect it may be, is yet sufficient to show him the utter hopelessness of his case. 3. Christ must not be thought of as loving us more than the Father loves us, as more long-suffering, more easy-to-be-entreated, showing us more sympathy, or knowing better the weakness of our nature. Hence when Christ appears before the Judge and Father for a believer who has sinned, it is not with any weak form of intercession, but as our advocate at God's bar of judgment. He admits the sin; He approves of the law; He acknowledges the justice of the penalty; and yet, strange to say, He obtains for the accused a discharge from the bar. And why? Because He is the propitiation for our sin. (*Jas. Fenton, M.A.*) *Christ our advocate:—*

I. WHAT IS THE IDEA OF AN ADVOCATE WHEN THE TERM IS USED TO EXPRESS A GOVERNMENTAL OFFICE OR RELATION? An advocate is one who pleads the cause of another; who represents another, and acts in his name; one who uses his influence in behalf of another by his request. **II. PURPOSES FOR WHICH AN ADVOCATE MAY BE EMPLOYED.** 1. To secure justice, in case any question involving justice is to be tried. 2. To defend the accused. 3. To secure a pardon when a criminal has been justly condemned and is under sentence. **III. THE SENSE IN WHICH CHRIST IS THE ADVOCATE OF SINNERS.** **IV. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN HIS BEING THE ADVOCATE OF SINNERS.** 1. His being employed at a throne of grace and not at the bar of justice, to plead for sinners, as such, and not for those who are merely charged with sin but the charge not established. 2. His being appointed by God as the Advocate of sinners implies a merciful disposition in God. 3. That the exercise of mercy on certain conditions is possible. 4. That there is hope for the condemned. 5. That there is a governmental necessity for the interposition of an advocate; that the sinner's relations are such, and his character such, that he cannot be admitted to plead his own cause in his own name. **V. THE ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ADVOCATE UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES.** 1. He must be the uncompromising friend of the government. 2. He must be the uncompromising friend of the dishonoured law. 3. He must be righteous; that is, he must be clear of any complicity in the crime of the sinner. 4. He must be the compassionate friend of the sinner—not of his sins, but of the sinner himself. 5. He must be able sufficiently to honour the law, which sinners by their transgression have dishonoured. 6. He must be willing to volunteer a gratuitous service. 7. He must have a good plea. He must be able to present such considerations as shall really meet the necessities of the case, and render it safe, honourable, glorious in God to forgive. **VI. WHAT HIS PLEA IN BEHALF OF SINNERS IS.** 1. It should be remembered that the appeal is not to justice. Since the fall of man God has suspended the execution of strict justice upon our race. 2. Christ's plea for sinners cannot be that they are not guilty. 3. Christ as our Advocate cannot, and need not, plead a justification. 4. He may not plead what will reflect, in any wise, upon the law. 5. He may not plead anything that shall reflect upon the administration of the Lawgiver. In that case, instead of insisting that the sinner should repent, virtually the Lawgiver would be called upon Himself to repent. 6. He may not plead any excuse whatever for the sinner in mitigation of his guilt, or in extenuation of his conduct. 7. He cannot plead as our Advocate that He has paid our debt, in such a sense that He can demand our discharge on the ground of justice. 8. But Christ may plead His sin-offering to sanction the law, as fulfilling a condition upon which we may be forgiven. 9. But the plea is directed to the merciful disposition of God. He may point to the promise made to him in Isaiah, chap. lii., from ver. 13 to the end, and chap. liii., vers. 1, 2. 10. He may plead also that He becomes our surety, that He undertakes for us, that He is our wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption; and point to His official relations, His infinite fulness, willingness, and ability to restore us to obedience and to fit us for the service, the employments, and enjoyments of heaven. 11. He may urge as a reason for our pardon the great pleasure it will afford to God to set aside the execution of the law. "Mercy

rejoiceth against judgment." Judgment is His strange work ; but He delighteth in mercy. 12. He may urge the glory that will redound to the Son of God, for the part that He has taken in this work. 13. He may plead the gratitude of the redeemed and the profound thanks and praise of all good beings. Conclusion : 1. You see what it is to become a Christian. It is to employ Christ as your Advocate, by committing your cause entirely to Him. 2. He is an Advocate that loses no causes. 3. The safety of believers. Christ is always at His post. 4. The position of unbelievers. You have no advocate. God has appointed an Advocate ; but you reject Him. 5. I ask, Have you retained Him ? Have you, by your own consent, made Him your Advocate ? 6. Do any of you say that you are unable to employ Him ? But remember, the fee which He requires of you is your heart. All may employ Him, for all have hearts. 7. He tenders His services gratuitously to all, requiring nothing of them but confidence, gratitude, love, obedience. 8. Can any of you do without Him ? 9. Have any of you made His advocacy sure by committing all to Him ? If you have, He has attended to your cause, because He has secured your pardon ; and the evidence you have in your peace of mind. (*C. G. Finney.*)

*The gracious provision :—*I. IT IS UNIVERSAL. II. IT IS AMPLE. God does nothing by halves. The salvation promised goes down to the very roots of our nature. Nothing is kept back. III. IT IS TO BE HAD FOR THE ASKING. Earthly potentates require great influence to procure an audience with them, and then there is no certainty that the boon sought will be granted. IV. THIS ADVOCACY CAN BE HAD AT ONCE. Delay is not only dangerous, but unnecessary. V. IT IS SURE IN ITS EFFECT. None need doubt its efficacy for a single moment. (*J. O. Peck, D.D.*)

*The sinner's advocate :—*The Apostle John presents us with a very clear and emphatic testimony to the doctrine of full and free forgiveness of sin. I. THE SAINT IS STILL A SINNER. Our apostle says—"If any man sin." The "if" may be written in as small letters as you will, for the supposition is a matter of certainty. Far be it from us to deny that Divine grace has wrought a wondrous change, it were no grace at all if it had not. It will be well to note this change. 1. The Christian no longer loves sin ; it is the object of his sternest horror. The head and the hands of Dagon are broken, although the stump remains. 2. The Christian never sins with that enormity of boasting of which the unregenerate are guilty. His heart is broken within him when he has sinned. 3. Nor does he sin with the fulness of deliberation that belongs to other men. He who can carefully arrange and plot a transgression is still a true child of the old serpent. 4. And again, he never chews the cud of his sin ; for after he has sinned, however sweet it may have been in his mouth, it becomes bitterness in his bowels. 5. The Christian, unlike other men, never finds enjoyment in his sin ; he is out of his element in it. Conscience pricks him ; he cannot, even if he would, sin like others. 6. You will notice, too, how different the Christian is as to the habit of sin. The ungodly man is frequent in overt deeds of rebellion, but the Christian, at least in open acts of crime and folly, rather falleth into than abideth in them. There are all these degrees of difference between the Christian and the ungodly man, and far more, for the believer is a new creature, but for all that we must come back to that with which we started—that the Christian is a sinner still. 1. He is so from the imperfection of his nature. 2. As the Christian thus sins in his devout performances, so he constantly errs in the everyday tenour of his life. Sins of omission, to wit, how many of these may be compressed into a single hour ! 3. Moreover, many Christian people sin from certain peculiar infirmities. Some sin through shortness of temper. There are others who have a high and proud spirit, and if they fancy they are a little snubbed or put into the background at once they feel inclined to resent it. How many we know who have to contend with constant unbelief brought on through depression of spirits ! Their nerves, perhaps, have experienced a great shock at some period in life, and constitutionally they look always at the black side of affairs. And then we all sin from the assaults of evil. The temptations of the world, when we are thrust into ungodly company, and the trials of business and even of the household, all these in unguarded moments may take the Christian off his feet. II. OUR SINS DO NOT DEPRIVE US OF OUR INTEREST IN CHRIST. "If any man sin we have an advocate." Yes, we have Him though we do sin ; we have Him still. He chose us when we were sinners ; He loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins ; and He loves us still. III. THE ADVOCATE IS PROVIDED ON PURPOSE TO MEET THE FACT THAT WE ARE STILL SINNERS. 1. "Jesus." Ah ! then He is an advocate such as I want, for He loves me and takes an interest in me. 2. "Jesus Christ," the anointed. This shows His authority to plead. 3. "Jesus Christ the righteous." This is not

only His character, but it is His plea. It is His character, and if my advocate be righteous then I am sure He would not take up a bad cause. What can there be asked more for the sinner than this? Jesus Christ the righteous stands up to plead for me, and pleads His righteousness; and mark, He does this not if I do not sin, but if I do sin. There is the beauty of my text. IV. THIS TRUTH, SO EVANGELICAL AND SO DIVINE, SHOULD BE PRACTICALLY REMEMBERED. It should be practically remembered at all times. Every day I find it most healthy to my own soul to try and walk as a saint, but in order to do so I must continually come to Christ as a sinner. Make this essentially the rule of your life on particular occasions. Here let me say a word that may at once comfort and enlighten some who are in darkness. Perhaps you will tell me that your sin has had some gross aggravation about it. If you are a Christian it has, for a Christian always sins worse than other men; if the sin be not in itself so bad as other men's, it is worse in you. For a king's favourite to play the traitor is villainy indeed. Fly with a humble, contrite heart, and throw thyself at the feet of that Advocate, and by His blood He will plead for thee, and thou shalt prevail. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The intercession of Christ:—*

I. WHO IS IT THAT APPEARS FOR US AN INTERCESSOR IN HEAVEN? 1. It is not a poor sinner like ourselves, who has need first to intercede for the forgiveness of his own sins, and then for the people. 2. He is One who perfectly understands our condition and exposures. 3. He is not only in certain respects a member of the human family, and acquainted with their sufferings, but He is also a partaker of the essence and glory of the Godhead. 4. He hath peculiar advantages for the accomplishment of the great object for which He intercedes. **II. THE FACT THAT WE HAVE SUCH AN INTERCESSOR GIVES RELIEF TO HOURS OF DARKNESS.** **III. THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST IS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO EVERY HUMBLE BELIEVER THAT HE SHALL NOT FINALLY APOSTATISE FROM GOD.** **IV. THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST OUGHT TO BE REMEMBERED BY CHRISTIANS AND OFTEN INVOKED BY THEM.** (*J. Foot, D.D.*) *Christ our advocate:—*

I. THE HIGH PRIVILEGE WHICH CHRISTIANS ENJOY—they “have an advocate with the Father.” All the spiritual concerns of believers are lodged in Christ's hands. Whatever respects their present or future happiness, their growth in grace, their preservation from the evil in the world, and their introduction at last into the presence of God with exceeding joy, are matters which belong to Him. He is their advocate, and pleads their cause with His Heavenly Father. He obtains for them all needful blessings to conform them more to the Divine image—to abide with them as a comforter—to be the earnest of their future inheritance—to lead and guide them through all the trials of life—and finally to seal them to the day of redemption. **II. THE CHARACTER GIVEN TO THIS ADVOCATE**—“Jesus Christ the righteous.” 1. He is righteous before God—perfectly approved by Him. 2. He is righteous in the view of Christians themselves. In every part of His character, indeed, He is the object of their approbation. 3. He is righteous in all His requests. **III. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THIS HIGH PRIVILEGE OF CHRISTIANS HAS TO RELIEVE THE FEARS WHICH A SENSE OF REMAINING SIN OCCASIONS THEM.** 1. It secures them against the dread of condemnation, on account of daily transgressions. 2. It promotes their deliverance from remaining corruption. 3. It secures the acceptance of their religious duties. The Christian's person is at first accepted in the Beloved, and his religious duties are accepted in the same way. **Conclusion:** 1. How well qualified Christ is to be a Saviour! 2. The intercession of Christ is a full proof of the constancy of His love. 3. Be exhorted to a thankful improvement of your privileges. (*W. F. Ireland, D.D.*) *The true pleader:—*

I. Christ is the UNIVERSAL pleader. The high priest under the Jewish dispensation exercised his intercession for a nation, Christ for all. **II. Christ is a FAITHFUL pleader.** Some will take bribes. **III. Christ is a SUCCESSFUL pleader.** **IV. Christ is a SYMPATHETIC pleader.** **V. Christ is a PERPETUAL pleader.** Many priests passed away, Christ “abideth.” **VI. Christ is a SURE GROUND for pleading.** (*G. Calvert.*) *Christ our propitiatory Sacrifice and our advocate:—*

I. Let us begin with THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS; for although Christ's advocacy is first mentioned in the text, yet His propitiation is the foundation upon which His advocacy is built, and without the latter the former would be utterly unavailing. 1. The propitiatory sacrifice of Christ was vicarious; that is, it was offered for the sins of others. 2. The propitiatory sacrifice of Christ was appointed by God. 3. The propitiatory sacrifice of Christ was necessary. The known character of God clearly evinces the truth of this assertion. God is a being possessed of infinite knowledge and wisdom. By His unlimited knowledge He is acquainted with every possible scheme by which any

end may be accomplished; and by His perfect wisdom He always chooses that particular plan which, upon the most extensive view of things, is best for carrying His designs into effect. We are sure that God loved His Son too dearly to give Him up to the most unexampled sufferings, if these had not been necessary for the expiation of our sins. 4. The sacrifice of Christ has fully answered the end for which it was appointed. It were absurd to suppose that a plan originating from the most perfect wisdom should fail of accomplishing the purpose intended. Besides, let us reflect for a moment upon the nature of that sacrifice which was offered for our sins, and we must be convinced that it has made complete satisfaction. Our text informs us that He is the propitiation for our sins. He!

II. Let us now consider CHRIST'S ADVOCACY WITH THE FATHER. The particular manner in which Christ pleads our cause at the court of heaven is a point upon which mortals cannot speak with certainty. Whether He employs words in His intercession in the same manner that He did upon earth is a question which we are not qualified to decide. If He does, it must be only in a general manner, because it is impossible that His humanity, which is finite in its nature, can employ language capable of representing the boundlessly diversified circumstances of His people. It must also be evident that Christ's advocacy, in whatever it consists, is not intended to produce any alteration in the Divine mind towards His people.

1. Christ is completely qualified for being our Advocate. 2. Christ's advocacy is founded upon His propitiation. His advocacy is not, properly speaking, a supplication; it is a claim founded upon right. 3. Christ's advocacy with the Father is always prevalent. (*D. Inglis.*) *Christ the Advocate of sinners:—*

I. THE NATURE OF THE OFFICE. It supposes—1. An offender. "All have sinned." A man cannot deny this without contradicting God's word. 2. An accuser. Alas, we have many accusers. Our own consciences accuse us. The devil accuses us. The law of God accuses us. 3. A judge. God the Father is the Judge. It is He whom we have offended. 4. A defence. II. THE SUITABLENESS OF THE OFFICE.

1. His person. "Jesus Christ." Jesus, a Divine Saviour. Christ, the Messiah, anointed of God to the office of mediator. We are not trusting our eternal interests in the care of one of whom we know nothing, or one who bears no endearing relation to us; but One whose personal excellences we are well acquainted with. 2. His qualifications. "Jesus Christ the righteous." He is righteous in the most extensive and unlimited sense. His human nature was without spot. His Divine nature threw unexampled merit into every action.

3. His plea. He admits the claims of God's law and the justice of its denunciations, but pleads that He has borne the curse for us, and that therefore pardon and justification may be safely extended to us. 4. His petitions. What does He plead for? For everything that a sinner needs for His present and eternal welfare.

Conclusions: 1. Let every man consider the importance of committing His eternal interests to the advocacy of Christ. This is to be done by faith in Christ, and prayer to God in reliance on Christ. 2. Let no one doubt whether Christ will undertake His cause. 3. Would you be sure you have Christ for your advocate? Prove it by obedience to Him. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

Christ our Advocate:—

I. THE NOTION OF CHRIST'S ADVOCACY; or explain His character as an Advocate. It conflicts in the three following particulars. 1. Christ's exhibiting or presenting Himself above in heaven, before His Father, in our name and behalf. 2. This is also performed by a signification of His mind and will on our behalf; though I take it to consist chiefly in actions, yet not wholly, as some do. There is, moreover, I apprehend, as belonging to it, a making known of requests. 3. We may reckon, as comprised within the advocacy of Christ, His presenting and recommending our regular prayers and requests to the Father, so as to procure acceptance and success to these. They pass, as it were, through His hands, and He consecrates them all. II. HIS PROPERTIES AS AN ADVOCATE. 1. He is a common Advocate for the whole household of faith. 2. He is an Advocate as fully qualified as we could wish. For—(1) He is One who does not act without a proper commission. (2) He must be a very able Advocate. Men may elect or appoint to offices those that are insufficient and no ways equal to them. (3) He is an acceptable Advocate, one highly esteemed and well-beloved of Him with whom His business thus considered lies. (4) He is a holy, sinless Advocate. This is the most proper signification of the word we translate "righteous." (5) He is a faithful Advocate. Disappointment shall never shame any of the hopes which are built upon Him. (6) He is a kind, gracious, affectionate Advocate. The term righteous may likewise lead our thoughts to these properties as belonging to Him. He bears a true affection and

goodwill to all His clients. (7) He is a constant, perpetual Advocate. This is thought to be clearly held forth in the apostle's saying, We "have" Him with the Father. He speaks in the present tense, to signify the duration, as well as certainty hereof. He resides always in the presence of the Father. He is ready to put in a plea upon every fresh matter of charge that our adversary can bring against us. (8) He is a prevalent Advocate. There is no danger of His miscarrying in any cause which He solicits. If we consider Him in the greatness of His person, or in the near relation He has to the Father, it will help to convince us that He cannot solicit in vain. Consider Him as a Son performing obedience at the call of the Father, and for the manifestation of His glory; and as this cannot but increase paternal affections towards Him, so it must facilitate His speeding in His addresses, and render the Father more inclinable to fulfil all His petitions. Further, the consideration of His being righteous or holy strengthens the argument for the successfulness of His advocacy. Again, considering the objects of His intercession, those for whom He lives as an Advocate, we shall find it helps to prove that He cannot but succeed. They are those whom the Father is well affected to and loves; not enemies nor strangers, nor servants and friends only, but children. I might further suggest, as what will make the proof yet more strong, of His being successful, that the matters of His intercession are all perfectly agreeable to the Father's will. 1. Let those be convinced of their unhappy fate and circumstances who remain uninterested in the advocacy of Christ, and are excluded the benefit hereof. 2. Have we who are true believers and Christians indeed an Advocate in heaven, even Jesus Christ? Let us keep up an affectionate esteem of Him, and be more duly thankful for Him thus considered. 3. How careful ought persons to be of intrenching upon and likewise abusing the office of this glorious Advocate! 4. Let us have daily frequent recourse to Christ our Advocate, learn to live more by faith upon Him thus considered, especially in case of many remarkable miscarriages. Faith ought then to be exercised in Him afresh. 5. Let the advocacy of Christ be improved for our consolation and joy. 6. Let us be studying through our whole lives suitable returns to our blessed Lord for what He does for us as our Advocate. Love is evidently one of these returns. Oh that we might learn to carry Christ's name upon our hearts, as He does ours upon His heart! Again, the consideration of His advocacy should teach us to persist in a course of zealous, faithful service to Him. Does He live for us, and shall we not be hereby constrained to live for Him? 7. The consideration of Christ being our Advocate with the Father is proper to elevate our minds and hearts from inferior things, and make us aspire heavenwards. (*J. Gibbs.*) *Our Advocate on high*:—The word "advocate" is applied elsewhere to the Spirit of God. The word does not simply represent one who pleads in a court of justice, but a friendly pleader; also a patron and a sponsor. The idea here seems to be not so much that of an intercessor as that of a representative, including an intercessor, but compassing much more than an intercessor. The idea is brought out by the prophet Isaiah, when he says, speaking of a sort of middleman, a sort of mediator, "He is near that justifieth me." Job brings out the idea when he says, "if there be a messenger with them"—a representative, an interpreter—"one among a thousand." The same thought runs all through the 72nd Psalm, where the king's son is represented as defending and as pleading the cause of the poor and the needy. Now the righteousness of an advocate is introduced in contrast with the sinfulness of those whom He represents. The Advocate represents sinners, but He is not a sinner. He is the sponsor of sinners, but He is not a sinner. He is an ambassador for a race of sinners, but He is not a sinner. I. THE GRACIOUS PROVISIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION DO NOT ENCOURAGE, BUT DISCOURAGE SINNING. The simple fact that God seeks to save us from sin shows us that in His sight sinning is a terrible evil. The mediation which God provides reveals the extreme peril to which sin exposes the transgressor. What must that peril be when God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up to be a Saviour? We often sin through ignorance. We sin through carelessness—the Christian dispensation makes us serious concerning sin. We sin through moral deadness—the Christian dispensation is a ministration by which the living God seeks to restore life to us. We sin sometimes through despair—the Christian dispensation fills us with hope. We sin often through feverishness and through restlessness of spirit—the Christian dispensation imparts peace, restores quiet to our disturbed nature. We sin through weakness—the Christian dispensation imparts power. We sin by force of evil motives—the Christian dispensation changes our motives; so that

if any man be in Christ he is a new creature. II. THE SINS OF THE CHRISTIANS SHALL NOT LEAD THEM INTO DESPONDENCY AND DESPAIR. "These things write I unto you," not that ye sin, but "that ye sin not." If any man sin, there is cause for sorrow, and cause for fear, but none for despair; none even for despondency. For, mark, we are not left to plead our own cause. Nor are we left to seek an Advocate or a Representative. A Representative is provided for us, and revealed to us; and the Advocate that we have is God's Christ—Jesus—devoted to salvation—and Himself without sin. "Jesus Christ the righteous." The advocacy of such a sponsor must prevail. Where, therefore, is there room for despair, or even for despondency? (*S. Martin.*) *Christ's intercession*:—How divine is the gospel! "Sin not." "If any man sin." It gives us comfort against the demerit of sin without encouraging the acts of sin. No religion is so pure for the honour of God nor any so cordial for the refreshment of the creature. I. CHRIST IS AS MUCH AN ADVOCATE AS HE IS A SACRIFICE, AS GOD IS AS MUCH A GOVERNOR AS HE WAS A CREATOR. As we say of Providence, it is a continued creation; so of intercession, it is a continued oblation. 1. This office of advocacy belongs to Him as a priest, and it is a part of His priestly office. As He was a priest upon the Cross to make an expiation for us, so He is our priest in the court of heaven to plead this atonement, both before the tribunal of justice and the throne of mercy, against the curses of the law, the accusations of Satan, the indictments of sin, and to keep off the punishment which our guilt had merited. 2. This, therefore, was the end of His ascension and sitting down at the right hand of God. His mediation kept the world from ruin after man's fall, and His intercession promotes the world's restoration after His own Passion. 3. This advocacy is founded upon His oblation. His plea depends upon the value and purity of His sacrifice. 4. The nature of this advocacy differs from that intercession or advocacy which is ascribed to the Spirit. Christ is an advocate with God for us, and the Spirit is an advocate with God in us (*John xiv. 17*). Christ is our advocate, pleading for us in His own name; the Spirit is an advocate, assisting us to plead for ourselves in Christ's name. II. WHAT KIND OF ADVOCATE CHRIST IS. 1. Authoritative. He intercedes not without a commission and command (*Jer. xxx. 21*). 2. Wise and skilful. He has an infinite knowledge as God and a full and sufficient knowledge as man. 3. Righteous and faithful. As He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, so He is exalted to perfect the conquest by His intercession. If He had sin He could not be in heaven, much less a pleader there. 4. Compassionate. His intercession springs from the same tenderness towards us as His oblation, and both are but the displaying of His excessive charity. 5. Ready and diligent. He is passed into the heaven, seated there in a perpetual exercise of this office, to entertain all comers at all times; and can no more be sleepy than He can be cruel, no more cease to be diligent than He can be bereaved of His compassions. 6. Earnest and pressing. He was not more vehement to shed His blood than He is to plead it. No man is more sollicitous to increase the honour and grandeur of his family than Christ is to secure the happiness of His people. For to what purpose did He carry up human affections to heaven but to express them in their liveliness and vigour for us and to us? 7. Joyful and cheerful. He hath not a sour kind of earnestness, as is common among men; but an earnestness with a joy, as being the delight of His heart. 8. Acceptable. He is the favourite of the court. 9. Alone. Since Christ trod the wine-press alone He solicits our cause alone, intercession being founded upon propitiation; He, therefore, that is the sole propitiator is the sole intercessor. As God never gave any commission to redeem us to any other, so He never gave a commission to any other to appear for us in that court. III. HOW CHRIST DOTH MANAGE THIS ADVOCACY AND INTERCESSION. 1. Christ is not an advocate in heaven in such a supplicating manner as He prayed in the world. This servile way of praying, as they call it, because it was performed by Christ in the form of a servant, is not agreeable to His present glorious estate. It is as unsuitable to His state in heaven as His prayers with strong cries were suitable to His condition on earth. Nor is it a supplication in the gesture of kneeling, for He is an advocate at the right hand of God, where He is always expressed as sitting, and but once as standing (*Acts vii. 55*). 2. Yet it may be a kind of petition, an expressing His desires in a supplicatory manner. Though He be a king upon His throne, yet being settled in that royal authority by His Father, as His delegate, He is in regard of that inferior to the Father, and likewise in the economy of mediator. And also as His human nature is a creature, He may be a petitioner without any debasement to Himself, to that power, by whose authority He is

settled in His dignity, constituted in His mediatory office, and was both made and continues a creature. 3. It is such a petition as is in the nature of a claim or demand. 4. This intercessory demand or asking is accompanied with a presenting the memorials of His death. 5. It is a presenting our persons to God, together with His blood, in an affectionate manner (Exod. xxviii. 29; Cant. viii. 6; Rev. iii. 5).

IV. CHRIST DOTH PERFECTLY MANAGE THIS OFFICE. 1. The first evidence is in the text, "We have an advocate"; we have at this present; we in this age, we in all ages, till the dissolution of the world, without any faintness in the degrees of His intercession, without any interruption in time. 2. There can be no cessation of His work till His enemies be conquered and His whole mystical body wrapped up in glory. 3. It is necessary it should be so. (1) Because it is founded upon His death. It is an "eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 12), and therefore an eternal intercession. (2) The exercise of this office must be as durable as the office itself. His priesthood is for ever, therefore the act belonging to His priesthood is for ever. (3) This was both the reason and end of His advancement. The intercession He made for transgressors was one reason why God would "divide Him a portion with the great" (Isa. liii. 12); "because He made intercession for the transgressors." It was also the end of His advancement (Heb. x. 12).

V. THE EFFICACY OF THIS INTERCESSION (Rom. v. 10). **VI. THE PARTICULARITY OF THIS INTERCESSION.** 1. For believers only. He manages no man's cause that is not desirous to put it into His hands. 2. For every believer particularly. **VII. WHAT DOTH CHRIST INTERCEDE FOR?** In general His intercession for believers is as large as the intent of His death for them. (*S. Charnock, B.D.*) *Christ's intercession*.—He is an advocate to the Father, not only to Him at a distance, but with Him. 1. This was typified. 2. It was prophesied of Christ (Psa. xxi. 2). 3. God never denied Him any request which He put up upon the earth for the Divine glory and His people's good, and Christ Himself acknowledges it. "I know that Thou hearest Me always" (John xi. 42). Now this intercession must needs be efficacious, if you consider—1. His person. (1) The greatness of it. (2) His near relation to the Father. (3) The special love God bears to His person for what He hath done in the earth and doth yet in heaven. 2. It must needs be efficacious in regard of the pleas themselves, the matter of them. (1) The matter of His plea is holy. (2) It is nothing but what He hath merited. (3) Whatsoever He pleads for is agreeable to the will of His Father. 3. In regard of the foundation of His intercession, His death. 4. In regard of the persons He intercedes for. They are those that are the special gift of God to Him, as dear to the Father as to Christ (John xvii. 9). 5. It is evidenced by the fruit of it. (1) Before His sacrifice. The text intimates it; as He was a propitiation for the whole world. (2) After His sacrifice, in the first-fruit of it, the mission of the Holy Ghost. (a) For believers only. (b) For every believer particularly (Luke xxii. 31, 32). 6. What doth Christ intercede for? (1) Justification. (2) Daily pardon. (3) Sanctification. (4) Strength against temptation. (5) Perseverance in grace. (6) Acceptation of our services. (7) Salvation. This is the main end of His intercession (Heb. vii. 25).

1. Use of information. (1) Here is an argument for the Deity of Christ. (2) Here is a ground to conclude the efficacy of His death. (3) See the infinite love of God and Christ. (4) How little ground is there to dream of such a thing as perfection in this life! If we stand in need of a perpetual intercession of Christ in this life we have not then a perfection in this life: intercession supposeth imperfection. (5) Hence it follows that the Church is as durable as the world. (6) If Christ be an advocate, the contempt or abuse of His intercession is very unworthy. (7) If Christ be our advocate it is a dishonourable thing to yoke saints as mediators of intercession with Him. (8) If Christ be our advocate, how miserable are those that have no interest in Him! 2. **Use of comfort.** His design in uttering His prayer on earth, the model of His intercession, was for the joy of His people (John xvii. 13). (1) There is comfort in the perpetuity of this intercession. (2) There is comfort in the prevalency of it. (3) Hence ariseth comfort to us in our prayers. (4) Hence ariseth comfort against all the attempts and accusations of Satan and the rebellion of our own corruption. 3. **Use of exhortation.** (1) Endeavour for an interest in this advocacy. To this purpose—(1) We must have a sincere faith. (2) We must have a sincere resolution of obedience. (3) Have a daily recourse to this Advocate and advocacy. 3. Let our affections be in heaven with our Advocate. (4) Glorify and love this Advocate. (*Bishop Hackett.*) *Man's advocate with the Father*.—1. Advocates amongst men frequently deny the allegation brought against their clients, but Christ admits the charge brought

against humanity. 2. Advocates amongst men, if they admit the charge, frequently seek to justify it. Sometimes they set up the plea of ignorance, or accident, or self-defence. But Christ pleads no palliation. 3. Advocates amongst men undertake their work, not from the love of justice or humanity, but from personal considerations. 4. Advocates amongst men seek to influence the mind of the adjudicating parties. But Christ seeks to influence the accused. The great Judge cannot and need not be influenced. In what respects, then, can Christ be called an advocate? I. HE IS AN ADVOCATE INASMUCH AS HE IS A HELPER OF THE ACCUSED. II. HE IS AN ADVOCATE INASMUCH AS HE IS A GOVERNMENTALLY RECOGNISED FUNCTIONARY. The great Governor of the universe has appointed Christ to the work. He occupies His position by a Divine right. III. HE IS AN ADVOCATE INASMUCH AS HE SEEKS TO DELIVER THE ACCUSED IN A WAY HONOURABLE TO LAW. Christ undertakes two things:—1. That if the sinner is delivered no wrong shall be done to the universe. 2. He pledges that if the sinner is delivered his life shall henceforth be holy. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Christ's acquaintance with man's case*:—Many a man whose friends have long defended him against an adverse opinion has lost all that defensive sympathy as soon as the facts of his case became fully known. It has happened before now, even in forensic history, that an advocate has felt forced to relinquish his brief in consequence of some unexpected disclosure that made proceeding with the case a course that would hurt his self-respect or compromise his reputation. Secrets have come to light in the life of a child that have silenced even a mother's advocacy, and made love itself confess that it had no more to say. But you never need fear that for reasons like these Christ will abandon your cause or fail in your defence. Before you confide to Him a single secret His acquaintance with your whole life is intimate and perfect. (*C. Stanford.*) **And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only.**—*Christ our propitiation*:—The propitiation made by our Lord Jesus Christ lies at the foundation of the whole system of Christianity, so that a weakness there involves a weakness everywhere. 1. By propitiation is meant the complete satisfaction of the claims of the law on the sinner by the infliction of the law's penalty on the Lord Jesus Christ as the sinner's substitute; and our first business will be to consider the principle in which the whole originates. This principle is, that the authority of law must be maintained by the lawgiver, and that when the law has been broken the sentence of the law must be carried into effect (2 Sam. xxiii. 3). But if law is maintained it will lead in many cases to a conflict between law and love. There must have been just such a conflict in the mind of Brutus when his sons were convicted of conspiracy against the republic. In that case law said they must die, but love must have said, "Let them live." Law said, "Condemn," and love must have said, "Have mercy." We have a similar illustration of this conflict between law and love in the case of David. When Absalom had murdered his brother Amnon, he fled to Geshur, and there remained for three years in banishment. "The soul of King David longed," or "was consumed," "to go forth unto Absalom." Love, therefore, would have restored him, but law forbade his restoration. David was king, and therefore responsible for the administration of law. He was compelled, therefore, to keep Absalom in banishment at the very time that his own soul was consumed by the tender love he felt towards him. Now, cannot we believe in exactly the same conflict between law and love in the mind of a perfectly holy God? There is in Him a righteousness infinitely more righteous, and a love infinitely more tender, than was ever known in man; and can any one be surprised either that His law cannot be set aside, or that His love yearns over the sinner even at the very time that He passes His own just sentence on the sin? People speak of the punishment of sin as if it were cruel and vindictive; but it may be a stern necessity imposed on a tender heart by the righteous claims of a violated law. Now, then, we are brought face to face with the great difficulty that has called forth the gospel, viz. this: In what way can the law be vindicated, and yet the sinner who has broken it be saved? There is a very remarkable passage in the words of the woman of Tekoah, when she went to David respecting the restoration of Absalom, in which she said of God, God does not "respect any person: yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him" (2 Sam. xiv. 14). According to that statement, He shows no partiality; but yet without partiality He has contrived a plan by which the offender may be forgiven. What, then, is this plan? This plan is propitiation. It is none other than that proposed by Judah, when, having undertaken to be surety for Benjamin, he said to Joseph (Gen. xlv. 33), "Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let

the lad go up with his brethren." His proposal was that there should be an act of substitution. So, in His boundless grace and mercy, our righteous God gave the Son to be bondsman in our place, and the Son accepted the suretyship and suffered. Thus the law has been vindicated and the sin punished, while at the same time the love is satisfied and the sinner set free. This is what is meant by propitiation (Rom. iii. 26). I am, of course, perfectly aware that there are those who reject this doctrine of substitution, and others who, while they accept it, see in it difficulties which they find it hard to explain. This is the one Divine plan which is taught throughout the Scriptures. It was prefigured in type as in all the sacrifices of the Levitical typical system; and pre-eminently in the type, of the scapegoat (Lev. xvi. 21). It was predicted in prophecy, as, for example, by Isaiah (Isa. liii. 6). So it was taught by the apostles (Gal. iii. 13; 1 Pet. iii. 18; 1 John iv. 10). And, above all, by the mysterious conduct of our Lord Himself as His death was drawing near, which, I do not hesitate to affirm, can be explained on no other supposition. II. This, then, being the principle, THERE ARE THREE GREAT CONCLUDING TRUTHS TO BE FOR EVER WRITTEN ON OUR MEMORIES AND HEARTS. 1. The Divine propitiation is complete. The whole and every part is completed for ever. In the typical sacrifices there were two parts in each typical propitiation—the death of the substitute, and the offering, or presentation, of the blood before one of the altars, or the mercy-seat. The atonement was not completed by the death alone, but it was necessary that the death should be followed up by the presentation of the blood. Now, in the Divine propitiation both parts have been completed. The one sacrifice has been once offered, and the whole is finished. The blood was shed on Calvary, and sprinkled or presented, when "by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. ix. 25, 26). The death and the offering were two parts of the one transaction, and the whole of that transaction was complete when He rose from the dead, and was accepted as the beloved Son completely free from the killing guilt of imputed sin. 2. The Divine propitiation is final. If there were the possibility of any repetition, there is no room left for it. "Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Heb. x. 18). If, therefore, remission is granted according to the covenant of God, if we are enjoying His promise, "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," and if, according to verse 14, "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," what place is there for any further propitiatory offering of any kind whatever? Who can perfect that which God has already perfected? 3. And this brings me to my last point—the Divine propitiation is sufficient. By this I mean that it is so complete and perfect in the covenant of God that those who are saved by it are made partakers of a complete reconciliation. There are many persons who appear to be satisfied with what I may call a partial reconciliation. They dare not accept the position of one whose every sin has been blotted out, and to whom there is no barrier in the way of a full, free, unfettered enjoyment of the love of God. They are not unlike Absalom when he returned from Geshur and remained three years at Jerusalem without being permitted to see his father's face. They are not as he was when in Geshur, for they are in the midst of religious life as he was in Jerusalem, but they are not fully restored. The result is that their religion is one of little more than anxiety, and they begin to think that it was almost better with them when they were altogether in the world. But this is not the result of an all-sufficient Divine propitiation. There is nothing in this half-and-half character in our Heavenly Father's provision for us. The veil of separation has been rent from the top to the bottom, and as the curse of all sin has been completely and for ever borne, it is the privilege of every soul that is in Christ Jesus to approach the mercy-seat of our most holy God with the same peaceful, loving, filial trust that he would have felt if he had never known sin. (E. Hoare, M.A.)

Propitiation for sin:—I. THE NEED OF PROPITIATION. To propitiate is to turn away wrath. We would rather not think of the wrath of God, but "propitiation" has no meaning unless the wrath of God be real. Hardly anything is more to be dreaded than an inadequate sense of sin and its desert. If we ask how God's wrath utters itself, we may venture to reply, In His separation from the sinner. Can anything be worse than that? can "outer darkness" exceed what it is for a soul to be left with its sins cut off from God? But why propitiation? If a parent can lay aside his anger merely on the child's contrition, cannot God? That is not a correct statement of the case. God has said that sin is such an evil that He cannot pass it by without penalty; if a parent has so said of the child's fault, the question is not whether he can pass it

by without penalty, but whether he ought to. Divine love would deserve no reverence did it ignore righteousness. II. THE PROPITIATION PROVIDED. 1. This is a propitiation provided and made by God Himself. It was no laying our sin on another, it was the taking it upon Himself. 2. This propitiation is by the substitutionary offering of God the Son. 3. This propitiation is sufficient for the sins of the world. We cannot doubt that if we remember by whom it was made. III. THE PROPITIATION MADE USE OF. Propitiation does not save: it makes it possible for God. Propitiation removes the hindrance to the prodigal son going home, and when he says "I will arise and go to my Father," Faith is the going. The end of it, therefore, is the filial relationship fulfilled, and that is salvation. (C. New.) *The propitiation of Christ*:—I. THE PROPITIATION OF CHRIST WAS DIVINE IN ITS PROVISION AND APPOINTMENT. The full meaning of the expression may be thus brought out: "Jesus Christ the righteous is the propitiator who has made propitiation for our sins. For Christ is at once the selected victim, the sacrifice offered, the sacrificing priest, the altar on which the sacrifice was offered, and the propitiation made for sin. II. VICARIOUS IN ITS NATURE. He is the propitiator who has made propitiation "for our sins." "He is Jesus Christ the Righteous"—not the innocent merely. III. PROPITIATORY IN ITS OFFERING. The office of a propitiator, like that of a mediator, of which it is the foundation or groundwork, is to produce a state of reconciliation between parties at variance, by removing the cause of offence, propitiating the offended, and thus opening a way for a real and lasting reconciliation. By the constitution of His person He was well qualified to act as "daysman betwixt us, and to lay His hand upon us both." IV. UNIVERSAL IN EXTENT. 1. Suited to the whole world. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," says John, and therefore the whole world needs a propitiation for its wickedness. And the propitiation made is suited to its needs. For it was made in the nature which had sinned in this world. 2. Sufficient for the whole world. The proof of this is not far to seek. John himself furnishes it when he says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." The blood shed was indeed human, but the person of His Son was Divine. It is an adequate "ransom for all," a sufficient propitiation for the sins of the whole world. No other and no greater sacrifice would have been required to secure the salvation of all men. 3. Available for the whole world. V. UNCHANGING IN ITS EFFICACY. It has lost none of its value and its virtue by the lapse of time, the course of ages, the change of customs, the vicissitudes of nations, or by the ignorance and neglect, the arts, the discoveries, the inventions, and the advancement of mankind. This subject shows to us—1. The manifestation of God's love to the world. 2. The foundation of the world's hope toward God. 3. The cause of the believer's life. Christ died that we might live—live by Him and for Him. (George Robson.) *Insufficiency of the subjective view of the atonement*:—1. If the Cross was nothing more than the revelation of God's love, the power of the Cross was manifestly limited to those who knew of it. This surely could not be called a "larger view." Rather it belittled the Cross and limited its power. There were men and women who lived before Christ came; had they no share in the Cross? There were millions of heathen in the world; were they untouched by the passion of God? There were unbelievers around, some willing, some unwilling; were they all quite shut out from the Cross because they knew not the love revealed? "I beheld, and lo a Lamb as it had been slain." The Cross was in heaven as well as upon earth. It touched God as well as man; it had a meaning and a blessing for every human soul. 2. The subjective view failed to explain the whole ritual of the Jewish sacrifices. 3. It failed to explain terms and phrases of very frequent occurrence in the New Testament, such as "reconciliation," "peace by the blood of His Cross," "saved from wrath," &c. To say that Evangelical Christians put a heathen meaning into these terms and phrases, they would naturally ask how it came to pass that inspired men were allowed to use words that would so easily slip into heathen meanings. The words were misleading if the atonement was not a power on God as well as on man. 4. The subjective theory failed to satisfy the nature of man. Man had a conscience as well as a heart. A clergyman of Norfolk, once a Unitarian minister, said he should never forget his experience as he stood one day by the death-bed of a poor, wretched man in a workhouse. He had just come to see that the Cross meant more than he had previously thought, "and for the first time in his life he had a plea for the awakened conscience." Nothing can satisfy the moral nature that does not meet God's love of righteousness. (G. S. Barrett, D.D.) *Is there a doctrine of the atonement in Scripture?*—For my own part I

have no doubt the New Testament does contain a theory, or, as I should prefer to say, a doctrine of the atonement. The work of Christ in relation to sin is not a naked fact, an impenetrable, unintelligible fact; it is, in the New Testament, a luminous, interpretable, and interpreted fact. The love of Christ, says St. Paul, constraineth us, because we thus judge; *i.e.*, because we can and do put a certain intellectual construction upon it. (*James Denney, D.D.*) *The propitiation intelligible*:—An absolutely unintelligible fact, to an intelligent being, is exactly equivalent to zero. (*Ibid.*) *Redemption for the whole world*:—When in London I like to visit one of the great hospitals, for the pleasure of seeing over its gates these generous words, “Royal Free Hospital, strangers, foreigners, &c., may freely partake of the benefits of this hospital.” When I see “*et cetera*,” I thank God, and I am delighted that there is one institution in our land that welcomes the “*et cetera*.” It means, “and the rest,” the anybody and everybody of mankind. Likewise this healing power of the Cross of Jesus is for the “*et cetera*.” The saving power of the Cross is for all sick people who want to be healed. (*W. Birch.*) *For the sins of the whole world*:—When John Elias was preaching at an association meeting at Llangefni to five or six thousand people from 1 John ii. 2, he, as a high Calvinist, and partly for an oratorical purpose, laid great stress on the pronoun “our” — “*our sins!*” “and He is the propitiation for *our sins*,” repeating the word again and again. Catherine Rondol, a peculiar and eccentric Welsh woman, impatient at his not quoting the whole verse, shouted out, “Yes, Elias, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world!” There is no need to say that Elias had no chance with the audience after that remark of Catherine’s. (*Sword and Troucel.*) *Man lives in a redeemed world*:—Christ “is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” It is not merely that He will be, if you repent and believe; He is so already. Apart from your choice, Christ is the propitiation for your sin. We are not, therefore, born into a lost world — but into a world redeemed by the death of the Son of Man, who is also the Son of God. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*)

Vers. 3-5. And hereby we know that we do know Him, if we keep His commandments.
 —*The guileless spirit realising through obedience the knowledge of God as the means of being and abiding in God*:—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 fellowship is intelligent as well as holy—intelligent that it may be holy. I. THERE WERE THOSE IN JOHN’S DAY WHO AFFECTED TO KNOW GOD very deeply and intimately, in a very subtle and transcendental way. 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. John denounces strongly their impious pretence. To affect any knowledge of God that is not to be itself known and ascertained by the keeping of His commandments is to be false to the heart’s core. God is known in Christ. 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. 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. The keeping of His word is, as it were, the concentrated and condensed spirit and essence of the keeping of His commandments. 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. 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; 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. 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. I would be so in Him that there should be, as it were, but one mind between us. Oh 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. 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"? 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. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *Doing and knowing*:—It is a curious phrase, "we do know that we know Him." But it is a familiar one to us in other applications. I say to a friend, "Are you sure that you know that man? You see him, perhaps, every day; you work with him; you talk with him. But do you know that you know him? Have you got any real insight into his character?" Sometimes the answer is quite confident. "I am certain that he is, or that he is not, an honest, or a kind, or a wise man." And yet it may not inspire us with confidence. We may say or we may think, "You are deceived in that man." But now and then one has a strong conviction that a friend does understand the man we are asking him about, does appreciate him. Now St. John assumes that the knowledge of God is as possible, is as real for human beings, as any knowledge they can have of each other. Nay, he goes farther than this. There are impediments to our knowledge of each other, which he says do not exist with reference to that higher knowledge. There is an uncertainty, a capriciousness, a mixture of darkness with light, in every human being, which make us hesitate a little, even when we think he has given us the clearest evidence of what he is. We may know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. I sometimes suspect that we give too loose a sense to that word "keep." No doubt it means to "obey"; it does not mean more than that, for obedience is very comprehensive. The word "keep," if we consider it, may help us to know what obedience is, and what it is not. A friend gives me a token to keep for him; he wishes that it should remind me of him, that it should recall days which we have spent together. Perhaps it may be only a flower or a weed that was gathered in a certain place where we were walking or botanising; perhaps it is something precious in itself. If instead of giving me anything he enjoins me to do a certain act, or not to do a certain act, I may be said as truly to keep that injunction as to keep the flower. To fulfil it is to remember him; it is a token of my fellowship to him, of my relation with him. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." The apostle uses strong language, for this lie was spreading in the Church of his own day, and would spread, he knew, further and further in the times that were coming. There were many in that time who used this very phrase, "We know God," and used it for the purpose of self-exaltation; therefore for an immoral, destructive purpose. "There are a set of common Christians," they said, "vulgar people, who may learn certain lower lessons; they are capable of nothing better. The law is very good for them. But we can enter into the Divine mysteries; we can have the most magnificent conceptions about the spiritual world which Christ has opened. What are the commandments—what is common earthly morality—to us?" "I tell you," says St. John, broadly and simply, "that if they are nothing to you, God is nothing to you. You may use what fine language you will; you may have what fine speculations you like; but it is in practice, in the struggle with temptation which besets us all in different ways and forms, that we come to know Him; thus, and only thus." And he adds words which, if understood rightly, were even more crushing to the pride of these haughty men than those which were aimed at themselves. "But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily the love of God is perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him." As if he had said, "You talk about the perfect, the

initiated man, and the mere beginners or novices. I will tell you who is the perfect or initiated man. Look at that poor creature who is studying hard, in the midst of all opposition from his own ignorance, to be right and to do right; who is trying to hold fast that word which is speaking to him in his heart, though he can form no high notions at all about things in earth or heaven. There is the initiated man; he is the one who is learning the perfect lore; for God's own love is working in him; God's own love is perfecting itself in him. He is keeping the commandments, and they are teaching him that in himself he is nothing; that in God he has everything that he wants." (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *The great change and its evidences*:—I. THE GREAT CHANGE IS DESCRIBED. For this purpose three phrases are used by the apostle in verses 3 to 6. 1. "We know Him." Knowledge is the result of observation and experience. It implies certainty. We know that bread is nutritive, because we have eaten it and found it to be so. We know that honey is sweet, because we have tasted it. Now this is precisely the force of the term when we speak of the knowledge of Christ. Hence it is that we know His power, for we have proved it; His wisdom, for we have been guided by it; His love, for we have enjoyed it; and we know His truth, for we have ever found Him faithful. How thankful we should be this is the nature of true religion. It is not a speculation about which there is uncertainty. It is not a doubtful opinion. It is a reality of which we may have experience. They who have attained to it may say, "We know Him." 2. "We are in Him." This expression brings us into still closer communion with Christ. Not only are we brought to Him, to converse with Him, but we are made to dwell in Him. This union of the believer with Christ is the source of all the blessings of which he becomes the partaker by the knowledge of Him. 3. "He abideth in Him." Had Noah left the ark while the deluge continued, he must have perished. If the man-slayer went out of the city of refuge, it was at the hazard of his life. When Shimei violated his pledge to Solomon, and passed beyond the bounds of Jerusalem, he brought upon himself the sentence of death. And so with the believer it is essential to his safety that he shall abide in Christ. How forcibly is this lesson taught by our Lord Himself (John xv. 4, 5). II. THE EVIDENCES OF THIS GRACIOUS STATE. These are equally clear with the description of that state. And it is observable that each feature in the description is accompanied by a corresponding evidence. The variety of the evidence is a testimony to the supreme importance of the inquiry. It is the will of God that we should faithfully examine ourselves by it. 1. "If we keep His commandments." "By their fruits ye shall know them." "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." He taught us how His people might be known by others. Then in the same way they ought to know themselves. 2. "Whoso keepeth His word." There is a close and natural connection between this evidence and the former. The word is the directory of the conduct. Whenever the knowledge of Christ has been obtained, His word is obeyed exclusively and universally. Exclusively, for no other authority is admitted. Universally, for whatever it forbids is avoided, and whatever it requires is done. 3. "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought to walk even as He walked." This evidence is the completion of the two former. It consists in the imitation of the example of Christ. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Our attitude towards the commandments of God are evidence of Christian life*:—I. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD. "Hereby know we that we know (*i.e.*, have fellowship with) Him, if we keep His commandments." A commandment is an order, a charge, a definite and authoritative expression of a superior will concerning some particular detail of duty. There must be no ambiguity in a commandment—no room for misunderstanding. Well, God has expressed Himself so about many things. Now let us try our religion by these commandments. How do these fare at our hands? Do we keep them, *i.e.*, watch, observe, take steps to carry out, God's orders? If so, then we know that we know Him. These commandments are not arbitrary edicts of capricious power. They are the spontaneous growths of immaculate holiness and eternal love. If the commandments are no longer mere bundles of dry roots packed away in some dark corner, but are beginning to grow in your life, that is a proof that you have passed into a new climate of being, and that God's own life has entered yours. You are a partaker of the Divine nature. "But he that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments"—who treats these clear, authoritative declarations of God's sovereign will as mere nothing—"he is a liar, and the truth is not in him"—not in him anywhere—not in him at all. II. THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, WHICH ARE SO MANY AND SO VARIOUS, ARE ALL GATHERED UP INTO ONE WORD. "Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily hath

the love of God been perfected." "His word" is the inner spiritual unity of all His commandments. There are many commandments, but one spirit. "I once saw two pieces of sculpture in a cathedral. One was the figure of the Virgin Mary, with the child Jesus in her arms, therefore a professedly sacred subject. And yet there was nothing sacred about it—it was simply a piece of stone; and looking at it, one felt nothing more sacred than a shudder at the coldness, deadness, stoniness of the thing. The other was the figure of a young mother asleep with her firstborn on her breast in a little side chapel. It was not a conventionally sacred piece—merely a figure on the tomb of a dead young wife and her babe; yet love had so informed the sculptor's skill that every line of the figure seemed to live. There was heart in it. The work had not been done to order, nor for a price. The man who did it was first a husband and father, and then a sculptor. Well, there is a Christianity with and a Christianity without the heart of Jesus Christ. Christianity without the heart of Jesus is the coldest, stoniest thing that ever came into this poor world. Truth is means to an end. The end itself is love, and whoso keepeth not only His commandments in their multitude, but also His word in its spiritual unity, in him only hath the love of God been perfected. III. Again, as the many commandments are one word in their spirit, so THE WORD BECAME A LIFE IN CHRIST'S EXAMPLE. That Life Beautiful is not placed before us in the gospel to be admired and worshipped, but to be imitated and reproduced in our own lives. That Life is our standard. IV. Finally, as the commandments are all summed up in the life of Christ, so THAT LIFE IS SUMMED UP IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST. "Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you . . . again a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you." The mark he sets before us is not ordinary love, everyday benevolence; but this—this love that summed up and crowned the life of Christ. (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *Sincerity and duplicity*:—I. THE KNOWING OF CHRIST. To "know" is a word used in Scripture in several senses. 1. Sometimes it means to acknowledge. Christ says that His sheep "know" His voice. They acknowledge His voice as being the voice of their Shepherd, and cheerfully follow where their Shepherd leads. Now, it is a matter of the first necessity to acknowledge Christ, that He is God, that He is the Son of the Father, that He is the Saviour of His people, and the rightful Monarch of the world—to acknowledge more, that you accept Him as your Saviour, as your King, as your Prophet, as your Priest. 2. The word "know" means, in the next place, to believe; as in that passage, "By his knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many"; where it is evidently meant that by the knowledge of Him, that is to say, by faith in Christ Jesus, he would justify many. 3. The word to "know" often means experience. It is said of our Lord that "He knew no sin"; that is to say, He never experienced sin; He never became a sinner. To know Christ, then, we must feel and prove His power, His pardoning power, His power of love over the heart, His reigning power in subduing our passions, His comforting power, His enlightening power, His elevating power, and all those other blessed influences which through the Holy Spirit proceed from Christ. 4. And once more, to "know" in Scripture often means to commune. Eliphaz says, "Acquaint thyself with God, be at peace with Him"; that is to say, commune with Him, get into friendship and fellowship with Him. So it is needful that every believer should know Christ by having an acquaintance with Him, by speaking with Him in prayer and praise; by laying bare one's heart to His heart; receiving from Him the Divine secret, and imparting to Him the full confession of all our sins and griefs. II. THE TWO CHARACTERS THAT ARE PORTRAYED IN THE TEXT. With respect to the one—those who know that they know Him. Oh, it is very urgent that we should know that we know Him! Dost thou ask what service it would render thee? 1. It would give thee such comfort as nothing else could. If I know that I know Christ, then all things are mine. Things present and things to come are alike in the covenant of grace. 2. Nor is it joy alone you would find from this knowledge; it would no less certainly bring you confidence. When a man knows that he knows Christ what confidence he has in meeting temptations! "Shall such a man as I flee?" What confidence in prayer! he asks believably, as children beloved ask of a generous parent. And what a confident air this assurance before God would give us with the sons of men! Our courage would no more fail us in the pestilential swamps of the world than our enthusiasm would subside in the fertile garden of the Church, knowing that we shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. 3. And this certainty that you know Christ would kindle in you the very highest degree of love. Observe the prescription,

"Hereby we know that we do know Him if we keep His commandments." It is in the keeping of His commandments that this sound state of the soul's health is enjoyed. Do you ask for further explanation? 1. It means to keep His commandments in our minds and hold them fast in our memory with devout reverence. If Christ hath said it I dare not cavil, argue, or question, much less rebel. 2. But to keep them in our hearts we must earnestly desire to fulfil them. By reason of the fall we cannot perfectly keep the commands of Christ, but the heart keeps them as the standard of purity, and it would be perfect if it could. The Christian's only desire is to be exactly like Christ. III. A MOMENTOUS CHARGE AGAINST DISSEMBLERS. There is such a thing as saying that we know Christ; but if any man say that he knows Christ, and keeps not His commandments, such a man is a liar—plain speech this. Point out some of those characters upon which the brand must be fixed—they are liars. There have been persons who have professed their faith in Christ, but who have been in the habit of acting dishonestly. They have been negotiating fictitious bills, they have been purloining small articles out of shops, they have been dealing with short weights, and selling wares with wrong marks, and all this time they have said that they knew Christ. Now, one of His commandments is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and another one is, "Thou shalt not steal," and in not keeping these they have proved themselves to be liars, though they called themselves Christians. Some who have professed faith in Christ have been drunkards. And what shall we say of those who, while making a profession of religion, have been addicted to uncleanness? The covetous! the grasping! those who see their brethren have need, and shut up the bowels of their compassion! to each of you the Master's words are very strong: "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" And are there not others, whose tongue is perverse and unruly and their conversation often far from pure? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Theology and morality*:—The text suggests two thoughts concerning morality. I. IT IS THE ONLY PROOF OF A TRUE THEOLOGY. "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." 1. Obedience is the certain result of a true theology. To know God is to love Him. If we love Him we shall keep His commandments. (1) Keep them heartily. (2) Keep them joyously. What we do in love we always do joyously. 2. Disobedience is a proof of a false theology. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." There is another thought suggested by the text concerning morality. II. ITS SPIRIT IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRUE THEOLOGY. What is the spirit of genuine morality? Love. 1. And this love is in the obedient man. 2. And this love in him assures him of his union with God. "Hereby know we that we are in Him." (*Homilist.*) *The saving knowledge of Christ evinced by a practical attention to His commandments*:—I. THE NATURE OF THE SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. 1. It is not a mere speculative knowledge. 2. It is a real, internal, spiritual revelation or manifestation of Him to the soul by the Spirit of God in the day of conversion. 3. It is the best and most excellent that can come within the reach of man. 4. It is greatly inferior as to degree, and different as to the manner of knowing, from what they will have in heaven. 5. It produces distinguishing effects—effects which distinguish it from all other knowledge. (1) It humbles those who have it. (2) Such as savingly know Christ put their trust in Him (2 Tim. i. 12). (3) It is transforming; it changes believers into His likeness (2 Cor. iii. 18) in holiness, meekness, patience, love, and every other imitable perfection. II. WHAT SORT OF OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMANDS OF CHRIST IS THE UNDOUBTED EVIDENCE OF THE SPIRITUAL SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF HIM? 1. It is hearty, springing from love to Christ, as the governing principle of it. 2. It is voluntary. David says, "I have chosen Thy precepts" (Psa. cxix. 173). 3. It is universal. All the commands of Christ are respected; not only those of easy observance. 4. It is constant and persevering. The true servants of Christ obey Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of their lives (Luke i. 74, 75). And His command to them is Rev. ii. 10. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) **Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.**—*The keeping of the Divine word*:—I. THE KEEPING IS IN DIRECT OPPOSITION TO LOSING IT, LETTING IT ESCAPE FROM US. II. THE KEEPING IT IMPLIES A CARE TO RETAIN IT. To retain it in the understanding, in the conscience, in the affections, and in the practice. In what aspects the word of God so kept is regarded by the Christian. 1. As a law to govern him. 2. As a revelation of the grace which saves him. 3. As a promise of Divine goodness to cheer him. 4. As a pledge of eternal life to animate him. 5. As a means of communion with God to sanctify him. (*Homilist.*) *The keeping of God's*

commandments is undoubtedly and truly the perfection of our love to God:—I. WHAT IS HERE MEANT BY PERFECTION? II. HOW DOES SUCH A KEEPING OF THE COMMANDMENT ARGUE LOVE TO BE PERFECT? 1. There is a perfection of all the parts of love in such men. (1) An affection unto fellowship with Christ. (2) An affection to be doing good to Him. 2. In perfection there is a readiness to a work; so such a man as keeps God's commandments, his love is ready, he is forward to every good duty, because it is a commandment of God. 3. There is perfect love in him, because it is constant and durable and will not change. III. WHEREIN DOES IT APPEAR THAT IF I KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENT MY LOVE IS PERFECT? 1. From the contrariety of our tempers naturally to any commandment, so that if you see any one willing and ready to be at God's command you may say, certainly the love of God hath overcome him. 2. You may know such a man's love to be perfect that keeps His commandments, because whatsoever weak beginnings of love you find in such as keep God's commandments, that man's love grows more perfect every day; such a man still grows in fruitfulness; he grows ready to every good work (John xv. 2), so that the love of God is perfected in him by obedience. Uses: 1. For trial of our love to God, whether it be perfect or no, sincere or counterfeit, how dost thou find thy heart affected to God's commandments? 2. For direction to all such as desire perfection of love to Christ—keep His commandments; take heed of breaking any one of them. 3. Of consolation to all such as apply themselves to be doing of God's commandments. (*John Cotton, B.D.*) *The love of God:*—The simple phrase, “the love of God,” may of course mean God's love to man; but it may also mean man's love to God; and that we take to be the meaning in the text. For two men to be thus distinguished from each other, by one having this affection and the other having it not—why, it is a greater distinction, when you come to think of it, than belonging to a different species of being. I. IT IS POSSIBLE TO LOVE GOD. Human nature has its intellect and affections, and a capacity for reason, thought, and sentiment. The being that can love one thing can love another; the man that loves a creature, a person manifested to him in the flesh, may love the infinite Person. II. WITHOUT LOVE TO GOD YOU CAN HARDLY CONCEIVE OF THERE BEING ANYTHING, IN HIS ESTIMATION, LIKE MORAL WORTH OR EXCELLENCE IN MAN. Take the case of a family presided over by a loving and virtuous parent. It is very possible to conceive of the children of that family outwardly appearing to tender him the expressions of filial obedience and respect; but if they had not a particle of love in their hearts to that father—if their hearts were altogether given to some one else, and if there were to come on the parental heart the conviction that with all their displays of respect they had not an atom of love towards him, how could there be any feeling of delight towards them in the parental breast? III. THE LOVE OF GOD IS NOT A SPONTANEOUS AND INSTINCTIVE AFFECTION OF THE HUMAN HEART. Human beings come into the world with certain tendencies, affections, and sympathies, and have the affection of love among the rest. I think there is rather a tendency in little children to like to hear about God, and heaven, and Jesus and His influence. But human nature needs to be operated upon from without; there must be external instrumentality in order to the development and manifestation of anything; and if you leave it to itself it will grow up just a bundle of appetites—a brutal, ferocious, obscene thing. IV. THE GOSPEL IS INTENDED TO EXCITE AND TO SUSTAIN THIS AFFECTION IN MAN. I think we may say here that the thing to be achieved has this difficulty about it; it is to be the reproduction of an extinguished affection. And then, when the love of God is excited, it is to expand and bring forth fruit; so that, in accordance with the statement of the text, the individual is not to be satisfied with the luxury of the sentiment—he is not to lose himself (as some mystics have thought) in perpetual contemplation, as though the love of God were to be perfected in that manner. We live in a world of action, and in which the great thing is to do and act according to the will of God; and if the human heart is brought into this condition, and really loves God, then it will seek to perfect that love, by its manifestation, in keeping God's word, in doing whatsoever God willeth. “Let me have Thy word, and the strong impulse of Divine affection shall be manifested and perfected.” Then supposing that to be done, the text says, the result and conclusion of the whole matter is that “hereby” the individual “knows that he is in Him”; that is, in Christ. (*T. Dinney.*)

Ver. 6. **He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.**—*The Christlike walk of one with guileless spirit abiding in God:*—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. 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. I. IT IS SOMETIMES SAID OF CHRIST SIMPLY THAT HE WALKED, WITHOUT ANYTHING TO DEFINE OR QUALIFY THE EXPRESSION (John vii. 1; Luke xiii. 33; 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. 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." While His feet were busy walking, His soul was resting in God. Outward movement, inward repose; the whole man Christ Jesus—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, as calmly 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." But some one may say, Is not this too high an ideal? Is it not the setting up of an inimitable model? 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. 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. 2. "He that saith he abideth in God" ought to walk as one subordinating himself always in all things to God, submitting himself to God, committing himself to God. 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. 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. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) In Him: like Him:—The first thing about a Christian is initiation into Christ; the next thing is the imitation of Christ. We cannot be Christians unless we are in Christ; and we are not truly in Christ unless the life of Christ is lived over again by us according to our measure. I. CONSIDER HOW THIS OBLIGATION IS PROVED. Why ought we to walk as Jesus did? 1. First, it is the design of God that those who are in Christ should walk as Christ walked. It is a part of the original covenant purpose; for "whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." 2. Observe, again, another point of this necessity: it is necessary to the mystical Christ that we should walk as He walked, for we are joined unto the Lord Jesus in one body. 3. And this, again, must all be the fruit of the one Spirit that is in Christ and in us. The Father anointed Christ of old with the same anointing which rests on us in our measure. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and we have an unction from the same Holy One. 4. I would have true Christians remember that this is one article of the agreement which we make with Christ when we become His disciples. We put ourselves into Christ's hands unreservedly, and we said, "Lord, sanctify me, and then use me. Reign in me; rule me absolutely, sovereignly, always and alone. I do not ask to be my own, for I am not my own, I am bought with a price." II. CONSIDER WHEREIN THIS WALKING WITH CHRIST AS HE WALKED CONSISTS. 1. To put it all together in one word, the first thing that every Christian has to see to is holiness. You know what wholeness is—a thing without a crack, or flaw, or break; complete, entire, uninjured, whole. Well, that is the main meaning of holy. If you wish to see holiness, look at Christ. In Him you see a perfect character, an all-round character. He is the perfect one; be ye like Him in all holiness. 2. We must go a little into detail; so I say, next, one main point in which we ought to walk according to the walk of our great Exemplar is obedience. It is the Lord's will that in His house His word should be the supreme law, for so only can our fallen natures be restored to their original glory. It is ours to walk in cheerful subservience to the mind of the Father, even as Jesus did. Does this strike you as an easy thing? It is child's work, certainly; but assuredly it is not child's play. 3. Such a life would necessarily be one of great activity, for the life of Jesus was intensely energetic. There is never an idle hour in the life of Christ. It is wonderful how He sustained the toil. Perhaps He measured out His zeal and His open industry by the fact that He was only to be for a short time here below. 4. Next we ought to walk as Christ did in the matter of self-denial. So walk as

He did who made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Himself the form of a servant, and who, though He was rich, brought Himself down to poverty for our sakes, that we might be rich unto God. Think of that. 5. Another point in which we ought to imitate Christ most certainly is that of lowliness. You never detect in the Lord Jesus Christ any tendency towards pride or self-exaltation. Quite the reverse: He is ever compassionate and condescending to men of low estate. 6. And then note again another point, and that is His great tenderness, and gentleness, and readiness to forgive. Did He not set us an example of bearing and forbearing? 7. There is one word which tells us more than all this about how Christ walked, and that is the word "love." Jesus was incarnate love. Only he that loves can live in heaven, for heaven is love; and you cannot go to glory unless you have learned to love and to find it your very life to do good to those about you. Let me add to all this, that he who says that Christ is in him ought also to live as Christ lived in secret. And how was this? 8. His life was spent in abounding devotion. He was pure and holy, and yet He must needs wait upon God all day long, and often speak with His Father; and then when the night came, and others went to their beds, He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed. If the Lord Jesus be in you, you must walk as He walked in that matter. And then think of His delight in God. He was, it is true, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; but still there was a deep spring of wondrous happiness in the midst of His heart, which made Him always blessed. And you and I also must delight in God. This charming duty is far too much neglected. Strange that this honey should so seldom be in men's mouths! 9. We ought to walk in holy contentment. The cravings of covetousness and pinings of ambition never touched our Lord. In a word, Christ lived above this world; let us walk as He walked. Christ lived for God, and for God alone; let us live after His fashion. And Christ persevered in such living; He never turned aside from it at all; but as He lived so He died, obedient to His Father's will. May our lives be a mosaic of perfect obedience, and our deaths the completion of the fair design. III. CONSIDER WHAT IS NEEDFUL TO ALL THIS. 1. It is needful to have a nature like that of Christ. You cannot give out sweet waters so long as the fountains are impure. "Ye must be born again." 2. That being done, the next thing that is necessary is a constant anointing of the Holy Spirit. 3. Then, again, there must be in us a strong resolve that we will walk as Christ walked; for our Lord Himself did not lead that holy life without stern resolution. 4. I add that if we want to walk as Christ walked we must have much communion with Him. We cannot possibly get to be like Christ except by being with Him. A person has written to me to say that he has painted my portrait, but that he cannot finish it until he sees me. I should think not. Certainly you cannot paint a portrait of Christ in your own life unless you see Him—see Him clearly, see Him continually. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) The example of Christ:—Example, it has often been remarked, exerts a much more powerful influence upon men than precept. The nature and excellence of God's commandments are more perfectly seen in those actions which are conformed to His law than in the abstract contemplation of the commandments themselves. To this peculiarity in our mental constitution God hath kindly accommodated His holy Word. Although the example of holy men of ancient times is made use of as a motive to particular excellences, yet none of them is proposed in general terms as a pattern for our imitation. This honour is given to Christ alone. Not only are particular virtues enforced by a reference to His character and conduct, but His conversation in general among men, or the whole of His life on earth is exhibited as a pattern to be imitated by all His disciples. I. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST IS PERFECT. Neither positive evil nor negative defect can be laid to His charge. In contemplating the pattern which it presents we are never perplexed by the necessity of separating the good from the bad, that which should be imitated from that which should be avoided. II. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST IS EASY OF IMITATION. It is calculated to allure rather than to repel the attempts of the meek and humble to copy it. The incidents by which it was diversified are such as frequently occur in the ordinary lot of man, and His conduct in reference to them was in every respect such as we might desire and expect any pious and benevolent individual to exemplify. It was human, devoid of everything impracticable. III. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST IS HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL. It is fitted to extract the attention and command the imitation of men. Who will refuse to imitate the pattern furnished in His obedience and sufferings when he recollects that He obeyed and suffered in our room? The example of a Divine person is indeed of infinite authority to all

creatures; but the obligation of gratitude has an attractive influence which the consideration of duty alone does not possess. IV. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST IS OF UNIVERSAL APPLICATION. It is suited to men of all classes and of every peculiarity of natural disposition. Had He come in all the glory of temporal royalty His example, however conspicuous and however perfect, could have been useful to but a limited extent. (*D. Duncan.*) *Of the imitation of Christ in holiness of life, and the necessity of it in believers:—*I. WHAT THE SAINT'S IMITATION OF CHRIST SUPPOSES AND COMPRISES. 1. That no Christian is, or may pretend to be, a rule to himself; for as no man hath wisdom enough to direct himself, so if his own will were made the rule of his own actions it would be the highest invasion of the Divine prerogative. 2. That as no man is his own guide, so no mere man, how wise or holy soever, may pretend to be a rule to other men; but Christ is the rule of every man's walking. 3. The necessity of sanctification in all His followers, forasmuch as it is impossible there should be a practical conformity in point of obedience where there is not a conformity in spirit and in principle. 4. That the Christian religion is a very precise and strict religion, no way countenancing licentiousness; it allows no man to walk loosely and inordinately. 5. The imperfection of the best of men in this life; for if the life of Christ be our pattern, the holiest of men must confess they come short of the rule of their duty. 6. The transcending holiness of the Lord Jesus; His holiness is greater than the holiness of all creatures, "For only that which is first and best in every kind is the rule and measure of all the rest." 7. It necessarily implies sanctification and obedience to be the evidences of our justification and interest in Christ: assurance is unattainable without obedience; we can never be comfortable Christians except we be strict and regular Christians. II. IN WHAT THINGS ALL WHO PROFESS CHRIST ARE OBLIGED TO THE IMITATION OF HIM. 1. And first of all, the purity and holiness of the life of Christ is proposed as a glorious pattern for the saint's imitation (1 Pet. i. 15). (1) He was truly and sincerely holy, without fiction or simulation; and this appeared in the greatest trial of the truth of holiness that ever was made in this world (John xiv. 30). (2) Christ was uniformly holy at one time as well as another, in one place and company as well as another. So must His people be holy in all manner of conversation. (3) Christ was exemplarily holy; a pattern of holiness to all that came nigh Him, and conversed with Him: oh, imitate Christ in this. (4) Christ was strictly and precisely holy: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" The most envious eyes could not pick a hole or find a flaw in any of His words or actions (Phil. ii. 15). (5) Christ was perseveringly holy—holy to the last breath; as He began, so He finished His whole life. It becomes not any of His people to begin in the spirit and end in the flesh. (6) In a word, the delight of Christ was only in holy things and holy persons—they were His chosen companions; even so it becometh His people to have all their delights in the saints and in the excellent of the earth (Psa. xvi. 3). 2. The obedience of Christ to His Father's will is a pattern for the imitation of all Christians. (1) Christ's obedience was free and voluntary, not forced or compulsory; it was so from the very first undertaking of the work of our redemption (Prov. viii. 30, 31). (2) The obedience of Christ was universal and complete; He was obedient to all the will of God, making no demur to the hardest service (Phil. ii. 8). (3) The obedience of Christ was sincere and pure, without any base or by-end, purely aiming at the glory of God (John xvii. 4). (4) The streams of Christ's obedience flowed from the fountain of ardent love to God (John xiv. 31). (5) The obedience of Christ was constant (Rom. ii. 7). 3. The self-denial of Christ is the pattern of believers, and their conformity unto it is their indispensable duty (Phil. ii. 4-6; 2 Cor. viii. 9). 4. The activity and diligence of Christ in finishing the work of God which was committed to Him was a pattern for all believers to imitate. (1) His heart was intently set upon it (Psa. iv. 8). (2) He never fainted under great discouragements (Isa. xliii. 4). (3) The shortness of His time provoked Him to the greatest diligence (John ix. 4). (4) He improved all opportunities, companies, and occurrences to further the great work which was under His hand (John iv. 6-10). (5) Nothing more displeased Him than when He met with dissuasions in His work (Matt. viii. 33). (6) Nothing rejoiced His soul more than the prosperity and success of His work (Luke x. 20, 21). 5. Delight in God and in His service was eminently conspicuous in the life of Christ, and is a rare pattern for believers' imitation (John iv. 32, 34). (1) The nature of it, which consisteth in the complacency, rest, and satisfaction of the mind in God and spiritual things, (2) The object of spiritual delight, which is God Himself and

the things which relate to Him (Psa. lxxiii. 25). (3) The subject of spiritual delight, which is a renewed heart, and that only so far as it is renewed (Rom. vii. 22). (4) The principle and spring of this delight, which is the agreeableness of spiritual things to the temper and frame of a renewed mind. 6. The inoffensiveness of the life of Christ upon earth is an excellent pattern to all His people; He injured none, offended none (Heb. vii. 26). He denied His own liberty to avoid occasion of offence; as in the case of the tribute-money (Matt. xix. 27). (1) For the honour of Jesus Christ be you inoffensive—His name is called upon you (James ii. 7). Your inoffensive carriage is the only means to stop the mouths of detractors (1 Pet. ii. 15). (2) For the sake of souls be wary that you give no offence (Matt. xiii. 7). (3) By the holiness and harmlessness of your lives many may be won to Christ (1 Pet. iii. 1). 7. The humility and lowliness of Christ is propounded by Himself as a pattern for His people's imitation (Matt. xi. 29). 8. The contentation of Christ in a low and mean condition in the world is an excellent pattern for His people's imitation. (1) The meanest and most afflicted Christian is owner of many rich, invaluable mercies (Eph. i. 3; 1 Cor. iii. 33). (2) You have many precious promises that God will not forsake you in your straits (Heb. xiii. 5; Isa. xli. 17). (3) How useful and beneficial are all your afflictions to you! They purge your sins, prevent your temptations, wean you from the world, and turn to your salvation; and how unreasonable, then, must your discontentedness at them be? (4) The time of your relief and full deliverance from all your troubles is at hand (1 Cor. vii. 26). (5) Your lot falls by Divine direction upon you, and as bad as it is it is much easier and sweeter than the condition of Christ in this world was. Yet He was contented, and why not you? III. THE NECESSITY OF THIS IMITATION OF CHRIST WILL CONVINCINGLY APPEAR DIVERS WAYS. 1. From the established order of salvation, which is fixed and unalterable. God that hath appointed the end hath also established the means and order by which men shall attain the ultimate end. Now conformity to Christ is the established method in which God will bring souls to glory (Rom. viii. 29). 2. The nature of Christ-mystical requires this conformity, and renders it indispensably necessary. Otherwise the body of Christ must be heterogeneous, of a nature different from the head; and how uncomely would this be? 3. This resemblance and conformity to Christ appears necessary from the communion which all believers have with Christ in the same spirit of grace and holiness. Believers are called Christ's fellows, or co-partners (Psa. xlv. 7), from their participation with Him of the same spirit (1 Thess. iv. 8). 4. The necessity of this imitation of Christ may be argued from the design and end of Christ's exhibition to the world in a body of flesh. For though we detest that doctrine which makes the exemplary life of Christ to be the whole end of His incarnation, yet we must not run so far from an error as to lose a precious truth. 5. Our imitation of Christ is one of those great articles which every man is to subscribe whom Christ will admit into the number of His disciples (Luke xiv. 27). 6. The honour of Christ necessitates the conformity of Christians to His example. How can wisdom be justified of her children except it be this way? Inferences: 1. If all that profess interest in Christ be strictly bound to imitate His holy example, then it follows that religion is very unjustly charged by the world with the scandals and evils of them that profess it. 2. If all men forfeit their claim to Christ who endeavour not to imitate Him in the holiness of His life, then how small a number of real Christians are there in the world! 3. What blessed times should we all see if true religion did once generally obtain and prevail in the world! 4. Hence it also follows that real Christians are the sweetest companions. 5. In a word, if no men's claim to Christ be warranted but theirs that walk as He walked, how vain and groundless then are the hopes and expectations of all unsanctified men who walk after their own lusts? 1. Christ hath conformed Himself to you by His abasing incarnation; how reasonable therefore is it that you conform yourselves to Him in the way of obedience and sanctification! 2. You shall be conformed to Christ in glory; how reasonable therefore is it you should now conform yourselves to Him in holiness! (chap. iii. 2). 3. The conformity of your lives to Christ, your pattern, is your highest excellency in this world: the measure of your grace is to be estimated by this rule. 4. So far as you imitate Christ in your lives, and no farther, you will be beneficial to the world in which you live; so far as God helps you to follow Christ you will be helpful to bring others to Christ, or build them up in Christ. 5. To walk as Christ walked is a walk only worthy of a Christian; this is to "walk worthy of the Lord" (1 Thess. ii. 12; Col. i. 10). 6. How comfortable will tho

close of your life be at death if you have walked after Christ's example in this world! A comfortable death is ordinarily the close of a holy life (Psa. xxxvii. 37). Lastly, I would leave a few words of support to such as sincerely endeavour, according to the tendency of their new nature, to follow Christ's example, but being weak in grace and meeting with strong temptations are frequently carried aside from the holy purposes of their well-meaning hearts. 1. Such defects in obedience make no flaw in your justification; for your justification is not built upon your obedience, but upon Christ's (Rom. iii. 24). 2. Your deep troubles for the defectiveness of your obedience do not argue you to be less, but more sanctified, than those who make no such complaints. 3. The Lord makes excellent uses even of your failings to do you good; for by these defects He hides pride from your eyes, He beats you off from self-dependence, He makes you to admire the riches of free grace, He makes you to long more ardently for heaven and entertain the sweeter thoughts of death. 4. Your bewailed infirmities do not break the bond of the everlasting covenant. 5. Though the defects of your obedience are grievous to God, yet your deep sorrows for them are well-pleasing in His eyes (Psa. li. 17). 6. Though God has left many defects to humble you, yet He hath given many things to comfort you. This is a comfort, that the desire of thy soul is to God. This is a comfort, that thy sins are not thy delight as once they were. (*John Flavel*.)

*Abiding in Christ to be demonstrated by walking as Christ did:—*I. THE APOSTLES DO ON ALL OCCASIONS ASSUME THE PRACTICE OF CHRIST AS AN UNQUESTIONABLE GROUND OF OBLIGATION AND AN EFFECTUAL INDUCEMENT THERETO. II. DOING SO HATH A REASONABLENESS GROUNDED ON OUR RELATIONS TO CHRIST—it is comely that the manners of the disciple should be regulated by those of his Master; that the servant should not, in his garb and demeanour, dissent or vary from his Lord; that the subject should conform his humour to the fashion of his Prince. III. FOLLOWING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE IS REQUISITE TO DEMONSTRATE THE SINCERITY OF OUR FAITH, LOVE, AND REVERENCE TO HIM. IV. BY PRETENDING TO BE CHRISTIANS WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRANSCENDENT GOODNESS, WORTH, AND EXCELLENCY OF OUR SAVIOUR; that He was incomparably better and wiser than any person ever was or could be; that He always acted with the highest reason, out of the most excellent disposition of mind, in order to the best purposes; and that His practice, therefore, reasonably should be the rule of ours. V. THE PRACTICE OF OUR SAVIOUR DID THOROUGHLY AGREE WITH HIS DOCTRINE AND LAW—He required nothing of us which He did not eminently perform Himself. He fulfilled in deed, as well as taught in word, all righteousness. VI. IT BEING THE DESIGN OF DIVINE GOODNESS, IN SENDING OUR SAVIOUR, TO RENDER US GOOD AND HAPPY, TO DELIVER US FROM SIN AND MISERY, THERE COULD NOT BE DEvised ANY MORE POWERFUL MEANS OR MORE CONVENIENT METHOD OF ACCOMPLISHING THOSE EXCELLENT PURPOSES than by propounding such an example and obliging us to comply therewith. 1. Good example is naturally an effectual instrument of good practice; for that it doth most compendiously, pleasantly, and easily instruct; representing things to be done at one view, in a full body, clothed with all their modes and circumstances; it kindleth men's courage by a kind of contagion, as one flame doth kindle another; it raiseth a worthy emulation of doing laudable things which we see done, or of obtaining a share in the commendations of virtue. 2. More especially the example of Christ doth, in efficacy and influence on good practice, surpass all others. (1) In that it is a sure and infallible rule, a perfect rule of practice: deficient in no part, swerving in no circumstance from truth and right, which privileges are competent to no other example. (2) In that He was, by the Divine providence, to this very purpose designed and sent into the world, as well by His practice as by His doctrine to be the guide and master of holy life. (3) In that it was, by an admirable temperament, more accommodated for imitation than any others have been; for though it were written with an incomparable fairness, delicacy, and evenness, not slurred with any foul blot, not anywhere declining from exact straightness, yet were the lineaments thereof exceedingly plain and simple, not by any gaudy flourishes or impertinent intrigues rendered difficult to studious imitation; so that even women and children, the weakest and meanest sort of people, as well as the most wise and ingenious, might easily perceive its design, and with good success write after it. (4) In that it is attended with the greatest obligations (of gratitude and ingenuity, of justice, of interest, of duty), mightily engaging us to follow it. (*Isaac Barrow, D.D.*)

*Imitation of Christ in His temper and life:—*I. IN WHAT RESPECTS CHRIST IS AN EXAMPLE TO CHRISTIANS AND THEY ARE TO IMITATE HIM. Christ is only our example as to those things that are common

between Him and us, but not as to those in which we can have no participation with Him or He with us. His part was to become our mediator with God. II. HOW SUITABLE AN EXAMPLE CHRIST IS TO US AND HOW EXPEDIENT IT IS FOR US TO HAVE SUCH AN EXAMPLE. 1. The example of Christ is exceedingly suitable to mankind. (1) From the humanity of it. (2) The notoriety of Christ's example makes it fit for general use. The most exemplary transactions of His holy life are transmitted to us in exact narratives. (3) His example was very extensive. It either directly exemplifies or contains a lively instruction into the duties of almost every station and relation in human life. (4) Christ's example is absolutely perfect. 2. How very expedient it is for mankind to have such an example set before them. (1) This use and expediency appears in that it tends to impress the mind with a strong sense of the reasonableness and excellency of that universal rectitude which the law requires, and to guard us against light and favourable thoughts of any deviation or iniquity. (2) It still adds more weight to this use of Christ's example, to consider the Divinity of His person. In this way God has glorified a state of obedience to Himself. III. THE OBLIGATIONS AND ENGAGEMENTS WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE UNDER TO IMITATE THIS SO SUITABLE AND EXPEDIENT EXAMPLE. This is the natural tendency of all Christian graces; so that where they are in truth they cannot but work this way, and otherwise they are only in appearance, not in reality. (*John Hubbard.*) *The Christian's imitation of Christ*:—First, for the conditional "If." Is it not a precedent condition of life; for a man cannot first walk as Christ walked, and then be in Christ. A graft cannot live the life of the stock and then be inoculated into the stock. The first act is before the latter act: life before the actions of life—"so walk as Christ walked," this notes the actions of life. Now a man must first be in Christ before he can walk as Christ walked. Indeed, this condition is first to our knowledge: but it is not first in its own nature. So, then, to walk as Christ walked, being a necessary consequence of being in Christ, we cannot be in Christ if we walk not as Christ walked. If there be any commandment of Christ in all the gospel that you will not conform to, it is an evident sign that ye abide not in Christ's love. Secondly, for the exemplary, "As," even as He walked. Can any man walk as Christ walked? Is it possible that dust and ashes, that is corrupt with sin, can walk as He walked? This word "as" hath a twofold signification—(1) such as imports equality, or (2) similitude. As this "as" imports an equality, so it is impossible that any flesh can walk as Christ walked—so purely, so unspottedly, so steadily, so effectually as He lived. A scholar writes as his master's copy directs him. Though there be no equality, he cannot write one stroke or dash with his pen so well as his master, yet he doth write as his master sets his copy: his hand follows his master's hand. Even as less white is like more white, though not alike in the same degree, yet in the same nature, there is the same nature in the lesser that there is in the bigger. So we must have the same life, obey the same commandments, be guided by the same rule, swayed by the same motions, led by the same Spirit that was in Christ (Rom. viii. 9). Thus you see the explanation of the doctrine; come we now to the reasons, which are principally these four:—1. The first reason is taken from the scope and end for which the Lord did send His Son into the world: as to justify the ungodly, so also to conform all those that are justified to the image of Christ. 2. The second reason is taken from the practice of Christianity. In vain are we called Christians if we be not imitators of Christ. The disciples are called Christians (Acts xi. 26); the very name tells us that we must be followers of Christ. 3. The third reason is taken from the essential, or rather from the integral union that is between Christ and all those that are in Christ; they are all members of His most gracious body. 4. The last reason is taken from the near relation that is to be between Christ and every member of Christ. If all that are in Christ are the children of Christ they must needs walk as Christ walked. Like begets like. Dost thou say thou hast put on Christ? Why, then, show me the signs of Christ in thee. How canst thou then demonstrate that thou art a Christian? It may be now and then thou wilt give a prayer unto Christ. Is this to be in Christ? If thou be in Christ, then thou must live the life of Christ in all thy ways. "He that saith he abideth in Him," &c. In this word "he" there are three notes. First, indication. The apostle doth, as it were, point at a certain man in his congregation, as if there had been some man that he knew was not in Christ. So preachers must not only preach the Word of God in general, but they must preach in particular. Secondly, discrimination. As if he should say, there are some that are in Him and some that are not in Him. Hence observe this point, that every minister is bound to preach so as to make a difference between the precious and the vile. Here are two things—1. They

shall teach them the difference between the holy and profane. 2. They shall not only show it before them, but if they will not see it they shall cause them to see it; that is, they must beat it into them and rub it into their consciences. You that have heard the Word of God apply it to your souls, it is a blessed plaister; let it lie on your souls. Thirdly, scrutiny. It is not only an outward word, but a word of the heart: "If any man say," that is, if any man think, that he is in Christ, he ought to walk as Christ did. Hence we observe, that a minister is bound to preach to men's thoughts. (*Wm. Fenner.*) *The Christian walk*:—It was one of the last sayings of a famous divine that there were three things which were essential to healthy Christian teaching—doctrine, experience, and practice. He said that if doctrine alone were brought forward to a people there was a danger lest they should turn out Antinomians; that if experience alone were brought forward to a people there was a danger lest they should turn out enthusiasts and sentimentalists; and that if practice alone were brought forward, there was a danger that they would turn out legalists. I know not whether we have sufficient attention given in the present day to the third of the three great essentials spoken of, I mean the essential of Christian practice. I. THE TRUE BELIEVER'S PROFESSION—"He saith that he abideth in Christ." He rests all his hope on the Lord Jesus Christ; he feels that he is a sinner, but he sees in Christ an all-sufficient Saviour. Time there was when he abode himself in carelessness; he was a thoughtless, an unconcerned person, travelling down the stream of time and thinking nothing of the gulf of eternity. Now, old things are passed away and all things are become new. II. THE STANDARD OF THE TRUE BELIEVER'S PRACTICE. The apostle speaks of the believer's "walk." By that he means his daily course of life, his behaviour, that may be seen of men, as a person's walking may be seen by the eye. The man of the world cannot move without being seen; so the walk of the Christian is that behaviour which others around him can observe. It is not merely a spasmodic rushing forward, but an equable daily walk. He speaks of what that walk "ought" to be; he speaks of it as a debt, as an obligation. The believer is bound by the strongest of all ties and obligations to "walk even as Christ walked." Who that has ever seen a young painter in his first efforts to paint, when he has set the canvas before him and endeavoured to copy some mighty masterpiece of Rubens, or Rembrandt, or Titian, has not been struck with the difference between his first essay and the wonderful copy before him? Yet that painter does the same kind of thing that Rubens, or Titian, or Rembrandt did; he is working upon canvas, he has the colours, he holds the brush; though he may not like them lay on the colours and trace the outline in the same way, yet, after all, he is following their steps, he is imitating them, and is far more likely to bring forth an excellent work than if he copied that which was not equal in perfection. But in what is it that we are endeavouring to "walk even as Christ walked"? In His demeanour towards those with whom He had to do—in all His relations, as a son unto His mother, as a friend among His friends—in all His dealings with His enemies and with His disciples. (*Bp. Ryle.*) *Imitation of Christ*:—I. PARTICULARS IN WHICH CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO LIVE AS CHRIST LIVED. 1. Those who profess to be Christ's disciples ought to take Him as their example in bearing their appointed sufferings. (1) In the first place, contentedly to bear whatever sufferings God by His providence imposes on us; not to be discontented, irritable, and despondent. (2) There was another characteristic in Christ's endurance of sufferings, perhaps yet more important to us, because it relates to a temper still more constantly to be in exercise. Jesus foresaw all those sufferings which He afterwards so patiently bore. He "steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem"; He pursued the great end of His mission into this world without deviation by one single step or for one single moment. He, then, who "walks as Christ walked," will, without fear, without despondency, without impetuosity and passion, without enthusiasm, with calm deliberation and steady purpose, determine to pursue the course of duty God has called him to pursue, whatever the consequences may be. 2. In this course, however, it is impossible but that Christians should meet, as Christ met, with those who would oppose this course. II. REASONS WHY WE SHOULD WALK THUS. 1. Those who are redeemed ought to live as their Redeemer lived, because they recognise Him to be the pattern of all excellence. 2. Those who are redeemed ought to endeavour to please their Redeemer. 3. Those who have been redeemed ought to count it one of the highest objects of their existence to glorify and serve Him who has been their Redeemer. (*B. W. Noel, M.A.*) *Inward grace manifest in the life*:—There is an inward germinant power which must make itself felt in a life like his. If a man abide in Christ and Christ dwells within him, then must the heavenly forms of grace and truth which Christ

unfolded in His life be manifested, to some extent at least, in His followers. The life of the rose unfolds itself in the fragrance and beauty of the queen of flowers; the life of the lily in immaculate purity; the life of Christ in "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," which are the fruits of the Spirit. Christ is the great archetype of redeemed humanity, and the life of each believer is an aspect of the image of the Son of God. The conformity of the life to the model of Christ is the test of fellowship with the Father. (*A. R. Cocke, D.D.*)

Vers. 7-11. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment.—*The old and new commandments* :—He had been telling them that they were to keep the commandments if they would know God. Now those people who boasted that they had discovered quite another road to the knowledge of God than this had an especial dislike to the Old Testament. So they would be sure to turn upon him and say, "The commandments! What commandments do you mean? Not those old commandments, surely, which were given to the Jews! You would not bring us back to the law, would you?" He faces them boldly. "I do mean those old commandments," he says; "I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. I mean, distinctly, that I look upon those old commandments, if they were faithfully kept, as a way to the knowledge of God." But how? He does not say for a moment that a person merely regarding the commandments as written on stone could keep them. But he says, "The old commandment is the Word which ye have heard from the beginning." Here is the secret of the whole matter. The commandments were a "word" proceeding from a living God; a "word" addressed to the hearts of human beings. As long as the commandments were looked at only as written and graven in stone they belonged to Israelites. When they were regarded as the words proceeding from the Word which was from the beginning it was intelligible how God had been speaking to other nations; how, though they had not the law, they did by nature the things contained in the law; how they showed the work of the law written in their hearts; how they, as well as the Jews, might seek by patient continuance in well-doing for glory, honour, and immortality. But was there nothing gained by this revelation of the Word in the flesh, by this gospel of His life? Was it not a good thing to be born under the New Testament instead of the Old? "Again," says St. John, "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." He is a teacher of progress much more truly than those who treated all the past as worthless or evil. He had brought forth a new commandment, not inconsistent with the old, scarcely an addition to it, rather the very essence of it, which yet it was unable to express. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now." What was there new in this statement? There was nothing new in the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That was old; that St. Paul declares, that St. John declares, that our Lord declares, is implied in all the commandments. Men knew that they ought not to hate their neighbours; that is, men who dwell near them, who belonged to their own tribe or nation; however often they might do it in spite of their knowledge. The code could not bid them to do more than this. We may say it boldly, no mere code can. But there must be a bond between man and man; there must be a power to make that bond effectual, or the law concerning neighbours will be most imperfectly heeded. The revelation of Christ explains the secret. When He came forth, when His light shone upon men, then it was seen that there is a common Brother of Men; of men, I say, not of Israelites merely. He is the Universal Brother. "Therefore," says John, "this thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth." As if He had said, "Now we are come into a new and higher state; the state not only of neighbourhood but of brotherhood." Are we no more under an obligation? Nay, verily, we come under a new commandment, under a wider and deeper obligation. It is a sin; a sin which punishes itself. For to hate a brother is to walk in darkness. It is to hide ourselves from Him who is our great common brother. It is to live as if the Lord had not appeared. For us to hate our brother—to hate any man—is nothing less than to deny the man, the Son of Man; the common light of men. For us to love our brother is nothing less than to walk in the light of Christ's presence, nothing less than to be free from all occasion and danger of stumbling. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *Brotherly love*:—I. BROTHERLY LOVE IS AN OLD

COMMANDMENT (ver. 7.) This verse is often represented as though it referred to what the apostle had before said, and not to that which he was about to utter. To me it seems clear that he speaks by anticipation. He adopts a manner of writing which suggests the introduction of a new topic—"Brethren, I write (or am about to write) no new commandment." Besides, brotherly love is a subject of which such a declaration might with great propriety be made. In making it the apostle imitates the example of his beloved Master, when, in His memorable Sermon on the Mount, He warned His hearers against supposing He was introducing any new doctrine (Matt. v. 17). Brotherly love was no novelty. It arose of necessity out of the relation in which men stood to God and to one another. He was their Creator and they were brethren. Brotherly love was the doctrine of the Old Testament as well as of the New. It need not be added how powerfully these views are enforced when men are regarded as the subjects of grace. They become thus doubly the children of God and brethren one of another. II. YET THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH IT IS A NEW COMMANDMENT (ver. 8). The apostle delights to imitate his Master. He does so not only in his own conduct, but in his very manner of teaching. Of this there is an interesting example in the subject now before us. Of it Jesus said (John xiii. 34, 35). It is after this model John says of brotherly love, "A new commandment I write unto you." How is this saying to be understood? In one sense it was an old commandment, and in another it was new. It was old, necessarily arising out of the relation of men to one another, and required by the oldest revelation of the Divine will. But it was also new, as it was republished under the Christian economy. It should be more intense than it ever had been. It was hereafter to be formed on the model of Christ's love. It should be wider in extent as it should be deeper in feeling. Hitherto the Jew confined his regards to his own nation. But in future all such national and sectarian distinctions were to be done away. It should be as high in its motives and aspirations as it was deep in feeling and wide in extent. Both would bring it into fellowship with heaven. Thus it should become the badge of the Christian economy. Judaism had been distinguished by its formal ceremonies, but Christianity would be distinguished by its generous and enlarged catholicity. Taking hold of a few hearts it would bind them together as one man. Thus united, they would operate on the mass of society around them. III. SUCH LOVE IS A REALITY, AND IS EXEMPLIFIED IN CHRIST AND IN THEM THAT ARE HIS (ver. 8.) As for Christ, His whole life was one burning flame of holy love. And be it observed, all this is summed up by the apostle as an argument for brotherly love in us (Phil. ii. 4-11). If we have the mind of Christ it is clear what that must be. A similar account may be given of His early disciples. Like their Master, they denied themselves that they might benefit others. How incredible the hardships they endured! This was the spirit that pervaded the early Church. No other could have sustained it in those days. It was full of the tenderest sympathy, the most ardent love, and the severest self-denial. IV. IT OUGHT TO BE SO, CONSIDERING THE LIGHT WE ENJOY (ver. 8). 1. "The darkness is past." (1) The darkness of Judaism. It served its purpose. (2) The darkness of heathenism. The address of the prophet has been made to us (Isa. lx. 1, 2). (3) The darkness of unaided and perverted human reason (1 Cor. i. 21). 2. "The true light now shineth." (1) The light of the Word shineth, "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path." (2) The light of the spirit shineth (2 Cor. iii. 18). (3) The light of ordinances now shineth, so that, as of old, of many places it may be said (Matt. iv. 16). (4) The light of Christ shineth (John xii. 36). These are our privileges. What then must be our responsibilities? V. THE APOSTLE'S ENFORCEMENT OF BROTHERLY LOVE BY A STRONG DENUNCIATION OF ITS VIOLATION AND A HIGH COMMENDATION OF ITS EXCELLENCE. (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*) *The commandment of love—its oldness and its newness* :—These words stand between two commandments—that in the sixth verse of the chapter from which my text is taken, to walk as Christ walked, and the commandment of brotherly love contained in verse the ninth. To which of these does the apostle refer here? To both, for in their deepest meaning the two are one. If we walk in the light as Christ walked, then shall we love our brethren, for He loved us and gave Himself for us. Having ascertained what the commandment is, let us consider the two things mentioned concerning it—its OLDNESS and its NEWNESS. The law of love is as old as human nature itself. First, the faculty of love belongs to man as man—is part of his nature. Second, man has the sense or feeling that love is right, that it is a duty; and that to hate others, or even to be indifferent to them, is wrong. This is the Divine testimony in man's conscience, a silent commandment which makes itself heard and felt without the use of words.

But the precept of love is new as well as old. It was Christ Himself that first called it new. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." 1. The prominence and oneness which our Lord gave to it made it new. 2. The perfect realisation of the precept of love in the life of Christ was new. It filled His Spirit, possessed His soul, appeared in His words and works, and was made manifest for ever in His passion and death. He did justice to love, honoured it, and showed how beautiful, how noble, and how divine a quality it is; and thus the old commandment was arrayed in new glory. 3. The old precept of love has also a new inspiring power, as seen in the life and character of our Lord. 4. Again, Christ made love the symbol or badge of the Christian Church. It is not by any system of theology, forms of worship, learning, or social position that the true Church is known; but by all that is implied in the great word "love" as it is used in the New Testament. 5. There is an undying freshness in love which makes it ever new. Consider the working of love anywhere, and you will find in it a beauty that never fades, a newness that never withers, a fragrance that never departs. (T. Jones.) *No new commandment*:—It is scarcely too much of a paradox to say that new knowledge is for the most part a discovery of old truth; we talk in popular language of the discovery of electricity, but the electric power lurked in those same substances since the world began; we talk with delight of the wonderful discoveries made by the spectroscope, but after all those colours were in the sunlight, those elements in the starlight, long before; we discover the marvellous power of steam, but many an earthquake and volcano might have told us something of the power of steam centuries ago; "no new law I write," the steam-engine, the electric current, the light seem to say as they pass on their rapid flight, but "an old law" which ye had from the beginning. And yet as we watch them at work it is a new one; the steam-engine is changing the course of commerce and the face of society; the electric current puts a girdle round the world; we know something of the stars and the sun now we never knew before; our ignorance, "our darkness is passing away, and the true light is beginning to shine." Can we wonder, then, when we turn from the physical to the moral world, the same truth holds good? But our paradox carries us further than this; it is not only true that new knowledge is often only a discovery of old truth, but surely it is also true that not infrequently progress in the world's best life is only made by the re-discovery of old knowledge. What are we doing in sculpture, except trying to discover how to reach the perfect outline of the Greeks? In painting we still study the old masters; and old inscriptions are showing us how much the ancients knew which we thought once we were discovering for the first time. So also in the moral and religious sphere, what have all the great Christian movements been except re-proclamations of forgotten truths? The Wesleyan movement was but the re-proclamation of the necessity of conversion; the so-called Oxford movement was but the calling emphatic attention to the neglected Sacraments; and this at least can be said of the Salvation Army, that it does remind us in the midst of our culture and education of the fact of perishing souls. What, then, is the upshot of all this? First, that we should expect to find God's final word for the world no new one; we should expect to find His great revelation something which focussed into a new force the scattered rays of old truth; and secondly, we should expect to find that in course of time, from human frailty, fragments even of this great revelation should be forgotten, and that consequently, welling forward, as it were, from its central depths, would have from time to time to shine the forgotten truth. I. NOW THE GREAT COMMANDMENT, EVER OLD AND EVER NEW, IS THE LAW OF LOVE. 1. "Is it true to history"; is it true that Christianity gathers together and focuses scattered rays of old truth? In dealing with sceptics it is often found that if a saying of our Lord's can be shown to distantly resemble the saying of some philosopher centuries ago, if the teaching of Plato, or of Seneca, or of Epictetus can be quoted as anticipations or echoes of the Sermon on the Mount or the letters of St. Paul, if sentences of the Lord's Prayer can be shown to be embedded in Jewish liturgies, therefore it is supposed that a damaging blow has been dealt to His uniqueness and originality. Why! on the contrary we glory in it; we trace in it the action of the Incarnate Word before He is Incarnate; we see Him immanent in the world from the beginning, teaching, controlling, guiding: it is the very thing we are looking for to confirm our faith; and if one thing more than another could be discovered to send home this teaching of brotherhood into our hearts, it is to find that it is no new commandment He gave us when He came in the flesh, but an old one He had given us from the beginning. 2. "It is true to

human nature." "A planet in our system," says Bishop Barry, "has three influences playing upon it—it has first its own centrifugal force which bears it on its way, and which if left unbalanced would carry it forward in a straight line; it has on it next the great central influence of the sun, and thirdly it has on it the influence of the other planets," and he goes on to remind us of the remarkable fact that the planet Neptune was discovered not at first by immediate observation, but by the effect which it had, though unseen, on the orbit of another planet. Now with that picture before us it is not difficult to see that Christianity recognises self. "Not afraid of the shallow taunt of selfishness it tells man plainly that his own personality is a treasure committed to his charge, and that he simply fulfils a law of his being in educating it to perfection, and therefore to happiness in this world and the world beyond the grave." In other words, we are called by Christianity to self-sacrifice, but we must have a self to sacrifice. A question was asked the other day after an address to some Oxford undergraduates which goes to the root of the matter. Was it wrong to educate a taste for art? was it wrong to go to Venice in the vacation? or to buy a beautiful picture for one's room? The sincerity of the question was beyond dispute. Putting aside all obvious cautions about extravagance or over-indulgence of taste or cases where, on account of the present distress, it becomes right to waive our rights, as a broad principle, is self-development right or wrong? And we may surely venture most emphatically to answer that it is a duty; that balanced duly by the other influences, the instinct of self-development—the centrifugal force of the planet—must have its place; that it is a short-sighted policy even looked at from the point of view of the human race to crush individuality; that mind and powers developed will have more to give, not less, in the days to come; and that we shall be untrue to history and human nature if we ignore the last revelation we have received—worked out too by human sacrifice and human effort—of personal and individual freedom, for which martyrs have fought and died. But does this contradict or interfere with the law of love? Not for a moment, if we remember whose we are and whom we serve. 3. But is it practicable? Does the law work? And it is a relief to turn away from general principles to reporting of the thing in action; after all, "the only true gospel is the gospel of life." Now in obedience to the law of love a certain number of the sons of the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford come each year to live in the centre of East London; they do it simply and naturally; they make no parade of virtue in doing it; their labour is a labour of love. What is the effect? Does it destroy self? By God's blessing it helps to destroy selfishness, but not self; it develops self; it transfigures self. It makes men of them; the calls upon their judgment, the claims upon their sympathy, the education of their powers of government, insensibly and slowly make character; they lose their lives only to find them. Has it any effect on their belief in God? We know the dreamy haze in which many of us leave the University: "is the old gospel true after all," we ask ourselves, "or have we lost it among the maze of modern speculations?" What effect upon this haze has obedience to the law of love? It gives a man back his faith in God; the darkness passes away and the true light begins to shine; and he finds by practical experience the truth of the old saying, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" And if it ennobles self and clears the vision of God, what has it to say to man? It wins man; man is unable to resist it; it makes him believe in a brotherhood of which he has heard but never seen before; this is a music he can understand. II. This brings us to the second thing we might expect to find; we saw that we might expect to find from time to time forgotten depths of even a final revelation swelling forward into the light of day. So weak is human nature, so small its capacity to hold infinite truth, that it has from time to time to relearn piecemeal the faith once delivered to the saints; just as clouds keep gathering round the sun, and then being dispersed, so the darkness of prejudice and selfishness keeps gathering round the sun of revelation; again and again that darkness has to be dispersed, and the true light again and again to shine. Now as we look out upon the world, it is perfectly certain that something has begun to shine which was not there before. Ask people who have been abroad for fifteen or twenty years, and then come back to England, and they will tell you that they are perfectly astonished at what they see. But these things, they will tell you, are but symptoms of an inner change; they find the whole tone different; they find the old class feeling vanishing; they find the heart of one half of the world has begun to go out towards the other. What is the meaning of it? It fronts us, it judges us, it is a fact; and the question is this, Is it to be sneered down as a passing whim or is it

part of the life of God? And in upholding that it is part of the life of God which has again found its way through the mists of human selfishness, we may take our stand on three grounds. 1. It was time for it to come; we had learnt the last lesson, we understand the freedom of the individual. 2. It is too strong to be a whim; the true diamond and the diamond of paste are like enough to look at, but you can cut with the one and not the other; this diamond cuts. 3. The colour of the light bears witness to its source; we all may mistake many things at times and many colours, but when we see it in action there is no mistaking the white light of love. And so, in conclusion, we have to ask ourselves, What is to be our attitude towards this brightening light? (1) And first, surely at any rate, not an attitude of opposition; the most cautious of us can hardly refuse to accede to the counsel of the cautious Gamaliel. (2) But secondly, the very words of Gamaliel show us that we cannot stop there; if it is of God, and we as Christians are fellow-workers with God, then God expects us, He must expect us to help it on. (*A. F. W. Ingram, M.A.*) **Which thing is true in Him and in you.**—*The law of love true to the requirements of life*:—What does he here mean by "true"? In Scripture, as in our daily speech, the word stands not merely for the giving over unchanged by our mind to the mind of another, by words or otherwise, of something we know, so that he shall get it just as we have it. It means often the real instead of the seeming—that which is, not that which we think to be. Not so often it must be taken, as in this place, for that which fits, as a key the lock which it opens, or a medicine the disease which it heals, or a plan the difficulty it solves. That, in short, which puts things right which are wrong, which, disentangling confusion brings about order, supplying wants, stopping gaps, knitting together broken links, making useful that which without it is useless, or beautiful that which by itself is uncomely. That which does this in each case is the "true." What the apostle, therefore, here means is that the great law of love fits into the facts, the realities, of human nature in the best way, giving it a finished beauty, and putting into it what it lacked for its smooth working. Nothing else, the apostle would tell us, could bring about so much good; and he is sure that we can see this clearly to be the case in Christ and in ourselves. This law of love, he says, "is true in Him and in you." Without this love all the glory of the life of Christ would be gone. We see how it was needed to make perfect all that He was and did. We see the boundless usefulness of that life to us and to the world. But what good could that life or that death have done but for the love which ruled Christ in both? Think next of yourselves, saith St. John; think how your thoughts, your feelings, your lives, your treatment of others, are all changed. You are happier, you are in all ways better than you were; your old difficulties in dealing with others you now no longer feel. Doubts as to the things it were best for you to do are gone. Whence the change? Has it not clearly followed on your obedience to the law of love? (*C. Watson, D.D.*) **The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.**—*The darkness passing—the light shining*:—**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. 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. **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. 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. Plainly there is here a thoroughly practical test. This darkness is the absence of God. 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. 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? "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 in some measure so loving it that I would not have it all at once pass? 2. "The true light is now shining." 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. It is true, as a great fact, in you as in Christ, that the true light now shineth. 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. (R. S. Candlish, D.D.)

Vers. 9-11. **He that . . . hateth his brother is in darkness.**—*Brotherly love a test and means of being and abiding with guiltless spirit in the light instead of walking in darkness*:—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. 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. Now all is changed. By grace in Christ I am in a new way. 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. 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? 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. 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. 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. Secondly, "there is none occasion of stumbling in Him." This is a negative advantage; but it is great. 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." (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) **He that loveth his brother abideth in the light.**—*Moral darkness*:—Note the solemn and picturesque eloquence of the accessional parallelism in this verse. The inner condition of him who hates his brother—"is in darkness"; the outward life—"walketh in darkness" (*Psa. lxxxii. 5; Eccles. ii. 14*). He has lost his point of orientation—"he knoweth not whither he goeth," to what unsurmised guilt and punishment. Something follows, worse than darkness above—the darkness has not only blinded him, but "blinded his very eyes" once for all. He has lost the very faculty of sight! Could the apostle have thought of creatures who, in dark caverns, not only lose the faculty of sight, but have the visive organs atrophied? Tennyson has presented the same image, applying it, however, not to sin, but to sorrow—

"But the night has crept into my heart,
And begun to darken my eyes."

(*Abp. Wm. Alexander.*) *Hatred causes stumbling*:—He who hates his brother stumbles against himself and everything within and without; he who loves has an unimpeded path. (*A. J. Bengel.*)

Vers. 12-14. I write unto you, little children.—I. CHRISTIANS OF ALL AGES AND RANKS ARE AND SHOULD BE AS LITTLE CHILDREN. 1. As little children are newly entered into the world, and beginning their lives, all things are new to them, so whosoever will be saved entereth into a new state by being renewed by the Holy Ghost, and participating of the Divine nature. 2. Having a new life, they look after that which will maintain and keep it up in good vigour; for all creatures that have life have something put into them which attracteth the nourishment proper to that life. 3. In regard of humility, and designs, and contrivances after greatness in the world. They that become as little children seek not after dominions and dignities and honours. 4. Innocent and harmless as a child, who, though infected with sin, and must be saved by Christ as others of grown age, yet cannot act sin. II. SUCH WHO ARE AS LITTLE CHILDREN HAVE OBTAINED REMISSION OF SINS FOR CHRIST'S NAME'S SAKE. 1. What is forgiveness of sins? (1) It is a judicial action of God. One man forgiveth another; for our heavenly Father requireth that (*Matt. xviii. 35*). But our forgiveness is an act of charity or duty imposed upon us. God's forgiveness is an act of authority, as He is the Governor and Judge of the world. (2) By which He doth freely and fully release from the guilt of all our transgressions. (a) Freely. God doeth it, and that without any cost to us (*Isa. lii. 3*). (b) It is full; as God pardoneth freely, so also fully, and not by halves; universally, and not a few-sins only. (c) It is a release from the guilt of our transgressions. Properly it is the obligation to punishment which God releaseth us from. A reprieve only deferreth execution, but a pardon wholly preventeth it. (d) The object of this pardon is the penitent believer; and that faith is required (*Acts x. 43*). (e) This sin is forgiven without requiring satisfaction or punishment of the sinner. 2. How it is obtained. (1) Sin, a transgression of the law, a debt, as being a wrong done against God, obliging the sinner either to repair God in point of honour, or to lie under the wrath of God for evermore; for "the wages of sin is death" (*Rom. vi. 23*). (2) There is no deliverance from this debt of sin, or obligation to wrath because of sin, but by pardon and forgiveness. (3) There is some hope of forgiveness, because God forbeareth the worst, and doth not stir up all His wrath against them. They have food, and raiment, and ease, and liberty, and friends and wealth, and honour. Everything about us proclaimeth the goodness of this God with whom we have to do (*Acts xiv. 17*). (4) Though forgiveness may be probably hoped for from God's goodness and mercy as represented in common providence, yet till there be a satisfaction for the offence, and we may have our pardon granted with the good leave of provoked justice, the soul can have no satisfaction. The grand scruple that haunts the guilty creature is how shall God be appeased? (*Micah vi. 7*). (5) It was agreeable to the honour and wisdom of God that those who would have benefit by this remedy should be sensible of the weight which is upon them, and humbly confess their sins, and with brokenness of heart sue out their pardon. (6) It is fit also that

those who would sue out their pardon in this humble and submissive way should acknowledge their Redeemer, and thankfully accept of the benefit procured by Him, and offered to them in His name; and heartily consent to His covenant to be brought home to God again, that they may be fully recovered out of their lapsed condition. III. SUCH AS HAVE OBTAINED REMISSION OF SINS ARE BOUND TO EXPRESS THEIR GRATITUDE AND THANKFULNESS TO GOD BY NEW OBEDIENCE. 1. That they may not undo what is done, and so build again the things they have destroyed (Gal. ii. 17, 18). 2. That we may make good our qualification. Certain it is that none are pardoned but those that are renewed and born again; for the application of the merit of Christ and the gift of the Spirit are inseparable (1 Cor. vi. 11). 3. To express their gratitude and thankfulness (2 Cor. v. 14). 4. Because they have great encouragements (Psa. cxxx. 4). Use—1. Let me now exhort you to seek after the pardon of sins. To this end—(1) Consider your necessity. (2) Consider the grounds and hopes of pardon; God's merciful nature and self-inclination to pity us. (3) Consider what a blessed comfort it is to have sin forgiven (Psa. xxxii. 1, 2). Use—2. To stir us up not to offend God any more, or provoke Him to anger by our sins. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *A sermon to the Lord's little children*:—I. I want the babes in grace, the weak in faith, to notice THEIR PRIVILEGE. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." 1. This is a privilege extremely desired by the little children. They have but lately felt the burden of guilt; the Spirit of God has but newly convinced them of sin; and, therefore, above everything, their prayer is, "Father, forgive me." To the freshly saved it is a joy worth worlds to have their sins forgiven; and this joy belongs of right to all the saints, yea, even to the little children in the family of God. The pardon of sin is as the pearl of great price to you in your present stage of spiritual life; you would have sold all that you had in order to procure it; and now that you have it your heart is aglow with gratitude. Far be it from me to stay your holy joy, and yet the Lord will show you greater things than these. 2. At your stage of experience pardon is the most prominent blessing of the covenant. The newly-pardoned does not yet see the innumerable other blessings which come in the train of forgiveness; he is for the present absorbed in the hearing of that one sentence, "Go in peace; thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee." Pardon is but an entrance blessing, a welcome at the doorstep: there are rarer joys within the house. You have become an heir to a boundless inheritance; all things are yours; heaven, and Christ, and God are yours. 3. Here let me observe that the forgiveness of sins is assuredly the possession of the new beginner in the Divine life. 4. Note, also, that your sins are forgiven you on the same terms as those of the apostle, and the greatest of the saints: your sins are forgiven you for the sake of Jesus, for the sake of His glorious person, for the sake of His honourable offices, for the sake of His atoning death, for the sake of His glorious resurrection, for the sake of His perpetual intercession before the throne of God. 5. Now notice that this is the reason why John wrote to you, little children. The moment, then, that a man has his sins forgiven, he is old enough to begin to understand that which is written, and he should become a Bible reader. II. I have to speak of THE KNOWLEDGE of these little children. "I have written unto you, little children, because ye have known, or know, the Father." The tiniest babe in the family of God knows the Father. 1. For, as we have seen, his sins are forgiven him. By whom is that pardon given? Why, by the Father; and, therefore, he that has had his sins forgiven him necessarily knows the Father. 2. Moreover, this is a piece of knowledge which the child of God obtains very early in his spiritual life; for whatever a child does not know, he knows his father. Little children, you know God now in your spiritual childhood. You could not write a treatise upon His attributes; but you know Him by the instinct of a child. Little children, the result of your knowing God as your Father is that when He is away from you you are in the habit of crying after Him. On the other hand, when you do get to your Father you show that you love Him by the perfect restfulness of your spirit. In God you are at home. The presence of God is the paradise of the believer. This also is true, that you seek to imitate Him. Would you not be perfect if you could? If you could, would you not be rid of every sin? And do you not glory in Him? Little children when they begin to talk, and go to school, how proud they are of their father! We cannot make enough of our God. We extol Him with all our might. With the blessed virgin we sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." III. THE PRECEPTS which John has written for your guidance. First, look at 1 John ii.: "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin

not." 1. That is the first precept—little children, sin not. Children are very apt to get into the mire. There is so much of carnality about us, so much of the old Adam, that the question is not into which sin we fall, but into which sin we do not fall. Like the pendulum, we swing to the right hand and then to the left: we err first in one way and then in another; we are ever inclined to evil. Avoid every sin. Ask for the grace of God to sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul, and body. 2. Further on in this second chapter the apostle writes to them again, and tells them (ver. 18) that it is the last time, and that there are many antichrists abroad. You will have to run your eye right down the chapter till you come to verse 24, for that is what he says to little children, because there are many antichrists in the world that would seduce them; "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning." Little children are very fickle. The toys which they cry for one day they break the next; young minds change with the wind. So, little children, there are many evil ones who will endeavour to seduce you from the truth of God, it is well to be on your guard against those who would mislead you. Till we are rooted and grounded in the truth, new things have great charms for us, especially if they have about them a great show of holiness and zeal for God. "Little children, let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning," leave to others the soon-exhausted novelties. 3. Little children, here is a third precept for you (ver. 28). "And now, little children, abide in Him." Let the truth abide in you, and do you abide in Christ, who is the truth. What next? 4. Read on to chapter iii. 7—"Little children, let no man deceive you." Children are very credulous; they will believe any idle tale if it be told them by a clever and attractive person. Little children, believe your Saviour, but be not ready to believe anybody else. 5. Further on (iii. 18) we read, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." 6. You have the next word in chapter iv. 4—"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." Satan dwells in the world, and he is mighty; but God dwells in you, and He is almighty; therefore be not afraid. 7. The last precept to little children is at the end of the Epistle. Carefully read the last verse—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols." I do not think you are likely to fall in love with the idols of the heathen and bow down to them; but there are plenty of other gods which are the idols of one period and the derision of the next. Keep you to Christ. Ask not for pomp and show; ask not for noise and bluster; ask for nothing but that your sins may be forgiven you, that you may know the Father, and then that you may abide in Christ, and be full of love to all the family of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The gospel to the young*:—What is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the young? 1. It appeals to their conscience, for youth has a conscience, a very sensitive conscience. How the boy blushes when he tells his first lie. The soul of the boy shrinks from sin at first. How penitent he is for the angry blow or the cruel word. May I not tell that child how sin may be put away? Ah, we tell the child, and we tell him to-day, that the lie will grow, and that the habit will increase. 2. It is also a gospel to the heart. I believe in making religion a personal thing, in bringing before the child, or the growing boy, the Lord Jesus Christ as a living, loving person, One who feels for him, and One who knows him. 3. It is a gospel which appeals to the admirations. It tells the child of the wondrous promises of God, and the little child's admiration is kindled. 4. It is the gospel to the energies. It represents life as a vineyard to be planted, as a battle to be fought, as a work to be done. The gospel to the young tells them that if they grow up there is work for them to do. 5. It is a gospel of aspirations. Youth is the time of hope. Youth is the time of ambitions. And the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ recognises that, and will never laugh at the young Joseph because he has dreamed that other sheaves are coming and bowing down to his sheaf. But remember, boy, the sheaves will never bow down to your sheaf unless you take off your coat, and sharpen your sickle, and get to work. Life is not simply to be dreamed away. (*E. A. Stuart, M.A.*) *The Father and His children*:—Having shown what God is, and what follows from that, what Christ is, and also what follows from that, St. John now tells his readers what by the grace of God they themselves are, and what follows from that. St. John's description of Christians. I. IN THEIR UNITY, or as to the things they have in common. 1. A common life (ver. 12). "Children" is one of the standing terms in this Epistle for all Christians of all ages and ranks; and the great truth to which this term witnesses is the kinship of all Christian people. 2. We are all feeble in power, partial in knowledge, fractious in temper, imperfect in all things. If Newton at the height of his career

felt himself a child strolling on the shore of a fathomless sea; if St. Paul at the height of his inspiration felt that his views of truth were imperfect, "for now I know in part, and prophesy in part"; if Michael Angelo at eighty said, "I carry my satchel still"—still like a little child going every day to school to learn a new lesson; if J. R. Green, with all his mine of knowledge, said, "I shall die learning"; surely, then, we must feel that the term "little ones" is no piece of apostolic playfulness, no mere pet name prompted by St. John's great love, but a strictly accurate description of us all. 3. Faith in His name, *i.e.*, in Himself, as revealed by Himself to us—is the first religious act of man. Forgiveness in His name is the first religious gift of God. Faith and forgiveness constitute the first act of reciprocity, of give and take between God and man. Now forgiveness of sin is the third fact common to all Christians. All Christians are akin. All are imperfect. All are forgiven. 4. To know the Father means to live in direct personal communion with the Father—personally to love Him, to obey Him, to draw near Him in prayer and praise. To live with regard to God not like an orphan whose father is a mere memory or a hearsay, but like a child whose father is alive and at home, who sees him every day, knows him better and loves more as each day passes—that is the crowning feature of the Christian life. II. IN THEIR VARIETY. 1. Knowledge is the feature of age. "I write unto you, fathers, because ye know." You cannot begin your Christian life with knowing; you must begin with believing. Life—only a life of action for God can change belief into knowledge. 2. Young men, there is a fight before you. Mrs. Oliphant, in one of her weird stories, tells of a secret chamber in a haunted castle, where dwelt for ages a bad ancestor of a lordly race, keeping himself alive by unholy arts. Every heir of that house on his twenty-first birthday was compelled to enter the chamber alone and meet the temptations of this evil man. One by one they fell into the snare; till one came who discarded the sword given him, and met the tempter in God's name, and conquered. Well, that weird ghost-story is our own life-story. All men and all women meet that spectre. We would protect you young folk; we would save you the temptation in the wilderness; but it may not be. Hell will assault you at every point of your nature. Now a young man's strength in that dread hour depends on how much of God's Word he has in him. (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *Christians as little children*:—St. John here considers the children of God, whom, as previously, he calls little, not contemptuously, but in reference to known infirmities, abbreviated knowledge, and feeble progress. The greatest saint, after all, is but as a little child, as it respects attainments in virtue and knowledge. As a giant, beside a pyramid of Egypt, is but as a pigmy; and the whole earth, compared with the universe in which it rolls, but a small planet; and its loftiest peaks as mites on its surface when compared with its bulk; so God's worshippers, compared with Him, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, and the Eternal, are as nothing. The wisest are the most humble, because they know how little they know, and how much of truth there remains to be known; which, as an ocean, lies before them in fathomless depths. Like those who climb mountains of ashes, who slide back as they make the progressive step, so we, through defective education, and from our own negligence, have to unlearn, as well as to learn; and, after all, are but learners still, and but as children, who are apt to stay, liable to fall, and who require continually to look up to the All-wise and All-good. To little children, even the babes in Christ, St. John proclaims the most consoling truth, *viz.*, that their sins are forgiven. Our blessed Lord authorises us to be happy, when it is thus with us, saying, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." To have our sins forgiven is to have life indeed; all are most miserable till then, however unjustly gay or blindly secure. (*John Stock, M.A.*) *Young Christians to be cared for*:—The true pastor careth for every member of Christ's body committed to His trust. He does not regard the cedars and the oaks only; but also the tender plants and shrubs in the garden of the Lord. (*Ibid.*) **Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.**—*God's glory in the forgiveness of sin for His name's sake*:—"For His name's sake!" These petitions which occur frequently in the Book of Psalms have been granted to the very letter. "For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name. Deliver us, purge away our sins, for Thy name's sake." You must be aware that the expression "the name of the Lord" is used frequently in Scripture to denote, generally, His nature and attributes. Indeed, "the name of the Lord" is put virtually for God Himself; so that what is said to be done for the sake of His name might be regarded as done for His own sake by God. And you will find that when employed as a motive or reason, there

is a prevalence in God's name which is assigned to no other plea. I. You cannot mark more distinctly THE ALTERATION WROUGHT BY CHRIST ON HUMAN CONDITION than by representing Him as placing us in such a position that we can ask God for His own sake to pardon iniquity. It is true that prayer, from its very nature, must correspond to the dictates of the Divine attributes, or the demands of the Divine glory; in other words, what our necessities impel us to ask, must be just what God, in compliance with His own properties, can be ready to bestow; else there is no hope of the acceptance of our petitions; but that this should be possible in respect of the forgiveness of sin is a marvel which overwhelms us, even when familiar with the scheme of redemption. The glorious, the stupendous thing in this scheme is, that it consulted equally for God and man; that it made the Divine honour as much interested as human necessity in the granting of pardon to all who would accept. Justice itself, holiness itself—these not only permit our pardon, they demand our glorification. In short, we can not only ask God to forgive in the hope that His compassion may incline Him to show favour, we can take the bold and unassailable ground of asking Him to forgive “for His name's sake.” When the Psalmist asked for forgiveness, he asked it for the sake of God's name. Indeed, the Psalmist was not privileged to “see the things which we see, or to hear the things which we hear.” He may not have been allowed to discern the exact process; but, in common with other patriarchs and saints under the old dispensation, he had reached a firm assurance that God stood pledged to provide a ransom; that, therefore, the Divine honour was indissolubly bound up with the pardon of sin. And this sufficed. But if David, living only in the twilight of revelation, taught only through the mysteriousness of prophecy and type—if he believed that pardon might be asked for the sake of God's name, shall not we acknowledge the fact—we, “before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified amongst us”—we, who know that “God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”—we, who are taught that “all the promises of God are yea in Christ, and in Him amen”? II. Consider more particularly THE COMFORT DERIVABLE FROM THIS GREAT TRUTH, that it is “for His name's sake” that God forgives sin. And we may here say, that since God forgives sin for His own sake, there is no room whatever for fear that our sins are too great to be pardoned. We may even go so far as to declare, that if it be always for the sake of His own name that God acts when pardoning iniquity, then the greater the iniquity the greater the reason why He should forgive. David would seem to have felt this when he prayed—“For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.” Human sinfulness has been turned into the widest field for the display of Divinity, so that on the arena of this ruined creation there may be such a manifestation of all that is majestic in Godhead as should serve to make it a theatre of instruction to the highest order of being. And we cannot hesitate to maintain that it is the greatness of moral evil which has made His interference so honourable to the Almighty. It was a case, if we dare use the expression, worthy the succours of the Godhead. When a Manasseh, who had sinned beyond all that went before, is forgiven, and Paul, who had thirsted for the “blood of the saints,” is reconciled unto God, we feel that every attribute which pardon glorifies must be glorified in the highest possible degree. If He was glorified in stilling the tempest, He must be most glorious when that tempest is fiercest. And though when the transgressor remembers that his sins have been numerous and heinous, or that his iniquity has been specially flagrant, if he had to ask forgiveness for his own sake, he might well be discouraged, yet when he calls to mind that if God forgives at all, He must forgive “for His name's sake,” it should not be the greatness of his sin which can withhold him from prayer. The bitter impiety of the reckless is not more offensive to our Maker than the suspicion that He is unwilling to receive back the prodigal. Such suspicion throws doubt upon the truth of His Word; and what can be imagined more derogatory to the honour of God? You are expressly told that God “willeth not the death of a sinner,” but rather that all would repent and live. Is this true? God saith it. Will you deny it? Will you falsify it? Yet you do if you fear to come to Him, because you know, because you feel that your transgressions are great, that your offences are multiplied. Whom did Ohrist die for? The guilty. Whom does He intercede for? The guilty. “The name of the Lord,” saith Solomon, “is a strong tower.” If so, why should we not “flee to it and be safe,” forasmuch as to “little children” an apostle could say, “Your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake”? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) For His name's sake:—Living in the joy and light of the

Divine Fatherhood, the Apostle John had come to regard all disciples of Jesus as children; and as the beauty of a child is in its childhood, its littleness, its unassertiveness, its dependableness, the apostle seems to have a delight in speaking of the disciples of Jesus as little children, remembering doubtless the little child that Jesus took and set in the midst of those disciples who were wrangling about greatness and place and position. I think there is much of instruction, and no little of comfort for us if only we will try and see things as the Apostle John sees them. He acknowledges the dark fact of sin, the bright fact of forgiveness, and the brightest of all facts—that forgiveness is based on the relation which Jesus Christ has established between Himself and us. One is weary of hearing of secular education as a cure for the sinfulness of man's nature. I am sure that an eloquent writer of our day is right on this—that if the influence of the outpoured life of Christ were withdrawn from our world, sins would not only increase incalculably in number, but the tyranny of sin would be fearfully augmented, and it would spread among a greater number of people. It is a new disposition, a new heart which man needs, and the outpoured life of God in Christ is necessary to produce that; as necessary to produce it as the outpoured radiance of the sun is necessary to produce the fruits of the earth by which our physical nature is sustained. Therefore it is that the Apostle John goes far deeper than to connect the forgiveness of sin with repentance for sin; he connects it with the relationship we sustain to Christ and the relationship He sustains to us. Some one asks—why is it necessary that Jesus the Christ of God should put Himself into the relations towards us which have been established, in order that the Everlasting Father may forgive sins? Why cannot He say to the sorrowing man, "I forgive you," and have done with it? 1. There are reasons in His own nature. When God undertakes to forgive sin He pledges Himself to rescue the forgiven man from his sin. In a word, He undertakes to regenerate his nature, to renew it so that he shall eventually live the unsinning life. And in order to that, Jesus Christ and His work are necessary. 2. There are reasons in the nature of man. To forgive a sinner and leave him to the helplessness which has come from his sin is only half forgiveness. Man needs to be brought into such an understanding of God and into such a love of God that he will hate to sin against Him. In order to that, Christ Jesus and His sacrifice of Himself are necessary. 3. There are reasons, too, in the Divine government. It must be made universally evident that there is no righteous reason for rebellion against God on the part of any. (R. Thomas.)

Ver. 13. Fathers, . . . young men, . . . little children.—*The successive stages of life*:—Here the aged apostle has a message of affection for every class and age of Christian disciples. And is it not wise for Christian teachers occasionally to proclaim to Christians some message designedly appropriate to each particular stage? For the cycle of man's fleeting life, like the cycle of the revolving year, has its succession of seasons—its springtime of childhood, its summer of youth, its autumn of maturity, and its winter of old age. Each of these succeeding seasons of life has its own joys and sorrows, weakness and strength, temptations, besetting sins, and preventing graces. And the gospel has a message appropriate for each period in life. I. It has, first of all, a message for **LITTLE CHILDREN**. Very beautiful and wonderful it is to think of Jesus, the Son of God, as the Babe of Bethlehem, passing through every stage of infancy, with all a child's trials, thoughts, hopes, fears, imaginings. Never before, in the history of the world, had any religion taken little children so closely and so warmly to its heart. And do not little children stand in need of the gospel of Christ? A child's life is often a very mingled life. Heaven often lies about us in our infancy, but often also heaven seems to flee quite far away. In every fortress of innocence there lurks some evil traitor, waiting to hand over the keys of the citadel to the temptations crouching at the gates. Little children, therefore, need all the help which parental discipline and affection, combined with religious education and good companionship, can render in their conflict against evil. But, my children, you cannot lead good and beautiful lives by simply trusting to your training. In religion, as in all things else, self-help and firm resolve are of the greatest importance. II. Now pass from childhood to the second stage of life—**YOUTH**. The season of youth is a very glad and glorious time. It has all the freshness of spring and all the fertility of summer. Yet it is a season of great and frequent perils. And Jesus, the Son of God, understood both its glory and its danger (Mark x. 17-22). The self-sacrificing love of Christ is the most powerful of all magnets for attracting the devotion of the young.

What young man who steadfastly gazes upon the spectacle of the Cross can withstand its blessed influence and its strong, appealing power? To show thee the pitiless violence of sin, as well as to enable thee to conquer it, Christ gave Himself up for thee with broken heart, yet unbending determination, upon the cruel Cross. Wilt thou not, then, make Him thy hero, thy model, thy all-inspiring friend? III. Our text has also a message for THE AGED. Old age, like every other season of life, has its own besetting sins and its own appropriate graces. The forms of sin change with the changing course of years. As the hot fires of vigour die down into cold cinders of decrepitude, the gay, thoughtless, and softly indulgent youth hardens into the cynical, envious, covetous, ambitious old man. On the other hand, old age has also its special graces. Especially do these graces shine in those who, "from the beginning," have been true and faithful unto Christ. He will not disdain the gleanings of your latest years, if with all your heart you truly seek Him. But for you, conscript fathers of the Church of Christ, there is a richer and a brighter message. You have known Christ from the beginning of your pilgrimage. You were faithful in the bursting freshness of spring, in the wearying heats of summer. You know by this time what God is; you have proved Him to the uttermost in childhood, youth, and maturer years. Experience has taught you that He never fails. And so for you there remains the special grace of the aged—the grace which transfigures the wrinkled face with the radiance of inward joy, and sets the golden crown of perfect peace upon the snowy head. For you, the seed-graces of spring and the flower-graces of summer, have developed into the rich fruit-graces of autumn. Self-control has ripened into self-conquest; kindness has been hallowed into love; the heavy morning of self-denial has brightened into the cloudless day of self-repose; the toil of the ascent has been repaid by the landscape from the summit. Nor is this all. The sunset, too, is glorious. And after sunset, as the twilight of evening deepens into the darkness of night, the stars begin to peep in the roof of heaven, stars which were invisible by day. And when death itself shall appear to you, ye old and faithful servants of the Lord, it will be not death, but victory. (*Canon Diggle.*) *The guileless spirit abiding in the light in its threefold aspect of childhood, fatherhood, and youth:*—These verses form, I think, a break or interruption in the apostle's line of argument. 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 he is entitled to assume in and about them as likely to ensure a favourable reception of his message. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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 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 approval, but, one would almost say, even Heaven's favourable regard too. What am I? And what are they? (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *Three stages of natural and Christian life: the distinction of three sort of Christians, "fathers," "young men," and "little children":*—1. Though spiritual growth be most considerable here, yet natural age is not altogether to be excluded. God hath people of all sorts and sizes, some old, some in the freshness of youth, others that are but newly got out

of infancy and childhood. For fathers or old men, we read of Paul the aged (Philem. 9) and of Mnason an old disciple (Acts xxi. 16). Among young men we read of Josiah (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3), of good Obadiah (1 Kings xviii. 12), of Samuel (1 Sam. ii. 18), of Timothy (2 Tim. iii. 15). Hosanna was not displeasing to Christ in little children (Matt. xxi. 15, 16). Well, then, people of all ages should apply themselves to religion. Old men excuse themselves, they are too old to interest themselves in Christ; and the children are not ripe, and young men are otherwise occupied; but fathers for age should be also fathers for knowledge and godliness (Prov. xvi. 31). On the contrary, how sad is it when men have spent many years unfruitfully, and are acquainted with all other things but God and their own souls, and have not as yet begun to live spiritually; when they have one foot in the grave, and are as good as dead already! You never begin to live till you live in Christ. You have but told over so many summers and winters; all that time is lost that is spent in your unregeneracy. A man may be long at sea, and yet make but a short voyage. Oh, bethink yourselves before your hoary head go down to the grave in sorrow! Submit to this work before it be too late. Chimneys long foul, if they be not swept, are fired at length. 2. For young men, it concerneth them to apply their hearts to godliness. There is an ignorant conceit that it is not so necessary for young men to study the Scriptures, or to trouble themselves much with thinking of heaven, because they are lusty, and likely to live many years, and therefore think it more fit for them to mind the things of this life, and let old men alone to think of heaven and holiness. Our apostle was not of this mind. Scripture biddeth us "remember our Creator in the days of our youth" (Eccles. xii. 1). Our best and flowery years should be consecrated to God. And David would have the "young man cleanse his way" (Psa. cxix. 9). It is but reason that God, that gave all, should have our first and best; they glorify God most who begin with Him soonest. The lusts of youth being boiling hot, need the correction of a more severe discipline. The devil layeth most snares for them, as those who are most prone to sin, who are like to serve him longest; and therefore, that they may not be caught in Satan's snares they should begin with God betimes. A good man may remember old sins with new fears that they are not pardoned. Now afflictions may awaken the sense of old sins, as old bruises trouble us a long time after upon every change of weather. 3. For babes or little children; they being born in sin must also be born again. Surely they that have the education of children belonging to them should season them betimes with good principles; they find the benefit of it ever afterward. Scripture often inviteth us to a careful education of them; and there be many promises of good success (Prov. xxii. 6). Dye the cloth in the wool, and not in the web, and the colour is the more durable. God worketh strangely in children, and many times rare things are found in them beyond expectation. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Spiritual growth*.—1. There is a great difference among Christians; all are not of one stature, strength, and growth in godliness; as here, there are fathers, young men, and babes. He supposeth the more elderly will be fathers in Christ, and that every one hath profited according to his time and standing. God created Adam and Eve in their full perfection, but doth not regenerate us into our full stature in Christ. 2. It may fall out that the elder Christians may be babes in Christ, and the younger Christians rather fathers for their longer experience in the things of God, and for the better government of their passions. David when young was wiser than his enemies, than his teachers, than the ancients (Psa. cxix. 100). Gracious abilities come not from age, but from the Spirit. Ancient men try several conclusions to their own loss; but God is more ancient than they, and at one prospect seeth all things; if He will direct me I am safe. Joseph young, at seventeen years old, was wiser than his brethren. Daniel and his fellows ten times more than all the astrologers and magicians, though children (Dan. i. 17-20). And many times youth goeth before the aged in ripeness of wisdom, and in solid manners, though they are so much behind them in number of years. 3. As to spiritual growth, some may be weak and strong, young and old at the same time, in different respects, as we see by experience. Some are weak in knowledge and unsettled in the faith, who yet have a good zeal towards God, and are temperate, just, and holy, and have a great command over their affections and passions. On the other side, some are of a good understanding, and they come behind in no gift, yet are subject to carnal passions and affections, and so are babes in that respect (1 Cor. iii. 1-3). A spiritual people is not a people of parts, knowledge, and abilities, but of grace and sanctification. 4. There is a wonderful difference between Christians and themselves at sundry times; so that these three degrees

may be coincident. The gravest father may be as weak as the youngest child, as violently tempted as the young man. Satan's design is against the spiritual Christian, and those who are more eminent than others, to throw them into the mire, that religion may have the greater wound and dishonour. In violent gusts of wind, even cedars may fall to the ground. Therefore, as we grow in grace, we should increase in humility and godly fear. 5. All this doth not hinder but that some from their settled constant frame may be called "fathers," "young men," and "babes." (1) Fathers are such who, through long experience and much acquaintance with a godly life, do walk more constantly, cheerfully, and fruitfully in the ways of God than others do. (2) Young men in Christ are such as have most courage, resolution, and earnestness, yet not that experience which Christ's old servants have gotten; a middle sort of Christians, not so settled as the aged, nor yet altogether so weak as babes. They are more exercised with temptations, and a life of conflicts, as having many rebellious passions to subdue, which being irritated by the suggestions of Satan and the baits of sense, do put them to no small trouble. (3) There are babes or little children. Use 1. If there be "fathers," "young men," and "children," then—(1) Let us "not despise the day of small things" (Zech. iv. 10), not in ourselves nor others. (2) Let us not despise the meanest degree of grace in others. Time was when every one was a babe in Christ, and time may be when those who are but babes may grow old men (Matt. xx. 16). Use 2. Let us consider in what rank we are, that we may wisely apply ourselves to the duties proper to our condition. Usually that which old men want is fervour; that which young men want, if they know their hearts, is sincerity; the one must beg quickening grace, as David doth often in Psa. cxix. Use 3. To awaken us to labour after the highest rank of grace. God is the more honoured the more fruitful we are (Phil. i. 9). (*Ibid.*) **Fathers:**—*Fathers in Christ*:—1. St. John says, "I write," and by-and-by, "I have written," this shows, I think, the importance of his subject. If he has already written upon it, he must think it to be a very necessary truth if he writes upon it yet again. Foundation stones should be laid with scrupulous care; and truth, which is fundamental, should be repeated by the teacher till the disciple has learned it beyond all fear of ever forgetting it. 2. This form of speech also reveals the unchanging conviction of the writer, who, having written once, is glad to write the same things again. This shows a mind made up and decided, from which proceeds consistent testimony. If we live a thousand years, at the close of life we shall have nothing more nor less to say than the immutable truth of God. We hope to understand the truth better, but we shall never discover better truth. 3. "I write," and "I have written," also indicate the abiding need of men: they require the same teaching from time to time. Men's natures are still the same, men's spiritual conflicts and dangers are still the same, and hence the same truth is suitable, not only from day to day, but from century to century. Though we can now digest the solid meat of the kingdom, yet the children's bread has lost none of its relish in our esteem. I. WHO ARE THE FATHERS? 1. We usually associate that idea somewhat with age; but we must take care that we do not make a mistake here, because age in grace, albeit that it may run parallel with age in nature in many cases, does not always do so. In the Church of God there are children who are seventy years old. One would not like to say of a man of eighty that he had scarcely cut his wisdom teeth, and yet there are such. On the other hand, there are fathers in the Church of God, wise, stable, instructed, who are comparatively young men. The Lord can cause His people to grow rapidly, and far outstrip their years. From their early youth they have a discernment of God's Word, and a quickness of apprehension wonderful to notice. More than that, I have even observed a depth of experience within a very short time granted to certain young believers, so that though they were but youths in age they were fathers in piety. Nevertheless, as a usual thing, it is to be expected that advancement in grace should be accompanied with advancement in years. These are the fathers, then, men who have aged in grace, have come to the full development of their spiritual manhood, and have been confirmed in that development by the test of time and trials. 2. "Fathers," again, are persons of maturity, men who are not raw and green, not fresh recruits. These men know what they know, for they have thought over the gospel, studied it, and have embraced it with full intensity of conviction. 3. "Fathers," again, are men of stability and strength. As the Spartans pointed to their citizens as the real walls of Sparta, so do we point to these substantial men as, under God, the brazen walls and bulwarks of the Church.

Men who are well taught, confirmed, experienced, and trained by the Spirit of God are pillars in the house of our God. 4. The fathers of the Church are men of heart, who naturally care for the souls of others. 5. Having this care upon him the father comes to be tender; he partakes somewhat of the tenderness of a mother, and thus is called a nursing-father. Sympathetic care and hearty tenderness are gifts of the Holy Spirit, and will bring you a happiness which will richly compensate you for your pains. 6. Not yet have I quite reached the full meaning of a father; for the father is the author, under God, of the being of his children; and happy is a Church that has many in it who are spiritual parents in Zion, through having brought sinners to Christ. II. WHAT IS THE PROMINENT CHARACTERISTIC OF A FATHER IN CHRIST? "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." 1. Observe here the concentration of their knowledge. Twice he says, "Ye have known Him that is from the beginning." Now, a babe in grace knows twenty things: a young man in Christ knows ten things: but a father in Christ knows one thing, and that one thing he knows thoroughly. Oh, to have one heart, one eye, for our one Lord, and for Him alone! 2. Note the peculiarity of their knowledge as to its object: they know "Him that was from the beginning." Do not the babes in Christ know the Lord Jesus? Yes, they do; but they do not know Him in His full character. They know Him as having forgiven their sins, and that is much, but it is not all. Yes, and as I grow and become a young man, I approach nearer to Jesus, and get another view of Him; for I overcome the wicked one even as He did, and thus I stand side by side with Him in the conflict. But if I come to be a father I enter into fellowship with the great Father Himself; for it is union with God the Father that makes a man a father in God. When you become a father in Christ you see Christ from the Father's point of view; not as newly come to save, but as "from the beginning" the Saviour of men. The father in grace rejoices to behold the Lord Jesus as God: he beholds the glory of His adorable person as for ever with the Father or ever the earth was. He sees that covenant even from of old ordered in all things and sure in the hand of Him that was from the beginning. There is one point that the father in Christ delights to think upon, namely, that the coming of Christ was not an expedient adopted after an unforeseen disaster in order to retrieve the honour of God; but he understands that the whole scheme of events was planned in the purpose of Divine wisdom for the glorifying of Christ, so that from the beginning it was part of Jehovah's plan that Jesus should take upon Himself human nature, and should manifest in that nature all the attributes of the Father. 3. I want to notice again, that this knowledge is in itself special: the knowledge itself is remarkable as well as the object of the knowledge. "Ye have known Him." Yes, we do know the Lord as a living, bright reality, a daily friend, councillor, and companion. True fathers in grace not only know the Lord by much meditation, but they know Him by actual intercourse; they walk with Him, they talk with Him. They look upon matters not from man's standpoint, but from Christ's point of view, and hence they understand much of the Lord's ways which aforetime were dark to them. He who very deeply sympathises with a man knows Him well. Learning by faith to sit still and believingly wait the event, these fathers calmly expect that all things will work together for good to them: and hence they understand the unbroken serenity of the heart of Jesus, and know Him in His joys as well as in His sorrows. III. WHAT IS THE MESSAGE TO THE FATHERS? I would indicate that message by referring to the context. 1. John has been saying that we should love one another. If you are truly fathers you cannot help loving all the family: the fatherly instinct is love, and fathers in Christ should be brimful of it. 2. The next message immediately succeeds the text, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." You have all the marks of what they call declining years—I call them ascending years; you will soon be gone from the world and its changing vanities, therefore do not set your love on earthly treasures. 3. While they are not to love the world they must take care that they do not fall victims to any of the lusts of this present evil world, such as the lust of the flesh. You are grown ripe in grace, and will soon enter heaven, live accordingly. 4. The next exhortation to the fathers is that they should watch, for, says the apostle, "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists." Oh, valiant fathers, keep ye watch and ward. 5. Lastly, it is the duty of the fathers to prepare for the coming of the Lord. "Abide in Him, that, when He shall appear, ye may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Christian fathers and the knowledge of the Divine Being*:—In the distinction of Christians,

they are fathers who best know Him that was from the beginning. I. THE OBJECT. By "Him that was from the beginning" is meant Christ, who is also thus elsewhere described (John i. 1, 2). 1. As to His office and saving efficacy (Rev. xiii. 8). 2. As to His personal subsistence (Micah v. 2; John xvii. 5). The benefit of this meditation. (a) To further the joy of our faith, in that we see the infinite worth that is in His sufferings to satisfy justice and to expiate sin. (b) To increase the strength of our confidence against all the assaults of the enemies of our salvation (1 John v. 5). (c) That we may be more apprehensive of the greatness of His love, which we shall never be till we consider the dignity of His person. (d) To show the readiness of our obedience, that we may receive His doctrine, and obey His laws; that we may not be ashamed of His truth, and the profession of His name. (e) To increase our reverence, and that the ignominy of His Cross may not obscure His glory, nor lessen His respect in our hearts, but that we may have high and honourable thoughts of our humbled Lord in His lowest estate. (f) To draw our hearts from all created things, and to lessen our respect to worldly vanities, that so our minds and hearts may more look after those things which are eternal and glorious. He that was before the world was will be when the world shall be no more. II. WHAT KIND OF KNOWLEDGE IT IS THAT IS HERE SPOKEN OF. There is a twofold knowledge. 1. Speculative and historical: with this most content themselves. The Jews had "a form of knowledge" (Rom. ii. 20), and so hath the formal Christian (2 Tim. iii. 5) a map or model of gospel-truths. There are different degrees of this—a memorative knowledge. Another degree above this is an opinionative knowledge, when they do not only charge their memories, but have a kind of conscience and judgment about these things. But yet wisdom entereth not upon the heart (Prov. ii. 10). They make men disputers of this world, but not serious practisers of godliness. They have a religion to talk of, but not to live by. 2. Practical and saving. The truth and soundness of our knowledge is mainly known by the effects. We are to "know Him that was from the beginning," so as—(1) To believe in Him, and to venture our eternal interests in His hands (Psa. ix. 10). (2) To know Him so as to esteem and prize Him (Phil. iii. 8, 9). (3) To know Him so as to embrace Him with love and desire (John iv. 10). (4) To know Him so as to obey Him (Jer. xxii. 16). III. WHAT IS HEREIN PROPER TO FATHERS, or how can this be a ground of distinction between them and others, since all Christians are indispensably bound to know Christ? (John xvii. 3.) 1. Whatever is said of either age, fathers, young men, or babes, doth certainly belong to all; as to overcome the wicked one, so to know Him that was from the beginning. To know the Father is common to all the ranks, only most eminently in one more than in the other. 2. There is some peculiar fitness in these characters, and in the several ages mentioned; as—(1) Plenitude of knowledge belongeth to the ancient (Job xii. 12). (2) Old men are versed in the knowledge of ancient things, and love to discourse of things done long ago. So the apostle commendeth his fathers, or old men, for that they have known the Ancient of Days, or the eternal Son of God, which maketh them more happy than all that knowledge which they have gotten by many years or long experience in the world. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The aged in years and grace*.—I. WHO ARE FATHERS, OR IN THE HIGHEST RANK OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. They are such as are more delightfully employed in the exercises of godliness. I ascribe this to fathers, partly because they are acquainted with the pleasures of obedience (1 John v. 3); and partly because by long custom they have inured themselves thereto, so that it is become another nature to them. They are alive unto God; and what a man doth with naturalness, he doth it frequently, constantly, and easily. 2. They do more wisely manage the affairs of the spiritual life. They know the craft of Satan (2 Cor. ii. 11); they have felt the bitterness of sin (Psa. li. 6); they know what hindrances they shall have from the devil, world, and flesh, and how they may resist and grow wise to salvation. Experience hath made them wise to decline the rocks upon which they dashed heretofore. 3. They are more fixed in the truth against the seduction of error. The long experience of the fruit of duties confirms them against those delusions which would draw us from them. 4. Their hearts are brought into a more settled, heavenly temper. A tree that hath long stood out against many stormy winds is the more firmly rooted; so a seasoned Christian that hath gone through all weathers. But men that have not solid rooting wave hither and thither. There is initial grace, and a radicated state of grace. 5. They oftener meditate of God, His Word and works and providence. They have had a long time to make provision and hoard up spiritual treasure; and now they bring it forth (Matt. xii. 31). Meditation is a difficult work for young

beginners; they are not as yet cleansed from vain thoughts, nor have inured themselves to self-government. But now long experience hath taught the aged Christian what a hindrance it is to have their hearts pestered with vanities, how it deadeneth their prayers; and therefore they throng themselves with holy thoughts of God in Christ, who is the beloved of their souls. 6. They can more feelingly than others speak of the shortness, misery, and sinfulness of the present life (Gen. xlvii. 8, 9). They know the disappointments of a naughty world. 7. They are more weaned from the delights of sense, and have long used to moderate themselves within the bounds of sobriety (Titus ii. 2). 8. They think and speak of the world to come, and the blessed state of the faithful in the most lively manner, as apprehending it sure and near (2 Cor. iv. 16). 9. They attain unto greater soundness and integrity in the essentials of religion (Titus ii. 2).

II. **HOW MUCH IT CONCERNETH FATHERS IN YEARS TO BE FATHERS IN GRACE,** and to be more eminently religious than others, that they may be a pattern to them. 1. It conduceth to God's honour. If young men and children only should profess religion, you would take it for indiscretion and hotness of spirit; young punies, they know not what they do. Fathers, when they served God in their ripest age and yet are not weary of His service, this is an honour to Him. 2. For your own comfort, what a support is godliness to old age, when decays of nature are recompensed with the increase of grace, the weakness of body with soundness of mind (2 Cor. iv. 16). The mind is vigorous when the body is weak. When the eye is dim, as in old Israel, it can see God the invisible one. III. **THE AGED IN YEARS AND GRACE MUST BE WRITTEN UNTO.**

1. That they may persevere in godliness. They are not yet out of the reach of temptations. Partly by their own security. A man of long standing, being secure of salvation, may grow remiss and negligent. And if he go round in his accustomed tract of duties, may carry it as if he were now past all danger, and so insensibly decayeth. Well, then, there needeth watchfulness to the very last. Man is a very changeable creature; therefore we should always stand upon our guard. Partly because the course of temptations may be altered; the devil doth not always play the same game. We had need be provided for all weathers (Phil. iv. 12). 2. That their growth may be promoted; that they may be stirred up to more seriousness, diligence, and more fruitfulness. (1) After so long a standing, and so much means, more growth and tendency towards perfection may be justly expected from them (Psa. xcii. 13, 14). (2) Their manifold experience should make them better. It is a miserable thing to pass under so many providences, and not to be improved by them (Deut. xxix. 2-6). (*Ibid.*) *Religion beautiful in all seasons of life:*—The fruitful tree is beautiful in all seasons; beautiful in the buddings and blossoms of early spring; beautiful in the opening summer with the unripened fruit clustering on its branches; but never so beautiful as when autumn has given the bloom of ripeness to the rich produce of its strength. How glorious is a human character ripe for heaven! (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

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.—*Strength, victory, and knowledge in youth:*—Counsel is the prerogative of age. Christianity is pre-eminently an experience. Even from the religious standpoint we look upon youth as militant, rather than as victorious. The fight with the evil one is upon them; but the victory is in the future. Are we right in this view of the religious possibilities of youth? Certainly not. Our apostle addresses the young men as having overcome the evil one, as having the Word of God abiding in them. Now, in fact, we reason just as John does when we look at youth in its relations to society. On that side we frankly recognise their strength, victory, and susceptibility to truth. They are accepted as important factors in the aggressive relations of life. In like manner we assume their ability to receive and apply the teachings of human wisdom. The history of great literary successes is largely a history of youthful triumphs; it makes a place for itself in spite of obstacles. In the secular sense it does overcome the world. "I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong." There may be strength without maturity. People act upon that principle everywhere. A man who wants a good horse looks out for a young horse. A lady who wants an active servant does not seek for an old man or woman. Not only so, but we expect real and telling service from youth. Ought the case to be any different in the Church of Christ? The work of pushing the gospel into new fields, of bringing other youth under its influence, of carrying on benevolent and missionary enterprises, is work which young men and women can do. Yes, you are strong; and the Church of Christ lays claim to your strength. Service is not to be an incident of your Christian life: it is to be its law, as it was

the law of Christ's life. But the question is not only of Christian work: it is also of Christian character lying behind the work, and inspiring it. There can be no good work without good character. Here we see that the strength of which John speaks is the strength which comes of the abiding of the Word of God in the heart, and of victory over evil. Youth is susceptible to bad influences—takes them in, is shaped by them. Is it not likewise susceptible to good ones? With all the sneers at early piety, early piety is a blessed fact. And why not? It is very evident what youth can do in the way of victory over self and temptation when a great worldly end is to be gained; and are we to say that the young Christian, with Christ's inspiration in his heart, and Christian influences around him, shall not take up the great cross of Christian service, and practise its grand self-denials, and resist and overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil? No; John is right. He does not assert too much when he says, "Ye have overcome the evil one." If youth can be Christian it can overcome. If it is truly Christian it will overcome, for Christ is victory. And once more, what of the Word abiding in the youth? "The Word of God abideth in you." In the order of the text this comes before the conquest over the evil one, and rightly; because the Word in the heart stands to conquest as means to end. John's thought here centres in the word "abideth." His emphasis is on the permanent power of the Word over youth. Paul assumes the same thing with reference to Timothy. He calls to mind the unfeigned faith which dwelt in his mother and in his grandmother, and adds, "And I am persuaded that in thee also." Young people have, many of them, come to think that such mastery by the Word is impracticable. They think they must master the Word before they are mastered by it. In science and art and philosophy the difficulty of a subject does not repel youth. They study, and that intelligently, the works of master minds. They work out hard problems in engineering and astronomy. And what I complain of in a certain class of young people is, that they will not apply to the Bible the same amount of attention and labour which they bestow on other things. Whatever mystery may attach to the Bible, the materials for character-building lie on its very surface. If there are parts of this great Divine map which we must still mark "unknown land," the track to goodness and to heaven is sharply drawn. You are, then, as young men and women, bound by your Christian profession to have the Word of God abiding in you, as a permanent impulse and formative force in your character and life. The Holy Spirit is as ready to make its precepts a living power in you as He is in me. You know, in other spheres, what it is to work on a principle and for a purpose; and it is no harder to know this when the principle is laid down by Christ, and when the purpose is holiness and heaven. The Word of God abideth in you. O young Christians! can you say that this is true of you? Has the power of the Word over you become stronger, more steady, more direct, since you began to follow Christ? (*M. Vincent, D.D.*)

Unto you, young men:—John abounded in charity, but with the utmost stretch of it he could not have written to all young men in this style, for, alas! all young men are not strong, nor doth the Word of God abide in them all, nor have they all overcome the wicked one. Shame that it should be, that when the devil seeks recruits for his army, he should straightway send his recruiting sergeant for these fine young fellows, who ought to serve a better master.

I. THE PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MODEL YOUNG MAN. 1. What is spoken in the text has to do only with spiritual qualifications, and it deals with three points. First, this young man is strong. The strength here meant is not mere natural vigour, but a spiritual strength, a strength which is the result of an indwelling of the Spirit; a strength which brings out and consecrates the natural energy, and makes the young man with his vigour to be vigorous in the right direction. (1) Now, the spiritually strong man may be described in this way—he is one who is very decided for Christ. He is not half-hearted, halting between two opinions. Whoever may be for the false, he is for the true. Whoever may side with the unjust, he is for the honest. He is decided, not only in his service of Christ, but in his opinions. He holds firmly what he does hold. He is a strong man in the truth. God has made him strong in integrity of heart. (2) While thus strong in decision, he is also strong in the matter of establishment. He once believed truths because he was so taught, but now he has proved, if not all things, yet enough to hold fast that which is good. (3) He has become strong, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in a vigour diffused throughout his whole spiritual constitution. He *knows* that he lives. Others in our Churches do something for Christ, and know that they are alive, but their whole spiritual system

is relaxed. If they take up the hammer and work for God, they strike such feeble blows that the nails do not know it. Meanwhile, he is not only strong in actual service, but he is strong in what he cannot do. The strong young man will have many schemes crossing his brain, and while he is in his youth he will not be able to realise them, but they will flit before him so often, that at last he will pluck up courage, and as he grows in years and possibilities, he will at last make real that which was once but a dream. 2. The text gives a further description of the model Christian young man in the words, "And the Word of God abideth in you." Her Majesty was on the south side of the water to-day, but she does not abide there. All the pomp and sunshine of her presence have vanished, and Westminster Bridge and Stangate are as they were before. The Word of God sometimes comes with right royal pomp into the minds of young men; they are affected by it for a time, and they rejoice therein, but, alas! that blessed Word soon departs, and they are none the better for that which they have heard. The model young man in the text is not of this kind. The Word of God abideth in him, by which I understand that he is one who understands the Word, for it must get into him before it can abide in him, and it can only enter by the door of the understanding: he understands the Word, and then by having an affection for the Word he shuts to that door and entertains the truth. The Word of God abides in him, that is, he is constantly feeling its effects. It abides in him—a sacred fire consuming his sins, and comforting his spirit. It abides in him, a heavenly messenger revealing to him the freshness of celestial truth, uplifting him from earthly desires, and preparing him for the mansions in the skies. 3. Thirdly, the text adds, "And ye have overcome the wicked one." Some young men have overcome that blue devil which keeps men despairing, doubting, trembling, and fearing. Then there is that dust-eating devil, of whom we can never speak too badly—the yellow devil of the mammon of unrighteousness, the love of gold and silver; the dread god of London, rolling over this city as if it were all his own. Another form of the wicked one we must speak of but softly, but oh! how hard to be overcome by the young man. I mean Madam Wanton, that fair but foul, that smiling but murderous fiend of hell, by whom so many are deluded. Young man, if you are strong, and have overcome the wicked one, you have overcome, I trust, that Lucifer of pride, and it is your endeavour to walk humbly with your God! You have given up all idea of merit. You cannot boast nor exalt yourself, but you bow humbly at the foot of the Cross, adoring Him who has saved you from the wrath to come. You have given up also, I trust, young man, all subjection to the great red dragon of fashion, who draws with his tail even the very stars of heaven. II. Let us further observe that THESE THINGS WHICH CONSTITUTE HIM WHAT HE IS ARE HIS QUALIFICATIONS FOR USEFULNESS. "I write unto you, young men, for ye are strong." We beg you to use that strength in winning souls for Christ. Remember that this very strength which brings a blessing to yourself will benefit another. That very faith which brought you to Christ is all you want to bring others to Christ. As the angel said to Gideon, so say I to you, young man, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour"; and yet, again, "Go in this thy strength." If the young man inquires for tools and weapons with which to serve his Master, we refer him to the next point in the text, "The Word of God abideth in you." Now, if you desire to teach others, you have not to ask what the lesson shall be, for it abides in you. Do you want a text that will impress the careless? What impressed you? You cannot have a better. You desire to speak a word in season from the Word of God which shall be likely to comfort the disconsolate. What has comforted your own soul? You cannot have a better guide. Once again, "you have overcome the wicked one." The man who has once given Satan a slap in the face need not be afraid of men. If you have often stood foot to foot with a violent temptation, and, after wrestling, have overcome it, you can laugh to scorn all the puny adversaries who assail you. III. The wording of the text suggested to me, to FORCE THE CONSCRIPTION. "I have written unto you, young men." In the French wars, certain young men, unhappily, found their names written down in the conscription, and were marched to the wars. Now, in a war from which none of us desire to escape, I hope there are young men here whose names are written down—heavenly conscripts—who are summoned more fully than ever before in their lives, to go forth to the battle of the Lord of Hosts. I invite every young man here who is already converted to God, to dedicate himself to the Lord Jesus Christ to-night. It will be well if you take a step further as conscripts. You "holy work-folk"—as they used to call those who dwelt around the cathedral at Durham,

and were exempt from all service to the baron because they served the church—I want you now to think of some particular walk and department in which as young men and young women you can devote yourselves wholly to Christ. Generalities in religion are always to be avoided, more especially generalities in service. What can you do? What is your calling? Ragged schools? Sunday schools? Street preaching? Tract distribution? Here is a choice for you, which do you select? I would inquire next, whether there may not be young men here who can give themselves up to the Christian ministry, which is a step farther. Take care you keep not back whom God would have. Then, further, I have to say, may there not be here some young man who will become a conscript for missionary service abroad? I might to-night read a sort of proclamation such as I see sometimes issued by Her Majesty—"Wanted, young men." We give no description about the inches either in girth or the height, but we do give this description—"Wanted, young men who are strong; in whom the Word of God abideth, and who have overcome the wicked one." Once again. If this be impossible, and I suppose it may be to the most of us, then may we not get up a conscription to-night of young men who will resolve to help at home those who have the courage to go abroad? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Noble young men*:—I. They have STRENGTH IN THEM. II. They have God's Word WITHIN THEM. III. They have the DEVIL UNDER THEM. (*Homilist.*) *Youthful strength*:—"What am I going to be?" is the question that presses upon young people. But, unfortunately, the question is generally supposed to be answered when they have fixed upon a trade or profession. It means, rightly taken, a great deal more than that. "What ideal have I before me, towards which I constantly press?" I. THE STRENGTH WHICH YOU YOUNG PEOPLE OUGHT TO AIM AT. It is not merely the physical strength, nor the mere unworn buoyancy and vigour which sorrow and care and responsibilities have not weakened. These are great and precious gifts, to be preserved as long as may be, by purity and moderation, and to be used for high purposes. It is not your body that is to be strong, but yourselves. Now the foundation of all true strength lies here, in a good, strong will. Two words contain the secret of noble life: "Resist!" and "Persist!" And the true strength of manhood lies in this mainly, that, in spite of all antagonisms, hindrances, you, having greatly resolved, you do greatly do what you have resolved. But then the strength that I would have you cultivate must be a strength of will, founded upon strong reason. Unintelligent obstinacy is folly. But that is not all. A strong will, illuminated by a strong beam of light from the understanding, must be guided and governed by a strong conscience. "I should like" is the weakling's motto. "I will" may be an obstinate fool's motto. "I ought, therefore, God helping me, and, though the devil hinders me, I will," is a man's. Conscience is king. 'To obey it is to be free; to neglect it is to be a slave. II. HOW TO GET IT. "Ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you." If you want to be strong, let Scripture truth occupy your mind. There are powers to rule and to direct all conduct, motive powers of the strongest character in these great truths of God's revelation. They are meant to influence a man in all his doings, and it is for us to bring the greatest of them to bear on the smallest things of our daily life. Whosoever lives with the thoughts that God has given us in His Word, familiar to His mind, and within easy reach of His hand, has therein an armlet against all possible temptation, a test that will unveil the hidden corruption in the sweetest seductions, and a calming power that will keep his heart still and collected in the midst of agitations. I remember going through the Red Sea, at the mouth of it, where the entrance is narrow and the currents run strong, when the ship approaches the dangerous place, the men take their stations at appointed places, and the ponderous anchors are loosened and ready to be dropped in an instant, if the swirl of the current sweeps the ship into dangerous proximity to the reef. It is no time to cut the lashings of the anchors when the keel is grating on the coral rocks. And it is no time to have to look about for our weapons when the sudden temptation leaps upon us like a strong man armed. You must have them familiar to you by devout meditation, by frequent reflection, prayer, study of God's Word, if they are to be of any use to you at all. And then if we take the other view, which at bottom is not another, of the meaning of this phrase, and apply it rather to the personal Word, Jesus Christ Himself, that will yield us another exhortation, and that is, let Jesus Christ into your hearts and keep Him there, and He will make you strong. Others can help you from without, as you put an iron band round some over-weighted crumbling brick pillar in order to prevent it from collapsing,

but He will pass into us, as you may drive an iron rod up through the centre of the column, and make it strong inside, and we shall be strong if Jesus Christ dwells within us. III. THE FIELD ON WHICH THE STRENGTH IS TO BE EXERCISED, AND THE VICTORY WHICH IT SECURES. "Ye have overcome the wicked one." What does that mean? It means this, that if you will take service in Christ's army, and by His grace resolve to be His faithful soldier till your life's end, that act of faith, which enrolls you as His, is itself the victory which guarantees, if it be continued, the whole conquest in time. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*) *Victorious young men*:—I. First, THE "STRONG" YOUNG MEN. Let the strength possessed be in Christ. "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." That is omnipotent, immutable; that is infallible; and, so often as you feel there is some momentous thing to be accomplished in the cause of God, rely on the person of Christ, and out of His fulness receive grace for grace. This leads us to consider for what purpose these renewals of strength are received. First of all, there is your warfare—you want more strength for that. You will recollect the cry of Jehoshaphat, when the host of his enemies was advancing against his little army, "Oh, our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." And he got strength enough. Moreover, this warfare is such a perpetual one, that you want perpetual strength for it. But we also want strength for our walk. It is a rough road. A great deal of it is up-hill. Our walk is "by faith, and not by sight," and amidst its difficulties you want that faith strengthened, so that the Author and Finisher of it may be glorified, and we make some advancement in Divine life. Oh, the vast importance of being kept moving onwards! Moreover, we want strength for the work. "My son, go work in My vineyard to-day" is the Father's command. I am sure that, instrumentally, the best method of keeping young men in Christ in health of soul is to keep them well employed. II. By "THE WORD OF GOD" WE UNDERSTAND EVERY ESSENTIAL TRUTH, WHETHER DOCTRINAL, EXPERIMENTAL, OR PRACTICAL. The prominent evil of the day, with regard to theology, is the separating of this threefold description of essential truth. They cannot press them too much, provided they press them upon proper principles and upon a sure foundation. But they frequently do so without that. Then there are others who have got a peculiar and favourite technicality about "my experience"—the preacher does not preach my experience. We like doctrinal statements fully urged and without reserve. We want deep experience, such as the Word of God sets forth. We want, in addition, that active Christianity which shall characterise the recipients of grace as "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." These I account "essential truths"; and I desire that they should abide in you. We also understand by the phrase, "Word of God," the eternal, incarnate Word dwelling in you—"Christ in you, the hope of glory." This makes our Christianity vital. III. A word about your spiritual victories. "Ye have overcome the wicked one." You have burst asunder from his bands. By mighty grace you have escaped his pursuit, and got as clear of him as Israel did of Pharaoh. Well, but he is sure to be after you. But "ye have overcome" him! What a merciful, what a gracious, what a glorious thing is faith! It overcomes Satan. The flesh and carnal free-will may content themselves with Satan's drudgery; but faith will not; faith cannot. Then, in overcoming sin, which is the same thing, as it exists in the world and our depraved nature. What is sin in the Christian? The wicked one employing his own emissaries that are yet left behind. Apart from the base corruptions and lusts, there are self-righteousness, and self-conceit, and self-congratulations, and selfish motives and desires to gratify and pursue. There is the spirit of the world. Let me pass on to direct your attention unto the use of spiritual weapons only. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." There are a great number of carnal weapons that are used very adroitly and very manfully, and to a certain degree, in a moral sense, very successfully too. Take, for example, the arguments that are entered into by keen and skilful polemics against infidels. Well, they are all very proper for a certain purpose; but they are not spiritual weapons. The result is that, in many instances, they frequently convince the judgment, and yet do nothing for the soul. IV. THE TEACHING WHICH THESE "YOUNG MEN" RECEIVE FROM THE APOSTOLIC WRITINGS. I think it may be summed up in three things. One of them follows immediately upon my text. Reject the world. (*J. Irons.*) *The strength of young men*:—"The glory of young men is their strength." Every lad who is worth his salt desires the strength of fuller years, the sphere of influence,

the consciousness of life, the power to protect the weak, to serve the greater, and to take his place in the front of the battle of life. Mothers lean on the arm of their firstborn with a half-concealed but conscious pride. Sisters admire and almost worship the bursting flower of their elder brother's strength. 1. This hope of the world must not be confounded with mere muscle. Strength without wisdom, skill, or self-repression, strength devoted to an unworthy or insufficient end, scarcely deserves its name. 2. Again, strength must not be confounded with the proverbial infallibility of youth. 3. Once more, strength is sometimes confounded with insensibility, which is due to imperfect appreciation of reality and a feeble imagination. Wherefore, laying aside all mere muscle, ludicrous self-consciousness, dullness of perception, uncharitable sense of superior wisdom, and the obstinacy of simulated virtue, let us clearly seize, if possible, and utilise that strength of the young which is their glory and the master power of the world. (1) The strength which the world and the Church yearn for is the youthful (*virtus*) courage, which, when a great end or lofty ideal has dawned like awful sunrise on the soul, counts all things but loss in comparison of its triumph. The young Athanasius braved the courtly prelates and crowned kings of the world, and through a life-long martyrdom maintained the Word which had been flashed in blazing light upon his inmost conscience. The glory of young men is their strength to do battle for a cause larger than themselves, and dearer to themselves than life. (2) Another noble feature of the young man's strength is in his power to endure hardness, from which often the older man shrinks baffled. The young man can afford to wait at his post of duty, like the sentinel who has the fate of an army in his hands, like the sea-pilot in a storm, or the lighthouse-man with the fleets of the channel at his mercy. He can endure as seeing Him who is invisible. The direction of physical force, of stored energy, by wisdom and skill is the wonder of the modern world; but the consecration of the young man's strength by the free reception and indwelling of the mind of Christ is the hope of the Catholic Church of the Living God. (*H. R. Reynolds, D.D.*) *The youthhood of the nation*:—1. And, first, the young are strong in numbers. 2. It is true the young are strong in passions, in impetuous desires, in appetites, and in aspirations, which have yet to be freed from too exuberant growth. But is it not good to see this fresh life? 3. Yes, the young are strong in hope, in trust in God's future, putting the Janus face of the new year to soften the sombre effect of the countenance of the old year, bidding us listen for the music which is soon to wake in the woodland, on the hillside, and by the streams. And this we need. But this freshness of spirit is only to be cherished as David cherished it—at the fountains of God. Hence the pertinency of St. John's words, "And the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." This is the crowning strength of humanity, and no demon can possess the soul while the Word of God abideth in it. In our judgment of the young, we forget what an age of stimulation this is—what a hot-house it is to the plants that otherwise might unfold more perfectly and enduringly, and we charge upon human nature what only belongs to the exciting influence of the steam engine and the telegraph. The fact is, all ages are linked together, and the true strength of the young is derived from a vital connection with the past. "Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations!" (*C. A. Bartol.*) *Working power*:—I like the teaching of an elder philosopher, defining "power" to be that in a cause by which it produces its effect. Power in possession, but not in exercise, is practically as weak as its opposite. To be strong, but inactive, strong for good, but to do nothing that blesses, is to be both weak and wicked. What is the advantage of having a force never harnessed to the weight it was made to draw? I. WHAT IS PERSONAL POWER IN THIS AGE? 1. The earliest type of personal power is the physical. The first heroes were Nimrods, mighty hunters. To them the lyre was struck, for them the feast smoked, on them beauty smiled. The elder Hercules was one who could rend oaks and strangle serpents. The modern has other labours, only symbolised by those of his prototypes. 2. The next type of personal power is that derived from birth, and blood, and place—patrician greatness. This sort of hero drives across the stage charioted, coroneted, titled. He bears a name made illustrious by dead men. We still cherish some little portion of this feudal deference, and make way, with decent homage, for the well-born. But this greatness is in our day only a shadowy effigy of its once dual pre-eminence. Not the crown, but what it circles, is the question; not the emblazoned star, but what beats beneath it; not the fountain, but the redness of the blood that flows in the veins. 3. Next arose in history the type of personal power derived from wealth.

The peers of this new order of nobility are ever of redoubtable force. And yet, let one of these gilded peers be a narrow-souled miser, how like a great blot lie his mansion and surroundings on the smiling landscape. Let him be a mean man, how everybody in his heart despises him, even those that fawn! 4. A loftier type of personal power than any we have named is the intellectual. As the soul is the true man, intellectual stature is real stature. The force of this power is far-felt and permanent. But this power in its distinctive inheritance, as a lordship among men, is for the few. It cannot be universal. Its conditions are too exacting. It does not go down to the vitalities of character and breathe through all the channels of the heart the spirit of the daily life. 5. Moral power. Its seat is the moral nature, the conscience, and the heart. Its life is the central law prescribed by the supreme Moral Governor—the law of his own being—the force that sways Omnipotence—the law, the force of love. It is ever obedient to the right, just, unselfish. It goes forth in beneficence whenever and wherever it can, as a full fountain flows down, give it open channels. This is the power that more and more asserts supremacy in our day. The humblest mind, the lowliest place may wield this pre-eminent force. All that was good and vital in other and outlawed types of personal force is restored and immortalised in this. The intellect may be wedded to it. Herein is the clearest mental illumination. Love is light. Here, too, the golden ingots, the silver bars molten in this crucible of love, pour out their shining streams in farthest currency, and dust that perishes is transmuted into polished gems that burn as the stars for ever and ever. II. HOW, AS INDIVIDUALS, MAY WE POSSESS THIS MORAL POWER, FIND OURSELVES CLOTHED WITH IT AS A PERSONAL FORCE, AND BY IT LAY HOLD OF AND BLESS OUR AGE? 1. The heart itself must be the home and court of this power. The individual heart must yield itself to the control of this truth, come loyally under the monarchy of this right, and pulse in every throb with love. 2. There must be personal purity and integrity in action. The law of unselfish living, enthroned in the heart, must extend its dominion over the life. The man must be seen walking with his conscience at his left hand, the Bible at his right, and God before him. 3. The ascendant law of unselfish devotion to the good of beings must assert itself also, to be puissant, in forms of self-denial—a cutting off of self-indulgencies, a careful personal abstinence from all that may be harmful to our fellows. 4. This power grows and becomes effective by being employed. It must declare itself in action. He who loves will do what love prompts and what love can. 5. As to the particular ways in which this personal force will attach itself to human interests and live in their histories, we may say the circumstances and opportunities of every man alone can give the definite and detailed answer. But these ways are all the ways possible to the man. It will go forth into the vineyard to see what needs to be done, and ask the Master for employment. III. CAN ANY MAN INAUGURATE FOR HIMSELF SUCH A LIFE AND HISTORY, AND POUR HIMSELF OUT UPON IT AS THE NORMAL HABITUDE OF HIS SOUL AND NOT BE FELT? Can such a life fail to take hold of the age? Can this power work, and not tell controllingly and abidingly upon individual interests and issues—the making and shaping of character and the advancement of the unseen Kingdom of God? (*A. L. Stone.*) *Young men in cities*:—Dangers attend every comer into this life, by whatever door he enters. All places will have their trials and burdens; but all places are not alike dangerous. The chances of health and worthy manhood are far greater to one born and reared in the country than to one born and reared in a city. If we could choose, we would delay the coming of men to cities from the country till their frames were consolidated, till their habits were formed; but that cannot be. We must seek to make the best of what is. Consider the influx of young men to our cities, and the causes of it. In the first place, there is an imperative demand for vast numbers of young men to carry forward all the processes of society that is so active and so intense in cities. Business of every kind needs them. Where, however, there is a real need there will always be an exaggerated conception in the country, which will induce a rush to the city out of proportion to the real want, making young men too plentiful, and therefore cheap. And it is a bad thing when men are cheap. Few conceive that, by a law of God as fundamental as the law of gravitation and as universal as human society, success in life is the equivalent of industry, knowledge, prudence, and perseverance, and not the result of chance. The exceptions are few and occasional in which it would be found to come from anything in the nature of real luck. Men go out to hunt their fortune; to fire it upon the wing; to take it as it runs through the forest. They mean to find it already made. They do not understand that they must make it themselves if

they are to have it. This vision attracts multitudes, as by and by it will mock them. Besides these causes that draw hither so many more than are wanted of young men, there are more legitimate ones. The city has opportunities for some kinds of education that are not elsewhere to be found. It is a living encyclopædia. It is a world in miniature. It touches human want on every side. I count as the greatest loss that the young can sustain in coming hither the loss of home, as I count as the greatest blessing which the young can enjoy to be that training which a good home affords. There was a time, in primitive periods, when the apprentice belonged to the employer's family, when the merchant took to his own house his few clerks; but the change of business, and the multiplication of men in stores and shops, make this no longer possible, and young men find their places as best they can. Let us look at a few points of danger that develop under such circumstances in cities. First, of course, is the danger that society will lead the young man through kindness into dissipation and wasteful indulgences and pleasures, at the risk of destroying his morals, his health, and his industrious habits, and of soon setting him adrift from good society and sweeping him into that great flock where distress and death shoot all their bolts. The very qualities that most fit a man to be loved and to be useful are the very qualities that make him an easy prey to dissipation. I mean sympathy and yearning for companionship and warm-heartedness. I must here specialise one of the dangers which beset the young. I mean the danger of drinking. This is a national vice. Passing from this, I mention some of the illusions that the young must go through. The first of all is that of setting up a wrong ideal and end of life: not manhood and its power; not conscience and purity; not truth and fidelity; not industry and contentment; but simple wealth, as if that carried all things. Now, aim as broadly and highly as you please at fortune, but remember that character is better than property. It is better because it brings with it that which property does not necessarily bring—influence and happiness. Next is the illusion in respect to the relation which exists between means and ends. Men charge the fault of their ill-success in life to society and to the envy and jealousy of rivals; whereas their failure is attributable to the fact that they have stumbled on the illusion that they could gain a prosperity, not by rendering an equivalent work, not by exercising skill, not by putting forth thought, not by adhering to moral fidelities, but by practising dexterities. There is but one other illusion that I shall mention, and that is the illusion that the young are too apt to fall into, of the incompatibility of a moral and religious course in life with worldly prosperity; as if the God that made and arranged the laws of political economy was not the same God that made and arranged the laws of morality and religion. Such are some of the dangers which beset the young that are filling our cities. What are some of the remedies that may be applied? There is not one royal remedy. From every side in human society we must address remedies to these conditions of temptation. There ought, first, to be inculcated a higher sense of the responsibility of those who employ the young, to watch for them and care for them. Then there should be a public sentiment formed—and Churches should assist in forming it—by which the young should more and more be released from the exactions of business, and should have time secured for their improvement. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

The hopefulness of youthful strength:—We have here three reasons why John deems it a fitting thing that young men should be exhorted on the necessity of leading a life of love and light and unworldliness. 1. But why, to take the first reason, does John deem it a fitting thing to exhort young men to lead the life of love and light and unworldliness because they are strong? Wherein lies the fitness? Our answer is, because for one thing youthful strength gives boundless hope. Youth has endless faith in itself. Its ambitions are all, as yet, realisable. Its aspirations have not yet had their wings sullied or torn by rude world-collisions in their ascent. Hope rules the life. Principle strong and vigorous, supported right and left by courage and hope and aspiration, can meet in something like equal battle the temptations of the world and of the inner life. The strength which is thus peculiar to young life gives good hope of victory in the spiritual battle. But this truth has clearly another side, and a very important one. The strength of youth may go forth in the lines of evil as well as of good. For in youth passion is wild and strong. Conscious strength is very ready to tempt to unprincipled action. And whether that youthful strength shall have an upward or downward tendency will depend very much, or rather altogether, on the guiding, controlling power at the centre of life. The same powder which, under powerful guidance, will split the rock and make its granite blocks accessible to man and available for his works of

ornament and use, will, beyond that control, shatter in a moment, into wreck and ruin, even the most enduring results of his toil. And even so the strength of the young man, which may well be rejoiced in, and from which so much may reasonably be expected, must, for safety and for fulfilment of promise, be under the control of a principle which works for righteousness. 2. John's second reason for exhorting young men to live the Christian life is that "the Word of God abideth in them." This being the case, then, the young man's powers, if he is to be really strong, must be under the controlling influence of the will of God, as that has been revealed in His law and specially in Christ's life. Further, for real strength, this Word of God must abide in him. The Divine will must not simply alternate as a guiding power, with other and natural forces that are within him. For this would be tantamount to making the control useless or impossible. The engine-driver must be an abiding presence in the front of the train from beginning to end of the journey—let passengers come and go as they list at the intermediate stations—if there is to be safety and final reaching of the desired goal. Do you still say, "But how do I know what God's will is?" I answer, you know the commandments. Whatever makes for righteousness is in harmony with God's will. Whatever is in the lines of love, and light, and truth, is also. The good, the beautiful, and the true, are of God. But, further, you have Christ's life. Make it your study. Imitate it. It is a human life, with God's Word abiding at its centre. Live His life and you will do God's will. 3. The third reason why John exhorts young men to lead the life of love and light is that they "have overcome the wicked one." This is really the reason to which the two preceding reasons lead up. This is really the result of the young strength put forth under Divine guidance. Human struggle can have no grander issue. And in order to victory here both things are needed—both the natural strength and enthusiasm of youth and the abiding Divine Word. It is in youth, in the fulness of manhood's young powers, that Satan ever makes the most determined assaults. And he also knows that if he can only then, as life's work is being entered on, break down the power of the better nature, he has the defeated man almost to a certainty at his feet for the rest of his life. Of course with every man the contest with evil is, in a most important sense, life-long. But the issues even of the end are often settled at the beginning. Hence the infinite importance of victory over the enemy in the dawn of life. Depend upon it, your safety is in fighting it out now. (*Andrew Douk, M.A.*) *Young manhood's strength and triumph*:—The most noticeable facts on historic page are young manhood's triumphs. Alexander passed into the shades when but thirty-three years old, yet he conquered the world. At twenty-seven Napoleon had executed his grand Italian campaign, had routed proud Austria's forces, had made himself recognised as the equal of Europe's proudest monarch, and was hailed as the greatest general of the age. Cæsar was a young man when he won the heart of Rome. As a young man Mozart held all Europe entranced by his symphonies. I. WHAT IS YOUNG MANHOOD'S STRENGTH? 1. It is brawn, unweakened by "wear and tear" and abuse. 2. Nerve force, unshattered by strains of real life. 3. Mental force, untrammelled by false reasoning, depraved imaginings, disappointments, melancholy. 4. The operation of powers kept in balance, as a piece of well-adjusted machinery, properly lubricated with what has been prepared by the Mighty Contriver—joy, vigour, hope. II. HOW TO PERPETUATE YOUNG MANHOOD'S STRENGTH. 1. By moderation or temperance in all things. 2. A just observance of the laws of health as laid down by men who have made the matter a subject of close study. 3. Proper mental food. "As one thinks, so is the man." 4. Carefulness of habits and company. 5. Heartly espousal of Christianity in its true sense. III. THE OBLIGATIONS IT ENTAILS ON ITS POSSESSORS. The eyes of the world are on you, young men! You are the future hope of business, society, politics, country, and Church. (*C. V. Waugh.*) *A description of young men in Christ*:—Understand that the apostle is not writing here to any according to their bodily age; he is using human age as a metaphor for representing growth in the spiritual life. Grace is a matter of growth, and hence we have among us babes, young men, and fathers. It is honour enough to be in Christ, and certainly it is no small thing to be in spiritual things a man in the prime of life. I. THEIR POSSESSION OF STRENGTH. "I have written unto you young men, because ye are strong." 1. These young men in grace are strong, first of all, in faith, according to that exhortation, "Be strong! fear not!" They know whom they have believed, and they are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed to him. 2. This strength makes a man strong to endure. He is a sufferer, but mark how patient he is! He is a loser in business, and he

has a hard task to earn his daily bread, but he never complains, he has learned in every state to be content. He is persecuted, but he is not distressed, he is not moved from the even tenor of his way. 3. This strength shows itself, next, in labouring for Christ. The young man in Christ is a great worker. He is up and at it according to his calling and ability. 4. So also are these young men strong to resist attack. 5. Furthermore, these young men are not only strong for resistance, but they are strong for attack. They carry the war into the enemy's territory.

II. **THEIR NEED OF STRENGTH.** "Ye are strong, and ye have overcome the wicked one." Between the lines of the text I read the fact that young men who are strong must expect to be attacked. Every sinew in the arm of faith will have to be tested. There is a heavy burden for the strong shoulder, and a fierce fight for the trained hand. Why does Satan attack this class of men most? I reckon, first, because Satan is not always sure that the babes in grace are in grace, and therefore he does not always attack beginners; but when they are sufficiently developed to make him see who and what they are, then he arouses his wrath. Satan knows that young men in grace can do his kingdom great harm, and therefore he would fain slay them. You are strong to overthrow his kingdom, and therefore you need not marvel that he desires to overthrow you. I think it is right that young men should endure hardness, for else they might become proud. Full of strength, full of courage, full of patience, full of zeal, such men are ready enough to believe the wicked one when he whispers that they are perfect; and therefore trial is sent to keep them out of that grievous snare of the evil one. Besides, not only might this young man be a prey to pride, but he certainly would not bring the glory to God untried that he brings to Him when he overcomes temptation. Besides, it prepares them for future usefulness. III. **THEIR PROOF OF STRENGTH.** They have overcome the wicked one. They must be strong; for a man who can overcome the wicked one is no mean man of war. In what sense have these young men overcome the wicked one? 1. Well, first, in the fact that they have broken right away from his power. They were once his slaves, they are not so now. 2. Moreover, these young men have overcome the wicked one, not only in breaking away from his power and in driving him entirely out of possession so that he is no longer master, but they have overcome him in the very fact of their opposition to him. When a man resists Satan he is victorious over Satan in that very resistance. 3. But besides that, some of us who are young men in Christ have won many a victory over Satan. Have we not been fearfully tempted? But the mighty grace of God has come to the rescue, and we have not yielded. 4. Once more, in Christ Jesus we have entirely overcome the wicked one already; for the enemy we have to contend with is a vanquished foe—our Lord and Master met him and destroyed him. Ah, friend, we who believe in Jesus shall defeat thee, for our Lord defeated thee! We are more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us. IV. **THEIR SOURCE OF STRENGTH.** "The Word of God abideth in you." "The Word of God"—that is to say, we are to believe in the doctrines of God's Word, and these will make us strong. What vigour they infuse into a man! The promises of God's Word, too, what power they give a man! To get a hold of a "shall" and "will" in the time of trouble is a heavenly safeguard. "My God will hear me." "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." Then mind the precepts, for a precept is often a sharp weapon against Satan. Remember how the Lord Jesus Christ struck Satan a killing blow by quoting a precept—"It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." If the precept had not been handy, wherewith would the adversary have been rebuked? Every word of God is life to holiness and death to sin. Use the Word as your sword and shield; there is none like it. Now notice that John not only mentions "the Word of God," but the Word of God "in you." The inspired Word must be received into willing mind. How? The Book must be pleaded in the inmost heart, by the work of the Holy Ghost upon the mind. A man instructed in the Scriptures is like an armed knight, who, when he goes among the throng, inflicts many a wound, but suffers none, for he is locked up in steel. Yes, but that is not all; it is not the Word of God in you alone, it is "the Word of God abideth in you." It is always there, it cannot be removed from you. If a man gets the Bible right into him he is all right then, because he is full, and there is no room for evil. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Young men:—I. THERE ARE A MIDDLE SORT OF CHRISTIANS, WHO MAY BE CALLED YOUNG MEN. 1. From the fathers they differ—(1) Because they are not so well settled in a heavenly frame of spirit. (2) In that they have not so much superiority and command over their affections and passions as the

fathers have. (3) In that they are not so wise and experienced in the spiritual warfare, and therefore are often foiled, though they do also often overcome. 2. From the babes they differ—(1) Because they have been longer engaged in the practice of godliness, and so they have a more serious consideration of their state and ways, that they may avoid sin and the occasions thereof. (2) They are more diligent in the use of means. Their continual work is to subdue their passions and corrupt inclination, to weaken their rebellious desires and defeat temptations. (3) They are more versed in the Word of God, though not skilful in the word of righteousness, as the fathers; yet not as unskilful as the babes (Heb. v. 13). II. THE MIDDLE SORTS OF CHRISTIANS OR YOUNG MEN ARE MOST EXPOSED TO TEMPTATIONS AND CONFLICTS. 1. It is true of Christians young in grace; these especially are busied in fighting against the temptations of Satan and in resisting and subduing their own unruly lusts. 2. The devil tempteth and molesteth the saints, in hope to recover the prey. 3. In regard to themselves and their own flesh, which is not as yet perfectly subdued to Christ's discipline. The bullock at first yoking is most unruly; the fire at the first kindling casts forth much smoke (Rom. vii. 9). III. THAT WHICH IS MOST EMINENT IN THIS RANK OF CHRISTIANS IS STRENGTH. 1. The strength of the body; that is incident to young men naturally considered (Prov. xx. 29). But this is no great thing in a spiritual eye; for a bull or an ox may exceed us in this kind of strength (Psa. cxliv. 14); and a robust temper of body doth more often incline to sin than to virtue and grace. 2. The strength of the soul, which is the property of Christians, often spoken of in Scripture (Psa. cxxxviii. 3; Eph. iii. 6). This is the fruit of grace, for by nature we have it not (Rom. v. 6). This spiritual strength serveth for three uses—(1) To bear burdens with patience. A heavy burden requireth a sound back (Col. i. 11). (2) To perform duties with cheerfulness. That is a part of a Christian's strength to be able to work hard as well as bear much (Phil. iv. 13). (3) To resist temptations with success. Our necessities are many, so must our strength be to fight as well as to work and bear. IV. THIS STRENGTH THEY HAVE BECAUSE THE WORD OF GOD ABIDETH IN THEM. 1. The precepts and doctrines of the Word abide in them (Psa. xxxvii. 31). A lively sense of his duty is kept fresh upon his heart; and then, when they are tempted, they answer as the Rechabites, We dare not; our father commanded us otherwise (Jer. xxxv. 6). 2. The promises. These must abide in us for comfort against temptations, desertions, and afflictions (Job xxii. 22). In a time of wants and straits, how sweet is it to remember how amply we are provided for in the covenant! (Psa. cxix. 111). And in doubts and discouragements by reason of pressures and troubles (Psa. cxix. 5). 3. The threatenings. Many lusts are strange and boisterous, and are deaf to all milder motives. V. THOSE THAT HAVE THE WORD OF GOD ABIDING IN THEM OVERCOME THE WICKED ONE. 1. The adversary, "the wicked one." As God is the holy One, so the devil is called "the wicked one." 2. What is the victory? for the apostle speaketh of it as a thing past, "Ye have overcome." (1) The devil is an enemy, with whom we cannot make peace, but must fight against him till we overcome. So that here it cometh to a point, either we must perish or conquer. (2) There is hope of this victory. Whilst we keep up the fight our striving is a degree of conquest (James iv. 8). (3) There are great preparations for a victory. The devil is a conquered adversary (Col. ii. 15), a disarmed enemy (Heb. ii. 14). (4) Final conquest is sure. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Manly Christianity*:—Canon McCormick, speaking on manly Christianity, said—1. That it was of grace and not of nature. It was the grace of God that changed a man's heart and freed his conscience from the burden of sin. 2. It appealed to the judgment. We do not accept Christianity blindly. Ours is a reasonable religion. There is no philosophy in the world equal to the philosophy to be found in the writings of Paul. 3. It touches the affections. The intellect is nothing without the heart. A religion that consists only of thought will never help suffering humanity. Manly Christianity exhibits the tenderest pity, sympathy, and love—it deals with the sorrows and weaknesses and failures of mankind. 4. It does not neglect the body. The body is sacred because Christ became man. Have high ideas about your bodies; if you are Christians you will, for you will know that the body is part of the temple of the Holy Ghost. 5. It takes care to cultivate the mind. There is no book so fascinating as the Bible. It helps a man to do his duty in life as no other book can. 6. It elevates the character. In the service of the Lord Jesus Christ there is the greatest and truest liberty. *The Word of God the guide of youth*:—God's own Word, and especially His record concerning Jesus, dwelling in your inmost heart. This is the helm by which alone your course through life will be safely steered. If

matters little to a steamship how powerful her engines may be if she have no rudder. The stronger the engines, the more needed the helm. The greater our strength, the greater our need of guidance. The boat-race is sometimes won, not through superior strength, but through superior steering; and many a young man has failed in life, not so much for want of strength as for want of good steering. Let the Word of God abide in you, and you will be led aright. (*J. T. Davidson, D.D.*)

Little children, because ye have known the Father. *The childhood of grace*:—1. They differ from the Fathers in two things—(1) The object known. (2) The degree of knowledge. (a) The object is diversified, "Him that was from the beginning," and "the Father." Nothing more needful for children than to have a father, to whom they may repair in all their wants and who may take care for them; accordingly they own God as a Father. (b) The act, "You have known the Father." This knowledge is an initial knowledge; the act of knowledge is attributed to the fathers and the little children, but yet there is a difference in the degree. (i.) Little children have but a taste of God's fatherly love (1 Peter ii. 3). The fathers had a longer experience, by which they are more confirmed in the sense of their adoption (chap. iii. 1). (ii.) These little children know God as a father, because they have never yet been put upon occasions to question His love; but when they are tried with afflictions or temptations they are filled with doubts and fears. 2. They differ from the young men in Christ. These differ from the young men partly because they are inexperienced, and so are guilty of many oversights, are more easily deceived by Satan and his instruments (Eph. iv. 14), and partly because they are ignorant of the power of corruption (1 Peter i. 14). Weaknesses and infirmities are most rife then. And partly because they do not understand their duty in their first entrance upon their Christian course so well as they do afterwards, and therefore either cleave to things out of blind zeal or else condemn them out of rashness and indiscretion (Rom. xiv. 1). They are easily carried away with a vain show, and either allow or condemn things without due warrant. And partly because they are not so strong as the young men, nor so full of spiritual confidence, but are full of fears, as little children are easily frightened with anything. Their faith being little, doubts arise and fears prevail (Matt. vi. 30). 3. We must distinguish these from the carnal or the temporary; for though they be not so heavenly, so prudent, so strong as the more grown Christians, yet there is a clear distinction between them and the unconverted. (1) They have the common spirit of all Christians. God's favour is all in all to them, inasmuch as they cannot be satisfied without it (Psa. iv. 6, 7). (2) Though their main care be about getting off the guilt of sin for the present, yet there is an unfeigned purpose that they may not in the smallest matters offend God, but to the uttermost of their knowledge they are careful to perform their duty. (3) These weak Christians do or should remember that God will not always bear with their weaknesses. They must grow more solid and prudent, more settled into an heavenly frame and temper (1 Thess. iv. 1). (4) Their knowledge of God as a father differeth from that knowledge which temporaries have, because it is an active and operative knowledge. God's being a father implieth both duty and privilege, and none know Him aright but those that perform the duties of children and depend upon Him for the privileges of children. (a) This knowledge implieth the performance of the duties of children, which are to love, please, and honour their father (Mal. i. 6). (b) There are the privileges of children, and this knowing of the Father implieth trust and dependence (Psa. ix. 10). **Doctrine**: That even the lowest sort of Christians do know God as a father. **I. GOD STANDETH IN THE RELATION OF A FATHER TO HIS PEOPLE.** 1. By creation. He gave being to all things, but to man and angels reason. To establish the relation of a father there must be communication of life and likeness. 2. More especially there is a particular sort of men to whom God is a father in Christ, and they are His children. This title is not by nature, but by grace (John i. 12). (1) It importeth great privilege to us. Great benefits accrue to us thereby. (a) The gift of the Holy Ghost. (b) We have a blessed and excellent inheritance to look for here; all the children are heirs and "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). (c) In all His dealings for the present God retaineth a fatherly affection to us, pitying our miseries and pardoning our failings (Psa. ciii. 13). (2) It calleth for great duty at our hands, conformity and likeness to Him in all Divine perfections. (a) In holiness and purity (1 Peter i. 15). (b) In ready obedience to His laws. In one place we read, "dear children" (Eph. v. 1), in another, "obedient children" (1 Peter i. 14). (c) Subjection and humble submission to His correction (Heb. xii. 5-10). **II. THE LOWEST SORT OF CHRISTIANS DO KNOW GOD IN THE RELATION OF A FATHER.** 1. Christ hath taught all His disciples

to say, "Our Father" (Matt. vi. 9). 2. Adoption is one of the first privileges. As soon as a man owneth Christ he is adopted into God's family (John i. 12). 3. It is God's covenant. He hath promised that all His "shall know Him, from the least to the greatest" (Heb. viii. 11). (T. Manton, D.D.)

Vers. 15-17. **Love not the world.** . . . If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.—*The world and the Father*:—We talk of sons going out into the world. Hitherto they have been dwelling in the house of their father. Day by day they have had experience of his care and government. This going out into the world we speak of as if it were a loss of some of these blessings. It may be a loss of them altogether; the father and the father's house may be altogether forgotten. The world may seem to us a good world, because it sets us free from the restraints of the family in which we have been brought up. But, on the other hand, all children look forward to this time of going out into the world. Their fathers encourage them to look forward to it; they tell them their discipline in the nursery has been intended to prepare them for the world. Well, St. John is regarding these Ephesians as members of one family in different stages of their growth. Children, young men, fathers, are all treated as sons of God and as brothers of each other. St. John would have them understand that what is true in particular families is true also of this great family. There is a time of childhood, a time when the name of a Father, and the care of a Father, and the forgiveness of a Father, are all in all. But while St. John looks thus encouragingly and hopefully upon these youths he also wishes them to be alive to the danger of their new position. They may forget their heavenly Father's house, just as any child may forget his earthly father's house. And the cause will be the same. The attractions of the outward world are likely to put a great chasm between one period of their life and another; these may cause that the love of the Father shall not be in them. But are the cases parallel? The family of my parents is manifestly separated from the general world; to pass from one to the other is a great change indeed. But is not the world God's world? Is not the order which we see His order? How then can these young men be told that they are not to love that which He, in whose image they are created, is said so earnestly to love? Assuredly it is God's world, God's order. And how has disorder come into this order?—for that it is there we all confess. It has come from men falling in love with this order, or with some of the things in it, and setting them up and making them into gods. It has come from each man beginning to dream that he is the centre, either of this world or of some little world that he has made for himself out of it. This selfish love is the counterfeit of God's self-sacrificing love; the counterfeit, and therefore its great antagonist. The Father's love must prevail over this, or it will drive that Father's love out of us. Here, then, are good reasons why the young men shall not love the world, neither the things that are in the world. For if they do, first, their strength will forsake them; they will give up the power that is in them to the things on which the power is to be exerted; they will be ruled by that which they are meant to rule. Next, they will not have any real insight into these things or any real sympathy with them. Those who love the world, those who surrender themselves to it, never understand it, never in the best sense enjoy it; they are too much on the level of it—yes, too much below the level of it—for they look up to it, they depend upon it—to be capable of contemplating it and of appreciating what is most exquisite in it. Some will say, "But these young men to whom St. John wrote were godly young men, to whom he gave credit for all right and holy purposes." I believe it; and therefore such words as these were all the more necessary for them. "Love not the world." For there is a love in you that the world did not kindle, that your heavenly Father has kindled; love it not, lest you should be turned into worldlings, whose misery is their incapacity of loving anything. (F. D. Maurice, M.A.)

Worldliness :—Religion differs from morality in the value which it places on the affections. Morality requires that an act be done on principle. Religion goes deeper, and inquires into the state of the heart. I. THE NATURE OF THE FORBIDDEN WORLD. Now to define what worldliness is. Remark, first, that it is determined by the spirit of a life, not the objects with which the life is conversant. It is not the "flesh," nor the "eye," nor "life," which are forbidden, but it is the "lust of the flesh," and the "lust of the eye," and the "pride of life." It is not this earth nor the men who inhabit it—nor the sphere of our legitimate activity, that we may not love; but the way in which the love is given which constitutes worldliness. Worldliness, then, consists in these three things :—Attachment to the

Outward—attachment to the Transitory—attachment to the Unreal: in opposition to love for the Inward, the Eternal, the True; and the one of these affections is necessarily expelled by the other. If a man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. But let a man once feel the power of the kingdom that is within, and then the love fades of that emotion whose life consists only in the thrill of a nerve, or the vivid sensation of a feeling: he loses his happiness and wins his blessedness. II. THE REASONS FOR WHICH THE LOVE OF THE WORLD IS FORBIDDEN. The first reason assigned is, that the love of the world is incompatible with the love of God. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. St. John takes it for granted that we must love something. Love misplaced, or love rightly placed—you have your choice between these two; you have not your choice between loving God or nothing. The second reason which the apostle gives for not squandering affection on the world is its transitoriness. Now this transitoriness exists in two shapes. It is transitory in itself—the world passeth away. It is transitory in its power of exciting desire—the lust thereof passeth away. Lastly, a reason for unlearning the love of the world is the solitary permanence of Christian action. In contrast with the fleetingness of this world the apostle tells us of the stability of labour. “He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” And let us mark this. Christian life is action: not a speculating, not a debating, but a doing. Observe, however, to distinguish between the act and the actor—it is not the thing done but the doer who lasts. The thing done often is a failure. Bless, and if the Son of Peace be there your act succeeds; but if not, your blessing shall return unto you again. In other words, the act may fail; but the doer of it abideth for ever. We close this subject with two practical truths. Let us learn from earthly changefulness a lesson of cheerful activity. Let not the Christian slack his hand from work, for he that doeth the will of God may defy hell itself to quench his immortality. Finally, the love of this world is only unlearned by the love of the Father. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *The peril of worldliness*:—How many a hopeful beginning of Christian life is marred by worldly influences! How many a flower of Paradise seems to perish in the bud at the deadly touch of the world's cruel frost. We mean by the world not only the place but the people, or at least some of the people, who live in it. Of them St. Paul says they “mind earthly things”; that is, their affections and desires are centred in this world. Now in primitive times the distinction between the world and the Church was very marked. Those who belonged to the world did not even profess to accept the authority of Jesus Christ; on the contrary, they proclaimed outward war against Him and His, and carried it on with cruel persecutions. But soon Satan began to change his tactics. He disposed the world to respect the Church, for he began to see that her strength lay in opposition. He therefore set his wisdom to work to rob her of this power, and he has attempted to compass this end by seeking to obliterate as far as possible that clear, sharp, well-defined line of demarcation which separated the children of God from the children of this world. There is such a line, and we ought in the first place to recognise that fact, and in the second place look to God for wisdom to discern it as clearly as we can. In a large number of instances it is not difficult to discern, because there are a great number of persons whose lives speak for themselves; evidently their object in life is not to glorify God or yield to His claims. In another large number of instances, where the lines are not so hardly drawn, a tolerably good idea of the character can be obtained from indications proceeding from the lives of those by whom you are surrounded. When it is apparent that the regal claims of Christ upon the human heart are not recognised; when there is no confession of Christ in either words or actions; when lower objects obviously engross the attention, and nothing in their character or conduct indicates that the will has been surrendered to Christ, then the honesty of true love constrains us to regard such persons as belonging to the kingdom of this world, and as destitute of the new life and life-instincts which belong to citizens of the New Jerusalem. Nor must we allow ourselves to be misled by the fact that most people are nominally Christians. What, then, is our relation to the world? Christ answers, “Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” By constant contact with the world and by exposure to the temptations which arise in our daily life, we are to be driven more and more to realise the fact that we are citizens of a heavenly country. But there is more to be said about our relations with the world than that we are in it but not of it. We notice that our text says we are not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world; and it goes so far as to say, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Now, side

by side with this direction we must place another text, with which we are equally or more familiar: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." What shall we say then? If God loved the world, are we precluded from doing that which we thank God for having done? Let us contemplate a man in whose heart the love of benevolence is strong towards the world. That benevolence will induce him to recognise the world's present position; to bear in mind the truth that the world has rebelled against God, and that God's edict of condemnation has already gone forth against it. Realising this—its terrible peril—he will shrink from adopting any attitude towards the world that would be likely to make the world feel as if its danger were a mere doctrinal or sentimental unreality, and this will keep him from associating with the world on terms of reciprocal amity. Christ might have wrought miracles of salvation from heaven, but He preferred to come into the world to save sinners; and so we may go into the world too, provided it is to save sinners. This should be the great work of our lives. But when instead of this we associate with the world as if it were congenial to us, it is far more likely to drag us down than our friendship is to lift it up. I am afraid it must be sorrowfully admitted that too many professing Christians are leading two distinct kinds of lives, worldly with the worldly and Christian with the Christian. You would hardly think them the same persons were you to meet them under different circumstances. They cannot be distinguished from the citizens of this world to-day, and they might pass for excellent saints to-morrow. But such people as these really exercise their influence for the world and not for God. (IV. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.) *The guileless spirit loving not the world, which is darkness, but God, who is light*:—The love of the world is here declared to be irreconcilable with the love of the Father. And the declaration applies to "the things that are 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." 1. "The lust of the flesh." 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. 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. 2. "The lust of the eyes." 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. 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 caressed. 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. 3. "The pride of life." 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. 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. It debauches conscience and is fatal to high aims. It puts the men and women of the world on a poor struggle to out-manœuvre and outshine 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 is imposing. Need I suggest how many sad instances of religious inconsistency and worldly conformity spring from this source? Do you not sometimes find yourselves more 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? 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." 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." There is nothing in them that rises above the natural influences of self-love and social, as these are blended "in the world." 2. "All that is in the world is of the world," wherever it may be found. 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. 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. 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. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*)

Love not the world:—I. THE WARNING. Are we not required diligently to attend to the things of the world? And is not a promise of its enjoyment made to those who do so? True. The command is "Look well to thy flocks and herds." "Not slothful in business." And this is among the promises, "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is and that which is to come." We may value the world, we may seek to possess it, we may enjoy it. This is not what the apostle forbids. The true meaning of the injunction lies in the term, "Love not the world." This affection is supreme in whatever heart it dwells. It is jealous, and admits no rival. If a man loves the world, he gives it the first place in his heart, and everything is subordinated to it. The world then becomes his God, and he worships it. Whatever comes in competition with it is discarded. It becomes the object of a passion of which it is wholly unworthy. Yet the love of the world is a principle fearfully prevalent. It is to be found in many who do not suspect it. Here is a man placed in a position where he may add to his worldly substance. But there is a difficulty. The law stares him in the face, "provide things honest in the sight of all men." He would like to keep it, but the prospect is tempting. By degrees his principle of integrity is overcome, and he takes the golden bait, overcome by the love of the world. One other illustration may be added. Here is a man who does respect the laws of integrity, and honour, and devotion. But he is associated with another, who does not respect them. A case arises where both must act together. The former expresses his desire to act righteously. The other uses his influence to overcome what he denominates his scruples. He is afraid to offend him; his interests are too deeply involved to run so great a risk; he yields, and presents another example of a victim overcome by the love of the world. II. THE REASONS OF THE WARNING. 1. The love of God and the love of the world are incompatible with one another, and cannot exist together in the same mind. This is precisely the sentiment of our Lord (Matt. vi. 24). 2. The world is sinful, and therefore its service is incompatible with that of God. 3. We are ourselves perishing, and so is all that is earthly. 4. But to all this there is a glorious contrast in the last reason. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Such a man is the subject of principles that will endure through all the trials and vicissitudes of life. (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*)

Love not the world:—Intimately connected, as we are, with this point of space, we are connected still more intimately with something which transcends alike both time and space—the Eternal and the Infinite in which we live and move and have our being. It is because the world tends to draw off our thoughts from Him who is the centre and fountain of our life that we are warned not to love the world. The world against which we are warned is something transitory and changeable. It is that which appeals to our senses, which supplies to us the natural field of enjoyment and thought and action. It is plain that if the world means all this, it is utterly absurd to think we can escape from it, as some have fancied, by becoming hermits, or avoiding certain kinds of society or amusement. The world is wrapt up in our very nature. It is a necessity of our earthly life. We might as well say we would renounce our bodies, renounce eating or breathing, as say we would renounce the world in this sense. It is not the world then in itself, but a particular way of using the world, a particular way of being affected by the world, which we Christians are to give up. It may help us to understand what is the wrong use and the wrong influence of the world if we think first what is the right use and right influence. Why did God place us in such a

world as this? Was it not in order that we might be raised from the animal to the spiritual, from the state of nature to the state of grace, that we might learn to know God and do His will, and so become partakers of eternal life? This, then, is the right use of the world, that, through the things which are made, we might come to understand the invisible things of God. Let us think of some of the ways in which this is done. The infant's world is its mother's lap. In and through that visible world it is taught, even before it can think, some of the invisible things of God. So again the astronomer when he ponders over the varying aspects of the starry heavens, the naturalist when he examines with the microscope the structure of creatures invisible to the naked eye, the poet when he bows down in reverence and adoration before the Holy Spirit revealing itself in nature—these all use the world aright, they rise through the visible, the outward transitory fact, to the invisible, the inner law, the unchanging character and will of the Eternal Father. Let us now descend from this wider view of our environment to that which we most commonly understand by the term "the world," and which no doubt approaches more nearly to its use in the Bible—the influence of society in general upon each member of the society. Many men have been kept from doing wrong by fear of the world's censure, many men have been stimulated to do right from hope of the world's praise. In this way, then, the voice of society is to a certain extent an echo of the voice of God. But far more valuable and important is that other influence of society, when each individual man ceases to think of himself as a separate unit with his separate interests, and becomes conscious of a common membership and a common life. As, for instance, when a boy at school learns to care more for the honour and credit of the school than he does for any advantage or credit to himself, or when the soldier is so penetrated by the spirit of discipline and loyalty and patriotism that he willingly sacrifices his life to ensure the safety of his comrades or the triumph of his country. If through the world of nature we are taught something of the might and the wisdom and the glory of God, surely through the world of humanity, through the natural feeling of fellowship which binds us all together, we are taught a yet higher truth, we are brought into sympathy with Him who left the throne of glory to take upon Him the form of a servant. Such, then, being the right use and the right influence of the world, it will not be difficult to see what is its wrong use and wrong influence, what, in fact, is the meaning of the term "world" as used in my text. The world, in the bad sense, is that in our environment which has a tendency to lower our moral nature, to shut out the thought of God, to make us disbelieve in the eternal righteousness and love. Let us take a few examples. Public spirit, *esprit de corps*, which is the parent of so much that is good, may also be the parent of terrible evil. Men who would have shrunk from doing harm to their neighbour on private grounds have been ready to commit the worst atrocities when it was ordered by the society to which they belonged. So a man whom we have known as fair and honourable in private life, will use the most unfair means, will descend to intimidation and slander, if not to actual falsehood, in order to promote the interests of the religious or political party to which he belongs. In all these cases we see the evil influence of that world against which St. John warns us. The man forgets that the first and greatest commandment is his duty to God, and that his duty to man can only be rightly accomplished as long as he remembers his duty to God. I turn now to the second kind of social influence of which I spoke before. I mean where a man is not carried away by the prevailing feeling, but where he consciously adapts himself to it with a view to gain respect or admiration, or to avoid punishment, or blame, or contempt, or inconvenience of any kind. As I said before, the effect of this motive is to a certain extent favourable to virtuous action, but no action is made virtuous or right simply because it is done to get credit or avoid discredit. It becomes right when it is done to please God, and it is only when we believe that human judgment is in accordance with God's judgment that we may properly take man's approval as a guide for our conduct. The great danger is that we take the fashion, whether of a larger or smaller world, as being itself the authoritative standard of life; that we are so deafened by the outside noise that we cease to hear the still small voice of God in the heart; we do not ask whether He approves, we do not even stop to ask what is the origin, or meaning, or ground of the custom or opinion which fashion enjoins, till at last we become simple echoes, we have no genuine tastes or feelings left, our one anxiety is to repeat correctly the latest catch-word of the moment. (J. B. Mayor, M.A.)

Love of the world.—I. Excessive affection for the mere things of the world must always be INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE LOVE OF GOD.

That which is of the earth is earthy, and cannot be made to incorporate with that which is heavenly. He who is warm in the chase after wealth or renown finds no time nor room in his heart for spiritual contemplation. It was fabled of old that when the arch tempter had made his allurements agreeable to a man his guardian angels uttered a sad lament, sang a melancholy dirge, and left him. When a licentious passion has gained dominion over the thoughts of a man, or when ambition is made free of his breast and constituted his privy-councillor, then do his anxious watchings over the purity of his spirit, and his delicate perceptions of right and wrong, and his tender feelings of universal benevolence, and his meditations on futurity, and his frequent and holy communions with God, which may indeed be called our guardian angels, take farewell of the habitation where they must stay no longer, carrying out their peace and glory with them. Alas! this is no fable, but a daily sight. II. The love of the world, being incompatible with the love of God, is consequently **AT ENMITY WITH HIS SERVICE**. The lover of the world is perhaps a votary of gain; if so, he cannot serve God with the accepted obedience of generosity and benevolence. He may have enrolled himself on the lists of ambition; but God dwells with the lowly and with him on whose lips there is no guile. He may have plunged into the roaring vortex of dissipation and intoxicating pleasure; he surely cannot serve God there. III. **THERE IS NOTHING DURABLE IN THESE OBJECTS**, which appear so enchanting, and are pursued so eagerly. IV. We ought not to love the world because **AN EXCESSIVE ATTACHMENT TO IT MAKES US UNWILLING TO LEAVE IT AT DEATH**. V. It is but little to say that we are thus rendered unwilling to leave it when we have also to say that we are thus rendered **UNWORTHY TO LEAVE IT, UNFIT TO LEAVE IT**. The discipline which the soul receives in the schools of selfishness and the bowers of pleasure and the halls of pride is not such as will fit it for heaven. (*F. W. P. Greenwood, D.D.*) *Love of the world*:—Is it true, then, that religion requires us to sacrifice every natural affection? If it is, then comply with it. If religion is such a thing, then Simeon Stylites, on his pillar-top, was a pattern saint. But if this is not the ideal of religion, let us find out what the true ideal is. If there is a love of natural things perfectly consistent with and flowing out from the love of God, let us know it and act accordingly. Now what is the doctrine in the text? When we consider it in its connection we find it is not a mere statement of negations. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." It does not stop with this. Why not love these? Because we are called to cherish a higher and more comprehensive affection. We are to love the Father supremely. There are some who try to preserve a sort of balance between the two—between the spirit that makes this world supreme, which of course dissolves all moral distinction between right and wrong; and the spirit that makes God supreme, which claims as right the love of right only. It is like compromising with a cancer, or holding negotiations with the yellow fever. There are only two standards—that which proceeds from the love of God as supreme; that which proceeds from the love of the world as supreme. You cannot serve them both. The whole statement of the text rests upon the simple fact that every man has a master-motive in his heart, which he more or less consciously acts upon. There is one general ground from which a man measures. Here, for instance, is a man that measures from the love of the world, from the summit of worldly advantage. If you want to explain his life you do it in this way: he starts with worldly sanctions and worldly interests, and thus sometimes measures up to spiritual claims and moral laws. So you see men in every avocation of life, from the most private to the most public transactions, willing enough to confess the right, but after all holding it subordinate to the ground from which they measure—worldly advantage. Now a thing is either right or it is wrong. If we measure from God's supreme law, the love of the Father, we must bring everything else down before that; if we measure from worldly advantage, we must bring God's law down before that. Love not the world, is the principle. What the apostle means by loving the world and the things of the world, is loving them supremely and making them a standard; measuring from the ground of worldly sanction and interest up to the supreme right. No, we are to measure from the love of the Father downward—not from the love of worldly advantage and sanction upward. That is the real meaning of the text. Loving the Father supremely, we shall know what to love as He loves, and we shall see everything in the relation in which He sees it. From His all-comprehending affection we shall go forth to see everything truly and to love everything as we ought to love it. Every daily duty, every daily care, every common

interest—your homes, your toils, your trials, will all be loved by you in due proportion, because you will read in them the Father's meaning and you will see them in their true relations and significance. And still again, when we start from this ground of love we learn to distinguish the essence of things from the outside of things. When, for instance, a man becomes so enamoured of nature that he forgets the God who made it; when he touches not the pulses of the infinite in the motions of the worlds, but all is a dead blank and all traces of God have vanished, then man has that love of the world and of the things that are in it which is condemned by the apostle. So, too, a man may love humanity simply on its outside—for its advantage to him—merely for that which is pleasing to him, not in its essence. Jesus Christ did not look at the outside of men. He looked into humanity as an emanation from God. He saw it in its priceless worth, and died for it—not for its relations to him of friendliness, or kindness, or love, or service, or beauty, or use, but for its intrinsic worth. That is the way to love humanity. Not because it serves us, not because it is pleasant to us, not because it is friendly to us. That is a very little thing. How sour men get by and by who love it on that account! The true Christian never falters in his high faith in and deep love for humanity, because he sees it and loves it as Jesus Christ did—not with reference to himself but for its intrinsic character and value in the eyes of God. (*E. H. Chapin, D.D.*)

When do we love the world too much?—1. When, for the sake of any profit or pleasure, we wilfully and knowingly and deliberately transgress the commandments of God and become openly and habitually wicked and vicious, and live addicted to sensuality, to intemperance, to fraud, to extortion, to injustice. 2. When we take more pains to obtain and secure the conveniences of this life than to qualify ourselves for the rewards of the next. 3. When we cannot be contented, or patient and resigned, under low or inconvenient circumstances. 4. When we cannot part with anything that we possess to those who want it, who deserve it, and who have indeed a right to it. 5. When we envy those who are more fortunate and more favoured by the world than we are, and cannot behold their success without repining; when at the same time we can see others better and wiser and more religious, if they be in a lower state than ourselves, without the least uneasiness, without emulation and a desire to equal them. 6. When we esteem and favour persons purely according to their birth, fortunes, and success, measuring our judgment and approbation by their outward appearance and situation in life. 7. When we dislike and slight others only because the world favours them not, and thus suffer our affections, our judgment, and our behaviour to be regulated by the notions and customs of men, and indeed of the worst sort of men. 8. When worldly prosperity makes us proud and vain, and we expect to be greatly honoured by others, only because they are placed beneath us, though in other respects, in valuable qualities, they may surpass us; and when we resent any little failure of homage as a real injury. 9. When we omit no opportunity of enjoying the good things of this life, when our great business and serious employment is to amuse ourselves, till we contract an indifference for manly and rational occupations, deceiving ourselves, and fancying that we are in a safe condition, because we are not so bad as several whom we could name, nor guilty of such and such vices with which the world abounds. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*)

The expulsive power of a new affection:—There are two ways in which a practical moralist may attempt to displace from the human heart its love of the world—either by a demonstration of the world's vanity, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon simply to withdraw its regards from an object that is not worthy of it; or by setting forth another object, even God, as more worthy of its attachment. Love may be regarded in two different conditions. The first is, when its object is at a distance, and then it becomes love in a state of desire. The second is, when its object is in possession, and then it becomes love in a state of indulgence. Such is the grasping tendency of the human heart that it must have a something to lay hold of—and which, if wrested away without the substitution of another something in its place, would leave a void as painful to the mind as hunger is to the natural system. It may be dispossessed of one object, or of any, but it cannot be desolated of all. We know not a more sweeping interdict upon the affections of nature than that which is delivered by the apostle in the verse before us. To bid a man into whom there has not yet entered the great and ascendant influence of the principle of regeneration, to bid him withdraw his love from all the things that are in the world, is to bid him give up all the affections that are in his heart. The world is the all of a natural man. He has not a taste nor a desire that points not to a something placed within the confines of its visible horizon. He

loves nothing above it, and he cares for nothing beyond it; and to bid him love not the world, is to pass a sentence of expulsion on all the inmates of his bosom. The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself? The heart cannot be prevailed upon to part with the world by a simple act of resignation. But may not the heart be prevailed upon to admit into its preference another, who shall subordinate the world, and bring it down from its wonted ascendancy? This explains the operation of that charm which accompanies the effectual preaching of the gospel. Beside the world, it places before the eye of the mind Him who made the world, and with this peculiarity, which is all its own—that in the gospel do we so behold God, as that we may love God. It is there, and there only, where God stands revealed as an object of confidence to sinners—and where our desire after Him is not chilled into apathy, by that barrier of human guilt which intercepts every approach that is not made to Him through the appointed mediator. It is the bringing in of this better hope, whereby we draw nigh unto God—and to live without hope is to live without God; and if the heart be without God, the world will then have all the ascendancy. It is God apprehended by the believer as God in Christ, who alone can dispossess it from this ascendancy. And here let us advert to the incredulity of a worldly man: when he brings his own sound and secular experience to bear upon the high doctrines of Christianity—when he looks on regeneration as a thing impossible. We think that we have seen such men, who, firmly entrenched in their own vigorous and homebred sagacity, and shrewdly regardful of all that passes before them through the week, and upon the scenes of ordinary business, look on that transition of the heart by which it gradually dies unto time, and awakens in all the life of a new-felt and ever-growing desire towards God, as a mere Sabbath speculation; and who thus, with all their attention engrossed upon the concerns of earthliness, continue unmoved to the end of their days, amongst the feelings and the appetites and the pursuits of earthliness. Now, it is altogether worthy of being remarked of those men who thus disrelish spiritual Christianity, and in fact deem it an impracticable acquirement, how much of a piece their incredulity about the demands of Christianity, and their incredulity about the doctrines of Christianity, are with one another. No wonder that they feel the work of the New Testament to be beyond their strength, so long as they hold the words of the New Testament to be beneath their attention. Neither they nor any one else can dispossess the heart of an old affection but by the expulsive power of a new one; and if that new affection be the love of God, neither they nor any one else can be made to entertain it, but on such a representation of the Deity as shall draw the heart of the sinner towards Him. Now it is just their unbelief which screens from the discernment of their minds this representation. They do not see the love of God in sending His Son unto the world. It is a mystery to them how a man should pass to the state of godliness from a state of nature; but had they only a believing view of God manifest in the flesh, this would resolve for them the whole mystery of godliness. As it is, they cannot get quit of their old affections, because they are out of sight from all those truths which have influence to raise a new one. But if there be a consistency in the errors, in like manner is there a consistency in the truths which are opposite to them. The man who believes in the peculiar doctrines, will readily bow to the peculiar demands of Christianity. The effect is great, but the cause is equal to it—and stupendous as this moral resurrection to the precepts of Christianity undoubtedly is, there is an element of strength enough to give it being and continuance in the principles of Christianity. Conceive a man to be standing on the margin of this green world; and that, when he looked towards it, he saw abundance smiling upon every field, and all the blessings which earth can afford scattered in profusion throughout every family, and the joys of human companionship brightening many a happy circle of society—conceive this to be the general character of the scene upon one side of his contemplation; and that on the other, beyond the verge of the goodly planet on which he was situated, he could descry nothing but a dark and fathomless unknown. Think you that he would bid a voluntary adieu to all the brightness and all the beauty that were before him upon earth, and commit himself to the frightful solitude away from it? But if, during the time of his contemplation, some happy island of the blest had floated by; and there had burst upon his senses the light of its surpassing glories, and its sounds of sweeter melody; and he clearly saw that there a purer beauty rested upon every field, and a more heartfelt joy spread itself among all the families; and he could discern there, a peace, and a piety, and a benevolence,

which put a moral gladness into every bosom, and united the whole society in one rejoicing sympathy with each other, and with the beneficent Father of them all.— Could he further see that pain and mortality were there unknown; and above all, that signals of welcome were hung out, and an avenue of communication was made for him—perceive you not, that what was before the wilderness, would become the land of invitation; and that now the world would be the wilderness? What unpeopled space could not do, can be done by space teeming with beatific scenes, and beatific society. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *Worldly affections destructive of love to God*:—There are things in the world which, although not actually sinful in themselves, do nevertheless so check the love of God in us as to stifle and destroy it. For instance, it is lawful for us to possess wealth and worldly substance; we may serve God with it, and consecrate it at His altar; but we cannot love wealth without growing ostentatious, or soft, or careful, or narrow-hearted (1 Tim. vi. 10). So, again, with friends and what is called society. I. LOVE OF THE WORLD BRINGS A DULNESS OVER THE WHOLE OF A MAN'S SOUL. Fasting, and prayer, and a spare life, and plainness, and freedom from the cumbering offices and possessions of the world, give to the eye and ear of the soul a keen and piercing sense. But this discipline is almost impossible to the man that moves with the stream of the world; it carries him away against his will. The oppressive nearness of the things which throng upon him from without defrauds him of solitude with God. They come and thrust themselves between his soul and the realities unseen; they drop like a veil over the faint outlines of the invisible world, and hide it from his eyes. And the spiritual powers that are in him grow inert and lose their virtue by the dulness of inaction. The acts of religion, such as reading, thought, contemplation of the unseen, prayer, self-examination, first seem to lose their savour, and are less delighted in: then they grow irksome, and are consciously avoided. II. As we grow to be attached to the things that are in the world, there comes over us what I may call a VULNERABLENESS OF MIND. We lay ourselves open on just so many sides as we have objects of desire. We give hostages to this changeful world, and we are ever either losing them, or trembling lest they be wrested from us. What a life of disappointment, and bitterness, and aching fear, and restless uncertainty, is the life of the ambitious, or covetous, or self-indulgent! But it is not only in this form that the mind is made vulnerable by a love of the world. It lays itself open not more to chastisements than to temptations; it gives so many inlets to the suggestions of evil. Every earthly fondness is an ambush for a thousand solicitations of the wicked one. It is a lure to the tempter—a signal which betrays our weaker side; and as the subtle infection of evil temper winds itself into the mind, the spirit of the Dove is grieved by an irritable and unloving spirit. The very affections of the heart recoil sullenly into themselves, and sometimes even turn against the objects of their immoderate fondness. In this way the love of the world becomes a cause of very serious deterioration of character. It soon stifles the love of God; and when that is gone, and the character has lost its unity, particular features unfold themselves into a fearful prominence. The chief among its earthly affections becomes thenceforth its ruling passion, and so predominates over all the rest, and draws the whole mind to itself, as to stamp the man with the character of a besetting sin. And this is what we mean when we call one man purse-proud, and another ostentatious, or selfish, and the like. The world has eaten its way into his soul, and “the love of the Father is not in him.” III. Now, IF THIS BE SO, WHAT SHALL WE DO? We cannot withdraw ourselves. One has wealth, another a family, a third rank and influence, another a large business: and all these bring with them an endless variety of duties and offices, and usages of custom and courtesy. If a man is to break through all these, he must needs go out of this world. All this is very true; but, at the same time, it is certain that every one of us might reduce his life to a greater simplicity. In every position of life there is a great multitude of unnecessary things which we may readily abandon. And as for all the necessary cares of life, they need involve us in no dangers. In them, if we be true-hearted, we are safe. When God leads men into positions of great trial, whether by wealth, or rank, or business, He compensates by larger gifts of grace. (*Archdeacon Manning.*) *The nature and danger of an inordinate love of the world*:—I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE WORLD. A general inventory of this world's goods is given us by the apostle, divided into three lots. The first contains all the pleasures of the world, called the lust of the flesh, because they are proper to a corporeal nature, or such as the soul now desires, only by reason of its union with the body. The next class is riches, which he calls the lust of the eyes, because the eye takes a

peculiar pleasure in gazing at those things which they immediately procure. The pleasures I before mentioned are gone with a touch, these with a look. So unsubstantial are the goods contained in the two first lots of this world's inventory. Let us now examine the third, and see if we can find anything more solid there. This opens to us all the honours, the high stations, the power and preferments of the world. This the apostle calls the pride of life, because it is the ambitious man's great object, and at once attracts and foment the vanity of his heart. But it never satisfies the vanity which it excites. Ambition is insatiable as avarice.

II. THE EXTENT OF THIS PROHIBITION; or with what restrictions it must necessarily be taken. 1. This does not forbid us (1) to prosecute our worldly affairs with application and diligence. (2) Nor does it countenance, much less require, a total separation from the world. (3) Nor are we hereby forbid to enjoy the world, or to take any delight in the good things of the present life. (4) This text does not forbid us to value, or in a certain degree desire to possess the good things of this world: because they are in some respects desirable, and to many good purposes useful; and therefore a wise man will not indulge an absolute contempt of them, or be totally indifferent to them. (5) Neither are we forbid a conformity to the innocent customs, manners and fashions of the world. 2. What is it then that it does forbid?—I answer in one word, an excessive love of the world, or an immoderate attachment of the heart to it. (1) We then love this world too much when we neglect our souls, or our interest in a better world, for the sake of it. (2) 'Tis a certain sign that a man loves the world too much when he grows vain, imperious and assuming, and despises others merely on the score of their wanting that affluence which he enjoys. (3) When a man grows confident in the world, and trusts to it as his chief good. (4) We then love the good things of this world too much when we dare to venture on any known transgression with a view to secure or increase them. (5) When a man has no heart to do good with what he has in the world, and is averse to acts of charity, piety and beneficence. (6) When we are tormented with an anxious solicitude about the things of this world. (7) It is a sign that our hearts are too much attached to earthly things if we cannot bear our earthly losses and disappointments with temper. (8) It is an indication that we love the good things of this life too much when we are not thankful for them, and forget to make our acknowledgements to Him at whose hand we hold them.

III. THE GROUNDS OF THIS PROHIBITION. 1. I am to suggest a few general considerations proper to guard us against an immoderate love of the present world. To this end then let it be considered. (1) How many dangerous temptations it lays in the way of our souls. (2) The more fond we are of the world the greater is our danger from it. The more it engages our hearts the more power it has to enslave them. (3) An excessive passion for the world defeats its own end. The more inordinately we love it, the less capable we are of the true enjoyment of it. If we squeeze the world too hard we wring out dregs. In our cup of worldly bliss the sweetest lies at top: he who drinks too deep will find it nauseous. (4) Why should we love the world so much, when there is nothing in it that suits the dignity or satisfies the desires of our souls? 2. Let us now particularly consider those two motives whereby the apostle himself enforces the caution he gives in the text. (1) An excessive love of the world is inconsistent with a sincere love of God. An immoderate love of the world, or of anything in it, is paying that devotion and homage of our heart to the creature which is due only to the Creator. What vile ingratitude as well as folly is here! To love the world more than God is a plain indication of the apostasy of the heart from him. And from this inward apostasy of the heart begins the outward apostasy in life. (2) The world and everything in it is mutable and mortal, constantly changing, and hastening apace to dissolution. (*John Mason, M.A.*) *Worldliness*:—I speak to you, not as hermits, but as men of the world, occupied constantly in honourable vocations, and yet conscious that there is a life above this world—an eternal, spiritual, divine life. Will you suffer me to put before you two or three suggestions which may enable us, while living in this world, yet to rise above it? 1. And the first suggestion I would make is, that it would be well for him who desires the spiritual life to adopt some definite, constant action of self-denial. It may be abstinence from alcoholic drink, from theatres and balls—things perfectly right and legitimate in themselves; it may be even so small a thing as early rising in the morning, or it may be some pecuniary generosity; but whatever it is, if it be adopted as a definite self-denial, as a definite self-consecration of the man to God, it will undoubtedly have a purifying and elevating influence. 2. My second suggestion is this, that every one of us who

desires to live the spiritual life should ask himself the question, In what respect does my ordinary life, my professional, my regular routine of existence, tend to draw me from God, tend to deaden the spiritual activities and faculties? and then that he should set himself to encourage a practice which will limit this tendency. For, according to the familiar illustration of the philosopher Aristotle, if a stick is bent in one direction, and you want to straighten it, you must bend it violently in the opposite direction. Suppose, for example, as is quite likely, that one is engaged in the business of commerce, it is his object to make money, and this is legitimate in itself; yet, if he be spiritually minded, he will not be blind to the fact that the occupation of making money does tend to set the soul upon earthly, and not upon heavenly things. In order to remedy this tendency he will encourage in himself a definite, systematic practice of generosity; he will aim at using his money, not as an owner, but as a trustee, so that by means of it he may make the world better, he may increase the happiness and joy of those less fortunate than himself. 3. Let me take a third instance to show the duty and beauty of this spiritual life. It is easy to get into the state in which the very being of God Himself becomes a doubt and a difficulty, and yet it is vital to avoid that state altogether and always. Is it not the case in public life that there are dangers which threaten the well-being of the spiritual nature—I mean the love of victory for instance, which is not the love of truth? The voice of the people is not the voice of God, it tends now-a-days to drown the voice of God. What can be the effect of the malice and uncharitableness which men display so often towards one another, but to make God seem distant, and as if He had no relation to the human soul? Any one then who in the noble field of public life is anxious not to let his spirituality die out will be careful at times to retire into solitude to commune with his Maker and with his own soul, and he will cry out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Such a man will try always to live as in the sight of God. (*J. E. Welldon, D.D.*)

The world we must not love:—Let us not confuse "the world" with the earth, with the whole race of man, with general society, with any particular set, however much some sets are to be avoided. Look at the thing fairly. Yet let us read the letters of Mary Godolphin. She bore a life unspotted by the world in the dissolute court of Charles II., because the love of the Father was in her. In small serious circles are there no hidden lusts which blaze up in scandals? Is there no vanity, no pride, no hatred? In the world of Charles II.'s court Mary Godolphin lived out of the world which God hated; in the religious world not a few, certainly, live in the world which is not God's. For once more, the world is not so much a place—though at times its power seems to have been drawn into one intense focus, as in the empire of which Rome was the centre, and which may have been in the apostle's thought in the following verse. In the truest and deepest sense the world consists of our own spiritual surrounding; it is the place which we make for our own souls. No walls that ever were reared can shut out the world from us; the "Nun of Kenmare" found that it followed her into the seemingly spiritual retreat of a severe Order. The world in its essence is subtler and thinner than the most infinitesimal of the bacterian germs in the air. They can be strained off by the exquisite apparatus of a man of science. At a certain height they cease to exist. But the world may be wherever we are; we carry it with us wherever we go, it lasts while our lives last. No consecration can utterly banish it even from within the church's walls; it dares to be round us while we kneel, and follows us into the presence of God. (*Abp. Wm. Alexander.*)

The Christian in the world:—A true Christian living in the world is like a ship sailing on the ocean. It is not the ship being in the water which will sink it, but the water getting into the ship. So in like manner the Christian is not ruined by living in the world, which he must needs do while he remains in the body, but by the world living in him. Our daily avocations, yea, our most lawful employments, have need to be narrowly watched, lest they insensibly steal upon our affections, and draw away our hearts from God.

A dangerous experiment:—Whoever is contriving, by how little faith or how little grace, and with how large interspersing of gaieties and worldly pleasure he may make his title to salvation good, is engaged in a very critical experiment. He is trying how to be a Christian without being at all a saintly person. How to love God enough without loving Him enough to be taken away from his lighter pleasures, and he really thinks that, aiming low enough to be a little of a Christian, he still may just hit the target on the lower edge. Perhaps he will; but is he sure of it? And, if he really is, what miserable economy is it to be so little in the love of God and the joys of a glorious devotion, that he can be just empty

enough to want his deficit made up by amusements! If that will answer, a very mean soul certainly can be saved. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *Unlading*:—When ballast is thrown out, the balloon shoots up. A general unlading of the "thick clay" which weighs down the Christian life of England and of America, would let thousands soar to heights which they will never reach as long as they love money and what it buys as much as they do. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Worldliness impedes the sight of higher things*:—Suppose I were shut up within a round tower, whose massive wall had in some time of trouble been pierced here and there for musketry; suppose, further, that by choice or necessity, I am whirled rapidly and incessantly round its inner circumference, will I appreciate the beauties of the surrounding landscape or recognise the features of the men who labour in the field below? I will not! Why? Are there not openings in the wall which I pass at every circuit? Yes; but the eye, set for objects near, has not time to adjust itself to objects at a distance until it has passed the openings; and so the result is the same as if it were a dead wall all round. Behold the circle of human life! of the earth, earthy it is, almost throughout its whole circumference. A dead wall, very near and very thick, obstructs the view. Here and there, on a Sabbath or other season of seriousness, a slit is left open in its side. Heaven might be seen through these; but alas! the eye which is habitually set for the earthly cannot, during such momentary glimpses, adjust itself to higher things. Unless you pause and look steadfastly, you will see neither clouds nor sunshine through these openings, or the distant sky. So long has the soul looked upon the world, and so firmly is the world's picture fixed in its eye, that when it is turned for a moment heavenward, it feels only a quiver of inarticulate light, and retains no distinct impression of the things that are unseen and eternal. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Love not the world*:—"Love not the world," cries St. John in a shuddering laconicism. A multitude of voices echo his words. The shores of time are strewn with many a wreck, each serving as a beacon to point out the rock on which they stranded. Here the merchant who worked seven days in the week, who forgot God in piling up riches, and failed at last, cries, "Love not the world." Here the millionaire who inherited a fortune and doubled it every ten years, and drained every cup of pleasure, and now faces death with a tainted body and a leprous character, cries, "Love not the world." Here the statesman who reached the senate chamber and laid his hand on dishonest gold and went down in ignominy, cries, "Love not the world." Here the brilliant journalist, the clever student, the gifted artist, who reached distinction at the sacrifice of strength, life, reputation, cry, "Love not the world." Could we lift the curtain that shrouds the tomb, what awful warnings would break upon our ears! Miser, spendthrift, drunkard, libertine, sensualist, what sayest thou? That gluttony is shame, and drunkenness woe, and debauchery corruption, and the wages of sin death. "Love not the world." Apart from God there is nothing. In Him are all things. The love of the creature more than the Creator is the curse and condemnation of the soul. Supreme affection toward God is the coronation of humanity. (*S. S. Roche.*)

Ver. 16. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. *The three elements of a worldly life: love of pleasure, the love of knowledge, and the love of power*:—What then is the meaning of the phrase "desire of the flesh?" It is the desire which we naturally have to gratify our lower impulses, that animal nature which we share with the brutes, but which in man ought to be under the control of the superior faculty of reason. If we name this desire from its object, rather than from its origin or source, we might call it loosely "the desire of pleasure uncontrolled by a sense of duty." It is more difficult to ascertain the exact force of the "desire of the eyes." If taken literally, it would simply stand for a particular form of the desire of the flesh, a more refined and human form of sensual pleasure, the desire of seeing beautiful objects; but I am inclined to think that, so far as this is sensual, it is included under the former head, and that it is more in accordance with Hebrew ideas and with the facts of life to suppose that we have here a quite distinct class of desires, the desires of the intellect. But how, it may be asked, can the desire of knowledge be condemned as characteristic of the world. Knowledge is not dependent on society, like pleasure, and moreover the desire of knowledge is especially commended in the Bible. How then can it be to the discredit of the world, or make its influence more injurious, if it is accompanied by the desire of knowledge? The answer is that neither pleasure nor knowledge

is in itself condemned in the Bible. The pleasure which is condemned in the phrase "lust of the flesh," is, as we have seen, selfish and predominantly sensual, unchecked by higher thoughts and feelings. And so by the "desire of the eyes" is meant primarily not the desire for truth as such, but the desire for a knowledge of the world, knowledge as contrasted not with ignorance and stupidity, but with simplicity, ingenuousness and innocence. How many owe their fall to an impatience of restraint and a curiosity which is attracted to evil rather than to good! How few remember that knowledge no more than pleasure can claim our absolute allegiance! We now come to the third of these worldly lusts, as they are styled in the Epistle to Titus, the "pride," or as the Revised Version has it, the "vainglory" of life, the desire to make a show, the desire of honour and distinction, which is as naturally characteristic of the active principle within us, as the desire of pleasure is of the passive or sensitive principle. Supposing this to be a generally correct account of St. John's analysis of the spirit of the world, it is evident that it corresponds with the common division of man's nature into the feeling, the thinking, and the willing part; the desire of pleasure corresponding to the appetites, the desire of knowledge to the intellect, while ambition, the desire of honour and of power, corresponds to the will. But human life consists in the exercise of these different elements of man's nature. How is it possible, then, that these gifts of God should be the source of the evil that is in the world? If man were perfect, as God intended him to be, this would not be the case. His various impulses would all work harmoniously together under the control of reason and conscience, enlightened and guided by the Spirit of God himself. But we know that, whatever we may hope for the future, this is far from being the case at present. At present every impulse is a source of danger, because it is not satisfied with doing the work and attaining the end for which it was implanted in our nature, but continues to urge us on where its action is injurious, antagonistic to higher ends and higher activities, and contrary to the will of Him Who made us. It is these blind unruly impulses which constitute the spirit of the world, and are employed by him, who is described as the prince of this world, to band men together in evil, and so build up a kingdom of the world, in opposition to the kingdom of God. St. John implies the unrestrained action of these impulses when he tells us they make up all that is in the world. If we can trust contemporary evidence, the historians and satirists of Rome, no less than Christian writers, the moral condition of society in the imperial city is not too darkly coloured in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. In the catalogue of sin and vice there given, two main lines of evil may be distinguished, which at first sight seem to be very remote from each other, but which are in fact closely allied, being continually associated together in history, as they are in Milton's famous line, "Lust hard by hate." Cruelty and profligacy were the most marked characteristics of the Caligulas and the Neros of Rome; they were the notes of that degraded aristocracy, in which even the women, dead to all sense of shame, were also dead to all feeling of pity, and could look on with a horrible delight at the sports in the arena, where gladiators were butchered to make a Roman holiday, and Christians were burnt alive at night in order to light up the chariot races of the emperor. And the profligacy of the capitol was faithfully copied in the provinces. St. Paul's epistles, with their constant warnings against impurity, show how deeply even the humbler ranks of society, from which the Church was mainly recruited, were infected with this vice of paganism. We see, then, that as regards the desire or lust of the flesh, the state of contemporary society fully bore out St. John's description of the world. How did the case stand with regard to the second point in his description, the lust of the eyes? Understanding this of the desire of knowledge, we find St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians describing it as the distinctive feature of the Greek as opposed to the Hebrew, that the Greeks seek after wisdom; but "God (he says) hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise"; "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." So St. Luke mentions curiosity, which is merely the undisciplined desire of knowledge, as the chief characteristic of the Athenians, "all the Athenians spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." Ephesus, where St. John is believed to have spent the latter part of his life, was especially noted for the study of curious arts, prying into forbidden things. Lastly, if we ask how far that third constituent of the worldly spirit, ambition, vainglory, the pride of life, was to be found in Paganism at the time of St. John's writing, we need not look further than the temple of Ephesus, which was held to be one of the wonders of the world; we need only think of the magnificence of the

architecture, the splendour of the ceremonial, the frenzied enthusiasm of the multitudes which gathered at the festival of "the great goddess Diana, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth." How hard it must have been for the little band of Christians to realise that all this pageantry and power was but an empty show, destined in a few short years to vanish away; to feel that the weakness of God was stronger than men, that "God had chosen the base things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, that no flesh might glory in His presence." And if this was true of a provincial town like Ephesus, how much more of what was even then known as the eternal city, to which all the wealth and power and greatness, all the art and science and skill of the whole earth was attracted, where one man commanded the lives and fortunes of all, and was worshipped as God on earth, the only God whose worship was obligatory on all. It was such a world-dominion as this, that St. John had in his mind, when he warned his disciples against being dazzled by the vainglory of life, when he spoke of the whole world lying in wickedness, when he encouraged them with the thought that "He that is born of God overcometh the world." I think that what we have seen to be true of the pagan world of St. John's day, is also true of all the more marked historical appearances of the worldly spirit. Two such appearances may be especially noticed. One was that period of revolt against the Middle Ages, which preceded and accompanied the Reformation, the other was that period of scepticism which prepared the way for the French Revolution. In both we find the most influential classes of society, those which may be regarded as the truest embodiment of the worldly spirit of their time, characterised by the combination of these three elements, the love of pleasure, the love of knowledge, and the love of power. Enlightenment was the special boast of both eras, and the effect of this enlightenment was to shake off the old-fashioned restraints of religion and morality and give free scope to the selfish instincts, whether in the direction of pleasure or ambition. Cesar Borgia was the natural outcome of the first era; Napoleon Bonaparte of the second. (*J. B. Mayor, M.A.*)

Transitoriness of the lust of the flesh:—By "the lust of the flesh" I understand the animal needs and appetites, the physical strength and vigour. There is a period in life when the desires of the flesh exercise immense influence and subtle power over the imagination. They seem to promise illimitable delight and inexhaustible pleasures. The imagination runs through the world and sees everywhere alluring forms which point to intoxicating joys. That is not an unusual experience. It is common to all of us in the heyday of youth and strength, and I only allude to it to ask—Have you considered that this is passing away? Do you know that the gamut of appetite and passion is very limited after all? You can soon reach up and strike the topmost note, and downward and strike the lowest. Do you know that these violent delights have violent ends? They are soon exhausted, and the hungry passion is satiated, and the promise which it made is found a cheat. It is so. It is so if for no other reason than this—because physical life itself fails. Youth is soon gone; manhood is soon passed; old age is soon reached. You are not what you were. Already the keen edge and zest of earthly appetite is blunted. You dislike, perhaps, to admit it, and yet you know in your hearts that the best cup of wine which life has to give you is already drunk, and that life will never prepare again for you the like. (*W. J. Dawson.*)

The lust of the eyes:—The eye is the portal of innumerable delights. It is "the meeting-place of many worlds." Through it there stream in upon the mind the vision of beauty, the revelation of sciences, the pomp and pageantry of earthly power, all the bright, shifting splendour of human glory. Have you ever considered that riches appeal mainly to the eye? It is the eye which interprets to a man the stateliness of the house which he has built, the beauty of the gardens which he has laid out, the picture's charm, the statue's grace, the horse's symmetry—in a word, all those costly embellishments with which wealth can adorn life. To the blind man they are nothing. To be blind is to lose almost everything that riches can bestow. Yet, says John, the lust of the eyes, too, is a fading passion which is soon satiated. The first house a man buys looks better and bigger to him than any house he owns afterwards. The first picture a man owns brings him more genuine pleasure than all the others put together. That lust of the eye which desires to add house to house and land to land has a lessening pleasure in its acquisitions. Like the lust of the flesh, after all it is a life of sensation, and all sensation is limited and soon exhausted. You, perhaps, have set your hope in some such direction as this. You desire to be rich; your eye lusts for the luxurious abodes of wealth and the circumstance and state of social greatness. When the lust of the flesh fails, the lust of

the eye often develops; and the man who has lost the one frantically tries to recoup himself by flying to the other. But it is vain. The miseries of the idle rich, their *ennui*, their listlessness, their discontent, their imbecile thirst for new sensations, their perpetual invention of new and artificial joys, remind us how true are the words of John, that the lust of the eyes, too, passes away. (*Ibid.*) *The pride of life is transitory*:—It may signify either the pride of power or the pride of knowledge. 1. Take it, for instance, as the pride of power. Take it in regard to that great and splendid empire with which the apostles were familiar. It seemed built to last for ever. To be a Roman was to be armed with an invincible defence. It was a proud boast which clothed the meanest man with dignity. The tramp of the legions of Rome echoed in every city; the silver eagles were borne in triumph through all the world; its laws had imposed civilisation upon the most barbarous peoples; and its power had crushed nation after nation. There was no sign in John's day of any overthrow. Yet this solitary man told the truth when he said, not merely that it would pass away, but that it was passing away. He recognised that mysterious law of God, which seems to give to nations their chance and strengthen them with universal victory, and then depose them, lest one good custom should corrupt the world. Egypt, Chaldean, Babylon, Greece, all had had their day, and ceased to be. And so it would be with Rome. We to-day know that it has passed away. 2. And it is true of the pride of knowledge. The noblest pride of life, because the highest, is the pride of knowledge. Yet that, too, is transient. Nothing shifts its boundaries so often. Nothing is so illusive. Nothing passes through such strange and rapid transformations. The knowledge of Galileo would be the ignorance of to-day; and if Isaac Newton were alive now he would have to go to school again. A century, a half-century, a single decade, is often sufficient to thrust the most brilliant discoveries into oblivion. The steam-engine has supplanted the coach; but the steam-engine is already passing away, and in fifty years' time will be supplanted by some greater and more serviceable power. The telegraph has bound nations together and has made all nations neighbours; but the telephone is becoming its rival, and in another century, and less perhaps, men will hear each other's whispers round the globe. A thousand illustrations might be given of how knowledge perpetually effaces its past. Nor is this a mournful truth. It is no tolling-bell which announces that the world is passing away. It is rather a trumpet. It means that God's law is progress; and that is a glorious truth for those who can understand it. (*Ibid.*) *The worldling's trinity*:—Pleasure, profit, preferment (called here "the lust of the flesh," &c.) are the worldling's trinity, to the which he performeth inward and outward worship. (*J. Trapp.*) *What is "the world"?*—The world is not altogether matter, nor yet altogether spirit. It is not man only, nor Satan only, nor is it exactly sin. It is an infection, an inspiration, an atmosphere, a life, a colouring matter, a pageantry, a fashion, a taste, a witchery. None of all these names suit it, and all of them suit it. (*S. Faber.*)

Ver. 17. The world passeth away, and the lust thereof.—*River and rock*:—There are but two things set forth in this text—a great antithesis between something which is in perpetual flux and passage and something which is permanent. If I might venture to cast the two thoughts into metaphorical form, I should say that here are a river and a rock. I. THE RIVER, OR THE SAD TRUTH OF SENSE. "The world" is in the act of "passing away." Like the slow travelling of the scenes of some movable panorama which glide along, even as the eye looks upon them, and are concealed behind the side flats before the gazer has taken in the whole picture, so constantly, silently, and therefore unnoticed by us, all is in a state of continual motion. There is no present, but all is movement. But besides this transiency external to us, John finds a corresponding analogous transiency within us. "The world passeth, and the lust thereof." Of course the word "lust" is employed by him in a much wider sense than in our use of it. With us it means one specific and very ugly form of earthly desire. With him it includes the whole genus—all desires of every sort, more or less noble or ignoble, which have this for their characteristic, that they are directed to, stimulated by, and fed or disappointed on, the fleeting things of this outward life. If thus a man has anchored himself to that which has no perpetual stay, so long as the cable holds he follows the fate of the thing to which he has pinned himself, and if it perish he perishes, in a very profound sense, with it. But these fleeting desires, of which my text speaks, point to that sad feature of human experience, that we all outgrow and leave behind us,

and think of very little value, the things that once to us were all but heaven. The self-conscious same man abides, and yet how different the same man is! Our lives, then, will zig-zag instead of keeping a straight course if we let desires that are limited by anything that we can see guide and regulate us. The march of these fleeting things is like that of cavalry with their horses' feet wrapped in straw in the night, across the snow, silent and unnoticed. We cannot realise the revolution of the earth because everything partakes in it. We talk about standing still, and we are whirling through space with inconceivable rapidity. By a like illusion we deceive ourselves with the notion of stability when everything about us is hastening away. Some of you do not like to be reminded of it, and think it a kill-joy. Now, surely common sense says to all that if there be some fact certain and plain and applying to you, which, if accepted, would profoundly modify your life, you ought to take it into account. Suppose a man that lived in a land habitually shaken by earthquakes were to say, "I mean to ignore the fact, and I am going to build a house just as if there was not such a thing as an earthquake expected," he would have it toppling about his ears very soon. And suppose a man says, "I am not going to take the fleetingness of the things of earth into account at all, but am going to live as if all things were to remain as they are," what would become of him do you think? Is he a wise man or a fool? And is he you? When they build a new house in Rome they have to dig down through sometimes sixty or a hundred feet of rubbish that runs like water, the ruins of old temples and palaces once occupied by men in the same flush of life in which we are now. We, too, have to dig down through ruins, until we get to Rock and build there, and build secure. Withdraw your affections and thoughts and desires from the fleeting, and fix them on the permanent. If a captain takes anything but the pole star for his fixed point he will lose his reckoning, and his ship will be on the reefs. If we take anything but God for our supreme delight and desire we shall perish. There was an old rabbi long ago whose own real name was all but lost because everybody nicknamed him "Rabbi This-also." The reason was because he had perpetually on his lips the saying about everything as it came, "This also will pass." He was a wise man. Let us go to his school and learn his wisdom. II. THE ROCK, OR THE GLAD TRUTH OF FAITH. We might have expected that John's antithesis to "the world that passeth" would have been "the God that abides." But he does not so word his sentence, although the thought of the Divine permanence underlies it. Rather over against the fleeting world he puts the abiding man who does the will of God. There is only one permanent reality in the universe, and that is God. All else is shadow. The will of God is the permanent element in all changeable material things, and consequently he who does the will of God links himself with the Divine eternity, and becomes partaker of that blessed Being which lives above mutation. What will you do when you are dead? You have to go into a world where there are no gossip and no housekeeping, no mills and no offices, no shops, no books, no colleges, and no sciences to learn. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." If you have done your housekeeping, and your weaving and spinning, and your book-keeping, and your buying and selling, and your studying, and your experimenting with a conscious reference to God, it is all right. That has made the act capable of eternity, and there will be no need for that man to change. The material on which he works will change, but the inner substance of his life will be unaffected by the trivial change from earth to heaven. Whilst the endless ages roll he will be doing just what he was doing down here, only here he was playing with counters and yonder he will be trusted with gold and dominion over ten cities. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *National worldliness* :—There is one thing makes and keeps a nation great; it is a love of invisible ideas. There is one thing that makes and keeps it base; it is love of the visible and the transient. The one love we call spiritual and the other worldly. The latter, when it is first, excludes the former; the former does not exclude the latter, but ennobles its work by making the motives of it worthy. What is the spiritual life in a nation? That is our first question. It is when there is an ever-present spiritual power in the people which rules and influences their whole national life. I may state what I mean by that in this way. Through knowledge of our nation's history in the past, through admiration of her greatness, through love of her scenery, through the subtle traditional feelings which have been sent down in our blood—through these, and through a crowd of desires and enjoyments and sorrows which are shared by us all as Englishmen, and through a crowd of hopes for the future of our country, there grows up before us an ideal image of our nation. Afterwards we separate the qualities of her character,

and from them, seen one by one, we conceive other spiritual ideas. She loves, we say, righteousness in her children, and there are certain ways of action which she has always thought right for Englishmen. Knowing this, her children conceive the idea of duty to her. She says, It is better to die than to be false to these demands; and the ideas of duty and courage are both invisible. Then we conceive that she loves all her children equally, and we believe that; and immediately we conceive the spiritual idea of a brotherhood in which all Englishmen are one. When each man, far beyond his personal interests, beyond his home affections, beyond his passions, feels these things as the power of his life and lives by them, and lives to do them; when the love he has to them is so powerful that he bends to its service all he is and all he has, then the nation that has such men within it lives a spiritual national life and not a worldly one. Can you imagine this or part of it being in a nation's life and that nation not being great and keeping great? The nearest approach to the picture was in the days of Elizabeth. Not long after her accession men began to realise the freedom they had won, and passed from despair into a passionate love of their country. They idealised England, and represented their ideal in the queen. And the life that came out of this—the adventure, the sacrifices, the abounding thought, the audacious power—is even to us astonishing. A vehemence of activity and faith filled the commonest sailor and yeoman with the same spirit as Raleigh and Greville. The intellectual work was just as great. We cannot yet cease to wonder at a time when all men seemed giants, when Elizabeth and Cecil played on Europe as on an instrument, when Spenser re-created romance and wedded her to religion, when Shakespeare made all mankind talk and act upon a rude stage, when Bacon reopened the closed doors of Nature and philosophy, when Hooker's judgment made wise the Church, and when among these kings of thought there moved a crowd of princes who in any other age would themselves have been kings of art and song and learning. That was a noble national life, and it was such because it was lived in and for spiritual ideas. Nor because of that was it less practical. The life the ideas made and supported entered into the work of wealth. The commerce of England began under Elizabeth, the agriculture of the country was trebled, houses rose everywhere, comfort and luxury and art increased. But, though wealth and comfort grew, they were never the first. Ideal motives ruled them—worship of God and England, and the queen as the image of England. An ideal national life then included all the good of a worldly one. It was no less practical in its results on the spirit of the country. There is none among us who is not the better for the example of that time, who is not prouder of our land with that pride that makes heroic deeds, who does not look back with reverence to the great names that then adorned our country. The opposite life to that is that of national worldliness. It is when there are but very few ideas in a nation, and when these few do not rule it; when its action, thoughts, and feelings are governed by what is present or visible or transitory. It is when the men in it worship as the first thing personal getting-on; when wealth is first and any means are good that attain it; when those who have it or rank or position are bowed down to without consideration of character; when art is even stained and men work at it not for love of its own reward but to sell it dearly; when politics are governed solely by desire for the material prosperity of the country; when the commerce of a nation is to be kept at all hazards, even the hazard of disgrace. And as there are a great many among us who are in that condition or tending to it, we should be in a bad way were it not that there are numbers who hate that condition, who do not live in it or for it, to whom it is vile and hideous and contemptible. Let all those who think thus do their best to keep the worldly spirit out of the nation's life; it will be a sacred duty. And it is one of those things which every one can do, each in his own society. Take a few instances of it in certain spheres of thought and act that we may know it. Take the scientific world. On one side of it it is quite unworldly. It demands that it should be allowed to do its work without any practical motive, without any end such as, when reached, would increase the wealth or comfort of the world. But in two ways it may become worldly. First, it becomes partially worldly when it tries to put aside all ideal life but its own, when it mocks at any belief in the invisible except its own invisibles, when it is so foolish as to see nothing beyond itself. Secondly, it may become altogether worldly if it should tie itself to the car of the practical man, hire itself out to the manufacturer, or the police, or the politician, or the people who love luxury, making itself like Aladdin's lamp in the hands of a clodhopper. Oh, protect it from that fate! Again take art. Of all men it is true, but of the artist it is especially true, that he must not love the

world nor the things of the world. He runs passionately towards the ideal beauty. The impossible is his aim; nothing he does should ever satisfy him. If he could say, "Now I grasp the perfect; the present is all in all to me; I live in and through the visible thing I have made," then were he really dead in sin; then would art glide away from him for ever, and when he knew that misery as his he would die of the knowledge of it. But worse, infinitely worse, than such a death is his becoming worldly, and he may be lured into that by the love of money. He may give up all his own ideas, all the ideal he once had of his work, to do work he hates and despises. He may even get to like the base work for the sake of the goods it brings him. There is no ruin so ghastly as this. Once more, take national economy. There is a good thrift when the money of a people is carefully watched that the greatest amount of reproductive good may be got out of it, when none is wasted, when work is honestly paid its full value and no more, when no money is given for bad work, or, as is often the case, for no work at all. Such economy is ruled by ideas, especially by this main one: All expenditure, even to the last sixpence, must have some relation to the good of England. But there is a base thrift, and that is ruled by this maxim: All expenditure must increase material wealth, or have a visible practical end, practical as enabling men to get on better in this world. Love not the world, nor the things of the world in your nation, any more than in your own heart. You may think this has nothing to do with religion, with the faith and life of Christ. Then you will be much mistaken. Such a national temper will put men into the atmosphere in which a Christian life is possible. If you can get men to live an unworldly national life you have made the first step to get them to live after Christ. (*S. A. Brooke, M.A.*) *The evanescent and the enduring in human history*:—I. Everything in worldliness is EVANESCENT. 1. The worldly man's possessions are evanescent. Though he has pyramids of gold they will pass away like a morning cloud. 2. The worldly man's purposes are evanescent. His great schemes are only splendid dreams which pass away in the waking hour. 3. The worldly man's pleasures are evanescent. 4. The worldly man's productions are evanescent. Architecture, painting, commerce, literature, legislation—what are these? A glaring pageant that passeth away. II. Everything in non-worldliness is ENDURING. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Such a man has received a "kingdom that cannot be moved." 1. His principles are abiding. 2. His possessions are abiding. No moth nor rust can corrupt his treasures. "The Lord is his portion." 3. His prospects are abiding. His hopes are not fixed on objects that are passing away, but on an "inheritance incorruptible," &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.—*The guileless spirit, amid the dark world's flow, established in the light of godliness*:—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. 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! 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 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, unsolaced, the world being all within and the world's lust, and nothing outside but the Holy One. 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. 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. 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. But the precise point of his statement is not adequately brought out unless we connect and identify the future and the present. 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. (R. S. Candlish, D.D.)

Obedience and abiding:—What God wills He approves or loves. What God wills He is. If, then, He has an express will concerning us, it follows that when we know it we know all that vitally concerns us. There can be nothing above, behind, beyond it. The will of God is all. Knowing that, we know the nature of things; we know the character of virtue, we know what truth is, and goodness. We get to the source of law, obligation, authority. All are inseparably connected with, all indeed are contained in, the will of God. We ask, now, what the natural will of man is? Is it for or against the will of God? Against, unquestionably. Not that there is declared, or even in most cases very conscious, opposition. For it is not true that men to their own consciousness, and by direct acts of their own will, go against God. They fill their lives, or strive to do, without Him who is the alone abiding fullness, and direct their conduct without reference to His authority, and habitually act from principles which He condemns, and seek after ends which are different from and inconsistent with the great ends He has put before us all. Now remember that as in God, so in man, will is character. What a man wills settles what he is. And since men do will against the will of God the character and condition of man must be evil. What could be sin if this is not sin? And since God did not design man for this, since His ideal of the human creature and life is just the opposite of this, it follows that we are justly and honestly described as "fallen," "alienated," "depraved." It is always more or less touching to see feebleness matched against strength, even when the feebleness is all in the wrong and the strength is all in the right; and therefore, simply as a conflict, it is pitiful enough to see man in his frailty matching himself against the omnipotence and justice of God. But, viewed from the higher ground, it is even more terrible than it is touching. What can come of it? Nothing but destruction, nothing but the fate of that which changeth and "passeth away." Can a man will against time so as to stop the flow of its moments? Can a man will against space and put himself out of it, in thought even, not to say in act? Can a man will against mathematical or necessary truth by making two and two into five, or by changing himself into another being? He may do any of these things as soon as will against the will of God, and make his will prevail and succeed. Surely, then, it is evident that if there be a gospel—a message from God that shall be "good news" to a man—it must bear directly and effectually upon man's evil will. There are many ways of compendiously expressing the gospel, but a better it would be hard to find than this—that it is the good will of God overcoming the evil will of man. By means, no doubt, wondrous means! By His own self-sacrifice, by suffering love, by revelation of truth, by donation of the Spirit, because these are necessary elements for the case, the nature of man being such as to forbid the hope of any change being wrought in it by mere strength, by what we call omnipotence. Then the question of questions to a man must be this, "Am I now with my will doing the will of God?" Not, "Have I undergone a certain spiritual change? and have I had, subsequently, a requisite amount of spiritual experience?" But just this, "Am I yet a self-willed creature, or have I become one of the Saviour's willing people? Am I still keeping up the black, silent controversy of a misjudging heart with and against God? Or have I been won over, at least in spirit and will, although not yet perfectly in feeling and act, from self and sin to truth and love and God?" Happy he who can at once say, "I am of those who do the will of God. Through grace I am aiming at the life of whole and constant obedience." Happy he, for whose thus doeth the will of God has entered the world of reality and permanence as one belonging to it. He, too, is going to abide for ever, is now already in the ever-abiding state. (A. Raleigh, D.D.)

The abiding life:—Like most writers and speakers, John had favourite expressions. One of his pet words is this "abide," significant of the quiet, contemplative temper of the man, but significant of a great deal more. He uses it, if I reckon rightly, somewhere between sixty and seventy times in the Gospel and Epistles. And he almost always employs it in a

metaphorical, or, if you like the word better, a "mystical" sense. The frequency of its recurrence is masked to an English reader by the variety of translation which our renderers have chosen to adopt, but wherever you find in John's writings the synonyms "dwell," "abide," "continue," "remain," it is pretty safe to conclude that he is using this word. To John one great characteristic of the Christian life was that it was the abiding life. I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A LIFE OF DWELLING IN CHRIST. I have said that this is one of John's favourite words. He learnt it from his Master. It was in the upper room where it came from Christ's lips with a pathos which was increased by the shadow of departure that lay over His heart and theirs. "Abide in me, and I in you." No doubt the old apostle had meditated long on the words. "Abide in me and I in you." That is the ideal of the Christian life, a reciprocal mutual dwelling of Christ in us and of us in Christ. These two thoughts are but two sides of the one truth, the interpenetration by faith and love of the believing heart and the beloved Saviour, and the community of spiritual life as between them. The one sets forth more distinctly Christ's gracious activity and wondrous love by which He condescends to enter into the narrow room of our spirits, and to communicate their life and all the blessings that He can bestow. The other sets forth more distinctly our activity, and suggests the blessed thought of a home and a shelter, an inexpugnable fortress and a sure dwelling-place, a habitation to which all generations may continually resort. Christ for us is the preface and introduction. I do not want that that great truth should be in any measure obscured, but I do want that, inseparably connected with it in our belief and in our experience, there should be far more than there is, the companion sister-thought, Christ in us and we in Christ. I need not remind you how this great thought of mutual indwelling is, through John's writings, extended not only to our relation to Christ, but to our relations to God the Father and God the Spirit. The apostle almost as frequently speaks about our dwelling in God and God's dwelling in us, as he does about our dwelling in Christ and Christ's dwelling in us. Let me say one word about the ways by which this mutual indwelling may be procured and maintained. You talk about the doctrine as being mystical. Well, the way to realise it as a fact is plain and unmystical enough to suit anybody. There are two streams of representation in John's writings about this matter. Here is a sample of one of them, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him." Similarly He says, "If that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father." And, still more definitely, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." So, then, the acceptance by our understandings and by our hearts of the truth concerning Jesus Christ, and the grasping of these truths so closely by faith that they become the nourishment of our spirits, so that we eat His flesh and drink His blood, is the condition of that mutual indwelling. And if that seems to be too far removed from ordinary moralities to satisfy those who will have no mysteries in their religion, and will not have it anything else than a repetition of the plain dictates of conscience, take the other stream of representations, "If we love one another, God abideth in us." "He that abideth in love abideth in God." "If ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love." The harm of mysticism is that it is divorced from common pedestrian morality. The mysticism of Christianity enjoins the punctilious discharge of plain duties. "He that keepeth His commandments abideth in Him, and He in him." II. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE SHOULD BE ONE OF STEADFAST PERSISTENCE. One of the synonyms with which our translators have represented this word of which I am speaking is "continue." You will find that the same double representation which I have spoken of is kept up with regard to other matters belonging to the Christian life. For instance, we sometimes read of "God's word," "Christ's sayings," or "the truth"—as John puts it—"abiding in us"; and as frequently we read of our "abiding" in these—the words of God, the teaching of Christ, the truth. In the one case something is represented as permanently establishing itself in my nature and operating there. In the other case I am represented as holding fast by and perseveringly attending to something which I possess. Ah! I am afraid that there are few things which the average Christian man of this generation more needs than the exhortation to steadfast continuance in the course which he says he has adopted. Most of us have our Christianity by fits and starts. It is spasmodic and interrupted. We grow as the vegetable world grows, in the favourable months only, and there are long intervals in which there is no progress. A Christian life should be one of steadfast, unbroken persistence. Oh! but you say, "that is an ideal

that nobody can get to." Well, I am not going to quarrel with anybody as to whether such an ideal is possible or not. It seems to me a woful waste of time to be fighting about possible limits when we are so far short of the limits that are known. III. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE MAY BE ONE OF ABIDING BLESSEDNESS. Our Lord in that same discourse in which He spoke about abiding in us and we in Him, used the word very frequently in a great variety of aspects, and amongst them He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy may abide in you." And in other places we read about "abiding in the light," or having eternal life abiding in us. And in all these various places of the use of this expression there lies the one thought that it is possible for us to make, here and now, our lives one long series of conscious enjoyment of the highest blessings. And even if there be a circumference of sorrow, joy and peace may be the centre, and not be truly broken by the incursions of calamities. There are springs of fresh water that dart up from the depths of the salt sea and spread themselves over its waves. It is possible in the inmost chamber to be still whilst the storm is raging without. It is our own fault if ever external things have power over us enough to shake our inmost and central blessedness. "As sorrowful yet always rejoicing." IV. LASTLY, THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WILL TURN OUT TO BE THE ONE PERMANENT LIFE. So say the words which I have taken as a text. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." That implies not so much dwelling or persistence or continuosness during our earthly career as, rather, the absolute and unlimited permanence of the obedient life. It will endure when all things else, "the world, and the lust thereof," have slid away into obscurity and have ceased to be. Now of course it is true that Christian men, temples of Christ, are subject to the same law of mutation and decay as all created things are. But still, whilst on the one hand Christian men share in the common lot, and on the other hand non-Christian men endure for ever in a very solemn and dreadful sense, the word of my text reveals a great truth. The lives that run parallel with God's will last, and when everything that has been against that will, or negligent of it, is summed up and comes to nought, these lives continue. The life that is in conformity with the will of God lasts in another sense, inasmuch as it persists through all changes, even the supreme change that is wrought by death, in the same direction, and is substantially the same. If we grasp the throne of God we shall be co-eternal with the throne that we grasp. We cannot die, nor our work pass and be utterly abolished as long as He lives. Some trees that, like sturdy Scotch firs, have strong trunks and obstinate branches and unfading foliage, looking as if they would defy any blast or decay, run their roots along the surface, and down they go before the storm. Others, far more slender in appearance, strike theirs deep down, and they stand whatever winds blow. So strike your roots into God and Christ. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *The moral only permanent*:—The first affirmation of this sentence is common enough and obvious enough. And yet perhaps it might be questioned whether any of us truly and profoundly believe it. Ask us whether we believe that the world passes away, and pointing to these lapsing years we unhesitatingly say Yes, but encounter us twelve hours after the new year is born in Cheapside or on 'Change, and you will see no diminution of our eager pursuit, no relaxation of our eager grasp of it. Not only does the world pass away, but "the lust thereof"—the very thoughts and passions with which we desire it. I know no more affecting affirmation concerning death than one that is made in one of the Psalms, "In that very day his thoughts perish." The man as we knew him and could recognise him has perished, his palpable body is no longer conscious of thought and passion. So far as the world is concerned, and so far as we look at him, his thoughts have perished. He is only dust—the eye, the hand, the tongue, and, above all, the mysterious brain, have forgotten their functions. And more than this, the thoughts of the man are perished in fact as well as in seeming, for although we believe the thinking, loving man to live in the unseen world, active from the very necessity of their nature, yet how few of the particular thoughts and desires that a man entertains here does he retain after he dies! How many of them perish! too vain, too foolish, too sinful to be retained in the light and under the conditions of another world. How few of our conscious thoughts and affections can we even now reasonably hope to retain! They are possible for this life of ignorance and sin, but possible for no other. Ay, and before a man dies "the lust of the world" may perish out of him. Difficult as it is to cure a man of an undue love of the world, disappointment and suffering may do it, and disgust may succeed to desire. Possession may bring a hatred and disgust surpassing our love and desire, and thus

even before the world itself passes away the "lust" of it may. But this is true of things only in part, true only as to their outward seeming, true only of their material and external element. There is an element of everything that a moral being touches and is related to that is unchanging and eternal; that, namely, which expresses or addresses itself to his moral feeling. The material element of this world's things passes away, the moral abides for ever. This is, I think, what is meant by the second member of this sentence. And there is a moral element in everything. Everything that comes to us comes with a moral lesson and influence from God—a touching of duty or a test of temper: and everything that goes from us carries with it a record of our moral principles and tempers. There is nothing so material and so trivial as not to be a possible means of grace to us. Let us be careful not to err, therefore, in our estimates of the transitoriness of things. Just as we do not all die because the material body dies, so we do not all pass away because the material externals of things do; there is a kind of moral soul of the world as well as a material body. Our pure thoughts, our loving affections, our holy actions, our penitence and prayer and communion with God, our service of God, our self-denial and self-consecration, all enabled by the things of the world around us, these are the elements of the things of the world that will live and abide for ever. I. Take, first, the GENERAL HISTORY OF THE YEAR, the public deeds that have been done, the national and social movements that have been effected, the sum total of what has been contributed to the world's history, wisdom, and goodness. We need attempt no enumeration of these; it is enough to say of them that all that is merely material and external in them has passed away, only that which is moral abides. There is no moral influence, no moral life in the mere record of an event upon the page of history; it may lie there a dead fact, without a living pulse, without a particle of quickening power. Only so far as moral principles were exercised in it, only so far as it was an example of virtue or a beacon of vice, an illustration of obedience or an instance of sin, has it power to appeal to and quicken us. How, then, shall we estimate the history of the past year? We will brush away its surface of mere phenomena, and look into the world's moral life and try to understand what the year has added to the world's holiness or sin, how far Christian civilisation has been extended and Christian piety increased. Is the world purer and more elevated? It has an additional record of sin, what additional record has it of virtue, obedience, and faith? II. Take next your OWN INDIVIDUAL HISTORY THROUGH THE YEAR. Now, whatever may have befallen you, whatever sorrows or joys, pains or pleasures, the only permanent result of the year is its sum of moral actions and experiences. Of how little value now apart from it are your toils for the perishing body, your care for the physical wants of your mortal condition, your ploughing the earth, your barter of merchandise, your hoarding of money, your toil as an orator, scholar, or statesman! So far as you have done these things without spiritual feeling and reference, how little they all appear now. And as with our possessions, so with our self-culture, both of mind and of heart. How much of what a man acquires is mere property, never entering into the essence of his moral life. Suppose that you have been a student during the year, acquiring knowledge of history, science, philosophy, well, how much of what you have acquired is mere knowledge, the mere chattel of the man? How little of it has been incorporated with your moral life! And all that has not shall pass away, save as mere memory. "Whether it be knowledge, it shall fail; whether they be prophecies, they shall cease"; only Divine charity, only that which is inwrought moral feeling, shall abide. Or suppose that you are a religious man, cultivating a religious character, and seeking to "make your calling and election sure." You have read your Bible, you have uttered prayers, you have helped in Christian labour. Well, as mere acts these have all passed away, congregations have broken up, duties have been finished. What, then, remains? Only the moral element that there was in all these things, only the inward religious feeling that prompted them or that they expressed. And it abides in two ways. First, all the moral element and influence of your religious acts produces an effect upon others—upon those who are the objects of your act, and upon others who behold it. Not merely does it relieve poverty or pain—that is only the material form and effect that will perish when pain shall end; but it exhibits a moral principle or feeling, and men are morally moved by it—moved to moral admiration and imitation. And then upon yourself the moral influence of your act is very mighty. Every exercise of a virtue or a vice acts inwardly far more powerfully than it acts outwardly; it strengthens and expands your moral principle, it enlarges and deepens your brotherly sympathies. (*H. Allon, D.D.*)

Vers. 18-23. Little children, it is the last time : and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists.—*St. John's "last hour"* :—The Apostle John is an old man; he has lived through a long day. The way of the Lord that he teaches is by this time a well-marked path, trodden by the feet already of two generations. Time has vindicated the bold inference that the aged apostle drew from his experience. The disciples of Jesus "have known the truth, which abideth in us and shall be with us for ever." St. John has but one thing to say to his successors: "Abide in Him." As for the recent seceders from the apostolic communion, their departure is a gain and not a loss; for that is manifest in them which was before concealed (vers. 18, 19). They bore the name of Christ falsely: antichrist is their proper title; and that there are "many" such, who stand threateningly arrayed against His servants, only proves that His word is doing its sifting and judicial work, that the Divine life within the body of Christ is casting off dead limbs and foreign elements, that the truth is accomplishing its destined result, that the age has come to its ripeness and its crisis: "whence we perceive that it is the last hour." We may best expound the paragraph under review by considering in order the crisis to which the apostle refers, the danger which he denounces, and the safeguards on which he relies—in other words, the last hour, the many antichrists, and the chrism from the Holy One. I. "My children, it is THE LAST HOUR—we perceive that it is the last hour." Bishop Westcott, in his rich and learned Commentary on this Epistle, calls our attention to the absence of the Greek article: "A last hour it is (*ἡσχάρις ὥρα ἰστίη*)"—so the apostle literally puts it; and the anarthrous combination is peculiar here. (St. Paul's, "A day of the Lord is coming," in 1 Thessalonians v. 2, resembles the expression.) The phrase "seems to mark the general character of the period, and not its specific relation to 'the end.'" It was a period of critical change. "The hour" is a term repeatedly used in the Gospel of St. John for the crisis of the earthly course of Jesus, the supreme epoch of His death and return to the Father. This guides us to St. John's meaning here. He is looking backward, not forward. The venerable apostle stands upon the border of the first Christian age. He is nearing the horizon, the rim and outmost verge of that great "day of the Lord" which began with the birth of the first John, the forerunner, and would terminate with his own departure: himself the solitary survivor of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. The shadows were closing upon John; everything was altered about him. The world he knew had passed or was passing quite away. Jerusalem had fallen: he had seen in vision the overthrow of mighty Rome, and the empire was shaken with rumours and fears of change. The work of revelation, he felt, was all but complete. The finished truth of the revelation of the Father in the Son was now confronted by the consummate lie of heresy which denied them both (ver. 22). He presided over the completion of the grand creative age, and he saw that its end was come. Clearly it was his last hour; and for aught he knew it might be the world's last, the sun of time setting to rise no more, the crash of doom breaking upon his dying ears. The world passes through great cycles, each of which has its last hour anticipating the absolute conclusion. The year, with its course from spring to winter, from winter to autumn, the day from dawn to dark, image the total course of time. The great epochs and "days" of human history have a finality. Each of these periods in turn sensibly anticipates the end of all things. Many great and notable days of the Lord there have been, and perhaps will be, many last hours before the last of all. The earth is a mausoleum of dead worlds; in its grave-mounds, tier above tier, extinct civilisations lie orderly interred. Each "day" of history, with its last hour, is a moment in that "age of the ages" which includes the measureless circumference of time. II. The Apostle John saw the proof of the end of the age in the appearance of MANY ANTICHRISTS. The word "antichrist" has, by etymology, a double meaning. The antichrist of whose coming St. John's readers had "heard," if identical, as one presumes, with the awful figure of 2 Thessalonians ii., is a rival or mock-Christ, a Satanic caricature of the Lord Jesus; the "many antichrists" were not that, but deniers, indeed destroyers of Christ; and this the epithet may equally well signify. So there is no real disagreement in the matter between St. Paul and St. John. The heretic opponents of Christ, starting up before John's eyes in the Asian Churches, were forerunners, whether at a greater or less distance, of the supreme antagonist, messengers who prepared his way. They were of the same breed and likeness, and set forth principles that find in him their full impersonation. These antichrists of St. John's last hour, the opponents then most to be dreaded by the Church, were

teachers of false doctrine. They "deny that Jesus is the Christ" (ver. 22). This denial is other than that which the same words had denoted fifty years before. It is not the denial of Jewish unbelief, a refusal to accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah; it is the denial of Gnostic error, the refusal to admit the Divine Sonship of Jesus and the revelation of the Godhead in manhood through His person. Such a refusal makes the knowledge of both impossible; neither is God understood as Father, nor Jesus Christ as Son, by these misbelievers. The nature of the person of Christ, in St. John's view, is not a question of transcendental dogma or theological speculation; in it lies the vital point of an experimental and working Christian belief. "Who is he," the apostle cries, "that overcometh the world, except he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (v. 5); and again, "Every one that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is begotten of God" (v. 1). In passing from St. Paul's chief Epistles to this of St. John, the doctrinal conflict is carried back from the atonement to the incarnation, from the work to the nature of Christ, from Calvary to Bethlehem. There it culminates. Truth could reach no higher than the affirmation, error could proceed no further than the contradiction, of the completed doctrine of the Person of Christ as it was taught by St. John. The final teaching of Divine revelation is daringly denied. "What think ye of the Christ?—what do you make of Me?" is His crucial question to every age. The two answers—that of the world with its false prophets and seducers (ii. 19; iv. 5), and that of the Christian brotherhood, one with its Divine Head—are now delivered in categorical assertion and negation. Faith and unfaith have each said their last word. III. While the Apostle John insists on the radical nature of the assaults made in his last days upon the Church's Christological belief, HE POINTS WITH ENTIRE CONFIDENCE TO THE SAFEGUARDS BY WHICH THAT BELIEF IS GUARANTEED. I. In the first place, "you,—in contrast with the antichrists, none of whom were really 'of us' (ver. 19)—you have a chrism from the Holy One (*i.e.*, Christ); all of you know" the truth and can discern its verity (vers. 20, 21). Again, in ver. 27, "The chrism that you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that any one be teaching you. But as His chrism teaches you about all things, and is true, and is no lie, and as it did teach you, abide in Him." Chrism is Greek for anointing, as Christ for anointed; St. John's argument lies in this verbal connection. The chrism makes Christians, and is wanting to antichrists. It is the constitutive vital element common to Christ and His people, pervading members and Head alike. We soon perceive wherein this chrism consists. What the apostle says of the chrism here he says of the Spirit afterwards in chapter v. 7: "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth." And in chapter iv. 6 he contrasts the influences working in apostolic and heretical circles respectively as "the spirit of truth" and "of error." The bestowal of the Spirit on Jesus of Nazareth is described under the figure of unction by St. Peter in Acts x. 38, who tells "How God anointed (christened) Him—made Him officially the Christ—with the Holy Spirit and power." It was the possession, without limit, of "the Spirit of truth" which gave to the words of Christ their unlimited authority (John iii. 34, 35). Now out of that Holy Spirit which He possessed infinitely in His Divine fashion, and which His presence and teaching continually breathed, the Holy One gave to His disciples; and all members of His body receive, according to their capacity, "the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot receive," but "whom" He "sends" unto His own "from the Father" (John xiv. 17; xv. 26, &c.). The Spirit of the Head is the vital principle of the Church, resident in every limb, and by its universal inhabitation and operation constituting the Body of Christ. "The communion of the Holy Ghost" is the inner side of all that is outwardly visible in Church activity and fellowship. It is the life of God in the society of men. This Divine principle of life in Christ has at the same time an antiseptic power. It affords the real security for the Church's preservation from corruption and decay. For this gift St. Paul had prayed long ago on behalf of these same Asian Christians (Eph. i. 17-23). This prayer had been answered. Paul's and John's children in the faith were endowed with a Christian discernment that enabled them to detect the sophistries and resist the blandishments of subtle Gnostic error. This Spirit of wisdom and revelation has never deserted the Church. "You know, all of you" (ver. 20)—this is what the apostle really says. It is the most remarkable thing in the passage. "I have not written unto you," he continues, "because you know not the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth." He appeals to the judgment of the enlightened lay commonalty of the Church, just as St. Paul when he writes, "I speak as to men of

sense; judge ye what I say." St. John's "chrism" certainly did not guarantee a precise agreement in all points of doctrine and of practice; but it covers essential truth, such as that of the Godhead of the Redeemer here in question. Much less does the witness of the Spirit warrant individual men, whose hearts are touched with His grace, in setting up to be oracles of God and mouthpieces of the Holy Ghost. In that case the Holy Spirit must contradict Himself endlessly, and God becomes the author of confusion and not of peace. But there is in matters of collective faith a spiritual common sense, a Christian public opinion in the communion of saints, behind the extravagances of individuals and the party cries of the hour, which acts informally by a silent and impalpable pressure, but all the more effectually, after the manner of the Spirit. 2. To this inward and cumulative witness there corresponds an outward witness, defined once for all. "You know the truth . . . that no lie is of the truth. . . . That which you heard from the beginning, let it abide in you" (vers. 21, 24). Here is an objective criterion, given in the truth about Christ and the Father as John's readers heard it from the apostles at the first, and as we find it written in their books. Believing that to be true, the Church rejected promptly what did not square with it. In the most downright and peremptory fashion St. John asserts the apostolic witness to be a test of religious truth: "We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears us not. By this we recognise the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (iv. 6). Here is the exterior test of the inner light. The witness of the Spirit in the living Church, and in the abiding apostolic word, authenticate and guard each other. This must be so, if one and the self-same Spirit testifies in both. Experience and Scripture coincide. Neither will suffice us separated from the other. Without experience, Scripture becomes a dead letter; without the norm of Scripture, experience becomes a speculation, a fanaticism, or a conceit. 3. The third guarantee cited by St. John lies outside ourselves and the Church: it is neither the chrism that rests upon all Christians, nor the apostolic message deposited with the Church in the beginning; it is the faithfulness of our promise-giving Lord. His fidelity is our ultimate dependence; and it is involved in the two safeguards previously described. Accordingly, when the apostle has said, in verse 24, "If that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning, ye too shall abide in the Son and the Father," he adds, to make all sure, in the next verse: "And this is the promise which He promised us—the eternal life!" It is our Lord's own assurance over again (John viii. 51; xv. 4). The life of fellowship with the Father in the Son, which the antichrist would destroy at its root by denying the Son, the Son of God pledges Himself to maintain amongst those who are loyal to His word, and the word of His apostles, which is virtually His own. He has promised us this (*αὐτὸς ἐπηγγέλλεται*)—He who says, "I am the resurrection and the life." No brief or transient existence is that secured to His people, but "the eternal life." Now eternal life means with St. John, not as with St. Paul a prize to be won, but a foundation on which to rest, a fountain from which to draw; not a future attainment so much as a present divine, and therefore abiding, possession. It is the life which came into the world from God with Jesus Christ (i. 1, 2), and in which every soul has its part that is grafted into Him. Understanding this, we see that the promise of life eternal, in verse 25, is not brought in as an incitement to hope, but as a reassurance to our troubled faith. "These things have I written unto you," the apostle says, "concerning those that mislead you" (ver. 26). Christ's word is set against theirs. Error cannot prevail against the truth as it is in Jesus. "Our little systems have their day"; but the fellowship of souls which rests upon the foundation of the apostles has within it the power of an indissoluble life. Such are the three guarantees of the permanence of Christian doctrine and the Christian life, as they were conceived by St. John and are asserted by him here at his last hour, when the tempests of persecution and sceptical error were on all sides let loose against the Church. (*George G. Findlay, B.A.*) *The dispensations*:—How could those days of primitive Christianity be called the last days, inasmuch as since those days eighteen hundred years have elapsed, and still the world's history has not reached its close? The answer is obvious. The whole period lying between the first advent and the present year of grace is but one æconomy; and it is destined to be the last æconomy, under which man is to be tried. What is a dispensation—*Οἰκονομία*? *Οἰκονόμος* is the administrator of a household, the lord of a family, he who dispenses to the household their portion of meat in due season. It is a certain measure, more or less, of moral light and help meted out by God, the great Householder, to His human family for the purpose of their probation. Any

and every light and help which man has from heaven constitutes, strictly speaking, a dispensation. It seems, moreover, to be a principle of God's dealings that the light and knowledge having been once supernaturally communicated, shall thenceforth be left to radiate from its centre, to diffuse itself among mankind, by the ordinary means of human testimony. Let us now proceed to review the leading dispensations under which mankind has been placed. 1. A single arbitrary restriction, issued merely as a test of obedience, was the first of them. The threat of death, in case of disobedience, was a moral help to our first parents, tending to keep them in the narrow path of obedience and happiness. But it did not enable them to stand. They broke the commandment, and they fell. 2. The fall had in some mysterious manner put our first parents in possession of a moral sense, or faculty of discerning between good and evil, independently of Divine precept. To second and aid the remonstrances of this faculty, the heads of the human family had such bitter experience of the fruits of transgression as would abide with them to their dying day. Into this experience of the results of transgression was infused, lest man should despair, an element of faith and hope. Who shall say whether man, with these powers brought to bear upon him, may not retrieve his ground and return in true penitence to the bosom of his Father? So the dispensation of experienced punishment on the part of the parent, of ancestral precept on the part of the children began and run its course. But it proved an utter failure. The principle of sin, engendered in its primeval act, ate into the moral nature of man like a gangrene, until at length blasphemy and immorality stalked rampant upon the earth, and the vices of human kind, like the stature of the men of those days, towered to a gigantic height. 3. While the shades of guilt were thus deepening towards a night of utter depravity, and the few faithful ones in the line of Seth shone but with the feeble ray of glowworms amid the surrounding darkness—an additional dispensation was instituted in the announcement of the deluge to the Patriarch Noah, and the direction associated with it, to commence the building of the ark. What a stirring voice from heaven was this! What a Divine trumpet-note of warning in the ears of a generation sinking deeper every moment into the fatal torpor of moral insensibility! At length, when Divine patience had had her perfect work—the flood (Economy came to its close amid out-poured torrents and gushing fountains of the deep. 4. When the stage of the earth had been cleared by the flood for another probation of the human race, a new measure of light and help was meted out by God, or, in other terms, a new dispensation was introduced. Human law was now instituted and sanctioned by heaven. It was now to be seen whether man's innate depravity would break through this barrier of restraint also. 5. It was succeeded by the dispensation of Divine law, promulgated with the most awful solemnity, and having annexed to it the most tremendous sanctions. 6. With Samuel and the succession of prophets, as many as spoke or wrote after him, commenced a new era, about three hundred and fifty years after the giving of the law. And of this dispensation the distinguishing characteristic is, that it was constantly expanding itself, that fresh accessions were continually being made under it to man's moral and spiritual resources, that it was a light continually increasing in brightness, shining more and more unto the perfect day when the Sun of Righteousness should rise with healing in His wings. 7. And now at length men's yearnings and anticipations were to be realised. The last hour of the world's day—or, in other words, the final dispensation under which man was to be tried—was at hand. The great Deliverer appeared and revealed a wholly new arrangement, or series of arrangements, under and in virtue of which God would henceforth deal with man. (1) Perfect absolution from the guilt of past sin—an absolution obtained in such a manner as should effectually strike the chord of love and gratitude in every heart of man. (2) A communication of Divine strength through outward means. (3) A perfect and explicit law embodying the purest morality which it is possible to conceive. But as man was still, under this final dispensation, in a state of probation, and a state of probation is not and cannot be a final or fixed state, the mind was still thrown forward by predictions of the Second Advent, to a period when He, in whom the heart and hope of God's people is bound up, shall come again to receive them to Himself, and to visit them with eternal comfort, while vengeance, terrific vengeance, is taken upon all who, though the new dispensation has been proclaimed to them, shall not have taken shelter under the refuge which it provides. We have now passed in review the various dispensations under which man has been placed; and, thus furnished for the fuller understanding of our text, we revert to the solemn asseveration of the apostle, that this under which we live

is the final economy, and that with its close will terminate for ever the probation of mankind. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Last things*:—I. My hearers are coming nearer their LAST BUSINESS-DAY. Men will ask about you, and say, "Where is so-and-so?" And your friend will say, "Have you not heard the news?" and will take a paper from his pocket and point to your name on the death-list. If things are wrong they will always stay wrong. No chance of correcting a false entry, or repairing the loss done to a customer by a dishonest sample, or apologising for the imposition inflicted upon one of your clerks. II. Men are coming nearer to their LAST SINFUL AMUSEMENT. A dissipated life soon stops. The machinery of life is so delicate that it will not endure much trifling. III. Men are coming nearer to their LAST SABBATH. IV. We come near THE LAST YEAR OF OUR LIFE. The world is at least six thousand years old. Sixty thousand years may yet come, and the procession may seem interminable; but our own closing earthly year is not far off. V. We are coming nearer THE LAST MOMENT OF OUR LIFE. That is often the most cheerful moment. John Howard talked of it with exhilaration, and selected his own burial-place, saying to his friend, "A spot near the village of Dauphiney would suit me nicely." It is a poor time to start to get your house insured when the flames are bursting out of all the windows; and it is a poor time to attempt to prepare for death when the realities of eternity are taking hold of us. (*T. de Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Antichrist.—*Antichrist*:—This word is absolutely peculiar to St. John. The general use of *avri* (*contra*) and the meaning of the similarly formed word *avriθeoc*, lead to the conclusion that the term means "adversary of Messiah." The Jews derived their conception from Dan. vii. 25, viii. 25, xi. 36; Ezek. xxxviii.—ix. The name was probably formed by St. John. It was believed by the Jews that Antichrist would appear immediately before the advent of Christ (*cf.* chap. ii. 22, iv. 3; 2 John 7). Our Lord mentioned "pseudo-Christ" as a sign (*Matt.* xxiv. 24). St. Paul gave a solemn warning to the very Churches which St. John now specially addressed (*Acts* xx. 29). St. John saw these principles and the men who embodied them in full action, and it was an indication for him of "the last period." So far Christians had only learnt in general to expect the personal appearance of one great enemy of Christ, the Antichrist. In his Epistle St. John gives solemn warning that those heretics who denied the God-Man were not merely precursors of Antichrist, but impersonations of the anti-Christian principle—each of them in a true sense an antichrist. The term is used by no other sacred writer, by St. John himself only five times (*chap.* ii. 18, twice, ii. 22, iv. 3; 2 John 7), and that specifically to characterise heresy denying the incarnation, person, and dignity of Christ as God-Man. Antichrist is "the liar"; his spirit and teaching is a lie pure and simple. The one Antichrist, whose coming was stamped into the living tradition of the early Church, and of whom believers had necessarily "heard," is clearly distinguished from many who were already in existence, and were closely connected with him in spirit. Probably St. John expected the chief Antichrist, the "theological antagonist of Christ," before the Personal Advent. In 2 Thess. ii. we find the same idea of a singular individual of pre-eminent wickedness, while St. Paul does not call the "Man of Sin" Antichrist. In the Apocalypse (xiii.—xvii.) a delineation of an anti-Christian power; in St. Paul and in St. John's Epistles of the "eximious anti-Christian person." (*Bp. Wm. Alexander.*)

Antichrist and antichrists:—It is a dangerous voyage which every Christian sails upon the sea of life. Sunken rocks, deceitful currents, and boisterous winds endanger his brittle bark. He needs constantly to beware that he makes not shipwreck of his faith. Here we are called to consider the danger arising from the seduction of false teachers. In the early Church these were the source of constant disquietude. Nor is it otherwise yet. It is melancholy to observe how little they are feared. Many trifle with them. 1. The apostle addresses himself to believers under the title of "little children." There is a peculiar propriety in using such language to those who are warned. Little children need to be warned. They are ignorant and unsuspecting, because they are inexperienced. When they are tempted they possess little power of resistance. And once betrayed they have neither the skill nor the power to deliver themselves out of the evils into which they have been betrayed. It is to be lamented that in all these respects many Christians bear a strong resemblance to little children. 2. To these the apostle says, "It is the last time," and this is an appropriate introduction to the warning he was about to give them. The meaning of the phrase will be seen by citing the parallel passage in Heb. i. 1. The last time is therefore the day of Christ. It is the age of Christianity. And there are two views in which it may be appropriately so denominated. It is the last economy viewed in its historical relation to

those which have preceded it. And it may be called so also in relation to the future. There will be no other economy. "Then cometh the end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God the Father." It is a high privilege that we live under an economy which is the completion, the perfection of all that went before it. But we must not forget we shall have no higher privileges than those which we now enjoy. If we are not saved by means of those we have we must perish. 3. Thus introduced, the apostle begins to announce his warning, "Ye have heard that anti-christ shall come." The very name is sufficient to awaken deep concern. We are at once given to understand that we must see a grand opponent to Him whom we delight to honour, and in whom is all our confidence. For His sake and our own, such an announcement should awaken our timely fear. As for Him, we cannot doubt his ability to overcome every enemy. But we may well fear for ourselves. 4. The apostle, however, comes closer to the case of those little children whom he addressed, and says, "Even now are there many antichrists." Observe the distinction between this statement and the former one. The former is a prophecy, the latter is a fact. Antichrist shall come, but he has not yet been revealed. Time will be required for his development. But there are other forms of evil and other seducers who exist now. You are not to imagine that you are safe because the great antichrist has not yet appeared. The heaven was working which would in time corrupt the mass of professors, so insidious and dangerous is error; and so necessary it is to watch its first rise and destroy it at the bud. In our own day we may well cry with the apostles, "There are many antichrists." And who or what are they? They are all persons and things that are opposed to Christ and His people and His cause. And how can they be enumerated? Infidelity is antichrist, and pours contempt upon the truth. The scoffer is antichrist, and scorns the truth. All ungodly men are antichrists, and while they resist the truth themselves they tempt others to deny it. All errorists are antichrists, and obscure and oppose the truth. 5. The apostle applies this announcement of many antichrists to a practical use, saying in the next clause, "Whereby we know that it is the last time." The words amount to a declaration that this mighty host with all their enmity to the truth should be a marked and prominent feature in the Christian era. Christianity is the best economy, and therefore it is the most hated and opposed by the wicked one. 6. We should beware that we are not found among these antichrists. And for our warning and guidance a description of them is given in the 19th verse—"they went out from us." Once they belonged to the Church of Christ. They apostatised from the faith and practice of the gospel. "But they were not of us," adds the apostle. They never were. "They are not all Israel that are of Israel." They may have professed the faith, but in reality they had never embraced it. "For," says he, "had they been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." This is certain. The nature of the Divine life makes it so. "The just shall live by faith." The apostle concludes, "But they went out, that they might be made manifest they were not all of us." On the whole, it was better they departed. It was better for themselves, that they may not be deceived by a name, but be led to penitence. It was better for others, that they might not be a burthen and hindrance to those with whom they were associated. And it was better for the cause of religion, that it might not be scandalised by their inconsistencies. (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*) **They went out from us, but they were not of us.—Anti-Christian:—I. WHERE COULD THESE APOSTATES GO OUT FROM BUT THE CHURCH?** If they had not been in it they could not have gone out from it. The Church they went out of was the true Church of Christ, in which the true and everlasting gospel was preached. And these persons had professed their faith in all the essential truths of the gospel. Yet their ambitious spirits were such they could not be content but they must bring in another gospel, contrary to what the apostles preached, pretending to have greater light into truth, and what they called the Person of Christ, and grace, than the very apostles themselves. They turned their back on Christ, His gospel, His ordinances, His apostles, His Churches, and everything belonging unto Him, and framed out of their own errors, heresies, whims, and fancies, a Christ and gospel for themselves. The apostle assigns the reason why they went out from the Churches in the way and manner they did—it was because they were not of one heart and soul with the Churches in the truth. As it was then, so it has been ever since. All the heresies which have tormented the Churches of Christ, down even to our present times, have originated from persons who have been in the Churches, who have departed from the Churches. From such as have made schisms and divisions in the Churches; and when any

old error is newly revived, it in general springs from such persons as are disaffected to the true Churches of Jesus Christ. II. HOW THE APOSTLE CONFIRMS HIS ASSERTION—"For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." How solemn! how awful! These antichrists came out of the apostolical Church of Jesus. They had been in it. It answered their end for a season to remain in the Churches to whom they had given in their names. It suited them to leave these Churches at such seasons; when they could, to distil their pernicious influences, as they thought and hoped, it would gain converts to them. These heretics left the Churches because they were not of them, only nominally. They might, and undoubtedly did, boast of superior light to all others in the doctrines of grace. They were slaves to their own lusts. They were covetous. They were greedy of reward. They were full of gainsaying. III. WHY THESE ANTICHRISTS WENT OUT OF THE CHURCH. It was that they might be made manifest, that they did not belong to the Church of Christ, let them make their boast of the same as they might. This was their end for their going out, but it was the Lord's end in thrusting them out, and it might be some of these might have been thrust out by apostolio and also by Church authority. In the holy and secret mystery of the Lord's providence it was evidenced they were not the Lord's beloved ones. (*S. E. Pierce.*)

Ver. 20. **But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.**—*The guileless spirit amid anti-Christian defections, established by a messianic unction and illumination:*—I. THE ANOINTING—"Ye have an unction." This anointing, or being anointed with oil, you have "from the Holy One"; from Christ Jesus our Lord. 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 Him who is anointed to be the Holy One. You, on the other hand, have anointing from Him. 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." 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 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. In Jesus this unction was, on the one hand, His having always the Holy Spirit helping, comforting, and strengthening Him. 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. 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 lifework 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. 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 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. III. THE UNCTION WHICH WE HAVE FROM THE HOLY ONE, AND OUR KNOWING ALL THINGS, ARE INTIMATELY CONNECTED. 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. 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 antichrist. 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? (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) **The anointing** :—I. **WHAT THE ANOINTING IS.** II. **WHERE THIS ANOINTING IS.** It "abideth." Other anointings do not abide. The fragrance of other unguents soon passes off. But here is an anointing which, like "the ointment of the right hand, which bewrayeth itself," abideth, "abideth in you." But you say it is not true; nothing is more plain than that ardent Christians get cold, and those who lived Christ may grow self-willed and self-assertive. How can St. John say that the unction abideth? Well, I suppose he wants to call attention to the Divine side of the case, to show us that whatever we may do, or whatever we may be, God remaineth faithful. III. **"WHAT DOETH THE ANOINTING?"** He teacheth, and, saith St. John, He has every right to teach, for "He is truth and no lie." Besides, "He hath already taught you," and what you have learned of Him should give you confidence in Him for what you may have yet to learn. Read your Bibles, but read them in His light; listen to your teachers, but listen to them with continual application to a higher Teacher. It is to that higher Teacher you owe the greatest blessing you ever received in the world, the blessing which made you a Christian. Remember to trust to Him as Guide and Counsellor, to ask Him what to believe on every subject. IV. **WHAT IS THE OUTCOME OF ALL THIS?** It is, "Ye shall abide in Him." (*J. B. Figgis, M.A.*) **The unction from the Holy One** :—I. **"THE HOLY ONE."** Who is He? Christ. It had been repeatedly ascribed to Him before, not only by men, but by voices falling from another world (see *Psa. xvi. 10; Isa. xlii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100*; *Luke vii. 35; Mark x. 24; Acts iii. 14*). And, although all ransomed spirits are called God's "holy ones," the term applies in its highest truth to Christ alone; for to which of the sons of men could you ever point and say, "Behold the Holy One of God!" But the evangelist is not now speaking merely in a general way of Christ, but of Christ as our High Priest. A priest who could be charged with the slightest infraction of the law would have been no Saviour. In Him, for the first time on our earth, holiness shone forth in its perfect brightness, and yet in a shape which man could bear to see. In Christ, holiness is our friend; it gives our crown, guards our safety, and inspires our joy. We can give thanks, not at the remembrance of love alone, but at the remembrance of holiness, through the redemptive death of Him who is the Holy One of God. II. **"THE UNCTION FROM THE HOLY ONE."** What does that expression mean? The Spirit of God is here intended; not as to His nature, but as to His agency; not in His essential attributes, but in His emanations. Now mark three things. 1. This unction comes down from Christ to all His people. Again and again did He seek to quicken the languid attention of His followers to the fact that this influence would come to them as the very consequence of His own departure (*John xvi. 7*). Now, remember Christ is not only our Priest, He is our Head. Combine these ideas, and you catch the spirit of the metaphor. As the body of the priest received the unction from the Head, we have received an unction from the Holy One; for we are members of His body, His flesh, and His bones. "The Spirit was given without measure to Him"; and from Him it flows to all

who are identified with His life. 2. This influence from Christ makes all His members holy. A holy influence must have a holy effect, and this effect must be the true test of your character. I say not that Christians, to verify their high vocation, must all at once be perfectly holy men, but that they must be the recipients of a holy influence—an influence that will show the traces of its presence, and work effects accordant with its nature. 3. Christ, by giving this unction to all His people, shows their essential unity with Himself and with each other. III. "YE KNOW ALL THINGS." This holy influence has an enlightening virtue. It rested upon Christ as "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." It made Him of "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Communicated by Him to us, it must have similar effects. The expression used to declare this fact startles us by its boldness. 1. Things that are holy are meant. The emphasis here on the word holy suggests that the knowledge spoken of must be knowledge of holy things. Without holiness you may indeed understand Hebrew as well as Caiaphas did; Latin as well as Pilate did; the Greek as well as that Athenian did who charged Paul with setting forth "strange gods"; the geography and antiquities of Palestine as perfectly as the proudest Pharisee that ever wore phylacteries; but God's book will be a sealed book to you: and, though you may have a grammatical knowledge of the words which reveal holy things, you will never know the things themselves. 2. Things that are essential are meant. Spiritual men, however mistaken they may be on marginal and subsidiary questions, know all essential things. If they are wrong in other respects they will not repair to the wrong Refuge, or plunge in the wrong Fountain, or follow the wrong Shepherd. (C. Stanford, D.D.)

The unction from the Holy One:—I. THIS IS A COMMON CHRISTIAN ENDOWMENT. It is to a body of Christian disciples that John is writing; not to the highly gifted among them, not even to the elder Christians who have acquired a long experience and grown prudent through a life's discipline, but to all. Simple conscientiousness is of more practical value than the readiest ability. A plain unlettered man will often see the falsity which ensnares men in their long-drawn reasonings. A child's discernment of character is proverbial; the simple soul is repelled from a hidden impurity or ungraciousness that escapes the subtle observation. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." A mind like Christ is given to you in the very consecration of yourselves to Him; and that mind "abideth in you," and "teacheth you all things." You have an inward and unfailing standard, which tests all sayings, all traditions and maxims, all the suggestions that may come to you, all the ways of the world. II. WHAT THIS SPIRIT IS WHICH IS GIVEN US IN OUR CONSECRATION, AND BY WHICH WE ARE ENABLED TO DISCERN THE TRUTH OF THINGS. 1. It is the spirit of the consecration itself. This involves God's revelation to us of a Divine service, and His call to us to serve Him; God's endowment of us for the service into which He bids us enter. It involves our recognition of His purpose, our acceptance of His will, and all the influence upon our character of the acceptance of it. Decision of purpose is the secret of directness of judgment. When you resolved that you would follow Christ, and obey Him in all your future, did you not feel at once a new power to discern the evil and good of all things? You looked on old confusing motives, and pronounced them base. Doubt cleared itself from your vision; the scales of selfishness fell from your eyes; you felt that you had attained a new power of judgment. A truer spirit, a spirit clearer and more confident, was yours in your consecration. "You had an unction from the Holy One, and you knew all things." 2. It is the spirit of Christ. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One"; a chrism from Christ. Here, then, is the virtue of our consecration; this our defence against all antichrists, this our power to discern all things: the spirit in sympathy with Jesus, that feels with and for Him. A personal life is a surer standard than all reasonings; sympathy is at once responsive, or is at once repelled. The habit of fellowship with Christ; the culture of our sympathies, the formation of all our judgments by His; the bringing of every maxim and of all conduct to the standard of the life of Jesus, will have its result in clear directness of thought and feeling. It will give thoroughness and practicalness to our character; will demand not only truth upon the whole, but truth in everything, truth in even minor matters, truth throughout. 3. The spirit of consecration is the spirit of devotedness to our fellows. Whatever destroys our reverence for men, whatever denies their redemption and restrains our sympathies with them; whatever leads us to distrust the power of the gospel to elevate and save from folly, and from selfishness, and from sin, any class of men, or race of men, or any individual of all

mankind, must be condemned by us as owning the spirit of antichrist. Our fellowship is with Christ's love and hopefulness; a spirit devoted like His to men is given us, and by this spirit we discern all things. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *The omniscience of holiness—an unction from the Holy One*:—In some minds the love of knowledge is very strong. It is the supreme desire. As the warrior thirsts for glory, as the miser thirsts for gold, "as the hart panteth for the water-brooks," so do they long to know—to possess truth. Compared with this, life itself is cheap, "It is more to be desired than gold, yea, than fine gold." He who really loves and is loyal to the truth will make any sacrifice for it. With scanty income, he is sometimes found starving the body that he may feed the soul. Even to extend our knowledge of this physical globe, what hardships will not men encounter! Knowledge is happiness; and man seeks to know. How deep the satisfaction of a Columbus when, after long tossing on the treacherous sea, and wearisome expostulations with mutinous men, he saw the new world arise from the deep! We experience something of this joy when we are brought, in the works of others, to new principles and thoughts—when we come into the possession of a great and true definition that casts a flood of light upon everything around us. Knowledge is power, and man seeks to know. The desire of power has led great kings at certain times to attempt the conquest of the world, and the founding of a universal empire. That was great ambition, but there is a greater still; even that of the man who aspires to universal knowledge. The text contains the astounding statement that true Christians know all things. We take the words "all things" in their widest comprehension, as including all existence and all events—the whole universe, material and spiritual. It is of all these we understand the assertion to be made; and it is admitted that, at first sight, such an assertion seems extravagant. For how can we know that which we have never seen; and the greater part of the universe we have not seen? How can we know that in the past of which we have never heard? How can we know the future which does not yet exist in relation to us? Here we must inquire into the nature of our knowledge—what it is to know. Our present knowledge is different in its character from God's. God comprehends all things fully and perfectly. God sees truth face to face. But while it cannot be said that the Christian knows all things as God knows them, it still remains true that He knows all things in a sense similar to that in which He can be said to know anything. To know one thing fully is to know all things fully. Take a piece of rock. To know that fully implies a knowledge of the history and formation of all rocks; and that implies a knowledge of the whole structure of the world, which again implies a knowledge of creation or the full and perfect knowledge of everything. The reason why the full knowledge of one thing implies a full knowledge of all things is that every object of knowledge is more or less directly connected with every other. Nothing in the universe stands alone, and therefore nothing can be understood alone. The statement in the text is not more astonishing or difficult to understand than another more common statement, which is accepted without qualification or hesitation, namely that the Christian knows God. God is infinitely greater than the universe, and infinitely deeper in the significance of His being; and therefore of the two statements, "Ye know all things," and "Ye know God," the latter is by far the greater and more wonderful of the two. What, then, does the Bible mean when it says the Christian knows God? It does not mean that he knows God fully or absolutely—that he has fathomed the unfathomable, or comprehended the infinite; for only God can thus know God. What the Scriptures mean by knowing God is, that we stand in a just relation to Him—that we are in a true sense related personally to Him—our mind being truly related to His mind, our heart to His heart, and our will to His will. We are in a true relation to His righteousness, justice, and mercy, and so of all the other aspects of His being. This is what is meant by knowing God in our present state, and seems to be the character of all our knowledge. As we advance in Divine truth, our knowledge will not change in this respect. It will only increase in depth and compass, in fulness and degree. Further, in order to sustain a true relation to the universe, we must sustain a true relation to God; for, since there is not a gulf between God and His works—seeing He continually sustains an intimate and living relation to them—to be justly related to Him is to sustain a similar relation to them; and to know Him is to know them. At the Fall man lost both the knowledge of God and the true meaning of the world. When the highest light went out all the lower lights were extinguished. Now Jesus Christ came to restore us to such a righteous relation to God, and to take that enmity and unbelief out of

the heart which distorts for us the whole character of God. He says, "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." This agrees with what St. Paul says, that ungodly men are "ever learning, and yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"—a remarkable statement, distinguishing, as it does, between learning and knowledge. To learn is to collect information merely. To know is to understand the nature and relationships of things. Men may increase in knowledge as to the letter of God's word, as the Scribes and Pharisees of old did—they may have a "form of knowledge, and of truth in the law"; but if they have not the light of life, which is the key to all learning, in their own souls, they are still walking in darkness, and know not whither they are going. All such are enlarging their information, but not extending their true understanding. They are building up pyramids of learning which may be only pyramids of falsehood. They are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." But "what God has hid from the wise and prudent He has revealed unto babes." Jesus makes this great declaration—"No man knoweth the Father but through the Son"; and hence for every true idea of God we possess, we are indebted to Christ Jesus. He said unto Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Therefore, when we know Jesus Christ, we know God, and not till then. But in order to know Christ, we must truly see Him, and to see Him we must sustain a right relation to Him. How then are we brought into a right relation to the Son of God? It is by His own anointing. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." The Holy One from whom the unction cometh is the Lord Jesus. The unction itself—which is not the act of anointing, but the oil or ointment used in anointing—is the influence of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Let us gather out of this subject a few general principles or inferences. First, with regard to the nature of knowledge; and second, with regard to the line of duty.

I. With regard to THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE. Absolute knowledge is the comprehension of existence. It is the circle which embraces all things. Relative knowledge consists in sustaining the right point of view, which is to stand in the centre of the circle. God absolutely comprehends all things. Man understands all things, when he stands in the absolute centre—when he is in God and God in him. Knowledge implies the three ultimate ideas of the universe—being, existence, and thought. Being is that which lies within or beneath—the invisible ground of existence. It is the spiritual material, or uncreated substance from which thought proceeds, and out of which existence stands. Existence is that which stands out, as the etymology of the word shows. It stands out of being, which is its ground, and from which it is created or developed by thought. Being, in itself considered, is the absolute nothing: that is, being, in itself, cannot be thought. Thought is the process or energising power by which being comes forth from itself into existence. It is the method by which being, which is essentially invisible, translates itself into existence, which is essentially visible. A thing is that which can be thought. "All things," is all that can be thought. It is the believer's destiny, then, in the light of God, to think out the universe. "To know even as He is known!"

II. With regard to DUTY. 1. Notice, here, the identity of knowledge and holiness. This is set before us in other Scriptures besides the text (Prov. xviii. 5; 1 Cor. ii. 15; 1 John ii. 27; iii. 2, 3; Matt. v. 8). Knowledge being the perfect reflection in the mind of man of the thought of God, it is evident that the mind must be as a perfectly polished mirror, or a perfectly pure lake, in order to receive and give the perfect image. 2. Notice, further, the identity of thought and sanctification. The process of sanctification is the same as that of thought. It is first negative, or a separation. It is a coming out of Egypt, and a cleansing "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." But it is also positive, or a union—a going into the Holy Land. The drawing away from sin implies a drawing nearer to God. 3. Notice, again, the identity of ignorance and sin. They are one in being confusion. Ignorance is blindness to the distinctions of things, or the confounding of what ought to be clearly separated in thought. Sin is the same in act or life. It is the confounding of what ought to be kept apart. It thus produces at once a false separation, and a false union. Now, the Word of God, which is the key to the whole universe, and the basis of all science, has been given to affect at once the thought and life of man—to make him at once think correctly and live purely. These cannot be separated. A man thinks correctly just to the extent of his being holy. (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*)

Knowledge by Divine unction.—I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE HOLY ONE FROM WHOM THE UNCTION COMES. It is very remarkable that on several occasions, in His

life as spent among men, He seemed to be the sinful one. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, but it was in the likeness only. 1. This truth appears, first, when He was circumcised. 2. When He was presented in the temple, the Virgin Mary brought Him in her arms, and Joseph attended with the two turtle doves. This ceremony was for the sinful, who had need of cleansing; and was according to the law the means of their purification. 3. When He came to be baptized of John in the Jordan, John said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." 4. He appeared in this likeness, when He was about to be crucified; when Barabbas, a man who had committed murder, and was guilty of insurrection in the city, was chosen to be set at liberty, in preference to Christ. Christ is the Holy One. See what testimony was borne to Him. The devils said, "We know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." The centurion said, "Truly this was the Son of God." Christ was carried to the grave as the Holy One. And because He was the Holy One He saw no corruption. As the Holy One He rose from the dead, and was declared to be the Son of God with power. II. Τῆς ὁσίας ἡ Τῆς ἁγίας Πνεύματος. I suppose the reference to be to the sacred oil of anointing which was prepared in a special manner by God's appointment. In connection with this oil there was another special and peculiar perfume for the altar of incense. Here, we suppose, is a new type of Christ and His mediation. That pure incense, burnt before God, represented Christ's intercession for His Church, and the complacency with which it is regarded by the Father. Before the Holy One gives the Holy Ghost in this particular form other works are effected by Him. There must be something preparatory to His communications. You must be washed. Then you must be sprinkled with blood: "without shedding of blood there is no remission." By water and blood we are first cleansed; then comes the unction. 1. It marks out and defines the objects of Divine choice. The Church is a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people; so every member is elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. As surely as you receive the unction, and are touched by the Divine power, you are a child of God, marked out for His own in Christ Jesus. You belong to the society and fellowship of the anointed ones. 2. The unction denotes separation from the common mass and multitude. So Aaron and his sons were separated from all the people of Israel. And through this unction we are separated—sanctified by Christ—called out of the world. 3. The third thing denoted by this unction is qualification for office. We are revived and illumined by the unction. The unction qualifies for holy exploits and for elevated duty. 4. The comparison denotes the consummation of heavenly joy. Every morning, as you have need, you are to seek fresh oil; fresh, like the virgin beams of the morning light; fresh oil, like the flowers of the early spring; fresh oil, like the blood of the sacrifice newly spilt, and presented before God upon the altar. Fresh influence, help, and succour, is to be sought to the last hour of our life from the Holy One of God. 5. We receive the Holy Ghost to establish and to preserve us. Of some the Apostle John affirms, "They went out from us, but they were not of us." In contrast to this, where the unction comes, it is abiding. 6. Finally, the unction comes to make you useful. It will be like an odour that is not to be hidden: it fills all the room. You will be a prophet to teach, shedding light by your example. You will be a priest, to offer the sacrifice of praise. You will be a king, having rule over your own spirit. III. AS WE HAVE THE UNCTION FROM THE HOLY ONE, WE KNOW ALL THINGS. There is a self-evidencing power in truth by which we know all these blessed subjects of Divine revelation. We know that we are of God by His Spirit which is in us. If I feel in my mind the influence of Christ, producing penitence and love, and desires after holiness and heaven, I may say, It is by the Holy Ghost. (*Jas. Stratten.*) *An unction from the Holy One*:—1. First, it is observable that the text contains an affirmation represented to be peculiarly descriptive of genuine believers. 2. It is more important, however, to observe that the text accounts for this peculiarity of genuine believers, and teaches us both what it is and whence it arises. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One." 3. We now proceed to that which is most prominent in the text, the result of the "unction of the Holy One" in the experience and life of the believer—"Ye know all things." It is with great appropriateness this effect of the indwelling of the Spirit is introduced here. It is as the best and only safeguard against error and those who seek to promote it. The believer is so under the influence of the Spirit, that error does not find ready entrance to his mind. We are all acquainted with the use and exercise of instinct in the lower creation. They are placed in a luxuriant herbage, part of which would

be to them poison and death, and other portions nutritious and necessary food. They are not much in danger of mistaking the one for the other. However closely they may resemble one another, they can tell which they are to use and which they are to shun. Men, with all their sagacity, may err, but the untaught quadruped seldom hesitates or goes astray. His Creator has taught him, and in this department of His works he knows all things that he needs to know. If we go to the winged creation, they are instructed, not merely with what they are to regale themselves, but they know to perfection how to protect themselves and their offspring from the inclement season. Of all these creatures there is a sense in which it may be truly said, "they know all things." There is, however, another and a higher illustration to be found among men themselves. As there is instinct in the inferior creation, there is what may be called taste in the intellectual world. It is very diversified in different persons. Some have a powerful propensity for certain objects or engagements which are just as much disrelished by others. Take, for example, the fine arts, or any of the sciences. One is enamoured with them from his youth, and another is indifferent to them, while neither can tell why it is so. But mark the readiness with which the former becomes a proficient in that which pleases him, and compare it with the difficulty which the latter finds it impossible to overcome. The one readily knows all things appertaining to his favourite study, and the other is only confounded and disheartened by all his attempts. Thus there is a sense in which it may be said of the natural taste with which God is pleased to endow us, it readily knows all things appertaining to the object of its interest and delight. There is still another illustration of the same propensity of the human mind. Observe the effect of experience. In the various forms of handicraft or other engagements, whether mental or manual, the power of habit is remarkable. Whatever relates to the accustomed exercise is perceived and understood at once. Practice, it is said, makes perfect. Now let these illustrations be applied to the subject under consideration. The Holy Spirit visits the soul with His "unction." By His influence the mind is enlightened to apprehend the truth, the heart is sanctified through the belief of it, and the life is spent under the power of it. What is the consequence? The soul participates in the benefits of its own decided tastes and cherished habits. A sanctified instinct may be said to be formed in it by which it chooses what is good and refuses the evil. It does not need in every case to pause, and reason, and consider. Without any such process, it feels instinctively what is the course to be either pursued or shunned. This heavenly taste is usually the best casuist. It is the product of an enlightened conscience. And the expression is not too strong when it is said of those who yield themselves to its habitual influence, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*)

*Unction from the Holy One:—*I. THE UNCTION IS THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST. II. THAT UNCTION IS PROMISED TO EVERY BELIEVER (John iii. 5, 6; Acts ii. 38; viii. 15; xix. 2; 2 Cor. i. 22; v. 5; Eph. i. 13, 14; iv. 30; also Rom. viii. 15; 1 Cor. ii. 12; xii. 13; Gal. iii. 2, 3, &c.). III. IT IS IMPARTED TO US BY VARIOUS CHANNELS. 1. Baptism is a channel whereby the "unction" is conveyed (John iii. 5; Acts ii. 38; 1 Cor. xii. 13; Tit. iii. 5, 6). 2. Confirmation is a means of fresh and fuller unction (Acts viii. 17, 18; xix. 6, by comparison with 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6). 3. The holy communion renews this unction. 4. The ministry of the Word imparts this unction (Gal. iii. 2; Acts x. 44; 1 Cor. ii. 4, 13; iii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 3, 6, 8, 9). 5. None of these means are efficacious apart from prayer (Acts ii. 42; iv. 29; vi. 4; ix. 15; 1 Cor. x. 16; Eph. vi. 18, 19; Col. iv. 3, 4; 2 Thess. iii. 1). IV. THE GIFT IS INWARD, AND NOT OUTWARD. 1. It is not outward. 2. The outward is not altogether excluded. 3. The decision comes from within. The ultimate court of appeal for each one of us is his own conscience. V. THE UNCTION CONSECRATES US TO BE—1. Prophets. 2. Priests. 3. Kings (Rev. v. 10; xx. 6; xxii. 5). VI. THE OINTMENT IS FRAGRANT (Exod. xxx. 22-33). 1. With the fragrance of sacrifice to God (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16; Phil. iv. 18). 2. With the fragrance of a holy life. (*J. J. Lias, M.A.*)

Vers. 21-24. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it.—*Knowledge favourable to further teaching:—*I. WHY THE APOSTLE HAD WRITTEN (ver. 21). It does not follow that he would not have written to those who were either ignorant of the truth or opposed to it. To every sinner he would address the gospel of salvation, and entreat him to become a possessor of its benefits. Indeed, he did so in other writings. On the present occasion, however, he wrote to them that knew the truth. He had special reasons for writing to them particularly. No doubt one reason was the extreme jealousy of the apostle lest any

of those who knew the truth should act inconsistently with it. In another epistle he discovers the spirit that animated him in this respect (2 John 4.) How it must have distressed him to have found some not walking in the truth. He therefore wrote to instruct, and warn, and encourage them that they might walk worthy of their high vocation. Nor can it be supposed this was not needed. In the most enlightened there is still much ignorance. In the most determined there is still irresolution. In the most devoted there is still deficiency. But his great reason appears to have been his hope of success in writing to such. He declared the truth to them, encouraged by the belief that there would be found in them a readiness of mind to receive it. In this assumption of the apostle there is a practical lesson of great value. We are taught that the acceptance or rejection of the truth is chiefly dependent on the disposition of the heart towards it. It is the perversity of the will that often blinds the understanding. Let that be rightly disposed, and we are apt to see clearly. II. WHAT, THEN, DID HE WRITE? The reply is in the next two verses. It is observable that, in treating of truth and error, the whole subject of the apostle is concerning Jesus Christ. He assumes that if our views of Him are correct, so will be our apprehension of the whole circle of truth. He therefore goes largely into the subject. He presents the Saviour in various views of supreme importance, in which it is vital to true godliness that we shall perceive the truth and not fall into error. 1. The first is adverted to in the opening of verse 22. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" No doubt the general sentiment here is the rejection of the claims of Jesus Christ to be the Messiah promised in the scriptures of the Old Testament. This was the sin of the Jewish nation. He was the light, but they could not see it, because their eyes were blinded. This view, however, does not express the full doctrine of the apostle. To receive or reject Jesus as the Christ has respect to all His offices, and consequently to all the blessings which we may obtain or forfeit by embracing or refusing Him in them. 2. In the same verse the apostle gives another description, and says, "He is antichrist that denies the Father and the Son." This cannot mean a denial of the existence of the Father and the Son as two distinct beings, the one dwelling in heaven, and the other upon the earth. The reference is manifestly to some union between them which some might be disposed or tempted to deny. It is that in which Christ is called God's "own Son," His "only-begotten and well-beloved Son." In this relation the Son is the equal of the Father. Let us give Him the glory that is due by hearkening to His invitation, "Look unto Me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside Me there is no Saviour." 3. The apostle gives one other view of antichrist in verse 23, "Whosoever denieth the Son," &c. There are two deeply important sentiments in these words, which can only be noticed. The one is that no one can have just views of God unless He is known as He is revealed in the Son (Matt. xi. 27). The other sentiment is the result of the first. He only who knows God in His Son can have fellowship with Him. III. This will more fully appear while we notice THE OBJECT OF THE APOSTLE IN WRITING AS HE HAD DONE. It is expressed in the 24th verse. The three terms, "abide," "remain," "continue," are the same in the original. The repetition is sufficient to show the extreme importance attached to the thought by the apostle. What, then, is it? It is suggested by a phrase which he uses again and again throughout the epistle, "The truth is not in us." In order that the truth may have its due effect, it must be in us, not as a speculation in the head, but a mighty practical principle in the heart. It must be in us as food is in the man whom it nourishes. But it is not merely the truth, as a system, that must thus dwell in us. It is as the casket that contains the jewel; and that jewel is Christ. (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*) *The guileless spirit, amid antichristian denial of the Son, acknowledging the Son so as to have the Father also.*—I. HOW IS A DENIAL THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST EQUIVALENT TO A DENIAL OF THE SON? 1. 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. 2. 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. II. 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. In the exercise of His absolute sovereignty God is entitled to say upon what terms and in what way any of His creatures shall have Him, that is, as theirs; have Him so as to have an interest in 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. The disowning of the Son cannot but be an offence to the Father; deeply wounding and grieving His heart. 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. All through His humiliation, how has He the Father? The Father's love He has; His love of boundless complacency, approval, delight. He has the Father's gracious presence with Him always. 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. 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 trial 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. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) **Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?**—*Deniers of Christ*.—1. Those who deny His eternal existence and Godhead, and the union of the Divine and human natures in His one person. 2. Those who deny the reality of His human nature. 3. Those who deny Him as Priest, and reject as irrational His expiatory sacrifice. 4. Those who deny Him as King and Judge, who scoff at His personal advent and reign on earth (2 Pet. iii.), or who ridicule His solemn warnings as to the punishment of the wicked. (*J. T. Demarest, D.D.*) **Antichrist**.—We have here two subjects of thought. 1. The greatest BEINGS in the universe. 1. The "Father." Who is He? The cause, the means, the end of all things in the universe but sin. 2. The "Son." Who is the Son? His express Image, His Divine Equal, the one grand object of His love. Before these two Beings, all systems, all hierarchies, all potentates, kingdoms, principalities, are less than a spark to the sun, a drop to the ocean. Another subject of thought is—II. The greatest CRIME in the universe. What is it? 1. Practical Anti-theism. "Denieth the Father." Millions confess the Father, who practically deny Him. 2. Practical anti-Christism. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" Practically, to deny Christ as the true Messiah, to live as if He never existed, is anti-theism in another form. This is the crime of crimes. Living as if no God the Father, no Christ the Son ever existed. **CONCLUSION**. 1. Antichrist is confined to no one Church. 2. Antichrist embraces all sin. Every man that does not love the Father supremely, and accept the Son lovingly and loyally, is Antichrist. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **The Son and the Father**.—These words strike at the root of a prevailing error. They warn us of the peril which we run by disparaging any of the central truths of the Christian Gospel—the loss which we incur if we surrender them. Deny that Christ is the eternal Son of God, and we lose hold of God Himself as our Father. Before looking at this startling sentence a little more closely, it is worth while to consider the fact that only where the Divine Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ has been believed, have men thought of God with the joy and trust of children. We may dismiss the great pagan religions. But take the two great monotheistic religions—Judaism and Mohammedanism—and compare them with the Christian faith. Judaism, of course, knew nothing of the incarnation. There are certain elements in the Jewish faith which, as we see, prepared the life of the race for this consummate glory; but that God could ever actually become man could hardly, even in moments of clearest vision, have been made real to Jewish prophets or saints. And hence, wonderful and varied as is the religious life expressed in the Psalms and prophecies, it is not a religious life which has its roots in the belief that God is in any true and deep sense the Father of men. Take Mohammedanism; this great faith which still exerts authority over a hundred or a hundred and fifty millions of men, and which still appears to have the power to inspire that heroic courage which a thousand years ago made the Saracens masters of some of the fairest regions of Europe, Africa, and Asia—Mohammedanism denies the Incarnation, and therefore denies the eternal Sonship of Christ, and affirms the perfect simplicity of the Divine nature. As I have said, it is a great faith. It exalts the majesty of God; God is supreme; His will is irresistible; neither earth nor hell can stay His hand. The God of Mohammedanism is a God to fear; a God to obey; a God to live for; a God to die for; but He is not a Father; and the devout

Mohammedan is a servant of God—a slave, not a child. And in the history of the Christian Church I find that wherever faith in the Divine Sonship of Christ declines, there soon declines with it, as a rule, the joy and exultation that come from the vision of the infinite love of God, and from the consciousness of our own kinship with Him. A flower severed from its root will retain its colour and its perfume for a time; but it must perish sooner or later. A real faith in the Divine Fatherhood may survive for a time after faith in the Divine Sonship of Christ has died; but sooner or later, whosoever denieth the Son, discovers that in losing the Son he has lost the Father also. We may find fresh light on this subject if we look at the words which immediately precede the text—words which carry us back to speculations about the Lord Jesus Christ which have long vanished. Among the earliest forms of heresy was one which maintained that Jesus—Jesus, the son of Mary—was a man and nothing more; but that before His public ministry began, a great and mighty emanation from the Eternal descended upon Him. This emanation was called “The Christ.” It was in the power of the Divine Christ, according to this theory, that Jesus did all His wonderful works; and it was the illumination of the Divine Christ that enabled Him to speak all His wonderful words. “The Christ” took possession of Jesus when Jesus had reached manhood; but Jesus Himself, according to this doctrine, was not Divine. “Who is the liar?” asks John, “but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?”—that is who, being asked to confess it, refuses. John meant by a liar a man whose whole conception of God, and the world, and the human race was false; whose whole theory of life therefore rested on a false foundation, was rooted in falsehood. It was not merely the man’s words that were untrue to his thought, but his thought was untrue to the fact, did not correspond to the reality of things. The falsehood was a grave one. It did not touch the mere details of the order of the world, but the fundamental relations of man and of the whole world to God. The heresy which denied that Jesus was the Christ was therefore fatal to all truth. The ancient Gnostic heresy has passed away, but the false conception of God and the world, which was the root of it, still survives. The distance between the Eternal and man seems so immense that it seems impossible that the Eternal Son of God ever became man, and that He remains man. In other words, human unbelief severs the human from the Divine. But when once we recognise in Christ the Divine glory, we see that God, instead of being remote from us, is near, that the great glories of the Divine nature are not omnipotence and omniscience, but righteousness, love, pity, grace. These glories we may share with the Eternal. In our own moral freedom we discover that which corresponds to the Divine sovereignty over nature; in our moral perfection that which may be the expression of the ethical life of God. We listen to Christ, we watch Him, we discover that He is God, and yet Son of God. He was eternally with the Father; He has come to share the conditions of our earthly life. This is a new discovery concerning God Himself, and not merely concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a discovery that God has always been the Father; that the Eternal Son, sharing His life, sharing His glory, is eternally one with Him, and yet eternally separate from Him, and has eternally rejoiced in His love. This Eternal Son has shared our life that we may share His life, and might be really and truly sons of God. For this we were made, and only as this is achieved in us do we fulfil the thought and purpose of God. And now, dismissing these high discussions, and returning to the practical aspects of this subject, let me say something to those of you who, while you speak of the Divine Fatherhood, are very conscious, when you come to think of it, and to deal with yourselves fairly, that it gives you little peace, little courage, little joy, little power; that it is no great restraint on sin, no powerful support to righteousness; that it is a thing to argue about rather than to live upon. You do not exactly deny—but the Sonship of Christ, His eternal Sonship, is not real to you; the wonder and the glory of it do not possess and awe you. Is that the reason you have never entered fully into the consciousness of sonship? Try to dwell on the great fact that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, the eternal Son of God, became flesh. Remember that through sixty Christian generations that truth, with the correlative truths, has been the substance of the very life of Christian people; that in the power of it they have trusted God, and have done the will of God. (*R. W. Dale, D.D.*) **Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.**—*The antagonism between truth and falsehood*:—I. ALL ERROR IS DEADLY. 1. It were a ludicrous absurdity to say that a wrong faith can save a man. Either, then, a right faith is necessary, or no faith at all is (John iii. 15, 16; vi. 40; xi. 25, &c.; Acts xx. 21; Rom. i. 17;

iii. 30; Gal. v. 6; 2 Thess. ii. 13; Heb. xi. 6). 2. A wrong faith must necessarily produce a wrong practice. We may see this in the affairs of this world. 3. Tendencies do not always produce their full results. A wrong faith on some points has been in some degree compensated for by a right faith on others. 4. It is a matter of importance to believe the truth. All the misery and distress in the world is due to wrong beliefs. 5. How is a right faith to be attained? In answer to this we must (a) dismiss the idea that any man, while in the flesh, can possibly attain to infallible certainty on all points whatsoever. For (b) our condition here is progressive. II. ALL ERROR IS BASED UPON THE DENIAL THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST. 1. Revelation is necessary. For otherwise we do not know (1) whether there be a God, (2) whether man is immortal or not, (3) in what the foundation of morals consists. 2. The only revelation is that made by Jesus Christ. 3. The essential feature of revelation is that it was made by one Anointed, i.e., commissioned to declare God's will. Thus we are forbidden, on any point on which God's will is clearly declared, to question it. 4. How, then, do unbelievers in Christ lead moral and admirable lives? They can do so only so far as they believe what Christ tells them. 5. Continuance in the Son and in the Father the only possible means of salvation. The denial of this truth leads directly to the destruction of all moral principle whatever. The moral lives of unbelievers are due to their acceptance of the moral principles of their age. These moral principles are Christian principles. But Christian moral law without its Lawgiver is a superstructure without a foundation. Thus continuance in the Son and in the Father is the only means whereby (1) error, the source of all evil, can be gradually dispelled, and (2) truth, the source of all holiness and goodness, enabled to take full possession of the heart. (*J. J. Lias, M.A.*) Our estimate of Christ the measure of God's estimate of us:—I have seen a perfect stranger heartily welcomed in an English home and treated with a deference, a tenderness, and a generous hospitality that did one good to witness, and I understood it all when informed that that stranger, though never seen before, had at one time shown kindness to a wandering, long-absent son in a certain town in the distant Australias. The parents governed their estimate of the stranger by this kindly treatment of their boy. And does not our Heavenly Father to some extent deal similarly with us? He views and estimates us according to our treatment of His beloved Son. If our estimate of Jesus is vague, or erroneous, or wilfully depreciatory, we suffer to that extent in the Divine estimation.

Vers. 24, 25. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.—*The guileless spirit abiding through the Word in the Son and in the Father, so as to receive the promise of eternal life:—*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. 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. 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. Let us 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. 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 lotting "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.

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 eternal 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. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*)

Christian doctrine, duty, privilege, and hope:—I. CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. It is the doctrine of the Father and of the Son. Christianity, while it by no means robs the eternal Father of His honour, at the same time promulgates the Saviour's declaration, that it is the pleasure of the Father that all men should do honour to the Son even as they do honour to the Father. It is a dispensation of which Christ is the head, is the chief subject, is the principal Person, to whom all eyes are to be directed; while all honour, and glory, and majesty, and worship, and thanksgiving are poured out upon the Father in all ages, at the foot of the mediatorial throne.

II. THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF THE CHURCH. What is the duty? "Let them abide in you." And what the privilege? "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." Let it "abide in you": but it must first obtain admission. Ah! and not only so, it must take its mighty grasp of the heart. And so it does wherever it comes in truth; it enters there to have its own way, first, to resist sin, then to imprison sin, and ultimately, by the grace of God, to cast it out.

III. THE CHRISTIAN HOPE. "This is the promise, even eternal life." We are not content to live here always. No; we know there is a better land, a land of peace, of purity, and perfect bliss. (*T. Mortimer, B.D.*)

Vital godliness:—There is a peculiar importance attached to these three little *ins*. There is a blessed union, a holy identity, an inseparable oneness between the persons and experience of real Christians and the persons and perfections of all the glorious Trinity in unity. Doctrinal godliness is union with Deity; experimental godliness is the enjoyment of Deity; practical godliness is the glorifying of Deity.

I. THE ANTIQUITY OF OUR RELIGION. "That which ye have heard from the beginning." What "beginning"? The beginning of the gospel? I grant that, if you wish; the beginning of the Christian dispensation. But go a little further back; the beginning of the prophetic vision—the beginning of the Messianic economy—the beginning of the Abrahamic covenant—the beginning of the creation—go back as early as you will, and we will bear testimony that our faith is the faith of the ancients. If not, we will abandon it. Mark that beautiful account of the patriarchal faith recorded in the seventeenth of Genesis, and compare it with what is recorded by Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, and the Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle to the Hebrews, and inquire whether they are not precisely the same faith, taught to both of them by the Holy Ghost. What was this ancient system? Our Lord tells us in plain terms, that "Abraham rejoiced to see His day, and he saw it and was glad." Well, then, Abraham's religion, Abraham's faith, "that which was from the beginning," simply consisted in seeing everything in Christ, beholding all he wanted in Christ, the Substitute, the Surety, the Daysman, the Sponsor of His whole Church. But we go further back than we have hitherto gone. "Where then?" say you? Up to the eternal councils of peace. I mean to say that all the religion worth having originated in heaven; it is the offspring of Deity. All that pertains to real godliness originates with God. Now here are certainties; here are securities. These are old-fashioned truths. Old-fashioned guineas, you know, are almost obsolete; but when we find them, we know they are valuable. Blessed be God, these truths are of sterling value and infinite importance; "that which we have heard from the beginning" our souls delight to dwell upon.

II. THE LIVING PARTICIPATION OF THIS OLD-FASHIONED RELIGION. "If it shall remain in you." It must be "in you" in order to "remain" there. So that here is a religion put in a man, and of such a nature, and of such value, that it remains—abides, continues. •What, then, is it? It is nothing less than a communication made from the throne of God, by the Holy Ghost, to the sinner's heart. I should never be the better for what God my Father has given and God my Saviour has done, but for God the Holy Spirit's communications to my soul. Every act of quickening is from His power; every whisper of love is by His voice. It is nothing less than the indwelling, the witnessing, the comforting, the instruction, the anointing

of the Holy Ghost, resting upon the soul of man, that imparts one spiritual motion. I pass on to the term "remain": "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you." "The Spirit of truth, whom ye know; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." "The Father shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." He never gives up His charge; He never forsakes His residence; He never abandons His work. It is a "remaining" religion. Now for the words—"remain in you." Blessed be God, then there is no possibility of alteration. What is round about me, I cannot secure. But what is within me, secures me. It "remains" within: a vital principle, the life of God in the soul. It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory"; and the world and the devil must conquer Christ before they can turn Him out. Therefore He "remains"—"remains in you."

III. WHEREVER THIS "REMAINING," ABIDING, UNCONQUERABLE, UNCHANGING RELIGION DWELLS IN THE SOUL, A LASTING UNION BETWEEN JEHOVAH AND THAT SOUL IS DEMONSTRATED. "Continue in the Son and in the Father!" An inheritor of all the Son's merit and of all the Father's love; "an heir of God, a joint heir with Christ"; interested in all that Christ did and suffered, and interested in all that paternal love planned, ordained, and predestinated. The warrior may boast of his fame, the statesmen may carry their projects, the merchants may secure their fortunes, the pleasure-taker may revel in his wickedness, worldlings of all sorts may have their gods; but give me mine. An interest in all that covenant love has bestowed, and all that covenant blood has bought, and all that covenant grace can impart. "But," say you, "how am I to know this?" I am to know it by something "remaining in me"; I am to know it by having a covenant gift; I am to know it by having an old-fashioned religion remaining in my soul that the devil and earth and sin cannot turn out. And, therefore, if thou hast the earnest, the pledge given by Jehovah, the Spirit's work in thy soul, thou hast all that constitutes assurance of interest "in the Son and in the Father." "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." (*J. Irons.*)

Ver. 25. **And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life.**—

Eternal life;—I. CONSIDER THE BLESSING PROMISED—"eternal life." Life is used as the illustration, because of all blessings it is the most desired, and eternal is appended to it, because that is the highest and best form of life. 1. The first great element in eternal life is freedom from condemnation. So taught our Saviour Himself (John v. 24). 2. Another element of eternal life is the renewal of the heart in righteousness by the grace of the Divine Spirit. There is a double death of the sinner in this present life, and there is a double life corresponding to it. He is dead under the sentence of the law, and also under the power of sin. The former is removed when he is forgiven, the latter when he is renewed in the spirit of his mind. 3. It is in eternity, however, it shall be consummated. The principles by which it is now produced and maintained shall then be perfected. II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN ITS BEING REPRESENTED AS A PROMISE? 1. If eternal life be a promise, this implies that it is a free gift. 2. While a promise supposes a free gift on the part of God, it implies its acceptance on our part. If it be not accepted it can never be enjoyed. 3. If eternal life be the promise of God it is sure. "He is not a man that He should lie," &c. 4. Finally, since eternal life is the promise of God, it ought to exercise a powerful influence over us, in engaging us wholly for Him who has so provided for us. (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*) *The promise of eternal life*:—I. GOD'S PROMISE OF SALVATION is the expression of His heart of love to the needy and to the lost. This is God's promise, even eternal life. II. THE PROMISER. 1. First, we must think of God's purpose in the promise. He had a purpose in making the promise. 2. Then we must think of the Word of God, in which the promise is revealed as well as recorded; and the promise being in God's Word, will never be repealed. 3. Then we must think of Christ, in whom all the promises of God are "Yea, and in Him Amen." God says, "My covenant shall stand fast with Him." There is no change in all this. 4. And then there is another point we have to think about, and that is the believer's faith in order to realise the promise; and this is often very weak, and often fails. III. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THE PROMISE IS MADE. "This is the promise which He hath promised us." The "us" here means those who "had an unction from the Holy One," and knew the truth, as distinguished from those who held the various errors the apostle had been speaking of. It refers to all the children of God, Christ's Holy Church throughout the world; for, as the work was done for them, so the promise by which that work was made theirs is addressed to them. (*J. W. Reeve, M.A.*)

VERS. 26-28. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.—I. **THE DANGER** (ver. 26). The term employed is most significant of danger "seduce you." Those to whom he refers would come to the disciples not as open enemies, but as professed friends. The history of the Church furnishes a melancholy illustration and confirmation of these remarks. Satan appears sometimes under the guise of an angel of light. Assaults are again made on the passions and the appetites and the peculiar propensities of men, so as to entice them from the paths of purity and propriety into forbidden courses. II. Such being the danger of disciples, the apostle next instructs them **WHEREIN THEIR SAFETY LIES** (ver. 27). 1. The security of the believer is at once ascribed to the grace of the Holy Spirit. No being but the Spirit of God can keep the soul. Our own strength is weakness, and our wisdom folly. 2. The very promise of the Spirit is made in the text, which encourages us to confide in Him. He "abideth in you." There He is with His unerring wisdom to guide in every movement. 3. Observe next how independent He is said to render the man in whom He abideth. "Ye need not that any man teach you; the same anointing teacheth you of all things." This certainly does not mean that he is made presumptuous and unwilling to be taught by others, as though he needed not their help. He is engaged in teaching the very persons whom he congratulates as independent of human teaching. Nor is there any inconsistency between his views and his practice. He taught the disciples, and they were grateful for his instructions, and were much edified by them. Yet, supposing him to be withdrawn from them, it did not follow that they must remain in ignorance. The Spirit could teach by him or without him. Even an apostle could not open the mind to apprehend a single truth unless the Spirit employed and blessed him. 4. It is, therefore, declared that he is safe. "Ye shall abide in Him." Seeing the Spirit abides in him, he shall abide in Christ. III. This leads us to consider the apostle's view of **THE BELIEVER'S DUTY** (ver. 28). It does not follow that because the Spirit abides in us, and maintains His own work, we are set free from any responsibility. Rather, it is the very reverse. Since the Spirit dwells in us, we are the more called upon to be diligent and faithful. We are left without excuse, seeing we are under the power of Him who is infinitely wise, and powerful to direct and sustain us. 1. In order to preserve the health of the body we use the utmost diligence to procure necessary food, and so should we do for the soul. 2. As we freely use the food we have secured for the body, so let us do with our spiritual food. 3. As when we have partaken of the food which our industry has provided, we employ our strength in the active duties of our calling, so let us be diligent and active in serving God. IV. **THE REASONS ASSIGNED AND THE MOTIVES URGED.** "That when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." The fact is assumed that Christ shall appear, and two most solemn reflections are founded on it. Christ will appear. This is the plain and repeated testimony of the Divine Word. Well may we cry, "Who shall stand when He appeareth?" The two cases described in the words before us reveal how it shall be in the solemn hour. 1. Some shall have confidence. They believed in Him. They continued in Him. They see the Lord in the air, and, raised from the grave, they go to meet Him with gladness. Of all beings He is the very one they are most desirous to behold. 2. How awful it will be to be ashamed in that day! Ashamed of unbelief! Ashamed of sin! Ashamed of ourselves! Ashamed of slighted opportunities, neglected privileges, and lost souls! (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*) **But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you.**—The guileless spirit, through the abiding Messianic unction and illumination of the Holy Ghost, abiding in Christ, so as to have confidence at His coming:—I. **THE PROVISION MADE FOR OUR ABIDING IN HIM** is the "anointing which we receive of Him abiding in us." 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. 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. 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 (*Psa. 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." 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 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. 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. 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. 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. (R. S. Candlish, D.D.) *The anointing by Christ*.—I. THIS ANOINTING IS A GIFT. It is "the anointing which ye have received." It is contrasted in the context with the transient possessions of worldly men. To these, what seems to be solid melts into air ; what seems to be permanent vanishes away. II. THIS ANOINTING IS A HEART-CLEANSING GIFT. Those who have it mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit (Rom. viii. 13), and purify themselves even as Christ is pure (chap. iii. 3). Not through any natural power of willing and working, but through the Spirit, they are able to do these things. III. THIS ANOINTING IS A HEART-ENLARGING GIFT. A man's calling and election once made sure to his own mind, the sphere of his studies becomes enlarged. It is not written, One thing have I desired of the Lord that I may be saved, but (Psa. xxvii. 4). IV. THIS ANOINTING IS A HEART-CHEERING GIFT. It is the oil of gladness (Psa. xlv. 7), the oil of joy (Isa. lxi. 3), the source of joy unspeakable, never-ending, and glorious (1 Pet. i. 8). V. THIS ANOINTING WAS A GIFT DIVINELY GIVEN TO CHRIST. As to His human nature He was richly endued. The Spirit of God rested upon Him (Isa. xi. 2 ; John i. 32, 33). He was therewith anointed above his fellows (Psa. xlv. 7). VI. THIS ANOINTING IS A GIFT DIVINELY GIVEN TO HIS PEOPLE. It is "the anointing which ye have received of Him"—not only as a proof that they are chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, but also as their instructor and guide (Eph. i. 4 ; 1 Pet. i. 2). VII. THIS ANOINTING IS A DISTINGUISHING GIFT. It "is the anointing which ye have received." As the anointing under the law, which is no doubt alluded to in the text, was of a sweet savour, so we, as many as are anointed with His Spirit, are thereby made a sweet savour of Christ (2 Cor. ii. 15). As that anointing oil was sprinkled upon Aaron and his sons (who represent the Church, as pointedly distinguished from the rest of the congregation), so Christ sends the comforter to His disciples, whom He pointedly distinguishes from the world (John xiv. 16, 17). As the anointing oil was forbidden to be poured upon the flesh of man (Exod. xxx. 25-33), so the Holy Ghost cannot be received by the world, which, in the present dispensation, "seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." VIII. THIS ANOINTING IS A PERMANENT GIFT. It is "the anointing which abideth in you." It is permanent as opposed to those proffers of grace, so called, which, depending on the volition of the creature, are worse than precarious. This distinctive mark cannot suffer abrasure or be blown away. Its permanence is chiefly shown by the vitality of our union to Christ (John xv. 5), by the reality of our participation in the Divine nature (2 Pet. i. 4), by the eternity of the life of which the Spirit is the demonstrator and source (chap. v. 11), and by the stability of the covenant under which that life is promised (chap. ii. 25). IX. THIS ANOINTING IS A TRUTHFUL GIFT. It is truth. It is truthful as opposed to those false misgivings, whether from the flesh or the devil, which frequently trouble the Christian. It is truthful, also, as opposed to the shadows of the law. It is truthful, also, as opposed to the lies and hypocrisy of false professors. X. THIS ANOINTING IS

A SUFFICIENT GIFT. Giving sufficiency to that spiritual judgment, that noble and inestimable endowment, which alone can distinguish truth from error. (*The Evangelical Preacher.*) "*Teacheth*":—That was a true word spoken of the prophet (Isa. liv. 23). It is certain that the amount of peace which we enjoy will be largely in proportion to the amount of teaching which we receive, and appropriate, at the hands of the Lord. As the many objects of fear which, in the mind of the savage, people all lonely places, disappear when he is instructed in truer science, so do doubts and misgivings vanish as the soul comes to understand its true standing in Jesus. It is very beautiful to remark the direct teaching agency of the Lord in this passage, and to remember that it is vouchsafed to all His children. He takes equal care over each. He perhaps takes most care over the stupid ones, putting the lesson in successive modifications, that it may be brought down to their capacity. It is His chosen business to make you know His will, and if He cannot do it in one way, He will in another. But as the Psalmist very fitly says, we are oftenest taught by chastening (Psa. xciv. 12). If you have been praying to know more of Christ, do not be surprised if He takes you aside into a desert place, or leads you into a furnace of pain. 1. Christ teaches by the Holy Ghost. It is unmistakable that He is referred to in the reference to the anointing which we have received. The Holy Spirit is, so to speak, the medium by which Jesus dwells in the surrendered heart, and operates through it and in it. 2. This teaching is inward. There are doubtless many lessons taught by Providence. But, after all, the meaning of outward events is a riddle, until He opens "the dark saying on the harp." And the teaching is therefore so quiet, so unobtrusive, so hidden, that many an earnest seeker may think that nothing is being taught or acquired, as the months go on. But we cannot gauge the true amounts of progress which we are making from year to year—the teaching is so thoroughly a secret matter between God and the Spirit. But when some great crisis supervenes, some trial, some duty, and the spirit puts forth powers of which it had seemed incapable, there is a swift discovery of the results, which had been slowly accruing during previous years. 3. The main end of this teaching is to secure our abiding in Christ. "Even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." All Christian progress begins, continues, and has its fruition here. Severed from Jesus we can do nothing. Abiding in Jesus we partake of "the root and fatness" of His glorious life. All His fulness slowly enters into us. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Vers. 28, 29. **And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence.**—*Abiding in Christ the ground of confidence in the day of His appearing*:—I. THE EVENT REFERRED TO, FOR WHICH PREPARATION IS TO BE MADE, IS THE COMING OF CHRIST—that we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him, at His coming. II. THE DUTY HERE ENJOINED, THAT OF ABIDING IN CHRIST. What is it to abide in Christ? To speak of one as abiding in Christ implies that he is already in Him; if any man be in Christ he is a new creature. And surely in the great day of the Lord's coming we shall need something to rest upon as a ground of confidence firmer and more abiding than anything the world can afford us. 1. Abiding in Christ we shall have no fear of condemnation in the day of His final coming. For we are assured there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. 2. Abiding in Christ you may feel assured, when summoned into His presence at the last day, that you have a friend in your judge, an advocate and intercessor; and having chosen Him as your Saviour, you can securely leave your cause in His hand, in firm confidence that all will be well with you for ever. 3. Abiding in Christ, His promise is given, His truth pledged, that all your dearest interests are safe for eternity. III. REASONS OR MOTIVES WHICH ENFORCE THE DUTY OF ABIDING IN CHRIST, and so having confidence when He shall appear. 1. Let it be impressed on your mind that His coming to judge the world is an absolute certainty. 2. To enforce still further the duty we are considering, let me remind you again of the august and solemn scenes connected with the coming of Christ to judge the world. 3. Christ is presented in His gospel as an all-sufficient Saviour; and abiding in Him, you may rest assured that you will be able to witness the scenes of the last day with perfect peace. 4. Security amid those scenes can be derived from no other source. (*J. Hawes, D.D.*) *Preparation for the coming of the Lord*:—I. First observe to WHAT HE URGES THEM—"Abide in Him." By this he meant one thing; but that thing is so comprehensive that we may better understand it by viewing it from many sides. 1. He meant fidelity to the truth taught by our Lord. Abide in the truth which you received from the beginning; for in your earliest days it wrought salvation in you. The foundation of your faith is not a

changeable doctrine; you rest on a sure word of testimony. Truth is, in its very nature, fixed and unalterable. You know more about it than you did; but the thing itself is still the same, and must be the same. Take care that you abide in it. You will find it difficult to do so, for there is an element of changeableness about yourself; this you must overcome by grace. You will find many elements of seduction in the outside world. Let no man deceive you with vain words, though there are many abroad in these days who "would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect." Abide in Jesus, by letting His words abide in you. 2. Next, he means "abide in Him" as to the uniformity of your trust. When you first enjoyed a hope, you rested upon Christ alone. Depend to-day as simply as you depended then. If you have some idea that you are hastening towards perfection, take care that you do not indulge a vain conceit of yourself; but even if it be true, still mix not your perfection with His perfection, nor your advance in grace with the foundation which He has laid for you in His blood and righteousness. "Abide in Him." 3. Moreover, abide in the Lord Jesus Christ in making Him the constant object of your life. As you live by Christ, so live for Christ. If you are in health, live for Christ earnestly; if you are bound to a sick-bed, live for Christ patiently. 4. Surely, we should also understand by "abide in Him," that we are to persevere in our obedience to our Lord. "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him." What your Lord bids you, continue to do. Be precise and prompt in your execution of His commands. 5. Continue in spiritual union with your Lord. All the life you have is life derived from Him; seek no other. You are not a Christian except as Jesus is the Christ of God to you; you are not alive unto God, except as you are one with the risen Lord. 6. "Abide in Him," in the sense of being at home in Him. Do not go to Jesus one day, and to the world another day; do not be a lodger with Him, but abide in Him. What a comfort to have our Lord Himself to be our chosen dwelling-place in time and in eternity! Why does the apostle urge us to abide in Christ? Is there any likelihood of our going away? Yes, for in this very chapter he mentions apostates, who from disciples had degenerated into antichrists, of whom he says, "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." "Abide in Him," then, and do not turn aside unto crooked ways, as many professors have done. II. Secondly, notice UNDER WHAT CHARACTER JOHN ADDRESSES THESE BELIEVERS. He says, "And now, little children." 1. This indicates the apostle's love to them. He could not wish them a greater blessing out of the depth of his heart's affection, than that they should faithfully abide in Christ. 2. Next, by this he suggests their near and dear relation to their Father in heaven. Because you are little children, you are not of travelling years, therefore stay at home and abide in your Lord. 3. Does he not hint at their feebleness? Even if you were grown and strong, you would not be wise to gather all together and wander away into the far country; but as you are so young, so dependent, so feeble, it is essential that you abide in Him. Is He not your life, your all? 4. Does not the apostle also gently hint at their fickleness? You are very changeable, like little babes. You are apt to be hot and cold in half an hour. Surrender yourself to Him by an everlasting covenant never to be cancelled. Be His for ever and ever. 5. Did not this remind them of their daily dependence upon the Lord's care, as little children depend on their parents? III. We shall consider BY WHAT MOTIVE JOHN EXHORTS US TO THIS PLEASANT AND NECESSARY DUTY OF ABIDING IN CHRIST. Look at that little word: it runs thus, "that we may have confidence." The beloved John needed to have confidence at the appearing of the Lord, and confidence fetched from the same source as that to which he directed his little children. How wisely, and yet how sweetly, he puts himself upon our level in this matter! 1. Notice, further, that the motive is one drawn from Jesus. John does not drive believers with the lash of the law, but he draws them with the cords of love. 2. The motive is drawn from our Lord's expected advent. Notice how John puts it. He uses two words for the same thing: "when He shall appear," and, "at His coming." The second advent may be viewed in two lights. First, as the appearing of one who is here already, but is hidden; and next, as the coming of one who is absent. In the first sense we know that our Lord Jesus Christ abides in His Church; according to His word, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Yet, though spiritually present, He is unseen. The spiritual and secret presence of Christ will become a visible and manifest presence in the day of His appearing. The apostle also uses the term, "at His coming," or, "His presence." This is the same thing from another point of view. In a certain evident sense our Lord is absent: "He is

not here, for He is risen." He has gone His way unto the Father. In that respect He will come a second time, "without a sin-offering, unto salvation." He who has gone from us will so come in like manner as He was seen to go up into heaven. John pleads the glorious manifestation of our Lord under both of these views as a reason for abiding in Him. As to our Lord's "appearing," he would have us abide in Christ, that we may have confidence when He appears. What does He mean by having confidence when He shall appear? Why, this: that if you abide in Him when you do not see Him, you will be very bold should He suddenly reveal Himself. Before He appears, you have dwelt in Him, and He has dwelt in you; what fear could His appearing cause you? The word translated "confidence" means freedom of speech. If our Divine Lord were to appear in a moment, we should not lose our tongue through fear, but should welcome Him with glad acclaim. The other point is, that you should "not be ashamed before Him at His coming." That means, that having regarded Him as being absent, you have not so lived that, if He should suddenly be present in person, you would be ashamed of your past life. What must it be to be driven with shame away from His presence into everlasting contempt! (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The highest life :—The term "little children" is a term of endearment. John was a man of love, those who loved Christ he loved dearly. "And now, little children," or better, my little children. The good have a property in the good. The words imply three things—I. AN ACTUAL EXISTENCE IN CHRIST. You cannot "abide" in Him unless you are actually in Him. What is it to be in Christ? To be in His school as His disciple, in His family as His brethren, in His character as His imitators. Spiritually, all men live more or less in the character of others. The existing generation lives in the character of its predecessor, loving children live in the character of their parents. To live in His character, actuated in all things by His Spirit, guided in all things by His principles, is the highest state of existence for man. II. THE POSSIBILITY OF LOSING THIS STATE OF EXISTENCE. If not, why should we be exhorted to "abide"? First, the constitutional freedom of the soul implies the possibility. Secondly, the corrupting influences of society are hostile to this state of existence. Thirdly, the exhortations of Scripture imply the danger of its decay. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "Be steadfast," &c. III. THE NECESSITY FOR CONTINUING IN THIS STATE OF EXISTENCE. "When He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed at His coming." Or, according to the New Version, "that if He shall be manifested we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." The idea is that a continuance of this high state of existence, this life in Christ will enable you to meet Him with unabashed confidence. Sooner or later He will come to all. He comes to all at death. (D. Thomas, D.D.)

Ashamed to meet the Lord :—A man lay dying many years ago. He had lived a Christian life and was esteemed by all who knew him. His sons stood round his bed, hanging upon their father's lips, and prepared to treasure the last words which he should speak to them in this life. They all, and the aged man himself, knew that he must soon cross the black river of death, so it was no shock when one of his sons asked, "Father, father, are you not afraid to die?" There was a pause as if the dying man turned his mental gaze in upon himself, and then slowly he replied, "No, no! I am not afraid to die, but," and he lifted his wasted hand, "I am almost ashamed to die when I look back upon my years wasted, that might have been spent in more active service for my Lord." If we have done a little for Christ, how little it is! How half-hearted have been our efforts! While not afraid to meet our God, we are almost ashamed to meet Him bearing "nothing but leaves" instead of "sheaves of gathered grain." (J. Elder Cumming, D.D.)

The advantage of abiding in Christ :—The cloth must be dipped into the dyer's vat, and lie there, if it is to be tinged with the colour. The sensitive plate must be patiently kept in position for many hours if invisible stars are to photograph themselves upon it. The vase must be held with a steady hand beneath the fountain if it is to be filled. Keep yourselves in Jesus Christ. Then here you will begin to be changed into the same image, and when He comes He will come as your Saviour, and complete your uncompleted work, and make you altogether like Himself. (A. Maclaren, D.D.)

Abiding in Christ gives confidence :—It is only in proportion as we keep ourselves in union with Christ, in heart and mind, and will, and work, that we shall stand steadfast. The lightest substances may be made stable, if they are glued on to something stable. You can mortise a bit of thin stone into the living rock, and then it will stand "four-square to every wind that blows." So it is only on condition of our keeping ourselves in Jesus Christ, that we are able to keep ourselves

steadfast, and to present a front of resistance that does not yield one foot, either to imperceptible continuous pressure, to sudden assaults, or to the fluctuations of our own changeful dispositions and tempers. The ground on which a man stands has a great deal to do with the firmness of his footing. You cannot stand fast upon a bed of slime, or upon a sandbank being undermined by the tides. And if we, changeful creatures, are to be steadfast in any region, our surest way of being so is to knit ourselves to Him "who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," and from whose immortality will flow some copy and reflection of itself into your also changeful natures. (*Ibid.*)

If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him.—*A standard of judgment:—*

I. A STANDARD OF JUDGMENT IS SET UP—"If ye know that He is righteous." The expression is not put in this form to suggest the idea of doubtfulness. On the contrary, it is an assumption of certainty. "If ye know" is tantamount to "since ye know." He is righteous in His holiness. He maintains it in a way which is in strictest harmony with the requirements of His law. It is never compromised in the provisions of the gospel. He is righteous in His truth. He has uttered no threatening which He shall not execute, He has delivered no promise which He shall not fulfil. He is equally righteous in His mercy. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne; mercy and truth go before His face." He is righteous in His goodness. All its bounties are conferred on the sinner for Jesus' sake. He is righteous in His justice. "Ye say the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, is not My way equal? are not your ways unequal?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" II. THE EVIDENCE FURNISHED BY THIS STANDARD, ENABLING US TO JUDGE OF THE GRACIOUS STATE OF THE BELIEVER. "Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him." 1. There are some of whom it may be said they are righteous. This is to be understood, not of the imputed righteousness by which they are justified, but of the personal righteousness by which they are sanctified. If it is asked, how is such a change made to pass upon the sinner? our reply is in the words of the Divine promise (Jer. xxxi. 33). This is enough to account for their complete transformation of life. Of every one on whom the Spirit of God has thus operated it may be said, "He is righteous." A few words will explain how it is so. He thus perceives the meaning of the law. He obtains a view of its spirituality and extent which he never had before. He sees how it covers his whole life, and enters into the deepest recesses of his heart. He thus feels the obligation of the law. He is led distinctly to perceive that it is impossible for it to relax its demands. It must always endure to claim the universal and unbroken homage of the heart and life. He is thus made to love the law. No matter how far he comes short of it, and how much it condemns him, he cannot but approve and admire it. He condemns himself, but he justifies it. He thus learns habitually to avoid the violation of the law. He cannot live in sin. He may be overcome by the force of temptation; but the whole bent of his mind is towards righteousness. He is thus impelled to obey the law. It is not the ground of his hope, but it is the rule of his life. Say now what must be the influence and effect of such exercises as these? It is not too much to say of their subject, "he is righteous." 2. Such righteousness furnishes satisfying proof that He who manifests it is born of God. Nature can bear no such fruit. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Education, and example, and prudence may do much, but they cannot produce the holiness of which we have spoken. Again, we find that it is distinctly ascribed to grace in the Divine Word (Eph. ii. 10). (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*) *Intermediate condition of the Divine fellowship—righteousness:—*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. 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 (Matt. v. 43-45; John viii. 38-44). John may have had these words of his Master in his mind when he wrote 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. 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 (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. 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 impulse 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? 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. 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 confirmed to it, to submit to it, is life. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *What is it to be a doer of righteousness?*—1. Righteousness is that which in itself is right, or according to the will of God. To do righteousness is to do that which He commands, whether it relates to moral or positive precepts. 2. Doing righteousness includes in it a regard to the rectitude and propriety of what is commanded. It is not the honour or advantage arising from the performance of duty, but it is being a Divine requirement, and tending to glorify God, that furnishes the motive to obedience, and renders it acceptable in His sight (*Zech. vii. 5, 6*). 3. The sincerity of our obedience is implied in doing righteousness. Genuine obedience includes the whole compass of duty, and esteems God's testimonies concerning all things to be right. 4. It includes a patient continuance in well-doing, and preserving to the end. 5. Doing righteousness supposes the existence of a righteous principle. The tree must be made good before the fruit can be good. The fountain must be cleansed ere the streams can be pure; and a godly life can only be the effect of a Divine nature. 6. Those only can be said to work righteousness who place no dependence on the righteousness they have wrought. Faith in Jesus is essential to all true obedience, and without this it is impossible to please God. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1-6. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.—*Children of God*:—These two verses of St. John's Epistle contain a simple summary of true religion. "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is begotten of Him." Thus far the Old Testament goes. Israel had learned this primary lesson of true religion, that the Almighty is the Righteous Power. Knowing Jehovah, not as a national deity who would help His own people whether they were right or wrong, but as the righteous God over all, who would reject His

chosen people if they did wrong, the prophets saw clearly also that only those men who do right can claim to be the sons of the Most High. The next verse contains a summary of the New Testament revelation of real religion: "Behold what manner of love," &c. It is all from God's love in Christ that we have right to be called children of God. These two words—one fulfilling the Old Testament, the other opening the riches of the New—mark the essence of real religion: righteousness and sonship. Let us first take up the Old Testament word for it. It is a solid word. The true religion is not a moral veneering of life; it is not a piece of pious ornamentation, nor an official robe drawn over an unprincipled heart. It is not an emotional substitute for conduct. The Old Testament word for religion is a word of cubic contents—righteousness, a real thing, concrete as just dealing between man and man. A present indisputable argument for belief in Moses and the prophets as holy men of old inspired of God is that they made the superhuman effort of building a nation on the Ten Commandments. They had the supernal faith to command a people to do right, and to live together in just relations in the fear of God. We do not yet dare bring our politics up to that level of the prophets. The religion which first mastered the lesson of eternal justice and made it the foundation of a state was not a faith which had sprung up of itself out of the jungle of Canaanitish superstitions. It was not found in Babylon. Assyria's power perished for the lack of it. The true God impressed Himself upon Moses and the prophets. We know that they were the appointed bearers of a Divine revelation, and the bringers of the light, very much as we might know that a highway running up to some clear mountain height through the swamp and the underbrush at its foot was never a spontaneous freak of nature, but marks the course of some intelligent purpose. The Lord God made that way of righteousness through all the superstitions and idolatries of the nations on and up to its Messianic height. The religion of eternal righteousness is the supernal fact of history. Once gain sight of the everlasting righteousness, and nothing else seems great. Observe that the righteousness which from beginning to end the Old Testament presses for is no abstraction, but concrete, solid right-doing. The preachers of righteousness in the Old Testament faced men, and threw themselves in the name of the holy God into the thick of events. They were the fearless advocates of the oppressed; they were God's statesmen amid the shifting politics of Jerusalem. They could flash the eternal justice into the covetous eyes of princes. Righteousness in the old testament is no scholar's candle flickering in an attic; it is an electric light revealing the street; all classes have to pass under it and be seen. Turn now from the prophets to the New Testament. We hear ringing clear and full through the preaching of the apostles another word for the true religion. It is sonship. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." The essence of the New Testament is in the Lord's parable of the prodigal son. So Jesus Himself opened the heart of the gospel toward us sinners. The grandest thing in the world for any man to do is really to live day and night, alike in the darkness or in the joy of life, as a son of the Most High God. Only one ever accomplished perfectly this task; and we for the most part do but succeed as yet in living here and there, now and then, as the children of the Father in heaven. But think a moment what it is to do this. It would signify within us a very genuine humility. In a life of sonship humility would have to be at times that conscious sense of evil or of wrongdoing which is repentance for sin. The humility of a life of filial dependence on God will become so deep and pure that no possible outward success or inward spiritual triumph will be able to cause the son of the living God to dwell in any other habit and atmosphere. Sonship, again, so far as this New Testament word for religion is realised by any of us, will free us from the haunting sense of strangeness in this world. It is not simply the mystery of things; it is the mystery of ourselves that baffles us. Death does not grow less strange from our increasing familiarity with it. All things are strange, and will grow stranger to us, unless we can discover some diviner thoughtfulness in them; unless, amid all the mystery of the universe, we shall know ourselves as God's children, and begin on this earth to be in our hearts at home with our God. This likewise will be the mark of true sonship, and the religion of sonship—obedience, strong, cheerful obedience. The Christian sense of sonship, so far as we receive the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father, will enable us, in short, to live the simple life of trust. It is life up on the sunny heights. Trust is final spiritual mastery of things. It is perfect poise of spirit, like the poise of the eagle after it has beaten its way up against the wind into the sky, and rests circling with buoyant wings upon the sunny air. Trust is

ability of soul to live happily without Divine explanation. Faith in God is willingness to wait for explanations of things. You ask for reasons why certain events have happened to you; why any evil, such as we may meet in the street, is tolerated for a moment in a world which has a God over it; why human life has often proved so tragic; why death reigns; why a thousand shadows fleck the light; why, in short, we mortals seem to be like wanderers in a forest, where it is both dark and bright. Now, faith is not an answer to any of these inquiries; faith does not yet lead us out with the clearing, but faith is trust in the light between the shadows, trust that the light is high and eternal, and the shadows only for the moment. Trust is the discovery of the soul that it can live awhile without explanations, and not be disturbed. Such trust is the confidence of sonship. Now, I am aware that men who have to meet the practical urgencies of life often find it easier to come to some determination of righteousness than it is for them to let their lives be lifted up into the assurance of sonship. It is less difficult for some of you to be Old Testament worthies than it is to become New Testament saints. You love righteousness, and you hate injustice and fraud. There you are inclined to stop. It is better for any one to live according to the righteousness of the Old Testament than not to live at all from the Bible. The seeds of the perfect life of sonship are contained in the religion of the prophets. Nevertheless, the Christ came to fulfil the righteousness of the old dispensation. The righteousness which is by faith is our full salvation. Let one's dutiful living spring directly out of his sense of sonship, and it will become a transfigured conscientiousness. The light of love will play all through it. To this higher life we are called. Men will finally do right toward one another when they shall learn to live together as sons of God. The present revival of right-doing will be complete when in the power of the Holy Spirit men are born anew as the children of the Father in heaven. (*Newman Smyth.*) *The Divine birth—the family likeness*:—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 accordingly," in virtue of our "being born of Him." Born of Him! That is what awakens John's grateful surprise. 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. 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. 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 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. 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. 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. 1. 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. 2. 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." 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. Is not this a hope "full of glory"? And is it not a hope full of holiness too? (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *God's adoptive love*:—I. First, we are arrested by the manner in which the apostle opens the subject—"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." It is the language of adoration and wonder. Our astonishment might well be excited that God had created us; that He preserved us, notwithstanding our unworthiness. But that He should

adopt sinners was condescension which might well prompt the exclamation, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." What, then, is the manner of this love? It passeth knowledge. It was everlasting love, gratuitous love, and at the same time costly love. And then how rich the blessings procured by such love. 2. "We are called the sons of God." It is clear this statement must be understood in a restricted sense. All are the sons of God by creation, also by providence. The text refers to a sonship peculiar to those who are the objects of redeeming love. Adoption into the family of God is singled out as evidence and effect of His love. Nor can we wonder at this selection. Think of the work that is done when the sinner is made a son of God. It is a new birth unto righteousness. The sinner is made alive unto God. Think, again, of the change that is effected in such a work. Think of the privileges of sonship. Think, finally, of the inheritance in store for them. "If children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." 3. The estimate formed of the privilege of sonship by the world. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." It might have been supposed that all men would applaud them as the happiest and most excellent of the children of men. But, alas! it is very different. The world does not know the sons of God. The world both disapproves and dislikes the peculiarity of the sons of God. The reason is suggested in the text. "Therefore," saith the apostle. He had only said it was a blessed thing to be called the sons of God. Can it be, then, this is that which the world dislikes? This is clearly his meaning. Worldly men do not understand the doctrine of sonship. It is too spiritual for their perception. They scorn it as the offspring of spiritual pride. Unhappily, however, for their hot displeasure, there is an indisputable fact to prove this enmity of the world to the sons of God. It is quoted by the apostle. It is the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says of the world and of Him, "it knew Him not." This accords with the history, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Ought this, then, to offend them? Certainly not. It ought to profit them. It should put them on their guard, that they may give no unnecessary offence. It should make them thankful they are not of the same spirit. 4. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." How carefully the views of the apostle are balanced in this passage. When he set forth sonship and its high privileges he annexed a caution, "the world knoweth us not," lest any might be disappointed and injured. So again after he had given that caution he reassures them of the reality and continuance of their blessedness, "Now are we the sons of God." This might be rendered necessary by the dark suspicions of their own minds. They found much within them contrary to what they could desire or might expect. Let them not be cast down. Or it might be rendered necessary by the conduct of others towards them. They might find themselves suspected and evil entreated. Through it all let them remember they are still the sons of God. Nor should they forget what was required of them as such. "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." "Walk worthy of your high vocation." So living they might enjoy the sweet consciousness that, let the world do or say as they might, they could appropriate the assuring words, "Now are we the sons of God." 5. Their thoughts are directed to the future. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." 6. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Adopting love of the Father:—* I. LOOK AT THE RESULT OR PURPOSE OF THIS LOVE, AND WE SHALL BE THE BETTER PREPARED TO UNDERSTAND ITS "MANNER." What "manner" of love is this, in transforming those who were once so unlike Him? Love prompted Him to adopt them; and after they are adopted He has peculiar delight in them. What "manner" of love is this, that the fallen should at length have a place in His bosom which the unfallen can never occupy! Still more, a glorious destiny awaits them. When the years of minority are expired the children are taken home to the household on high, where the whole family form one unbroken and vast assemblage. The extraordinary love of the Father is also seen in the entire circuit of discipline which has been arranged for His children. And will not such a child be content in any circumstances? What is good for him his Father will give him. As much of temporal blessing will he get as he can improve. II. THE SINGULARITY OF THE DIVINE AFFECTION. 1. And first, the love that leads a man to call a child his own, which is not his by natural descent, has not such a "manner" about it. For when among men a child is adopted, it is usually because the adopter thinks it worthy of his regard; because there is something in its features or character that

pleases him. But no such motive could prompt the Divine affection, for we are utterly lost and loathsome before Him. 2. Again, if one adopts a child, it is commonly because himself is childless, or his hearth may have been desolated by war or disease. He longs to have some object near him on which to expend his attachment. But Jehovah had myriads of a flourishing progeny—uncounted hosts of bright intelligences, who have never disobeyed Him. But the present condition of the sons of God is veiled and incomplete. “Therefore,” the apostle adds, “the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.” The mission of the Son of God was spiritual, was too ethereal for the coarse vision of the world to detect, or its sordid heart to admire. Its great ones, and not its good ones, divide among themselves the world’s homage. Not that the world is able to ignore Christianity. But it admires it not for itself but for its splendid results—for the beneficial effects, in the form of patriotism and philanthropy, which it has produced. It is not Wilberforce the saint, but Wilberforce the queller of the slave trade, that men admire. The dignity and prospects of the sons of God are not of a secular and visible nature. “The world knoweth them not.” But should this ignorance on the part of the world dispirit you? By no means. Your case is not solitary. It did not recognise the Son of God. “Now are we the sons of God.” Despite of this non-recognition on the part of the world, we are the sons of God. The reality of our adoption is not modified by the world’s oblivion of it. It may be undiscovered by others, but our own experience gives ourselves the full assurance of it. But noble as is our present condition, our ultimate dignity surpasses conception. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be.” Even though we now revel in the Divine favour, yet such transcendent felicity is scarcely a premiss to reason from as to the glory of our ultimate heritage. There is so much about us that clogs and confines us—so deep is the shadow that earth throws over the children of God that any inference as to coming freedom and glory is all but an impossibility. Such being the present eclipse of our sonship, there is the less wonder that “the world knoweth us not.” Their aim is to be as like Him as they can be here, in the hope that they shall be perfectly like Him hereafter. (*John Eadie, D.D.*)

*The manner of love bestowed upon us:—*I. THE MANNER OF LOVE WHICH THE FATHER HATH BESTOWED UPON US. 1. Sovereign in its exercise. 2. Gracious in its communication. 3. Merciful in its regards. 4. Everlasting in its continuance. II. THE CONSEQUENCES WHICH FLOW TO US FROM THAT LOVE. 1. Present adoption into God’s family. 2. Future restoration to His image. III. THE ATTENTION WITH WHICH THE WHOLE SHOULD BE REGARDED. 1. Your attention should deepen your humility. 2. Your attention should strengthen your confidence. 3. Your attention should excite your affection. (*W. Mudge, B.A.*)

*The present relationship and future prospects of the faithful:—*I. THE CHRISTIAN’S PRESENT STATE IS ONE OF RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. It implies—1. Godlikeness. 2. Confidence. 3. Liberty. 4. It entitles us to a glorious inheritance. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS FUTURE LIFE ARE IN A GREAT MEASURE UNKNOWN TO HIM. III. WE HAVE, NEVERTHELESS, SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE OF THAT FUTURE TO MAKE US HAPPY IN THE PRESENT. (*H. P. Bowen.*)

*The wonderful love of God as displayed in human redemption:—*I. THE UNWORTHINESS OF ITS OBJECTS. II. THE EXPENSIVENESS OF THE SACRIFICE. III. THE VARIETY AND VASTNESS OF THE BLESSINGS SECURED TO US THROUGH THIS ADOPTING LOVE. 1. Present. 2. Future. IV. THIS LOVE IS TO BE TO US A SUBJECT OF MEDITATION. “Behold.” 1. Admire it. 2. Trust in it. 3. Extol it. 4. Believe it. (*W. Lloyd.*)

*What manner of love:—*Here, you notice, that although St. John had been learning more and more about the love of God all his days, he does not trust himself to characterise it. I believe throughout eternity we shall never find the right word for it. Even if we think that we have made some such grand discovery as to present it to us in an altogether new light, we shall still go on discovering that there is more to be said about it. Mark, the love spoken of here is the love of the Father. This text takes us right back to the source from which all other blessings flow. That word “Father!”—there is scarcely a heart in which there does not seem to be awakened something like a sympathetic thrill at the sound—even those who are most estranged from God by sin and wicked works. Does it not answer to an inward yearning of our human hearts? Orphans are we, and desolate, unless we know that within the veil we have One who not only bears a Father’s name but possesses a Father’s heart. Now observe, this love is represented as being definitely bestowed, with a view to a specific end, and that end is in order that we might be called the sons of God. We might have been called the sons of God in the sense of creation, without any such love being bestowed upon us, without any

gift being made. There was no particular difficulty in our being placed in such a position; indeed, as an historical fact, we are His offspring. Nor, again, was there any special difficulty in the way of His adopting a certain ecclesiastical relationship to us, standing to us in the relation of Father to an ecclesiastical theocracy, which He Himself established; there was no difficulty in that. But in order that He might stand in the relationship indicated to us in this sense, as "our Father," and put us in the position indicated by the word "son" in this passage, it was necessary that He should make such a manifestation of His love towards us as He has made in the Incarnation. Now we pass on to consider this special relationship, and the first thought that strikes me is this, that in order that you and I might attain to it the love of God had first of all to surmount a stupendous difficulty. There was a question which God represents Himself as putting to Himself, and that question is, "How shall I set thee amongst the children?" Oh, you say, by an act of God's sovereign power. But an act of God's sovereign power would not make us real children of His. The child partakes of the nature of his parent. Now, we have lost the nature of our spiritual Parent, we have inherited the nature of our earthly parent: the old Adam. We come into the world with an hereditary taint of rebellion against God. How many of us there are who, from our earliest days, have gone on living consistently with this start. Now, under those circumstances, how can God put us amongst the children? If God were to say to one of you, "You are My child," would that make you His child unless He were first to perform a moral miracle upon you? Now, God performs moral miracles, but He does it in a particular way. He so performs the miracle that in the actual performance of it our will shall be consciously co-operating with Him. "How shall I set thee amongst the children?" The answer is given in the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was only one way in which the love of God could achieve this marvellous result. It was to be done by a gift—the gift of Incarnate Love. What do we know about the love of God? I see it revealed in the human form of Jesus. What is that love of God like? I apprehend its character by gazing into the face of Jesus. What is it that the love of God actually does achieve? It achieves its very end, it achieves the end of bringing me, poor, guilty rebel as I am, into a filial relationship with God; enabling me to look up into God's face and say, "Thank God, I now am a child of God." How is this done? It is done by a new birth. How is this birth to be effected? "Ye must be born again." But how am I to pass from the old life into this new life of God? I am "born not of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of the will of God." How am I born? By complying with that will, by surrendering myself to the revealed love of God in the person of Christ. If at some great cost some boon which you very much require is brought within your reach, and if you spurn it, I venture to say it is impossible to cut your benefactor more to the heart than by such a line of conduct. Now, then, are you called a child of God? Does God call you so? Is it so? If not, why not? Don't say that God has made it so difficult. Do you think it probable that God should refuse the very boon which He has given His Son in order to bestow? (*A. H. M. H. Aitken.*) *The sons of God*:—1. The privilege itself is to be "called the sons of God." Mark, not subjects or servants, but sons; and to be called the sons of God is to be the sons of God. 2. The fountain and first rise is the "love of the Father," who is everywhere represented as the first cause of our blessedness. God's love is nothing else but His goodwill and resolution to impart such great privileges to us; He did it because He would do it; He was resolved to do it, and took pleasure in it. 3. The wonderful degree in the expression of His love, "What manner of love." The expression noteth not only the quality, but quantity. 4. The note of attention, or the terms used exciting our attention, "Behold." There is a threefold "behold" in Scripture, and they are applicable to this place; as—(1) The behold of demonstration, which is referred to a thing or person present, and noteth the certainty of sense (John i. 29). (2) The behold of admiration, or awakening our drowsy minds, when any extraordinary thing is spoken of (Lam. i. 12). So here in the case of good, is there any love like unto this love? And all is that we may entertain it with wonder and reverence. (3) The behold of gratulation, as rejoicing and blessing ourselves in the privilege (Psa. cxxi. 4). 1. THERE IS SUCH A RELATION AS THAT OF FATHER AND CHILDREN BETWEEN GOD AND HIS PEOPLE. 1. It proceedeth from a distinct cause, His special and peculiar love, not from that common goodness and bounty which He expresseth to all His creatures (Psa. cxlv. 9). But this is the special act of His grace or of His great love (Eph. ii. 4, 5). 2. The foundation of this relation is not our being which we have from Him as a Creator, but our new being which we

have from Him as a Father in Christ. 3. The whole commerce and communion that is between us and Him is on God's part fatherly, on our part childlike. II. THAT THIS IS A BLESSED AND GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE will appear if we consider—1. The person adopting, the great and glorious God, who is so far above us, so happy within Himself, and needeth not us nor our choicest love and service; who had a Son of His own, Jesus Christ, the eternally-begotten of the Father, "the Son of His love," in whom His soul found such full complacency and delight. 2. The persons who are adopted—miserable sinners. 3. The fountain of this mercy and grace, or that which moved God, was His love: this was that which set His power and mercy at work to bring us into this estate. (1) This was an eternal love; the first foundation of it was laid in the election of God; there is the bottom stone in this building. (2) It was a free love: "I will love them freely." (3) It is special, peculiar love, not common to the world; yet this love was bestowed upon us. (4) It is a costly love, considering the way how it is brought about. 4. The dignity itself nakedly considered; it is a greater honour than the world can afford to us, a matter to be rather wondered at than told. 5. It is not a naked and empty title, but giveth us a right to the greatest privileges imaginable. (1) With respect to the present state; and there—(a) He will give us the Holy Spirit to be our sanctifier, guide, and comfort. (b) He giveth us an allowance of such temporal things, of outward mercies, as are convenient for us (Matt. vi. 25, 30). (2) With respect to the life to come. Eternal blessedness is the fruit of adoption (Rom. viii. 17). III. BELIEVERS OUGHT TO BE EXCITED TO THE EARNEST CONSIDERATION OF IT. 1. To quicken our thankfulness, which is the chief motive and principle of gospel-obedience. 2. That we may keep up the joy of our faith and comfort in afflictions from the world. Though we be God's children, yet the greater part of the world treateth us as slaves. It doth support us often and frequently to consider the world cannot hate us so much as God loveth us. 3. That we may be satisfied and contented with our portion; if you have God to your Father, what though you be straitened in the world? 4. To stir us up to be exemplary in holiness; for if God be matchless in His love we should be singular in our holiness; our return must carry proportion with our receipts. 5. We should consider it, that we may clear up our interest the more in it and not foolishly content ourselves with an inferior happiness. The use that I shall make of it is to persuade you to put in for a share in this blessed privilege. To direct you in this, let me tell you—(1) That this new relation dependeth on the new birth, and that none are adopted but those that are regenerated and renewed to the image and likeness of God; all others, though called Christians, are degenerate children. (2) Regeneration is God's act; but repentance and faith, which are the immediate issues of it, are ours, and you must enter by the strait gate if you would enter into God's family and obtain the privileges of it. (3) If you would have the privileges of children you must perform the duties of children; we catch at privileges but neglect duty. Now the great duty of children is to love, please, and honour their father. (4) If we would enjoy the privileges of the family we must submit to the discipline of the family. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The spiritual sonship*:—In the words there are two things chiefly: First, what this means "Sons of God"; secondly, what this, "To be called the sons of God." First, sons of God is a title used divers ways; the son of God is either by nature, or by creation, or by participation, or by a general profession, or by adoption. Now, when this sonship by adoption is applied to those whom God chooseth, there are two kinds of it mentioned in Scripture, the former of which is but a resemblance and figure of the latter. Of it is that speech of God to Moses (Exod. iv. 22), which very privilege Paul calleth by the name of adoption (Rom. ix. 4). By it is no other thing meant but God's choosing that people out of all nations under heaven to be His peculiar people; which, albeit it were an high favour, yet it was not properly a spiritual blessing, but a type and a shadow of that adoption which Paul calleth the adoption of sons (Gal. iv. 5), which is that grace of God by which He is pleased to take us for His children in Christ, and to make us heirs together with Him of eternal glory; and this is that which John speaketh of in this place. The second thing is, what it is to be called the sons of God. It must not be so taken as though this of being the sons of God were a matter of title only without substance, as when a man hath a word of respect cast upon him only for compliment's sake; but to be called the sons of God and to be the sons of God are here all one. The general points are these—First, that the state of God's adoption is a glorious estate. Secondly, that it is an estate of which it is possible for him that is invested into it to be assured in his own soul. Thirdly, that it is an estate unalterable. Fourthly, that

the alone spring and beginning of it is God's love. How the first point is grounded upon this Scripture appears by the admiration which the apostle breaks out into, wondering at the infiniteness of God's mercy, who should vouchsafe unto the sons of men such a prerogative, and provoking others to join with him therein, as though it were a matter singular from all example that we should be advanced to so great an honour to be the sons of God. I could easily collect even a cloud of circumstances for the enlarging the glory and worth of this estate; I will reduce all to three heads. The first is the excellency of the means to procure it to us. The second is the majesty of the person by whose name (through our adoption) we are entitled. The third is the prerogatives and privileges that are belonging to it. Now these prerogatives are to be distinguished thus: To be either in this life or hereafter. Touching this life I will name only two. The first is an interest into God's particular and special providence. If my wants be outward here is my Heavenly Father standing by me, He knoweth what I need, and He cannot forget me. If my defects be from within He is that God of all grace, and shall fulfil all my necessities. This privilege of God's especial providence is that river of God out of which flow these streams to make glad the adopted of God. The second prerogative in this life is the free use of God's creatures, both for necessity and for delight. This is a true saying. The charter anciently given by the great Lord of all at our first creation, touching the use of His creatures, was forfeited into the hands of the Donor by Adam's fall. It is restored and renewed by Christ, and only to those who are honoured with the adoption of sons, only the heirs of heaven are the right inheritors of the earth; all the rest are but usurpers. Now for the prerogative of the sons of God appertaining to the life to come, which way shall I begin to express it? When Haman was willed to speak by Ahasuerus, What should be done to the man whom the king would honour, he (supposing that the king had no meaning to honour any but him), said thus (Est. vi. 8, 9). So shall it be to the sons of God at the day of judgment. What should now be the use of this doctrine, or wherefore hath this dignity of adoption been set before us, but to stir us all up to say in our hearts, as Christ's hearers did when He had spoken to them of the bread of life, Lord (said they) evermore give us this bread. So you, I beseech you, say every one in the strength of your best desires, Is the state of adoption such an honourable estate? Lord, evermore give us this dignity. And now, touching the means by which those that do affect this prerogative of adoption may attain unto it. There are two places of Scripture especially by which we may be rightly informed in this matter (Gal. iii. 26; John i. 12). Both put together do make this good, that the means of adoption is faith in Christ Jesus, or believing in His name. First, what kind of faith it is which makes us capable of adoption. Secondly, how it brings us to be the sons of God. Thirdly, how itself is wrought in the hearts of the adopted. Touching the first, this I say, that the believing, or faith, which maketh a man the son of God is an action of the will, whereby a man knowing certainly out of the Scriptures that Jesus Christ is the promised Saviour of mankind doth for the matter of his soul settle his heart and repose himself wholly and solely upon Him. This is properly that faith which is called justifying or saving faith. For the second, that also is necessary to be rightly opened, because some men of corrupt minds do think these speeches, faith justifieth, faith adopteth, faith saveth, to be derogatory to the glory of God, and to carry a contradiction to these, Christ justifieth, Christ adopteth, Christ saveth. Understand we therefore, and be not deceived. One thing may be spoken of divers particulars in a different sense: as, for example, God the Father adopteth, Christ Jesus adopteth, the Holy Ghost adopteth, faith adopteth; these are all true and without any mutual contrariety. God the Father adopteth as the fountain of adoption; Christ as the ground of adoption; the Holy Ghost as the applicer of adoption; faith as the instrument of adoption. The third point was to show how this faith is wrought in the hearts of the adopted. The Supreme Giver of faith is God, every good gift is from Him. The second doctrine is, that it is possible for him that is the son of God to be assured in his own soul that he is so. I am commanded by my Saviour when I pray to call God Father. How is He to me a Father into whose presence I may dare to come, but as I am His adopted son in Christ? Shall I term Him Father, and have no assurance that I am His son? This were intolerable presumption. To bring us to the assurance of our adoption is the drift of preaching, the scope of praying, and the intent of our administering and receiving the sacraments: all aim and drive at this, that we may learn to apply the general sweetness of the Scriptures to our own particulars. But to cut off all mistakings: here is a necessary question

to be made touching this assurance of adoption, Whether it be such an assurance which is so certain that it is never disturbed with doubting? I answer: I dare not say it is such an assurance; I know David knew himself to be the chosen of God, yet I know that sometimes he thought he was cast out of God's sight, and that the Lord would show no more favour (Psalms xxxi. 22, lxxvii. 7, lxi. 3). What assurance then (will you say) is this you discourse of? I answer, an assurance striving after assurance; an assurance wrestling and combating with continual doubtings. It is the wisdom of God by this very means to settle the hearts of His chosen. It was one of the old rules of the law, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should stand. It is therefore the wisdom of God that the assurance of adoption should be grounded upon the testimony of two very sufficient witnesses, the Spirit of God and our own spirit. The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. (*S. Hieron.*) *The Father's love and the children's blessedness*:—I have taken the text from the New Version, which gives us this very emphatic Amen: "And such we are." Well may the apostle cry "Behold!" as he sets forth this wonderful truth. I. See, then, WHENCE THIS LOVE COMES. Behold what manner of love "the Father" hath bestowed upon us. Let men come to think that God is against them, and what can they do? There is nothing for it then but utter despair. But if a man only believes through and through him that God loves him—that God wants to help him—then let winds blow, let earth tempt, that man can hope; he can rise up and can come home; he is more than conqueror. But saith some timid soul, Does it not say that God is angry with the wicked every day? True. How then can He love me? Well, it is because He loves that He is angry. If I were going on my way, and heard a set of boys rough and rude and profane, I should feel sorry for them; but if I saw my son amongst them I should feel not sorry only, but angry—angry not because I did not love him, but because I did. All the meaning of Christ's coming—of His life and death and resurrection and intercession—is the story of God's love to us. All the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit is to lead us into the assurance of His love. II. Let us draw near and look at THE FREENESS AND FULLNESS OF THE LOVE OF GOD. 1. It does not proceed from any need in the Divine nature. That wonderful preface to the writings of St. John shows us the Only Begotten dwelling in the bosom of the Father. There is the eternal communion. There is love's satisfaction. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in eternal communion and fellowship. 2. This love of God is not mere pity. It is not that the Almighty is moved by our needs and miseries as the Samaritan of old. Pity saw the wants, and would give what it could spare; but love saw the son, and could not give enough. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us—love that takes us for His very own; love that would hold us in closest communion and tenderest relationship; love that saith, "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine." 3. Behold what manner of love—it is a righteous love. It may yearn to deliver and to restore, but there is one thing it can never do—it cannot pass by sin. It can never make light of that. And who of us could trust God's love if He did? Hereby perceive we the love of God, that He laid down His life for us. And now there meets us love that is righteous, and therefore free and full. Love that hath nothing to conceal, nothing to be afraid of. 4. Another light falls on the text if we turn it round and think of the children—that we should be called the children of God. Adoption has much in it that is beautiful and very gracious. But ours is not an adoption; we are His by regeneration. It is not a new name but a new nature which is bestowed upon us. Begotten of God, we are His children indeed and of a truth. Do not explain it away as a figure. "And so we are." Bound to the heart of the Father by the tenderest ties of relationship. Wonder at it, but do not doubt it. Claim it, in all its fullest privilege and blessing. (*M. G. Pearce.*) *The Father's love to His family*:—I. WHAT GOD'S LIVING FAMILY ARE CALLED UPON TO BEHOLD. "What manner of love," &c. 1. It is covenant love. 2. Unchangeable love. 3. Incarnate love. 4. Redeeming love. 5. Pardoning love. 6. Restoring love. II. WHAT THEY, UPON WHOM THE FATHER'S LOVE IS BESTOWED, ARE CALLED. "The sons of God." 1. It is not a fictitious name. 2. It is a name which shows the peculiar relation they sustain to God. 3. It is a name which gives them a title to all things in the whole universe of God. III. WHAT THE SONS OF GOD SAY OF THE WORLD. "Knoweth us not." 1. The world knoweth not the life which they live—even a life of faith on the Son of God, and a life hid with Christ in God. 2. The world knoweth not their inward conflicts; the flesh lusting against the spirit, &c. 3. The world knoweth not their doubts and

fears. 4. The world knoweth not their joys and sorrows. 5. The world knoweth not the doctrines which the children of God are taught by the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot receive. IV. THE REASON WHY THE WORLD KNOWETH NOT THE SONS OF GOD. "Because it knew Him not"—the Incarnate God. (*J. J. Eastmead.*) *The dignity of human nature and its consequent obligations*:—1. We are the sons of God—of the first and greatest of Beings. What noble and elevated sentiments should fill our minds! How should we rise above everything that is low and worthless to what is dignified and elevating! 2. We are the sons of God—of the purest and best of Beings. How pure and holy should be the affections which animate our own breasts! 3. We are the Sons of God. How much should we love God, our Creator, Unwearied Benefactor, who discovers His paternal relation to us by unceasing care and the most substantial benefits! How greatly should we honour Him! How devoutly should we trust in Him! How cheerfully should we submit to Him! How diligently should we serve Him! (*Charles Lovell.*) *A Christian's high condition and hope*:—"Behold what manner of love" (what great and singular love, that is to say) "the Father hath bestowed," &c. Now this seems to imply that we had forfeited the name. Like the prodigal in the parable, we had virtually renounced our sonship and inheritance; and it was a question of agonising interest, whether God would ever again consent to stand towards us in the relation of a parent. And so when Almighty God, regarding us in Christ, declares, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters," we understand that His anger is turned away, that our offences are cast behind His back, and that we are restored to all the privileges which appertain to children. Such are the blessings comprehended in the promise, "Ye shall be called the sons of God." But there is still more in it. Not only had we forfeited the right to call God Father, but we had also lost the child-like spirit. And therefore when God calls us children, on the ground of being reconciled to us in Immanuel, He engages to make us so by communicating to us of His Spirit. The apostle, after this burst of admiration at the love God shows towards His people in Christ, and the honours He puts upon them, anticipates an objection. Are we indeed so great and honourable? Yet, what is our condition upon the earth? The rich, the great, the wise of this world stand aloof from us, as from persons of disturbed intellect or morose temper. Are we indeed so great before God, while so little before men? It is even so. God seeth not as man seeth: and that which is vile to human judgment is precious in His sight. Was it not so with holy men and prophets and apostles of old? Was it not so with Jesus Himself? Indeed, there is much of comfort in the thought suggested by the words, "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." If you do not resemble Christ, who was so unlike ordinary men, the world which loves its own would know and approve you. For your conscience may justly testify that therefore the world which rejected Christ refuses to know you with approbation, because it perceives in you His features and carriage. And, after all, we are sons. That is our confidence, our comfort, our triumph. And here I must remind you of the duties which flow from this relation to God—the duties of obedience and trust. If you are children of the Most High, to Him, surely, more than to any human superior, must absolute obedience be due. As a Creator, as a King, as a Master, He might have demanded, with perfect justice, the consecration of all our faculties to His service. But He speaks to us by a tenderer name: "I am your Father," He says. Try to show yourselves worthy of that noble estate by a child-like deportment towards Him. Well, then, we are actually the sons of God, through His free and abounding grace, although not yet wearing a royal diadem and clothed in princely apparel. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." The real grandeur of the righteousness is overshadowed by the hand of Providence; the present display of it being incompatible with their own spiritual welfare, and with the scheme of God's kingdom. Yet, while glorifying the grace which bestows upon us so great a privilege, forget not the duty it entails. Remember that to live as slaves of sin and the world, after God has freed you from that bondage, and brought you into the glorious liberty of His own children, would be infinitely base and ungrateful. Therefore pray for the Holy Spirit of God to enable you to walk worthy of this high relation. (*J. N. Pearson, M.A.*) *Sons of God*:—I. NOTICE THE WORD "BEHOLD," with which the words of my text are introduced, which gives an item of the vast importance of what is contained in them. It is used by the Lord Himself, by the prophets, and Christ, and the evangelists on some very particular occasions, both in the Old and New Testament (*Isa. xl. 10, xlii. 1; Zech. iii. 8, 9; Rev. i. 7, iii. 20, xxi. 3, &c.*). II. WHAT WE ARE CALLED UPON TO

BEHOLD. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." He is not here calling on us to believe the love wherewith God hath loved us; nor is he calling on us to receive the knowledge of it into our minds, that we may receive the same into our hearts. He is calling us to behold it, to look at it, to contemplate it in its original—in its spring and fountain—in its freeness and sovereignty—in the nature of it—in the manner of it—in its gifts and blessings. The love of God is a subject for the minds of God's saints to contemplate. They may well behold, survey, and take a view of it, by faith. It is the greatest thing in God Himself, which we are concerned in. His love to us is a free love. It is also sovereign love. It proceeds from Himself alone. It is a love fixed on us. It is a love of complacency and delight. It is an immutable and an everlasting love. Survey it in election, in predestination, in adoption, in salvation, in the blessedness of personal communion. It is vast-glorious. It surpasseth all finite understanding. III. THE SPECIALITY OF THIS. What in the love of the Father it is which the apostle would have these saints to take special notice of. It is this, "That we should be called the sons of God." "It is," says Dr. Goodwin, "but a title which is here expressed." "Yet," says Mr. Romaine, "God bestows no empty titles." He gives all contained in it. Therefore the greatness of the love of God is contained herein. To be heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ, in all the riches of God's communicable grace and glory, this is the fruit and blessedness which flows from the grace and royalty of adoption. God is our inheritance, and we are His inheritance. IV. Though this be the case, that we are, and are called, "the sons of God," and this title is bestowed on us by our heavenly Father, YET THE WORLD KNOWETH US NOT, as so called, and as thus distinguished by free sovereign favour; neither did they our Lord before us. It is the same to the very present moment, yet we wonder at it, whilst there is not the least cause for it, if we but reflect one moment. How can contraries unite? The longer you live, the more you will find supernatural truths disrelished. The present day is not that in which any are persecuted for their profession. Yet it is a day when supernatural truth, and the supernatural gospel, and a supernatural profession of them, were never more heartily despised. (S. E. Pierce.) *Children of God*.—I. HOW REAL CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE UNDERSTOOD TO BE THE CHILDREN OF GOD. II. WHAT CONSIDERATIONS MAY SERVE TO HEIGHTEN AND ENDEAR THE LOVE OF GOD IN TAKING THEM INTO THIS RELATION TO HIMSELF. 1. The consideration of His majesty and supreme greatness, which thus vouchsafes to make and own us for His children, notwithstanding our infinite distance from Him (1 Sam. xviii. 18). 2. The consideration, how early the Divine love laid the foundation of their sonship whom it pleased to recover from the common ruin, in which it saw them lie involved with others. 3. The consideration of the means ordained to make way for their adoption, even the sufferings and death of the only-begotten Son of the Father to view. (1) Consider the person given: He is the Lord Jesus Christ—God's eternal and only-begotten Son. (2) Consider what this Person is sent for, viz., to suffer, to be put to death, even by those that He came to save. (3) This love will appear all miracle if we consider the persons Christ was given for, to do and suffer all this, even for the infinitely unworthy. (4) We have reason to admire the love of God in making us His sons upon this further consideration, if we call to mind the state He finds us in when He comes to work the blessed change, and the power and patience He exercises therein. (5) The happy difference made in the relation of such as are dignified to be children of God, both from themselves, before it was made, and from others. (6) The privileges of the sons of God, negative and positive, as to time and eternity, heighten and endear the love of God to all that are called to be and really made such. (D. Wilcox.) *The privileges of the good*.—I. THAT PRIVILEGES OF UNSPEAKABLE WORTH "NOW" BELONG TO THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST. "Now are we the sons of God." II. THAT NOTWITHSTANDING THESE HIGH PRIVILEGES THEY ARE, WHILE IN THIS LOWER WORLD, SUBJECT TO TRIBULATION. "The world knoweth them not"—knoweth not their spirit, their character, their dignity. III. THAT PRIVILEGES OF A HIGHER ORDER AWAIT THE CHILDREN OF GOD IN A FUTURE STATE. "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." IV. THAT THOSE PRIVILEGES OF THEIR FUTURE STATE CANNOT BE FULLY REVEALED TO GOD'S PEOPLE ON EARTH. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." V. THAT ALL THESE PRIVILEGES, PRESENT AND TO COME, FLOW FROM THE "LOVE" OF THE FATHER. "Behold, what manner of love!" VI. THAT EVERY MAN, THAT HATH THIS HOPE OF HEAVEN THROUGH THE LOVE OF THE FATHER, "PURIFIETH HIMSELF." (Samuel Roberts, M.A.) *The love that calls us sons*.—It is not so much to the contemplation of our blessedness in being sons, as to the

devout gaze on the love which, by its wonderful process, has made it possible for us to be sons, that we are summoned here. Again, you will find a remarkable addition to our text in the Revised Version, namely, "and such we are." Now these words are parenthetical, a kind of rapid "aside" of the writer's, expressing his joyful confidence that he and his brethren are sons of God, not only in name, but in reality. I. THE LOVE THAT IS GIVEN. The apostle bids me "behold what manner of love." I turn to the Cross and I see there a love which shrinks from no sacrifice, a love which is evoked by no loveliness on my part, but comes from the depth of His own Infinite Being, who loves because He must, and who must because He is God; a love which sighs for recognition, which desires nothing of me but the repayment of my poor affection; a love that will not be put away by all sinfulness and shortcomings and evil. In like manner we have to think, if we would estimate the "manner of this love," that through and in the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ there comes to us the gift of a Divine life like His own. We may gain another measure of the greatness of this love if we put an emphasis on one word, and think of the love given to "us," such creatures as we are. II. THE SONSHIP WHICH IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS GIVEN LOVE. The writer draws a broad distinction between "the sons of God" and the world of men who do not comprehend them; and so far from being themselves sons, do not even know God's sons when they see them. And there is a deeper word still in the context. John thinks that men (within the range of light and revelation, at all events) are divided into two families—"the children of God and the children of the devil." There are two families amongst men. Thank God! the prodigal son, in his rags amongst the swine, and lying by the swine-troughs in his filth and his husks and his fever, is a son. He has these three elements and marks of sonship that no man ever gets rid of: he is of a Divine origin, he has a Divine likeness in that he has got mind and will and spirit, and he is the object of a Divine love. All that is blessedly and eternally true, but it is also true that there is a higher relation than that to which the name "Children of God" is more accurately given, and to which in the New Testament that name is confined. What is implied in that great name by which the Almighty gives us a name and a place as of sons and daughters? Clearly, first, a communicated life; therefore, second, a kindred nature which shall be "pure as He is pure"; and, third, growth to full maturity. III. THE GLAD RECOGNITION OF THE SONSHIP BY THE CHILD'S HEART. "Such we are"—the "Here am I, Father," of the child, answering the Father's call, "My Son." He turns doctrine into experience. The truth is nothing to you, unless you have made it your very own by faith. Do not be satisfied with the orthodox confession. Unless it has touched your heart and made your whole soul thrill with thankful gladness and quiet triumph, it is nothing to you. Can you say, "And such are we"? Take another lesson. The apostle was not afraid to say, "I know that I am a child of God." Do not be afraid of being too confident, if your confidence is built on God, and not on yourself; but be afraid of being too diffident, and be afraid of having a great deal of self-righteousness masquerading under the guise of such a profound consciousness of your own unworthiness that you dare not call yourself a child of God. IV. THE LOVING AND DEVOUT CONTEMPLATION OF THIS WONDERFUL LOVE. I have but two remarks to make about that, and the one is this, that that habit of devout and thankful meditation upon the love of God, as manifested in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, lies at the foundation of all vigorous and happy Christian life. How can a thing which you do not touch with your hands and see with your eyes produce any effect upon you, unless you think about it? But remember that we cannot keep that great sight before the eye of our minds without effort. You will have very resolutely to look away from something else, if, amid all the dazzling gauds of earth we are to look over them all to the far-off lustre of that heavenly love. Just as timorous people in a thunderstorm will light a candle that they may not see the lightning, so many Christians have their hearts filled with the twinkling light of some miserable tapers of earthly care and pursuits, which, though they be dim and smoky, are bright enough to make it hard to see the silent depths of heaven, though it blaze with a myriad stars. Wrench yourselves away from the absorbing contemplation of Birmingham jewellery and paste, and look at the true riches. Do not let the trifles which belong not to your true inheritance fill your thoughts, but renew the vision, and by determined turning away of your eyes from beholding vanity, look away from the things that are seen, that you may gaze upon the things that are not seen, and chiefest among them on the love of God in Christ

JESUS OUR LORD. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.**—*Christians unknown*:—If we were to ask worldly men what is the difference between Christians and themselves, we should suppose, from their answer, that it was very trifling and of small moment. They appear to think that the distinction between the people of God and the world has no foundation except in the self-righteous conceits of those who assert it. But is there no foundation for it in truth? 1. From Scripture language and examples we should not expect that the worldly would readily perceive the difference between Christians and themselves. Here it is expressly asserted that Christians should be in a great measure unknown in the world. Again, the life of the believer is called a hidden life: "Your life is hid with Christ in God," and the spirit of piety is called "the hidden man of the heart." And again, when we remember how Jesus and His apostles were regarded we may readily suppose that the Christian now would be unknown in the world. 2. Those who are not Christians are not qualified to judge of the difference between themselves and those who are Christians. Were an ignorant and a learned man to be placed in company with each other, which would perceive most clearly their difference of attainment? Why, the ignorant man would realise perhaps that there was some inferiority on his part, but upon the whole would be very well satisfied with himself. Just so is it in the present case; no one is qualified to decide whether Christians differ from others unless he is himself a Christian. 3. The distinction between Christians and others is of such a character that it is not easily noticed by the worldly. The qualities which the world admires are obtrusive and showy, but those which religion cherishes are humble and unobtrusive, and, like certain modest flowers, prized by those who value and seek after them, but despised by the unthinking. 4. The worldly hear all the dissensions among the various denominations of Christians, and they see everything that is discreditable, but they enter not into the secret and chief blessedness of religion. Like strangers on the shore of an unknown country, who behold great barrenness and desolation, hear the dashing of the waves, and are ready to conclude it is a most dismal region, while farther in than they have ever penetrated there may be pleasant and fertile fields. 5. It is to the prejudice of Christians that the worst representatives of their profession are most prominently before the world, while the more worthy are more concealed. Is there among those with whom we are acquainted a professor who has more zeal than knowledge?—his character will be well known; his sayings will be often repeated, with the bitter remark that such things are enough to disgust one with religion. But is there one that glorifies God by patience under affliction, by striving to bring his heart and life to correspond with God's Word, by humble efforts to do good, by a life of prayer and self-denial? Ah, the attention of the world is never drawn to such as these; they pass through it unknown. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) **The world knoweth us not:**—First, of the concession; and there the first granted truth is—1. That the children of God are obnoxious to the contempt and hatred of the world: "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." 2. The second concession is the imperfection of the present state, by which the glory of this privilege is darkened. It doth not appear what we shall be by what we are now. The heirs of the world make a great show and noise; they may be pointed at where they go; there goeth such a prince, or such a lord's son and heir; but God's children carry no such port and state. Secondly, by way of correction; and there—1. He asserts the reality of the privilege: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." 2. That in the future state the glory of God's children shall be manifest: "When He shall appear we shall be like Him." That shall be the day of the manifestation of the sons of God (*Rom. viii. 19*). **FIRST CHRIST, AND THEN ALL THE REST OF HIS CHILDREN** (*Col. iii. 3, 4*). **I. OUR GLORIOUS RELATION TO GOD, WITH THE EFFECTS AND FRUITS OF IT, IS A THING HIDDEN AND NOT SEEN.** 1. It is not seen by the world; the world knoweth us not, as it knew Him not; it is hidden from the world, as colours from a blind man; they have no eyes to see them. (1) Because they are blinded by the delusions of the flesh, and cannot judge of spiritual things (*1 Cor. ii. 14*). (2) Being blinded with malice and prejudice they censure this estate perversely, and so malign it and oppose it (*1 Peter iv. 4, 5*). But their perverse judgment should be no discouragement to the godly in the way of holiness, wherein they endeavour to imitate God, their heavenly Father. (a) Because if God be not known nor honoured in the world, nor Christ, nor the Spirit, why should we take it unkindly? (b) Their opinion is little to be valued, and therefore we should rather pity their ignorance than be offended by their censures. (c) Christians should be satisfied with the

approbation of God. It is enough that we have God's image, God's favour and fellowship, and are taken into God's family. (d) It might be cause of suspicion to us if we were hugged and embraced by the world. It is better to have the praise of their hatred than the scandal of their love and approbation. (e) Those that are truly blessed in their own consciences cannot be truly miserable by the judgment of other men (2 Cor. i. 12). (f) The slanders and mockery of worldly men should be no discouragement to us in the ways of the Lord; for God will reckon with them about their hard speeches against His people (1 Peter iv. 4).

2. As our dignity is not of the world, so in itself it doth not appear during our present state. (1) The privileges that belong to our dignity and prerogative of adoption are spiritual, and therefore make no fair show in the flesh, as for instance—(a) The image of God is an internal image (Psa. xlv. 13). (b) The life which floweth thence is hidden (Col. iii. 3), like the sap of the tree, which is not seen though the fruit appear. (c) Their comforts are spiritual, known by feeling rather than by report and imagination: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ." (d) The protection and supplies of God's providence; it is a secret, it is a mystery and a riddle to the world that must have all under the view of sense (Psa. xxxi. 20). (2) Because it is hidden (Col. iii. 3), not only in point of security, as maintained by an invisible power, but hidden in point of obscurity; there is a veil upon it. (a) The spiritual life is hidden under the veil of the natural life (Gal. ii. 20). (b) Another veil is that of afflictions and outward meanness and abasement. (c) Another veil is reproach and calumnies (2 Cor. vi. 8). (d) There is another veil: Christians quench the vigour and obscure the glory of this life by their infirmities; they have too much of Adam and too little of Jesus, and so the spiritual life is carried on darkly; the good herbs and flowers are hidden in neglected gardens by the plenty of weeds. (3) It is future: "Now are we the children of God, but it doth not appear what we shall be"; and so our filiation is not only hidden from others, but in a great measure from ourselves.

II. THE REASONS WHY THIS GLORY DOTH NOT APPEAR. 1. Because now is the time of trial, hereafter of recompense; therefore now is the hiding time, hereafter is the day of manifestation of the sons of God. Christ had his bright side and dark side, a glory to be seen by those eyes that were anointed with spiritual eye-salve, and affliction and meanness enough to harden them that had no mind to see; so God hath His chosen ones in the world who keep up His honour and interest, and He hath His ways to express His love to them, but not openly. 2. Now is the time of faith, hereafter of sight; and "faith is the evidence of things not seen." Therefore in this day of faith God will not too openly expose things to the view of sense, for that would destroy faith. Now we are sanctified and justified, and live by faith. 3. That we may be conformed to our head, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came not with external appearance. 4. God hath chosen this way as most fit to advance His glory; He will give us little in hand that He may daily hear from us, and we may seek our supplies from Him, for the spirit of adoption was given us that we may cry, "Abba, Father"; and also that His power may be perfect in our weakness. (T. Manton, D.D.)

Slighted by the world:—Virtue loses not its worth by being slighted by the world. (Scraggs.)

The world does not know Christ:—The principle [on which He manifests Himself to His people as He does not to the world] is illustrated by some of the common facts of life. A man is present to his friend, as he is not to a stranger, though he may be at the same moment speaking to both. The light which floods the landscape with a deluge of beauty is present to him who sees it as it is not to the blind man walking at his side. Music, though it may ripple round the deafened ear, is only present to him who hears it. The discourse of the naturalist on his experiments, of the scholar on his books, of the mathematician who is talking with raptures on the beauties of a theorem, will bring things into the presence of initiated listeners which are still remote from the minds of those in the very same company who have no sympathy with the theme. (C. Stanford, D.D.)

The hidden life:—Standing by the telegraphic wires one may often hear the mystic wailing and sighing of the winds among them, like the strains of an Æolian harp, but one knows nothing of the message which is flashing along them. Joyous may be the inner language of those wires, swift as the lightning, far-reaching and full of meaning, but a stranger intermeddles not therewith. Fit emblem of the believer's inner life; men hear our notes of outward sorrow wrung from us by external circumstances, but the message of celestial peace, the Divine communings with a better land, the swift heart-throbs of heaven-born desire, they cannot perceive: the carnal see but

the outer manhood, but the life hidden with Christ in God, flesh and blood cannot discern. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 2. Beloved, now are we the sons of God.—*A present religion*:—The word “now” is to me the most prominent word in the text, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” They who love religion love a present thing. The Christian who really seeks salvation will never be happy unless he can say, “Now am I a child of God.” That word “now” which is the sinners warning is to the Christian his greatest delight. I. I shall commence by endeavouring to show that religion must be a thing of the present, because **THE PRESENT HAS SUCH INTIMATE CONNECTIONS WITH THE FUTURE.** We are told in Scripture that this life is a seed time, and the future is the harvest, “He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.” But again, this life is always said in Scripture to be a preparation for the life to come. “Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.” This life is as the vestibule of the king’s court, we must put our shoes from off our feet; we must wash our garments and make ourselves ready to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. How are we saved? All through Scripture we are told we are saved by faith, except in one passage, wherein it is said, we are saved by hope. Now note how certain it is that religion must be a present thing if we are saved by faith, because faith and hope cannot live in another world. “What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” II. In the second place, as I have shown the connection between the present and the future, let me use another illustration to show **THE IMPORTANCE OF A PRESENT SALVATION.** Salvation is a thing which brings present blessings. “Unto them which are saved, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” He does not say to them who shall be saved, but to them which are saved. We know too that justification is a present blessing—“there is therefore now no condemnation.” Adoption is a present blessing, for it says, “Now are we the sons of God,” we know also that sanctification is a present blessing, for the apostle addresses himself to “the saints who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called.” All the blessings of the new covenant are spoken of in the present tense, because with the exception of eternal glory in heaven, they are all to be enjoyed here. A man may know in this life, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he is accepted in Christ Jesus. Yet I am inclined to think that the worldly man most of all objects to present religion because he does not like its duties. Men will not direct a single eye to religion, because it curtails license and entails duties. And this, I think, proves that religion is a present thing, because the duties of religion cannot be practised in another world, they must be practised here. Now, what are the duties of religion? In the first place, here are its active duties, which a man should do between man and man, to walk soberly and righteously and uprightly in the midst of an evil generation. Lightly as some people speak about morality, there is no true religion where there is no morality. You have hard struggles to pass through life. Sometimes you have been driven to a great extremity, and whether you would succeed or not seemed to hang upon a thread. Has not your religion been a joy to you in your difficulties? Has it not calmed your minds? When you have been fretted and troubled about worldly things, have you not found it a pleasant thing to enter your closet, and shut to the door, and tell your Father in secret all your cares? And oh, ye that are rich, cannot you bear the same testimony, if you have loved the Master? What had all your riches been to you without a Saviour? I fear that there are a great many of you who will say, “Well, I care nothing at all about religion; it is for no avail to me!” No, and it is very probable that you will not care about it until it shall be too late to care. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Sonship the foreshadowing of heaven*:—In every true economy of life there is a concealed side. This fact grows partly out of the nature of the case, and is partly a dictate of wisdom. This fact of concealment, and these two reasons for it, are both apparent in God’s dealing with men. Divine revelation is the exposed side of a Divine economy which reaches back into darkness. Some things God could not tell us, because we could not understand them. Other things are equally hidden, because He does not see fit to reveal them. God does not ignore nor forbid men’s natural curiosity to know what is hidden. In many cases, indeed, He uses it in the interest of wider knowledge. The advancement of knowledge would come to a stop if all men were simply content to accept the unknown as unknowable. At the same time He does set a limit to human knowledge in certain directions: but in all such cases God puts His revelation in such a relation to what is

unknown, as to quiet the restlessness of the curious and searching spirit when it reaches the limit of knowledge. He assures us concerning what He does not reveal by what He does reveal. He gives us certain foreshadowings of our future in our present. First, the concealment. What we are to be hereafter is not yet manifested. Christ reveals the fact of immortality but tells us little or nothing about the outward conditions of immortality. A Christian must frankly accept this ignorance. By the terms of his Christian covenant he engages to walk by faith and not by sight. Still, there is revelation as well as concealment. It doth not yet appear, but we know something. And as we study what is revealed to us, we begin to see that the concealment and ignorance which wait on this subject are not arbitrary, but are in the interest of our knowledge on another side, and are intended to direct our researches into another and more profitable channel. "It doth not yet appear"—not where we shall be, or in what circumstances we shall be—but "it doth not appear what we shall be": only we know that we shall be like God. That is the great, the only point which concerns us as respects the future life. To be like God will be heaven. To be unlike God will be perdition. Character creates its own environment. On this side we know something of the heavenly world. We know the moral laws which govern it, for they are essentially the same laws which the gospel applies here. We know the moral sentiments which pervade heaven. They are the very sentiments which the gospel is seeking to foster in us here. We know that holiness which is urged upon us here is the character of God; and that where a holy God reigns the atmosphere must be one of holiness: that if God is love, love must pervade heaven; that if God is truth, truth must pervade heaven. Now, all this, you see, must exert a tremendous power upon the present life, viewed as a prelude and preparation for the life to come. If that future life is to have its essence in character and not in circumstance, it follows that character and not circumstance is the great thing here. The apostle strikes directly into this track of thought. In the first place he states the fact of concealment. Down between our speculations and dreams and the eternal reality falls an impenetrable veil. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." But he goes on to say, "You are on the right road to knowing. You are on the right road to becoming. Now are you children of God: that fact enfolds all that is to come. It is a matter of character here as in heaven. The true goal of your striving is likeness to God." Essentially we shall not be other there than here. The difference will be in degree, in maturity of development. We are children of God here, we shall be children of God there. Why, then, with all this promise, does it not appear what we shall be? Look at the promise itself and you will see the answer. The essence of the promise is, we shall be like God. Understand, not equal to God, but like God, as the finite, under the highest possible conditions, can be like the infinite. The reason for this likeness to God is given. We shall see Him as He is. This gives us the reason why it doth not yet appear what we shall be. We do not see Him as He is. We cannot so see Him here, any more than a child, in the weakness of infancy and the ignorance and perverseness of childhood can understand and appreciate the mind and character of a noble father. We cannot know what it is to be like God, because we cannot see Him as He is, and never shall, until He shall be manifested as pure spirit to purified spirits freed from the trammels of the flesh. And you will further notice the truth which the text assumes, that likeness to God comes through vision of God. We assimilate to that which we habitually contemplate, and especially so when we contemplate lovingly and enthusiastically. Thus we come to the last point of our text—the practical duty growing out of this mixed condition of ignorance and promise. For if the promise is to be fulfilled in likeness to God, if that, in short, is to constitute our heaven, and if that promise is enfolded in our present relation as children of God, then we have in that fact both a consolation and an exhortation to duty. You shall win the best of heaven by getting the best there is out of your position and relation as a child of God here. This is the logic of the gospel. Only God can purify the heart, but He enlists our service in purifying the life. In the same breath Paul tells us that God worketh in us to will and to work for His own pleasure, and bids us carry out our own salvation. Every one that hath this hope in God is purified by the Holy Spirit, yet our text says "purifieth himself." Personal devotion calls out personal effort. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) *The glory of Divine sonship:—I. THE PRESENT GLORY OF THIS SONSHIP IS GREAT.* The life of God in the soul is intrinsically great. Holiness and love are the principal elements of character embodied in the life of a believer: these constitute his dignity—his present glorious inheritance. II. THE

FUTURE GLORY OF THIS SONSHIP IS THE GREATEST. The model is Christ in His enthroned majesty and splendour. "Behold" the omnipotence of this love. For whom was it displayed? Angels? No, but for rebellious, ruined man—man scathed by sin, and an enemy to his Maker. (*J. H. Hill.*) *The possessions and prospects of believers*:—I. HERE IS TRUE UNITY. "Now are we the sons of God." This makes a true Catholic Church. There may be diversity in the family features—nay, if there be intellectual life there must be; but withal there will be likeness in the King's sons, in all the wide extent of the Great Father's household. II. HERE IS TRUE FELLOWSHIP. This, at all events, is the ideal. Till the world lasts there will be men of the logical temperament of St. Paul, the mystical temperament of St. John, the practical, sagacious temperament of St. James; but there should be true fellowship for all that: "Sons of God" swallows up all minor difficulties, all theoretical diversities. III. HERE IS TRUE RESEMBLANCE. It is not a mere question of condition, but of character. All the lines of the Gospel are laid along the lines of life. IV. HERE IS FUTURE PROSPECT. "It doth not yet appear." No, the time has not yet come. The cradle is not the place for judging of countenance or character in the perfect sense. The condition of the development is time. Like a tree made strong by storms, so life means contradiction, hindrance, temptation. We are waiting, as our text says, to appear. Like an unblossomed flower, the glory is hidden yet. (*W. M. Statham, M.A.*) *The present condition and future prospects of believers*:—I. WHAT WE NOW ARE—SONS OF GOD. 1. We were restored to the forfeited honour of the sons of God by "being begotten again by the Father; and born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We became the sons of God, not by natural generation, nor in virtue of any inherent power or tendency, nor in consequence of any endeavour on the part of others, but by the agency of His Spirit. 2. We may know it by the faith we exercise, if it leads us to entire dependence on Christ, and to the utmost diligence in duty. We may know it by the repentance we have experienced, if it has been heartfelt, arising from a true sense of sin, and resulting in its entire renunciations. We may know it by the feelings we cherish toward our brethren in Christ, if we love them sincerely. We may know it by the state of our affections toward God, if they are set on "those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." 3. We, indeed, may be of no account among men. II. WHAT WE EXPECT TO BECOME. 1. The confidence with which we may expect future happiness: "We know we shall be like Him." Though we are not favoured with such evidence as John enjoyed, we have all that is necessary to sustain our hope in the reality of that blessedness which God has in reserve for His children. The number and minuteness of these predictions, which have received accomplishment in the history of Jesus and the Church; the sublime nature of the doctrines of the gospel; the holy tendency of its principles; the pure morality of its precepts; the circumstances in which it was first promulgated, and the success which has attended its ministrations, convince us of the truth of that record, which reveals to us life and immortality. 2. The peculiar nature of the happiness of heaven, "We shall be like Him." It must satisfy the most enlarged desires of the immortal soul to be assimilated to Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. Our minds, like His, shall be gloriously constituted, for, vigorous and pure, they shall be fitted for the noble pursuits and sublime contemplations of the heavens. Our character, like His, shall be glorious, for, freed from all taint of impurity, we shall be arrayed in the robe of His righteousness. Our stations, like His, shall be glorious, for we shall be near to that throne on which He sits at the right hand of His Father. Our happiness, like His, shall be glorious, for we shall possess all we can desire or be able to enjoy. 3. The means by which this assimilation to Christ shall be produced, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." As the earth owes all that diversity of light and shade with which it is adorned, and all that variety of flower and luxuriance of fruit with which it is beautified and enriched to the agency of the sun; so shall the redeemed in heaven derive all their beauty, and all their blessedness, from the presence of Him who sits upon the throne. 4. The time when the felicity of the sons of God shall be consummated, "When He shall appear." 5. The inconceivable greatness of this future happiness, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." (*W. Welsh.*) *The present and the future of Christian life*:—I. THAT WHICH IS POSITIVELY KNOWN: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." 1. A man may know himself a Christian, as he knows himself a living soul—by personal consciousness. The fact of his conversion is the starting-point in his religious history; and the incidents of Christian experience

are the indications of his progress in the Divine life. 2. And, beyond the personal evidence arising from the exercise of faith in the soul, there is the witness of the Spirit in our hearts. II. THAT WHICH IS IMPERFECTLY UNDERSTOOD. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." 1. One thing, however, is quite sure. We shall not remain as we are. The very process of animal life is fraught with decay. 2. Another thing is equally certain; and that is, that we shall still exist. 3. But amidst all the information which God has given us on that subject, we know not the mode of our future existence, nor even its locality. How we shall see without these eyes, hear without these ears, and converse without these organs of speech, we cannot tell. Probably we shall be all intelligence, and find, to our surprise, that the senses on which we laid so great a stress, and considered so essential to our intellectual being, were but so many loopholes in our prison-house of clay, through which we could sometimes catch a glimpse of surrounding objects, but by means of which we could distinguish nothing perfectly. III. THAT WHICH IS CONFIDENTLY ANTICIPATED. (*D. E. Ford.*) *Now sons, though sufferers*:—I. THE SONS OF GOD ARE SPECIALLY LOVED OF GOD. II. THE SONS OF GOD ARE BORN AGAIN OF GOD. "Of His own will begat He us by the word of His truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." So that the character of the disciples of Christ is a special Divine workmanship. It matters little what civilisation may be in a country, or what it may do. Every man needs regeneration. III. THE SONS OF GOD, AS SUCH, ARE BRETHREN OF JESUS CHRIST. IV. THE SONS OF GOD ARE RELATED TO ALL THE UNFALLEN AND REDEEMED OF THE OFFSPRING OF GOD. Paul makes very much of this, and I suppose that if our hearts were right we should make very much of this. V. THE SONS OF GOD ARE HEIRS OF GOD, JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST, heirs to the noblest rank and title, and heirs to boundless wealth. The reason that God does not give us more of every kind of good now, is that we need the discipline of want. And until the discipline of suffering and of want has accomplished its end we have not the capacity to use the treasures and the riches which God waits to put at our disposal, and which He will put at our disposal so soon as we are educated and ready. VI. THE SONS OF GOD ARE BEING EDUCATED BY GOD. Suitable habits are being formed, so that when they become lords of the inheritance which is in reserve for them, they shall appear to have been so educated as to be thoroughly fit for all the duties, and responsibilities, and honours, and joys of that position. VII. THE SONS OF GOD HAVE ACCESS TO GOD. (*S. Martin.*) *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*—*Of the happiness of good men in the future state*:—I. THE PRESENT OBSCURITY OF OUR FUTURE STATE, as to the particular circumstances of that happiness which good men shall enjoy in another world. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." If one should come from a strange country, never known before, and should only tell us, in general, that it was a most delightful place, and the inhabitants a brave, and generous, and wealthy people, under the government of a wise and great king, ruling by excellent laws; and that the particular delights and advantages of it were not to be imagined by anything he knew in our own country. If we gave credit to the person that brought this relation, it would create in us a great admiration of the country described to us, and a mighty concern to see it, and live in it. But it would be a vain curiosity to reason and conjecture about the particular conveniences of it; because it would be impossible, by any discourse, to arrive at the certain knowledge of any more, than he who knew it, was pleased to tell us. This is the case as to our heavenly country. II. Thus much we know of it in general, that it shall consist in the blessed vision of God. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when He shall appear, we shall see Him as He is." 1. What is meant by seeing God. As to see the king includes the court, and all the glorious circumstances of his attendance: so to see God, does take in all that glory, and joy, and happiness, which flows from His presence. 2. What is here meant by seeing God as He is: we shall see Him as He is. (1) Our perfect knowledge of Him. Not that we are to imagine that when we come to heaven, our understanding can or shall be raised to such a pitch as to be able perfectly to comprehend the infinite nature and perfections of God. But our knowledge shall be advanced to such degrees of perfection as a finite and created understanding is capable of. (a) We shall then have an immediate knowledge of God, that which the Scripture calls seeing Him "face to face"; not at a distance, as we do now by faith: not by reflection, as we do now see Him in the creatures. (b) We shall have a far clearer knowledge of God than we have now in this life (1 Cor. xiii. 12). We see Him now many times as He is not; that is, we are liable to false and mistaken conceptions of Him. (c) We shall then, likewise, have a certain knowledge of God, free from all doubts concerning Him

(1 Cor. xiii. 12). As God now knows us, so shall we then know Him, as to the truth and certainty of our knowledge. (2) To see God "as He is," does imply our perfect enjoyment of Him. It can be no mean thing, which the infinite wisdom, and goodness, and power of God hath designed for the final reward of those who love Him, and of those whom He loves. 3. The fitness of this metaphor, to express to us the happiness of our future state. (1) Sight is the noblest and most excellent of all our senses; and therefore the frame of the eye is the most curious of all other parts of the body, and the dearest to us, and that which we preserve with the greatest tenderness. It is the most comprehensive sense, hath the largest sphere, takes in the most objects, and discerns them at the greatest distance. It can in a moment pass from earth to heaven, and survey innumerable objects. It is the most pure, and spiritual, and quickest in its operations, and approacheth nearest to the nature of a spiritual faculty. (2) The primary and proper object of this sense is the most delightful and of the most spiritual nature of any corporeal thing, and that is light (Prov. xv. 30; Eccles. xi. 7). It is the purest and most spiritual of all corporeal things, and therefore God chooseth to represent Himself by it: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." III. WHEREIN OUR LIKENESS AND CONFORMITY TO GOD SHALL CONSIST. 1. In the immortality of our nature. In this mortal state we are not capable of that happiness which consists in the vision of God; that is, in the perfect knowledge and perpetual enjoyment of Him. The imperfection of our state, and the weakness of our faculties, cannot bear the sight of so glorious and resplendent an object, as the Divine nature and perfections are; we cannot see God and live. 2. In the purity of our souls. In this world every good man does "mortify his earthly and corrupt affections," and in some measure "bring them into obedience and subjection to the law of God." But still there are some relics of sin, some spots and imperfections in the holiness of the best men. But upon our entrance into the other world we shall quite "put off the old man with the affections and lusts thereof"; we shall be perfectly "delivered from this body of sin and death," and, together with this mortal nature, part with all the remainders of sin and corruption which cleave to this mortal state. IV. THE NECESSARY CONNEXION BETWEEN OUR LIKENESS AND CONFORMITY TO GOD, AND OUR SIGHT AND ENJOYMENT OF HIM. "We know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." 1. Likeness to God in the immortality of our nature is necessary to make us capable of the happiness of the next life; which consists in the blessed and perpetual vision and enjoyment of God. 2. Our likeness to God in the purity of our souls is necessary to make us capable of the blessed sight and enjoyment of Him in the next life. (1) It is necessary, as a condition of the thing to be performed on our part, before we can expect that God should make good the promise of eternal life and happiness to us. (2) We cannot possibly love God, nor take delight in Him, unless we be like Him in the temper and disposition of our minds. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *Future state of Christians*.—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD. It is this filial spirit which forms all the beautiful and amiable traits in the Christian character. 1. It disposes the children of God to love Him with an ardent and supreme affection. 2. It disposes them to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and to believe in Him alone for salvation. 3. It unites all the children of God to one another. 4. It is a spirit of grace and of supplication. 5. It disposes His children to obey all His commands. II. WHAT THEY DO NOT KNOW CONCERNING THEMSELVES IN A FUTURE STATE. 1. They are wholly unacquainted with the means by which they shall perceive either material or spiritual objects, after they have lost their bodily senses. 2. It is no less dark and mysterious how they will converse with one another, and with the heavenly hosts, after they leave these mortal bodies. 3. They must remain totally ignorant in this life, how they shall arrive in heaven, and how they shall move from place to place after they arrive there. III. WHAT THE CHILDREN OF GOD DO KNOW CONCERNING THEMSELVES IN A FUTURE STATE. 1. They do now know where they shall be hereafter. 2. They know in this world what manner of persons they shall be in the next. 3. They know that when they shall leave this present evil world, they shall be completely blessed. Lessons: 1. It appears from what has been said, that all the knowledge which Christians have of themselves in a future state, they wholly derive from Divine revelation. 2. We may learn from what has been said, why some Christians die in so much light and joy, and some in so much darkness and distress. 3. Christians may and ought to infer, from what has been said, the great importance of making their calling and election sure. 4. The preceding observations leave us no room to doubt, that death is always a happy event to the children of God. 5. This subject affords a source of great consolation to those who

have been bereaved of near and dear Christian friends. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Our ignorance and our knowledge of the future state* :—I. *OUR IGNORANCE.* We do not suppose that God has designedly kept back from mankind clear and full intimations of the characteristics of future happiness ; on the contrary, revelation is abundant in its discoveries. Parable and image are exhausted with the effort to make that portrait worthy the original ; and, probably we do not, for the most part allow our knowledge to keep pace with God's revelation of the future. But when you come to the point of what we ourselves shall be, we frankly admit that we have but scanty information. It is just that mystery, for coping with which we possess no faculties. Yea, and from this our ignorance of what a spiritual body shall be, arises an ignorance just as total of a vast portion of the occupations of believers.

II. *OUR KNOWLEDGE.* "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." There would be no difficulty in bringing forward other portions of Scripture to corroborate this statement. It is, for example, expressly declared by St. Paul, that Christ "shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." But St. John, you observe, subjoins a reason for the resemblance, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." We can hardly venture to suppose that the excitement of desire, and the consequent offering up of prayer will constitute the connection, as they do a present connection, between seeing Christ and resembling Christ. We must rather own, that whatever the future connection, it will altogether differ from the present. It is to a suffering and humiliated Christ that we become like now ; it shall be to an exalted and glorified Christ that we are made like hereafter. The work wrought in us whilst on earth is conformity to Christ in His humiliation—the work wrought in us when we start up at the resurrection shall be conformity to Christ in His exaltation. The apostle declares that we "shall see Christ as He is." We ask you whether, with the most vigorous actings of faith, it can be ever said of us that we "see Christ as He is" ? No, the gaze that we cast on Christ here must be a gaze upon Christ as Christ was, more truly than a gaze upon Christ as Christ is. We look upon Jesus as delivered for our sins, and raised again for our justification. We look towards Christ as lifted up like the brazen serpent in the wilderness, as presenting in His office of Intercessor the merits of His atonement in our behalf. Even those who obtain a sight of Christ as Intercessor, do not strictly see Christ as Christ is. They see Him as perpetuating His crucifixion. So that, sift the matter as closely as you will, whilst on earth we see Christ as He was rather than Christ as He is—and in exact agreement with this sight of Christ is the likeness we acquire. But when in place of travelling back I would spring forward, when I would contemplate the majesty of a Being administering the business of the universe, and drawing in from every spot an infinite source of revenue, teeming with honour, and flashing with glory—oh ! shall I not be forced to confess myself amazed at the very outset of the daring endeavour ? Shall I not be compelled to fall back from the scrutiny of what Christ is, to repose more and more on a survey of what Christ was, thankful for present knowledge, hopeful of future ? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The unrevealed future of the sons of God* :—The present is the prophet of the future, says my text : "Now are we the sons of God, and" (not "but") "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." A man may say : "Ah ! now are we, we shall be—we shall be—nothing !" John does not think so. John thinks that if a man is a son of God he will always be so. I. *THE FACT OF SONSHIP MAKES US QUITE SURE OF THE FUTURE.* It seems to me that the strongest reasons for believing in another world are these two—first, that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and has gone up there ; and, second, that a man here can pray and trust and love God, and feel that he is His child. "We are the children of God now"—and if we are children now, we shall be grown up some time. Childhood leads to maturity. And not only the fact of our sonship avails to assure us of immortal life, but also the very form which our religious experience takes points in the same direction. "The child is father of the man" ; the bud foretells the flower. In the same way the very imperfections of the Christian life, as it is seen here, argue the existence of another state where all that is here in the germ shall be fully matured, and all that is here incomplete shall attain the perfection which alone will correspond to the power that works in us. There is a great deal in every nature, and most of all in a Christian nature, which is like the packages that emigrants take with them, marked "Not wanted on the voyage." These go down into the hold, and they are only of use after landing in the new world. If I am a son of God I have got much in me that is "not wanted on the voyage," and the

more I grow into His likeness the more I am thrown out of harmony with the things round about me in proportion as I am brought into harmony with the things beyond. II. SONSHIP LEAVES US IGNORANT OF MUCH IN THE FUTURE. "We are the sons of God, and," just because we are, "it is not yet made manifest what we shall be." John would simply say to us, "There has never been set forth before men's eyes in this earthly life of ours an example, or an instance, of what the sons of God are to be in another state of being." And so because men have never had the instance before them they do not know much about that state. In some sense there has been a manifestation through the life of Jesus Christ. But the risen Christ is not the glorified Christ. The chrysalis's dreams about what it would be when it was a butterfly would be as reliable as a man's imagination of what a future life will be. So let us feel two things—let us be thankful that we do not know, for the ignorance is a sign of the greatness; and then, let us be sure that just the very mixture of knowledge and ignorance which we have about another world is precisely the food which is most fitted to nourish imagination and hope. III. OUR SONSHIP FLINGS AN ALL-PENETRATING BEAM OF LIGHT ON THAT FUTURE, in the knowledge of our perfect vision and perfect likeness. "We know that when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Future life*:—There is nothing in the actual condition of mankind, or in the method of God's dispensations towards them, more surprising than the fact that, while the very constitution of the mind impels it to survey the future with intense solicitude, futurity itself is hidden by a veil which can neither be penetrated nor withdrawn. We have only to look back upon our progress hitherto, to see experimental evidence, which we at least must own to be conclusive, that, in hiding from us that which was before us, God has dealt with us, not as an austere master, but a tender parent, knowing well how His children can endure, and, in the exercise of that omniscience, determining not only how much they shall actually suffer, but how much of what they are to suffer shall be known to them before their day of visitation comes. But this part of God's providential government, though eminently merciful, is not designed exclusively to spare men a part of the suffering which sin has caused. It has a higher end. By the partial disclosure and concealment of futurity, continually acting on the native disposition to pry into it, the soul is still led onward, kept in an attitude of expectation, and in spite of its native disposition to look downward, to go backward, or to lie stagnant, is perpetually stimulated to look up, to exert itself, and make advances in the right direction. In making us rational, in giving us the power of comparison and judgment, and in teaching us by the constitution of our nature to infer effect from cause and cause from effect, God has rendered us incapable of looking at the present or remembering the past, without at the same time or as a necessary consequence anticipating that which is to come, and to a great extent with perfect accuracy, so that all the knowledge of the future which is needed for the ordinary purposes of human life is amply provided and infallibly secured; while, far beyond the limits of this ordinary foresight, He has granted to some gifted minds a keener vision. Nor is this all, for even with respect to things which neither ordinary reasoning from analogy, nor extraordinary powers of forecast can avail to bring within the reach of human prescience, God has Himself been pleased to make them known by special revelation. If anything is certain it is this, that they who do escape perdition, and by faith in the omnipotence of grace pursue this upward course, shall still continue to ascend without cessation, rising higher, growing better, and becoming more and more like God throughout eternity. This vagueness and uncertainty, although at first sight it may seem to be a serious disadvantage, is nevertheless not without important and beneficent effects upon the subjects of salvation. It may seem, indeed, that as a means of arousing the attention, an indefinite assurance of transcendent blessedness hereafter is less likely to be efficacious than a distinct and vivid exhibition of the elements which are to constitute that blessedness; but let it be remembered that no possible amount, and no conceivable array of such particulars, would have the least effect in originating serious reflection or desire in the unconverted heart. This can be wrought by nothing short of a Divine power, and when it is thus wrought, when the thoughts and the affections are once turned in the right direction, the less detailed and more indefinite description of the glory which is yet to be experienced seems often best adapted to excite and stimulate the soul, and lead it onwards, by still presenting something that is yet to be discovered or attained, and thus experimentally accustoming the soul to act upon the vital principle of its new-born

nature, forgetting that which is behind, and reaching forth to that which is before. The same thing may be said of the indefinite manner in which the doom of the impenitent and unbelieving is set forth in Scripture. In this, as in the corresponding case before described, if the mind is awakened, such details are needless, and if not awakened, they are unavailing. But is it, can it be, a fact, that rational, spiritual beings, Godlike in their origin, and made for immortality, with faculties susceptible of endless elevation and enlargement, and activity, can hesitate to choose life rather than death, and good in preference to evil? Because you now wish to repent, and to believe, and to be saved hereafter, you imagine yourselves safe in your impenitence, and unbelief, and condemnation. Why, the very disposition which is now made the pretext for procrastination may forsake you. The respect you now feel for the truth, for God's law, for the gospel, may be changed into a cold indifference, contemptuous incredulity, or malignant hatred. The faint gleams of conviction which occasionally light up the habitual darkness of the mind may be extinguished. (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*) *Heaven*:—It is often asked, if the great object of the gospel be to fit us for heaven, why is not a fuller revelation of its joys made to us? In the first place, were the future life fully laid open to us, its brightness would throw the present state into utter eclipse, and make our earthly pilgrimage irksome and grievous. The natural shrinking from an unknown condition of being sustains an interest in the present life in the hearts of those best fitted to die, while, when that unknown state is at hand, their confidence in the Divine mercy enables them to enter upon it without doubt or fear. Again, the representations of heaven in the Bible are such as to adapt the inspired record to the needs of all classes of minds. We doubt not that the life of heaven is spiritual. We expect there pleasures, not of sense, but of soul. But the gospel was first preached, and is still preached every year, to multitudes who occupy the lowest plane of intelligence and culture. It goes to them in their coarseness and degradation; and in that state how could they take in a picture of spiritual joy? Their conceptions of heaven grow with their characters. As they increase in spirituality it becomes less a place and more a state. It represents to them at every stage the highest point that they have reached, the utmost of blessedness that they can apprehend. To pass to another topic, I would ask, Would not any detailed description of the life to come raise more questions than it answered—excite more curiosity than it gratified? I love to think of it as infinitely diversified, as, though the same, yet different to every soul. I believe that every direction which the mind can take, every bent which the character can assume under the guidance of religion, reaches out into eternity. If this be the case, how could the whole be written out in a volume? Or, had some portions of this blessed life been revealed, and some threads of our earthly existence shown us as they are woven into the web of eternity, it could only have awakened doubt and despondency in those minds on whose favourite departments of thought and duty no light from heaven was shed. But while for these reasons a specific revelation with regard to the heavenly life was not to be expected, does not the very idea of immortality include the answers to many of the questions which we might ask the most anxiously? If we are the same beings there as here, we must carry with us the tastes, affections, and habits of thinking and feeling, with which we depart this life, and those of them which can find scope for exercise and space for growth in heaven must unfold and ripen there. In addition to what has been said, I would suggest that much may have been left unrevealed with regard to heaven in order to furnish room for the highest exercise of the imagination. It seems to me that the Scriptural representations of the life to come are precisely adapted to make fancy the handmaid of devotion. There may be yet another reason why we have so little detailed information with regard to heaven. There is no doubt much which we could not know—for which human speech furnishes no words. Language is the daughter of experience. It can give the blind no idea of colours, or the deaf of sounds. Now there can be no doubt that in the future life our mode of being, of perception, of recognition, of communication, will be essentially different from what it is here, and perhaps so different that nothing within our earthly experience could furnish terms for its description. But, with all our ignorance, we have full assurance on one point, and that the most essential to our present improvement and happiness. "When God shall appear," shall draw near the soul in death and judgment, "we shall be like Him." And if like Him, like Jesus, His express image, whose heart is all laid open to us, whose traits of spiritual beauty and excellence are within our clear view. To be like Christ—need we know, could we ask more? (*A. P. Peabody.*)

Progress of manhood :—There is enough of progress and development in our present existence to justify the belief that man, living in God and loving Him, shall pass on to capacities, services, and enjoyments of which he can have now only the most imperfect conception. Look at the little child in his mother's arms: its eyes beautiful but vacant, or just sharpening into attention and wonder; its head at all points of the compass in five minutes. Now look at that man who, with eye of fire and voice of thunder, binds an army together, and rules the will of a hundred thousand men with a word: the little, comely, helpless infant has grown into that mighty soldier, whose look is equal to a hundred swords, whose voice is equal to a cannonade. Who could have predicted such a man from such a child? Say, then, to every child, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be"; we must wait; we must live and work in the spirit of hope; this child, or that, may move the world to God and heaven! Look at the child beginning his letters and forming words of one syllable. See him hesitating between C and G, not exactly knowing which is which, and being utterly confounded because he is not sure whether the word to should have two o's or one! Now look at the student shut up in the museum deciphering and arranging the most learned and difficult writings in all literature, vindicating his criticism in the face of an enlightened continent. The two are one. The little puzzled learner has grown into the accomplished and authoritative scholar. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be!" If we follow on to know the Lord and do His will, our strength shall be equal to our day, and we shall be to ourselves a continual surprise, and to the dignity of life a constant witness, and a memorial not to be gainsaid. Fancy a child born under the most corrupting and discouraging circumstances: parents immoral; poverty, desolation, discomfort of every kind, the characteristics of the house. No reverence, no chivalry, no pretence even of religious form; to be born under such circumstances is surely to be doomed to a continual depravity, wickedness, and despair. Yet even there the Spirit of the Lord may mightily operate, and out of that pestilent chaos may order come, and music, and beautiful utilities. This has been done; it is being done now; it is the daily Christian miracle; it constrains us by glad compulsion to exclaim, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." It is the joy of the Christian missionary to be able to point to villages once the scene of cannibalism, and of wickedness of every name, where there was no conscience, no law, no mercy, no honour, and to show you houses of Christian prayer, and to point out men who were cannibals singing Christian psalms and crying like children under the pathos of Christian appeals. What wonder, then, if within view of transformations so vital and astounding, we exclaim with thankful and hopeful surprise, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be"! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Our imperfect knowledge of the future* :—If a child had been born, and spent all his life in the Mammoth Cave, how impossible would it be for him to comprehend the upper world! Parents might tell him of its life, its light, its beauty, and its sounds of joy; they might heap up the sands into mounds, and try to show him by stalactites how grass, flowers, and trees grow out of the ground; till at length, with laborious thinking, the child would fancy he had gained a true idea of the unknown land: and yet, though he longed to behold it, when it came that he was to go forth, it would be with regret for the familiar crystals and rock-hewn rooms, and the quiet that reigned therein. But when he came up some May morning, with ten thousand birds singing in the trees, and the heavens bright and blue, and full of sunlight, and the wind blowing softly through the young leaves, all a-glitter with dew, and the landscape stretching away green and beautiful to the horizon, with what rapture would he gaze about him, and see how poor were all the fancies and interpretations which were made within the cave of the things which grew and lived without! and how he would wonder that he could ever have regretted to leave the silence and dreary darkness of his old abode! So, when we emerge from this cave of earth into that land where spring-growths are, and where is eternal summer, how shall we wonder that we could have clung so fondly to this dark and barren life! (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Love's ultimate intentions* :—It is not merely for what we are to-day that our Father loves us so. It is for what He means to make us when we have done with mortality and sin. See that tiny boy in his cradle, over whom his parents watch with such doting fondness. Say, over and above the instinctive fondness of parents for their children, are there not big hopes that gather round that little one's head? It is not merely because of what he is to-day that his parents love him so, but because of what he is to be when he becomes a man, filling some place of honour in this busy world. Ah! and so it is with the love of God. It is not merely because of what we are now, in our frailty

and weakness, that our Father loves us thus, but because of what He means to make us when He has received us home and has divested us of this dull mortality, and has crowned us with His own ineffable glory! (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *Our knowledge of heaven small*:—Oh! when we meet in heaven, we shall see how little we knew about it on earth. (*G. Payson.*) **But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.**—*The eternal future clear only in Christ*:—The apostle admits that there is obscurity hanging over much of our eternal future. 1. The first step of the soul into another state of being is a mystery. The existence of the soul separate from the body, and from all material organs, is incomprehensible. 2. The place of our future life is obscure. How there can be relation to place without a body we do not know, and even when the body is restored, we cannot tell the locality of the resurrection-world. 3. The outward manner of our final existence is also uncertain. Whether we may possess merely our present faculties, enlarged and strengthened, as a child's mind expands into a man's, or whether new faculties of perception may not be made to spring forth, as if sight were given a blind man, we find it impossible to affirm. 4. Many of the modes of thought and feeling, in that life to come, perplex us. Truth must for ever continue truth, and goodness eternally commend itself to the soul, else our training for the future life would be valueless, and our confidence in the reality of things shaken. But there may be large modifications, through the extension and elevation of our thoughts. We shall see the same spiritual objects, but from other positions, and with higher powers of judging. How far this may affect our views we cannot say. 5. It would be unsatisfactory enough if this were all that could be said and done. But the apostle puts this dark background upon the canvas, that he may set in relief a central scene and figure—Christ and our relation to Him. It matters little, the apostle says, what may be our ignorance about other things, what doubts may agitate us, what darkness lie on the edge of our horizon, if we can abide in the centre with this great Enlightener. He casts His illumination upon our future destiny as well as upon our present duty. I. The first thing promised is **THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST**—"Christ shall appear." It is not merely that Christ shall be seen, but seen as never before. 1. The first thought of the apostle was no doubt the human nature of Christ as appearing again to the eyes of His friends. He left with that nature, and promised so to return—"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." His first disciples are not to be the only favoured men who ever saw Christ after the flesh. They will regain the view they lost, and we, if we are of them who love His appearing, shall share it with them. The likeness of sinful flesh will be removed—the marred visage and form of suffering,—but the look that turned on Peter—the face that rejoiced in that hour when He said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth"—the hands that blessed the children—these shall remain, with all the soul of pity that was in them, and the beating heart which went forth through them. The only difference will be that they shall appear. In this world they were hidden, seen only by the few, seen obscurely, realised feebly; but when He is made manifest they shall be the centre and the sunlight of a ransomed world, the heritage of an innumerable company, and yet each one, as if by himself, shall have His view of, and portion in, the true human fellowship of the Son of God. 2. In the manifestation of Christ the apostle must have thought also of His Divine nature. His first appearance in this nature was dim and overcast, both for the sake of the weak vision of fallen humanity, and because suffering and sacrifice were necessary for the work He had to perform. Before He could raise, He needed to redeem. When He became man "He emptied Himself" of His Divinity, as far as this was possible—gathered the attributes of the Infinite within the limits of the finite, and shut up the rays of His uncreated glory in the likeness of sinful flesh. When He shall appear there may be expected a clear manifestation of the Divine nature through the human. The glory that He had with the Father before the world was shall be resumed, and, if we may venture to say it, raised, for the glory of the Divine shall have added to it the grace of the human. The majesty, the power and wisdom which belong to Him as the Son of God shall go forth unrestrained, in union with the tenderness and sympathy which fill His heart as the Son of Man. II. The second thing promised at the appearance of Christ is a **FULL VISION ON OUR PART**—"we shall see Him as He is." 1. There must certainly be a change in our material frame before we can sustain the view of Christ's exalted humanity. When men are brought to see Him as He is, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory would crush them to the dust, without that change which will make their bodies incorruptible and glorious as His own. 2.

With this change on the body, there must be a corresponding one upon the soul, before there can be the full vision of Christ. If we were allowed to conjecture, we might suppose that this education is part of the history of souls in the separate state. The body can rise at once to its highest perfection, but the law of spirit is that of advance by slow degrees. It is consolatory, also, to think that the great day shall not startle the blessed dead, if we may so speak of them, with affright. It shall dawn to them as the summer sun dawns. But however the preparation takes place, we may be confident that the soul's vision will be at last perfectly fitted to its object—"Christ as He is." It will be a vision free from all sin in the soul. This will make it free from error, and from the doubt which has pain with it. It will be free from partiality—from that fruitful source of misconception and division, taking a portion of Christ and His truth for the whole. It will be a vision intense and vivid, not coldly outlined by the understanding, but veined and coloured by the heart—a sight in which the soul goes out to rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. And it will be a vision close and intimate. They shall gain their knowledge of God and Christ by quicker processes and shorter paths than here we do. III. The third thing promised is COMPLETE ASSIMILATION TO CHRIST—"we shall be like Him." It is the perfect view of Christ which gives perfect likeness to Him. To look on one we love brings a measure of similitude, and looking on Christ, even here, however dimly we may see Him, produces a degree of likeness. But it is when Christ appears that the last great step is taken. However pure and happy may be the state of separate spirits, the Scripture teaches us that it is incomplete, and that they, as well as the whole creation, "wait for the manifestation of the sons of God." 1. Taking the order hitherto observed, we may think first of our material frame. It will be made like to Christ's glorious body. This assures us that we shall have eternal relations to God's material universe. It fixes a central home for our nature—we shall be where Christ is. It makes us feel that there will be a fitness in our frame for our future dwelling-place. All that world forms itself into a harmony with Christ, and when we are like Him we shall be in harmony with it. When the material frame is made like Christ's, it indicates to us something not only of the forms of the future life, but of its active employments. The body in this present world serves two great purposes. It lets in God's external creation, with all its lessons of knowledge, upon the soul; and it gives the soul power to go forth and imprint upon God's creation its own thoughts and volitions. When the Bible assures us that a body shall still be associated with man's soul, it leads us to infer that God's material universe will be open to him in all its teachings; and that he will be able to impress it in some way with the marks of his own mind and will. Only it will be after a higher manner. The lordship of man over creation, which was granted him at first, will be heightened when it is restored through Christ (Heb. ii. 7). 2. Besides the assimilation of the material frame, we cannot forget that there will be a likeness of the spiritual nature. The source of heaven's blessedness and power is the likeness of the soul to Christ. When He shall appear "we shall see His face, and His name shall be on our foreheads." It shall be deeper—in our souls; and all of God's truth and grace that can be communicated to a creature shall enter into the depth of the spiritual nature through Christ. If the active soul finds scope for work in God's material universe, the Mary-like spirit which delights to sit at the feet of Christ and hear His word, shall have unrebuked leisure in the heavenly home. We may trust that in some way the sisters, Service and Meditation, will interchange gifts, and be perfectly at one when they reach His higher presence. 3. We have pursued the order of presenting first the human side of Christ, and then the Divine; but we trust it has been made clear that the knowledge of Christ comes to us through the soul-side in ourselves. We must begin by knowing Him spiritually as the source of pardon and purity—commencing a new life within, which goes forward, strengthening and rising—a life of which heaven is not the reward, but the natural and necessary continuation. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *Future blessedness*.—I. THE NATURE OF THIS BLESSED AND GLORIOUS ESTATE—"we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." A transforming vision, or such a vision as changeth us into the likeness of God, is the true blessedness of the saints. There are three things considerable in our happiness—(1) The vision of God; (2) A participation of His likeness; (3) The satisfaction or delectation thence resulting. Two of them are in the text: "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The third is fetched from a parallel place (Ps. xvii. 15). First, for vision, that beginneth the happiness, and maketh way for all the rest—"we shall see Him

as He is." This sight is either ocular or mental. 1. Ocular; for our senses have their happiness as well as our souls, and there is a glorified eye as well as a glorified mind (Job xix. 26, 27). But you will say, How is this so great a privilege to the godly, since the wicked shall see Him? (Matt. xxvi. 64). (1) That sight they have of Christ shall be but a short glimpse of His glory; for after their doom and sentence is passed, they shall be immediately banished out of His presence (Matt. xxv. 41). (2) They shall see Him with shame and terror, looking upon Him as to receive their just punishment (chap. ii. 28). (3) The consideration of the object is different; the one look upon Him as their inexorable judge, the other as their merciful saviour; their interest in Him maketh Him dear to their souls. 2. Mental vision or contemplation. The angels, which have not bodies, are said to behold the face of our heavenly Father (Matt. xviii. 10); and when we are said to see God, it is not meant of the bodily eye, for a spirit cannot be seen with bodily eyes; so He is still the invisible God (Col. i. 15). And seeing face to face is opposed to knowing in part. And therefore it implieth a more complete knowledge than now we have. The mind is the noblest faculty, and must have its satisfaction. Now three things are necessary—(1) A prepared faculty; (2) A suitable object; and (3) The conjunction of both these. Now in the state of glory all these concur. The faculty is more capacious, the object is more fully represented, and the conjunction and fruition is more intimate and close than it can be elsewhere. Secondly, assimilation or transformation into the image of God and Christ. 1. What this likeness is. This was man's first ruin, this aspiring to be like God (Gen. iii. 5); not in a blessed conformity, but in a cursed self-sufficiency. This was the design of the first transgression (Isa. xiv. 14). The men of the world aspire to be like God in greatness and power, but not in goodness and holiness. We affect or usurp Divine honour, and to sit upon even ground with God. Christ came not to gratify our sin, but to make us like unto God, not equal with God. (1) In holiness and purity; for that is the chief thing wherein God will be resembled by His creatures. We are made holy as He is holy. (2) We are like Him in happiness and glory, that is, in a glorious condition (1 Cor. xv. 49). (1) A relative and adherent glory, as the saints are admitted into a participation of His judicial power (1 Cor. vi. 2). (2) Internal and inherent, viz., the glory revealed in us, put into us. Now it is revealed to us, then in us. Our ear hath received a little hereof, but then it shall be fully accomplished in our persons, in our bodies and souls. 2. How it is the fruit of vision? for so it is given as a reason, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." I answer—there is between light and likeness a circular generation, as there is in most moral things; and on the one side it may be said we shall be like Him, therefore we shall see Him as He is, and also on the other side, as in the text, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Thirdly, the third thing is satisfaction, not mentioned in the text, but implied from a parallel place; for we having the sight and presence of God, must needs be ravished with it (Psa. xvi. 11). Our great business will be to love what we see, and our great happiness to have what we love. This will be a full, perpetual, and never-failing delight to us. II. THE SEASON WHEN WE SHALL ENJOY THIS—"when He shall appear." 1. I take it for granted that the soul before is not only in the hand of God, which all assert, but admitted into the sight and presence of the Lord, and to see His blessed face. 2. Then we have our solemn absolution from all sins (Acts iii. 19). And our pardon is pronounced by the judge sitting upon the throne. 3. Then shall we have glorified bodies restored unto us, wherein Christ shall be admired (2 Thess. i. 10). 4. Then Christ will present us to God by head and poll, and give an account of all that God hath given him, that they may be introduced into their everlasting estate, not one wanting (John vi. 40). III. THE APPREHENSION THAT WE SHOULD HAVE OF IT FOR THE PRESENT—"we know." 1. It is not a bare conjecture, but a certain knowledge; it is not only we think, we hope well, but we know. 2. It is not a probable opinion, but an evident and infallible truth, as sure as if we saw it with our eyes. An unseen world is an unknown world; how can we be so sure of it? It is set before us by His precious promises who cannot lie. 3. It is not a general belief, but a particular confidence. He speaketh upon the supposition that we are God's children. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Man's capability of future glory and blessedness*:—I. THAT STRONG, UNAPPEASABLE DESIRE, THAT LONGING AFTER A HIGHER GOOD THAN THIS WORLD AFFORDS, WHICH SEEMS INHERENT IN THE NATURE OF MAN, POINTS TO SOMETHING GREAT AND GLORIOUS IN HIS FUTURE DESTINY. This was wont to be appealed to by the ancient heathen philosophers as among the strongest proofs of the soul's immortality. And

plainly there is much force in the argument. For, assuming the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, it may be asked, why should He implant in the nature of man a desire after immortality, if He did not mean to gratify that desire; or why awaken in Him longings after unearthly, eternal happiness, if He has made no provisions to appease those longings? Place man in any earthly situation; give him wealth, give him power, give him honour, pleasure, all that the world can afford; still there will be a void within, still he will travail in pain, and look and sigh after enjoyments which the fleeting objects of time and sense can never afford him. His thoughts and his hopes stretch beyond the shadows of earth and time and fasten on the skies. These facts clearly show that this world was never designed to be the final abode of man. II. IF WE CONSIDER THE CAPACITIES OF MAN, WE SHALL PERCEIVE STILL STRONGER EVIDENCE THAT HE IS DESTINED TO SOMETHING INCONCEIVABLY GRAND AND GLORIOUS IN THE PROGRESS OF HIS FUTURE BEING. Though fallen from his original dignity and degraded by sin, man is still noble in ruins. He is now, most plainly, but in the infancy of his being. Still we perceive in him capacities for high and noble attainments; capacities which stamp on his existence the seal of eternity. 1. Man possesses an immortal nature; is made for an endless existence. The body soon decays. But this affects not the existence of the living, thinking spirit. 2. Man has a capacity for endless progress in knowledge. The great law of mind is expansion, and we know of no assignable limits to this law. 3. Man has a capacity for endless improvement in moral excellence or holiness. He is qualified to be perfectly conformed to the will of God, to be holy even as He is holy. 4. Man has a capacity for great and noble actions, and for constant and evergrowing usefulness in the kingdom of God. 5. Man has a capacity for endless advancement in happiness. Happiness in a rational being is the necessary result of the right and useful exercise of all His powers. III. WHAT PROVISIONS GOD HAS MADE TO SATISFY THE WANTS OF MAN, AND FILL THE LARGE CAPACITIES OF THE SOUL WITH GOOD. Ever since the morning of creation, when God made man in His image, and gave him dominion over His works, He has been continually operating for his good. Behold this world in all its magnificence and beauty, appointed to be his habitation, and to minister to his improvement and happiness. Turn next to the wonders of redeeming love, and see how, from age to age, God has been operating for the salvation of our race. IV. LET US TURN TO THE ORACLES OF GOD, AND LEARN WHAT THEY REVEAL ON THIS SUBJECT. 1. Conclusion: How truly wise is it to be religious! What is religion? It is to act up to the dignity of our nature as made in the image of God, rational and immortal beings; is to look beyond the scenes of earth and time to those invisible realities which the Word of God presents for our consideration, and prepare to meet them; it is to love, reverence and serve the great Being who holds our destiny in His hand. 2. How degrading is a life of irreligion, a life spent in neglect of God and the soul; devoted to the cares and pursuits of the world! Of what value, in a little time, will all those things be which now most interest and absorb men of the world? (*J. Hawes, D.D.*) *The manifestations of Christ*:—Both St. Paul and St. John dwell largely upon the "sonship" of believers, but they approach the subject from different points of view. To the mind of the former of these two apostles, this sonship assumes the appearance of a position of privilege. A boy running wild in the streets—untaught and uncared for, and in danger of utter destruction—is adopted into a benevolent and wealthy family. He has had no reason to expect such an advancement. The other apostle pushes the matter a step further, and opens up what perhaps we may venture to call a profounder view of the subject. Looking beyond the question of privilege, He speaks of the disciple as deriving his spiritual existence from the Great Being into whose family he has been introduced. The man, according to the apostle, is born of God. You will see at once what a lofty idea of Christian discipleship the apostle St. John presents to us. "Beloved! now are we the sons of God." This is the starting-point; and when we have reached it there emerge to the view three thoughts. First, that there is something difficult to comprehend about the present spiritual position of the believer. It is seen, as it were, through a mist. In the next place, that this difficulty will be removed. The mist will melt away, and all be made plain when Christ appears. And lastly, that if we are really looking forward to the clearing up or manifestation, which is coming, the effect of the expectation will be seen in the conduct of our daily lives. We shall purify ourselves even as He is pure. 1. As to the first of the three thoughts, it is plain enough that the true disciple of Christ is misunderstood, and must be misunderstood by the world at

large, and just because the world cannot possibly put itself at his point of view. St. Paul tells us that the spiritual man judgeth all things, whilst the natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God. The Christian disciple is more or less of a puzzle to those who, not being born again of the Spirit, do not really belong to the family of God. Sometimes they will question his motives, and set him down as hypocritical, or fanatical, or as seeking his own advantage under pretence of regard for the glory of God. But the more kindly and generous portion of them—and these will probably constitute the majority—will content themselves with expressing surprise, or, it may be amusement, at his devotion to Christ. And the reason of this is plain enough. You must sympathise with a man in order to be able to understand him. But there is more than this to be said. The disciple himself—to put the opinion of the world aside—the disciple himself can only very dimly and imperfectly apprehend the future which lies before him. Partly because he is engaged in the tug and strain of a spiritual conflict. You may have your misgivings sometimes as to how the battle is going on with you. When men express a doubt about the reality of your faith and the sincerity of your religion, you may at times be inclined to suspect that their judgment is correct, and that your estimate of yourself has all along been in error. But though the confusion may arise—in part—from the fact of your being placed in the thick of a spiritual struggle, it may be attributed still more to the difficulty of realising the things of the eternal world: a difficulty for experiencing which we are surely not altogether to blame. 2. There will be a time when all difficulties and confusions shall be removed, and that time is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Day of Judgment is simply a day of manifestation, in which every one of us, every human being, is seen to be what he really is. At present we are muffled up in various disguises. More or less, we are hidden from each other, and perhaps from ourselves. The mean spirit is sometimes clothed in dignity, whilst solid worth, not unfrequently, is clothed in rags. Sometimes, too, the true Christian is misunderstood. But we must go a little further with Him. "When Christ," he says, "is manifested," i.e., in His resurrection-glory, "we shall see Him as He is." It is possible to see Christ and yet not to see Him "as He is." There are few, I suppose, in Christendom, who do not form any idea of Christ; but in some cases it is unhappily a mistaken one. To some persons He is a mere man. To others a great teacher and nothing more. To others, again, a hard and exacting taskmaster. But to see Christ as He is, is to contemplate Him with sympathy and love. We have been taught by the Spirit to understand Him. This I suppose to be seeing Christ as He is, so far as this present world is concerned. And they who are thus accustomed to see Christ are ready to gaze upon Him with unspeakable joy when He shall come again to earth. III. Our last point remains yet untouched. An illustration somewhat resembling that with which I started, must serve me to place this part of our subject before you. A young prince, stolen away in childhood from his father's palace, and brought up amidst unworthy surroundings, has been recovered and brought back again. By degrees he comes to understand his position—he did not quite understand it at first—and he is full of gratitude when he contrasts what he is now with what he was some months or years ago. Yet he has difficulties. The habits of years of depraved life are not easily shaken off. But he contends manfully against the difficulties, and is climbing up slowly, but surely, to a fitness for the position in which he has been so happily reinstated. Now, two distinct considerations will influence the young man. First, he will desire to act worthily of his present princely state; and then, because he knows he is to inherit, at some time or other, his father's sceptre, and because wide dominions and large populations will then be placed under his sway, he will wish to qualify himself for the task and responsibility of ruling, whenever he shall be called upon to ascend the throne. You see the application. We who are Christians have a present position to maintain. Christ says to each of us, "Be what I have made you! I have placed you where you are. I have made you children of God. Be children of God!" And then there is the future to look forward to—the future kingdom—the future glory, upon which we shall have one day to enter with Christ. And what is the result of our expectation of these things if we really entertain the expectation? Let St. John tell us: "Every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (*G. Calthrop, M.A.*) *By and by*:—I. "IT DOETH NOT YET APPEAR WHAT WE SHALL BE." At present we are veiled, and travel through the world *incognito*. 1. Our Master was not made manifest here below. (1) His glory was veiled in flesh. (2) His Deity was

concealed in infirmity. (3) His power was hidden under sorrow and weakness. (4) His riches were buried under poverty and shame. 2. We are not fit to appear in full figure as yet. (1) The son is treated as a servant while under age. (2) The heir is kept a pensioner till his majority. (3) The prince serves as a soldier before he reaches the throne. 3. This is not the world to appear in. (1) There are more to appreciate us, and it would be as though kings showed their royalty at a wake, or wise men discoursed philosophy before fools. (2) A warring and waiting condition like the present would not be a fit opportunity for unveiling. (a) The winter prepares flowers, but does not call them forth. (b) The ebb-tide reveals the secrets of the sea, but many of our rivers no gallant ship can then sail. (c) To everything there is a season, and this not the time of glory. II. "BUT WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR." 1. We shall speak of our Lord's manifestation without doubt. "We know." 2. Our faith is so assured that it becomes knowledge. (1) He will be manifest upon this earth in person. (2) He will be manifest in perfect happiness. (3) He will be manifest in highest glory. (4) He will appear surely, and so we speak of it as a date for our own manifesting—"when He shall appear." III. "WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM." We shall then be as manifested and as clearly seen as He will be. The time of our open presentation at court will have come. 1. Having a body like His body: sinless, incorruptible, painless, spiritual, clothed with beauty and power, and yet most real and true. 2. Having a soul like His soul: perfect, holy, instructed, developed, strengthened, active, delivered from temptation, conflict, and suffering. 3. Having such dignities and glories as He wears: kings, priests, conquerors, judges, sons of God. IV. "WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS." 1. This glorious sight will perfect our likeness. 2. This will be the result of our being like Him. 3. This will be evidence of our being like Him, since none but the pure in heart can see God. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *What we shall be*.—Surely a wholly new interest creeps over this poor human world of ours if we once see in it the germ of possibility, the suggestion of all we shall be hereafter. So seen, it is no aged and weary traveller tottering slowly down to his end; but it is a child still, with the fascination of a child all about it, the fascination of a life which is feeling its way forward by start, by gleam, by sudden intuition, by experiment, by tentative trial, by flashes of insight, by glances, by glimpses—yes, and by stumbles and falls and shocks and jolts, from out of which it still pulls itself together and runs on yet ahead. That is human life in the believer's eye, in its best and wisest form—still the child-life, wistful, prophetic, marvellous, suggestive; a child-life so full of strange dreams, but with all its achievements yet to come, to come in that great after-world for which the whole round of this age-long story of man is but a nursery, but a preparation, but a rehearsal, but an education. Let us recount our gains from such a belief in respect of the world at our feet, before our eyes. 1. Cheerfulness in the face of change. Change is so wearisome when it insists on going beyond what we want. There is such a sense of disappointment when we, perhaps, have succeeded in obtaining a goal, and then have to discover that the moment the end is touched it has already begun to change, to move, to go further. In politics, especially, we note how we are suffering from this cheerless disappointment. Good things, from which men thirty years ago hoped so much, have been done only to show how much more remains to be done. We thought ourselves in the van—lo! we are already lagging in the rear, we are *passé*, we have lost the cue. That is what damps the spirit. But what if this life is all of it not an end, but only a beginning; all of it a suggestion of more beyond, none of it a goal attained? Our political fabric is to us precious and sacred. It suggests something which we shall find hereafter. It gives a hint, a shadow, of that heavenly citizenship which shall complete all that is well begun here: we shall find it all there. Here no suggestion of that vast society in heaven exhausts its meaning. As soon as we have understood one, and seen our way to its realisation, we see our way to another; each is but a fragment of the great kingdom to be. Now let it go. God sweeps it out of sight; not in contempt, but because He prepares for us another and yet another picture of that immeasurable glory of the kingdom of heaven. 2. We gain cheerfulness in the face of change, and we gain hope just where we most need it. For if the ideal, if completion, is to be sought here on earth, then we know how despairing is our view of those who are born in thousands in dark and low dens, born out of the seed of sin, out of the fires of lust and of drink, born into a life that must be stricken and stunted, blind with ignorance and cursed with a loveless doom. Those so born can make but a pitiful fight of it here; at their very best they can attain very little, and they are swept so

lightly down the dark waters of crime and sorrow. If this earth of ours be all, how can we close our eyes to that nightmare? But we who believe that this life is at its best but a germ, a start, a discipline, can afford to broaden our hope beyond all our seeing. Behind the fumes of drink, behind the cloud of crime, each may have made his start and fought his fight, and have proved the possibility, and have manifested some germ of possible growth. Kindness, purity, may have been touched at least. And if this is so there is hope. God may yet do great things with them, so long as He can secure in them some seed of future life. 3. We gain cheerfulness in the face of change and hope in face of base and bad tuition, and then we gain what is near akin to the last—joy in the face of failure. The fruit is not here, but fruit may come hereafter in abundance out of those very failures which prune and curtail and sharply discipline us here. Hereafter it may be our failures that we shall most bless, as we see all they taught us. Who knows what is going on in secret behind those very failures in others which most provoke us? It will not be the failure which distresses, but only the failure to use the failure for good purposes. Our failures (above all, of course, our noble failures) are part and parcel of our spiritual history and growth. When we go before our God the failures will go to the account, they will be elements in the judgment, they will be as instrumental and effective as any of our successes in determining our eternal lot. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, but it doth not appear what we shall be." Not yet, but the root of what we shall be hereafter is here embodied in the soul. Now are we the sons of God, now are we the germ of what we shall find ourselves in that fair land. Now all that we can learn of what we shall be hereafter is to be sought here and now, in our human lot, amid our fellows, in our common brotherhood. The hints, the glimpses of the glory which is to follow, the beginning, the omen, the voice—all are here close about us in human nature and in flesh and blood. How, then, shall we not turn to this poor life of ours with hope, with zeal, with tenderness, with love; how shall we not clasp it tight and fast, and cling about it, and busy ourselves with its services? (*Canon Scott Holland.*) *The spirituality of the beatific vision:*—As vain and troublesome a world as this is, and as short and uncertain as our abode is in it, yet are we so strangely charmed with the glittering appearances in our way as to forget the crown of glory at our journey's end. To wean us, therefore, from the place of our pilgrimage, and to set our affections on a better country, we must send out our minds, as Moses did his spies, to search the promised Canaan, and to bring of the fruit of that good land we are travelling to. Such Divine contemplations will give a new turn of thought and quite another taste and relish of things; they will be of great use to cure a downward disposition of soul, and to raise us above the world. I. THE MEANING AND EXTENT OF THIS PHRASE, OF SEEING GOD AS HE IS. The vision here intended must be intellectual—a vision of the mind and not of the eye, a clear perception or sight of God in the souls of just men made perfect. In this life we feel after God, as it were, in the dark, we trace Him out by the footsteps of infinite power and wisdom, we see Him in His works but not in Himself; but when we commence angel life this veil shall be taken away, then we shall be no longer under the pedagogy of types and shadows but admitted into the immediate possession of original truth. II. THE MODE OR MANNER OF THIS BEATIFIC VISION. The manner of our seeing God in this life is either by a long train of consequences, by climbing up gradually from the effects to the cause, from the things that are made to the invisible things of the Maker, even His eternal power and Godhead; or by way of eminence, by inferring that the perfections we see in the creatures must of necessity centre all more eminently in the Creator; or negatively, by denying everything of God we conceive unbecoming the Divine nature, for at present we rather know what God is not than what He is; or else we see Him by faith, by believing upon the testimony He has given us of Himself by Moses and the prophets, Christ and His apostles. In the vision reserved for the heavenly Jerusalem there will be nothing dark or enigmatical, nothing of cloud, or representation, of faith or reasoning, or intermediate ideas to inform the understanding, nothing between God and the glorified soul, the knowledge intuitive, the vision naked, full, and perfect according to the quality of the recipient, and the mind directly irradiated from the fountain of light, from the Divine essence itself. III. WHEREIN THE HAPPINESS OF THIS BEATIFIC VISION DOES PRINCIPALLY CONSIST. Now by seeing God we are not to conceive a bare intuitive knowledge only of the Divine essence, but a vision most lively and operative, warmed with all the affections of the heart, and an entire conformity of our wills

to the will of God. For then, then alone, are just men completely blessed, when their spirits are made so perfect that they clearly contemplate all truth and fully enjoy all good; that is, when the whole orb of the soul is filled with perfect light and perfect love. To see God, therefore, is to enjoy Him. First, the Holy Spirit is now given but in part, in proportion to the exigencies of a state of trial, and consequently our communion must be in part also; but in heaven, the place of reward, we shall all, to the utmost extent of our capacity, so be filled with all the fulness of God, and most perfectly joined to the ever-blessed Trinity in a most intimate, immediate, and ineffable union. For, secondly, God communicates Himself in this world not immediately, but by inferior instruments and secondary causes: He feeds the soul with the graces of His Spirit, by the ministry of His Word and sacraments, and preserves the body by the help of His creatures. But in the other world all we can want or wish for shall be supplied directly from the Fountain of Happiness, and God Himself shall be to us all in all without any second causes. Thirdly, the mean, or condition on our part, whereby we are incorporated into Christ at present, is our faith, but in the life to come faith shall be swallowed up in perfect vision, we shall see God as He is, and the sight of infinite perfection shall set us on fire and make our hearts burn with love as pure and bright as our knowledge; and it being the property of love to clasp the object beloved into the closest union, we shall enjoy all things possible in common with the ever-blessed Trinity. From the nature of our communion with God in heaven thus explained, I proceed more particularly to the blessed effects of it. I begin with the perfection of our knowledge. Then shall we know, not in part, not by wearisome steps and deductions, but clearly and all at once; we shall know in the same manner as God knows, that is, by His immediate self, for in Himself only can we see Him as He is, and in His infinite mind we shall see the hidden forms of His creatures and the ideas of all perfection. But there is a fond inquiry whether we shall know our relations and acquaintances in the other world. To which I answer, that if such knowledge will add to our happiness we shall surely enjoy it. But then, seeing everything in God, we shall be affected only as God is affected; we shall love one another for our relation and likeness to Him only, and as we are members of Christ united and informed by the same Spirit, which will be both the bond of our union and the cause of our love. Lastly, from this perfection of knowledge will arise a perfect conformity of our wills and affections. (*W. Reeves, M.A.*)

The beatific vision:—It is one of the most natural desires in all the world, that when we hear of a great and a good man we should wish to see his person. I am sure you will all confess that this strong desire has arisen in your minds concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We owe to none so much; we talk of none so much, we hope, and we think of none so much: at any rate, no one so constantly thinks of us. We have a strong desire to see Him. Nor do I think that that desire is wrong. Moses himself asked that he might see God. Had it been a wrong wish arising out of vain curiosity it would not have been granted, but God granted Moses his desire. Yea, more; the earnest desire of the very best of men has been in the same direction. Job said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God": that was his desire. The holy Psalmist said, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness"; "I shall behold Thy face in righteousness." We are rejoiced to find such a verse as this, for it tells us that our curiosity shall be satisfied, our desire consummated, our bliss perfected. "We shall see Him as He is." I. THE GLORIOUS POSITION. Our minds often revert to Christ as He was, and as such we have desired to see Him. We shall never see Him thus; Bethlehem's glories are gone for ever; Calvary's glooms are swept away; Gethsemane's scene is dissolved; and even Tabor's splendours are quenched in the past. We cannot, must not, see Him as He was; nor do we wish, for we have a larger promise, "We shall see Him as He is." 1. Consider, first of all, that we shall not see Him abased in His incarnation but exalted in His glory. We shall see the hand, and the nail-prints too, but not the nail; it has been once drawn out, and for ever. We shall see Him, not with a reed in His hand, but grasping a golden sceptre. 2. Remember, again: we are not to see Christ as He was, the despised, the tempted one. We shall see Him beloved, not abhorred, not despised and rejected, but worshipped, honoured, crowned, exalted, served by flaming spirits and worshipped by cherubim and seraphim. "We shall see Him as He is." 3. We shall not see the Christ wrestling with pain, but Christ as a conqueror. We shall not see Him fight; but we shall see Him return from the fight victorious, and shall cry, "Crown Him! Crown Him!" We shall never see our Saviour under His Father's displeasure;

but we shall see Him honoured by His Father's smile. Perhaps I have not shown clearly enough the difference between the two visions—the sight of what He was and what He is. The believer will be as much astonished when he sees Jesus' glories as He sits on His throne as He would have been to have seen Him in His earthly sufferings. The one would have been astonishment, and horror would have succeeded it; but when we see Jesus as He is it will be astonishment without horror. If we could see Jesus as He was, we should see Him with great awe. If we had seen Him raising the dead we should have thought Him a most majestic Being. So we shall feel awe when we see Christ on His throne; but it will be awe without fear. We shall not bow before Him with trembling, but it will be with joy; we shall not shake at His presence, but rejoice with joy unspeakable. Furthermore, if we had seen Christ as He was, we should have had great love for Him; but that love would have been compounded with pity. We shall love Him quite as much when we see Him in heaven, and more too, but it will be love without pity; we shall not say "Alas!" but we shall shout—"All hail the power of Jesu's name," &c. If we had seen Jesus Christ as He was here below, there would have been joy to think that He came to save us; but we should have had sorrow mingled with it to think that we needed saving. But when we see Him, there it will be joy without sorrow; sin and sorrow itself will have gone; ours will be a pure, unmingled, unadulterated joy. Yet more. If we had seen our Saviour as He was, it would have been a triumph to see how He conquered, but still there would have been suspense about it. We should have feared lest He might not overcome. But when we see Him up there it will be triumph without suspense. Sheathe the sword; the battle's won. II. PERSONAL IDENTITY. Perhaps while I have been speaking some have said, "Ah! but I want to see the Saviour, the Saviour of Calvary, the Saviour of Judea, the very one that died for me. I do not so much pant to see the glorious Saviour you have spoken of; I want to see that very Saviour who did the works of love, the suffering Saviour; for Him I love." You shall see Him. It is the same one. There is personal identity. "We shall see Him." We shall be sure it is He; for when we enter heaven we shall know Him by His manhood and Godhead. We shall find Him a man, even as much as He was on earth. Have you never heard of mothers having recognised their children years after they were lost by the marks and wounds upon their bodies? Ah! if we ever see our Saviour, we shall know Him by His wounds. But then, Christ and we are not strangers; for we have often seen Him in this glass of the Word. We shall know Him, because He will be so much like the Bible Jesus, that we shall recognise Him at once. Yet more, we have known Him better than by Scripture sometimes—by close and intimate fellowship with Him. Why, we meet Jesus in the dark sometimes; but we have sweet conversation with Him. Oh! we shall know Him well enough when we see Him. You may trust the believer for knowing his Master when he finds Him. III. THE POSITIVE NATURE OF VISION. "We shall see Him as He is." This is not the land of sight; it is too dark a country to see Him, and our eyes are not good enough. We walk here by faith. It is pleasant to believe His grace, but we had rather see it. Well, "we shall see Him." How different that sight of Him will be from that which we have here! 1. For here we see Him by reflection. Just as sometimes, when you are looking in your looking-glass, you see somebody going along in the street. You do not see the person, you only see him reflected. Now we see Christ reflected; but then we shall not see Him in the looking-glass; we shall positively see His person. Not the reflected Christ, not Christ in the sanctuary, not the mere Christ shining out of the Bible, not Christ reflected from the sacred pulpit; but "we shall see Him as He is." 2. Again: how partially we see Christ here! The best believer only gets half a glimpse of Christ. There we shall see Christ entirely, when "we shall see Him as He is." 3. Here, too, how dimly we see Christ! Have you never stood upon the hilltops when the mist has played on the valley? You have looked down to see the city and the streamlet below; you could just ken yonder steeple and mark that pinnacle; but they were all so swathed in the mist that you could scarcely discern them. Suddenly the wind has blown away the mist from under you, and you have seen the fair, fair valley. Ah! it is so when the believer enters heaven. Here he stands and looks upon Christ veiled in a mist—upon a Jesus who is shrouded; but when he gets up there, on Pisgah's brow, higher still, with his Jesus, then he shall not see Him dimly, but he shall see Him brightly. 4. Here, too, how distantly we see Christ! Almost as far off as the farthest star! But then we shall see Him closely; we shall see Him face to face; as a man talketh with his friend, even so shall we then talk with Jesus. 5. And oh! how transitory is our view of Jesus! It is only a little while we

get a glimpse of Christ, and then He seems to depart from us. But, Christians, there will be no hidings of faces in heaven! Then, do you know, there will be another difference—when “we shall see Him as He is.” How much better that sight will be than what we have here! When we see Christ here, we see Him to our profit; when we see Him there, we shall see Him to our perfection. I bear my Master witness, I never saw Him yet without being profited by Him. But then it will not be to improve us, it will be to perfect us, when we see Him there. “We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” IV. THE ACTUAL PERSONS—“we shall see Him as He is.” Come, let us divide that “we” into “I’s.” How many “I’s” are there here that will “see Him as He is”? Brother, with snow upon thy head, wilt thou “see Him as He is”? Thou hast had many years of fighting, and trying, and trouble: if thou ever dost “see Him as He is,” that will pay for all. But are thy grey hairs full of sin? and doth lust tarry in thy old cold blood? Ah! thou shalt “see Him,” but not nigh; thou shalt be driven from His presence. God save thee! And thou, who hast come to middle age, struggling with the toils of life, mixed up with all its battles, enduring its ills, thou art asking, it may be, shalt thou see Him? The text says, “We shall”; and can you and I put our hands on our hearts and know our union with Jesus? If so, “we shall see Him as He is.” Young man, the text says, “We shall see Him as He is.” Young man, you have got a mother and her soul doats upon you. Could your mother come to you this morning, she might take hold of your arm, and say to you, “John, we shall ‘see Him as He is’; it is not I, John, that shall see Him for myself alone, but you and I shall see Him together; ‘we shall see Him as He is.’” Oh! bitter, bitter thought that just now crossed my soul! O heavens! if we ever should be sundered from those we love so dearly when the last day of account shall come! That were sad indeed. But we leave the thought with you, and lest you should think that if you are not worthy you will not see Him—if you are not good you will not see Him—if you do not do such-and-such good things you will not see Him—let me just tell you, whosoever, though he be the greatest sinner under heaven—whosoever, though his life be the most filthy and the most corrupt—whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall have everlasting life; for God will blot out his sins, will give him righteousness through Jesus, accept him in the beloved, save him by His mercy, keep him by His grace, and at last present Him spotless and faultless before His presence with exceeding great joy. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The two transfigurations (with 2 Cor. iii. 18).—The transfigurations of Moses and Christ were events that did more than accredit their Divine missions. The facts were typical, and suggestive of principles that were operating beyond the range of these special instances, and as such helped to colour the thought and speech and hope of the founders of the coming Church. Paul and John take hold of these inscrutable and stupendous transfiguration forces, and trace the effect of their working upon a man’s moral life and character here, and upon his person and destiny hereafter. Christ not only so acts upon us as to conform us to His holy and exalted pattern now; when He comes again it shall be to reflect His glory into the persons of His believing followers. 1. It may help the weak faith of some who stumble at the supernatural, if we recognise that assimilation forces are already at work which change into finer quality, nobler form, more subtle function that which is gross, inert, unshaped. The earth, in its noiseless flight, gathers to itself cosmic dust, just as a miller in going to and fro amidst the revolving wheels of his mill draws to himself fine grains of flour; and the earth then conforms that dust to its own likeness. It pulls the pliant stuff into its own range, and then refines and exalts it into those living organisms that are the glory of the earth. 2. It is by the law of assimilation that men are bound together into homogeneous communities and nations. 3. Transfigurations go on in the social realm that are more or less consciously mimetic in their character. It is because of this fact that the different parts of our common life at least match themselves into a congruous and harmonious whole. The moulding forces of society tend to bring men into conformity with ruling types rather than to make them separatists. And there is an assimilation to Christ’s pattern that is more or less conscious, corresponding to these processes in the social realm around us. The transcendent beauty of Jesus Christ casts a spell over us, and we long to copy Him. And within certain limits we do find ourselves possessed of power through which we approximate, in external conduct at least, to His standard of truth and righteousness and compassion. 4. In ways unknown to us these assimilative forces work deep down amidst the elemental mysteries of life. The nervous system seems curiously responsive to the environment, and accommodates itself to the forms and hues that predominate in it. In a stream near Ivybridge, into which

white clay was poured, the fish soon became perceptibly lighter in colour. A Syrian shepherd, by putting peeled rods of hazel before his flocks and herds in the breeding season, found that he could almost mark at will the skins and fleeces of the unborn young. And the law holds in human life. The organisation passes through plastic stages of sensibility, in which it is peculiarly susceptible to the imprint of any new object that may be presented to it. The deep mental impressions of the mother often infuse themselves legibly upon the young life she brings into the world. Probably the traditions of saints who had set themselves to meditate on the agonies of the pierced hands and feet, and at last received nail-marks in their own persons, are not simple myths, but have a basis of scientific fact. And if there be a law of this sort, it must surely run out into higher and more momentous forms. Shall God give to the frail, mute, unreasoning weaklings of the animal creation around us the power of assimilating themselves to the hues of their environments, so as the better to equip them for a life which is but a short spasm of sensations, and shall He deny the benefit of that catholic law to us who have come to the assembly and church of the firstborn, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, so that we may be transformed and fitted for the high distinction that is before us? Shall this mysterious law work through our fears and terrors, and conform us to the disease of which we may think and work towards death, and shall it not also operate through hope and admiration and worship, and assimilate us to the ideal of health, and be fruitful for glory and honour and immortality? We are even now in conditions in which we are being attracted more or less swiftly into the image of Christ's spiritual loveliness, but ere long we shall be attracted into conformity to the unknown splendour which invests the humanity enshrined and enthroned in the highest heaven. 5. Both the earthly and the heavenly transfigurations rest upon a common act of contemplation. The monks of Mount Athos hypnotise themselves into trance conditions by gazing at their own bodies. In some of the Buddhist monasteries of Eastern Asia devotees are pointed out who have sat facing blank walls for years, and have gazed themselves into mysterious ecstasies. We find, as a matter of experience, that we can absorb and assimilate that on which we succeed in detaining the attention of our concentrated powers. Now, if men by projecting themselves into moods of abstraction discover new powers of mind, find unknown fires begin to burn within them, and rise into worlds of spiritual ecstasy, what change, think you, ought to effect itself within us if with the same steadfastness we contemplate the personality of Him who is the Leader and Consummator of our faith? We cannot look with sympathy upon His moral loveliness here, or with worship upon His glorious majesty hereafter, without realising some amazing approximation to His likeness. 6. Another analogy worthy of our notice is that these transfiguration processes effect themselves upon a new and impressionable life. It is the unborn babe which is responsive to the image presented to the brain of the mother, rather than the mother herself. The chrysalis is no longer affected by the colour of its surroundings when it reaches the last stages of its development. And in the spiritual realm this fact has its counterpart. The transcendent beauty of Christ imparts itself only in natures made tender by the Spirit. Till the Holy Ghost comes to brood within us, the material of which we consist does not lend itself to these high spiritual transformations. A man may try and look at Christ for a lifetime. He may have an adequate intellectual conception of this ideal character. Every grace may be discriminated and may command its due meed of homage, but all in vain unless there be a new and tender life to receive the imprint of the perfect personality thus presented to the thought and emotion. This process is not human and ethical only. The life dawning in that birth mediated through the Spirit is alone susceptible of these sublime modifications and perfectings; and in the heavenly transfiguration there is the same parallel or analogy. If man's nature is to be photographically sensitive to the celestial splendour of the Son of Man in His last glorious manifestation, the quickening from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, must be followed by a new birth of man's sentient life from the dust of death. 7. But in these transfigurations there are contrasts as well as analogies. These arise, not from the fact that different forces are brought into use to effect these changes, but from the different degrees of aptitude which appear in the early and late stages of the religious history of the soul. (1) The first transformation is brought to pass by contemplating the reflected image of Christ; the second, by contemplating the direct glory of His essential nature. If the broken gleams of Christ's life, the fragments of His tradition, the piecemeal presentation of His character and personality to the world by His followers, can effect such sublime

changes amongst men, how much richer will be the transfigurations effected by His direct personal manifestation at His second coming "without spot unto salvation"? (2) In the first transfiguration the Spirit is the agent of the change; in the second the ministry of the Spirit is superseded, or at least falls into the background. The righteous burst forth at once into the zenith of their destinies like stars into the swift-kindling splendour of the firmament. The Son creates them at once to new majesty as He once created worlds, for His power is dealing with an entirely obedient material, a material ruled by regenerated wills promptly and absolutely responsive to His sovereignty. (3) The present transfiguration is gradual, whilst the future is instantaneous. "We shall see Him as He is," and pass at once into the distinctions of His sovereignty. Quick as the kindling of light His exalted humanity will implant itself in us. In that life of unknown blessedness there will be scope for ever-enlarging knowledge, strength, dignity of nature; but men will rise at once into participation with the privileges of Christ's enthronement and conformity to His Divine kingliness. 8. These two blessed changes are so vitally related to each other that one is a pledge and forecast of the other. Princely beauty hides itself away in the sons of God everywhere, and if we only suffer the Spirit of God to come to us and assimilate our characters to the Christlike ideal, that beauty will adorn even the bodies of our humiliation, and will at last clothe our quickened and recreated flesh for ever. Guard unhurt the germ. See that the law of approximation to Christ is at work in all the occasions of common life. That will guarantee the rest. If we are absorbed into Christ, and Christ into us, when He is manifested we also shall be manifested with Him in glory. He is in us the hope of glory, and such a hope maketh not ashamed. (*T. G. Selby.*) *The final transfiguration*:—There is a very lofty sentiment in these words. They labour with meaning and soar with aspiration. We notice—I. A CHANGE OF THE MOST MARKED CHARACTER IS ALREADY SUPERINDUCED. Something is already accomplished; an effect is secured. Things are placed in a course of progression even now. II. THIS CHANGE IS PREPARATORY TO ANOTHER IN A FUTURE STATE OF EXISTENCE. Life is the school, the arena, the watch-tower. Here holy principle is imbibed and holy habit formed; but the scope and aim are always prospective. The premonitions of our future are afforded by the nature of—(1) Our present states. There is rapture in devotion. Holiness now is clothed with beauty. Love, obedience, fellowship, are sweetest flowers of earth, but they all look heavenward. (2) Our characteristic principles. III. OF THAT SUBLIMER CHANGE THE PRESENT ONE IS A VERY IMPERFECT SPECIMEN AND PRESAGE. "It doth not yet appear," &c. (*R. W. Hamilton, LL.D.*) *The transforming power of the revelation of God*:—John, looking back, sees what great spaces have been covered in his spiritual history; he also looks forward, and sees greater changes in store for him. He has, in truth, become a son of God, but it is not manifest what he will become; he is only sure that as all the transformations in his character have been in the direction of likeness to God, they will go on in the same direction. To believe in future change is very different from believing in past change. It is not easy to realise that we shall ever be much different from what we are at present—that we shall become wiser, that we shall feel older, that we shall hold other opinions, that we shall develop new powers. Our future self is commonly the simple projection of our present self. The wondrous changes since infancy, with the development of hidden powers, do not effectually teach us that changes as great await us, or may be achieved. And yet these natural changes in the past ought to teach us that as great changes may await us in the future, and also that there may be spiritual changes and developments corresponding to the physical changes. The limit of physical development may be reached, but the mental and moral development may go on long after, and, for aught we know, for ever, and the fact that we draw our life from God makes it probable that it will be so. Origin in an infinite being is a pledge not only of an infinite life, but of endless development in the direction of the unattainable source. This natural history should open our minds to the possibility of a like spiritual history. We may be sure that God has not put all the wonders of His creation into our early physical life, and left the moral life bare and fixed. The natural comes first, then the spiritual, but it is no less full of germinant seeds and possibilities than the natural. This is high probability; the Christian faith makes it a certainty. It enters into its nature and purpose to open before us great changes and developments. And it also seeks to produce them. It sets before us the duty of ourselves striving to make these changes. "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." Let us give ourselves to this thought for awhile. Under natural

conditions character does not show a tendency to change its type or direction; it simply grows after its type, and sets steadily in its native direction and toward some permanent form. Hereditary qualities take the lead, and the character moves on in their direction. The main quality asserts itself more and more strongly, shapes the features, gives tone to the voice, and gesture to the body, directs the conduct and becomes the spirit of the life. If selfish or lustful or proud, these qualities tend simply to go on and harden into fixed form. We call the result habit; it is rather the natural tendency of character, aided by habit, to consolidate; it is the loss of native freedom, for habit is the absence of freedom. But there is even a better prospect than this. It is, indeed, a pleasant thought that if I cultivate a spirit of patience, or sympathy, or self-control, it will become a fixed habit in me. It points to an end of strife, to rest and peace; but there is something better than that. I do not want merely to become fixed in these habits, but to grow in them; and I also want to be carried on and lifted up into higher ranges of character than I now know; I cannot be satisfied with any condition that is stationary. Therefore we hope to come upon other duties, and so to enter into other feelings than any we now know. Just as a little child knows nothing of the passions that sweep through the heart of the youth, so there may be lofty spiritual passions and experiences, and even qualities of character, of which we now know nothing. One thing is sure, the gospel of Jesus Christ does not leave us alone with a law of heredity, and the bare hope that we may become confirmed in goodness; it opens before us a vista of endless growth and change. And therefore it begins with a call to regeneration. Its first work is to lift us out of the order of nature where character tends simply to solidify and habits become fixed, and to carry us into another sort of world. Regeneration means, not that we are to be developed, but that we are to be changed, to live in other ways, with other motives and for other ends. Now see how Christian requirement works in with regeneration and helps it on. The gospel is constantly putting a man upon moral choices, and so it acts against the solidifying tendency of habit or native inclination; i.e., it keeps a man constantly in the world of freedom and out of the region of fixed habit. When I begin the day, I have not only to keep on in the good habits of yesterday, but I have fresh choices to make. New questions come up; life varies its phases; I am myself not quite the same being as yesterday; I see more, feel more; duty is a little broader; time presses upon me a little more heavily; eternity becomes more real. Thus I am summoned to new exercises of my nature. We are not to think that this transforming process belongs only to the life beyond. God is appearing all the while to those who have eyes to see Him. We touch here a most vital fact—the revelations of God and their effect upon us. I do not refer to the everyday manifestations of God—the sunlight, the blessed order of nature, the daily food and daily joy of home, but to those occasions when life becomes momentous, when it gathers itself up in a crisis and all is changed for us. It may be good or evil fortune, the birth or death of love, a loss or a gain; all such things are revelations of God, for God is in our lives and not outside of them; but when He thus appears it is for purposes of transformation. That is the use to be made of such events as they touch us. St. John doubtless had in mind the effect of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. That was almost the only revelation to which he gave much heed; the effect of it was the only spiritual effect of which he was conscious. Christ had come into his life; and from a mere child of this world, a simple fisherman, he had been made a veritable son of God. Christ had drawn him out of his old, worldly, natural self up into this high sense and relation, so that he could say, "Now, I am a son of God"—a tremendous change, the greatest a human being can undergo. St. John had experienced this change under the influence of Christ—a change so great that he can scarcely realise what he was at the beginning. A new creation; born again; a son of God; transformed—these phrases are too weak to express it. But it will go on, he says. We shall see Christ again, and see Him as He is; see Him with clearer eyes than we now have; and so mightier transformations will take place within us; we cannot tell nor even imagine what we shall be. I see no reason to doubt this—that great changes are still to go on in us under the transforming power of Christ. Let us not think meagrely on such a subject, but under high analogies. See how Christ has transformed the world; how His spirit has stolen into the hearts of nations; how civilisation has taken on His name and is doing His work. See how the tide of progress sets steadily Christward—more peace and less war, more justice, more equality, more mercy and kindness and goodwill. No matter how they come; they are coming by the Spirit of God, and they are coming in ways not to be turned aside.

What the end of this social change will be we do not know, but there is no reason to doubt that society will make as great gains as it has made in the past. But if society is capable of such transformations, much more must the individual be capable of them. All men are as one man; one is the whole and the whole are but one. And the final condition! who can imagine it? It doth not yet appear what this human world will become. All we can say is that the holy city of the saved world, the new Jerusalem of the perfected humanity, is slowly but steadily coming down from God out of heaven, and will in time appear four-square upon the earth. Thus these great hopes that enfold the world are yours and mine; we can take them into the secrecy of our sorrowing hearts, into our disappointed lives, into the vanishing away of our strength and years, and through them claim and find a place in the world of joy and peace. (*T. T. Munger.*) *Life and character in God's children*:—Loved ones, now are we the children (*τίκνα*) of God. We are His children even now. "Amidst all the mistakes on the part of the world we are nevertheless really now the children of God," however unworthy we may appear and however little we may be appreciated. The soil may dwarf the Divine life and prevent its perfect development; nevertheless, we have that life in germ. But the infinite future lies before us: "It doth not yet appear." The lily-life is subject to hostile climate, and hence is imperfect. The life in us is an exotic from a celestial clime, "and" hence "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." There will be no difficulty in recognising our unfolding of His life in the future. "When He shall appear" all will be well; the life will unfold itself in divinest forms under the immediate sunlight of His countenance. "We shall be like Him." The life will have reached its type. For the present our "life is hid with Christ in God," but "when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory"; yes, "with Him in glory," because "like Him." What is the explanation of that perfect likeness? "For we shall see Him as He is." The sight of Him makes us like Him. Our life begins with a look "Behold the Lamb of God." In the same way that life develops: "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." So at last in the heavenly city we are made perfectly like Him, and seas of bliss begin to roll through our souls, because "we see Him as He is." What heaven in such a look! (*A. R. Cocke, D.D.*) *The blessed vision of Christ*:—"Oh, blessed vision!" was the apostrophe of an ancient confessor. "Oh, blessed vision! to which all others are penal and despicable! Let me go into the mint house and see heaps of gold, and I am never the richer; let me go to the pictures and see goodly faces, I am never the fairer; let me go to the court, where I see state and magnificence, and I am never the greater; but oh, Saviour! I cannot see Thee and not be blessed. I can see Thee here through symbols; if the eye of my faith be dim, yet it is sure. Oh, let me be unquiet till I shall see Thee as I am seen!" (*Quoted by Dr. Hanford.*) *Transformations*:—Mr. Ruskin, in his "Modern Painters," tells that the black mud or slime from a footpath in the outskirts of a manufacturing town—the absolute type of impurity—is composed of four elements—clay, mixed with soot, a little sand, and water. These four may be separated each from the other. The clay particles, left to follow their own instinct of unity, become a clear, hard substance so set that it can deal with light in a wonderful way, and gather out of it the loveliest blue rays only, refusing the rest. We call it then a sapphire. The sand arranges itself in mysterious, infinitely fine parallel lines, which reflect the blue, green, purple, and red rays in the greatest beauty. We call it then an opal. The soot becomes the hardest thing in the world, and for the blackness it had obtains the power of reflecting all the rays of the sun at once in the vividest blaze that any solid thing can shoot. We call it then a diamond. Last of all, the water becomes a dewdrop, and a crystalline star of snow. Thus God can and does transform the vilest sinners into pure and shining jewels fit for His home in heaven. *Transfiguration by sight of Christ*:—Among some reminiscences of the sweet singer, Jenny Lind, communicated by Canon Scott Holland to *Murray's Magazine*, occurs the following:—"She had gone to look on the face of her friend, Mrs. Nassau Senior, after death. The son of her friend had shown her the stairs, and pointed out the door of the room where the body lay, and put a candle in her hands, and left her. She pushed open the door and entered alone, and there, before her, lay the face, fine and clear-cut, encompassed about with a mass of white flowers. On it was peace, and a smile, with her lips parted; but that was not all. I must tell the rest in her own words. 'It was not her own look that was in her face. It was the look of another, the face of another, that had passed into hers. It was the shadow of Christ that had come upon her. She had seen Christ. And I put down my candle, and I said, "Let me see this thing. Let

me stop here always. Let me sit and look. Where are my children? Let them come and see. Here is a woman who has seen Christ." I can never forget the dramatic intensity of her manner as she told me all this, and how she at last had to drag herself away, as from a vision, and to stumble down the stairs again."

Ver. 3. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.—*The Divine hope perfecting the sinless family likeness*:—I. WE MUST LOOK 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. 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. 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. 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 come;—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? 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 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" (chap. ii. 29). The doing of sin is inconsistent with so righteous a parentage; for it is the doing of that which is against 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 (chap. 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 (chap. 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. (*II. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *Purifying hope*:—I. THAT EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN IS ANIMATED BY THE HOPE OF BEING WITH CHRIST. We make three remarks relative to this hope. 1. It is well-founded. 2. It is soul-sustaining. Great is the power of genuine hope. 3. It is increasingly active. II. THAT THE POSSESSION OF THIS HOPE TENDS TO PROMOTE PERSONAL HOLINESS. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself." He not only feels obliged to cultivate personal purity, but, stimulated by this hope, he makes every effort to become pure. We shall make two or three inquiries relative to personal purity. 1. What is its nature? 2. How is it promoted? 3. What are its evidences? "He purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (*J. H. Hughes.*) *The self-purifying hope*:—I. THE WORK OF SELF-PURIFICATION. 1. This is a personal work, not only accomplished in us but by us. 2. It includes such things as—(1) Purity of imagination. This is the very fount of our hearts. The issues of life are from hence. Beware what books we read, &c. (2) Purity of word. Our Lord teaches this. Watchfulness is needed. (3) Purity of conduct. Struggles with the flesh, especially in youth. "Keep thyself pure." II. THE MOTIVES TO THE WORK OF SELF-PURIFICATION. 1. Hope of the coming of Christ—"when He shall appear." 2. Hope of likeness to Christ—"we shall be like Him." III. THE PATTERN OF THIS

work—"as He is pure." What a height! But the higher we aim the higher we reach. A painter, a sculptor, a poet, all work to some ideal. (*Family Churchman.*) *Christian hope*:—Hope is a feeling that animates every human bosom; that forms the motive power to active exertion, is the soul of enterprise, and is one of the main springs that keep the world itself in motion. Is the morning of life fair and promising? Hope gives freshness to the scene, and buoyancy to the spectator. Is the meridian of life bright and prosperous? Hope casts its radiant glories over life's pathway, and infuses its sweet ingredients into life's enjoyments. In a word, hope is the great cordial of human life, the lightener of all our cares, "the sweetener of all our joys, and the soother of all our sorrows." I. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN HOPE. 1. The points of resemblance, or rather of agreement, it bears to hope in general, are the three following: (1) Like every other hope, "this hope" has reference to what is good. In this respect hope differs from fear, which is the dread of evil, present or prospective, real or imaginary. (2) Like every other hope, this hope has reference to good, yet future in its realisation and enjoyment. In this respect hope differs from both faith and possession—(a) It differs from faith, which credits things that are past as well as things that are future, threatened evils as well as promised blessings; (b) It differs also from possession. "But hope that is seen is not hope"—that is, the thing hoped for, when realised, is no longer hope, but possession and enjoyment. (3) Like every other hope, this hope has reference to what is attainable. And in this respect hope differs from desire. We may desire some future good, real or imaginary, which is far beyond the reach of attainment; but we cannot be said to hope for what is unattainable. And just in proportion as the possibility, and especially the probability of its attainment, seems great or small, certain or uncertain, will hope or expectation be strong or weak, lively or languid. 2. The points of contrast are chiefly two. (1) That hope is a mere natural emotion, "springs eternal in the human breast," is produced by natural objects, and common to all natural men; this hope is a Christian grace, is produced by the Spirit of God, through faith in the gospel is fixed on the things of the spirit, and is common to all that are spiritual. (2) The future and attainable good things, on which that hope is fixed are all earthly and material, "seen and temporal"; the future and certain good things on which this hope is fixed are all spiritual and heavenly, "unseen and eternal." II. THE FOUNDATION OF THIS HOPE. In this the goodness of this hope consists, and appears still more manifest than in its nature. Christ, in His person, in His mission and mediation, and especially in His work of propitiation, finished on the Cross and accepted by the Father, is the true and only foundation of a sinner's hope. Jesus Christ, in His propitiatory work, is not merely the foundation, but the only foundation of a sinner's hope toward God. The mere mercy of God, apart from the mediation of Christ; their comparative goodness, as not being so bad as some other men; their descent from godly parents; their Christian profession; the soundness of their faith and the orthodoxy of their creed; their many prayers and their great charity—these are some of the countless foundations which deluded mortals have tried on which to build their hopes for eternity. What are they, but the sandy foundation of the foolish builder? Not only must the foundation be revealed to faith, the revelation must be received by faith, in order to have this hope on Him. Every man must have faith in Christ before he can have this hope on Him. "Christ must be in him" before Christ can be to him "the hope of glory." And every man must "be in Christ" ere he can have or exercise this hope on Christ. III. THE OBJECT OF THIS HOPE. 1. Perfect likeness to Christ. The many sons whom He has brought unto glory shall be perfectly like Him, not only in immortality, but also in moral excellence; not only in holiness, but also in happiness. Their minds, like His, shall be filled with heavenly light; their imaginations, like His, shall be filled with heavenly purity; their wills, like His, shall be filled with heavenly righteousness; their consciences, like His, shall be filled with heavenly peace; their hearts, like His, shall be filled with heavenly love; and their bodies, like His, shall be clothed with heavenly glory. 2. The full enjoyment of Christ. We shall see Him in all His glory, in the glory of His Father, and in the glory of all the holy angels with Him. IV. THE INFLUENCE OF THIS HOPE. Every man having this hope on Christ is not only the subject of sanctification, but likewise the agent of its progressive advancement in his own soul and life. 1. This hope is a Christian grace; and, like every Christian grace, forms part of sanctification, and contributes to its increase and advancement to perfection. For it is influenced by means and by motives felt, by arguments adduced, by examples exhibited, by goodness experienced, and by promises given

unto us. 2. This hope forms an essential element of their new nature ; it is the constant attendant and efficient assistant in their spiritual life. What assistance does it give to them in its course ? Is the Christian life compared to a race ? This hope casts aside every incumbrance, braces every limb, strains every nerve, and puts forth every energy to reach the goal and gain the prize. 3. This hope furnishes the best counteractive of the adverse and conflicting influences of the world. It is the ship's best ballast during the voyage of life. It is its subject's best reminder of what he is, whither he is going, and how he is to occupy his Lord's talents till He comes. 4. This hope is the chief prompter to life's activities, in whatever state its possessor may be found. For every man that hath this hope knows, delights in, and seeks after, conformity to the will of God, which is our sanctification. He knows also that indolence and inaction are among the chief incentives to "the pleasures of sin," which are contrary to the will of God and inimical to our sanctification. But this hope which he has, is not the dead hope of the formalist, or the hypocrite, nor the dying hope of the worldling, but the lively hope of the sons of God. It makes them all alive to God's requirements, and lively in His service, in His House, in His cause, and in His kingdom in the world. V. THE PATTERN OF EVERY MAN HAVING THIS HOPE. Christ is at once the foundation on which he builds his hope for eternity, and the pattern of purity he imitates in purifying himself. He has not yet attained, neither is he already perfect. But it is the present pursuit, the daily, habitual practice of every man having this hope : he purifieth himself, and he will continue to purify himself, as certainly as he will hope, to the end ; when the purifying process will be perfected, and the conformity to the perfect pattern of purity will be complete. 1. A warning to sinners. You too have a hope. Granted. But your hope is not "this hope," yourselves being judges. It is of nature, not "through grace." Being a mere natural emotion, it is subject to incessant fluctuation and sudden extinction. Your hope, besides, exerts a baneful, corrupting influence over your whole spirit and soul and body. It blinds the mind to the truths, the promises, and blessings of the gospel of Christ ; alienates the heart from the life of God ; and by stimulating to the exclusive pursuit of the things of the world, the lusts of the flesh, and the pleasures of sin, the whole faculties and feelings of the inner man become contracted, corrupted, and defiled. And if the influence of your hope be so baneful, what must be the end of it ? The end of these things is death—to the body, and to the soul. 2. An incentive to saints. Having this hope on Christ, see that ye purify your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren. The Holy Spirit, by whom this hope is inspired, that dwelleth in you, is its best supporter and friend. Therefore "quench not the Spirit." Sin is the greatest enemy to this hope and to its purifying influence. Therefore, "stand in awe and sin not." (*Geo. Robson.*) *The purifying influence of hope* :—That is a very remarkable "and" with which this verse begins. The apostle has just been touching the very heights of devout contemplation. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." And now without a pause, and linking his thoughts together by a simple "and," he passes from the imaginable splendours of the beatific vision to the plainest practical talk. Mysticism has often soared so high above the earth that it has forgotten to preach righteousness, and therein has been its weak point. But here is the most mystical teacher of the New Testament insisting on plain morality as vehemently as his friend James could have done. The combination is very remarkable. Like the eagle he rises, and like the eagle, with the impetus gained from his height, he drops right down on the earth beneath ! I. IF WE ARE TO BE PURE, WE MUST PURIFY OURSELVES. There are two ways of getting like Christ, spoken about in the context. One is the blessed way, that is more appropriate for the higher heaven, the way of assimilation and transformation—by beholding : "If we see Him" we shall be "like Him." That is the blessed method of the heavens. Ah ! but even here on earth it may to some extent be realised. Love always breeds likeness. And there is such a thing, here on earth and now, as gazing upon Christ with an intensity of affection and simplicity of trust, and rapture of aspiration, and ardour of desire which shall transform us in some measure unto His own likeness. But the law of our lives forbids that that should be the only way in which we grow like Christ. The very word "purify" speaks to us of another condition ; it implies impurity, it implies a process that is more than contemplation, it implies the reversal of existing conditions, and not merely the growth upwards to unattained conditions. And so growth is not all that Christian men need ; they need excision, they need casting out of what is in them : they need change as well as growth. Then there is the

other consideration, viz., if there is to be this purifying it must be done by myself. To take a very homely illustration, soap and water wash your hands clean, and what you have to do is simply to rub the soap and water on to the hand, and bring them into contact with the foulness. And so when God comes and says, "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings, your hands are full of blood," He says in effect, "Take the cleansing that I give you and rub it in, and apply it: and your flesh will become as the flesh of a little child, and you shall be clean." That is to say, the very deepest word about Christian effort of self-purifying is this—keep close to Jesus Christ. You cannot sin as long as you hold His hand. II. THIS PURIFYING OF OURSELVES IS THE LINK OR BRIDGE BETWEEN THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE. The act of passing from the limitations and conditions of this transitory life into the solemnities and grandeurs of that future does not alter a man's character, though it may intensify it. You take a stick and thrust it into water; and because the rays of light pass from one medium to another of a different density, they are refracted, and the stick seems bent; but you take the human life out of the thick, coarse medium of earth and lift it up into the pure rarefied air of heaven, and there is no refraction; it runs straight on! The given direction continues; and where'er my face is turned when I die, there my face will be turned when I live again. Don't you fancy that there is any magic in coffins, and graves, and shrouds to make men different. The man is the same man through death and beyond. Death will take a great many veils off men's hearts. It will reveal to them a great deal that they do not know, but it will not give the faculty of beholding the glorified Christ in such fashion as that the beholding will mean transformation. "Every eye shall see Him," but it is conceivable that a spirit shall be so immersed in self-love and in godlessness that the vision of Christ shall be repellent and not attractive; shall have no transforming and no gladdening power. III. THIS SELF-CLEANSING IS THE OFFSPRING OF HOPE. There is nothing that makes a man so down-hearted in his work of self-improvement as the constant and bitter experience that it seems to be all of no use; that he is making so little progress. Slowly we manage some little patient self-improvement; gradually, inch by inch and bit by bit, we may be growing better, and then there comes some gust and outburst of temptation; and then the whole painfully-reclaimed soil gets covered up by an avalanche of mud and stones, that we have to remove slowly, barrow-load by barrow-load. To such moods then there comes, like an angel from heaven, that holy, blessed message, "Cheer up, man! 'We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'" A great deal of the religious contemplation of a future state is pure sentimentality, and like all pure sentimentality is either immoral or non-moral. But here the two things are brought into clear juxtaposition, the bright hope of heaven and the hard work done here below. Now, is that what the gleam and expectation of a future life does for you? (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The purifying power of hope:*—A great hope, a great duty, a great example are here put before us. I. WHAT IS THE HOPE? An agnostic would say there is none; for the apostle plainly tells us that though "we are now the children of God, it doth not yet appear what we shall be." But then "hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why does he yet hope for?" This hope, of which St. John tells us, is set on Jesus our Lord. It is not the hope of the Pharisee, trusting in himself apart from Christ. It is not the hope of the man of the world, who considers that he is no worse than others, though, like them, he does neglect Christ. It is the hope of the penitent and faithful follower of Christ, who walks by faith in the unseen Saviour, and casts himself for pardon, acceptance, and strength on Him. And this hope, as he learns it in Holy Scripture and in holy living, becomes gradually clear and definite to him. II. WHAT A DUTY IS LAID UPON US! The hope is so glorious that it fires us to seek its fulfilment. It is a long and difficult task, this of purifying ourselves. In many of us it needs a deep thinking on old, forgotten ways. In all of us the field to be cleansed is very wide, and the roots of the vicious, deadly weeds are far down below the surface. How much it means—to purify oneself! There must be purity of heart, but "the heart is deceitful above all things," and how shall we know it? There must be purity in the affections; but, even in our highest relationship, we are prone to selfishness. There must be purity for our body; but fleshly lusts keep warring against the soul. There must be purity of speech; but certain companionships, and our own forgetfulness of God's presence, make this very difficult: and one word of uncleanness may "set on fire the whole course of nature" in us, and destroy our growth in grace. There must be purity in the eye, turning it away from beholding vanity; purity in the ear, casting out as evil the

filthy communication of the thoughtless and the profligate ; purity in the mind, lest it absorb the things it hears, or take delight in the writings of hell, or pervert even holy teaching to the purposes of sin. Yes, and there must be purity of intention—a high aim in dealing with all men, the setting of a guard over ourselves when danger is near, a resolute acting on that Divine and comfortable saying, that “to the pure all things are pure.” Oh, may we all go forward in this holy, difficult, blessed duty, while we have the Light to walk by, and the Cross to be our guide !

III. And remember, once more, whose LIGHT THIS IS, AND WHOSE CROSS. It is His glorious example which should help us most—the example of Him who died for us, who liveth for us. (*G. E. Jell, M.A.*) *The lost purity restored* :—Let us see—I. IF WE CAN FORM A FIT CONCEPTION OF WHAT PURITY IS. If we refer to examples, it is the character of angels and of God—the simplicity, the unstained excellence, the undimmed radiance, the spotless beauty. Or it is God, as represented here on earth, in the sinless and perfect life of Christ. If we go to analogy, purity is, in character, what transparency is in crystal. It is water flowing, unmixed and clear, from the mountain spring. Or it is the white of snow. Or it is the clear open heaven, through which the sparkling stars appear, hidden by no mist of obstruction. Or it is the pure light itself in which they shine. A pure character is that, in mind, and feeling, and spirit of life, which all these clear, untarnished symbols of nature, image, in their lower and merely sensible sphere, to our outward eye. Or, if we describe purity by reference to contrasts, then it is a character opposite to all sin, and so to most of what we see in the corrupted character of mankind. It is innocent, just as man is not. It is incorrupt, as opposed to passion, self-seeking, foul imaginations, base desires, enslaved affections, a bad conscience, and turbid currents of thought. It is the innocence of infancy without the stain—that innocence matured into the spotless, positive, and eternally-established holiness of a responsible manhood. Or we may set forth the idea of purity under a reference to the modes of causes. In the natural world, as, for example, in the heavens, causes act in a manner that is unconfused and regular. All things proceed according to their law. Hence the purity of the firmament. In the world of causes, it is the scientific ideal of purity that events conspire normally, according to the constitutive order and original law of the creation. Or, finally, we may describe purity absolutely, as it is when viewed in its own positive quality. And here it is chastity of soul, that state of the spiritual nature in which it is seen to have no contacts or affinities but such as fall within the circle of unforbidden joy and uncorrupted pleasure. In all these methods we make so many distinct approaches to the true idea of spiritual purity.

II. Distant as the character is from anything we know in this sad world of defilement and corrupted life, still it is THE AIM AND PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN REDEMPTION TO RAISE US UP INTO THE STATE OF COMPLETE PURITY BEFORE GOD. The call of the Word is, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” It would seem, on looking at the manifold array of cleansing elements, applications, gifts, and sacraments, as if God had undertaken it as the great object and crowning mercy of His reign, to effect a solemn purgation of the world. But a question rises here of great practical significance, viz., whether, by a due improvement of the means offered in Christ, or by any possible faith in Him, it is given us to attain to a state which can fitly be called purity, or which is to itself a state consciously pure ? To this I answer both “Yes,” and “No.” There may be a Christian purity that is related to the soul as investiture, or as a condition superinduced, which is not of it, or in it, as pertaining to its own quality or to the cast of its own habit. The point may be illustrated by a supposition. Let a man, habitually narrow and mean in his dispositions, fall into the society of a great and powerful nature in some one distinguished for the magnanimity of his impulses. Let this nobler being be accepted as his friend, trusted in, loved, admired, so as virtually to infold and subordinate the mean person, as long as he is with him, to his own spirit. This, at least, we can imagine, whether any such example ever occurred or not. Now it will be seen that, as long as this nobler nature is side by side with the other, it becomes a kind of investiture, clothes it, as it were, with its own impulses, and even puts it in the sense of magnanimity. Consciously now the mean man is all magnanimous, for his mean thoughts are, by the supposition, drunk up and lost in the abysses of the nobler nature he clings to. He is magnanimous by investiture ; that is, by the occupancy of another, who clothes him with his own character. But if you ask what he is in his own personal habit, cast, or quality, he is little

different possibly from what he was before. He has had the consciousness waked up in him of a generous life and feeling, which is indeed a great boon to his meagre nature, and if he could be kept for long years in the mould of this superinduced character he would be gradually assimilated to it. But if the better nature were to be soon withdrawn by a separation, he would fall back into the native meanness of his own proper person, and be what he was with only slight modifications. Now Christ, in His glorious and Divine purity, is that better nature, which has power, if we believe in Him with a total, all-subjecting faith, to invest us with a complete consciousness of purity—to bring every thought into captivity to His own incorruptible order and chastity. To illustrate how far it is possible for this purifying work to go on in the present life, I will simply say that the very currents of thought, as it is propagated in the mind, may become so purified that, when the will does not interfere, and the mind is allowed, for an hour, to run in its own way, without hindrance, one thing suggesting another, as in reverie, there may yet be no evil, wicked, or foul suggestion thrust into it. Or in the state of sleep, where the will never interferes, but the thoughts rush on by a law of their own, the mixed causes of corruption may be so far cleared away, and the soul restored to such simplicity and pureness, that the dreams will be only dreams of love and beauty—peaceful, and clear, and happy; somewhat as we may imagine the waking thoughts of angels to be. III. Having this view of Christ and His gospel as the plan of God for restoring men to a complete spiritual purity, seeing that He invites us to this, gives us means and aids to realise this, and yields to them that truly desire it a hope so high as this, I inquire IN WHAT MANNER WE MAY PROMOTE OUR ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE STATE OF PURITY, AND FINALLY HAVE IT IN COMPLETE REALISATION? And, first of all, we must set our heart upon it. We must see the degradation, realise the bitterness, confusion, disorder, instability, and conflict of a mixed state, where all the causes of internal action are thrown out of God's original law. We must learn to conceive, on the other hand—and what can be more difficult?—the dignity, the beauty, the infinitely peaceful and truly Divine elevation of a pure soul. St. Francis de Sales had been able, in his knowledge of the cloistered men and the cloistered life, to see how necessary it is for the soul to be aired in the outward exposures of the world; and, if we do not stop to question the facts of his illustrations, no one has spoken of this necessity with greater force and beauty of conception. "Many persons believe," he says, "that as no beast dares taste the seed of the herb Palma Christi, so no man ought to aspire to the palm of Christian piety as long as he lives in the bustle of temporal affairs. Now, to such I shall prove that, as the mother-pearl fish lives in the sea without receiving a drop of salt water, and as, toward the Chelidonian Islands, springs of fresh water may be found in the midst of the sea, and as the fire-fly passes through the flames without burning its wings, so a vigorous and resolute soul may live in the world without being infected with any of its humours, may discover sweet springs of piety amidst its salt waters, and fly among the flames of earthly concupiscence without burning the wings of the holy desires of a devout life." Having this determined—that he who will purify himself, as Christ is pure, must live in the world—then one thing more is needed—viz., that we live in Christ, and seek to be as closely and intimately one with Him as possible. And this includes—First, a willingness wholly to cease from the old man, as corrupt, in order that a completely new man from Christ may be formed in you. Secondly, the life must be determined implicitly by the faith in Christ. IV. SOME OF THE SIGNS BY WHICH OUR GROWTH IN PURITY MAY BE KNOWN. Fastidiousness, I will first of all caution you, is not any evidence of purity, but the contrary. No, the true signs of purity are these—That we abide in the conscious light of God, while living in a world of defilement, and know Him as a presence manifested in the soul. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Purity sees God. A good conscience signifies the same; for the conscience, like the eye, is troubled by any speck of defilement and wrong that falls into it. A growing sensibility to sin signifies the same; for, if the conscience grows peaceful and clear, it will also grow tender and delicate. If you are more able to be singular and think less of the opinions of men, not in a scornful way, but in love, that again shows that the world's law is losing its power over you, and your devotion to God is growing more single and true. Do you find that passion is submitting itself to the gentle reign of God within you, losing its heat and fierceness, and becoming tamed under the sweet dominion of Christian love? That again is the growth of purity. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *The hope of future glory excites to holiness:—1. Is it possible for any man to purify*

himself? Is it not the Spirit of God that must work in us "both to will and to do"? To this I answer, that we must distinguish of a twofold work of purification. (1) The first is, the infusing of the habit of purity or holiness into the soul, which is done in regeneration or conversion; and in this respect no man living can be said to purify himself. (2) The other is the exercising of that habit or grace of purity, which a man received in conversion; by the acting or exercising of which grace he grows actually more pure and holy. And in this respect a man may be said in some sense to purify himself, yet not so as if he were either the sole or the prime agent in this work. 2. But admitting that a man may purify himself in the sense mentioned, yet can he do it to that degree as to equal the purity of Christ Himself?—to "purify himself even as He is pure"? To this I answer, that "even as," denotes here only a similitude of kind, not an equality of degree; that is, he that hopes for glory, gets his heart purified with the same kind of holiness that is in Christ, though he neither does nor can reach it in the same measure of perfection: he gets the same meekness, the same spiritual-mindedness and love to the Divine precepts; that is, the same for kind. I. WHAT IS IMPLIED AND INCLUDED IN A MAN'S PURIFYING OF HIMSELF, HERE SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT. Now that which a man is to remove and to purify himself from is—1. The power of sin. (1) Wherein it consists. (a) A most serious and hearty bewailing of all the past acts of sin by a continually renewed repentance. We may here compare the soul to a linen cloth, it must be first washed to take off its native hue and colour, and to make it white; and afterwards it must be ever and anon washed to preserve and to keep it white. In like manner the soul must be cleansed, first from a state of sin by a converting repentance, and so made pure, and afterwards by a daily repentance it must be purged from those actual stains that it contracts, and so be kept pure. Till it be our power and privilege not to sin, it is still our duty to repent. (b) The purifying ourselves from the power of sin consists in a vigilant prevention of the acts of sin for the future. If we would keep our garment clean it is not sufficient to wash it only, unless we have also a continual care to keep it from trailing in the dirt. For a restraint of ourselves from the committing of sin bereaves the power of sin of that strength that it would certainly have acquired by those commissions. While a beast is kept in and shut up he still retains his wild nature; but when he breaks out and gets loose his wildness is much more hurtful and outrageous. Now, for the keeping of sin from an actual breaking out, a man should observe what objects and occasions are apt to draw it forth, and accordingly avoid them. (c) The purifying ourselves from the power of sin consists in a continual mortifying and weakening the very root and principle of inherent corruption. Sin is not only a scar, or a sore, cleaving to one part or member, but it has incorporated itself into the whole man (Job xxv. 4). A man draws so much filth from his very conception and nativity, that it is now made almost as natural and essential to him to be a sinner as to be a man. Now the chief work of purification lies in the disabling and mortifying this sinful faculty. The power of godliness must be brought into the room of the power of sin. (2) The means by which it is to be effected—(a) The first is, with all possible might and speed to oppose the very first rising and movements of the heart to sin; for these are the buds that produce that bitter fruit; and if sin be not nipped in the very bud, it is not imaginable how quickly it will shoot forth. When an enemy is but rising, it is easy to knock him to the ground again; but when he is up, and stands upon his legs, he is not then so easily thrown down. (b) A second way to purify ourselves from the power of sin is to be frequent in severe mortifying duties, such as watchings and fastings, the use of which directly tends to weaken the very vitals of our corruption. For they are most properly contrary to the flesh; and whatsoever opposes that proportionably weakens sins. Better were it for a man to restrain an unruly appetite, and to stint himself in the measures of his very food and his sleep, than by a full indulgence of himself in these to pamper up his corruption, and give it strength and activity to cast off all bonds, till at length it becomes unconquerable. (c) A third way to purify ourselves from the power of sin is to be frequent and fervent in prayer to God for fresh supplies of sanctifying grace. There is no conquest to be had over sin but by grace, nor is grace any way so effectually to be procured as by prayer. A praying heart naturally turns into a purified heart. 2. I proceed now to the other thing from which we are to purify ourselves, and that is, the guilt of sin. In speaking of which I shall show—(1) Negatively, what cannot purify us from the guilt of sin. (2) Positively, what alone can. (a) For the first of these. No duty or work within the power and performance of man, as such, is able to expiate and take away the guilt of sin. In this matter

we must put our hands upon our mouths, and be silent for ever. (b) In the next place therefore positively, that course which alone is able to purify us from the guilt of sin, is by applying the virtue of the blood of Christ to the soul by renewed acts of faith. It is from His crucified side that there must issue both blood to expiate and water to cleanse our impurities. Faith also is said to purify the heart (Acts xv. 9). But how? Why certainly, as it is instrumental to bring into the soul that purifying virtue that is in Christ. Faith purifies, not as the water itself, but as the conduit that conveys the water. II. How THE HOPE OF HEAVEN AND A FUTURE GLORY COMES TO HAVE SUCH A SOVEREIGN INFLUENCE UPON THIS WORK. 1. First upon a natural account; this hope purifies, as being a special grace infused into the heart by the Holy Ghost, and in its nature and operation directly contrary to sin: as heat is a quality both in nature and working, contrary to and destructive of cold. When heaven is cast into the lump it presently begins to work and to ferment, till by degrees it has thoroughly changed the whole mass. In like manner every grace will be incessantly working, till it has wrought over the heart to its own likeness. Now hope is one of the principal graces of the Spirit, so that we have it marshalled with faith and charity, and placed immediately after faith in regard of the method of its operation, which is immediately consequent upon that of faith. For what faith looks upon as present in the promise, that hope looks upon as future in the event. Faith properly views the promise, hope eyes the performance. 2. The hope of future glory has an influence upon this work of purifying ourselves upon a moral account; that is, by suggesting to the soul such arguments as have in them a persuasive force to engage it in this work. (1) The necessary relation that this work has to the attainment of heaven, as the use of the means to the acquisition of the end. (2) It is purity alone that can fit and qualify the soul for so holy a place. He that is clothed in filth and rags is not a fit person to converse and live in a court; nor is there any one who designs the course of his life in such a place but will adorn and dress himself accordingly. (3) The obligation of gratitude. If I expect so great a gift at God's hands as eternal happiness, even humanity and reason cannot but constrain me to pay Him at least a temporary, short obedience. For shall I hope to be saved by Him whom I strike at and defy? Or can I expect that He should own me in another world when I reject, despise, and trample upon His commands in this? (4) Purity is the only thing that can evidence to us our right and interest in those glorious things that we profess ourselves to hope for. (*R. South, D.D.*) *The Christian's hope and its fruits* :—The one great object of the revelation which God has given us, is to make us happy in making us holy. To this end every part of revealed truth more or less directly tends. I. THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE—WHAT IT IS. This hope is, that he shall in every respect, in body as well as in soul, be made wholly like his Saviour. Further, observe that this is a real hope. It is not a mere wish, a doubtful surmise, a faint desire; it is a sure and certain hope. "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." And, let me add, that hope implies not only a bare expectation, but expectation accompanied with desire, consequently, if the great subject of his hope be the presence of Christ, that presence is what the Christian will desire above all things, and feel to be the perfection of happiness. II. THE EFFECTS OF THIS HOPE. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Now, observe in this the implied certainty of the connection between the hope of the Christian and the life of the Christian; between the sure anticipation of glory hereafter and holiness here. Here, then, are two points we have to consider—the extent to which the Christian attains purity, and how far the work of purification is his own. With reference to the first point the meaning manifestly is not that the Christian is even now actually as pure as Christ, but that he endeavours to make himself so. But in what sense is this work his own? The Christian does not, as an independent agent, purify himself. The idea is absurd, and involves an impossibility. But although the work of purification is God's, we are not mere machines, nor does He treat us as such. He deals with us as with rational, intelligent beings, capable of discerning between good and evil, and of choosing for ourselves. (*A. Jenour, M.A.*) *The Christian's hope and its results* :—I. THE OBJECT OF A CHRISTIAN'S HOPE. II. THE FOUNDATION OF THESE HOPES. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." The foundations of such high expectations should be strongly laid; and they are strongly laid, even in the grace of God's adopting love. III. What is the PRACTICAL RESULT of this hope within a believer's heart? It is equally powerful and universal. (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *The great hope of the sons of God, and its influence on life* :—I. THE GREAT HOPE OF THE SONS OF GOD—"To be like Christ," and that implies an unbounded progress

towards perfection. To be like Christ implies two things: perfect communion with God, as the blessedness of life; and perfect self-sacrifice, as the law of life. These were the two great features of Christ's human character: to have them is our destiny; to have them is to be perfect. II. ITS INFLUENCE ON LIFE.—"He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." To the question, How shall I realise an aim so glorious? John answers—Hope for it—and the hope will gradually become the means of fulfilling itself. 1. As an unconscious influence. 2. As a safeguard against life's temptations. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) *The purifying effect of hope in Christ*.—I. THE PRESENT PRIVILEGES AND FUTURE HOPE OF THE CHRISTIAN. 1. The present privilege of the Christian is to look up to God as his Father. 2. But this state of privilege is preparatory to something still higher, more precious and valuable. II. IN WHOM AND ON WHAT BASIS IS HE PERMITTED TO ENTERTAIN SO GLORIOUS AND EXALTED A HOPE? 1. He has this hope in Christ Jesus our Lord; in God who hath given us His eternal Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and the Holy Spirit to them that obey Him. 2. His hope rests upon the work of Christ upon earth and His glorification in heaven. III. THE EFFECT OF THIS HOPE ON THE BELIEVER'S HEART AND LIFE. 1. This hope is calculated altogether to ensure his sanctification, to cleanse and sublimiate his soul. 2. But what is the effect of hope in bringing about this purification? Much every way. The hope of the Christian is altogether calculated to elevate the soul and ennoble the character. Is he the inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, and shall he not prepare himself to take possession of his inheritance? IV. BUT AFTER WHAT MODEL MUST WE PURIFY OURSELVES? We must purify ourselves "even as He is pure." He must propose to himself no faulty or defective pattern. (*H. J. Hastings, M.A.*) *A purifying hope*.—I. The first thing here implied is INCORRUPTION. In purity or in holiness there is incorruption, or incorruptibility. "Every man that hath this hope" has a knowledge of his entire corruption and depravity; and he consequently comes, in his faith, in his desires, in his hope, out of this, and his hope centres in an incorruptible God. He has an incorruptible religion; God the Father appears in His incorruptibility in all the love of His heart, God the Son appears in His incorruptibility, God the Holy Ghost appears in His incorruptibility. We shall be invigorated to all eternity with all the freshness of incorruptibility. II. Purity signifies also QUALIFICATION. "Every man that hath this hope," comes out of his own thoughts into God's thoughts, comes out of his own sentiments into God's sentiments, comes out of his own ways into God's ways; and therefore we read of a man's "ceasing from his own wisdom." What is the whole object of the gospel towards us? Why, to make known the mind of the Lord concerning us; and if I know the mind of God concerning me, that what He has done is for me, that His Holy Spirit is for me, that His testimony in the Holy Scripture is for me, why, being of one mind with Him, I am fit to live with God. There is no collision; there is perfect harmony. III. Purity also supposes MORT. "Every man that hath this hope" comes out of his state of having no right to anything, into a right and title to the things of eternity. And what is our right to eternal glory? Why, that question may be answered several ways, but I answer it in these few words: our right to eternal glory is the authority of God. IV. Purity supposes also LIBERTY. Where is our bondage? In sin. Sin is our bondage. The flesh, the law, the world—these things are our bondage. But holiness—purity—is our liberty. Then "every man that hath this hope" comes into liberty. Christ having led captivity captive, has for Himself and for us perfect liberty. What is to hold Him? The law is established, the covenant confirmed, the promises Yea and Amen. He has dominion over all worlds. (*James Wells.*) *The pattern of purity*.—1. The workman is "every one that hath hope in Him," every one that looks to be like the Lord Jesus in the kingdom of glory, he is the man must set about this task. 2. The work is a work to be wrought by himself; he is a part of the Lord's husbandry, and he must take pains as it were to plough his own ground, to weed his own corn, he must purify himself; this is the work. 3. The pattern by which he must be directed is the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ's purity. I. THAT A MAN THAT IS CARELESS OF PURIFYING HIMSELF, THAT MAN MUST HAVE NO HOPE. Shall we encourage men to that hope, that they shall carry with them to hell? May we say, thou mayest hope to be like Christ in glory, when thou dost not labour to be like Him in purity in this world? We should betray that soul. And do you know, this is the beginning of salvation. When a man hath run hitherto in a naughty course, and now comes to be resolved in his conscience, that if he continue thus he shall perish, I say the revolving of his conscience that way is the beginning of his conversion.

II. WHOSOEVER HOPES TO BE SAVED MUST SET HIMSELF UPON THIS WORK, TO PURIFY HIMSELF. But here is as great a difficulty as the other. Doth it lie in the power of a man to purify himself? That is the work of God (Psa. li. 10). You must not make one truth of God to destroy another; therefore, for the clearing of it, consider what the apostle writes (Philip. ii. 12). God doth not work things in us or with us, as we do with a spade or a shovel; that is, that we shall be mere patients only, but He works with us suitably to the reasonable soul He hath bestowed upon us. Though principally God, yet there is a concurrence between God and thee; and this is grace, when thy will is made active and able to do things, that now the things done by God's grace are attributed to men. How may it be done? The examples of the world are like a stream that carries a man clean out of the way of purity. 1. Remember we come to do service to a Father; that is, for encouragement. 2. No means in the world so effectual as when a man would go to Christ to look to His ordinances. What are they? His word and His sacraments. 3. Then go and read a lecture to thyself of watchfulness. What it is to watch, that implies when a man is in great danger to be surprised, that all is untrusty within him, and false abroad; then reason, I had need of a strong watch of every side; I have a false nature, and this flesh of mine is ready to betray me into the hands of the world and of the devil; therefore there must be a marvellous strong guard. III. THE PATTERN TO WHICH WE SHOULD CONFORM OURSELVES. The glass we should imitate is our Saviour Jesus Christ, as He is pure. It is not meant thou shouldst ever hope to be as pure in quantity. "As" is not a note of quantity, but of quality—it shows a likeness. A man that would have his child to write a fair hand, he will not give him an ill copy to write by, but as fair as may be, though there be no possibility the child should write so well as it. So we cannot possibly attain to that purity in Christ, yet the copy must be fair. Scholars, if they will have an elegant style, they set the best orators before them. Thus, though the law of God be perfect, though such a thing as a man is not able to fulfil, yet it is a fit pattern; the copy must be fair, that I may mend my hand by it. And thus, if we go on following our pattern, as the scholar's hand, by practice, mends every day, though it never come near the copy, so shall we grow in grace. (*R. Sibbes.*) *The influence of the Christian hope on the Christian character:*—The apostle is here speaking of true Christians only. "Now are we the sons of God." They have been brought into closer relationship to Him, through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have received the grace of adoption, and are members of His family. Then the apostle turns our thoughts from the true Christian's present advantages to his coming blessedness. They shall see their Saviour as He is. Having spoken of the believer's position and prospects, the apostle proceeds to state a third great matter—the influence which a Christian's expectation for the future should have on his consecration for the present. The confidence that he will one day be with Jesus, the confidence that he will one day be fully like to Jesus—that helps to make him, in some measure, like to Jesus, even on this side the grave. He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Heaven is largely unknown. Eye hath not seen it, heart hath not conceived its joys; but enough is revealed to make the hope of being there one of the mightiest agents in moulding the character of man, even in this mortal state. What we shall be there is to regulate what we are here. There, there are harps of gold and songs of triumph; there, the light that never fades. From us all that is far away; far from us in point of time and place and character. But yet it is intended by God to work upon us here and now. Through all the intervening space that heavenly glory is to stretch forth its hand, and touch our souls and transform them into the image of our Lord and Master. Let me in the next place direct your attention to some of the details of this great matter. There is no grace of Christian character, to be acquired here, which may not be fostered by the thoughts of what we shall have there. There is that first of all the graces—Faith—the foundation stone in the temple of Christian character, the root out of which all other fruits of the Spirit do grow. Maybe some of you have sore conflict with doubts. You have tried many expedients without being satisfied. Have you tried what a clearer hope of heaven will do? If amidst the darkness of this mortal state you can yet read your "title clear to mansions in the skies," you will then remember that there is no night there; you will be able to say with the great-hearted Arnold of Rugby, "In the presence of an admitted mystery, I can lie down as calmly and contentedly as in the presence of a perfectly comprehended truth." Next to faith, the apostle Peter mentions courage. Add fortitude to your faith.

Because he is a soldier, a Christian needs to be brave. There will be no cowards in heaven; and there ought to be none in the visible Church below. You will remember what they tell of Nelson, when he had cleared his deck for action and was about to enter into the deadliest struggle with the adversary. "Now," he says, "now for Westminster Abbey or the peerage!" He looked beyond all the darkness and danger of the bloody conflict. "If I fall," said he, "they will bury me among the noble dead; if I survive, they will give me a place among the noble living." Therefore had he no fear. Therefore was he forgetful of peril. The sight of the future glory inspired him with all the courage the occasion required. Maybe some of you have sadly felt your lack of soldierly courage. You have wanted the boldness to say "no," when asked to do some forbidden thing; or if you had the courage to say "no," you had not the courage to give the real reasons for so saying. It is in the latter respect that so many fail. I am sure I speak to some who have often been ashamed of their shamefacedness and faithlessness. They have mourned over their want of soldierly fortitude, and have longed for more of the heroic spirit that could dare anything for Jesus' sake. Have you ever tried the power of a clearer, stronger hope of heaven? The bravest soldiers of the Cross have been men who drew their inspiration from the world to come. Temperance is a grace of character we have to cultivate in this life. Some of you are saddened by your felt want of this Christian moderation. You feel a constant peril of the world getting too much power over you. The saints of God have tried many remedies for this. Simeon Stylites built his high pillar, and lived on the top of it for thirty years. I am not aware that his worldly-mindedness was much diminished by it. The only effective cure is that which God's Word prescribes, "Set your affections on things above." Until you get the other world into its right place in your hearts, you will never keep the present world in all due subordination. The starry circle of Christian graces is not yet complete. There must be patience, as well as temperance. What would patience be if it had no hope of heaven to sustain it? It would never be strong enough to do its perfect work. It would languish and die in many a heart. It was never before the mighty thing it hath been since Christ "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Some of you, maybe, have heavy burdens to carry, and you long to carry them more like Christ carried His Cross—without one word of complaint, without one feeling of discontent. Sometimes your greatest trouble is that you cannot bear your troubles. You know what you ought to do, you desire to do it; but, while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. You must try this expectation, a bright hope of heaven. This expectation has never failed. I have seen an aged Christian who has toiled through many a weary year and was a poor man still. Age and infirmity had weakened his efforts, but still he must work to earn his daily bread. Yet have I seen such a one free from all fretfulness and murmuring. He had hope in Christ; and that hope did soar away to heaven, and then came back again with leaves from the tree of life. I pass by other virtues we have to cultivate to speak of those which are last but not least in the apostle's inventory of Christian graces—brotherly-kindness and charity. Amidst all our divisions and differences, what power of reconciliation there is in the thought: We go to the same home, to join in the same song, to cast our crowns at the feet of the same Divine Saviour! (*C. Vince.*)

Hope making pure:—No sacred inspiration, no emancipating impulse, no consecrating motive, no uplifting enthusiasm, no grand ethical or spiritual force of any sort, can spring from self-despite. Good is not born of evil nor of the mere contemplation and realisation of evil. Convince a man that he is a low creature, a mere animal, evolved from lower types, and he will go far toward proving the doctrine true. Make out that a man is the slave of circumstances, the victim of base necessity, and the slave of circumstances and the victim of base necessity will be. Helpful moral ministry lies in the revelation of the noble and divine in man, the elements of worth, the germs, the potencies of good. The grand characteristic of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that it makes a man feel that he is a being of capacity and worth, one whom God loves and cares for, desires to redeem and save, and purposes to do great things by, counting not the cost the process of His grace involves. It sets forth the ideal relation of man as the child of God. What soul but recognises this as the highest, deepest, grandest truth concerning it? What so accentuates the evil into which men have actually fallen as the light of this sublime truth? And what so brings the sense of shame with regard to evil in ourselves and starts the reactions of repentance and resolve, as to realise from what

height we have fallen into it, what better purpose our sin has foiled, and with what pain and grief it is regarded by those who know us best and love us most! This is the effect of the revolution of Jesus Christ to the soul. It reveals the man to himself, shows him what he truly is, and awakens the instincts which belong to his deepest affinities and relations. It makes him feel how foreign sin is to his real nature and life, and starts the yearning after goodness. It sets the child of God crying out unto and claiming his Father. Nothing is so terrible as the theory—call it philosophy, science, rationalism, agnosticism, or what you will—that man is abandoned to the evil into which he has fallen, with no help for his recovery. This subverts all the moral principles and paralyses all the moral forces of a life and opens the way for all manner of delusions, sophistries, subterfuges, and shams. But that is a grand, Divine, redeeming, saving religion which shows man that he is a child of God, awakens the instincts of this relation, and leads him into the actual and effectual realisation of what he natively and ideally is, enabling him to say, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." But that will not do for man what he needs which destroys aspiration, and allows to settle upon him the dull satisfaction of a finality, the thought that he has attained to the highest, and that there is no grander possibility and idea calling to him, and challenging endeavour. Man's true life is one of progress and growth. And it is another eminent characteristic of Christianity that it meets this requirement. It sets before man lofty ideals. But something has grown certain by that which already is. We know that our perfecting must come in our religion, not out of it; in our Divine sonship, not out of it. Oh, the sadness of those whose religion has failed them, or who have become stolid and moribund in it, to whom it has become a memory, but ceased to be a hope, and whose good days are behind them! Christianity, where it has a true effect, makes us know that, if certain influences could act upon us completely, if we could be perfect correlation to certain forces, the result would translate and fulfil all our best desires. It is the nature and inevitable effect of hope to train the life into preparation for its own realisation, and to purify it of all that is inconsistent therewith. We pitch our lives at the height of the good we anticipate. The ideal draws us into itself. Thus, hope is the beginning of its own fulfilment. Especially is this the case if the hope be centred, as every great and noble hope must be, by a heart of living personality, and the looked-for event is to give to us, and give us to, not only somewhat, but some one. We see this in the forecast of and preparation for the great, solemn, tender, and sacred relations of the present life. How the anticipation of these lifts up the life to their plane! Change is impending by which our life is going to be translated from the present scene and setting, with their poverty and hardness, to a condition of affluence and advantage. How we set our lives in the order of the new days and ways! We say, "I shall do this and that by and by," and we begin to do this and that now; "I shall have this and that when the change has come," and the anticipation already moulds our tastes and consciousness; "my friend lives thus and so," and we begin to live like Him with whom we are soon to be. The provincialisms fall off from us as we contemplate the grand capital of being. The prodigal, through all his homeward journey, must have been becoming ever more and more a son, because he was going to his father. Hawthorne has given profound truth pictorial form in his allegory of "The Great Stone Face." The young man, Ernest, had heard, when a child, from his mother's lips, the local prophecy, that some day there should come to the valley one bearing an exact resemblance to the great stone face which they could see in the neighbouring mountain, and being the greatest and noblest personage of the time, should be a great blessing to those among whom he lived; and he had taken the prophecy more seriously than the other inhabitants of the valley. As he had greater faith, he had the power of seeing more clearly than his neighbours the grandeur of the strange, stony outline, and so the prophecy meant more to him than the rest, and the hope of its fulfilment entered more deeply into his life. Ever as the years passed that hope became stronger and of richer meaning. When this one and that one came to the valley and was regarded as the fulfilment of the prophecy—Mr. Gathergold, the millionaire; General Blood and Thunder, the military hero; Old Stony Phiz, the eminent statesman; and the poet, whose wondrous songs glorified both nature and humanity, and had such meaning and charm for Ernest himself, his hope was most eager and rejoicing; but he was always the first to discover that the prophecy was not yet fulfilled. But ever as the prophecy's fulfilment was thus deferred, the great stone face seemed to whisper to him, "Fear not, Ernest; he will come." As he thus dearly cherished the hope of

the great man's coming, he gave himself to doing good, preparing the valley for the great benefactor's arrival, doing in his imperfect way what he thought the great one who would fulfil the prophecy would do in his better way when he came. He learned a heavenly wisdom and became involuntarily a preacher, the pure and high simplicity of his soul, which dropped silently in good deeds from his hand, flowing also from his lips in words of truth, so that the people came to him with their needs and troubles, felt in his presence the benignity of the great stone face, and had a greater confidence that one would come who resembled it, until at length, when Ernest had grown old, and with the grey about his face like the mists which often hung about the face in the mountain, the people saw that he resembled it. His hope had configured his features, even as the character of which they were the expression. And the people said, "The man resembling the great stone face is with us;" but Ernest the more firmly believed that a wiser and better than himself would yet appear. Thus is it ever with our noblest hopes. Thus is it with the grandest of all hopes—that of seeing God. All grossness, triviality, selfishness, sordidness, falsity, scorn, bitterness, and contempt are purged from the heart where such hope abides. Pessimism is the grave of heroism, aspiration, the nurse of noble purpose and generous ardour. He who believes the worst will be, will be his worst. He who believes the best will be, will be his best. And he who hath the hope of seeing Christ and being like Him, will purify himself even as He is pure. The life that is pitched only at temporal ends will be weak in its ethics and liable to allow itself large licence as to means. But when one has attained to the love of the highest and has come to realise that "the highest is the most human too," the soul then knows that it belongs to the highest and must be joined to the highest, and the life is governed by sublime attraction. The great question in regard to every life is, Does it respond to the highest, does it cleave to the best? The great Elder Brother, revealing your Divine sonship, making possible its realisation, and setting before you the glory of its consummation, claims you for Himself, claims you for the Father whom He reveals, claims you for the life for which you were made. (*J. W. Earnshaw.*)

The Christian's hope:—I. A CHRISTIAN IS DESCRIBED BY HIS HOPE. Hope is a special act of the new life, and an immediate effect of our regeneration. The animal life fits us to live here, but the spiritual life hath another aim and tendency; it inclineth and disposeth us to look after the world to come. 1. The nature of it. It is a certain and desirous expectation of the promised blessedness: the promise is the ground of it; for hope runneth to embrace what faith has discovered in the promise (Titus i. 2). (1) The expectation is certain, because it goeth upon the same grounds that faith doth, the infallibility of God's promise, backed with a double reason, both of which do strongly work upon our hope. First, the goodness of Christ; He would never proselyte us to a religion that should undo us in this world, if there were not a sufficient recompense appointed for us in another world (1 Cor. xv. 19). Secondly, the simplicity, and faithful and open plainness which Christ ever used; this is pleaded (John xiv. 2). (2) The expectation is earnest and desirous, because it is as great a good as human nature is capable of. 2. The necessity of this hope, which is twofold—(1) To support us under our difficulties. How else could we subsist under the manifold troubles of the present life. Oh, how would a Christian be tossed up and down, and dashed against the rocks, if he were without his anchor! (2) To quicken our diligence, and put life into our endeavours and resolutions, that we may not faint in the way to heaven (Acts xxiv. 16). All the world is led by hope; it is the great principle which sets every one a-work in his vocation and calling. The merchant trades in hope, the husbandman ploughs in hope, and the soldier fights in hope. So what sets the Christian a-work, notwithstanding the difficulties which attend his service, the temptations which assault his constancy, the calamities which attend his profession, but only hope? You see to what to turn your eye, and direct your pursuit; it is the everlasting fruition of the ever-blessed God. Secondly, this hope. It is not said he that hath hope in Him, but he that hath *this* hope; it is not a sensual enjoyment which is propounded as our blessedness, but seeing God as He is, and being like Him; if our hearts be set upon the vision and likeness of God, we will be purifying ourselves more and more. It is not a sensual paradise, but a pure sinless state. Thirdly, this hope in Him. If we expect to receive it from God, we must receive it upon God's terms, and according to His manner of promising it. Now He promiseth it not absolutely, but conditionally, to the pure and holy, and to none else. Fourthly, observe the quantity of the proposition; it is not particular nor indefinite, but it hath an

expression of universality affixed ; every man that hath this hope. It is not spoken of some eminent saints, who shall have a greater degree of glory than the ordinary sort of Christians, but of all who have any interest or share in it. II. **THE PURITY AND LIKENESS TO CHRIST, WHICH IS THE EFFECT OF THIS HOPE.** 1. Here is an act done on the believer's part, he "purifieth himself," or a serious endeavour of purity and holiness. God giveth the new nature, first infuseth the habits of grace, and then exciteth them ; and being renewed and excited by God, we set ourselves to seek after holiness and purity in heart and life. 2. It noteth a continued act ; it is not he hath purified, but, he purifieth himself ; he is always purifying, making it his daily work to clarify and refine his soul, that it may be fit for the vision of God, and the fruition of God. 3. It noteth a discriminating act, "He purifieth himself." It is not said, should purify of right, *de jure*, but *de facto* ; he is, and will be in this work. It is not laid down here by way of precept, or as a rule of duty, which yet would be binding upon us, but as an evidence and mark of trial, whereby the heirs of promise are notified and distinguished from others. 4. It noteth an unlimited endeavour, "He purifieth himself." He doth not say from what, he leaveth it indefinitely, because he would include all sin, and exclude none. There must be an endeavour after universal purity. If you will have me descend to particulars, let me warn you of two things—first, fleshly lusts (1 Peter ii. 11) ; and, secondly, worldly lusts (Titus ii. 12). III. I NOW COME TO THE CONNECTION BETWEEN BOTH THESE. 1. You may take notice of the suitableness of our heart to the object, or the things believed and hoped for. That which we hope for is conformity to Christ, a pure immaculate state of bliss. Men are as their hopes are ; if they pitch on carnal things, they are carnal ; if upon worldly things, they are worldly. Our affections assimilate us into the objects they fix upon. 2. It is the condition indispensably required of us ; it is not an indifferent thing whether we will be holy, yea or no, but absolutely necessary. Heaven is the portion of the sanctified (Acts xxvi. 18). (T. Manton, D.D.) *The practical influence of the believer's hope :—*I. **THE STANDARD OF PURITY IS CHRIST.** 1. We should consider Him attentively as the means of elevating our views of holy obedience by His blessed example, and of stimulating us to seek for higher attainments in grace than we are likely to find by our very imperfect knowledge of our yet imperfect brethren. 2. The moral sight, like the mariner's, acquires by practice an almost inconceivable keenness ; and the highest points of moral beauty in the temper and conduct of Jesus are only visible to him who looks on Him and His perfections continually with ardent attachment, with keen and steady scrutiny, and with holy desire to follow in His steps. II. **THE PRINCIPLES OF PURIFICATION** which are in operation in the Christian's mind. 1. A sense of the love and mercy of God in this dispensation of salvation. 2. Filial affection to God, as having become His child. 3. The expectation of the promised blessing. 4. The spiritual influence by which his belief is maintained. III. **THE RESULT ACCOMPLISHED** in the believer's mind. 1. He that has the Christian hope, obtains a purity of thought and intention. 2. He attains to the purifying of his tempers and dispositions. 3. He attains to the purifying of the affections. 4. He attains to purity of conversation in the world, and of intercourse with his fellow-men. 5. He attains to purity of conscience. (Edward Craig, M.A.) *The Christian's hope :—*I. **ITS OBJECTS.** 1. The second and glorious appearance of Christ. 2. Complete resemblance to His image. 3. The contemplation of His glory and the enjoyment of His love as the means of perfecting this resemblance. II. **ITS CERTAINTY.** 1. Think on what it rests : not on the schemes of men, which a thousand unforeseen events, and even the failure in a single instance of the means which are employed to accomplish them, may render abortive ; but on the purposes of God towards those who are in Christ Jesus—on the determination of infinite wisdom, which no event can thwart. 2. Think of the security of its foundation : this is the work and the grace of Christ. 3. Think, again, what the character and origin of this hope is. It is the hope of seeing Christ, and being like Him ; it is the fruit of the Spirit which is shed abroad in the heart. III. **THE PURIFYING INFLUENCE OF THIS HOPE.** 1. The hope of Christ's appearance must have a purifying effect on all who truly possess it, because without holiness it is absolutely impossible for them to inherit His glory. 2. The very nature and object of this hope have a purifying tendency. Why is it that the Christian longs for the manifestation of the sons of God ? Not merely, or chiefly, because then he shall no more struggle with the distresses, or toils, or sorrows of life ; but because then his grateful affections shall flow out in perpetual streams of adoration and obedience towards God and the Lamb ; not checked, as at present, by any

obstruction of temptation and sin. And can the love and dominion of sin subsist in union with such a hope as this? (*D. Dickson, D.D.*) *Purification by hope* :—The Christian is a man whose main possessions lie in reversion. Most men have a hope, but his is a peculiar one; and its effect is special, for it causes him to purify himself. **I. THE BELIEVER'S HOPE.** 1. It is the hope of being like Jesus. Perfect, glorious, conqueror over sin, death, and hell. 2. It is based upon Divine love. 3. It arises out of sonship. 4. It rests upon our union to Jesus. 5. It is distinctly hope in Him. 6. It is the hope of His second Advent. **II. THE OPERATION OF THAT HOPE.** 1. The believer purifies himself from—(1) His grosser sins. From evil company, &c. (2) His secret sins, neglects, imaginings, desires, murmurings, &c. (3) His besetting sins of heart, temper, body, relationship, &c. (4) His relative sins in the family, the shop, the church, &c. (5) His sins arising out of his nationality, education, profession, &c. (6) His sins of word, thought, action, and omission. 2. He does this in a perfectly natural way. (1) By getting a clear notion of what purity really is. (2) By keeping a tender conscience, and bewailing his faults. (3) By having an eye to God and His continual presence. (4) By making others his beacons or examples. (5) By hearing rebukes for himself, and laying them to heart. (6) By asking the Lord to search him, and practising self-examination. (7) By distinctly and vigorously fighting with every known sin. 3. He sets before him Jesus as his model. (1) Hence he does not cultivate one grace only. (2) Hence he is never afraid of being too precise. (3) Hence he is simple, natural, and unconstrained. (4) Hence he is evermore aspiring after more and more holiness. **III. THE TEST OF THAT HOPE.** Actively, personally, prayerfully, intensely, continually, he aims at the purification of himself, looking to God for aid. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Christian's hope* :—The hope of the Christian is the one worthy, enduring hope that is capable of lifting man above the earth and leading him to heaven. For all earthly and human ideals are too near the man to last him more than a little while. No sooner does he propose one such to himself, and begin to mount toward it, than it begins to lose its excellence as he draws nigh to it, and soon it has no power to hold his affections. There is no imaginable state that he cannot so disenchant except heaven, and no model that he cannot unidealise except the Son of God. Therefore, every mere earthly hope is unworthy to rule a man, and if he have no higher, will at last degrade him; because man is greater than any earthly honour he can aspire to, and greater than the world he lives in, and greater than all its achievements and glories—yes, greater than anything except God. Here, now, is the eternal grandeur of Christ's religion. It proposes the only worthy and enduring hope to man. It says to you and to me, "If you will you may be God-like, for you are the sons of God. And you may be like Him if you will, and see Him as He is." This is the way to the stars. And Jesus, our Elder Brother, has gone before, and opened the way for aspiring man to follow. Behold, they go to Him, out of every nation. One by one they shake off all meaner desires, and lay all meaner purposes down, and as they climb toward Him along the various paths of suffering and of duty their hearts are filled with a common hope—to be like Him, and see Him as He is. (*Bp. S. S. Harris.*) *Purifying power of hope* :—In the moulding-room of an iron foundry you may see workmen making in fine sand the moulds into which the molten iron will be poured in a day or two. It is delicate work, requiring care and skill. Compared with it, the pouring of the molten iron into the mould seems very easy. But it is not. Air bubbles that weaken the iron are more dangerous than a wrong pattern. It is a great thing to get a good ideal of life. But to work out the ideal, to make it real, to get the work just like the perfect pattern, is no easy thing. There are more failures from the want of faithfulness and skill in the worker than from the want of a good model of the work to be done. Hope has a purifying power. 1. Because it knows that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. 2. Because it creates an atmosphere of life that is death to personal impurity. 3. Because it encourages us to believe that the work of our being made like Christ will be accomplished. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." 4. Because we grow like those we ardently love. (*Geo. Cooper, D.D.*) *Christian hope influencing present Christian life* :—There is, in one of the valleys of Perthshire, a tree which sprang up on the rocky side of a little brook, where there was no kindly soil in which it could spread its roots, or by which it could be nourished. For a long time it was stunted and unhealthy, but, at length, by what may be called a wonderful vegetable instinct, it has sent a fibre out across a narrow sheep-bridge, which was close beside it, and that fixed itself in the rich loam on the opposite bank of the streamlet, whence it drew sap and sustenance, so that it speedily became vigorous. Now, what

that tiny bridge was to the tree, the Resurrection of Christ is to the believer. The Christian life on earth is growing in an unkindly soil; and if it could find no better nourishment than that can furnish it would die; but, taught by the Holy Spirit of God, through faith in the resurrection and ascension of the Lord, it sends a rootlet across the river into the better land, and draws from that all the support it needs to keep it fresh and healthy. (*W. M. Taylor.*) *The purifying hope*:—Let thy hope of heaven moderate thy affections to earth. You that look for so much in another world may be very well content with a little in this. Nothing more unbecomes a heavenly hope than an earthly heart. You would think it an unseemly thing to see some rich man, that hath a vast estate, among the poor gleaners in harvest time, as busy to pick up the ears of corn that are left in the field as the most miserable beggar in the company. Oh, how all the world would cry shame of such a sordid man! Well, Christian, be not angry if I tell thee that thou dost a more shameful thing by far, if thou, who pretendest to hope for heaven, be as eager in the pursuit of this world's trash as the poor carnal wretch is who expects no portion but what God hath left him to pick up in the field of this world. Certainly thy hope is either false, or at best very little. The higher the summer sun mounts above the horizon, the more force it bears to clear and heat the air with his beams; and if thy hope of salvation were advanced to any ordinary height in thy soul, it would scatter these inordinate desires after this world, with which now thou art choked up, and put thee into a greater heat of affection after heaven. (*Christian Treasury.*)

Vers. 4, 5. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law.—*Sin*:—I. A GENERAL ACCOUNT OR DECLARATION CONCERNING "Whosoever committeth sin." What such an one doeth. "He transgresseth the law." By the law is here to be understood the law of God, in and by which He hath commanded perfect obedience to every precept of it. Which law is as immutable as the nature and will of God: it can no more change than God Himself. II. WHAT SIN IS IN ITS CONSEQUENCES: even in any, in the least act of it: yea, in any act of it: "Sin is the transgression of the law." It is therefore most carefully to be avoided. Sin in its nature and quality, matter and manner, may seemingly to us be more or less sinful; yet it is one and the same as to the essence of it. Herein it is we are ourselves so often deceived and overcome by it. If we can dish up the sin we are in our own persons most inclined to, so as to have the gross parts of it so refined as to render it palatable, and that it may go down glibly, we are then able to act the same; yet as the nature of sin cannot be changed, so it is not the less pernicious, because we have so contrived as to swallow it most easily. It is in many instances so much the more poisonous. Sin is like a poisonous plant. The root, the leaves, the every part is full of it. Be it weaker or stronger in any part of it, yet it diffuses itself in and throughout the whole. There is the nature of sin in every act of it: and this more than we can, or ever shall be able to comprehend. III. THE ANTIDOTE THESE SAINTS HAD, which was all-sufficient to bear up their minds, and lift up their hearts with holy confidence, above and beyond the law, sin, and its curse. "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." (*E. S. Pierce.*) *Sin the transgression of the law*:—I. SHOW THAT ALL MANKIND IS UNDER THE LAW OF GOD, WHICH STILL REMAINETH IN FORCE AS AN INVIOABLE RULE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. That man is God's creature, and therefore His subject. The subjection of man to God is built upon his absolute dependence upon God, both as to creation and preservation. 2. Man being God's subject, hath a certain law given to him, which doth require obedience from him, and doth determine his duty, particularly wherein it shall consist (*Micah vi. 8*). 3. Man being under a law, should be very tender of breaking or disobeying it, for God never dispenseth with it, as it is purely moral, and standeth much upon keeping up His legislative authority; which may appear by these considerations—(1) If man could have kept it, he would have gotten life by it; that was God's first intention; and the reason why it succeeded not was through our sin. (2) In that God would not release the penalty of the law, nor pardon any sin against it without satisfaction first made by the blood of Christ; the law is both the rule of our duty and God's judgment; it sheweth what is due from us to God, and also what is due from God to us in case of disobedience. (3) Before man can have actual benefit by this satisfaction, he must consent to return to the duty of the law, and live in obedience to God (*Acts xxvi. 18*). (4) Christ merited regeneration, or the spirit of holiness, that all new creatures might voluntarily keep this law, though not in absolute perfection, yet in sincere obedience (*Titus iii, 5, 6*). (5) The more we keep this law, the more pleasing we

are to God, and the more communion we have with Christ. (6) That we cannot have full communion with God till we are perfectly conformed to His law; for we are not introduced into the heavenly glory till we are perfect and complete in holiness (1 Eph. v. 27). (7) That the law is the rule of all God's judgments in the world, and His righteous process, whether against nations or persons (Rom. i. 18). (8) That He will not spare His own children when they transgress it by heinous sins (Prov. xi. 31). (9) That Christ came not to dissolve our obligation to God, or ever intended it, but to promote it rather.

II. THE NATURE AND HEINOUSNESS OF SIN IS TO BE DETERMINED BY A CONTRARIETY OR WANT OF CONFORMITY TO THIS LAW; for sin presupposeth a law and law-giver, and a debt of subjection lying upon us. 1. By omitting what is commanded as a duty to God or man: as suppose invocation of God (Jer. x. 25). 2. By committing what God hath forbidden, or breaking through the restraints God hath laid upon us, in worshipping idols, or satisfying our revenge, or fulfilling our lusts. III. THAT THOSE THAT LIVE IN SIN, OR ANY ALLOWED BREACH OF THIS LAW, ARE STILL UNDER THE CURSE OF IT, AND CANNOT LOOK UPON THEMSELVES AS GOD'S ADOPTED CHILDREN. 1. It is certain that when we come to take the law out of the hand of a redeemer, we are all sinners and transgressors before God. 2. Though God findeth us sinners, and we apprehend ourselves to be so, yet when He taketh us into His family He doth not leave us so; but on God's part regeneration maketh way for adoption (John i. 12, 13). 3. None are so exact with God in the obedience of His law but that still they need the same grace that brought them into the family to keep them in the family, and to pardon their daily failings. 4. Though God's adopted children may through infirmity break His law, yet there is a manifest difference between them and others that live in a state of sin, either in enmity to godliness, or in a course of vanity, sensuality, or any kind of rebellion against God, rejecting His counsels, calls, and mercies, which should reclaim them. (*T. Manton, D.D.*)

Nature of sin:—I. WHAT LAW THE APOSTLE MENTIONS IN THE TEXT. There is no reason to think that He means any law given to Adam, or to Noah, or any law given by Moses, except the moral law, which is founded in the reason of things, and is of perpetual obligation. This He calls the law, in distinction from all positive laws and particular precepts. By the law, therefore, he means the first supreme and universal law of God's moral kingdom, which is binding upon all rational and accountable creatures. II. WHAT THIS MORAL LAW, WHICH IS BINDING UPON ALL MANKIND, REQUIRES. It certainly requires something that is reasonable, because it is founded in reason. Our Saviour perfectly understood the true import and perpetual obligation of the law, and came to fulfil and magnify it. There are but two things really valuable and desirable in their own nature. One is happiness, and the other is holiness. Happiness is valuable and desirable in its own nature, or for what it is in itself. And holiness is valuable and desirable in its own nature, or for what it is in itself. The moral law therefore which is founded in the nature of things, requires men to love and seek holiness and happiness for themselves and others. It requires them to love and seek the holiness and blessedness of God supremely; because He is supremely great and good. And it requires men to love and seek one another's holiness and happiness as their own. And when they exercise such disinterested love to God and man, they fulfil the law, or do all that the law requires them to do. III. WHAT IT FORBIDS. Every law has both a precept and prohibition. It forbids whatever is directly contrary to what it requires, and requires whatever is directly contrary to what it forbids. It appears from what has been said under the last head that the Divine law requires disinterested love to God and man; and from this we may justly conclude that it forbids whatever is directly contrary to disinterested love to God and man. Improvement: 1. If the transgression of the Divine law consists in positive selfishness, then it does not consist in a mere want of conformity to it. 2. If the Divine law requires pure, disinterested love, and forbids selfishness, then every free, voluntary exercise of the heart is either an act of obedience or disobedience of the law of God. 3. If every selfish exercise be a transgression of the law, then those are under a deep deception who imagine that they have no sin. 4. If every selfish exercise is a transgression of the law, and every transgression of the law is sin, then every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come. 5. If the law of God forbids all selfish and sinful affections upon pain of eternal death, then mankind are all naturally in a very guilty and wretched condition. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

The evil of sin:—1. There is folly in it, as it is a deviation from the best rule which the Divine wisdom hath given unto us. They who reject that which is able to make them wise to salvation, that in which all true wisdom consisteth, how can they be wise

men? Every soul in hell is brought there by sinful folly. 2. Laws are not only rules to direct, but have a binding force from the authority of the lawgiver. God doth not only give us counsel as a friend, but commands as a sovereign. Therefore the second notion whereby the evil of sin is set forth is that of disobedience and rebellion; and so it is a great injury done to God, because it is a contempt of God's authority. 3. It is shameful ingratitude. Man is God's beneficiary, from whom he hath received life and being, and all things, and is therefore bound to love and serve Him according to His declared will. 4. It is a disowning of God's propriety in us, as if we were not His own, and God had not power to do with His own as He pleaseth. It robbeth God of His propriety. If we consider His natural right, so sin is such an injury and wrong to God as theft and robbery. If we consider our own covenant by which we voluntarily own God's right and property in us, so it is breach of vows. If we consider this covenant as being made in a way of devoting and consecrating of ourselves from a common to a holy use, so it is sacrilege; all which aggravate sin, and should make it more odious to our thoughts. 5. It is a contempt of God's holiness and purity, as if He were indifferent to good and evil, and stood not upon His law, whether men broke it or kept it, and would not call them to an account, and judge them for it. Whereas God standeth punctually and precisely upon His law; the least point is dearer unto Him than all the world in some sense (Matt. v. 18). 6. It is a denial of the goodness of God, as if He were envious of the happiness and welfare of mankind, as if He had planted in us desires which He would not have satisfied, only to vex and torment us, and had fettered us unreasonably, and His commands were grievous and His yoke intolerable; yea, ensnared us by keeping us from that which is good and comfortable for us. 7. It is a depreciation and contempt of God's glorious majesty. What else shall we make of a plain contest with Him, and a flat contradiction to His holy will? 8. It is a questioning, if not a flat denial, of God's omniscience and omnipresence, as if He did not see or regard the actions of men, since we dare do that in the presence of God which we would scarce do before a little child. 9. It is the violation of a law which is holy, just, and good. The matter of it recommendeth itself to our consciences, as tending to the glory of God, and conducing to preserve the rectitude of our natures. 10. It is a disorder in nature, or a breach in the moral order and harmony of the world, whilst man, the most excellent of all visible creatures, is so perverted and depraved, like the chief string to an instrument broken and out of tune. 11. It is a disbelief of the promises and threatenings wherewith the law is enforced; for in the law, besides the precept, there is a sanction by penalties and rewards. 12. It is a slighting of all those providences by which He would confirm and back His law. The Lord knoweth how apt we are to be guided by present sense. So all those chastisings by which God will show us the bitter fruit of sin (Jer. ii. 19). 13. It is a contempt of all those means by which God useth to enforce His laws and quicken the sense of our duty upon our hearts; such are the strivings and pressing motions of His Spirit (Gen. vi. 3). 14. The slenderness of the temptation that irritates us to break the laws of God doth also show the malignity of sin; for what is it but the pleasing of the carnal faculty (James i. 14). Practical lessons: 1. We see hence the folly of them who make a mock and sport of sin (Prov. xiv. 9). 2. It sheweth the folly of those that do not only make a light reckoning of sin themselves, but think also that God makes little account of it. 3. How just is God in appointing eternal punishment as the fruit and reward of sin. 4. If all sin be so odious, how much more a life of sin! 5. The necessity of entering into the gospel-covenant. Now this is done by repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 6. The necessity of persevering in the gospel-estate by new obedience, and a continual dependence on the grace of the Redeemer. 7. What reason we have to submit to the sharpest providences which God in His corrective discipline puts us under (Isa. xxvii. 9). 8. That a renewed heart should be affected, not only with the evil after sin, but with the evil in sin; for to persuade God's children to a conformity to their Father, he urgeth this argument, that it is a breach of the law. (*T. Mantou, D.D.*) *Sin and its removal*:—I. SIN IS DENOUNCED AS A TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW. How fitted is such a representation to warn us against it! It teaches us what sin is. The very fact that a law exists to direct our conduct is enough to claim our attention. "Do this, and live; in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die": these announcements may be regarded as beacons set up to warn us against shipwreck on the sea of life, or lights to guide us into a safe and peaceful haven. Not only, however, is it a solemn thing to know there is a law to which we are subject, but the responsibility is greatly increased when we remember it is the law of God.

He is the lawgiver, and knows what to require, and has authority to enjoin it. It is the transcript of His mind, and to disobey it must be rebellion against Him. In its nature the law is absolutely perfect, being alike worthy of God and adapted to advance the best interests of those who are subject to it. It is holy—distinguishing in all cases between right and wrong, good and evil. It is just—never claiming anything beyond what God is justified to require and man is bound to render. And it is good—securing the highest advantages to all who obey it. It is well for time, and better for eternity. This law it is the purpose of God ever to maintain. No change in man can produce a change in it. It never was and can never be broken without entailing sorrow and suffering on the transgressor. Sin has been the cankerworm at the root of human happiness and prosperity. We must esteem it the enemy of God, the enemy of holiness, justice, and goodness; the enemy of man, of his peace and prosperity; the prolific source of all sorrow, because the transgression of that law which God has established as the directory of man and the safeguard of righteousness. II. In pursuance of his argument, the apostle declares that the **VERY PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S MISSION WAS TO DESTROY SIN.** III. It strengthens these views still further to observe that **THE APOSTLE REPRESENTS THE BELIEVER'S UNION WITH CHRIST TO BE PRODUCTIVE OF THE SAME RESULT (ver. 6).** IV. **THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CHRISTIAN IS DECLARED TO BE RIGHTEOUSNESS.** "He that doeth righteousness." He does it. He has laid the law of God before him, and seeks to walk in conformity to it. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *The nature of sin:*—Very little consideration may show us the importance of seeing wherein consists the real nature of sin. The empiric who sets himself, in dealing with any disease of the body, merely to counteract its external symptoms, often aggravates the malady with which he ignorantly meddles; and he assuredly runs a far greater risk of working a far wider ruin who attempts in such presumptuous ignorance to deal with the disorders of the soul. Weigh the effects of sin, and you must appreciate something of its deadly character; look what it has wrought in the heavenly world; remember that those natures, framed according to the wise design of the All-Wise and the All-Mighty with the largest capacities for blessedness with which created beings could be gifted, have all those vast capacities filled with anguish, unconceivable, unalleviated, and then see what sin has wrought, and measure as you can in that awful shattering of God's great work of love what sin is. Or turn to this world, and compare what it was when, as "very good," God's blessing rested upon its rejoicing dawn; and then gather into one heap the sad-nesses of this present earth—its darkened imaginations, its toiling, wearied, suffering multitudes—and remember that all these are the work of sin, and see what a poison must be in it. Or look to Calvary, and know that this too is sin's work. For, secondly, all this belongs not to some distant world, not to beings of another kind from us, not to devils in hell; but it belongs to us, it touches us, nay, it is in us, in every one of us, ruling in some, struggling in others, present in all. What, then, is its nature? "Sin is the transgression of the law." But, then, what is "the law"? It is the manifestation to reasonable creatures by the unapproachable and incomprehensible Lord of so much of the perfection of His own necessary character as can be comprehended by the creature to whom it is revealed, in order that the character of the supreme Lord may be formed and maintained, according to his limited capacity, in the creature also. This connection of the reasonable creature's happiness with the existence of a true harmony between his own spiritual being and the character of God, is a necessary consequence of the inalienable relation between the perfect Creator, from whom we have our being and in whom we subsist, and the reasonable creatures of His hand. First, because only by this harmony of his own will with the will of his Creator can the perfection of the creature's own nature be reached or maintained. And next, because only in the Creator can the creature, created with capacities for knowing, loving, serving, resting on his Creator, ever find complete happiness. By whatever means, then, the supreme Lord reveals Himself to His reasonable creatures, that revelation is to them "the law." And as in keeping this law there is for the creature all blessedness, so in the transgression of it there is certain and inevitable misery. For, first, every variation from it is a disturbance, it may be a fatal disturbance, of the intricate and marvellous machinery of his own being, all of which was planned and executed with Divine wisdom for a purpose to which he in his waywardness is running counter. Here, doubtless, we may find the cause and the history of the fall of the apostate angels. Under some temptation of self-will they quitted that order in which God's loving wisdom had placed them; and violating that, the

indwelling grace of God, whereby alone the creature can ever stand upright, was first resisted and then quenched in them, and their nature became incapable of the bliss for which they had been created. And as it was with them, so it must be with every other creature; in choosing that which is at variance with the will of Him who created them, they reject all possible perfectness in their own nature. Again, they lose that which alone can fill with perfect and enduring happiness the reasonable soul created capable of knowing it, the loving revelation to itself of the Lord of all as its abiding portion. For the creature whose will, affections, and spiritual nature are diverse from those of the Almighty, cannot rejoice in Him; the contradiction between them makes it impossible; all the boundless reach of the Creator's perfections becomes to such a fallen one the occasion of a more energetic repulsion of his own nature from that, the only true centre and rest of his being. All this leads to some most practical conclusions. 1. First, we have here some light thrown on the awful mystery of eternal death, and of the steps down which the creatures of the God of love are dragged into it. Malignity, hatred, despair, the last and blackest sins into which the smaller pleasurable sins have run, are often, even in this life, a visible anguish to their victim; and the reason of all this, and its end, is taught us as we gaze into the nature of sin. For sin is not a thing, but a certain mode of action by a reasonable creature, and that action affects his own inward constitution; and the misery of eternity is not the mere retribution appointed for something which happened in this life, but is a continuous and most intense course of action into which action here has by necessary steps run on. 2. Secondly, see here the true evil of the least allowed sin. For this, which is the consequence of the deadly nature of sin, must be in every sin; and when we give way to the least sin, we yield ourselves to it, and we cannot know how far it may prevail over us. The mere allowing our earthly hearts to fix with too much delight upon lawful things short of their true Lord—this of itself may destroy us, by being the first step which leads us away from Him as the centre of our being. Still more, one habit of sin, one allowed evil temper, one permitted lust, may be the acting of our soul against God which insures for us the eternal rebellion of a lost spirit in the blackness of despair. Doubtless, as some poisons destroy the life of the body more suddenly than others, so some sins lay waste the soul with a more awful rapidity than others, because they concentrate into themselves a more energetic contradiction of the holiness of the blessed God: but all have the evil nature in them; and one therefore which possesses the soul may, and if it remains, must, shut it out from heaven and blessedness, not because God is a severe exactor of a threatened penalty, but because sin must part the soul which it possesses from Him, who, by the necessity of His own blessed nature, cannot bear iniquity. 3. And again, see here the need we have of crying constantly to God for larger and yet larger gifts of His converting grace. 4. And, lastly, let us learn hence that lesson without which prayer for the gifts of God's grace is nothing but delusion—the lesson of striving in act against sin. (*Bp. S. Wilberforce.*) Sin:—A right knowledge of sin lies at the root of all saving Christianity. Without it such doctrines as justification, conversion, sanctification, are “words and names” which convey no meaning to the mind. The material creation in Genesis began with “light,” and so also does the spiritual creation. I. I shall supply some DEFINITION of sin. Sin is that vast moral disease which affects the whole human race, of every rank, and class, and name, and nation, and people. “A sin,” to speak more particularly, consists in doing, saying, thinking, or imagining, anything that is not in perfect conformity with the mind and law of God. The slightest outward or inward departure from absolute mathematical parallelism with God's revealed will and character constitutes a sin, and at once makes us guilty in God's sight. II. Concerning the ORIGIN and SOURCE of this vast moral disease called “sin” I must say something. Let us, then, have it fixed down in our minds that the sinfulness of man does not begin from without, but from within. It is a family disease, which we all inherit from our first parents, Adam and Eve, and with which we are born. Of all the foolish things that parents say about their children there is none worse than the common saying, “My son has a good heart at the bottom. He is not what he ought to be; but he has fallen into bad hands. Public schools are bad places. The tutors neglect the boys. Yet he has a good heart at the bottom.” The truth, unhappily, is diametrically the other way. The first cause of all sin lies in the natural corruption of the boy's own heart, and not in the school. III. Concerning the EXTENT of this vast moral disease of man called sin, let us beware that we make no mistake. The

only safe ground is that which is laid for us in Scripture (Gen. vi. 5; Jer. xvii. 9). Sin is a disease which pervades and runs through every part of our moral constitution and every faculty of our minds. The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, the will, are all more or less infected. Even the conscience is so blinded that it cannot be depended on as a sure guide, and is as likely to lead men wrong as right, unless it is enlightened by the Holy Ghost. IV. Concerning the GUILT, UTILITY, and OFFENSIVENESS of sin in the sight of God, my words shall be few. The blind man can see no difference between a masterpiece of Titian or Raphael and the Queen's Head on a village signboard. The deaf man cannot distinguish between a penny whistle and a cathedral organ. The very animals whose smell is most offensive to us have no idea that they are offensive, and are not offensive to one another. And man, fallen man, I believe, can have no just idea what a vile thing sin is in the sight of that God whose handiwork is absolutely perfect—perfect whether we look through telescope or microscope—perfect in the formation of a mighty planet like Jupiter, with his satellites, keeping time to a second as he rolls round the sun—perfect in the formation of the smallest insect that crawls over a foot of ground. But let us nevertheless settle it firmly in our minds that sin is “the abominable thing that God hateth”; and that “nothing that defiles shall in any wise enter” heaven (Jer. xlv. 4; Hab. i. 13; Jas. ii. 10; Ezek. xviii. 4; Rom. vi. 23; Rom. ii. 16; Mark ix. 44; Psal. ix. 17; Matt. xxv. 46; Rev. xxi. 27). V. One point only remains to be considered on the subject of sin, which I dare not pass over—its DECEITFULNESS. “It is but a little one! God is merciful! God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss! We mean well! One cannot be so particular! Where is the mighty harm? We only do as others!” Who is not familiar with this kind of language? 1. A Scriptural view of sin is one of the best antidotes to that vague, dim, misty, hazy kind of theology which is so painfully current in the present age. 2. A Scriptural view of sin is one of the best antidotes to the extravagantly broad and liberal theology which is so much in vogue at the present time. 3. A right view of sin is the best antidote to that sensuous, ceremonial, formal kind of Christianity, which has swept over England like a flood, and carried away so many before it. 4. A right view of sin is one of the best antidotes to the overstrained theories of perfection, of which we hear so much in these times. 5. A Scriptural view of sin will prove an admirable antidote to the low views of personal holiness, which are so painfully prevalent in these last days of the Church. We must return to first principles. We must go back to “the old paths.” We must sit down humbly in the presence of God, look the whole subject in the face, examine clearly what the Lord Jesus calls sin, and what the Lord Jesus calls “doing His will.” (*Bp. Ryle.*) *The lawless nature of sin:*—What do we mean when we say of others, or of ourselves, that we are sinners? And what is the kind and degree of feeling which ought to accompany this utterance? I. SIN CONSISTS IN ACTION, IN DOING SOMETHING. Sin, it is said, is the transgression of the law. Every one, then, who sins acts, or does something; for transgressing is certainly acting. But in saying this, let me not be understood to imply that sinning is limited to mere external actions. In fact, we more properly say that the sin resides in the mind, and consists in the purpose there formed, even when the purpose is manifested in outward action. The outward act does not give character to the internal disposition and purpose; but the internal disposition and purpose give character to the outward act. The outward act is the internal spirit embodied; and in every case of open sin, both the mental purpose and this external embodying are sinful. II. SIN ALWAYS IMPLIES KNOWLEDGE—knowledge of the law of which it is a transgression. It is the moral law, which is always made known, first of all, in the conscience. This peculiar faculty gives to every human being, in proportion as his nature is unfolded, the sense of moral obligation, makes him accountable, and capable of such actions as we call right and wrong, worthy of reward or of punishment. The law, in this form, is as old as man. He finds it in himself; and it reveals, in some degree, its binding power wherever man is seen on earth; though it speaks more clearly in proportion as the human faculties are improved, and man becomes more truly human. But since to the generality of men conscience, in the absence of an extraordinary revelation, speaks but feebly, God has more fully proclaimed His law in His Word. On the principle that to whom much is given, of the same will much be required, the possessors of this Word, if they fail to live answerably to it, will involve themselves in deeper and more inexcusable transgression than the heathen. III. SIN ALWAYS IMPLIES VOLUNTARINESS, or that the action to which it is ascribed is the free action of its author. We may search

among the Divine commandments in the Bible as long as we please, we shall not find one addressed to man which it is not in his power to obey, if rightly disposed. Thus falsehood, theft, and all kinds of dishonesty are sins, because every one who chooses can refrain from these acts. The power of the will extends to everything which man can be said to do. It is a power over the movements of the body, and over the general state and exercises of the mind. It is seen in controlling the thoughts, restraining the imagination, regulating the affections, and subordinating the appetites and the desires. In confining sin to the voluntary actions, we give it then all the scope which it can have in fact, and a very wide scope; for as all our properly human actions are voluntary, they may conceivably all be sinful. IV. SIN IS A WRONG ACT, or, as the text denominates it, a transgression. Holiness is the whole of that moral state, by which a temper of obedience to the Divine law is expressed. Sin is whatever appears in the form of disobedience. It is any and every state of mind and act of the life by which the precepts of the law are contravened or evaded. The object aimed at by the transgressor is not the commission of sin, but simply the gratification of an appetite or desire; sin, in other words, is not his end, but merely a means to his end: while yet in order to gain the end to which some whetted desire points, in order to secure a certain amount of pleasure, he commits the sin, sometimes recklessly, sometimes coolly and deliberately. Any desire of the mind, any freak of caprice or passion, the sensual appetites, the love of fame, the love of power, or the love of accumulation, may thus urge him across the boundary line which separates right from wrong, holiness from sin. Sin is thus, according to the true import of the Greek word in the text, lawlessness. No matter what the sin may be, whether evil-speaking, or dishonesty in business, or intemperance in any of its forms, or any of the legion of sins of which men render themselves guilty, all may be traced directly to that lawlessness, that denial of Divine restraint which is given as the fundamental characteristic of sin in the text. Conclusion:—(1) From this exhibition of the subject we infer that all sin is personal, by which we mean that it belongs to some personal being who has committed it; and that in the sin of one being no other being whatever can have a share. (2) Sin cannot be ascribed to the mere nature or mind of man, or to any latent principle of the mind. Everything sinful in man is his own act, or work. (3) Keeping, then, this in view, we are conducted to the further inference, that sin is a great evil. It is a virulent, positive mischief, consisting in treason against the Divine government, and resistance of the supreme source of all rightful authority. (*D. N. Sheldon, D.D.*) *The perpetual obligation of the moral law; the evil of sin and its desert of punishment*:—I. WHAT WE MEAN BY THE MORAL LAW. 1. The moral law signifies that rule which is given to all mankind to direct their manners or behaviour, considered merely as they are intelligent and social creatures, who have an understanding to know God and themselves, a capacity to judge what is right and wrong, and a will to choose and refuse good and evil. 2. It is found in the Ten Commands; it is found in the Holy Scriptures, scattered up and down through all the writings of the Old and New Testaments, and it may be found out in the plainest and most necessary parts of it, by the sincere and diligent exercise of our own reasoning powers. II. THIS MORAL LAW IS OF UNIVERSAL AND PERPETUAL OBLIGATION TO ALL MANKIND, EVEN THROUGH ALL NATIONS AND ALL AGES. 1. It is a law which arises from the very existence of God and the nature of man; it springs from the very relation of such creatures to their Maker and to one another. 2. This law is so far wrought into the very nature of man as a reasonable creature that an awakened conscience will require obedience to it for ever. 3. This law is suited to every state and circumstance of human nature, to every condition of the life of man, and to every dispensation of God; and since it cannot be changed for better law, it must be everlasting. 4. It appears yet further that this law is perpetual, because whatsoever other law God can prescribe or man can be bound to obey, it is built upon the eternal obligation of this moral law. 5. Scripture asserts the perpetuity and everlasting obligation of the moral law (Luke xvi. 17). III. THE EVIL NATURE OF SIN. 1. It is an affront to the authority and government of a wise and holy God, a God who has sovereign right to make laws for His creatures, and has formed all His commands and prohibitions according to infinite wisdom. 2. Sin carries in the nature of it high ingratitude to God our Creator, and a wicked abuse of that goodness which has bestowed upon us all our natural powers and talents, our limbs, our senses, and all our faculties of soul and body. 3. Sin against the law of God breaks in upon that wise and beautiful order which God has appointed to

run through His whole creation (Prov. xvi. 4). 4. As it is the very nature of sin to bring disorder into the creation of God, so its natural consequences are pernicious to the sinful creature! 5. Sin provokes God to anger, as He is the righteous governor of the world; it brings guilt upon the creature, and exposes it to the punishments threatened by the broken law. IV. THE PROPER DEMERIT OF SIN, or what is the punishment it deserves. 1. When God made man at first, He designed to continue him in life and happiness so long as man continued innocent and obedient to the law, and thereby maintained his allegiance to God his Maker. 2. By a wilful and presumptuous transgression of the law, man violated his allegiance to God his Maker, and forfeited all good things that his Creator had given him and the hope of all that He had promised. 3. This forfeiture of life, and the blessings of it by sin, is an everlasting forfeiture. 4. There is scarce any actual, i.e., wilful sin, but carries with it some particular aggravations, and these deserve such further positive punishments as the wisdom and justice of God shall see reason to inflict. Conclusion: 1. Is the law of God in perpetual force and is every transgression of it so heinous an evil?—then let us take a survey how wretched and deplorable is the state of mankind by nature. 2. Is the moral law of such constant obligation, and is death the due recompense of every transgression of it?—then it is necessary for ministers to preach this law, and it is necessary for hearers to learn it. 3. What a holy regard and jealousy has God shown for the honour of His everlasting law, and what a sacred indignation has He manifested against sin, when He sent His own Son to obey this law, and to suffer for our disobedience of it! 4. How glorious is the wisdom and the mercy of the gospel, which does honour to the law in every respect, which prepares an honourable atonement and pardon for guilty rebels who have broken this everlasting law, and provides grace and power to renew our nature according to the demands of it! 5. Happy is the world above, where such natural and such easy obedience is for ever paid to this law of God without the least transgression. (*Isaac Watts, D.D.*)

What sin is:—Sin is the transgression of law. It is doing contrary to or without law. The first thing, in ascertaining the real nature of sin, is to get a clear notion of law, What is it? How does it arise? There seems to me but one possible way for us in this nineteenth century to ascertain what is law; and that is, by the observation of the consequences and tendencies of actions. The study of the laws of different peoples can only help us in this thus far—it enables us to see what they found to be useful and good to them, and so gives us a presumptive notion that the same may, in similar circumstances, be good and useful to us. But it is only by observing what are the consequences to which the action actually does tend under our circumstances that we can be sure of its real character in its relation to us. By our own observation alone we can arrive at certainty. But now, what is it that we are to observe in actions, in order to find out God's law? What is the test by which we may discern what we should and what we should not do? The tendency of an action to promote the highest and most perfect happiness upon the whole is the sure criterion of its being according to the law of God. There is no other which does not resolve itself into this. For, just think a little within yourselves, how can you know that it is the will of God you should act in a certain way, but from the fact that God has so created you and others that, if you do so act, it will promote your highest and truest happiness? There is no mark, no sign put upon actions, distinguishing one from another, that all men can recognise, but this. On the other hand, this test is clear, adequate, and such as every man can appreciate and feel the force of. Whatever tends to promote human happiness upon the whole, and in the long run, must be good and according to the will of God. Whatever tends, ultimately and in the end, to produce suffering, pain, or misery, must be evil and opposed to the Divine will. The only point where the test can seem to fail, is where temporary consequences are mistaken for ultimate results. Self-denial for the sake of doing good to some one, may bring temporary suffering; but the pleasure arising from the contemplation of the good conferred, the vigour and high tone imparted to the mind by the act of self-denial, and the approbation and love secured by it from our fellow-creatures, together constitute an amount of happiness which, while immeasurably compensating for the trifling suffering, declare the action to be according to God's will. And so, too, the test requires that the kind or degree of happiness be taken into the account, in order to ascertain the whole law of God and our complete duty. We find, for example, that whilst some actions bring pleasure through our physical organisation, others bring pleasure through our mental consti-

tution; and that those affecting us through the latter means, induce a more perfect sense of happiness than those affecting us through our physical organisation. And so, again, acts of kindness, love, truthfulness, honour, forgiveness, &c., bring a greater, intenser, more complete degree of happiness than mere culture of intellect; and the suffering or pain brought by neglecting them is, upon the whole, much greater; so that the Divine law requiring these is higher and more imperative than that requiring the intellectual culture. Still, in every case you will see that it is the happiness or pain which determines and makes plain the law or will of God; and it is the relative character or degree of the happiness which determines the relative stringency and imperativeness of the law. But, observe, I do not say that it is the tendency of an action to promote happiness which constitutes it virtuous, and tendency of an action to promote misery or pain which constitutes it or causes it to be sin; but only that it is the tendency which is to us the test, criterion, or sign by which we know it to be good or bad, virtuous or vicious. But now, if you accept this test, and consider God's law as requiring whatever tends to promote happiness, you will see that sin includes a much wider range of action than is generally contemplated. For human happiness is dependent upon physical actions as well as upon moral, and the violation of the laws of our physical and intellectual being is, therefore, quite as much sin as is the violation of the laws of our moral nature. And you have no right to select this law or the other, and say, the transgression of this is sin, whilst the transgression of the other is only an act of imprudence and folly. The same authority which renders the laws relating to morals imperative, renders the laws relating to the intellect and body imperative. The tone of Greek thought and feeling was much higher and truer upon this subject than the mediæval and later Christian thought and feeling. To the Greeks the body was as sacred as the soul—the senses and intellect as divine as the moral powers. And they were right. They are as essential to man's happiness; they are, at least, in our present mortal condition, the very foundation of all other good—their healthful existence is the condition of all other forms of happiness. Leave the moral powers unguided by the intellect, and they lead into all sorts of errors and follies. Leave the physical powers a prey to disease, and the intellectual and moral powers sooner or later suffer the evil consequences. And you will at once discern for yourselves how this condemns the too common tendency amongst religionists to create artificial sins, that is, to denounce things which they themselves are not disposed to enjoy. No one can lawfully condemn anything which does not tend to diminish human happiness upon the whole; and therefore, however uncongenial an action may be to our own tastes, we have no right to reprove it, unless we can show that it necessarily tends to such diminution. Nay, we must go further than this. The different constitutions and temperaments of individuals are such that, what is perfectly consistent with the purest and most perfect happiness of one man, is altogether inimical to that of another. Each man must, therefore, be left free to follow his own course, and to determine for himself what is the will of God concerning him, excepting when he begins a course which, if universally followed out, would be injurious to mankind at large. From these principles there follow certain practical conclusions. First, we see the law of life allows of many modifications, according to individual circumstances and necessities. Physically, mentally, and morally, men have different requirements, which each one for himself must determine before God. Again, we may see human duty is necessarily a progressive thing, changing and purifying itself with man's advancing culture. Many actions are necessary to happiness in a barbarous state which are altogether inadmissible in a more advanced stage. Civilisation, also, gives rise to many requirements to which the savage is a stranger. There can be no stereotyped law laid down, excepting in very rudimental and fundamental principles, as I said: but the law will always be rising higher, purer, and freer as men advance. (*Jas. Cranbrook.*)

Sin.—I. WHAT IS THAT LAW WHEREOF SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION? It is the law of God, even any law of His whereby He lays any duty upon any of the children of men. 1. There is a law engraven upon the hearts of men by nature, which was in force long before the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai. This is the light of reason, and the dictates of natural conscience concerning those moral principles of good and evil, which have an essential equity in them, and show man his duty to God, to his neighbour, and to himself. 2. There is another law which was given to the Jewish nation by the ministry of Moses (John xvii. 19). By this we are to understand the whole system of Divine precepts concerning ceremonial rites, judicial processes, and moral duties. 3. There is the moral

LAW. II. WHEREIN THE NATURE OF SIN CONSISTS. It consists in a want of conformity to the law of God, or a disconformity thereto. The law of God is the rule; whatsoever is over this rule is sin. 1. Sin is no positive being, but a want of due perfection, a defect, an imperfection in the creature; and therefore it is (1) Not from God, but from the creature itself. (2) It is not a thing to glory in more than the want of all things. (3) It is a thing we have reason to be humbled for, and have great need to have removed. (4) It is not a thing to be desired, but fled from and abhorred as the abominable thing which God hateth. 2. Original sin is truly and properly sin. 3. The first motions of sin, and the risings of that natural corruption in us, before it be completed with the consent of the will to the evil motion, are truly and properly sin. 4. All consent of the heart to and delight in motions towards things forbidden by the law of God are sins, though these never break forth into action, but die where they were born, in the inmost corners of our hearts (Matt. v. 28). 5. All omissions of the internal duties we owe to God and our neighbours are sins, as want of love to God or our neighbours. 6. Hence a man sins by undue silence and undue speaking, when the cause of God and truth require it; seeing the law bids us speak in some cases, but never speak what is not good. 7. Hence also a man's sins, when he omits outward duties that are incumbent on him to perform, as well as when he commits sin of whatever kind in his life. 8. The least failure in any duty is sin; and whatever comes not up in perfection to the law is sinful.

III. WHEREIN THE EVIL OF SIN LIES. 1. In the wrong done to God, and its contrariety. (1) To His nature, which is altogether holy. (2) In its contrariety to God's will and law, which is a sort of a copy of His nature. And God being all good, and the chief good, sin must needs be a sort of infinite evil. 2. In the wrong it doth to ourselves (Prov. viii. 36). (1) It leaves a stain and spiritual pollution on the soul, whereby it becomes filthy and vile (Isa. i. 15), and shame and confusion on the sinner himself (Gen. iii. 7). (2) It brings on guilt, whereby the sinner is bound over to punishment, according to the state in which he is, until his sin be pardoned. This ariseth from the justice of God and the threatening of His law, which brings on all miseries whatsoever. 1. It is high rebellion against the sovereign Majesty of God, that gives the life of authority to the law. 2. It is an extreme aggravation of this evil, that sin, as it is a disclaiming our homage to God, so it is in true account a yielding subjection to the devil; for sin is in the strictest propriety his work. More particularly, sin strikes at the root of all the Divine attributes. (1) It is contrary to the unspotted holiness of God, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity. (2) Sin vilifies the wisdom of God, which prescribed the law to men as the rule of their duty. (3) Sin is a high contempt and horrid abuse of the Divine goodness, which should have a powerful influence in binding man to his duty. (4) The sinner disparages the Divine justice, in promising himself peace and safety, notwithstanding the wrath and vengeance that is denounced against him by the Lord. (5) Sin strikes against the omniscience of God, and at least denies it implicitly. Many who would blush and tremble if they were surprised in their sinful actings by a child or a stranger are not at all afraid of the eye of God, though He narrowly notices all their sins in order to judge them, and will judge them in order to punish them. (6) Sin bids a defiance to the Divine power. He can with one stroke dispatch the body to the grave, and the soul to the pit of hell, and make men as miserable as they are sinful: and yet sinners as boldly provoke Him as if there were no danger. Conclusion: 1. If ye would see your sins, look to the law of God. That is the glass wherein we may see our ugly face. 2. See here what presumption it is in men to make that duty which God has not made so, and that sin which God has not made so in religion. 3. Flee to Jesus Christ for the pardon of sin, for His blood and Spirit to remove the same. All the waters of the sea will not wash it out, but that blood alone. And repent and forsake your sin, or it will be your ruin. (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

*The knowledge of sin necessary to repentance:—*1. The text supposes that there is some law given by the Almighty which sin transgresses. Now, the laws of God are of various kinds, and made known in different ways. The law of God requires certain dispositions and tempers. Now, if a man is not actuated by these dispositions, he is guilty of habitually breaking the Divine law, and therefore is habitually living in a state of sin. The law of God requires you to be heavenly-minded, to be meek and kind, and to love your neighbour as yourself; it requires you to be pure and chaste, and to be "holy even as" Christ is "holy": the man, therefore, who does not in the fullest degree possess these dispositions, is living in the hourly commission of sin, however unconscious he may be of his transgression

and guilt. 2. "Sin is the transgression of the law." But, then, it is the transgression of a law of which the spirit is to be regarded rather than the letter. In criminal cases the judge will not suffer a penal statute to be strained beyond its literal meaning in order to condemn a prisoner; but the law of God, which requires the highest conceivable purity, both of heart and life, is to be interpreted in the most extensive sense: it forbids not only the sin, but everything connected with it, everything leading to it. It is not necessary, therefore, to the guilt of the criminal, that the particular crime of which he is guilty should be expressly named in Scripture. It is sufficient that the general class of sins under which it may be ranked, be forbidden; or that the disposition from which, in common with many other sinful acts, it proceeds, be contrary to the pure and holy law of God. 3. Again, "Sin is the transgression of the law." But it is not necessary to the guilt of such transgression, either that the law should be distinctly known, or the transgressor be conscious that he has committed a sin in breaking it. The law may be broken, and man fall under its condemnation, without knowing or suspecting the consequences of his misconduct. For, in this case, as in that of human laws, it is sufficient that the offender might have known what the law was. How many deceive themselves by, first, so narrowing the bounds of sin as to allow only the grossest acts to be criminal; and then, by deeming themselves guiltless, merely because their consciences are at ease! Man's conscience, however, is not the legitimate interpreter of the Divine law. It is the office of conscience, indeed, to accuse and reprove us when we have done wrong; but if conscience fails in its duty; if it be uninformed, or blind, or corrupt; if it becomes, as it too often does, partner in the crime, this will not alter the nature of sin, or the responsibility of man: sin will still be the transgression of the law of God, and not merely the doing of what we may know or feel to be wrong. 4. "Sin is the transgression of the law." By keeping this definition in view we shall avoid the error of those who place the guilt of sin solely in the intention with which it is committed. The drunkard, the man of pleasure, the sabbath-breaker, will tell you that they did not intend anything sinful; they had no express purpose of disobeying or offending God. In short, all the various classes of sinners mean, according to their own statement, simply their own gratification. But if we gratify ourselves in a way which God has forbidden, we are guilty of sinning against God, whatever be in this respect our wish or intention. 5. Another mistake into which many persons are apt to fall, is that of judging of sin rather by its probable effects than by its intrinsic heinousness as a violation of the law of God. Without doubt, everything which God has forbidden would be injurious to man: yet the principle on which we should abstain from evil is reverence for the authority of God, rather than any view of utility or interest. Besides, were the principle true, that the evil of sin is to be estimated simply by its effects; yet who is to be the judge of those effects? 6. Another mode of judging of sin, equally common, and equally contrary to the Word of God, is that of estimating it by the opinions of the world rather than by Scripture. The chief evil of sin consists in the insult which it offers to the majesty and greatness of Him who is the Creator and Lord of all things. That this law is strict, far too strict for man in his fallen state to fulfil, cannot be denied; but a less holy law would fail of conveying to us adequate ideas of the greatness and holiness of the Being whose transcript it is. Besides, the obligation of man to obey is infinitely strong. For what is the relation in which he stands to God? Is not God the author of his being, the giver of his faculties, the bestower of all his comforts? Is the law to be relaxed to accommodate the weakness and corruption of man? Or, rather, ought not that very weakness and corruption to be exposed and corrected by the purity of the law? (*John Fenn, M.A.*) *What is sin?*—I. SIN IS A MISSING THE MARK. It is a failing to arrive at that high purpose which God has prepared for us; and as in the natural world the failure to fulfil the law imposed upon us would lead to the most fearful results, so the terrible results of our aberration are visible in the sorrows and sufferings of our kind. II. SIN IS A DELIBERATE SETTING OURSELVES AGAINST GOD. This is clear if we ask what mark it is we miss. The law imposed upon us by God. Now every sin, of whatever kind, partakes of this character. III. THEREFORE THE LEAST SIN IS MORTAL IN ITS CHARACTER. (*J. J. Lias, M.A.*) *Sin, the transgression of the law:—*I. THE NATURE OF THE DIVINE LAW. II. THE NATURE AND DEMERIT OF SIN, which is the transgression of it. 1. Consider against whom it is committed. 2. The humiliations and sufferings appointed, and submitted to, in order to atone for it. 3. The dreadful consequences which still result from it. 4. What would be its consequences, did it

universally prevail. (*D. Savile*.) *The law of God*:—St. John has set before us the child of God as striving to shape his inner and outer life after the pattern of God's purity. This is to him a law: he must in each thought and act make himself as like God as he can. He must give himself no freedom of choice. His will must be to do what he knows to be the will of the all-wise, and truthful, and loving God. Over against him St. John puts the man who has no rule of life, who simply pleases himself, obeying the desires of his own flesh and mind, allowing neither God nor man to pass within the edge of the circle he has drawn round himself. All within it is his own, and all of that he will keep to himself; no one has any claim upon it, no one has a right to tell him what to do with it. This is lawlessness, which is indeed a form of selfishness. Nothing can be further from the mind of God. For there is no act of God which is not wrought under the great laws of truth, and justice, and love. Every time we sin, we not only set ourselves against authority, we also deny the truth of God's witness to some eternal facts. We put ourselves outside of the laws which give order, and firmness, and strength to all the world and to God. St. John goes on to give another reason why all the children of God should be righteous. It was, he says, for the sake of taking away sins, or of making man righteous that God manifested Himself to us. It may not be clear to us why, for this end, so costly a sacrifice must be made. But we know that made it was, and we see from the greatness of it that it could not but be made, and thus learn that to the laws which God lays on His children He submits Himself, and that these laws therefore have not their rise in His mere will, but are themselves eternal. There is in God a "must" and a "must not," which set bounds to Him, even as they set bounds to us. To reach this truth through the manifestation of God in Christ is in itself a large step towards righteousness. It would be well if all Christians quite understood that the great end of God when He manifested Himself in Christ was to bring men to be like Himself, in goodness and happiness, by taking away sins, or, as it is put in the kindred passage (v. 8), by destroying the works of the devil. (*C. Watson, D.D.*) *What is sin?*—More literally: "Whosoever committeth sin committeth lawlessness; for sin is lawlessness." The Bible does not contain many definitions. It does define sin. Sin is lawlessness. That is, it is the violation or careless disregard of law. There is what we call the criminal class in the community; that is, there are those in the community who either openly set themselves against the laws which the community has made, or who live in careless disregard of those laws. They live as if there were no law. A sinner is to God's law what a criminal is to social law. That is to say, a sinner is a man who sets himself against the Divine law. He may be a sinner in broadcloth or in fustian, he may be a sinner in a big stone house or in a common lodging-house; but if in his life he counts the will of God as though it were not, and lives without regard to it; or if in any part of his life he leaves God out, not considering what God would have him do in that particular part, he is a sinner, for just in so far he is living a lawless life. Men may be divided into three generic classes. There are a few men who have seriously considered that there is a moral order in the universe, God and a law of righteousness that proceed from Him, and who endeavour to conform their life to that law of righteousness. There are also a few men at the other extreme who have said to themselves—practically, if not in words—I am going to get what I can out of life; I am going to live as though there were no future life, no judgment, no God, no law in the world. And between these two bodies of men, one at the one extreme, and the other at the other, is the great mass of men who sometimes think of God's law and often forget it, who bring it into a part of their life and leave it out of a part of their life. All men, in so far as they live thus, live lawless—that is sinful—lives. What shall we say is the generic law of life? It is love. To live regardless of the law of love, or to live any part of one's life regardless of that law of love, is lawlessness. Now, what does this law of love require? What is the law of government—that is, what does love require of government? The Psalmist says, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of God's throne," so justice and judgment should be the habitation of human government: "For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy." Will any man, looking on the governments of the world, say that that is the ideal according to which governments are organised? There is not a government which is not, in some measure, a lawless government if it be measured by the law of God. What shall we say the law of love requires of the great commercial and industrial world? What does God organise that world for? Love. And if you translate love into terms of political economy, it means the wise and equitable

distribution of wealth. Business, according to the law of God, means benevolence. I leave you to judge how far business, as it is carried on to-day, means benevolence. What is the law of the teaching profession? Truth. What is the teacher for? what the editor? what the preacher? Primarily this: that he may give to listening people truth, absolute truth, uncoloured, unchanged; that he may speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Will any teacher here to-day say that truth is the atmosphere of the schoolroom? Is there any man who will take a daily paper to-day and say that the one inspiration and purpose of the editors is to give us the absolute truth, in all its correct proportions—without sensationalism, without misinterpretations? What is the law of society? What has God made society for? This interchange of men and women, what does it mean? What has God made the reception for? what the party for? what the social calling for? Or did not He make it—was it made in the other world? Society has for its purpose the interchange of life. The Divine function of society is the interchange of life and the impartation of life. It is said that Christ went into society; that He went wherever He was invited; but I do not think a great many Christians follow Christ's example when they go to parties and receptions. Wherever He went, because His own heart was full of the love of God and of His fellow-men, love bubbled out from Him. How do we go? I wonder how many of us have worn mask and domino; how many of us have pretended to be somebody we were not that we might be polite and courteous, and keep our lives to ourselves and not give our true life forth to others. And every social circle, every social interchange that has not for its inspiration love, the ministration to the highest life of manhood and womanhood, is lawless, it is sin. Continue what I have begun; take this law of love and apply it to one phase of life after the other. Let the lawyer ask himself how much of the law of love there is in the court-room; and the medical man ask himself how much there is in the practice of his professional life; and the artist ask himself how much there is in the handling of his brush; and the musician ask himself how much there is in the music of his voice and the ministry of his instrument; and the writer ask himself how much there is in the writing of his story; and each individual ask himself how much there is in his individual life: how much he subjects his will to the will of God, in questions of what he shall eat, and what he shall drink, and what he shall read. Go into a great factory full of spindles and wheels and all intricate machinery; all are connected with some great water-wheel below; and, when the band is connected, all the wheels begin to revolve and all the spindles to play their music. Now, imagine every wheel and every spindle with a will or purpose of its own, and keep the bands off and let every spindle dance to its own tune, every wheel revolve at its own pleasure—what product would you get from your factory? The world is out of gear with God, that is the trouble; and you and I, if we are lawless, are just in so far out of gear with God, and nothing can make our life right save bringing ourselves back into oneness with God, to will what He wills to do, do what He would have us do. (*L. Abbott, D.D.*) *Sin and penalty*:—Infraction of law must be followed by infliction of penalty. This is a principle to which common sense subscribes. It is older than historical Christianity. Before we open the Bible, we learn it from the grand and tranquil regularities of nature. There is a law in the fire; break it, and you will be burned. There is a law in the water; break it, and you will be drowned. There is a law in mechanical force; break it, and you will be crushed. There are laws for souls as well as for bodies; these laws are all wrapped up in one: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," &c. Let the soul break it, and the soul will die. The full penalty does not follow close upon the transgression, but it is inevitable. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) *Sins, small and great*:—As there is the same roundness in a little ball as in a bigger, so the same disobedience in a small sin as in a great. (*J. Trapp.*)

Ver. 5. And in Him is no sin.—*The personal history and character of Christ: the influence of character*:—It has always been felt, even by men who did not view the matter from the Christian standpoint, that the immediate effects of the mission of Christ must be largely ascribed to the influence of that Divine personality which He allied with human nature, and which brought Him into contact, at every stage of His earthly sojourn, with the sorrows, the necessities, and the sympathies of life. The same feeling has brought it to pass that the love of Christ, rather than any other form of the religious sentiment, represents the very heart and centre of the Christian character. "The love of Christ constraineth us," says the apostle: and the love of Christ alone supplies the strong and overruling motive which can conquer the

unrighteousness, the impurity, the selfish darkness of the world. It is a leading principle thus suggested by the history of Christ that the power of individual character, with all the special force of sympathy, self-sacrifice, and love, is the most essential element in every kind of influence which has ever brought about great movements or given a right direction to the impulse of change. It is true that the influence must be followed up and perpetuated by a wise organisation; but the best organisation will go for little or nothing if it is not permanently actuated by this individual power. Never has this fruitful principle received so grand an illustration as when the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. The amazing power which our Lord exerted lay not so much in His words and deeds as in the character from which they sprang, not so much in His maxims of charity as in His life of love. This is a more than sufficient answer to the cavils of some who have endeavoured to depreciate the greatness of our Saviour's teaching by trying to prove that it has no new message that He brought into the world. Be that as it may, it was something greater than a new message—it was above all things a new life. When Gibbon mockingly wrote that he had read the golden rule of doing as we would be done by in a moral treatise of Isocrates, written four hundred years before the publication of the Gospel, his words were true enough, but perfectly irrelevant. No one need be in the least surprised to hear it. He might have found much that sounds like the golden rule in a hundred places; but what he would have found was the shadow, not the power. The mere precept was nothing better than a well-sounding phrase till it was lifted into life and energy by the quickening influence and example of the love of Christ. The power of Christ was both Divine and human—exerted by One who was the Son of Man as well as the only begotten Son of God. Consider how these two elements were always blended together to constitute the unprecedented manifestation of the Gospel. The life of Christ, then, is the noblest example of the power of influence, just as the Church of Christ is the grandest illustration of the value of system, that have ever yet been made known among mankind. Here we are dealing with a law of universal application. For the two things, influence and system, are the elements which meet in all great institutions; the one to give force and impetus; the other to supply a preservative and perpetuating power. In God Himself these two principles are united in completeness and perfection. His power is as supreme as though no such thing as law existed. His order is so perfect that He is “a law unto Himself and to all other things besides.” While both of these are illustrated in the life of Christ and in the Church, both of them rank among the best gifts which God has bestowed on His creatures for the discharge of their work and the improvement of their race. The life of influence is indispensable to give vigour to system; the protection of system is just as requisite to prevent the life of a new impulse from evaporating and loving itself when the motive power has been withdrawn. For such as ourselves the strongest element of personal influence will be found in the sympathy of simple human fellowship—a sympathy which will lead us, in spite of all differences of education and position, to lay mind to mind and heart to heart in dealing with those whom influence can reach, so that, lowly as may be the object which we seek to elevate, a loving and unselfish sympathy may enable us, if the word be not too bold, and if only we may be so highly privileged to lift their nought to value by our side. There never was a time when it was more important to realise this great social gift of sympathy. (*Archdeacon Hannah.*) *The secret of sinlessness—abiding in the Sinless One as manifested to take away our sins:—I. Consider, first, FOR WHAT END HE WAS MANIFESTED.* It was to “take away our sins.” John has just described sin as “the transgression of the law” (ver. 4). He has fastened upon this as constituting the essence of sin. He is of the same mind with Paul (Rom. viii. 7). He, like Paul, knows that as our sins are against the law, so the law is against our sins. 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. 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.” 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.” 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. Their power to condemn us He takes away; and so He takes away also their power to rule over us. 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. 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." 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. 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. 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. 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. 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 in us whereby we cry Abba Father. (R. S. Candlish, D.D.)

Ver. 6. **Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not.**—*The secret of sinlessness—our abiding in Christ—the seed of God abiding in us—our being born of God.*—I. These texts (vers. 6 and 9) 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. II. There is another mode of dealing with the statements before us which I cannot feel to be satisfactory. It is to limit their comprehensiveness, and to understand the apostle as speaking, not of sin universally, but of sin more or less voluntary and presumptuous. According to this view, one abiding in Christ cannot sin deliberately, intentionally, knowingly. Is that true? Was it true of David? Or of the man in Corinth who was excommunicated for incest, and, upon repentance, restored? 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 impossible for us to sin? Simply our abiding in Christ, our being born of God, His seed abiding in us. 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 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. 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? 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 2. The texts teach 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. 3. John's true design and purpose is to put you in the way of not sinning, of its being impossible for you to sin. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*)

The inadmissibility of sin:—This paragraph goes to show that the practice of sin is out of the question for a believer in Christ. Sin has no place whatever in the Christian life, according to the proper view and conception of it. We observe five distinct reasons alleged by the apostle for this conclusion. I. First he makes out, in vers. 2 and 3, that ON PURITY DEPENDS OUR FUTURE GLORY. This is the starting-point of his denunciation of sin. John and his readers are "now," in this present life, the "children of God." The manner of their future existence is not revealed. One thing "we know," that it will be a God-like state. We want to see God, for we are His children. And we are told that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Then we must be holy. Now the pattern of God-likeness for us is Jesus the Son of God. We will, therefore, conform ourselves to Him. Every one who longs to see God, and has seen Jesus Christ, knows now what he must be like in order to attain the vision. So he "purifies himself, as He is pure." The apostle does not tell us here how this purity is to be gained. He says one thing at a time. He wants to convince us that such purity is indispensable. Observe, by the way, the word which John uses here for pure. It is *hagnos*, which elsewhere and commonly means chaste (2 Cor. xi. 2; Titus ii. 5). It signifies the delicate purity of virgin thoughts and an uncontaminated mind (comp. Rev. xiv. 4), the opposite of sensuality and carnality; the purity of one in whom the animal and earthly are refined and transformed by the spiritual—as in Jesus. II. Now St. John proceeds from the positive to the negative, from enjoining holiness to denouncing sin. And of his prohibitions this is the first: SIN IS ILLEGAL. So he puts it, with concise energy, in ver. 4. This seems to you, perhaps, a commonplace; because you have behind you many ages of Christian teaching. Not so with John's readers. Most of them had been Pagans, taught to think that if they kept the ceremonial rules of religion, and the laws of the state as sanctioned by religion, the gods were satisfied with them, troubling themselves no further about men's conduct or the condition of their souls—that, in fact, private morals are one thing, law and religion quite another. Some of them had, probably, been Pharisaic Jews, accustomed to observe strictly the letter of their sacred law, while they found means, by all manner of evasions, to indulge in gross wickedness. Now the apostle traverses this position in ver. 4. He deepens our conception of sin and broadens our conception of law, while he makes them coincide and cover the same ground, when he says, "Sin is lawlessness." The law of God is all-embracing, all-penetrating; it touches every part of human nature and conduct. We have no business to do anything or think anything that is in the least degree ungodly. Every sinner is a rebel and an outlaw in God's creation. This is the first and fundamental condemnation—the constitutional objection to sin, as we may call it. III. In the next place, SIN IS UNCHRISTIAN. Here again we must put ourselves in the position of the readers, who had to learn things of God that He has been teaching us and our fathers for centuries. "He was manifested that He might take away sins"—not "our sins," but "sins" in the most unlimited sense (compare chap. ii. 2). This our apostle had learnt from his first master, the Baptist, who pointed him to Jesus with the words, "Behold the Lamb

of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!" That great manifestation, the appearance of the Son of God in human flesh, was God's demonstration against sin. Christ's one object was to destroy it; and we can only "abide in Him" on the understanding that we have done with it too. Nor must we deceive ourselves by thinking that "righteousness" consists of good frames and feelings—we must "do righteousness" (ver. 7). This apostle had known his Master on earth more intimately than any one besides. And in this one word he describes the character of Jesus, and says of Him what could be said of no other child of Adam: "In Him sin does not exist." Elsewhere he calls Him "Jesus Christ the righteous," "the pure," "the true." To "take away sins," to "cleanse us from all sin" (i. 7), is with John a summary term for the abolition of moral evil. The Lord Jesus carries our sins right away and discharges us from them. Herein lies the glory and the fulness of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—it destroys sin root and branch, in its guilt and power, its burden on the conscience, and its dominion over the heart. It is a hard saying, that of ver. 6: "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him nor known Him!" The interpreter needs to walk warily, lest with this sentence he should break some bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax in the heart of one who loves the Lord and yet has to mourn his many failures and shortcomings. The apostle writes here, and in vers. 4 and 6, in the Greek present participle, which describes a continuous act or habit of sin: "every one that sinneth" signifies every one who lives in sin, or every sinner; and "every one that doeth sin" means every one whose life bears this fruit and yields sin for its product and result. The apostle is not thinking of the case of men weak in faith or "overtaken in some trespass." Once to have seen the Lord Jesus, as John had seen Him, is enough to make any other ideal of life impossible. If you have "seen Him," then you have fallen in love with holiness, once and for ever. For you to put up with sin any more, or be at peace with it, is a thing impossible. IV. Once more, St. John gives us to understand that sin is DIABOLICAL (ver. 8). The righteous Son of God has come forth to be the leader of the sons of God, who are saved by His blood and abide in His righteousness. For the doers of sin there is another leader and pattern: "He that doeth sin is of the devil." Every act of wrong-doing is an act of assistance to the enemy of God and man; it is an act of treason, therefore, in the professed servant of God, the soldier of Christ Jesus. Every such act helps in its degree to prop and maintain the great fortress of evil, the huge rampart raised in this world against the holy and almighty will of God, which Scripture calls sin. V. Finally, St. John comes round again to what he had said at the outset: SIN IS UNNATURAL IN A CHILD OF GOD (ver. 9). The two sentences of ver. 9 amount to saying: First, as a matter of fact, the child of God does not sin; secondly, as a matter of principle, he cannot sin. Concerning "every one that is begotten of God," the apostle asserts, "sin he does not commit." There is a master influence, a principle of Divine life and sonship, which produces the opposite effect, a "seed" that bears good fruit of righteousness instead of the old evil fruit of unrighteousness. This "seed of God abiding" in the believer is surely, according to John's way of thinking, the presence of the Holy Spirit, that which he called in chap. ii. 27 "an anointing from the Holy One dwelling in you," the *chrism* (anointing) which makes men Christians. Of the same grace he writes in chapter iii. 24: "In this we know that He dwells in us, from the Spirit which He gave us." And St. Paul teaches us that the Holy Spirit, given to believers in Christ, is at once the seal of their sonship to God and the seed of moral goodness; for he speaks of the manifold forms of Christian virtue as "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. v. 22, 23), that excludes "the works of the flesh." For "these are contrary one to the other, so that you may not do the things you would"; "the Spirit lusts against the flesh"—it desires and effects what the flesh most disliked. Sin is done away not by mere negation and repression, but by the counterworking of a positive and stronger principle. The ground is so filled with the good seed that weeds have no room to grow. To a child of God, to the new nature, the new tastes and dispositions of the man "born of the Spirit," sin becomes a moral impossibility. It is wholly repugnant to that "Divine nature" of which he now partakes (2 Pet. i. 4). What shall we say, then, to the notorious fact of sin in believers? Some have shamelessly declared that their sin is no sin, for they are "born of God," and therefore "cannot sin"! St. John would infallibly draw, for such men, the opposite conclusion—that, seeing they thus sin, they are not born of God, they "lie and do not the truth." The fact must be admitted, but not for a moment allowed. Sin is an alien and monstrous thing to the regenerate; its detection in the heart must cause to a child of God the deepest pain and shame. Its actual commission, even

for a moment, is a fall from grace, a loss of the seal of sonship, only to be retrieved by prompt repentance and recourse to the all-cleansing blood. Christianity can make no concession to sin, no compromise with it in any shape or form, without stultifying itself and denying its sinless, suffering Lord. (*G. G. Findlay, B.A.*) *Abiding in Christ the remedy against sin*:—As the Venerable Bede wrote long ago, “Quantum in Eo manet, tantum non peccat” (“In so far as he abideth in Him, thus far he sinneth not.”) *Christian purity*:—This deliverance does not imply the annihilation of the inward tendency to sin, so that we shall no longer find it in us as a force against which we have to watch and to contend. For, if Christ, by His own presence and power in our hearts, gives us complete and constant victory over the hostile force within us, so that it no longer consciously moulds our acts, or words, or thoughts, we are already saved from all polluting power of sin. A tendency to evil which is every moment trodden underfoot will cause us no spiritual shame. (*J. A. Bect, D.D.*) *Centrifugal and centripetal forces*:—This exposition may be illustrated by a far-reaching analogy found in the solar system. The motive force in a planet at any moment, which force is an accumulation of its previous motion, would, if the attractive force of the sun were withdrawn, carry the planet from its orbit and to ruin. Whereas, if the inherent force were removed, the planet would fall into the sun, thus losing its individual existence. But under the combined influence of these two forces, each exerting its full influence every moment, the planet moves on its appointed path, preserving its individuality, yet subordinate to a body immensely greater than itself. So we move in absolute devotion to Him from whom we receive light and life and all things. (*Ibid.*) *Counteracting sin*:—Similarly, we carry in our bodies chemical forces which would destroy us were they not neutralised by the presence of animal life. Yet, in spite of these forces, the body may be in perfect health. For the neutralising power is sufficient to preserve us. Just so the presence of Christ in our hearts holds back our inborn tendencies to evil, aggravated as they are by personal sin, and preserves us from all corruption. Thus does He save His people from their sins. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 7. Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.—*The secret of sinlessness*:—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. 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. 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. 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.” 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”; 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. This phrase, “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. 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. 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 not yet 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. III. "But for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *On imitation of the obedience of Christ:—*I. WHAT WE ARE TO

UNDERSTAND BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST. 1. He was pre-eminently righteous in His moral sentiments. His mind was entirely free from pollution, and no unrighteous or unholy affection ever harboured there. He had the law of God in His heart, and it was His meat and His drink to do the will of His heavenly Father. By the original constitution of His nature, and the plenary inspiration of the Spirit, He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. His love to God was intense, rational, and pure, and His benevolence to man was without the slightest ingredient that could sully the purity and heavenliness of His motives. 2. He was righteous, not only in His moral sentiments, but also pre-eminently righteous as it regarded His moral actions. From the perfection of His knowledge He knew intuitively both what was good and what was evil; but His heart never consented to what was evil, and His will led him invariably to choose the good and reject the evil. He endured a severer series of temptation than any other human being that ever appeared in the world. He had no other motive to direct His moral conduct but the glory of God, and the desire of advantage to the bodies and the souls of men. The only ambition by which He was actuated was the noble, the generous, the Godlike ambition of doing good. II. WE CAN ONLY LAY CLAIM TO THAT DESIGNATION IN SO FAR AS OUR SENTIMENTS AND ACTIONS CORRESPOND WITH HIS. In one very important respect there is certainly a vast difference between even the holiest of men and our Lord Jesus Christ. From the native rectitude of His will He could do nothing that was evil; but, alas! we are naturally prone to evil; and how, then, it may be asked, can we be righteous, even as He was righteous? But we ought ever to recollect that this is not a natural, but a moral inability; it is not so much the want of power as the want of inclination, and this will never excuse us before the tribunal of Almighty God. We know what is good, and what the Lord requires of us; but we too often voluntarily follow after, and do that which is evil. (*D. Stevenson.*) *The importance of works:—*The words "he that doeth righteousness," instruct us that there is a righteousness which we can do.

We are elsewhere taught that there is a righteousness which we cannot do (*Psa. xiv. 1, 3; Rom. iii. 10*). The righteousness, in the sense of which none are righteous, is either a natural righteousness, we all, by nature, being inclined to evil, or it is an independent righteousness, or it is a meritorious righteousness, or else it is the legal righteousness, the righteousness of perfect obedience, and "in many things we offend all." But the righteousness which we can do is very extensive and precious. We can be so far righteous as to render to God, according to the best of our poor abilities, the honour and worship due to Him; we can believe in Him, fear Him, pray to Him, give Him thanks, honour Him with our substance, delight in His ordinances and commandments; we can avoid the wilful commission of sin, we can cause our light so to shine before men that seeing it they may be led to glorify our heavenly Father. Now our text affirms of those who practise such righteousness—first, that they are righteous; and, secondly, that they are righteous as Christ is righteous. I. HE THAT DOETH RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RIGHTEOUS. Some would object to the use of this language in reference to any human being. They think that human nature is so inevitably depraved that no terms except those of the most debasing import are applicable to any works which proceed from it, even in its regenerate state. But however partial some may be to such distressing views of human nature, the Scriptures do not authorise them. They unequivocally state the fact of man's depravity, but they confine themselves to general declarations of the same, such as "the whole world lieth in wickedness," "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," without attempting to fix the degree of our common corruption—a forbearance which it would be wise in all to imitate. II. HE IS RIGHTEOUS EVEN AS CHRIST IS RIGHTEOUS. The apostle appears to mean that, as Christ's righteousness was His own personal righteousness, and not by imputation, so that righteousness which is

by faith shall be accounted the believer's personal, which, through the meritorious obedience of Christ, shall avail to final justification. (*A. Williams, M.A.*) *Sin and its destruction*:—I. "HE THAT COMMITTETH SIN IS OF THE DEVIL." The word rendered "commiteth," implies continued action. It is expressive of a habit rather than of an act. It assumes that the sinner is under the influence of Satan. His power over the body and the physical faculties of the mind is fearfully exposed in the history of demoniacal possessions in the gospel narrative. There is evidence no less clear and irresistible of his influence over moral principles. "The lusts of your father ye will do," "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." There is, more, however, in the expression of the text. It implies that not only are sinners subject to Satan, but that they are employed by him to aid him in influencing others to evil. II. THE DEVIL SINNETH FROM THE BEGINNING. "From the beginning" must be explained of a limited period, and refers probably to the commencement of the present dispensation. His conduct toward our first parents is the model of what he has ever done toward their descendants. And it is deserving of notice how those whom he does succeed to influence are made to resemble him. As he does to them, so do they to others. They are seduced by Satan and they become seducers. They are deceived by him, and they try to deceive others. Such is the progress of sin. It knows no limit. Once set in motion, it continues with accelerated pace to pursue its course. At the same time we are reminded by the view of sin and Satan now before us, that there is no effectual restraint put upon iniquity, nor any reformation produced by all the sorrow and suffering which it entails. True, the opportunity of indulgence may be withdrawn, and then the sin is not committed, or a partial and temporary change may be produced. But mere suffering can effect no more. The Spirit of God alone can heal the malady. III. "FOR THIS PURPOSE THE SON OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED, THAT HE MIGHT DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL." The work of Christ is a full counterpart to that of Satan. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*)

Vers. 8. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.—*The existence of the devil and the origin of evil*:—I. REFUTE THE THREE THEORIES IN WHICH THE DEVIL-DENYING DOCTRINES ARE COMPRISED. 1. The doctrine that two principles, of good and evil, eternally existed, and that the devil is only the evil principle personified. 2. The theory that the devil, specified in the Bible, is only the personification of fallen human nature. 3. The theory that sinful actions are the only devil that the Bible guards us against. II. EXPLAIN THE ORIGIN OF EVIL, AND EXHIBIT THE REAL EXISTENCE OF SATAN, AS ESTABLISHED BY REASON AND REVELATION. (*W. Barnes.*) *Children of the devil*:—I. The unregenerate sinner, living in the habitual practice of sin, is of Satan, because his will harmonises with Satan's will; and it follows, therefore, that all the powers and faculties which he possesses, influential as they are upon those with whom he associates, become instrumental to the working out of the dictates of Satan's will rather than God's will. 2. The unregenerate sinner, living in the habitual indulgence of sin, is under the despotic influence of Satan, whose slave and vassal he is. He may be a free member of a free community, but his heart, his intellect, his body, all are bound in unresisting submissiveness to Satan. 3. The unregenerate sinner, living in the habitual indulgence of sin, must, if unreclaimed by sovereign grace, share the final end of Satan. If he is of the devil in sinning, he must be of the devil in suffering. (*G. Fisk, LL.B.*) **For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.**—*Satan's works destroyed*:—I. THE FACT—THAT THE SON OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED. 1. By His mysterious incarnation. 2. By His personal ministry. 3. By the promulgation of His gospel. 4. By the presence of His Spirit. II. THE DESIGN OF THIS MANIFESTATION—"that He might destroy the works of the devil." (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *Christ a destroyer*:—I. THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL. What these may be in the unseen world we know not; we find enough of them here in our world to astonish us. 1. Moral evil, sin, is one of these works. It is this which the apostle has more especially in his mind here, and which we may regard as the foundation of all the rest. 2. What we call natural evil, suffering, is another of his works. It grows out of sin. 3. And then comes discord, another work of Satan. Man and his God were walking together at first in a blessed amity. Satan came in and severed between them. And think of the contentions which have ever been going on between man and man in nations, societies, churches, and even families—Satan has fostered them all; nay, given rise to them all. 4. And then there is the

deception which prevails in our world. We must trace this also to Satan. He is called in Scripture "the father of lies," of all lies, but more especially of all spiritual lies. Well knowing that he cannot keep religion altogether out of the world, he deludes men with false religions. 5. Another work of Satan is the obscurity he has thrown here over Jehovah's glory. He seems to have baffled God in all His purposes as to our world; to have brought to nothing all the designs of His goodness towards it when He created it. 6. And one thing more must be added—death. This crowns the work of Satan. II. THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD TO DESTROY THEM. Even the omnipotent Son of God cannot be a Saviour unless He is at the same time a destroyer. The works of Satan must be demolished, or God's great work of mercy cannot be accomplished. III. THE DESTRUCTION OF THESE WORKS. 1. The Lord Jesus effects their destruction in a wonderful character. Had we been told that the Son of the Highest was about to manifest Himself in our world as a Destroyer, we should have expected Him to appear among us in His glorious majesty, withering Satan, as He will do hereafter, by "the brightness of His coming." But the Lord is wiser than we. This would have been a display of the Divine power only. The Lord would not thus honour Satan. He lays aside His majesty when He comes forth to this work of destruction. Satan and his works shall be overthrown by one of those very creatures whom Satan has long triumphed over. 2. If the character was wonderful in which our Lord achieved this work, the means whereby He achieved it were still more so. "Through death," we are told, "He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (C. Bradley, M.A.) *The design of Christ's incarnation:—*

I. AS FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD, though it principally relates to the actual coming of Christ into the world, yet it is a term of a larger comprehension, and so ought to carry our notice both to passages before and after His nativity. We find Him first exhibited in promises, and those as early as the first need of a Saviour, even immediately after the fall; by such a hasty provision of mercy, that there might be no dark interval between man's misery and his hope of recovery (Gen. iii. 15). But when at length prophecy ripened into event, and shadows gave way upon the actual appearance of the substance, in the birth of Christ, yet then, though the Son of God could be but once born, He ceased not to be frequently manifested; there was a choir of angels to proclaim His nativity, and a new star to be His herald. Christ was the light of the world; and nothing is more manifest or visible than that which manifests both itself and all things else; and needs no invitation to the eye, but will certainly enter, unless it be forcibly kept out. But the Jews were purposed not to believe their eyes; to question whether it was day when the sun shined. It is clear, therefore, that the Jews rejected the Son of God, not because He was not manifested, but because they delighted to be ignorant, and to be sceptics and unbelievers even in spite of evidence.

II. THE END OF HIS MANIFESTATION, "that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1. I reduce the works of the devil, destroyed by the manifestation of the Son of God, to these three—(1) Delusion. (2) Sin. (3) Death. There is a natural coherence between these: for sin being a voluntary action, and so the issue of the will, presupposes a default in the understanding, which was to conduct the will in its choices; and then when the delusion and inadvertency of the understanding has betrayed the will to sin, the consequent and effect of sin is death. Christ therefore, that came to repair the breaches, and cure the miseries of human nature, and to redeem it from that frenzy into which it had cast itself, designs the removal and conquest of all these three. 2. I come now to show what are the ways and means by which He destroys them. (1) As a prophet He destroys and removes that delusion that had possessed the world, by those Divine and saving discoveries of truth exhibited in the doctrine and religion promulgated by Him. (2) As for the second work of the devil, sin, this the Son of God destroyed as a priest, by that satisfaction that He paid down for it; and by that supply of grace that He purchased, for the conquering and rooting it out of the hearts of believers. By the former He destroys the guilt of sin, by the latter the power. (3) As for the third and last work of the devil, which is death; this Christ, as He is a king, destroys by His power: for it is He that has "the keys of life and death, opening where none shuts, and shutting where none opens." At the command of Christ "the sea shall give up its dead," the graves shall open, and deliver up their trust; and all the devourers of nature shall make a faithful restitution. (R. South, D.D.) *The purpose of the incarnation:—*I. THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION—the Son of God was manifested. 1. The propriety, to whom this work of subduing

the devil and destroying his works, properly belongs; that is God. (1) He only had right to do it; whether we consider Him either as the Judge, or as the party wronged. (2) He only had strength and power to effect this destruction of Satan's works. 2. The appropriation of this work. It is ascribed to the second Person in the glorious Godhead; to the Son of God. And that the Son of God should undertake this work, there are two congruities. (1) The first congruity is grounded upon His relation, in that He is the Son of God. And suitable to this there were two works of the devil to be destroyed; and none so fit to do it as the Son of God. (a) The first work of Satan, was to make us degenerate from our original, and to become the children of the devil; that was our woeful condition (John viii. 44). This work must be destroyed by our spiritual adoption; that rescues us out of that cursed family, and reduces us to a new sonship, makes us become the children of God. Now, who so fit to make us adopted sons as the natural Son of God? (b) The second work of the devil was the defacing and destroying that holy image of God, in which we were created, and so stamping upon our souls that blemish of the devil's similitude. Now, who so fit to deface the image of Satan, and to repair the blessed image of God upon our souls, as the Son of God, who is the lively express image of God the Father (Rom. viii. 29)? (2) A second congruity is grounded upon that special attribute which is ascribed to the Son of God; that is, the attribute of wisdom. Well, did craft and subtlety ruin us? Here is wisdom of God to restore us (1 Cor. iii. 19). 3. The manner of effecting this work, the dispensation observed in it, that is called here His manifestation. (1) It is a manifestation, that is the representation of that which was before, but did not appear before. (2) Christ's incarnation is the appearing of Him, who before was invisible. (3) Christ is now really and actually exhibited to the sons of men; before He was promised only, but now that promise is fully performed to us. (4) This degree and temper of His manifestation was thus ordered and proportioned for these considerations. (a) This manifestation under the veil of His flesh was fitted for our capacity, we could not otherwise have beheld Him. We can fix our eyes upon the sun when it is under a cloud; we cannot do so when it is in its full splendour. (b) This manifestation was under the veil of the flesh to make way for the exercise of faith; and faith was to have a principal part in the work of our redemption. And the property of that is to believe that which we see not. And therefore, that our faith might have what to believe, He concealed His Divinity under the veil of His humanity. (c) His manifestation was under the veil of the flesh, as the fittest way to conquer and destroy the devil. (i.) It was a fit way to requite the devil. He wrought our ruin by a counterfeit incarnation, appearing to our first parents in another habit; and Christ works Satan's ruin by a real incarnation. (ii.) This was done to bring on the devil to this encounter, by which he might be destroyed. He durst not have assaulted our Saviour appearing in His glory. II. THE WORK AND EMPLOYMENT OF OUR INCARNATE SAVIOUR. It was "to destroy the works of the devil." The fruit and benefit of our Saviour's incarnation hath other expressions in Scripture (Matt. xviii. 11; 1 Tim. i. 15; John vi. 41, x. 10). These are all comprehended in this of St. John, it was "to destroy the works of the devil." 1. What is that which Christ sets Himself against and opposes? They are the works of the devil. So then, in general, the work for which Christ came into the world is a spiritual work, to oppose spiritual wickedness. The gospel is conversant in mortifying of sins, not in invading of possessions, as Bernard speaks. (1) See the extension of the object that Christ comes to destroy. (a) Sin, that is the work of the devil. (b) Death, that is the work of the devil; and Christ destroys both. (2) The limitation. That which Christ came to destroy is the works of the devil, those and only those. The works of God, those Christ came not to destroy, but to preserve and restore, to improve and better them (Isa. lviii. 12); the souls of men, to recover them; the lives of men, He came not to destroy, but to save (Luke ix. 56). It must teach all undertakers of works of destruction to carry a steady hand in so perilous a work. They had need of three caveats; (a) Look to thy warrant and authority. Every man is not to be a destroyer, even of those things that deserve to be destroyed. (b) Take heed you mistake not a work of God for a work of the devil. (c) When these two works meet in one—the work of God and the work of the devil—then separate the precious from the vile, discern and distinguish them. 2. The opposition which Christ makes against the works of the devil. It is called a destroying. It is a full word, of great vehemence and intention. Christ came not only to abate the power of Satan, and to bring him under, as Saul did with Agag, or the Israelites,

did with the Canaanites: spared their lives, but subdued them only, and made them tributaries. It is charged on them as a sin (Psa. cvi. 34). No; sin and Satan are to be devoted to utter destruction. Not only restrain sin, but root it out and destroy it. And that we may do this, we must beget in us a destroying affection. What is that? Hatred—a double hatred. (1) Hatred of enmity, that must be against the devil; hate him with a perfect hatred. (2) Hatred of abomination, that must be against sin, the work of the devil. These two, the hatred of enmity against Satan, and the hatred of, loathing, and antipathy against sin: that will make us imitate the work of Christ, in destroying of sin. And this Christ doth in three degrees, till sin be utterly destroyed. (a) He destroys the condemning power of sin by purchasing the pardon of sin, and confers this upon us in our justification. (b) He destroys the dominion and reigning power of sin by inspirations of His grace, thereby mortifying sin in our sanctification. (c) He destroys the very being of sin; roots up the bitter root of sin by His final and finishing grace in our glorification. Thus do thou—(i.) Sue for the pardon of sin. (ii.) Strive against the power of sin. (iii.) Long for the final abolishing of sin. III. THE DESIGN AND INTENDMENT OF THIS WORK: “For this purpose.” 1. This destroying of sin and Satan and so the rescuing of us from both, was His intention. He foresaw our fall, and pitied our misery, and forecasts our recovery: His eternal thoughts of grace and mercy were employed about us. 2. This work was His primary intention. The main end of His coming into the world was to destroy Satan and to free us from his bondage and captivity. 3. This destroying of Satan’s works is His effectual and real intention. Did He purpose it? Then surely He will accomplish it, and effectually perform it. (*Bp. Brownrigg.*) *The first promise accomplished; or, the head of the serpent bruised by the seed of the woman:*—The text is a distinct doctrine, viz., that the Son of God was manifested for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. I. TO OFFER SOME THINGS WITH RELATION TO THIS RENOWNED CHAMPION. 1. He is a person of a noble extract and pedigree; He is the Son of God by eternal generation, His Father’s first-born, and therefore higher than the kings of the earth. 2. This renowned person, the Son of God, had an ancient kindness for our family; for He from eternity “rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and His delights were with the sons of men.” 3. That He might be in a capacity to help and relieve us from the hand of the enemy, He marries our nature into a personal union with Himself. Law and justice required that the same nature that sinned should suffer. 4. This renowned Champion is one of a very martial and heroic spirit; He fears no enemy that stands in His way (Isa. lix. 16–18). 5. He is one that is successful in all His enterprises: He never lost a battle, victory follows Him in His train. 6. He is incomparable for power and wisdom; hence His name is “Christ the power of God, and Christ the wisdom of God.” II. TO OFFER A FEW THOUGHTS CONCERNING THE GRAND ENEMY OF MANKIND, THAT THE SON OF GOD HAD IN HIS EYE WHEN HE APPEARED UPON THE STAGE, AND THAT IS THE DEVIL. 1. That he was once an angel of light, and had his habitation at first in glory. 2. Pride and ambition was the sin of the devil. 3. Being cast out of heaven, he was filled with the madness of revenge and enmity against God. 4. By virtue of the curse of the broken law, the devil comes to have a legal title to, and dominion over, every son of Adam by nature. 5. The enemy into whose hands we are fallen is of all others the most dangerous and terrible. (1) He is a very powerful enemy. (2) He is a subtle and cunning enemy. (3) He is an experienced enemy. (4) A most vigilant enemy. (5) He is a most fierce and raging enemy. (6) He is a numerous enemy. His name is legion. I will tell you of some works of the devil brought about by sin. 1. The dishonour of God. 2. The disturbing of the creation. 3. The ruin of man. 4. The erection of his own kingdom of sin and darkness. III. THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD IN ORDER TO HIS DESTROYING THESE WORKS OF THE DEVIL. 1. He was manifested initially in the first promise (Gen. iii. 15). 2. He was manifested typically to the children of Israel in the Mosaic economy. The tabernacle, the temple, the passover, the manna, the rock that followed them, the sacrifices and ceremonies of that dispensation—what else were they but the “shadows of good things to come”? 3. To this there was added a prophetic manifestation of the Son of God. 4. He was manifested personally in the fulness of time by the assumption of the nature of man (Gal. iv. 4). 5. There is a declarative manifestation of the Son of God in the dispensation of the gospel. 6. He is manifested sacramentally. 7. Christ is manifested in a spiritual and efficacious way in the day of conversion. 8. There is the public and solemn

manifestation of the Son of God at the last day (Rev. i. 7). Thus you see how it is that the Son of God is manifested; and in every one of these manifestations He had in view the destruction of Satan and his works. IV. TO SPEAK OF THE SON OF GOD DESTROYING THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL. 1. The first thing is, to prove that it was the great business of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil. (1) Was it the plot of hell to have God dishonoured in all His attributes and perfections by the sin of man? Well, Christ counteracts the devil in this; for He brings a great revenue of glory to the crown of heaven by the work of redemption. (2) It was the work of the devil to disgrace the holy law of God, by breaking it himself, and teaching man to break in upon it; but the work of Christ is, to "magnify the law, and to make it honourable." (3) Was it the work of the devil to disturb God's government in the world, and to cast all into disorder? Well, God the Father lays the government upon Christ's shoulders on purpose that He may restore everything into the order wherein He had set them at first (Rom. viii. 19, &c.). (4) Was it the devil's work to establish his own kingdom of darkness in this lower world, by establishing error, ignorance, unbelief, atheism, pride, carnality, profanity, and all manner of sin and wickedness? Well, it is the work of Christ to pull down these strongholds of Satan's kingdom. (5) Was it the devil's work to break all fellowship and friendship betwixt God and man? Well, it is the work of Christ to bring them into friendship one with another; therefore He is called a Mediator, or a Peacemaker. (6) Was it the work of the devil to bring man under the curse and condemnation of the law, that so he might be in the same condition with himself? Well, it is the work of Christ to "redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (7) Was it the work of the devil to deface the image of God which He stamped upon man? It is the work of Christ to restore it. 2. The second thing here is, to inquire, How is it that Christ destroys the works of the devil? Christ destroys the works of the devil four ways. (1) By the virtue of His blood. (2) By the light of His Word. (3) By the power and efficacy of His Spirit. (4) By the prudence of His government and administration. 3. The third thing was, to observe upon some particular times and seasons wherein Christ destroys the works of the devil. (1) The day of Christ's death gave a notable blow unto the devil's kingdom. (2) The day of Christ's resurrection gave a signal blow to the works of the devil; for He "rose for our justification." (3) The day of Christ's ascension into heaven was a notable destruction unto Satan and his works; for "when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive"; He opened a passage between this world and heaven, through the territories of the prince of the power of the air, by which all His friends might follow Him to glory. (4) In the day of Pentecost Christ gave another stroke to the devil and his works. (5) The day of a sinner's believing in Christ is a time when Satan's works are destroyed. (6) Times of espousals, nearness betwixt God and a soul, are times of destroying the works of the devil. (7) When at any time an honourable testimony is given to the Lord, to the doctrine, discipline, worship and government of His Church, in a day of uncommon defection and backsliding. (8) When a believer dies, and goes away to glory, under a guard of angels, along that road that Christ opened. 4. The fourth thing here was, to give the reasons why Christ the Son of God is manifested to destroy the works of the devil. (1) Christ encounters this enemy, and destroys his works, because it was His Father's will and pleasure; and He did always these things that pleased His Father, rejoicing always before Him. (2) Christ destroys the works of the devil, because it was for His own honour to engage in this expedition. (3) Christ destroys the works of the devil, out of the ancient and wonderful love that He did bear to man upon earth. (4) Out of regard to His own law, which the devil by his works had dishonoured. (5) Christ destroys the works of the devil that He may "still this enemy and avenger." (6) He destroys the work of the devil, for the manifestation of all the Divine perfections. V. THE LAST THING IN THE METHOD WAS THE USE OF THE DOCTRINE, WHICH I SHALL DESPATCH IN THE FOLLOWING INFERENCES. 1. See hence a glorious ray of the God-head or supreme independent Deity of the glorious Redeemer. 2. See hence how the kindness and love of God hath appeared toward man upon earth. 3. See hence the evil of sin, and the folly of those that are in love with it, and give themselves up to its power and service. 4. See hence a good reason why the believer is at war with sin in himself, and wherever he finds it. 5. See hence why hell and earth took the alarm when Christ appeared in the world. 6. See one great reason why believers breathe so much after manifestations of the Lord. 7. From this

doctrine we may see how much it is our concern to keep up the memorials of a Redeemer's death, and why the truly godly love to flock to a sacrament. Use second may be of trial, whether the Son of God was ever savingly manifested to thy soul. 1. If ever the Son of God was manifested in thy soul, thou wilt be for pulling down the works of the devil, and for building up the works of the Son of God. (1) You will pull down self-righteousness, and put on the righteousness of Christ. (2) You will be much employed in pulling down the image of the first Adam, and in setting up the image of the second Adam in your souls. (3) You will be clear for pulling down the wisdom of the flesh, and for setting up the wisdom of God above it. 2. If ever the Son of God was manifested savingly unto thy soul, the union of the two natures in the person of Christ will be the wonder of thy soul. 3. It will be your great design, in attending ordinances, to have new manifestations of His glory, as David (Psa. xxvii. 4, lxiii., lxxxiv., &c.). 4. You will be concerned to manifest His glory to others. The last inference is this, Is it so that the Son of God was manifested? See hence noble encouragement to all honest ministers and Christians to make a stand against the defections of the day we live in. (*E. Erskine, D.D.*) *The works of the devil destroyed*:—I. First, **THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL**. This very strong expression is descriptive of sin; for the preceding sentence so interprets it. 1. This name for sin is first of all a word of detestation. Sin is so abominable in the sight of God and of good men that its various forms are said to be "the works of the devil." Think of that, ye ungodly ones—the devil is at work in you, as a smith at his forge. 2. Next, it is a word of distinction: it distinguishes the course of the ungodly man from the life of the man who believes in the Lord Jesus. If you have not the life of God in you, you cannot do the works of God. The mineral cannot rise into the vegetable of itself, it would require another touch from the creative hand; the vegetable cannot rise into the animal unless the Creator shall work a miracle; and, even so, you as a carnal man cannot become a spiritual man by any spontaneous generation; the new life must be imparted to you by the quickening Spirit. 3. The language before us is, next, a word of descent. Sin is "of the devil," it came from him; he is its parent and patron. Sin is not so of the devil that we can lay the blame of our sins upon him, for that is our own. It is our work because we willingly yield. Let us be thoroughly ashamed of such work when we find that the devil has a hand in it. 4. Consider, next, that we have here a word of description. The work of sin is the work of the devil because it is such work as he delights in. He has led the human race to become accomplices in his treason against the majesty of heaven, allies in his rebellion against the sovereignty of God most high. The works of the devil make up a black picture: it is a thick darkness over all the land, even a darkness that may be felt. II. **THE PURPOSE OF GOD**—"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." Yes, mark that word, "destroyed," not limited, nor alleviated, nor neutralised, but destroyed. 1. The work which lies in this purpose is assuredly a Divine work. The Lord who can create can certainly destroy. 2. And there is, to my mind, about it the idea of a conquering work. When are the palaces and the fortifications of great kings destroyed? Not till the kings themselves have been overthrown in fair fight; but when their power is broken then it is that the conquerors raze the castle and burn the stronghold. 3. This means also a complete work. The product of evil is not to be cut down for a time and left to grow again. 4. It is a complete work and a conclusive work; for the Lord Jesus will so break the head of the old dragon, that he shall never wear the crown again. Sin in every shape and form the Lord shall destroy from off the face of the earth for ever. III. Our text plainly tells us how this is to be done—**BY THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD**. Behind, and under, and over the works of the devil the Lord had ever the design that this evil should be permitted that He might battle it with love, and that the glory of His grace might be revealed. My text has in it to my mind a majestic idea, first, of the difficulties of the case—that the Son of God must needs be manifested to destroy the works of the devil; and then, secondly, of the ease of His victory. 1. First, Christ's manifestation, even in His incarnation, was a fatal blow to the works of Satan. Did God come down to men? Was He incarnate in the infant form that slept in Bethlehem's manger? Then the Almighty has not given up our nature to be the prey of sin. 2. Next, look to the life of Christ on earth, and see how He there destroyed the works of the devil. It was a glorious duel in the wilderness

when they stood foot to foot—the champions of good and evil! All our Lord's preaching, all His teaching, all His labour here below was in order to the pulling away the corner stone from the great house of darkness which Satan had built up. 3. But oh, it was in His death that Jesus chiefly overthrew Satan and destroyed his works. Man, accepting this great sacrifice, loves and adores the Father who ordained it, and so the works of the devil in his heart are destroyed. 4. Our Lord's rising again, His ascension into glory, His sitting on the right hand of the Father, His coming again in the latter days—all these are parts of the manifestation of the Son of God by which the works of the devil shall be destroyed. So also is the preaching of the gospel. If we want to destroy the works of the devil our best method is to manifest more and more the Son of God. 5. Lastly, on this point, our blessed Lord is manifested in His eternal power and kingdom as enthroned in order to destroy the works of the devil; for "the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, the mighty God, the Father of the ages." IV. A few words of inquiry as to THE EXPERIENCE OF ALL THIS IN OURSELVES. Has the Son of God been manifested to you to destroy the works of the devil in you? 1. At first there was in your heart an enmity to God; for "the carnal mind is enmity against God." Is that enmity destroyed? 2. The next work of the devil which usually appears in the human mind is self-righteous pride. Have all those rags gone from you? Has a strong wind blown them right away? Have you seen your own natural nakedness? 3. When the Lord has destroyed self-righteousness in us, the devil generally sets us forth another form of his power, and that is despair. But if the Lord Jesus Christ has been manifested to you, despair has gone, that work of the devil has been all destroyed, and now you have a humble hope in God and a joy in His mercy. What next? 4. Have you any unbelief in your heart as to the promises of God? Down with it! Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. All mistrusts must die. Not one of them must be spared. Do fleshly lusts arise in your heart? In whose heart do they not arise? The brightest saint is sometimes tempted to the foulest vice. Yes, but he yields not thereto. He cries, "Away with them!" It is not meet even to mention these vile things; they are works of the devil, and to be destroyed. Do you quickly become angry? I pray God you may be angry and sin not; but if you are of a hasty temper, I entreat you to overcome it. Do not say, "I cannot help it." You must help it, or rather Christ must destroy it. It must not be tolerated. Oh, there is to be in every true believer the ultimate abolition of sin. What a prospect this is! (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.—*The usurper deposed and the conqueror vanquished*:—I. THE IMPORTANT DOCTRINE HERE ASSERTED. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." 1. This doctrine is implied in all the precepts of the law of God, whether they relate to evils prohibited or to duties enjoined. 2. This doctrine is implied in all the injunctions of the New Testament, which are expressly enjoined on those who profess the religion of Christ. 3. This doctrine is implied in all those Scriptures which speak of holiness as the privilege of the people of God, and as indispensable to all men. 4. This doctrine is, if possible, still more plain from a consideration of what the Scriptures say concerning those who live in the practice of sin. II. THE ARGUMENT BY WHICH THIS DOCTRINE IS ESTABLISHED. "For his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin: because he is born of God." 1. The practice of sin is contrary to the nature of the man who is born of God. 2. The practice of sin is contrary to the impulse of that Divine principle which is deposited in the heart of the man who is born of God. From this subject we learn—1. What is the nature of the true religion. 2. What is the unfailing conduct of all those who are truly religious. 3. What is the lamentable condition of all who live in the practice of sin. (*W. Lupton.*) *Sonship exclusive of sin*:—I. THE CHANGE, OR THE WORK OF GRACE IN THE SINNER. 1. "Born of God." (See John i. 12, 13.) As water cannot rise above its fountain, so can no change in man be better or greater than its cause. If it come from the flesh it must be like it, earthly and sinful. When it comes from the Spirit, then it must be like Him, spiritual, holy, and heavenly. 2. "His seed remaineth in him." It is immaterial whether "his" seed be understood of God or of the believer. It is that seed which God has sown in his heart. It is God's as the author of it. It is the believer's as the subject of it. How is this figure calculated to supplement and illustrate the former one. First, the sinner is born of God by means of the truth. He is left no longer ignorant of

sin, but is taught to know its vileness and evil consequences. He is no longer ignorant of himself, but has been enlightened to see the depravity of his heart. Second, it is in the same way the life of faith and holiness thus begun is maintained in him. The idea is specially noticed in the text, "His seed remaineth in Him." It is in its own nature imperishable. The truth ever abides the same. The believer ever sees sin as he saw it at the first, vile and ruinous. He ever sees himself as he did at the beginning, exposed to ruin if he indulges it. He ever sees the Saviour as gracious and glorious as He appeared at the first. His claims do not diminish in his view, nor does he ever find reason to change his conclusions respecting this world and the next, time and eternity. II. THE EFFECTS THAT ARE DECLARED TO RESULT FROM IT. "He doth not commit sin, and he cannot sin." As two figures were used to describe the change, so are there two assertions to declare the results. The one is the assertion of a fact, and the other is an argument to explain and confirm it. 1. The fact—"He doth not commit sin." Let it be observed this is said of every converted man. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." He does not sin knowingly, wilfully, and habitually. We say of a man versed in literature, he is learned, although he is ignorant of many things. In like manner we speak of men, and say they are strong, although in some respects they may be weak. We judge of them by that which is prominent and paramount in them. 2. The second expression, explanatory and confirmatory of this fact, is still stronger, "He cannot sin, because he is born of God." To live in sin is contrary to the new nature of which he has been made a partaker. The nature cannot and does not sin. Had he no other nature he would never sin. And there are many reasons why he cannot. (1) It is contrary to his views. He sees sin to be the greatest of all evils, and holiness to be the highest of all good. (2) It is contrary to his tastes; he dislikes sin and he loves holiness. (3) It is contrary to his most determined purposes. The language of David is not strange to him (Psa. xvii. 3). It were unreasonable to suppose such a man could live in sin. (4) It is contrary to his habits. He has served God and found His service to be liberty. (5) It is contrary to his interests. He knows that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." He is not the fool to "sin against his own soul." (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Sins of the regenerate*:—Various expositions are given of this. 1. He ought not to sin. Cannot indeed is sometimes taken for ought not (Acts iv. 20). But this is not the meaning of cannot here, ought not; for an unregenerated man ought not to sin any more than a regenerate man. But the apostle attributes here something peculiar to the regenerate, adding the reason, "because he is born of God." 2. He cannot sin so easily. He may sin easily in respect of the frailty of the flesh, but not so easily in regard of the abiding of the seed in him, which helps him to beware of sin. Grace being a Divine habit, hath the nature of a habit, which is to incline the person to acts proper to that habit, and facilitate those acts, as a man that hath the habit of an art or trade can with more ease work in it than any other. 3. He cannot sin, as he is regenerate. A gracious man, as a gracious man, cannot sin; for grace, being a good habit, is not capable of producing acts contrary to its nature. Sin in a regenerate man proceeds not from his grace, but from his corruption. 4. He cannot sin as long as he is regenerate, as long as the seed remains in him, as long as he follows the motions of the Spirit and grace, which are able to overcome the motions of concupiscence, but he may give up the grace: as an impregnable tower cannot be taken as long as it is defended by those within, but they may fling away their arms and deliver it up. Sin may be considered in two ways, viz., as to—1. The act of sin. Thus a believer sins. 2. The habit of sin, or custom in it, when a man runs to sin freely, willingly, and is not displeased with it. Thus a believer does not commit sin. Being God's son, he cannot be sin's servant; he cannot sin in such a manner and so absolutely as one of the devil's children, one born of the devil. Doctrine: There is a mighty difference between the sinning of a regenerate and a natural man. A regenerate man doth not, neither can, commit sin in the same manner as an unregenerate man doth. The sense of this "cannot" I shall lay down in several propositions. 1. It is not meant exclusively of lesser sins, or sins of infirmity. 2. A regenerate man cannot live in the customary practice of any known sin, either of omission or commission. (1) Not in a constant omission of known duties. (2) Not in a customary commission of any known sin. I shall confirm this by some reasons, because upon this proposition depend all the following. 1. Regeneration gives not a man a dispensation from the law of God. 2. It is not for the honour of God to suffer a custom and course of sin in a renewed man. 3. It is against the

nature of the covenant. In the covenant we are to take God for our God, *i.e.*, for our chief good and last end. 4. It is against the nature of our first repentance and conversion to God. True repentance is "a breaking off iniquity by righteousness" (Dan. iv. 27). 5. It is against the nature of habitual grace, which is the principle and form of our regeneration. 6. A regenerate man cannot have a fixed resolution to walk in such a way of sin, were the impediments to it removed. 7. A regenerate man cannot walk in a way doubtful to him, without inquiries whether it be a way of sin or a way of duty, and without admitting of reproofs and admonitions, according to his circumstances. 8. A regenerate man cannot have a settled, deliberate love to any one act of sin, though he may fall into it. 9. A regenerate man cannot commit any sin with a full consent and bent of will. (*S. Charnock.*) *The sins of the regenerate*:—The apostle having exhorted the saints to whom he writes in the former chapter to abide in Christ and to do righteousness (vers. 28, 29), follows on this exhortation with several arguments that a true Christian is not only bound to do so, but that he indeed doth so. 1. From that hope which hath eternal happiness for its object (vers. 2, 3). Where this hope is truly founded it will inflame us with a desire after holiness. 2. From the contrariety of sin to the law of God. A Christian who is guided by this law will not transgress it. 3. From the end of Christ's coming, which was to take away sin (ver. 5). 4. From the communion they have with Christ; abiding in Him. 5. From the first author of sin, the devil; he that sins hath a communion with the devil (ver. 8), as he that doth righteousness hath a communion with Christ. 6. From the new nature of a Christian, which hinders him from sin (ver. 9). (*Bp. Hackett.*) "*Cannot sin*":—He cannot sin any more than a good mother can kill her child. She might be able in a thousand ways to kill the child, but her heart would forbid it and make the impossibility absolute. (*J. B. Figgis, M.A.*) "*Cannot sin*":—The ideas of Divine sonship and sin are mutually exclusive. As long as the relationship with God is real, sinful acts are but accidents; they do not touch the essence of the man's being. The impossibility of sinning in such a case lies in the moral nature of things. (*Bp. Westcott.*) "*Cannot*":—Some of you are men in business. I go into your shop or warehouse, and I ask you the price of a certain article. You say it is so much. I offer you one-half or two-thirds of what you have said is the price. You say, "I cannot take it." Now, why cannot you take what I offer you? It is not the want of freedom in your will to decide on accepting my proposal; nor is it the want of physical power in your arm to accept my offer. You have both the one and the other, and yet you repeat your former statement, "I cannot take it"; and you speak truly. You cannot take it, because it would be unjust, because it would tend to bring ruin on your business, and to reduce yourself and family to beggary. You cannot take it consistent with your safety and happiness. Just so he that is born of God cannot commit sin consistent with his well-being. It would be rebellion against God, and would bring injury, if not ruin, upon his soul. (*J. Seymour.*) *The failings of Christians*:—With true insight into the case, quaint Thomas Fuller alleges that "the failings of Christians be rather in the branches and leaves than in the roots of their performances." *Sin unnatural to the regenerate nature*:—"It would," says Thomas Manton, "be monstrous for the eggs of one creature to bring forth a brood of another kind, for a crow or a kite to come from the egg of a hen. It is as unnatural a production for a new creature to sin." Each creature brings forth after its own kind. Out of a dove's nest we expect only doves to fly. The heavenly life breeds birds of paradise, such as holy thoughts, desires, and acts; and it cannot bring forth such unclean birds as lust, and envy, and malice. The life of God infused in regeneration is as pure as the Lord by whom it was begotten, and can never be otherwise. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.—*Two classes of men*:—I. MEN ARE DIVIDED INTO TWO CLASSES, THE CHILDREN OF GOD AND THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL. This assumption is very contrary to the prevailing views and practices of men. Many make no inquiry to what class they belong. Some who have thought upon it consider it is not possible to obtain satisfaction, and they dismiss it from their minds. They are satisfied to live in entire uncertainty. Or if they do classify men, themselves included, it is a very different summary from that of the apostle. Their reckoning makes many classes. They are as numerous as the phases of human society. Think, then, of this Divine distinction. Some are the children of God. They have been

born of Him. This is the one class. But how different is the other? They are "the children of the devil." Like him they have fallen from their original righteousness. They have been under his influence ever since they came into the world. These are the only two classes known to God. The Scriptures never recognise any other here. Neither shall any but these be found at the last judgment. II. THIS DISTINCTION MAY BE MANIFESTED. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." This statement may be understood with reference to ourselves or others. Contemplate it in both relations. 1. If we are the children of God this ought to be manifest to ourselves. 2. It is, however, its manifestation to others that appears to be specially spoken of in the text. The proofs are such as are cognizable by others. To a large extent the evidence of conversion to ourselves and to others is the same. In our own case, however, there is consciousness, which cannot be had in the case of others. The two states in question are the most contrary to one another that can possibly be conceived. The change from the one to the other is the most marked and decided of which the human mind can be the subject. Might not such a change be expected to be manifest? Its necessary and habitual operation is a constant testimony to its existence. It is like the ointment that betrays itself. The flowing stream is proof of a living fountain. And if the life be holy there must be a cause that lies deeper than any human purpose. III. THE EVIDENCES BY WHICH THEY ARE MADE MANIFEST. Two are mentioned—"He that doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." It is observable that these evidences are put in the negative form, and an important lesson is suggested by it. The absence of well-doing is sufficient for condemnation. It is not enough that we "cease to do evil," we must "learn to do well." 1. "He that doeth not righteousness is not of God." A man who is not exhibiting righteousness in his deportment gives no proof that he is born of God. 2. With this general deportment a special grace is associated—"Neither he that loveth not his brother." (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *The distinguishing character of a good and a bad man*:—I. THE CHARACTER AND MARK OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A GOOD AND BAD MAN. "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God"; which implies, on the contrary, that whosoever doeth righteousness is of God. 1. Who they are that in the apostle's sense may be said not to do righteousness. (1) They that live in the general course of a wicked life, in the practice of great and known sins. (2) They who live in the habitual practice of any one known sin, or in the neglect of any considerable part of their known duty. (3) They who are guilty of the single act of a very notorious crime; as a deliberate act of blasphemy, of murder, perjury, fraud, or oppression, or of any other crime of the like enormity. 2. Who they are that in the apostle's sense may be said to do righteousness. In short, they who in the general course of their lives do keep the commandments of God. I choose rather to describe a righteous man by the actual conformity of the general course of his actions to the law of God, than by a sincere desire or resolution of obedience. For a desire may be sincere for the time it lasts, and yet vanish before it comes to any real effect. No man believes hunger to be meat, or thirst to be drink; and yet there is no doubt of the truth and sincerity of these natural desires. No man thinks that a greedy desire to be rich is an estate, or that ambition, or an insatiable desire of honour is really advancement; just so, and no otherwise, a desire to be good is righteousness. II. BY THIS MARK EVERY MAN MAY, WITH DUE CARE AND DILIGENCE, ARRIVE AT THE CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF HIS SPIRITUAL STATE AND CONDITION. 1. By this character, as I have explained it, he that is a bad man may certainly know himself to be so, if he will but consider his condition and do not wilfully delude himself. For the customary practice of any known sin is utterly inconsistent with sincere resolutions and endeavours against it. 2. By this character, likewise, they that are sincerely good may generally be well assured of their good condition, and that they are the children of God. And there are but two things necessary to evidence this to them—that the general course of their actions be agreeable to the laws of God; and that they be sincere and upright in those actions. III. WHENCE IT COMES TO PASS, THAT NOTWITHSTANDING THIS, SO MANY PERSONS ARE AT SO GREAT UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THEIR SPIRITUAL CONDITION. 1. We will consider the grounds of the false hopes of men really bad concerning their good condition. (1) Some rely upon the profession of the Christian faith, and their being baptized into it. But this, so far from being any exemption from a good life, is the most solemn obligation to it. (2) Others trust to their external devotion; they frequent the church and serve God constantly, they pray to Him and hear His Word, and receive the blessed sacrament. But this so far from making amends

for the impiety of our lives, spoils all the acceptance of our devotions. (3) Others, who are sensible they are very bad, depend very much upon their repentance, especially if they set solemn times apart for it. And there is no doubt but that a sincere repentance will put a man into a good condition; but then no repentance is sincere but that which produceth a real reformation in our lives. (4) Others satisfy themselves with the exercise of some particular graces and virtues, justice, and liberality, and charity. And is it not a thousand pities that thy life is not all of a piece, and that all the other parts of it are not answerable to these? (5) Some who are very careful of their outward conversation, but yet are conscious to themselves of great secret vices, when they can find no comfort from the testimony of their own consciences, are apt to comfort themselves in the good opinion which perhaps others have of them. But if we know ourselves to be bad, it is not the good opinion of others which can either alter or better our condition. Trust nobody, concerning thyself rather than thyself, because nobody can know thee so well as thou mayest know thyself. 2. The causeless doubts and jealousies of men really good concerning their bad condition. (1) Some are afraid that they are reprobated from all eternity, and therefore cannot be the children of God. But no man hath reason to think himself rejected of God, either from eternity or in time, that does not find the marks of reprobation in himself—I mean an evil heart and life. (2) Good men are conscious to themselves of many frailties and imperfections; and, therefore, they are afraid of their condition. But God considers the infirmities of our present state, and expects no other obedience from us, in order to our acceptance with Him, but what this state of imperfection is capable of. (3) They are afraid their obedience is not sincere, because it proceeds many times from fear, and not always out of pure love to God. For answer to this: it is plain from Scripture that God propounds to men several motives to obedience—some proper to work upon their fear, some upon their hope, others upon their love; from whence it is evident He intended they should all work upon us. (4) Another case of doubting in good men is, from a sense of their imperfect performance of the duties of religion and of the abatement of their affections towards God at some times. But our comfort is, that God doth not measure men's sincerity by the tides of their affections, but by the constant bent of their resolutions and the general tenor of their actions. (5) Another cause of these doubts is, that men expect more than ordinary and reasonable assurance of their good condition—some particular revelation from God, an extraordinary impression upon their minds. God may give this when and to whom He pleases, but I do not find He hath anywhere promised it. (6) As for the case of melancholy, it is not a reasonable case, and therefore doth not fall under any certain rules and directions. 3. There are likewise others, who upon good grounds are doubtful of their condition, and have reason to be afraid of it; those, I mean, who have some beginnings of goodness, which yet are very imperfect. The proper direction to be given them in order to their peace is, by all means to encourage them to go on and fortify their resolutions; to be more vigilant and watchful over themselves, to strive against sin, and to resist it with all their might. Conclusion: 1. From hence we learn the great danger of sins of omission as well as commission. 2. It is evident from what hath been said, that nothing can be vainer than for men to live in any course of sin and yet to pretend to be the children of God and to hope for eternal life. 3. You see what is the great mark of a man's good or bad condition: whosoever doeth righteousness is of God, and "whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." (*J. Tillotson, D.D.*) *The manifestation of character:—* The persons opposed are **THE CHILDREN OF GOD AND THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL**, *i.e.*, good and bad men. It is common in the Scripture to call persons, distinguished by any quality or acquisition, the children of those from whom it was originally derived, or by whom it was pre-eminently possessed. 1. This division is the most general and universal. 2. It is also a division the most serious and eventful. It overlooks everything adventitious, and considers only character. It passes by the distinctions of speech, complexion, rank; and regards the soul and eternity. 3. Let us consider, farther, what results from these relations. According as you are "the children of God, or the children of the devil," you are crowned with honour or covered with disgrace. 4. Upon these connections innumerable privileges or evils depend. Are you the children of God? Heaven is your home. And here you shall want "no good thing." But I leave you to fill up the remaining article, and to think of the children of the wicked one. I leave you to reflect upon the miseries they endure, from their perplexities, their fears, their passions, and their pursuits in life. I leave you to look forward to the

horrors which will devour them in a dying hour. II. THE POSSIBILITY OF ASCERTAINING IN WHICH OF THESE CLASSES YOU RANK. The children of God and the children of the devil are "manifest." Observe, it is not spoken of as a future, but as a present discovery—they "are" manifest. 1. They are manifest to God. It is impossible to impose upon Him; He "is not mocked." 2. They are manifest to others. The tree is known by its fruit. 3. They are manifest to themselves. It will readily be acknowledged that it is not possible for a man to be wicked without knowing it. (1) Is it not necessary for him to be able to know his character? If promises are made to a religious state, how can he claim these promises unless he can determine that he is in this state? (2) What is religion? An unintelligible mystery? a charm? an operation which passes upon us and leaves no trace behind? Is it not the most serious concern in which we were ever engaged? Is it not a general and continued course of action? The business of life, to which we endeavour to render everything else subordinate? Our prevailing aim? And is this incapable of being known? III. THE MARKS OF DISTINCTION BETWEEN THESE CHARACTERS. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." In what? Not in temporal success. This is given or withheld too indiscriminately to allow of our knowing love or hatred. In what? Not in religious profession. Judas and Demas were both visible members of the Church of God. In what? Not in talking—not in controversy—not in a sound creed—not in the pronouncement of the Shibboleths of a particular party. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; he that doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." 1. The manner in which the subject is expressed. It is held forth negatively—nor is this without design. It reminds us that omissions decide the character, even where there is no positive vice. 2. The union of these excellences is worthy of our notice. We commonly see them combined in the Scripture. It is said of a good man, "He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous." 3. From these arises a criterion by which we are to judge of the reality and genuineness of religion—not that these are the only marks which we are to employ; but all the rest will be delusive, if unaccompanied with this righteousness and love. (*W. Jay.*) *Self-manifestation*:—As there is a God, and a devil, a heaven, and a hell, a kingdom of glory, and a kingdom of darkness, so there are several sorts appertaining to both; and at the day of judgment there shall be a final separation made betwixt both. Now the one of these two sorts are in the very text called the children of God; the other, the "children of the devil." Now to speak of the difference which is betwixt the children of God and the children of the devil. This difference is twofold, either general or particular. The general is the doing or not doing of righteousness; the negative is here only named, but in it as in all negative rules the affirmative is included. By righteousness is understood that holy and righteous course which God requireth of us, whether in general as we be Christians, or in particular according to our places and callings allotted unto us by God. The rule of righteousness is the Scripture; in it the Lord hath showed what is good, that only deserves to be entertained as our Spiritual Counsellor, that alone is able to make a "man wise unto salvation." The doing of righteousness is twofold. 1. Legal, and 2. Evangelical. The legal doing is the perfection of all duties, both in manner and form, both for the number and measure of them; which kind of doing was never found in any mere man since the fall of Adam. The Evangelical doing is mingled with much weakness, and is good only in acceptance with God by Jesus Christ. Of this doing the Spirit of God speaketh here, and it consists upon the concurrence of these following particulars. 1. A caring and studying to prove what is the good will of God, how He will be served, and where-with He will be pleased. 2. An inflamed love and affection to that righteousness which is pleasing unto God. 3. A desire, that if it were possible, the whole course of the life and conversation might be suitable thereunto. 4. A firmness of resolution, to frame and set the whole and continual endeavour to the performance of it. 5. A speedy applying of oneself therein. 6. A careful catching of all opportunities to help forward this good purpose. 7. A diligent survey of ones own courses. 8. A bitter bewailing of slips and infirmities, together with a kind of holy indignation at one's own self, that he should so grossly and ordinarily sin against the Lord. 9. An increase of care (after a soil received) and of watchfulness, together with a fear of running afresh into the same or like offence. And as these things cannot be in an unregenerate person, so they cannot but be in those whom the Lord hath chosen to be His. (*S. Hieron.*) *Connexion of doing righteousness with brotherly love as proving a Divine birth*:—1. Consider that old message or commandment, heard

from the beginning, that we should love one another. On what is it based? It cannot, since the Fall, be based on our joint participation in the ills to which the Fall has made us heirs. It is redemption, and redemption alone, with the regeneration which is involved in it, that makes mutual brotherly love among men, in its true and deep sense, a practicable duty, an attainable grace. It is only one who, "being born of God, doeth righteousness as knowing God to be righteous," that is capable of really loving his fellow-man as a brother. 2. No such brotherly love is possible for him who, not doing righteousness, is not of God. His frame of mind must be that of Cain; a frame of mind that but too unequivocally identifies him as one of the devil's children, and not of God's. It was not because he was void of natural affection, or because his disposition was one of wanton cruelty and bloodthirstiness; it was not in the heat of sudden passion, or in a quarrel about any earthly good, that Cain slew his brother; but "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." It is this which chiefly marks the instigation of the devil; and his fatherhood of Cain, and such as Cain. More than anything else on earth; infinitely more than any remains of remnants of good that the Fall has left in human nature and human society—for these he can turn to his own account and make his own use of—does that wicked one detest the faintest trace of the footsteps, the slightest breathing of the spirit of Him "whose goings forth have been from of old"; who has been ever in the world, the Wisdom and the Word of God, the light and the life of men. Let the truth and righteousness of God be brought so near to a man, by the Divine Word and Spirit, as to stir and trouble thoroughly his inward moral sense, while his desire and determination to stand his ground and not give in remains unabated, or rather is inflamed and aggravated; let the process go on; and let all attempts towards an accommodation, between the conscience's increasing soreness and the heart's increasing self-righteousness and self-will, be one after another frustrated and foiled; you have then the making of a Cain, a very child of the devil, who, if need be and opportunity serve, will not scruple to cut short the terrible debate and end the intolerable strife by slaying his brother Abel; by "crucifying the Lord of glory"! O my fellow-sinner, let us beware! (R. S. Candlish, D.D.)

Ver. 12. **Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.—***The world's hatred of the godly:—*I. A REFERENCE TO THE EXAMPLE OF CAIN. 1. His character—"he was of that wicked one." He inherited his disposition. He was under his influence. He did his will. Had any one warned Cain of the danger to which he was exposed, there is no doubt he would have treated it as the grossest insult. The fact proves there is no iniquity to which Satan will not prompt, and which he may not one day induce us to perpetrate. We are, therefore, farther warned to resist his encroachments upon our minds. They are deceitful and gradual. We need to be ever watchful against his devices. Let us remember the counsel of the apostle (1 Pet. v. 8). 2. The conduct of Cain—"he slew his brother." How shall the deed be designated? (1) It was unnatural. Nature was outraged by the force of violent temptation. (2) It was irremediable. Satan will ever endeavour to plunge us into some iniquity that cannot be recalled. (3) It was extreme in its enormity. We cannot give life, and without a Divine permission we should not take it away. (4) It was a sin which once committed ensures the bitterness of the offender's future life. Cain soon found reason to cry, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." No doubt Satan sought to persuade him repentance was vain, and forgiveness impossible. 3. But how are we to account for it? "Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." It was envy that first moved him to the unparalleled iniquity. His offering was rejected, while Abel's was accepted. He was mortified by the distinction, and would be avenged. It is very instructive to mark the progress of his mind under the influence of his envious feelings. The first notice is, "He was wroth." It is then added, "His countenance fell." So "he rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." What an instructive history! It is the progress of envy till it ended in fratricide. We need to be watchful over the movements of our own minds. Impressions may be guided or removed if early dealt with, but if they are allowed to strengthen, it is impossible to restrain them. We may be borne away by them as by a resistless torrent. II. A REFLECTION FOUNDED UPON IT—"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." The world, of which Cain was a type, hates the godly, who are represented by Abel. 1. Surely, then, they who know the history of the world and the Church should not marvel. It begins with

Cain and Abel. The same spirit has appeared in all ages, in all places, and under all circumstances. It has been carried on upon the wide theatre of nations, the narrower scene of communities, within the circle of friends, and in the bosom of families. 2. The causes of the enmity of the world to the Church remain as they were at the beginning, and therefore we should not wonder at it. (1) One is the exclusive claim of truth. It asserts its own supremacy. "He that is not with Me," says Christ, "is against Me." This is intolerable to the world, and it hates the assertion of it. (2) Another cause is the nature of the truth asserted. The gospel offers a way of salvation that gives no credit to man. (3) We must add the life which the gospel requires is still more offensive than the ground on which it offers salvation (see 1 Pet. iv. 4). 3. Important purposes are served by the hatred of the world, and therefore we need not wonder at it. It belongs to God to make the wrath of man to praise Him. He brings good out of evil, light out of darkness, and joy out of sorrow. It shows what man is. His "mind is enmity against God." Thus the grace of God is exalted. That alone can change the human heart. At the same time the believer is thus subjected to a wholesome influence. As he is useful and holy so does the world watch him with a malignant eye. He needs to remember the injunction "watch unto prayer." (1) Do not fear the world. With Cain it may persecute the righteous Abel. But the God of Abel lives and has prepared mansions of rest and glory above. (2) Do not provoke the world. "Give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." "With well-doing put him to silence." (*J. Morgan, D.D.*)

Ver. 13. **Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.**—*The world's hatred—God's love*:—The world's hatred; God's love; these are what are here contrasted. And yet there is one point at least of partial similarity. The affection, in either case, fastens in the first instance upon objects opposed to itself. The world hates the brethren; God loves the world, "the world lying in the wicked one." And in a sense, too, the ends sought are similar. The world, which hates, would assimilate those it hates to itself, and so be soothed or sated; God, who loves, would assimilate those he loves to Himself, and so have satisfaction in them. I. **THE WORLD'S HATRED OF THE BRETHREN.** 1. It is natural; not marvellous. The Lord prepares His disciples beforehand to expect it, warning them not to look for any other treatment at the world's hands than He had met with. Notwithstanding all warnings, and all the experience of others who have gone before him, the young Christian, buoyant, enthusiastic, may fancy that what he has to tell must pierce all consciences and melt all hearts. Alas! he comes in contact with what is like a wet blanket thrown in his face, cold looks and rude gestures of impatience, jeers and jibes, if not harsher usage still. Count it not strange that you fall into this trial. Why should you? Is their reception of you very different from what, but yesterday perhaps, yours would have been of one coming to you in the same character and on the same errand? Surely you know that love to the brethren—true Christian, Christlike love—is no plant of natural growth in the soil of corrupt humanity; that, on the contrary, it is the fruit of the great change by means of which a poor sinner "passes from death unto life." 2. It is murderous, as regards its objects: "He that loveth not its brother abideth in death: whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." "Loveth not," "hateth," "murdereth"! There is a sort of dark climax here! Not loving is intensified into hating, and hating into murdering. The three, however, are really one; as the Lord teaches (Matt. v. 21-24). Be on your guard against this spirit of the world finding harbour again in your breasts. Even you need to be warned against the world's evil temper of dislike and envy. Consider how insidious it is. Consider also its deadly danger. Consider, finally, how natural it is; so natural that only your "passing from death unto life" can rid you of it, and make you capable of its opposite. Grace may overcome it; grace alone can do so. And even grace can do so only through continual watchfulness and prayer, continual recognition of the life through which you pass from death, and continual exercise of the love which is the characteristic of that life. II. **OF THIS LOVE, AS OF THE HATRED, TWO THINGS ARE SAID.** 1. It is natural now to the spiritual mind; natural as the fruit and sign of the new life. 2. It is the very opposite of the murderous hatred of the devil; it is self-sacrificing, like the love of God Himself. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *The world hating the Church*:—These words imply a fact, and contain a warning. I. First, then, for the fact that **THE UNBELIEVING WORLD DID HATE THE CHURCH.** It is established, not by sacred testimony only, but by the concurrence of heathen writers. II. The apostle not only states the

fact that the world did "hate" the Christian, but HE PROCEEDS TO WARN THEM NOT TO "MARVEL" AT IT. There were two reasons that would very naturally induce Christians so to marvel. 1. The first was derived from considering the Divine origin of their faith. They might be inclined to suppose that a religion coming from such a source, and so confirmed, would at least secure its professors from persecution. 2. The singular innocence and harmlessness of the lives of its professors might reasonably be expected to disarm malice of its sting. Now, for the first of these grounds, of their "marvel that the world should hate them." The very pretension of the religion to speak with authority from God, armed the world, Jewish or heathen, against it. With the Jew it was not like a new sect, such as the Herodians, added to the older division into Pharisees and Sadducees. But it was a deposing Moses from his authority, and placing him beneath Him whom they execrated, "the carpenter's son of Galilee." Nay, more, it was not deposing Moses only from his place, it was a loss of rank and caste to themselves likewise. For if the Christian religion broke down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and made both one, what became of their own fancied superiority over the rest of mankind? Still more, what became of their own special position as lords over their brethren? Again, for the heathen. The Christian religion was not like adding another form of worship to the ten thousand that were already received in the world, so that it has been said that there were more gods than people at Rome; but it pronounced every one of these forms to be foul, cruel, pernicious, and false. Even some conviction that it must have come from God, was not sufficient to hinder those to whom it was brought from hating and murdering those who brought it. But again, if the suspicion that the religion came from God were not sufficient to deter the world from persecuting the Christian, neither would the innocence of the Christian's life be any defence. So far from it, it would be a special ground of attacking them. Wickedness has a consciousness that it is in the wrong, and as it only can support itself by having the multitude on its side, so it regards all goodness as a desertion, an exposure of its weakness. And what is the result? Clearly, that we ought not to be taken by surprise if we find the very best designs, the most palpable efforts of self-denial, not only misconstrued and misrepresented, but its ground of such opposition as the spirit of the age will permit. In more tranquil days, there is reason to apprehend that our faith may grow weak from want of exercise, and degenerate into mere morality and conventional decorum. (G. J. Cornish, M.A.).

Ver. 14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.—*Passing from death to life by love*:—I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY DEATH AND LIFE. II. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE PRIVILEGE OF HAVING PASSED FROM DEATH TO LIFE. 1. This privilege implieth in it a change of covenant heads. The first Adam represented all his natural posterity. The second represented all given to Him by the Father. 2. This privilege implies a having passed from law death, to law life; or in other words, from a state of condemnation to a state of justification. 3. This privilege implies a having passed from spiritual death to spiritual life in regeneration; a having been released from the dominion and power of sin, to enjoy the happy reign and influence of grace. This change is not the product of nature, but wholly the work of God. 4. This privilege implies a coming or being taken into new relations—into a new covenant relation to God through Christ—taken into God's family. III. THE FRUIT AND EVIDENCE OF THIS PRIVILEGE, VIZ., LOVE TO THE BRETHREN. 1. Whom we are to understand by brethren. (1) By brethren we are to understand generally every man and woman—all mankind. All are generally God's offspring. All are sprung from one common root, Adam. (2) But by brethren here we are specially to understand brethren in Christ, believers, those who belong to and have the image of Christ upon them. They are brethren by birth, by nature, by relation, and by love. 2. What love to the brethren is. In general it is a supernatural warmth, kindled in the hearts of believers to one another, begetting union of heart and soul, sympathy with, care for, and complacency and delight in and towards one another. Never before nor since was this more emphatically expressed than in the beautiful description in Acts iv. 32. (1) The rule by which this love of the brethren is to be regulated and directed, is that of God's Word. If our outward walk and conversation are to be regulated by it, sure no less is the exercise of the graces of the Spirit. (2) This love of the brethren is not inconsistent with all that regard we owe to gospel truth and ordinances. (3) Nor is this love to the brethren inconsistent with a proper regard to the maintenance of

Church government and discipline the reproofs, admonitions, and rebukes which the Lord in love has instituted, and appointed to be observed in His Church, and which He has promised to bless. (4) Neither is this love to the brethren inconsistent with the discharge of all the duties of love they owe to one another—such as telling them of their faults, warning, admonishing, and testifying against their evils, as well as having compassion for, and exercising beneficence towards them. 3. Now this love of the brethren evidences an interest in the privilege of having passed from death to life. It is an immediate fruit of this privilege, and therefore a certain and infallible evidence of it. (1) From its being an evidence of regeneration, in which the image of God is communicated—and love to the brethren is a prominent part of that image. (2) From its being an undoubted evidence of justification. This supposeth and implieth access to God, by and through Jesus the Mediator; as well as access to a throne of grace. (3) From its being an evidence of their having received the Spirit (Gal. v. 22). (4) From its being an evidence of their adoption (Rom. viii. 15). (5) From its being an evidence of their union to Christ, and belonging to His mystical body; the members of which are all united to each other by bonds of the most endearing love and affection. IV. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE PRIVILEGE AND THE FRUIT AND EVIDENCE OF IT, VIZ., LOVE TO THE BRETHREN. 1. This connection is founded in the purpose and promise of God. 2. It is founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ. 3. In the intercession of Christ. 4. In the order of things. V. THE BELIEVER'S OWN KNOWLEDGE OF THIS, "WE KNOW." John did not know this as an apostle, but as a believer; and this may be, and is known by believers. 1. From experience of what passeth in their own souls. 2. From its fruits. "A tree is known by its fruits"; and the fruits of this love are such as pity, sympathy, kindness, and compassion, forgiveness, benevolence, beneficence. 3. From the regard they pay to the authority and testimony of God in His Word—as in the text. This knowledge is not left to rest on the testimony of people's own experience, but is based on the testimony of God in the Scriptures. Improvement: 1. From this doctrine we may learn that, although love to the brethren has been called one of the lowest marks of grace, yet it is a real and decisive one, and is attended by the highest authority. 2. We may see that real Christians are united in the firmest bonds of mutual love and affection. 3. We may see how little of this love appears among professed Christians. 4. From this doctrine we may learn that sin has unhinged the moral frame—has introduced a breach between heaven and earth. 5. We may learn that Christ is the uniting bond of peace, reconciliation, love, and fellowship. (*Alex. Dick.*) *The world contrary to the Christian*:—Air and earth, fire and water, good and evil, light and darkness, are not more contrary the one to the other, than are the people of the world and the true members of the Church. Their views are contrary, the one class looking at the things of eternity merely in the light of time, the other looking at time in the light of eternity. Their tastes are contrary, the one being "of the earth, earthy," the other spiritually-minded. Their pursuits are contrary, the one "walking according to the course of this world," the other "walking with God." Their destiny shall be contrary—"these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." I. "WE HAVE PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE." Let it be carefully observed this is a change which is declared to have already taken place. "We have passed." Whenever a sinner believes he is put in possession of everlasting life, that is, of the germ or beginning of it. The words are expressive, however, not merely of a change that is supposed to be past in point of time, but of one most blessed in its nature. What is so much shunned as death? And what is so prized and preserved as life? 1. Death is used in the Scriptures to express a state of condemnation, and life one of acceptance. In the one case there is a sentence of death, and in the other of acquittal. 2. Death is also used in the Scriptures to express a condition of sinfulness or depravity, and life that of holiness. The sinner is pronounced to be dead; and is he not so? He has all the features of death upon him. (1) There is insensibility. He is in sin, and ever committing it, but he does not seem to be conscious of it. (2) There is inactivity. He possesses powers which he does not employ. On the other hand, it is the office of grace to make him alive to God, when it does effectually operate upon him this is the result. The sinner is made "alive to God." You have seen the oak struck by the lightning of heaven. Its juices were dried up, and its branches withered away. You pronounced it dead. But the husbandman came: he lopped off the withered boughs. He manured its roots and watered its branches. The process of decay was arrested. Life was restored. It sent forth its foliage and bore its fruit as before. It was a resurrection.

So it is with the sinner under the blight of sin, when he is visited by the grace of the Spirit. His decayed powers are animated with a new life. He puts forth the powers in active energy, which before were paralysed in spiritual death. He is "passed from death unto life." II. THE EVIDENCE SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT, "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Brotherly love is the proof of conversion here cited by the apostle. 1. There is the natural affection which binds us to those with whom we are allied according to the flesh. It is true there may be this love when there is no grace. In that case brotherly love is no proof of the great change of which we have spoken. 2. The evidence arising from the exercise of brotherly love towards the people of God is still more unequivocal. It may be sometimes difficult to distinguish between the natural and gracious affection in the case of those who are closely allied to us. But where we love the godly, simply because they are such, the proof is unequivocal. Its peculiarity is that, apart from other considerations, our love is attracted by their godliness. 3. Still, love is not to be confined to them. It is to be extended to all men. And as it is so we strengthen the evidence of our gracious state. III. THE ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION, ARISING OUT OF THIS EVIDENCE. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." We may know it then. This is assumed. The term is the most expressive of certainty that could be used. It is not, we think or hope or desire, but we know. He ought to know it. It is not a privilege merely, but a duty. He ought to know it for the sake of his own holiness. He ought to know it for the honour of Christ. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Love to the brethren a ground of assurance*:—I. The love of which the apostle speaks is peculiar in its ORIGIN. It is a very distinct thing from natural kindness and amiableness of disposition; from what we commonly call good nature. Nature cannot produce it. It is the special effect of the Spirit's new-creating power upon the soul. II. It is peculiar, also, in its OBJECT. It is not the love of our fellow-creatures generally, but the "love of the brethren," in particular, on which St. John dwells so strongly as the evidence of a state of salvation. Not that the Christian by any means confines his benevolent regards to his fellow-believers. But whilst he thus comprehends the whole human race in the circle of his affection, and prays for all, and is ready to benefit all, there is a still closer and more endearing bond of union by which he is attached to his fellow-Christians. Their principles, taste, habits, and pursuits are congenial to his own. III. Nor is the love of which we are speaking less distinct from that which sometimes assumes its name in its OPERATION, than in its origin and object. 1. It is regular and consistent in its action. True charity is not an impulse, but a principle; not an act, but a habit; not a momentary or transient ebullition of feeling, but a fixed, steady, consistent motive of conduct, always ready to administer, as far as circumstances may allow, to the relief of ascertained distress, whether of soul or body. 2. It is self-denying. Its basis, like that of every other Christian grace, is humility. Pride, self-will, self-indulgence, are the bane of Christian society, and rend asunder the body of Christ. So true is it that if we would be Christ's disciples we must deny ourselves. 3. It is active in its operation. It is an energetic principle. It is not the profession of kindness, but the reality. It is not by kind speeches and courteous expressions, but by beneficent actions chiefly, that we are to evidence the sincerity of our regard to others. (*R. Davies.*) *Brotherly love*:—There are many kinds of knowledge, but the most difficult is self-knowledge. It is remarkable that St. John much more frequently uses such expressions as these, "*We know that we are of God*"; "*We know that we are in Him*"; "*We know that we dwell in Him*"; "*We know that He abideth in us*," than any other writer in the whole Bible. Let us look first at the thing which is to be known, and then at the sign by which we are to know it. A passing "from death unto life." For this is God's metaphor to express real conversion of heart. The idea conveyed in the words is of two states separated as by a gulf; and there is now, what one day there will not be, a transit from one over to the other. The one side is a land of death. There everything that is done is short and uncertain. It is a country of graves, and the joys of pleasure have no resurrection. On the opposite shore everything in it is essential light, because there is a new principle there; that principle is one which works for ever and ever. The light grows brighter and brighter every day, whatever curse may pass over the bereaved earth. But this is not the only difference between the opposite states. The former, which we may call the original condition of every man, his native country lies far away, separate from the source of all true light, and in God's language, is all chaos. There is no reality in it; while the other is brought under the very smile of God's

countenance. He moves and dwells there. Hence, it is peace, it is energy, it is fruit. Let us notice the contrast more clearly. Every man who inhabits the first state, is under actual condemnation of death. Every man who continues there is to die. But over every soul on the other side the word is gone forth, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." Now of the manner in which the passage is effected from one shore to the other, it does not belong to my present subject to speak. Suffice it to say that the passage is a great historical fact. And the inquiry is, how may each of us best ascertain whether or not that transformation has taken place. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Some persons, however, will say that it is such an easy thing to love Christians. I wish I could believe, but I cannot, that I shall be safe to infer I am one of God's Christians, because I admire and attach myself to the lovable and really pious character. Who are the "brethren," and what is it to "love" them? The brethren are those who have the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in their hearts, even though there be much clinging to them that is unrefined, and unintellectual, and unpleasing—yea, even though there be much that is really very inconsistent in them. And this very comprehensiveness of a catholic spirit is a mark of a mind that has had to do with the largeness of an Almighty God. If you have "passed from death unto life" the friendships that you choose for yourselves, and the relationships that you form will be all made upon one principle—that you keep within the family of grace. Hence, it follows, that the conversation which you prefer is that which is the most spiritual; for how can you love the brethren, unless you really delight in their themes? So that the world of fashion, and the world of pleasure, and the world of commonplace, has become insipid, and there is only one atmosphere in which you love to breathe, and that is the atmosphere of Jesus Christ. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Christian love:—Do you desire to know whether you may confidently, though humbly, cherish the good hope through grace that you are numbered among Christ's people? Here is the way, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." If that be right, then everything is right. It was the index that registered how everything else was; even as the pulse at the wrist can tell the skilled observer something as to how all the functions of material life are going on. More than this. Sometimes the index that registers a great thing is itself but a little thing. The tremendous pressure on the boiler of the locomotive is indicated by an ascending and descending drop of water in a little glass tube. The state of hundreds of solid miles of atmosphere is revealed to us by the movements of a slight pointer upon the dial of the barometer. But this testing-pulse of the soul is not a little thing that indicates a great one; it is a great thing in itself. As love to God sums all our duty to God, so does love to our neighbour sum all our duty to man. Let us think whether St. John did not give this counsel so earnestly and so often because he knew that it was, and is, and always will be, a difficult thing to "love the brethren." Yes, there are many feelings and tendencies in poor sinful human nature that must be held tightly in check, before Christian people will succeed in loving one another. Many human beings find it much easier to feel a general dislike to those with whom they come into anything like competition, than to feel anything like love towards them. Now let us think what it is that is really required of Christian people in these days, in this very artificial state of society, amid these separations of class from class, by this great gospel command, to "love the brethren," "love our neighbour as ourselves." Now, in interpreting such directions, we may take two things with us. One is, that God's service is always a "reasonable service"; that there is never anything extravagant in what Christianity requires of us. Another is, that when God gives us a law, He always gives us one that is accordant with the nature and constitution of the souls He has given us. In the light of these things, we can see what is the love God requires us to bear to our fellow-Christians and fellow-creatures. St. John does not tell us that we are all to think exactly alike; nor to persuade ourselves that those things are of no consequence about which we cannot agree. That is not what is meant by gospel love towards all. No; it means, See a man's faults and failings, and bear with him. Hold your opinions strongly, yet agree to differ, without quarrelling. Be ready to help a poor overburdened creature to bear his burden; and a sympathetic word will go far here. Do not exaggerate the faults of your friends; rather try to see something good in them; and if you try hard, you may perhaps find a good deal. But besides that general kindness, let us mark the little things in which Christians are found to fail in obedience to the law of love. You know it is very easy, and it sounds smart to dwell, in conversation, upon the faults and follies of the people you

know; to exaggerate these, and dwell on them with weary iteration. Now, never have anything to do with that wretched ill-set tattle. Do not join in it; do not listen to it. You know when the first Christians died the martyr's death, rather than offer sacrifice to idols, what was it they were called to do? Why, the whole thing was to take up a pinch of incense with their finger and thumb, and throw it into the fire on the altar of Jupiter or Minerva. But that little act signified that they apostatised from Christ, and so they died rather than do it. And even so, what an awful light is cast on little unkind sayings and doings, when we call to mind St. John's solemn words, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"! Train yourselves to bring the whole force of your religion to bear upon this matter; the thing is vital. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*)

Love to the brethren a test of piety:—I. THE LOVE TO WHICH ST. JOHN REFERS. 1. Love to Christians for the sake of their Christianity; or, love to the Church for the sake of Christ, the Head of the Church. 2. St. John does not speak of any partial affection we may entertain for individuals, or even classes of men, within the Church of Christ. 3. Nor is it enough that we love, however cordially, all Christians of our own Church or sect. 4. The "love" to the brethren, which is so sure a proof of our own safety, is not merely a universal love to the Church of Christ, but to the Church of Christ in its spiritual character.

II. HOW THE LOVE IN QUESTION BECOMES THE PLEDGE OF OUR OWN SALVATION. 1. It is, perhaps, the strongest of all proofs that we love God; and it affords a sort of demonstration that we do so, which, when considered, is conclusive to the weakest mind, or to the most hesitating faith. 2. It demands a constant sacrifice, and so constantly displays the strength of that Divine principle of faith which unites us to the Lord; for the love in question is not a mere sentiment of respect and admiration, but it is a bond of the closest union. 3. It exposes us to constant suffering for the sake of Christ; at least this was the case in the apostles' days, and, in some degree, is so still, or else "is the offence of the Cross ceased." (*J. B. Marsden, M.A.*)

Life proved by love:—I. WE KNOW THAT WE WERE DEAD. 1. We were without feeling when law and gospel were addressing us. 2. Without hunger and thirst after righteousness. 3. Without power of movement towards God in repentance. 4. Without the breath of prayer, or pulse of desire. 5. With signs of corruption; some of them most offensive.

II. WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE UNDERGONE A SINGULAR CHANGE. 1. The reverse of the natural change from life to death. 2. No more easy to describe than the death change would be. 3. This change varies in each case as to its outward phenomena, but it is essentially the same in all. 4. As a general rule its course is as follows—(1) It commences with painful sensations. (2) It leads to a sad discovery of our natural weakness. (3) It is made manifest by personal faith in Jesus. (4) It operates on the man by repentance and purification. (5) It is continued by perseverance in sanctification. (6) It is completed in joy, infinite, eternal. 5. The period of this change is an era to be looked back upon in time and through eternity with grateful praise.

III. WE KNOW THAT WE LIVE. 1. We know that we are not under condemnation. 2. We know that faith has given us new senses, grasping a new world, enjoying a realm of spiritual things. 3. We know that we have new hopes, fears, desires, delights, &c. 4. We know that we have been introduced into new surroundings and a new spiritual society: God, saints, angels, &c. 5. We know that we have new needs; such as heavenly breath, food, instruction, correction, &c. 6. We know that this life guarantees eternal bliss.

IV. WE KNOW THAT WE LIVE, BECAUSE WE LOVE. "We love the brethren." 1. For Christ's sake. 2. For the truth's sake. 3. For their own sake. 4. When the world hates them. 5. We love their company, their example, their exhortations. 6. We love them despite the drawbacks of infirmity, inferiority, &c. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Christian love:—Dr. Raymond told us the other night about those geysers flowing with boiling water. The ice and snow come down from the mountain-tops, and then they pour down through subterranean channels, and in some strange places, but where no man knows, they are heated, and come bubbling to the surface of the earth again. We know they are warmed, but we know not how. And we do not need to wait until we find out how, before we believe that they are warm. And so the hearts that are cold and sensual and proud and selfish, whenever they are brought in contact with the heart of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, are warmed. They come into contact with Him and become different men. The nation is a different nation, the civilisation is a different civilisation, the type of character is a different type of character. Christian character is not Hindu character. It is not African character. It is distinctively Christian character; a character warm with love, because it has

been warmed in the secret places of the Most High. (*L. Abbott, D.D.*) *Loving the pictures of God* :—If you love an absent person, you will love their picture. What is that the sailor's wife keeps so closely wrapped in a napkin, laid up in her best drawer among sweet-smelling flowers? She takes it out morning and evening, and gazes at it through her tears. It is the picture of her absent husband. She loves it because it is like him. It has many imperfections, but still it is like him. Believers are the pictures of God in this world. The Spirit of Christ dwells in them. They walk as He walked. True, they are full of imperfections; still they are true copies. If you love Him, you will love them; you will make them your bosom friends. (*R. M. McCheyne.*) *Christian love an evidence of Christian life* :—As it would be impossible for the insect in its chrysalis state to observe the laws which are made for its transformed state—for the worm to know the laws which make the summer fly seek the sunshine and live upon the flower—as it must be “born again” and enter upon a new existence before it can keep the laws of that new existence; so only the new creature can keep this new commandment. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) **He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.**—*Brotherly love wanting* :—I. “HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER ABIDETH IN DEATH.” The very form of this statement demands attention. It charges as a crime the want of a grace and not merely the perpetration of evil. 1. The complaint is, “he that loveth not his brother.” He is devoid of the natural affection which close affinity should create. As for counting any one a brother because he is a child of God, although he has no earthly relationship to him, he neither apprehends the idea, nor is sensible of any obligation upon him, arising out of it. 2. His condition is supposed to be the most deplorable. “Death” is the term that is used to describe it. It is descriptive at once of his guilt and depravity, and his insensibility to both. Mark the emphasis of the phrase, “abideth in death.” Such a one was and continues to be dead. II. “WHOSOEVER HATH HIS BROTHER IS A MURDERER, AND YE KNOW THAT NO MURDERER HATH ETERNAL LIFE ABIDING IN HIM.” This statement is stronger than the former. That was negative, while this is positive. That consisted in withholding what was due, this in the infliction of evil. We are reminded in this comparative statement of the progress of sin. It is never stationary. The want of a grace will soon become the germ of a great sin. The man that loveth not his brother will soon learn to hate his brother. In finding out arguments to justify his neglect, he will not fail to discover reasons to inflame his hatred. The conclusion of the apostle respecting such a one is irresistible—“Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” The two things are incompatible and cannot dwell together. III. “HEREBY PERCEIVE WE THE LOVE OF GOD, BECAUSE HE LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US; AND WE OUGHT TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES FOR THE BRETHREN.” This is the strongest argument yet advanced. It is drawn from the conduct of God Himself, and from the obligation that rests on us to be followers of Him as dear children. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.—*Sin measured by the disposition, not by the act* :—These are harsh words, some will say, and many will deny that they are just. “I hate such a one, it is true, but I would not harm him for the world. There is surely a wide interval between the feeling of rancour, or even the bitter lasting quarrel, and the act of Cain who was of that wicked one and slew his brother.” As for the spirit of the words it is enough to say at present that they proceed from the apostle of love, and that, if true, they ought to be known. Moreover, if you find fault with him, you must find the same fault with Him from whom he learnt his religion (*Matt. v. 28*). But besides this, our feeling that we are incapable of this or that sin is not to be entirely trusted (*2 Kings viii. 13–15*). So too our great poet portrays to us a man, loyal, upright hitherto, conscious of no secret treachery, into whose mind the infernal powers sent the thought, that he, now Thane of Cawdor, should be king hereafter. The thought ripened into a wish, the wish into a plan: he murdered his king, when asleep and a guest under the protection of the rights of hospitality, and from this dark beginning he waded on through blood, to retain what he had grasped, until he worked out his own ruin. The apostle says not that all hatred will end in murder—far from it—nor that all hatred is equally intense and equally reckless, nor that hatred which bursts out into great crime may not imply a worse state of soul than such as remains within, and does no obvious harm to others. Nor does he intend to confine the murderous quality to positive hatred. Want of love, hardened selfishness, acting on calculation with no rage or wrath in it, may be as deadly, as murderous, as malignity or revenge. The apostle teaches

us in these words that evil lies in the heart, and that the evil there, which meets with some temporary or some lasting hindrance, differs not in kind from that which is ripened by opportunity. It may be for ever dormant as far as the notice of man is concerned. It may never burst forth into the poisonous flower of wicked action, yet the hatred within and the hatred in the wicked action are one and the same, one quality runs through both. The powder that is explosive and the powder that explodes do not differ. It is just as we measure the power of a flood by its breaking down a dam or transporting heavy masses to a distance. There are restraining influences which secure human society from the explosion of injurious passions, so that such a crime as murder, common enough, if you gather up all the instances of it in a year, will excite wonder and awe in the place where it is committed. We know that fear of consequences, conscience, respect for public opinion, pity, are as permanent and universal as sin itself is, and that they are the dam and banks which keep the stream of unregulated selfishness from sweeping over society. Yet though we call the crime extraordinary, whenever it occurs we trace it back to some principle or habit. The man who committed homicide was subject to great fits of rage which he took no pains to restrain, or his natural heat was increased by strong drink, or he had such a covetous temper that he was tempted by it into robbery and murder. All this is obviously just. But with all this, we have a right to say, that the limit to which a passion, such as hatred or lust, leads, is a fair measure of its general power. We apply to the strength of hatred, or some other evil passion, the same measurement which we apply to the capacities of the mind. A man of genius seems at one time to be inert and without creative power: at another, he will produce a poem or a picture that the world admires. We measure his genius by his best productions, by what he does in the most favourable circumstances, not by the vacancy of his dreamy or inactive hours, where thought is gathering strength for a new flight. Why not judge of sin, and especially of hatred, after the same fashion? The justness of the apostle's words is shown by the awful quickness with which resolutions are sometimes taken to commit great crimes. We flee into crime as if the dogs of sinful desire were on us, and we sought the outward act as a relief from the agitation and war within the soul. So strange do some such historical crimes appear, that they look like the sway of destiny. A divine Nemesis, or Ate, urged the man into self-ruin. The tragedy of life was not accomplished by his own free will. And when the deed is done, unthinking men will ascribe it to the force of circumstances, as if circumstances could have any effect, independently of the passion or selfish desire itself. And the criminal himself may think that he was hardly a moral agent in the deed; that his own power of resistance was destroyed by temptation against his will; or, that others, the most respectable men in his society, would do the same. To all of which, we reply, that the consent of his soul was his sin; that his sin was weakness; that if he had wanted strength really, and prayed for it, it would have come down out of heaven, and that whether others would have acted like him or not is a point of no importance. There was in London, a few years since, a German tailor, who was, probably, not more dissolute than hundreds of others in such a vast city, a mild, inoffensive man, whom nobody thought capable of dark deeds of wickedness. He found himself in a car of an underground railroad in company with a wealthy man. They were alone, and yet, as the cars had a number of stopping-places in their five or six miles' course, every few minutes a new passenger might come into their compartment. They were alone, I say, for a passenger had left them, and the door was shut. Now, in the interval of three or four minutes, this man had murdered the wealthy man by his side, had seized his purse and watch, and in the hurry taken his hat by mistake, and had left the train the instant it reached the next station. He fled to America, was seized on his landing, was found to have the dead man's hat and watch, was handed over to the English authorities, carried back, tried, and sent to his execution. How terrible was this speed of crime! No whirlwind or water-spout, no thunder-cloud flying through mid-heaven could represent its swiftness, and yet here there was nothing unaccountable, nothing monstrous. He himself had been no prodigy of sin, nor was he now. The crime was an epitome of his life, a condensed extract of his character. And again, the apostle's principle is vindicated by the rapid deterioration which we often observe in the lives of particular men. It seems as if they had only covered up their sins before, as if an evil life could not begin, all of a sudden, but the habits of sin must have been suppressed, perhaps, for a long period. But it is not so. They have not grown suddenly worse, but some natural motives, which swayed them before, have given way to other natural motives

which were for a time counteracted. Self-indulgence was counteracted by prudence or by conscience, hatred was kept down or shut up in the breast by public opinion. Meanwhile changes of life, more liberty of action, greater means of self-gratification, new forms of society, new sentiments and opinions, make the road of temptation leading to outward sin easier. According to this view of man, there is nothing strange when hatred culminates in murder, there is no new principle injected, there is, in reality, no sudden worsening of the character. It is natural, not monstrous or morbid, that he who indulges hatred in his heart should yield, when he is tempted to manifest it in the life. The deed is the expression of the feeling, as words are of thoughts. I add, again, that if in any given case it were certain that sinful affections would be suppressed and be prevented from going out into sinful deeds, the apostle's principle would still be true. The spirit of the extreme crime is in the unblamed malice or the unobserved envy. It is neutralised, as the oxygen of air is by nitrogen. The two in mechanical union form an innocuous atmosphere, and yet we know that oxygen alone would be a principle of death. So hate in the heart is a deadly affection though counteracted, and although it may be always counteracted.

1. I wish to remark, first, that sin deceives us until it comes into manifestation. Men are apt to think that they are good enough, because no indications of a corrupt character are shown in their lives. And then, when the time of trial comes and they yield, they excuse themselves because temptation is so strong and so sudden. In neither case does their moral judgment conform to the true state of things. Principle means that which will stand the test, when native characteristics which were on its side have turned against it. The measure of principle is the strength of resistance to attacks of temptation, and if hatred or lust is a cherished feeling of the heart, there is no possibility of resistance when circumstances turn so as to favour sin.

2. Sins committed by others may fairly suggest to us what we ourselves can do, and so in a certain sense we may be humbled by them, when we apply them as the measuring line of the deep possibilities of sin within ourselves. It was no cant when John Bradford said, as he saw a man going to Tyburn to be hanged for crime, "There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford." He did not magnify his sins, and liability to great sins, in order to magnify the grace of God, but he magnified the grace of God, because he felt and found within himself the same sinful nature which he saw in the unworthiest. He read himself in the history of his fallen and guilty brother.

3. Finally, we see what an uncompromising principle love is. One may say with truth love hates malevolence, hates all that is opposed to itself in the feelings or the manifestations of the inner life. Love is an element of a strong character which views men as they are in all their sins, which feels no favour towards the principles by which the worldly, the selfish, the proud are governed. And thus as it looks on moral evil in all its deformity, it can feel intense pity towards the blind in sin, the misguided, the fallen, the unworthy, and is ever ready to sacrifice its own interests for their good. (*T. D. Woolsey.*) *Who is a murderer?*—Nothing reveals the gulf that separates ancient from modern history more clearly than their respective estimates of human life. If, for instance, you read an account of how Rome built up and consolidated her conquests, you will shudder at the terrible track of blood that marked her advance. Nor was this so much to be wondered at. For what was there to surround or invest man as such with reverence? And there was one thing that stood fatally in the way of any lofty conception of humanity possessing the mind of the ancient world. That was the institution of slavery. Nor was there any restraint laid upon the prevailing violence by the fear of a righteous judgment to come. Here modern history has acknowledged a new stream of influence, which has come to us through Christianity, as that again received it from an older source. The opening pages of the Old Testament teach us that man was made in the image of God, and on this ground inculcate respect for human life under the most terrible of all possible penalties: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The New Testament enforces the same lesson. Man is not only the bearer of the Divine likeness, but the object of the Divine love—a love which has given and spent itself wholly for him. It is impossible the world should receive such teaching as this without being impressed by the awful sanctity of human life. To mutilate the image of God, to cut some poor soul short of its allotted time for penitence, is not only a crime against society, an unspeakable wrong against the victim slain, but a sin against God whose prerogatives have been usurped and His authority defied. But what really is this of which we stand in such natural and wholesome awe? What makes the sin so sinful? Not merely the taking of a life. It is the motive or intention with which

the deed is done, the deliberate and savage hate which has leaped beyond the barriers of restraint, and refused to be satisfied except with blood, that invests it with such an atmosphere of horror. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." But is not this to confound feeling with action in a somewhat dangerous and hasty way? If he who hates has already incurred the guilt of murder, may he not argue that the overt act can make him no worse than he has already become? But this is not to be inferred from the words of my text. Christianity does not say that a wicked thought is in all respects equal to a wicked deed. If it did so, it would set itself at variance with the instincts of our own nature, and utterly confuse our moral consciousness. But what it does say is, that the guilt is identical in kind though it differs in degree; that in moral character they are essentially the same, though they differ in the amount or depth of their immorality. We need to look below the surface and test ourselves by what we find there. "The world is still deceived with ornament." Appearances are still allowed to betray into a false security. When you look at the smiling slopes of Vesuvius, at the hamlets nestling in its hollows, the matchless beauty of the bay with all her loveliness sleeping at its feet, you can scarcely conceive of the wild torrent of destruction that poured from its sides two thousand years ago. But the occasional rumble, the dense columns of ascending smoke, the tremor of the quaking earth, remind you that the mighty monster is awake, and may again let loose the vials of his wrath. So we are misled by the smooth and superficial gilding of our modern civilisation. Education has spread, refinement is more general, a fashionable craze for culture is abroad, order is steadily and sternly maintained—not so much from the love of order, as because the complex and delicate machinery of life could not otherwise be kept at work. Some outbreak of communism, some sudden delirium of lawlessness, some startling and appalling crime, shows the diseases of the world have not been cured, nor the forces of evil destroyed. The germs that breed them, the passions that explode into all sorts of excess, are still in our midst. It is the same also with ourselves. We are strongly tempted to take too much for granted, to conclude there are certain things of which we are quite incapable. We are blinded by the fact that our position protects us from certain temptations, or so weakens their force, they cannot pierce the armour of our respectability. Nay, self-interest may so range us on the side of right, as to put us practically beyond their reach. But if we may escape temptations from which our position secures immunity, we may fall into others to which perhaps it especially exposes us. If it is often difficult for us to do wrong, just because so many fences close us in, and a hundred eyes would be witnesses of our shame, it is always easy to cherish the sinful feeling or desire. We may even compensate for our exclusion from the field of open transgression by giving the reins to a loose and wandering, an unhallowed and impure, imagination. And how many there are who would shrink with terror from the overt act, who rarely suspect they conceal the seeds and roots of it within themselves! Now what does all this show? 1. That crime is not to be removed by external remedies alone. The house may be swept and garnished, and the evil spirit apparently expelled; but if another and a better occupant do not take his place, and keep him out, he will return, as the parable tells us, and the last state will be worse than the first. 2. But if something more drastic than external remedies are needful, what is to be done? Will the spread of education and enlightenment so refine the taste, that it will reject the grosser forms of indulgence? Alas! experience proves that some of the most brilliant periods of history have been the most corrupt, and that the seat of the disease lies too deep to be reached by such a cure. The truth is, that all our earthborn experiments carry with them the defect attaching to their source. They are short-sighted, or one-sided, and where they see most clearly and impartially they only confess their impotence, and give up the problem in despair. But while Christianity has so unerringly detected the spring of all human misery, and exposed it in its undisguised malignity, it has also revealed an effectual cure. It brings with it a salvation which is no mere experiment or assault upon the outworks of our foe, but which goes straight to the root of the matter. It embraces our whole nature—spirit, soul, and body—and advances from this centre to claim and occupy every province of life. And to apply this to ourselves. If you do not feel that you need a Divine power brought to bear upon your heart, have you ever really examined the true moral character of your daily life? Have you considered what the unforgiving and uncharitable temper, the selfish and impure desire, really mean—that they are straws which show how the wind blows, symptoms of a fatal disorder, which is not to be banished by passing moods of penitence, or the postures of worship? Be

assured there is only one thing that can save a man, and that is that grace of Christ which, where sin has abounded, has much more abounded, which forgives us when we come to Him, and cleanses us from all unrighteousness, shedding abroad within us that love which is the fulfilling of the law. (*C. Moinet, M.A.*)

Vers. 16-18. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.—*Lofty ideals perilous unless applied*:—Even the world sees that the Incarnation of Jesus Christ has very practical results. Even the Christmas which the world keeps is fruitful in two of these results—forgiving and giving. Love, charity (as we rather prefer to say), in its effects upon all our relations to others, is the beautiful subject of this section of our Epistle. I. **WE HAVE HERE LOVE IN ITS IDEA.** “Hereby know we the love.” It is continuous unselfishness, to be crowned by voluntary death, if death is necessary. The beautiful old Church tradition shows that this language was the language of St. John’s life. Who has forgotten how the apostle in his old age is said to have gone on a journey to find the young man who had fled from Ephesus and joined a band of robbers; and to have appealed to the fugitive in words which are the pathetic echo of these—“if needs be I would die for thee as He for us”? II. **THE IDEA OF CHARITY IS THEN PRACTICALLY ILLUSTRATED BY AN INCIDENT OF ITS OPPOSITE** (ver. 17). The reason for this descent in thought is wise and sound. High abstract ideas expressed in lofty language are at once necessary and dangerous for creatures like us. They are necessary, because without these grand conceptions our moral language and our moral life would be wanting in dignity, in amplitude, in the inspiration and impulse which are often necessary for duty and always for restoration. But they are dangerous in proportion to their grandeur. Men are apt to mistake the emotion awakened by the very sound of these magnificent expressions of duty for the discharge of the duty itself. Every large speculative ideal then is liable to this danger; and he who contemplates it requires to be brought down from his transcendental region to the test of some commonplace duty. It is helpful compassion to a brother who is known to be in need, manifested by giving to him something of this world’s “good”—of the “living” of this world which he possesses. III. **WE HAVE NEXT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVE IN ACTION.** “My sons, let us not love in word nor with the tongue; but in work and truth.” There is love in its energy and reality; in its effort and sincerity—active and honest, without indolence and without pretence. IV. **THIS PASSAGE SUPPLIES AN ARGUMENT AGAINST MUTILATED VIEWS, FRAGMENTARY VERSIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.** 1. The first of these is emotionalism, which makes the entire Christian life consist in a series or bundle of emotions. This reliance upon feelings is in the last analysis reliance upon self. It is a form of salvation by works, for feelings are inward actions. 2. The next of these mutilated views of the Christian life is doctrinalism—which makes it consist of a series or bundle of doctrines apprehended and expressed correctly, at least according to certain formulas, generally of a narrow and unauthorised character. According to this view the question to be answered is—has one quite correctly understood, can one verbally formulate certain almost scholastic distinctions in the doctrine of justification? 3. The third mutilated view of the Christian life is humanitarianism—which makes it a series or bundle of philanthropic actions. There are some who work for hospitals or try to bring more light and sweetness into crowded dwelling-houses. Their lives are pure and noble. But the one article of their creed is humanity. Altruism is their highest duty. With others the case is different. Certain forms of this busy helpfulness—especially in the laudable provision of recreations for the poor—are an innocent interlude in fashionable life; sometimes, alas! a kind of work of supererogation, to atone for the want of devotion or of purity—possibly an untheological survival of a belief in justification by works. 4. Another fragmentary view of the Christian life is observationism, which makes it to consist in a bundle or series of observances. Frequent services and communions, perhaps with exquisite forms and in beautifully decorated churches, have their dangers as well as their blessings. However closely linked these observances may be, there must still in every life be interstices between them. How are these filled up? What spirit within connects together, vivifies, and unifies this series of external acts of devotion? Now, in distinction from all these fragmentary views, St. John’s Epistle is a survey of the completed Christian life, founded upon his gospel. It is a consummate fruit ripened in the long summers of his experience. It is not a treatise upon the Christian affections, nor a system of doctrine, nor an essay upon works of charity, nor a companion to services. Yet this wonderful Epistle presupposes at least much that

is most precious of all these elements. (1) It is far from being a burst of emotionalism. Yet almost at the outset it speaks of an emotion as being the natural result of rightly received objective truth (chap. i. 4). (2) This Epistle is no dogmatic summary. Yet combining its premium with the other of the fourth Gospel, we have the most perfect statement of the dogma of the Incarnation. (3) If the apostle's Christianity is no mere humanitarian sentiment to encourage the cultivation of miscellaneous acts of good-nature, yet it is deeply pervaded by a sense of the integral connection of practical love of man with the love of God. (4) No one can suppose that for St. John religion was a mere string of observances. This Epistle, with its calm, unhesitating conviction of the sonship of all to whom it is addressed; with its view of the Christian life as in idea a continuous growth from a birth the secret of whose origin is given in the gospel; with its expressive hints of sources of grace and power and of a continual presence of Christ; with its deep mystical realisation of the double flow from the pierced side upon the Cross, and its thrice-repeated exchange of the sacramental order "water and blood," for the historical order, "blood and water"; unquestionably has the sacramental sense diffused throughout it. The sacraments are not in obtrusive prominence; yet for those who have eyes to see they lie in deep and tender distances. Such is the view of the Christian life in this letter—a life in which Christ's truth is blended with Christ's love; assimilated by thought, exhaling in worship, softening into sympathy with man's suffering and sorrow. It calls for the believing soul, the devout heart, the helping hand. It is the perfect balance in a saintly soul of feeling, creed, communion, and work. (*Bp. Wm. Alexander.*) *The sacrifice of love*:—The laws of nature and the laws of grace come from the same Lawgiver, and they have the same fundamental quality. All life depends on this—that some one is willing to lay down his life for another. From the very earliest stages to the very oldest and highest this is the condition not only of progress but of the continuance of life. The tree grows, produces its leaf, its bud, its blossom, its fruit, in order that it may drop seeds upon the wings of the wind, or give them to the birds, that those seeds may be carried to the soil and from them other trees may spring up. And when the tree has given forth this consummation of its life, its year's work is over, and it goes to sleep that it may get ready to repeat the operation next year. The annual dies in giving its life to another; the perennial does not die, but it gives its life, then ceases for a little while, gathers up its forces, and resumes its life the next year in order to repeat the gift. The babe is not dropped out of the clouds into the life of the waiting family. The mother hazards her own life that she may give a new life to the world; and when she has given it, then she begins to devote her life to it; her thoughts concentrate on it, her life flows out to it. It is for this child that the father does his work; it is for this child that the mother gives her prayers, her night-watchings, her energies. Her own life is laid down for another life. The child, we say, grows older, wiser. How does it grow older? how does it grow wiser? how does it grow in wisdom and in stature? In stature, because a hundred lives are busy all over the world gathering fruit for it, and food for it, and ministering to it; and wiser, because a hundred brains are thinking for it and a hundred hearts are gathering equipment of love and pouring into it. The teacher is giving her life to her pupils, laying down her life for them. If she does not care for them, if she simply goes into the schoolroom for her six or eight hours to earn her salary, and then goes away, and no life flows out from her, she is a mere perfunctory thing and no true teacher. We build a fence around a tribe of Indians and shut them up by themselves and say, "Now grow." A hundred years go by, and they are the same barbarians they were a hundred years before. Then we say, "Let civilisation see what it can do with them"—a selfish civilisation. "We will let in the railroad, we will let in the trader, the whisky-dealer, we will let in selfishness." And barbarism simply grows more barbaric; the growth is degeneracy. Not until you can find an Armstrong or a Pratt who will lay down his life for them, not until you can find men and women who will devote their lives to pouring truth and purity and life into these barbaric minds, is there growth; and the moment you find such life given, true growth begins. Life goes by transmission, and there is no hope for a lower race except as some higher race will transmit its life thereto. This is the significance of, the fundamental principle underlying, all foreign missionary service. Now, the Bible takes this generic law and carries it up a little higher. Follow up the stream to its source and you will find the springs among the hills; and these, you say, fed it. But where did these springs come from? You must look up, and there in the blue above sails the clouds; and the rainfall from these clouds has first

fed the springs that fed the rills that fed the streams that made the river. So all life, its progress, its development, come from the One above all, who pours out His life that others may live. This is what love means. Love is life-giving. Love is not caress. The mother does not love her child simply because she folds it to her arms and caresses it with her kisses. This is but the expression of love. Love is not joy. The mother does not love her child because a strange joy thrills her heart as she looks into baby's eyes. This is simply the fruit of love. Love is giving one's life to another. To lay down one's life for another is not, then, the same as to die for another. That is very clear. "Hereby we know love, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Ought we all to die for the brethren? Not at all. No man thinks that. But we all ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. That is another matter. To live for another may involve with it dying for another, and certainly does involve willingness to die for another, but the value is in laying down the life, not in dying. Here are two nurses going out into a city that is plague-stricken. One catches the plague, dies, is buried in a nameless grave under a nameless headstone in the cemetery. The other lives through the plague and goes back to her home. One has laid down her life for the plague-stricken city as truly as the other. To lay down one's life is not to die; it is only to be willing to die. But no man does lay down his life truly and really for another unless he is willing to die. If a young man goes into the medical profession, and, when pestilence appears in a house, he says, "I cannot go there; I should risk my life and the life of my children," he has not laid down his life. The value of Christ's life was not in the crucifixion. It was not by His death that He saved the world. I know how that sentence will be picked out, and perhaps sent abroad, and I misinterpreted; nevertheless, I repeat it—it is not by His death He saves the world, but by laying down His life for the world. Passion week began when He was born. From the beginning to the end His life was laid down for humanity. So to lay down one's life does not necessarily involve pain and suffering. It may or may not. You may be a lover without pain; you cannot be a saviour without pain. And when the Christ came into the world, bringing the message of infinite and eternal love, it was not the spear-thrust that made Him the Saviour—it was the spear-thrust that proved Him the Saviour; it was the spear-thrust that showed that there was such love in this heart of the Christ that He was willing to die for love's sake. The Cross is the glory of Christ, because it shows how far love would carry Him in laying down His life for sinful man. Christ's Cross is witness of the Divine life that is saving the world. Christ lays down His life for us. We are to lay down our lives for one another. This is the simple lesson of this communion Sunday—Life poured out from one full heart into another empty heart; from one joyous heart into an aching heart; from one pure heart into a sinful and shameful heart. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*)

Vers. 17-21. **But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?**—*Righteousness essential to the answer of a good conscience in ourselves and before God:*—The lesson here is sincerity. Beware of self-deception. It is easy to imagine what you would do to win or help a brother; and you may please yourselves by carrying the imagination to any length you choose. You will lay down your life for one who is, or who may be, a brother! And yet you cannot lay down for him your love of this world's good; your love of ease and selfish comfort; your fastidious taste; your proud or shy reserve. John brings out into prominence a general principle concerning conscience and faith, with immediate reference to his particular topic of brotherly love. The principle may be briefly stated. There can be no faith where there is not conscience; no more of faith than there is of conscience. In plain terms, I cannot look my God in the face if I cannot look myself in the face. If my heart condemns me, much more must He condemn me who is greater than my heart, and knoweth all things. Reserving the special application of this principle to the grace of brotherly kindness, I ask you for the present to consider it more generally with reference to the Divine love; first, as you have to receive it by faith; and, secondly, as you have to retain it and act it out in your loving walk with God and man. I. I am a receiver of this love. And it concerns me much that my faith, by which I receive it, should be strong and steadfast, which, however, it cannot be unless my conscience, in receiving it, is guileless. The plain question then is, Are you dealing truly with God as He deals truly with you? Are you meeting Him, as He meets you, in good faith? Is all real and downright earnest

with you? Or are you toying and playing with spiritual frames as if it were all a mere affair of sentimentalism? Is there a sort of half-consciousness in you that you would really apprehend and welcome the mediation of Christ better than you do if it were meant merely to establish a relation between God and you, so far amicable as to secure your being let alone now and let off at last; and that in consideration of certain specified and ascertainable acts of homage, without its being insisted on that God and you should become so completely one? If your heart misgives you and condemn you on such points as these, it is no wonder that you have not peace with Him "who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things." II. Not only as receiving God's love does it concern me to see to it that my heart condemns me not, but as retaining it and acting it out in my walk and conduct. Otherwise, "how dwelleth the love of God in me?" It is a great matter if the eye be single, if your heart do not condemn you. The consciousness of integrity is, of itself, a well-spring of peace and power in the guileless soul. The clear look, the erect gait, the firm step, the ringing voice, of an upright man, are as impressive upon others as they are expressive of himself. But that is not all. The assurance or confidence of which John speaks is not self-assurance or self-confidence. No. It is "assurance before God"; it is "confidence toward God." Why does the apostle make "our heart condemning us" so fatal to our "assuring our heart before God"? It is because "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." He assumes that it is with God we have to do, and that we feel this. Our own verdict upon ourselves is comparatively a small affair; we ask the verdict of God. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*)

Shutting up compassion.—Pure and undefiled religion is the imitation of God. Whatever else may characterise the men who have passed from death unto life, this is characteristic of them all. Now, assuming this, look at the immense interrogation which he proposed in our present text. A man is presented to us who professes to be a son of the Lord Almighty, but his profession was unsubstantiated. I. THE MAN WHOSE RELIGION IS VAIN HAS THIS WORLD'S GOODS; of the things which are necessary for the vigorous maintenance of life he has enough and to spare. Before his wants ever recur there is the supply. God daily loadeth him with His benefits. II. HE SEETH HIS BROTHER HAVE NEED. It is not with others as it is with him. By treacherous and sore calamity they are afflicted in mind, or body, or estate; perhaps from ascertainable causes, perhaps from causes not ascertainable, they are destitute of daily food. He sees it plainly. III. HE SHUTS UP THE BOWELS OF HIS COMPASSION. There may be the clamorous appeal, he is deaf to that; there may be the eloquent appeal of the silent heart. It is just the same, and lest his bowels, peradventure, should yearn, he locks them up and bids them remain unmoved. Why should he interfere? People should be more careful; there should be a great deal more frugality; the institutions of the country should prevent such calamities. Such applications are nothing to him, and now, at all events, he means to be excused. IV. HOW DWELLETH THE LOVE OF GOD IN HIM? Does he resemble God? I know your answer. That man an imitator of God, who causeth the sun to shine upon the just and the unjust! That man an imitator of Him who "giveth us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness"! That man an imitator of Him who "dealeth not with us after our sins, who rewardeth us not according to our iniquities"! Impossible! How can he be? God is merciful, he is unmerciful; God is communicative, he is parsimonious; God is compassionate, he is unrelenting; God bindeth up the broken in heart and healeth their wounds, he irritates the broken in heart. There is no similarity whatever. You might call light and darkness one. (*W. Brock.*)

Charity to the poor.—I. WHO ARE THEY THAT ARE OBLIGED TO WORKS OF CHARITY? All are obliged to do something towards supplying the wants of others whom God hath blessed with greater abundance than is sufficient for the supply of their own. It is not the value of the gift which God regards, but the honest purpose of the giver. II. WHO ARE THEY TOWARDS WHOM WORKS OF CHARITY OUGHT TO BE EXERCISED? By the "needy" you are not to understand absolutely every needy man, but every one who being in need is not able by honest means to provide for himself. Those are before all others the objects of charity, who want food and raiment sufficient for the sustenance of their bodies. The reason of this is that life is the foundation of all other blessings in this world. We are bound, according to our abilities, not only to preserve the life of others, but to secure their happiness too. And in this work sickness and pain are principally to be regarded. When life, health, and liberty are secure, the law of charity grows to be more undermined, yet I think we should not say that it entirely ceases. For the having what is

barely necessary for the purposes of life is but the first and lowest degree of happiness. III. WHENCE THE VALUE OF CHARITY ARISES, or what it is that makes the outward act of giving to become acceptable to God. That which the apostle condemns here is the shutting up our bowels against the cries of the needy. God can feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, and deliver the prisoner from captivity without drawing anything from our stores. But as He has otherwise ordered things, He hath given us affections suitable to the conditions in which He hath placed us, and made us by nature humane and merciful. When the heart is open, it is impossible that the hands can be shut. There is a pleasure in giving, which a truly compassionate mind is no more able to resist than it can forbear to commiserate. IV. THE WANT OF A CHARITABLE AND BENEVOLENT DISPOSITION IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE LOVE OF GOD. (*H. Stebbing, D.D.*) *The duty of charitable distribution*:—I. THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH THIS GREAT DUTY IS UNALTERABLY FOUNDED. All the goods of nature, the fruits of the earth, the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, were given to man for his sustenance and use. But as the necessities of man impel him, no less than his passions lead him, to a state of civilisation and society, so the necessary effect hath been a limitation of this common right of the enjoyment of the goods of nature by the establishment of particular properties. It must be granted that in most of the kingdoms of the earth the inequalities of property are too great, either for the public peace of the whole, or the private happiness of the individuals, whether rich or poor. To prevent therefore, or to remedy these dreadful evils, the great principle of Christian charity comes in. And on this principle it appears that our care of the necessitous is by no means to be considered as a voluntary act of virtue, which we may perform or remit at pleasure. II. THE VARIOUS MOTIVES WHICH MAY URGE THE RICH TO THE CONSISTENT AND CONTINUED PRACTICE OF IT. 1. And first, on account of their present satisfaction of mind, and with a view to a rational and true enjoyment of wealth, they ought to attend to the continued practice of this duty. Love, hope, peace, and joy are the constant companions of the compassionate soul. 2. Again, as the rich ought religiously to attend to the great work of charitable distribution as the necessary means of regulating their own desires, so the welfare of their families and children ought to be a farther motive to their exemplary practice of this duty. The noblest and most valuable inheritance that a father can leave his child is that of an honest and generous mind. 3. The last motive I shall urge for the performance of this great duty is the security of your future and eternal welfare in a better world than this. A selfish attention to wealth tends strongly to withdraw our affections from God and virtue. III. THE PROPER METHODS AND OBJECTS OF IT. 1. And here it will be necessary, first, to show the invalidity of a plausible pretence, which would destroy the very essence of this duty. It is pretended that the principle of a charitable distribution is superfluous, because, if the rich do but spend or squander the incomes of their estates, the money will distribute itself, and like blood circulating from the heart will fall into all the various channels of the body politic, in that just proportion which their respective situations may demand. The objection is plausible, yet void of truth. For, first, supposing the effects to be such as are here represented with respect to the necessitous, yet they would be bad with regard to the rich themselves. But farther. This kind of distribution by mere expense can never effectually relieve the necessitous. Insolence and oppression are its certain consequences. Again, therefore, this method of distribution can never be effectual, because they who stand most in need can never be succoured by it. For the mere act of expending wealth can never affect any of the lower ranks, but those who labour. But the helpless young, the sick, and aged must languish and die in misery. Nay, what is yet worse, while the helpless innocent are thus left destitute of relief, the associates of wickedness are often fed to the full. 2. A second excuse for an exemption from this duty must likewise here be obviated, which is the pretended sufficiency of poor laws for the maintenance of the necessitous. But that they can never stand in the place of a true spirit of charity will appear from considering them either in their formation or execution. If they are formed merely on the principles of prudence and policy, void of a charitable zeal, they will always be of a rigid, and often of a cruel complexion. Again, laws for the maintenance of the poor must ever be defective in their execution unless inspired by true charity, because, on the same principle as already laid down, they must generally be executed in a despotic manner. Also they never can effectually separate the good from the bad, the worthy from the worthless, so as to relieve and reward the one in preference to the other. It

now remains that we point out the proper objects of this great Christian duty. First, all they who, through natural infirmity, age, sickness, or accidental disaster, are rendered incapable of self-support by labour. Among this number, more particularly, we are bound to relieve our neighbouring poor. Our neighbour's real wants are better known to us than theirs who are farther removed from our observation. Again, among this number a selection ought to be made of the most worthy, not to the total exclusion of even the worthless, but as an encouragement to virtue. Beyond these common objects of our charity there is still a higher sphere for beneficence to shine in—on those who, by inevitable misfortunes, have been reduced from wealth to a state of necessity. Beyond these objects of our charitable assistance here enumerated, there yet remains one, which deserves a particular consideration. I mean the children of the necessitous. (*John Brown, D.D.*)

*On Christian beneficence:—*I. THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE. Many possess a constitutional benevolence of disposition. But nothing short of the love of God can ensure obedience to His will in any department of duty, and no inferior motive can be regarded by Him with acceptance. II. THE INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY OF BENEFICENCE AS A BRANCH OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. Beneficence is a positive law of the Divine government, and cannot be dispensed with, save by incurring the guilt of disobedience against the supreme authority of God. Christian beneficence is most comprehensive, extending to the entire nature of man. III. THE PRINCIPLES BY WHICH BENEFICENCE OUGHT TO BE REGULATED DESERVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. "To consider the case of the poor" is an obligation as imperative as that of relieving it. Indiscriminate alms-giving is a serious evil to both giver and receiver. Let the understanding be Divinely enlightened, and the bowels of compassion not be shut against the brother who hath need, and we may safely commit to your own judgment and feelings the extent of your benefactions. IV. ITS DEPENDENCE UPON THE GRACIOUS INFLUENCES OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD. The fruit of the Spirit is love. (*John Smyth, D.D.*) **My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.**—*Deceptive friendliness:—*I. EXPRESSIONS OF COURTESY WHICH HAVE NO ROOT IN THE HEART. II. BLANDISHMENTS TO GAIN AN END. III. MANIFESTATIONS OF SUPERFICIAL GOOD-NATURE AND FRIENDLINESS WHICH CANNOT STAND THE TEST OF TIMES OF ADVERSITY. IV. EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY WITHOUT HELP. (*R. Abercrombie, M.A.*) *Charity in deed better than in thought:—*When you see a plan in an architect's office that is very new and very pretty to look at, you say, "Ah! nothing has been done with it," but when you see a plan that is smudgy, and torn, and almost broken through where it has been folded, you know that the man has done something with it. Now, do not fall in love with the plan, and think it very pretty, but never carry it out. When Dr. Guthrie wanted his ragged schools founded, he called on a certain minister, who said, "Well you know, Mr. Guthrie, there is nothing very new in your scheme; I and Mr. So-and-so have been thinking over a similar plan to yours for the last twenty years." "Oh! yes," said Dr. Guthrie, "I dare say; but you have never carried it out." So some people are always thinking over some very fine plan of their own; but while the grass grows the steed starves. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 19-22. **And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.**—*The connection between faith and the state of the heart:—*I. There is a CERTAIN BLESSING OR PRIVILEGE HERE SPOKEN OF—"then have we confidence toward God." Confidence, literally fulness of speech, because this is one of the principal ways in which confidence displays itself; the heart is enlarged, the mouth is opened, and thus the whole soul pours forth its feelings without restraint and without disguise. It is a very remarkable part of our nature this, in virtue of which we are impelled to make those whom we love and confide in the depositaries of the most sacred treasures of our breasts. As confidence is enkindled, reserve disappears, like as the winter's frost that binds up the bosom of the earth is melted before the summer's sun. And as it is in the intercourse between man and man, so is it in the intercourse between man and God. The degree in which we can reveal to Him all our sins, wants, and sorrows will ever be in proportion to our confidence in Him. It is a most blessed state of mind; if we are believers we must know it in some measure. There is a firm foundation laid for it in the gospel; the atonement realised by faith will produce this in the soul, and nothing else will. II. NOTICE A CERTAIN HINDRANCE SPOKEN OF AS STANDING IN THE WAY OF THE ENJOYMENT OF CONFIDENCE toward God. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth

all things." There is something in the very constitution of our nature which would shake our confidence toward God, if our own heart condemned us. III. A CERTAIN INDISPENSABLE QUALIFICATION for the enjoyment of confidence toward God: "If our heart condemn us not." This is discouraging at first sight. It seems to place us at a hopeless distance from this blessing. You say, perhaps, you look into your heart, and you see there nothing but sin, darkness, disorder, unbelief; nothing that a holy God can approve of. Indeed! Nothing? No grace evident there, no repentance, no love to the Saviour, no spirituality, no desire after communion with God? A most extraordinary kind of religion yours! And what is the tendency, and I fear actual effect of a one-sided experience like this? It is twofold: First, as affects the people of the world. They say, What difference is there between us and those who call themselves the Lord's people? 2. And then as affects Christians themselves. For this exclusion of all inward evidence tends to beget a want of watchfulness, and leads more or less to the losing sight of the moral element in Christianity. It prevents them from cultivating that personal holiness which is indispensable to the fruition of a spiritual being. IV. A CERTAIN PRACTICAL TEST on which the heart's verdict of itself must be based, favourable or unfavourable, "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." "Hereby." This carries us back to something going before. We cannot trust to mere emotions, however deep. These emotions must be brought to some practical test; and here it is. What are we doing for the brethren? We say, perhaps, we love God. But let us test the genuineness of this emotion. He that loveth God, loveth his brother also. If you lack assurance it is not a simpler faith you need, nor a freer gospel, but a faithful dealing with your conscience as to particular sins of omission and commission. You must do more for God. You must do more for your fellow-creatures. V. A CERTAIN MORAL OR ETHICAL GROUND ON WHICH GOD ANSWERS PRAYER—"Whatsoever we ask we receive, because we keep His commandments," &c. I think we are too apt to view faith as the only condition of acceptable prayer. There are two elements in prayer that never must be lost sight of—the evangelical, and the ethical or moral. When we view faith only as the condition of acceptable prayer, we are keeping hold only of the evangelical element. But mark, how to correct this error, this one-sided view of prayer, the passage before us brings under our notice the ethical element, "Because we keep His commandments and do those things that are well pleasing in His sight." Ah! don't we need this? We think we can do great things with our simple faith—and so we would were it the faith that worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world. But this bare, naked faith of ours, which looks only to promises and aims only at what we call salvation, is imperfect, and will not answer all ends. (*A. L. R. Foote, D.D.*) *Heartsease* :—I. "HEREBY SHALL WE KNOW THAT WE ARE OF THE TRUTH." There is no gainsaying the logic of this whole passage. The children of God, by a spiritual necessity, "do justly, and love mercy." II. AND HOW MUCH THAT IS NOT GLORIOUS REMAINS IN EVERY LIFE! Oh, the iniquity of our holy things! Remove the smooth blue stone that lies in the sun with the glass-blades waving round it—so clean and smooth and quiet it looks—remove it and you see creeping things innumerable—things that hate the light, that love dampness and darkness. And so in life. Beneath the surface honesty, how much dishonesty do we find! Beneath the surface truthfulness—the court of justice veracity—how much untruth—what falsity—what shams. What lies we tell ourselves—what false testimonials we give ourselves! Beneath the surface purity of life, what uncleanness of thought, desire, imagination! Beneath the surface love, what self-love, what meannesses. Beneath our best deeds, what a mixture of motives that will not bear the light—hideous things that love darkness and dirt! III. WHAT APPEAL LIES FROM THE VERDICT OF CONSCIENCE? What answer can there be to these self-accusations? What can we say to our own heart? "Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure"—shall persuade, pacify, silence—"our heart before Him whereinsoever our heart shall condemn us." "We are of the truth." The imperfections are manifold. The inconsistencies are glaring, and yet the endeavour to love proves that the holy place is not empty yet. Travellers tell us that the mirage in the desert is so like a lake of water, that not until they actually enter it can the deception be discovered. But if a stream of water never so small were seen entering the lake, or a rill flowing out of it, they would know at once that what lay before them in the distance was real—was fact, and not phantom. Well, if a stream that makes for righteousness is flowing into your life, cleansing and sweetening and fertilising your thoughts, alms, and affections, and if another stream of kindness is

flowing out of your lives to others, fertilising and gladdening hearts else fruitless and joyless, then you may be certain that your religion is not a make-believe, not a piece of self-deception, but a reality. You are of the truth. God is there. IV. "GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR HEART." The heart means the whole inner moral life—the conscience. That is the greatest thing in each of us—that which, without being consulted, magisterially approves and condemns. But "God is greater than our heart." The heart condemns sin. God condemns sin and forgives the sinner. God is greater! Conscience sees the flaws in our life. God sees them too, and mends them. God is greater! Conscience is the iron pen that writes down without pity all that has been in man's life. God is love, and blots out the handwriting that was against us. "God is greater than our heart." This is the true heartsease—the flower whose fragrance soothes the restless soul—faith in the love of God. "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Me." V. "BELOVED, IF OUR HEART CONDEMN US NOT"—And there are blessed moods when the heart lies hushed and silent before God—when conscience lays its sceptre and crown at the feet of Christ, and all that is within us stands up to bless the Lord, who forgiveth all our iniquities. Now in these blessed hours we "have boldness toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight." We know at such times that we are one with God. We love what He loves. We hate what He hates. His commandments are our law. And we pray to Him freely, confidently, unhesitatingly, speaking to Him as to One of whose sympathy we feel sure. (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *Truth*:—The word "truth" is the characteristic word in the teaching of the beloved disciple, the Apostle St. John; he always speaks of those who belong to the Lord as those "who are of the truth." A Christian life is expressed by him as "doing the truth," or "walking in the truth." It describes the very essence of the Christian life; it describes that which is the fundamental principle, without which the Christian life is impossible. The power of the Christian life is, of course, the presence of the Lord Himself; the Lord Jesus in the soul is the power by which the Christian lives, but the form which the Christian life takes is more fully expressed by the word "truth" than by any other word that we can use. Let us consider, then, what is the kind of character which is shown in the man who walks in the truth and does the truth. 1. The characteristic of such a life is in the first place that openness which is described by St. John when he says that such a man "cometh to the light." He dislikes concealment; he desires that he shall be fully known, he has nothing to hide, he lives frankly among his fellows, concealing nothing whatever in his actions or in his purposes. 2. The characteristic which goes along with that is the simplicity of purpose which marks the man; because the man who has two purposes, generally speaking, desires to put one in front and keep the other behind. He desires to serve God openly before his fellows, and, perhaps, to have some little consideration for something else in his own soul; but the man who is thoroughly true in his life as he is open, so is he simple; he has but one aim all through, that of pleasing his heavenly Father. He knows nothing else that can be supreme over his life. 3. A further characteristic of such a character is courage. He is the truly brave man. As he has but one purpose he is never ashamed to confess it, and is he who, at all moments, in spite of all opposition, and in spite of quiet contempt and indifference, is never ashamed of Christ, never ashamed to say that he is a Christian, never ashamed to refuse to join what he knows his Master has condemned. Now this is the character of the man whose life is true. But let us come down to details. What is it that He would have us do and say and think and feel? The characteristic of the man who is really true in his service to the true Lord, is that he is thoroughly trustworthy. Never can it be said of any true child of God that he shall be found wanting in that elementary truth which, even in those who believe not, may yet be found, and give them a standing in the eyes of all. But go a little further. Look not only at his dealings, but also at his speech. And here I wish I could use the emphasis I could desire; because most assuredly the choice by our Lord and by St. John of such a word as "truth," to be the special description of the Christian life, lays upon Christians a tenfold responsibility in regard to truth of speech, of not allowing the Christian name to be lowered by giving way to all the many temptations which surround every one to swerve from exact fact, not allowing at any time the tongue to betray the soul by uttering that which is not true, and true all through; never allowing, for instance, the impulse of vanity to make a man say a word which will bring praise to himself which he does not really deserve; never allowing, in the very slightest degree, a word to pass the lips which shall claim for us a higher

Christian rank than we deserve, or any grace which we do not possess. It can be done without any word which is in itself false; it can be done in such a way as to give a false impression without exactly contravening the truth; but the Christian will scorn it in his soul for the sake of his Master Christ, whom he knows to be the very Messenger of truth, whose kingdom is the kingdom of truth. The Christian will feel that everything which is false, even if it be but a trifle, even if it be but one of those things which people are so ready to condone, mars the brightness of the Christian aspect. Need I go on to say that, whether the falsehood be prompted by vanity or by fear, it is equally abhorrent to the true Christian spirit. And then look at the thoughts. There, too, the Christian aim will be to seek the truth, and to be true to himself; he will not pretend to believe what he does not believe, and he will not pretend to disbelieve what, in his secret soul, he really does believe. Wait until you have clearer light, but never lower your Lord and Master by thinking to serve Him by any falsehood, either within you or without. Be true to your own self, true to your own convictions, and fear not. The man who is thoroughly true will inevitably find that the longer he lives, turning his soul to the Lord and casting himself on the power of Christ, the more certain does it become that the Lord is, indeed, the King of Truth, that truth belongs to Him, and that in the Lord it will be found; for the power by which men hold fast to the truth, and speak and do and live the truth, is the Lord Jesus. He alone is the source of truth. (*Bp. Temple.*)

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.—*Conscience condemning or acquitting.*—I. THERE IS IN EVERY ONE A NATURAL CONSCIENCE, WHICH ACQUITS OR CONDEMNS HIM ACCORDING TO THE TENOR OF HIS LIFE AND ACTIONS. The very heathens were sensible of this. Juvenal says of a guilty conscience: How, like so many furies, it haunts and torments the wicked man, and proves the executioner of vengeance on him in the horrors of his own breast. And agreeable to this is that observation of St. Paul (Rom. ii. 14). If it be objected that we see many wicked men go on without check in their sins, and, at the same time, none more gay or more happy, to this it may be answered, in the first place, that we cannot always form a judgment of the inward peace of men's minds by outward appearances; and that, for aught we know, the man who appears so outwardly happy may yet be far from being at peace within. Or, supposing a wicked man be really free from upbraidings of his conscience, yet it is not difficult to assign reasons which may help us to account for it. As, 1. It is possible that men may be able so to palliate or excuse their errors to themselves. Or, 2. It is possible that men may pursue a wicked course so long, and with so much obstinacy, as, in a great measure, to wear out the impression made upon them by their conscience, and to stifle its reflections. Yet some severe affliction or calamity, the approach of sickness or of death, is generally known to awaken in the minds of men those terrors of conscience which before seemed quite suppressed. If it be still objected that there have been some, after all, who, after a dissolute course of life, have died without appearing to have felt any great uneasiness of conscience, I answer, supposing there may have been some few examples of this kind, yet they are so very rare that we may justly look upon them as a sort of monsters in the moral world. 1. From hence we cannot but perceive and admire the goodness of God, who, to restrain men from the ways of sin, has endued them with a natural principle of conscience—such as generally applauds them when they do their duty, and condemns them whenever they transgress it. 2. From hence may be drawn a good argument in proof of a future judgment. 3. Hence we plainly see the folly of endeavouring to shake off the painful reflections of a bad conscience by a free indulgence to pleasure, by drink or company. 4. From what has been said we cannot but be sensible of the exceeding comfort and advantage of a good conscience. II. IF, UPON A REVIEW OF OUR PAST LIVES, OUR OWN CONSCIENCE CONDEMN US, WE HAVE REASON TO THINK THAT GOD, WHO KNOWS A GREAT DEAL MORE OF US THAN WE DO OF OURSELVES, WILL LIKEWISE ASSUREDLY CONDEMN US. 1. The self-condemnation here meant is not that of the true penitent, who, though he has abandoned every sinful course, yet cannot but reflect upon his former sins with horror, and justly condemns himself for them; but that which arises from the conscience of a wicked life still followed. 2. It may not be amiss to consider the case of another sort of persons, who, though not conscious to themselves of having lived in any unrepented sin, are yet apt to entertain very perplexing doubts of their spiritual state. This is the case of some good Christians, who, through the weakness of their understandings, or the timorousness of their natures, are often subject to melancholy fears. But such as these would do well to consider that these groundless fears are not so properly the

judgment of their conscience as the effect of a disordered and a weak imagination.

3. There is yet another sort of persons whose case it may be well to consider,—viz., that of those who lead such mixed, uncertain lives, that it is a matter of some difficulty to themselves, as well as others, to determine whether they are in a state of grace and salvation or not. These are such as sin and repent, and sin again, and this in a perpetual round, so that it is hard to say whether sin or religion be the most prevailing principle in them. Now such as these can have no just ground to hope well of their condition till they have brought themselves to a more steady course of life.

III. IF, UPON A SERIOUS AND IMPARTIAL EXAMINATION OF OUR LIVES, OUR OWN CONSCIENCES ACQUIT US, THEN MAY WE HOPE THAT GOD WILL LIKEWISE GRACIOUSLY ACQUIT US, AND THAT WE ARE ENTITLED TO HIS FAVOUR AND FORGIVENESS. (*C. Peters. M.A.*)

*Reason the judge of religious actions:—*I. The apostle's reasoning in the text supposes that THERE IS A NECESSARY AND ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL, and that men are naturally conscious of this difference, and of the consequent desert of their actions accordingly. And this is true, not with regard to the dictates of natural reason only, but, in those who profess themselves Christians, it is true also with regard to the terms or conditions of the gospel of Christ.

II. The apostle's argument proceeds upon this further supposition, that GOD WHO IS THE JUDGE OF ALL, MAKES GENERALLY THE SAME JUDGMENT OF MEN'S ACTIONS AS THEIR OWN REASON DOES, only much more perfect in the same kind, as having a knowledge infinitely more perfect and unerring than theirs. For, whatever a man's own eyes plainly see, he cannot doubt but a person of better eyes must see the same more perfectly. And whatever a man free from passion and wilfulness, upon calm consideration, clearly discerns with his own mind, he is very sure the Infinite and All-knowing Mind cannot but discern still more clearly and distinctly.

III. HOW FAR THE TRUTH OF THIS RULE IS AFFECTED BY THAT FALSE APPLICATION WHICH THE WRONG JUDGMENT OF AN ERRONEOUS CONSCIENCE IS APT TO MAKE OF IT. It is certain men are naturally conscious of the difference of good and evil, and of the consequent desert of their own actions. It is natural for them to apprehend that this judgment of their own consciences is the judgment that God also passes upon them; and Scripture clearly affirms that it is so. Whence then is it that many truly pious persons have been under the strongest melancholy apprehensions that God would condemn them; and on the contrary, many impious men seem to have been fully persuaded that they have been doing God service, even by unrighteous actions? It proceeds from hence; that in some cases, through innocent and pitiable weakness; in other cases, through wicked and corrupt prejudice, men set their own passions of fear or presumption in the judgment-seat of reason and conscience. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*)

*The nature and advantages of a good conscience:—*The advantage of having a good conscience is acknowledged both by those who possess and by those destitute of it. The one class knows its value by the solid enjoyment which it confers; the other, very frequently, by the wretchedness with which the want of it is attended.

I. With regard to THE NATURE OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE, it is properly defined in the text as one which does not condemn us.

1. There are those whose consciences do not condemn them, who yet cannot be said to have a good conscience. (1) Those persons, for instance, who are misinformed as to the line of conduct for them to pursue, and who, in consequence of such misinformation, are led to the commission of even the most fearful enormities, may, very probably, not be condemned by their own consciences; nay, very possibly, may be perfectly acquitted by them, if not highly applauded. (2) Again, there is another large class of persons, who, whatever attention they may occasionally pay to some of its duties, yet manifest on the great subject of religion no small measure of indifference. The conscience of these persons does not condemn them; it leaves them to conclude that all who in any measure exceed them in paying to religion that attention which its incomparable importance demands, are justly liable to the charge of enthusiasm, and of being righteous overmuch. (3) Once more, the apostle speaks of some persons as being "past feeling" (Eph. iv. 19); and as having their conscience seared with a hot iron (1 Tim. iv. 2). Wearied at length and exhausted by making ineffectual remonstrances, this faculty loses all its sensibility, and becomes totally obdurate.

2. There is another position, which at first view may appear equally, though in a different way, inconsistent with the representation of the apostle; namely, that there are those whose consciences do, at times more especially, condemn them, who yet are favourably regarded by the Most High, and who have ground for that confidence towards Him which yet they are not able to exercise. Whatever they read or hear, it all, as they conceive, makes against them; they are

ready to regard almost every threatening of the Word of God as pronouncing their condemnation, and to consider themselves as having as little to do with the comfortable promises of the gospel. For this species of religious depression various causes may be assigned. It may possibly be ascribable to physical causes, and originate in bodily distemper. It may, perhaps, be justly attributed to the malice of Satan, who would endeavour to persuade us that God is as much our enemy as he himself is. Or, it may be owing to mistakes respecting the nature of the Christian covenant, and the grounds of our acceptance with God. 3. Who, then, we at length inquire, are those persons who may conclude that they are in a right state, from the circumstance of their conscience not condemning them? The persons who can form this conclusion are those who have acquired, among other things, a correct knowledge of what is essential to the Christian character. And having obtained this knowledge of the Christian character, they search deeply into their own. His repentance, and faith, and love, and obedience, though not perfect, are yet genuine. II. ITS ADVANTAGES. 1. It is no small advantage that those who possess it are exempt from the disquiet and terror of an evil conscience. (1) The condemnation of a man's own heart. (2) The anticipation of a still more tremendous condemnation at the hands of God. 2. There are positive advantages also of a most important nature which belong to such persons, and which are comprehended under the expression in the text. The person who has a good conscience has confidence towards God—(1) In prayer. (2) In a season of suffering. (3) In the hour of death. Let me, in conclusion, recommend each of you to make that application of the subject. 1. Do you say that your conscience does not condemn you; and that you, therefore, if any one can, may well entertain a confidence towards God; and that, notwithstanding you have never seriously examined whether your conscience is quiet on good grounds, and your confidence well founded? It is for you to search deeply your own hearts in order to ascertain whether traces are to be found there of that repentance, and faith, and love, and obedience, which form the only evidence of a well-founded confidence. 2. But does your conscience already condemn you, and that on good grounds? You have, indeed, reason for alarm, under the conviction that God is greater than your heart. 3. Finally, are you in the number of those who may conclude that they are in a right state, from the circumstance of their conscience not condemning them? Remember that the continuance of your peace is closely connected with the continuance of your watchfulness against sin, and of your activity in well-doing. (*T. Natt, B.D.*)

Self-condemnation:—1. SELF-CONDEMNATION. "For if our heart condemn us." 1. Some possibly may stand self-condemned on the ground of indulging in particular sins. 2. Others may feel inwardly accused on account of their indifference to the interests of their souls. 3. But there are some whose hearts may condemn them on the ground of the nominal and formal character of their religion. 4. With many the guilt of unbelief may be the ground of self-accusation. 5. The hearts of some may charge them with hypocrisy. II. SELF-CONDEMNATION CONFIRMED AND AUGMENTED BY DIVINE DECISIONS. "God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things." 1. God is greater than our hearts in knowledge, and knows therefore the whole extent of our sin. 2. God is greater than our heart in purity, and sees therefore the utmost evil and malignity of sin. 3. God is greater than our hearts in justice, and knoweth therefore the whole amount of our desert. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *The lower courts*:—The fault of many is that they will not lay spiritual things to heart at all, but treat them in a superficial manner. This is foolish, sinful, deadly. We ought to put our case upon serious trial in the court of our own conscience. Certain of a better class are satisfied with the verdict of their hearts, and do not remember the higher courts; and therefore either become presumptuous, or are needlessly distressed. We are about to consider the judgments of this lower court. Here we may have—1. A CORRECT VERDICT AGAINST OURSELVES. Let us sum up the process. 1. The court sits under the King's arms, to judge by royal authority. The charge against the prisoner is read. Conscience accuses, and quotes the law as applicable to the points alleged. 2. Memory gives evidence. As to the fact of sin in years past, and of sin more lately committed. Items mentioned. Transgressions of the commandments. Failure in motive, spirit, temper, &c. 3. Knowledge gives evidence that the present state of mind and heart and will is not according to the Word. 4. Self-love and pride urge good intents and pious acts in stay of proceedings. Hear the defence! But alas! it is not worth hearing. The defence is but one of "the refuges of lies." 5. The heart, judging by the law, condemns. Henceforth the man lives

as in a condemned cell under fear of death and hell. If even our partial, half-enlightened heart condemns, we may well tremble at the thought of appearing before the Lord God. The higher court is more strictly just, better informed, more authoritative, and more able to punish. God knows all. Forgotten sin, sins of ignorance, sins half seen are all before the Lord. What a terrible case is this! Condemned in the lower court, and sure to be condemned in the higher! II.

AN INCORRECT VERDICT AGAINST OURSELVES. The case as before. The sentence apparently most clear. But when revised by the higher court it is reversed, for good reasons. 1. The debt has been discharged by the man's glorious Surety. 2. The man is not the same man; though he has sinned he has died to sin, and he now lives as one born from above. 3. The evidences in his favour, such as the atonement and the new birth, were forgotten, undervalued, or misjudged in the lower court. 4. The evidence looked for by a sickly conscience was what it could not find, for it did not exist, namely, natural goodness, perfection, unbroken joy, &c. The judge was ignorant, and legally inclined. The verdict was therefore a mistaken one. III. A CORRECT VERDICT OF ACQUITTAL. Our heart sometimes justly "condemns us not."

1. The argument for non-condemnation is good: the following are the chief items of evidence in proof of our being gracious—(1) We are sincere in our profession of love to God. (2) We are filled with love to the brethren. (3) We are resting upon Christ, and on Him alone. (4) We are longing after holiness. 2. The result of this happy verdict of the heart is that we have—(1) Confidence towards God that we are really His. (2) Confidence as to our reconciliation with God by Jesus Christ. (3) Confidence that He will not harm us, but will bless us. (4) Confidence in prayer that He will accept and answer. (5) Confidence as to future judgment that we shall receive the gracious reward at the last great day.

IV. AN INCORRECT VERDICT OF ACQUITTAL. 1. A deceived heart may refuse to condemn, but God will judge us all the same. 2. A false heart may acquit, but this gives no confidence Godward. 3. A deceitful heart pretends to acquit while in its centre it condemns. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Self-condemnation.—I. WHAT THE CONDEMNATION OF A MAN'S OWN HEART IS. It is a judicial act, and hath the accuser, witness, and judge, ready against the malefactor; which, in external judicatures, are the distinct parts of different persons. For the knowledge of the law being lodged in the heart, and the consciousness of its own transgression lying uppermost there also, nothing hinders the sentence from proceeding immediately, inasmuch that the bare knowledge of evil committed is in the heart or conscience self-condemnation.

II. DO ALL WILFUL AND PRESUMPTUOUS SINNERS FEEL AND SUFFER THIS CONDEMNATION OF THEIR OWN HEARTS? Why should a man's own heart condemn him? Cannot self-love bribe off the evidence? May not the favour and partiality, which faction seldom fails of in its defence, blind the eyes or corrupt the judgment of a man's own conscience in his favour? No! the heart judges for the God of truth, and cannot but declare the truth. That there are some examples to the contrary, let these two things be considered—1. That we cannot know what wicked men feel in their own breasts; the most cheerful countenance, to appearance, may have a very aching heart. But, if for a time he shall also cheat himself into a false peace, it must be by such opiates as lay asleep the thinking powers of the soul. 2. Nevertheless, God by His Holy Spirit takes His own time to awaken the wicked, and to bring their sins before the bar of their conscience (Psa. l. 18–23). It is possible to live in sin without anxiety, but repentance will bring this self-condemnation home to our hearts before ever we can sue to God for His mercy. The longer we are without it the greater will be its torture at last. For it is not peace, but stupidity of mind; not happiness, but the delusions of Satan, that keep the conscience quiet in the ways of perdition. III. GOD WILL JUDGE US ACCORDING TO THE SENTENCE OF OUR OWN HEARTS (Jer. xvii. 10). If God is just in His laws, He will be just in executing their sentence, and not acquit the sinner that accuses and condemns Himself, as guilty and impenitent. And it will be the greatest aggravation of our misery, that having brought it on ourselves, we condemn ourselves to it. He that will not see his day of grace shall find his punishment in the utter despair of it. 1. Resolve to act in uprightness and integrity of heart in all we do; let us carefully consult the dictate of our own conscience, as ever we hope to avoid its merciless rebukes in the last day. 2. Let no pretence or subterfuge tempt us to sins which our conscience, informed by the law of God, must needs condemn. 3. Of all our actions our religious worship has the greatest sincerity of heart; and of all parts of our worship the Holy Sacrament calls for the utmost integrity. (W. Whitfield.)

And knoweth all things.—All things known to God:—This may seem a principle,

and therefore not to be doubted, and consequently needless to be proved. I. PROVE THE PROPOSITION. 1. First from Scripture (John xxi. 17; Heb. iv. 13). 2. From reason; and here our first argument shall be drawn from His works of creation and providence. It is impossible that He that made all things should not also know all things. Who is it that cannot readily acknowledge and read his own hand? Next, His providence sufficiently declares His omniscience; if He manages, rules, and governs all things, yea sin itself, it clearly follows that He has full cognisance of those things, since all these acts presuppose knowledge. II. THE EXCELLENCY OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE ABOVE THE KNOWLEDGE EITHER OF MEN OR ANGELS. 1. Concerning its properties. (1) The first property holding forth the excellency of this knowledge is the exceeding evidence, and consequently the certainty of it; for though a thing may be certain, and yet not evident, yet whatsoever is evident, that also is certain. Evidence brings a property eminent from the essence and being of knowledge; it follows that that which includes the nature of knowledge in an infinite manner, must be also attended by a most infinitely clear evidence. He that causes that innate evidence in every object, by which it moves and strikes the faculty, shall not He see? He that gives light to the eye, by which that evidence is discerned, shall not He discern? (2) Another property of this knowledge, showing the excellence of it, is this, that it is a knowledge independent upon the existence of the object or thing known. God beholds all things in Himself; and that both eminently, as He sees His own perfection, which eminently includes all the perfection that is scattered among the creatures, as the light of all the stars is contained eminently in the sun; and He beholds them also formally, distinctly, and according to the model of their own proper beings, without looking upon the existence of the things themselves, and that two ways—(a) By reflecting upon His power, and what He can do, He has a perfect knowledge of all possibilities, and of things that may be produced. (b) By reflecting upon His power and His will, He knows whatsoever shall be actually produced. 2. The excellency of God's knowledge appears in respect of His objects; which are all things knowable. But they may be reduced to three things especially, which God alone perfectly knows, and are not to be known by men or angels. (1) The nature of God Himself. Nothing but an infinite knowledge can comprehend an infinite being. (2) The second sort of things only known to God are things future. (3) The thoughts of men: it belongs to the sovereignty of God's omniscience alone to judge and know these (Psa. cxxxix. 2). III. I proceed to make some APPLICATION; and to see what uses may be deduced from the consideration of God's omniscience: it may serve as an argument to press several duties upon us. 1. It must be a strong motive to bring us to a free confession of all our sins to God. We can commit and tell our secrets to a friend that does not know them; how much more should we do it to Him that knows them already. 2. The consideration of God's omniscience may enforce us to an humble submission to all God's commands and directions, and that both in respect of belief and of practice. 3. And lastly, since it is an express command of our Saviour Himself, that we should "be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect"; why should we not, according to our weak model, endeavour to copy out this Divine perfection upon our soul, as well as any of the rest? And why, as well as we are commanded to be like Him in His goodness, bounty, and mercy, we should not endeavour to resemble Him in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, according to our weak capacity? (R. South, D.D.) *Hearts of sinners known to God*:—Sinners know something about their own hearts, otherwise they would never feel self condemned; but they do not know so much about them as they might know; for they endeavour to misinform, or silence conscience, which would, if properly consulted and allowed to speak, condemn them for every evil imagination of their hearts. No sinners, however, whether moral or immoral, whether secure or awakened, know so much about their own hearts as God does, who is greater than their hearts, and knows all things. For—1. God has a more extensive view of the exercises of their hearts than they ever have. "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all imaginations of the thoughts." He knows all that passes in their hearts and drops from their lips every moment, and remembers all. This is what all sinners are extremely prone to forget, for which God justly blames them. Though they cannot remember all their sins, yet they ought to remember that God remembers them all. 2. God sees all the moral exercises of their hearts at one intuitive and comprehensive view; which is a far more perfect knowledge of them than they ever have. 3. God knows the moral quality of all the exercises which compose the hearts of sinners, as well as their connection with each other, and with the external actions which flow from them.

4. God knows how vile and guilty sinners are, for all the evil exercises of their hearts which they inwardly cherish, and outwardly express. He views the least sin as unspeakably more vile and guilty than sinners do the greatest. 5. God knows all the evils which the corrupt hearts of sinners would prompt them to do, if He did not continually restrain them. He views their hearts, therefore, as infinitely more sinful than they view them. 6. God knows the extreme obstinacy of their hearts, which they are unwilling to know, and of which they are generally very ignorant. God knows how often and how much they have refused to obey His commands, His gracious invitations, and His awful threatenings. God knows how often and how much they have resisted the strivings of His Spirit. Improvement. 1. In the view of this subject we may see why sinners generally live so little concerned about their guilty and dangerous state by nature. They either bribe conscience by their good deeds, or sear it by their bad ones; and in either case, they flatter themselves that their hearts are pretty good, if not so good as they ought to be. But if they only saw their hearts as God sees them, they would be instantly alarmed, and all their peace and flattering hopes would forsake them. 2. This subject shows us why awakened sinners are often in so much anxiety and distress about the salvation of their souls. It is because they begin to see their hearts in the same light in which God sees them. 3. This subject shows why sinners are so ready to believe that God will not make them, nor any others of mankind, for ever miserable. They think that no sinners deserve eternal punishment. The reason is that they have never seen their own hearts as God has seen them. 4. It appears from what has been said, that it is of great importance to preach the doctrine of total depravity plainly and fully. 5. It appears from what has been said, that no sinners have a right to think they are Christians. They all have the witness within themselves that they are graceless. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Conscience and God as judges*:—I. Thoughts which OUR NATURAL MINDS TAKE FROM IT. 1. We know, in the sense of being impressed with, but a few of our own sins—only such as are somewhat aside from our ordinary habit, or diverse from our current taste. But God, the impartial and omniscient, sees them all numerically; every grain in the growing heap. 2. We see at best but detached portions of our lives; we easily forget the past; hence, our moral equanimity differs from day to day. But God sees us altogether in our general character, the drift and meaning of our lives. 3. We do not know the sin that lies within our own purposes. No wicked man lives out the full of the wickedness that is in him; he is hedged in by a thousand fears. But God looks on the heart. 4. We see our sin in the narrow scope of its immediate effect. God sees it in all the hideousness of sin's general work in the world, the diseases, poverty, crime, death, which deeds of the same kind as those that to us seem venial have accomplished. 5. We know almost nothing of the meaning of sin as seen in its consequences within the soul: blinding spiritual sight; corroding the finer sensibilities; paralysing the will: engendering eternal impotency and misery. God knows all this. 6. We have no high standard of judging our sins; conscience is generally depraved to near the level of the sinful habit. God sees our sin in contact with His infinite purity, our sins in the light of His countenance. 7. God sees all sin in the light of His purpose one day to rid the universe of it; the refiner sits at the fire, and our sin is there awaiting the process. II. Thoughts which BIBLE FAITH PUTS INTO THE TEXT for our consolation. 1. It is especially said to be for our assurance. 2. God knows what He, the Judge, is—"God is love." 3. God knows the meaning of His own infinite fatherhood. 4. God knows what He has already done for us. We do not begin to realise the meaning of the gift of the only begotten Son. 5. God knows what He has already done with our sins—blotted them out. 6. God knows what the Holy Spirit's mission to a sinful soul is; we but dimly conceive it, as the sanctifying process is manifest to our experience. 7. God knows how the light of heaven will put away all darkness from the soul that He has permitted to enter there, and looks upon us as candidates for that perfection which He has decreed and prepared for us. (*J. M. Ludlow.*) **Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.**—*A good life the surest title to a good conscience*:—I. THE NATURE OF A SURE OR CLEAR CONSCIENCE ought to be first stated lest we should mistake shadow for substance, presumption and vain confidence for truth and soberness. The apostle points out the general nature of a good conscience by this mark, that our hearts condemn us not, and that we know that we are of the truth; know it by some certain rule, namely, that we keep God's commandments. And if our conduct be found, upon a just examination, to square with that rule, then our consciences are clear, and we may look up with a becoming confidence to God. This

is a matter of great weight, and yet there is nowhere more room for self-flattery and self-deceit. A man will often call it acting according to his conscience, when he acts according to his present persuasion, without ever examining how he came by that persuasion; whether through wrong education, custom, or example; or whether from some secret lust, pride, or prejudice, rather than from the rule of God's written Word, or from a principle of right reason. This cannot be justly called keeping a good conscience: for we ought not to take up false persuasions at all adventures, and then to make those persuasions our rule of life, instead of that rule which God hath given us to walk by. It is deceiving ourselves to imagine that we have a good conscience when we have used no reasonable care in examining whether it be a right conscience or not. There is another common method of self-deceit, when a person who well enough understands the rule he is to go by, yet forgets to apply it to his own particular case, and so speaks peace to himself all the while that he transgresses it. No doubt but a considerate man may know when he behaves as he ought to do, and may reap the comfort of it. And though we are none of us without sin yet a good life is easily distinguished from the life of the ungodly, and a state of grace from a state of sin. And so there is room enough left for the joy of a good conscience, where men live as becometh the gospel of Christ, perfecting holiness, to such a degree as man can be perfect, in the fear of God. II. I now proceed to discourse of the comforts of it. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him. What greater comfort can there be than conscious virtue drawing after it the favour of God in whom all happiness centres, and upon whom all things entirely depend? If God be with us who can be against us? What friends can we want, while in Him we have all that are truly valuable? Or what blessings can we desire, but what He is both willing and able to shower down upon us, only leaving it to Him to judge what is safest and most convenient for us? There is no pleasure in life comparable to that which arises in a good man's breast from the sense of his keeping up a friendly intercourse with God. (*D. Waterland, D.D.*)

An account of the nature and measures of conscience:—As nothing can be of more moment, so few things, doubtless, are of more difficulty, than for men to be rationally satisfied about the estate of their souls, with reference to God and the great concerns of eternity. First of all then: he who would pass such a judgment upon his condition as shall be ratified in heaven, will find himself wofully deceived, if he judges of his spiritual estate by any of these measures. 1. The general esteem of the world concerning him. He who owes his piety to fame and hearsay, and the evidences of his salvation to popular voice and opinion, builds his house not only upon the sand, but, which is worse, upon the wind; and writes the deeds, by which he holds his estate, upon the face of a river. The favourable opinion and good word of men, to some persons especially, comes oftentimes at a very easy rate; and by a few demure looks. 2. The judgment of any casuist or learned divine, concerning the estate of a man's soul, is not sufficient to give him confidence towards God. And the reason is because no learning whatsoever can give a man the knowledge of another's heart. 3. The absolution pronounced by a priest is not a certain, infallible ground, to give the person so absolved confidence towards God, because if absolution, as such, could of itself secure a man, as to the estate of his soul, then it would follow that every person so absolved should, by virtue thereof, be *ipso facto* put into such a condition of safety; which is not imaginable. In a word, if a man be penitent, his repentance stamps his absolution effectual. If not, let the priest repeat the same absolution to him ten thousand times; yet for all his being absolved in this world, God will condemn him in the other. 4. No advantages from external church membership, or profession of the true religion, can of themselves give a man confidence towards God: and yet perhaps there is hardly any one thing in the world which men, in all ages, have generally more cheated themselves with. Thus I have shown four several uncertain rules, which men are prone to judge of their spiritual estate by. But now have we any more certain to substitute and recommend in the room of them? Why, yes; if we believe the apostle, a man's own heart or conscience is that which, above all other things, is able to give him "confidence towards God." And the reason is, because the heart knows that by itself, which nothing in the world besides can give it any knowledge of; and without the knowledge of which it can have no foundation to build any true confidence upon. I. HOW THE HEART OR CONSCIENCE OUGHT TO BE INFORMED, IN ORDER TO ITS FOUNDING IN US A RATIONAL CONFIDENCE TOWARDS GOD. It is not necessary for a man to be assured of the rightness of his conscience, by

such an infallible certainty of persuasion, as amounts to the clearness of a demonstration; but it is sufficient if he knows it upon grounds of such a convincing probability, as shall exclude all rational grounds of doubting of it. There is an innate light in every man, discovering to him the first lines of duty in the common notions of good and evil; which by cultivation may be advanced to higher discoveries. He therefore who exerts all the faculties of his soul, and plies all means and opportunities in the search of truth, which God has vouchsafed him, may rest upon the judgment of his conscience so informed, as a warrantable guide of those actions which he must account to God for.

II. How, and by what means, we may get our heart or conscience thus informed, and afterwards preserve and keep it so. 1. Let a man carefully attend to the voice of his reason, and all the dictates of natural morality; so by no means to do anything contrary to them. For though reason is not to be relied upon, as a guide universally sufficient to direct us what to do; yet it is generally to be relied upon and obeyed, where it tells us what we are not to do. No man ever yet offended his own conscience, but first or last it was revenged upon him for it. So that it will concern a man to treat this great principle awfully and warily, by still observing what it commands, but especially what it forbids: and if he would have it always a faithful and sincere monitor to him, let him be sure never to turn a deaf ear to it; for not to hear it is the way to silence it. Let him strictly observe the first stirrings and intimations, the first hints and whispers of good and evil that pass in his heart; and this will keep conscience so quick and vigilant, and ready to give a man true alarms upon the least approach of his spiritual enemy, that he shall be hardly capable of a great surprise. 2. Let a man be very tender, and regardful of every pious motion and suggestion made by the Spirit of God in his heart. 3. Because the light of natural conscience is in many things defective and dim, and the internal voice of God's Spirit not always distinguishable, above all, let a man attend to the mind of God uttered in His revealed Word. We shall find it a rule, both to instruct us what to do, and to assure us in what we have done. For though natural conscience ought to be listened to, yet it is revelation alone that is to be relied upon: as we may observe in the works of art, a judicious artist will indeed use his eye, but he will trust only to his rule. There is not any one action whatsoever which a man ought to do or to forbear, but the Scripture will give him a clear precept or prohibition for it. 4. The fourth and last way that I shall mention for the getting of the conscience rightly informed, and afterwards keeping it so, is frequently and impartially to account with it. It is with a man and his conscience as with one man and another, amongst whom we used to say that "even reckoning makes lasting friends," and the way to make reckonings even, I am sure, is to make them often. I shall close with this twofold caution. (1) Let no man think that every doubting or misgiving about the safety of his spiritual estate overthrows the confidence hitherto spoken of. The sincerity of our faith or confidence will not secure us against all vicissitudes of wavering or distrust; indeed, no more than a strong athletic constitution of body will secure a man always against heats, and colds, and such like indispositions. (2) Let no man from what has been said reckon a bare silence of conscience, in not accusing or disturbing him, a sufficient argument for confidence towards God. For such a silence is so far from being always so, that it is usually worse than the fiercest and loudest accusations; since it may, and for the most part does, proceed from a kind of numbness or stupidity of conscience; and an absolute dominion obtained by sin over the soul; so that it shall not so much as dare to complain or make a stir. (*R. South, D.D.*)

*A further account of the nature and measure of conscience:—*I. Whence it is that the testimony of conscience, thus informed, comes to be so authentic, and so much to be relied upon. 1. The high office which it holds immediately from God Himself, in the soul of man. It commands and dictates everything in God's name; and stamps every word with an almighty authority. So that it is, as it were, a kind of copy or transcript of the Divine sentence, and an interpreter of the sense of heaven. Nay, and this vicegerent of God has one prerogative above all God's other earthly vicegerents; to wit, that it can never be deposed. For a king never condemns any whom his judges have absolved, nor absolves whom his judges have condemned, whatsoever the people and republicans may. 2. Proceed we now to the second ground, from which conscience derives the credit of its testimony in judging of our spiritual estate; and that consists in those properties and qualities which so peculiarly fit it for the discharge of its forementioned office, in all things relating to the soul. (1) The extraordinary quickness and sagacity of its sight in spying out everything

which any way concern the estate of the soul. As the voice of it was as loud as thunder; so the sight of it is as piercing and quick as lightning. (2) The tenderness of its sense. For as by the quickness of its sight, it directs us what to do or not to do; so by this tenderness of its sense it excuses or accuses us, as we have done or not done according to those directions. And it is altogether as nice, delicate and tender in feeling, as it can be perspicacious and quick in seeing. (3) Its great and rigorous impartiality. For as its wonderful apprehensiveness made that it could not easily be deceived, so this makes that it will by no means deceive. A judge, you know, may be skilful in understanding a cause, and yet partial in giving sentence. But it is much otherwise with conscience; no artifice can induce it to accuse the innocent or to absolve the guilty. No, we may as well bribe the light and the day to represent white things black, or black white. II. SOME PARTICULAR CASES OR INSTANCES IN WHICH THIS CONFIDENCE TOWARDS GOD, SUGGESTED BY A RIGHTLY INFORMED CONSCIENCE, DOES MOST EMINENTLY SHOW AND EXERT ITSELF. 1. In our addresses to God by prayer. When a man shall presume to come and place himself in the presence of the great Searcher of hearts, and to ask something of Him, while his conscience is all the while smiting him on the face, and telling him what a rebel and traitor he is to the majesty which he supplicates; surely such a one should think with himself, that the God whom he prays to is greater than his conscience, and pierces into all the filth and baseness of his heart with a much clearer and more severe inspection. And if so, will he not likewise resent the provocation more deeply, and revenge it upon him more terribly, if repentance does not divert the blow? But on the other side, when a man's breast is clear, and the same heart which indites, does also encourage his prayer, when his innocence pushes on the attempt and vouches the success; such a one goes boldly to the throne of grace, and his boldness is not greater than his welcome. God recognises the voice of His own Spirit interceding with him; and his prayers are not only followed but even prevented with an answer. 2. A second instance in which this confidence towards God does so remarkably show itself is at the time of some notable trial or sharp affliction. When a man's friends shall desert him and all dependencies fail him, certainly it will then be of some moment to have a friend in the court of conscience, which shall, as it were, buoy up his sinking spirits and speak greater things for him than all these together can declaim against him. 3. At the time of death: which surely gives the grand opportunity of trying both the strength and worth of every principle. At this disconsolate time, when the busy tempter shall be more than usually apt to vex and trouble him, and the pains of a dying body to hinder and discompose him, and the settlement of worldly affairs to disturb and confound him; and in a word all things conspire to make his sick-bed grievous and uneasy: nothing can then stand up against all these ruins and speak life in the midst of death, but a clear conscience. And the testimony of that shall make the comforts of heaven descend upon his weary head, like a refreshing dew or shower upon a parched ground. It shall give him some lively earnest and secret anticipations of his approaching joy. (*Ibid.*) *What is the verdict?*—I. CAREFULLY OBSERVE THAT THIS TEXT IS SPOKEN TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD. It speaks to those who are called "beloved." These are the people who are specially loved of God and of His people. As soon as we become children we are freed from the condemning power of the law; we are not under the principle and motive of the law of works, but yet we are not without law unto Christ. We are dealt with not as mere subjects are ruled by a king, but as children are governed by a father. Thus they walk on blindfold to the brink of the precipice. God grant the bandage may be taken off before they have taken the final and fatal step. 1. Genuine Christians very much frequent this court of conscience. They long to have their condition put to a thorough test, lest they be deceived. Make sure work for eternity. Be certain by the witness of the Holy Ghost within you, that you are indeed the children of God. The spirit of the true man answers to this: he is always willing to set in order the court of conscience and make solemn trial of his heart and life. 2. In this court the question to be decided is a very weighty one. Am I sincere in the truth? Is my religion true, and am I true in my profession of it? Does love rule in my nature? Do I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do I also keep His commandments? Do I seek to be holy as Jesus is holy? Or am I living in known sin, and tolerating that in myself which does not and cannot please God? 3. This court is guided by a mass of evidence. That evidence has not to be sought for, it is there already. Memory rises up and says, "I remember all thou hast done since thy profession of conversion—thy shortcomings and breaches of covenant." The will confesses to offences which

never ripened into acts for want of opportunity. The passions own to outbreaks which were concealed from human observation. The imagination is made to bear testimony, and what a sinful power that imagination is, and how difficult it is to govern it: its tale is sad to hear. Our tempers confess to evil anger, our lusts to evil longings, our hearts to evil covetousness, pride, and rebellion. Hopeful witness there is also of sin conquered, habits broken, and desires repressed; all this is honestly taken in evidence and duly weighed. 4. While the trial is going on, the deliberation causes great suspense. As long as I have to ask my heart, "Heart, dost thou condemn me, or dost thou acquit me?" I stand trembling. You may have seen a picture entitled, "Waiting for the Verdict." The artist has put into the countenances of the waiters every form of unrest, for the suspense is terrible. Blessed be God, we are not called upon to wait long for the verdict of conscience. We ought never to let the question remain in suspense at all; we should settle it, and settle it in the light of God, and then walk in the light as God is in the light.

II. THE ACQUITTAL ISSUED FROM THIS COURT: "If our heart condemn us not." 1. Observe that a man may get an acquittal from the court of conscience; for the question laid before the heart can be settled. It can be ascertained whether I sincerely believe in Jesus Christ; it can be ascertained whether I sincerely love God and love His people; it can be ascertained whether my heart is obedient to the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. These questions, however, must be debated with great discernment. Abundance, aye, superabundance, of temptation is no proof against the sincerity of our faith in our God; on the contrary, it may sometimes happen that the more we are tempted the more true is it that there is something in us to tempt, some good thing which Satan seeks to destroy. 3. Again, the verdict of the heart must be given with discrimination, or otherwise we may judge according to outward circumstances and so judge amiss. The fact that my child is little and feeble is no proof that he is not my son. The boy may be like his father and yet be only a tiny babe. 4. And the verdict has to be given, mark you, upon gospel principles. The question before the court of conscience is not, Have I perfectly kept the law? The question is, Am I a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Am I resting in him for salvation, and do I prove the truth of that faith by loving God, and loving the brethren, and by doing those things which are pleasing to God, and avoiding those things which are displeasing to Him? 5. This question in the court of the heart must never be settled by our feelings. Sinners can rejoice as well as saints, and saints can mourn as well as sinners; the point is not what we feel, but what we believe and do. 6. The question of our state ought to be settled speedily. We know "the law's delays," but we must not allow any delay in this court. No, we must press for summary justice.

III. THE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS ACQUITTAL. Here is the man who has had his acquittal in the court of conscience. Your conscience has said, "He is a sincere man; he is a believing man; he is quickened with the life of God; he is an obedient and God-fearing man"; and now you have confidence toward God; or at least you have a right to such confidence. What does that confidence or boldness mean? 1. There is the confidence of truthfulness. When you kneel down to pray you know that you are praying, and not mocking God; when you sing you are making melody in your heart; when you preach you are preaching that which your soul believes. 2. The next kind of confidence towards God as to one's acceptance with Him. The Word saith, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." Conscience says, "Yes, thou hast faith"; and the heart concludes, "There is therefore now no condemnation." When you know this, your life is gilded with the sunlight of the coming glory, and your heart rejoiceth exceedingly. 3. This produces, and perhaps it is that which the apostle most intended, a boldness of converse. The man who knows that he is truthful and that God has accepted him, then speaks freely with God. 4. This leads to great confidence in prayer. Look at the context. "We have confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask we receive," &c. If you want power in prayer you must have purity in life. 5. Our text means also that such a man shall have confidence towards God, in all service for God. Look at the man of God who has confidence towards God as to the perils encountered in faithfully following his Lord. Take Daniel, for instance. His confidence toward God is that he is safe in the path of duty. 6. Moreover, we have this confidence towards God in the way of service, so that we are sure of receiving all necessary help. An officer, if he finds himself in straits, impresses anybody that passes by, saying, "In the King's name, help me." Even so, if you do your Lord's bidding, and if conscience condemns you not, you may impress into the service of the great King every angel in heaven, and

every force of nature, as need requires. 7. It means rest, perfect rest. Look at your Lord when the tempest was on. Loud roaring, the billows come near to overwhelming the ship; but He is asleep. It was the best thing to do. You and I may do the same: we need not be frightened nor worried nor troubled; but just trust in the Lord and do good, so shall we dwell in the land, and verily we shall be fed. 8. This confidence often mounts up into joy till the Christian man overflows with delight in God; he cannot contain his happiness. He goes to his toil rejoicing to serve God in his calling, and he comes home at night to repose himself in the care of his God and Father. All is well and he knows it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*An approving heart—confidence in prayer:—*I. SHOW THAT IF OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE HAVE AND CANNOT BUT HAVE CONFIDENCE TOWARD GOD THAT HE ACCEPT US. If our heart really does not condemn us, it is because we are conscious of being conformed to all the light we have, and of doing the whole will of God as far as we know it. While in this state it is impossible that, with right views of God's character, we should conceive of Him as condemning us. He is a Father, and He cannot but smile on His obedient and trusting children. We cannot conceive of Him as being otherwise than pleased; for, if He were displeased with a state of sincere and full obedience, He would act contrary to His own character; He would cease to be benevolent, holy, and just. Again, let it be noted that in this state with an approving conscience, we should have no self-righteousness. A man in this state would at this very moment ascribe all his obedience to the grace of God. The apostle Paul when in this state of conscious uprightness most heartily ascribes all to grace. "I laboured," says he, "more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that is in me." But observe that while the apostle was in that state, it was impossible that he should conceive of God as displeased with his state. Again, when a man prays disinterestedly, and with a heart in full and deep sympathy with God, he may and should have confidence that God hears him. Indeed no one, having right views of God's character, can come to Him in prayer in a disinterested state of mind, and feel otherwise than that God accepts such a state of mind. Again, when we are conscious of sympathising with God Himself, we may know that God will answer our prayers. The soul, being in sympathy with God, feels as God feels; so that for God to deny its prayers is to deny His own feelings, and refuse to do the very thing He Himself desires. Since God cannot do this, He cannot fail of hearing the prayer that is in sympathy with His own heart. In the state we are now considering the Christian is conscious of praying in the Spirit, and therefore must know that his prayer is accepted before God. I say he is conscious of this fact. And this deep praying of the heart goes on while the Christian is still pursuing the common vocations of life. The team he is driving or the book he professes to study is by no means so vividly a matter of conscious recognition to him as is his communion of soul with his God. In this state the soul is fully conscious of being perfectly submissive to God. "Not my will, O Lord, but Thine be done." Hence he knows that God will grant the blessing he asks. II. We are next to consider this position, namely, THAT IF OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE MAY HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT WE SHALL RECEIVE THE THINGS WE ASK. 1. This must be so, because it is His Spirit working in us that excites these prayers. 2. It is a remarkable fact that all real prayer seems to be summed up in the Lord's Prayer, and especially in those two most comprehensive petitions: "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Now let it be observed that God desires this result infinitely more than we do. 3. Yet let it be noted here that God may not answer every prayer according to its letter; but He surely will according to its spirit. III. WHY WILL GOD CERTAINLY ANSWER SUCH A PRAYER, AND HOW CAN WE KNOW THAT HE WILL? 1. The text affirms that "whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." The fundamental reason always of God's bestowing blessings is His goodness—His love. All good flows down from the great fountain of infinite goodness. Our obedience is only the condition of God's bestowing it—never the fundamental reason or ground of its bestowment. Obedience takes away the obstacle; then the mighty gushings of Divine love break forth. Obedience removes the obstacles; never merits or draws down the blessing. 2. If God were to give blessings upon any other condition, it would deceive multitudes, either respecting ourselves or Himself. If He were to answer our prayers, we being in a wrong state of mind, it would deceive others very probably; for if they did not know us well, they would presume that we were in a right state, and might be led to consider those things in us right

which are in fact wrong. Or, if they knew that we were wrong, and yet knew that God answered our prayers, what must they think of God? They could not avoid the conclusion that He patronises wrong-doing. 3. God is well pleased when we remove the obstacles out of the way of His benevolence. He is infinitely good, and lives to do good. Now, if it is His delight and His life to do good, how greatly must He rejoice when we remove all obstacles out of the way! Suppose the bottom of the vast Pacific should heave and pour its ocean tides over all the continents of the earth. This might illustrate the vast overflowings of the love of God; how grace and love are mounting up far and infinitely above all the mountains of your sins. How it would force its way and pour out its gushing floods wherever the least channel might be opened! And you would not need to fear that your little wants would drain it dry! Remarks: 1. Many persons, being told that God answers prayer for Christ's sake, overlook the condition of obedience. They have so loose an idea of prayer, and of our relations to God in it, and of His relations to us and to His moral government, that they think they may be disobedient and yet prevail through Christ. How little do they understand the whole subject! "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." When men come before God with their idols set up in their hearts, and the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face, the Lord says, "Should I be inquired of at all by them (Ezek. xiv. 3-5)?" 2. Persons never need hesitate, because of their past sins, to approach God with the fullest confidence. 3. Many continue the forms of prayer when they are living in sin, and do not try to reform, and even have no sincere desire to reform. All such persons should know that they grievously provoke the Lord to answer their prayers with fearful judgments. 4. It is only those that live and walk with God whose prayers are of any avail to themselves, to the Church, or to the world. 5. Sinner, if you will come back to the Lord, you may not only prevail for yourself, but for your associates and friends. Christian hearer, is it not a dreadful thing for you to be in a state in which you cannot prevail with God? Let us look around; how is it with you? Can you prevail with God? (C. G. Finney.) *Self-acquittal, and the confidence it produces*.—I. SELF-ACQUITTAL. "If our heart condemn us not." The case supposed is what may be supposed of any Christian, which is—1. That his heart does not condemn him on the ground of allowing and cherishing sin. 2. A Christian's heart does not condemn him on the ground of total insensibility to spiritual things. 3. Acquit you of a self-righteous spirit. Is it a sin, then, to be self-righteous? Undoubtedly. Must it not be sinful to justify ourselves in the face of a righteous law which condemns us at every point? 4. The destitution of Christian graces is another point on which the judgment of a Christian will acquit him. 5. Insincerity is also one of those things of which our hearts should be prepared to acquit us. II. THE CONFIDENCE WHICH RESULTS FROM THIS SELF-ACQUITTAL. 1. We have a persuasion of our being justified before God because the terms of our justification have been complied with. 2. We are conscious of possessing what God approves. "We assure our hearts before Him," because "we love indeed and in truth." 3. A persuasion of acceptableness in devotion is another part of his confidence toward God. 4. An expectation of gracious superintendence forms also a part of this confidence. 5. An assurance of preparation for judgment and eternity crowns the confidence of those whose hearts condemn them not. (*Essex Remembrancer*.)

Vers. 22-24. **And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments.**—*The conditions of power in prayer*.—I. THE ESSENTIALS OF POWER IN PRAYER. We must make a few distinctions at the outset. I take it there is a great difference between the prayer of a soul that is seeking mercy and the prayer of a man who is saved. I would say to every person present, whatever his character, if you sincerely seek mercy of God through Jesus Christ you shall have it. Qualifications for the sinner's first prayer I know of none except sincerity; but we must speak in a different way to those of you who are saved. You have now become the people of God, and while you shall be heard just as the sinner would be heard, and shall daily find the needful grace which every seeker receives in answer to prayer, yet you are under a special discipline peculiar to the regenerated family. There is something for a believer to enjoy over and above bare salvation; there are mercies, and blessings, and comforts, which render his present life useful, happy, and

honourable, and these he shall not have irrespective of character. To give a common illustration: If a hungry person were at your door, and asked for bread, you would give it him, whatever might be his character; you will also give your child food, whatever may be his behaviour; you will never proceed in any course of discipline against him, so as to deny him his needful food, or a garment to shield him from the cold; but there are many other things which your child may desire, which you will give him if he be obedient, but which you will not give if he be rebellious to you. I take it that this illustrates how far the paternal government of God will push this matter, and where it will not go. Understand also, that the text refers not so much to God's hearing a prayer of His servants now and then, for that He will do, even when His servants are out of course with Him; but the power in prayer here intended is continuous and absolute power with God; so that, to quote the words of the text, "whatsoever we ask of Him we receive." For this prayer there are certain pre-requisites. 1. The first is child-like obedience: "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments." 2. Next to this is another essential to victorious prayer, viz., child-like reverence. We receive what we ask, "because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Suppose any of us should be self-willed, and say, "I shall not do what pleases God, I shall do what pleases myself." Then observe what would be the nature of our prayers? Our prayers might then be summed up in the request, "Let me have my own way." And can we expect God to consent to that? 3. In the third place, the text suggests the necessity of child-like trust: "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." Let us come back to our family similitudes again. Suppose a child in the house does not believe his father's word; suppose, indeed, that he tells his brothers and sisters that his faith in his father is very weak. He mentions that wretched fact, but is not at all shocked that he should say such a thing, but he rather feels that he ought to be pitied, as if it were an infirmity which he could not avoid. I think a father so basely distrusted would not be in a very great hurry to grant such a son's requests; indeed, it is very probable that the petitions of the mistrustful son would be such as could not be complied with, even if his father were willing to do so, since they would amount to a gratification of his own unbelief and a dishonour to his parent. Expect not, therefore, to be heard when your prayer is suggested by an unbelieving heart: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; and trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." 4. The next essential to continued success in prayer is child-like love: "That we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as He gave us commandment." We should abound in love to God, love to Christ, love to the Church, love to sinners, and love to men everywhere. You must get rid of selfishness before God can trust you with the keys of heaven; but when self is dead, then He will enable you to unlock His treasures, and, as a prince, shall you have power with God and prevail. 5. Next to this, we must have child-like ways as well. "He that keepeth His commandments, dwelleth in Him, and He in him." It is one of a child's ways to love its home. Suppose one of you had a boy, who said, "Father, I do not like my home, I do not care for you; and I will not endure the restraints of family rule; I am going to live with strangers. But mark, father, I shall come to you every week, and I shall require many things of you; and I shall expect that you will give me whatever I ask from you." Why, if you are at all fit to be at the head of the house, you will say, "My son, how can you speak to me in such a manner? If you are so self-willed as to leave my house, can you expect that I will do your bidding? If you utterly disregard me, can you expect me to support you in your cruel unkindness and wicked insubordination. No, my son; if you will not remain with me and own me as a father, I cannot promise you anything." And so it is with God. 6. One thing more: it appears from the text that we must have a child-like spirit, for "hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." What is this but the Spirit of adoption—the Spirit which rules in all the children of God? The Holy Spirit if He rules in us, will subordinate our nature to His own sway, and then the prayers which spring out of our renewed hearts will be in keeping with the will of God, and such prayers will naturally be heard. II. THE PREVALENCE OF THESE ESSENTIAL THINGS. If they be in us and abound, our prayers cannot be barren or unprofitable. 1. First, if we have faith in God, there is no question about God's hearing our prayer. If we can plead in faith the name and blood of Jesus, we must obtain answers of peace. But a thousand evils are suggested. Suppose these prayers concern the laws of nature, then the scientific men are against us. What of that?

The Lord has ways of answering our prayers irrespective of the working of miracles or suspending laws. Perhaps there are other forces and laws which He has arranged to bring into action just at times when prayer also acts, laws just as fixed and forces just as natural as those which our learned theorists have been able to discover. The wisest men know not all the laws which govern the universe, nay, nor a tittle of them. If there be but faith in God, God must either cease to be, or cease to be true, or else He must hear prayer. The verse before the text says, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him." He who has a clear conscience comes to God with confidence, and that confidence of faith ensures to him the answer of his prayer. 2. But next, love must succeed too, since we have already seen that the man who loves in the Christian sense is in accord with God. God always hears the prayers of a loving man, because those prayers are the shadows of His own decrees. 3. Again, the man of obedience is the man whom God will hear, because his obedient heart leads him to pray humbly and with submission, for he feels it to be his highest desire that the Lord's will should be done. 4. Again, the man who lives in fellowship with God will assuredly speed in prayer, because if he dwells in God and God dwells in him, he will desire what God desires. 5. And here, again let us say, our text speaks of the Christian man as being filled with God's Spirit: "We know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." Who knows the mind of a man but the spirit of a man? So, who knows the things of God but the Spirit of God? And if the Spirit of God dwells in us, then He tells us what God's mind is; He makes intercession in the saints according to the will of God. Practical improvement: 1. The first is, we want to pray for a great blessing as a church. Very well. Have we the essentials for success? Are we believing in the name of Jesus Christ? Are we full of love to God and one another? 2. Next, are we doing that which is pleasing in God's sight? 3. The next question is, do we dwell in God? 4. Lastly, does the Spirit of God actuate us, or is it another spirit? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Righteousness essential to our pleasing God and to His hearing us*:—I. "We keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." So John writes; and so also Jesus speaks (John viii. 29). The language is the very same; the sense and spirit in which it is used must be the very same also. Jesus uttered the words for our sakes; and as expressing a human feeling which we may understand, and with which He would have us to sympathise. That human feeling in the bosom of Jesus must have been very simple and intensely filial; realising intensely His filial relation to the Father and His filial oneness with the Father. There is, if I may venture so to speak, a child-like simplicity, a sort of artless straightforwardness, in His saying so confidently, so lovingly, so naturally, "I do always those things that please Him." He has the Cross in view. Men, displeased with Him, are to "lift Him up," and leave Him to die in His agony alone. Not so the Father. He leaves me not alone; He is with me; "for I do always those things that please Him." Somewhat similar are the circumstances in which John would have us to say; "we do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Oh! to be converted, and become as little children! First, to be made willing as little children, that all this misunderstanding should be ended, and this breach thoroughly healed at once, and once for all, as the Father would have it to be, in the Son. And then, as little children, to know something of a little child's touching and artless simplicity, as we look with loving eye into the loving eye of the Father, and lovingly lip out the touching words: "We keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." II. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him." In this saying also we have the countenance of Jesus (John xi. 41, 42). "Thou hearest me always!" It is a blessed assurance. And the blessedness of it really lies, not so much in the good he gets from the Father's hearing him, as in the Father's hearing him itself; not so much in what he receives, as in his receiving it from the Father. For this is the charm, the joy, the consolation, of that access to the Father and that influence with the Father which you now have in common with the Son. It is not that you may enrich and gratify yourselves with what you win by asking from Him. But it is literally that whatever you ask you receive of Him, as His gift; the proof that He is ever with you and heareth you always. Ah! how then shall I ask anything at all? If such is my position, in and with Christ, how shall I have the heart or the hardihood to ask anything at all of the Father, except only that He may deal with me according to His good pleasure? If I am really on such a footing with the Father that "He heareth me always," and "whatsoever I ask I receive of Him"; if I have such influence with Him; if, as His dear child,

pleasing Him, and doing what pleases Him, I can so prevail with Him that He can refuse me nothing; what can I say? What can I do? I can but cast myself into His arms and cry, 'Thou knowest better than I, oh my Father! Father, Thy will be done. (R. S. Candlish, D.D.)' *Answers to prayer*:—We must make a wide distinction between a cause and a condition. The cause of anything is the actual reason why it is—the source from which it flows. The condition is something which comes in afterwards—super-added—to limit and to guide the actings of the first cause. Just, for example, as the rain is not caused by the particular state of the atmosphere, but it depends upon it; and there must be a certain rarity in the air, without which the rain would not fall. This is its condition. In like manner, "keeping the commandments" is not the cause of our prayers being answered, but it is the condition. Your prayers will not be answered unless you "keep the commandments." If we ask, "what is the reason why any prayer prevails with God?" the explanation lies very deep. You will find it among the grandnesses of the Holy Trinity. It is because God is a Father, and therefore of Himself loves to listen to His children's petitions, and to give them everything they ask. It is because every believer praying, prays in Christ—he presents Christ—he is in Christ. Hence the almost omnipotence of prayer. It is because whatever true prayer goes up to the throne of God, it is the Holy Ghost who prays it. Thus the whole Trinity meets to make the prayer of the weakest Christian, and this is the cause why prayer gets answered. Who has not asked of God a great many things? Who does not believe that many, at least, of the things which he asks are the legitimate, nay, the covenanted subjects of prayer? Who has not the evidence of his own heart that for many of these things, at all events, he has prayed, and is praying very earnestly. And yet, who has not to feel "My prayers are not answered; I do not obtain what I ask"? And who has not wondered why it is thus with his prayers? Now what is the reason? Certainly the cause cannot be in God; it must be in you. But where in you? I answer deliberately—in your life, in your heart. In some way or other, you are not "keeping" some "commandment," you are not "doing those things that are pleasing in His sight." Let us now pause upon the thought that the life rules the prayer—that according as you are holy, so will you receive answers to your prayers—that the condition of prayer is obedience, and without obedience prayer loses its prerogative. If a man is leading a religious life—not grieving his conscience—a man of pure thoughts and holy pleasures—that man grows into such a state of mind that he will only wish such things as God has promised to give him, he will not desire many temporal things; but his tastes will be spiritual, therefore his prayers are always keeping within the bounds of the promises. He will not ask nor long for anything which is not after the will of God to give. The Spirit which is in him will take care of that for him. 1. And here is the first grand secret of the success of a good man's prayer, which arises out of a conformity of his mind to the mind of God, and that conformity of his mind to the mind of God arises out of his daily habits of life. 2. Secondly, blessings may be ready to come down, and they may pour, but unless your heart be in a right state to receive them, they will pour in vain. The heart is hard, and they cannot come in; or it is so crowded that there is no room; or it is so weak that there is no holding. Now any state of wilful sin puts the heart in that state. Hence, prayer cannot be answered—for even should the answer come, it will not find entrance. 3. Thirdly, remember this; that when God says that a man must "keep His commandments" if he will have his prayers answered, part of the commandments is faith in Jesus Christ; and therefore the passage runs thus in very emphatic order—"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." 4. And then fourthly, it is quite evident that what God gives to those who are leading a godly and devoted life, He gives to the promotion of His own glory; because, either directly or indirectly, they will use the gift for the extension of His kingdom, and this gives a plain reason why their prayer should be granted. For shall God give to a man whose life has two faces—one face in practice, and another face in prayer? Shall He give to a sheer hypocrite? 5. And once more, why should not our heavenly Father do what all fathers do, love to give His good things to the child who tries to please Him most, and who delights in His society? (J. Vaughan, M.A.) **And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another.**—On the importance of faith in Christ and love to Christians:—I. THE GOSPEL, WHEREVER IT COMES, REQUIRES A FIRM TRUST IN THE MERITS AND GRACE OF THE LORD

JESUS CHRIST. 1. It is necessary to obtain pardon of sin. 2. It is necessary to produce purity of heart. 3. It is necessary to promote vital union with God, the fountain of life and felicity. II. THE GOSPEL REQUIRES BROTHERLY LOVE, AS A PRIMARY AND MOST IMPORTANT DUTY. 1. Let us consider the nature and extent of that brotherly love which the gospel inculcates and demands. It is esteem, complacency, compassion, benevolence. (1) Love is evinced by sincerely sympathising with our Christian brethren in their sufferings. (2) Love is evinced by cheerfully communicating of our substance to relieve the wants of our Christian brethren. 2. The grounds and obligations of brotherly love. (1) Faith in Christ, and love to Christians are represented as closely and inseparably connected. (2) There is an express and very particular command of Christ, enjoining brotherly love upon His followers. (3) The basis of our obligation is the cause of God. There are two cases to which this subject may be applied. 1. Let it serve as a test or touchstone of our personal piety. 2. Let this subject rouse us to more seriousness, activity, and zeal. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *The warrant of faith* :—The true believer has learned to look away from the killing ordinances of the old law. He turns with loathing from all trust in his own obedience and lays hold with joy upon the hope set before him in the one commandment contained in my text. I. THE MATTER OF BELIEVING, or what is it that a man is to believe in order to eternal life? That faith which saves the soul is believing on a person, depending upon Jesus for eternal life. We must believe Him to be God's Son—so the text puts it—"His Son." We must grasp with strong confidence the great fact that He is God: for nothing short of a Divine Saviour can ever deliver us from the infinite wrath of God. Furthermore, we must accept this Son of God as "Jesus," the Saviour. We must believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man out of infinite love to man, that He might save His people from their sins. We must look upon Jesus as "Christ," the anointed of the Father, sent into this world on salvation's errand, not that sinners might save themselves, but that He, being mighty to save, might bring many sons unto glory. Moreover, we should rejoice that as Jesus Christ, by His dying, put away for ever the sin of His people, so by His living He gave unto those who trust in Him a perfect righteousness, in which, despite their own sins, they are "accepted in the Beloved." We are also taught that if we heartily trust our soul with Christ, our sins, through His blood, are forgiven, and His righteousness is imputed to us. The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us, unless we really trust our souls in the Redeemer's hands. II. THE WARRANT OF BELIEVING. This is the commandment, that ye "believe on His Son Jesus Christ." 1. First, negatively. (1) That any other way of preaching the gospel-warrant is absurd. Are we to go running up and down the world proclaiming life to the living, casting bread to those who are fed already, and holding up Christ on the pole of the gospel to those who are already healed? (2) To tell the sinner that he is to believe on Christ because of some warrant in himself, is legal. If I lean on Christ because I feel this and that, then I am leaning on my feelings and not on Christ alone, and this is legal indeed. (3) Again, any other way of preaching than that of bidding the sinner believe because God commands him to believe, is a boasting way of faith. When we tell a sinner that filthy as he is, without any preparation or qualification, he is to take Jesus Christ to be his all in all, finding in Him all that he can ever need, we leave no room for self-glorification, all must be of grace. Law and boasting are twin brothers, but free grace and gratitude always go together. (4) Any other warrant for believing on Jesus than that which is presented in the gospel is changeable. Since everything within changes more frequently than ever does an English sky, if my warrant to believe in Christ be based within, it must change every hour; consequently I am lost and saved alternately. Can these things be so? (5) Again, any other warrant is utterly incomprehensible. Multitudes preach an impossible salvation. Personally, I do not remember to have been told from the pulpit to believe in Jesus as a sinner. I heard much of feelings which I thought I could never get, and frames after which I longed; but I found no peace until a true, free grace message came to me, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." (6) Yet again, I believe that the preaching of alarms of conscience and repentance as qualifications for Christ is unacceptable to the awakened sinner. Oh, I am ashamed of myself when I think of the way in which I have sometimes talked to awakened sinners. I am persuaded that the only true remedy for a broken heart is Jesus Christ's most precious blood. (7) Any other warrant for the sinner's faith than the gospel itself, is false and dangerous. It is as false as God is true, that anything in a sinner can be his warrant for believing in Jesus. There cannot be a

true and real hatred of sin where there is not faith in Jesus. All the sinner knows and feels before faith is only an addition to his other sins, and how can sin which deserves wrath be a warrant for an act which is the work of the Holy Spirit. How dangerous is the sentiment I am opposing. Take care of resting in your own experience. All that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled, and everything that getteth into Christ's place, however dear to thee, and however precious in itself, must be broken in pieces. Sinners, Jesus wants nothing of you, nothing whatsoever, nothing done, nothing felt; He gives both work and feeling. Ragged, penniless, just as ye are, lost, forsaken, desolate, with no good feelings and no good hopes, still Jesus comes to you, and in these words of pity He addresses you, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." 2. But now, positively, and as the negative part has been positive enough, we will be brief here. "This is the commandment." Do you want any warrant for doing a thing better than God's command to do it? The command to believe in Christ must be the sinner's warrant, if you consider the nature of our commission. How runs it? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It ought to run, according to the other plan, "preach the gospel to every regenerate person, to every convinced sinner, to every sensible soul." But it is not so; it is to "every creature." Then how is it put?—"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Where is there a word about the pre-requisites for believing. (1) I shall only add, that the blessings which flow from preaching Christ to sinners as sinners, are of such a character as prove it to be right. Do you not see that this levels us all? We have the same warrant for believing, and no one can exalt himself above his fellow. (2) Then how it inspires men with hope and confidence; it forbids despair. No man can despair if this be true; or if he do, it is a wicked, unreasonable despair, because if he has been never so bad, yet God commands him to believe. (3) Again, how it makes a man live close to Christ! If I am to come to Christ as a sinner every day, and I must do so, for the Word saith, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him"; if every day I am to come to Christ as a sinner, why then, how paltry all my doings look! what utter contempt it cast upon all my fine virtues, my preachings, my prayings, and all that comes of my flesh! and though it leads me to seek after purity and holiness, yet it teaches me to live on Christ and not on them, and so it keeps me at the fountain head. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's one commandment*:—Every thoughtful reader of the Word of God must have been struck with the very great importance that the sacred writers attach to names. In the opening chapter of the Sacred Volume we read of God giving their names to the works of His hands: "God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night." The very first thing that Adam, the first man, does, is by God's direction to give names to all God's creatures. Then, when God entered into covenant with Abram, He changed his name from Abram to Abraham. When God wrestled with Jacob, He changed his name from Jacob to Israel. But we must pass on to the New Testament. It also begins with God giving a name. On its very title-page we have God sending an angel to give a name to One not yet born—that Second Adam—that Beginning of the New Creation of God, whom He sent into the world. In the very first chapter of the New Testament we have two names assigned to the Saviour. First, the angels say, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Then the name of "Emmanuel," given to Him in the spirit by Isaiah, the prophet, is also claimed as His by the Evangelist. These two names, given to the Second Adam in the first chapter of the book of the New Covenant, answer to the two names by which God made Himself known to the children of Israel. Emmanuel signifies what the Saviour is in Himself—God with us; God in our nature. Jesus rather signifies what He is to His people—their "Saviour from sin." It means literally, "The Lord is salvation," or "The Lord our salvation." I. WHAT IS MEANT BY BELIEVING IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST? It must mean more than believing that some years ago a person came into this world who had such a name given to him. It is believing that Jesus Christ is to us what His name means. Now let us take the best known name of our Saviour—"Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord." We know Him as the only Son of God—as Jesus—as Christ. Take the first of these—the Son of God. See how our Lord insists upon our believing in this, as His name, in His discourse with Nicodemus (John iii. 18). Now a man who believes this respecting the Person who was then speaking to Nicodemus, and who was afterwards crucified and raised again, believes in the greatest possible instance of God's love. It is quite clear, also, that any interpretation which attaches to the term "Son of God" a lower meaning

than that of "only-begotten Son," really destroys all the testimony which such a text as "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" bears to the exceeding love of God. Now let us proceed to the human name by which we know the Son of God—Jesus Christ. The name "Jesus" signifies "the Lord our salvation." He has saved us from the guilt of sin by His sacrifice on the Cross. Again, He saves us from the power of sin by His indwelling Spirit making us partakers of His nature, so that His risen life is in us our spiritual life. And so with that title of Messiah, or Christ, or Anointed One, to which is joined His name of Jesus. It is implied in the very fact of His being called Christ that He has been anointed by the Holy Ghost to be the Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. Believing in the name of God's Son, Jesus, then, is believing that God's Son is that very Lord, our Saviour, which His name implies. This is God's commandment. No, no; it is only part of God's commandment: for the one commandment of God, which God inspired the beloved disciple to give to His people, is made up of two things. "This is His commandment, that we believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He"—i.e. as Christ Himself—"gave us commandment." Any one who knows anything of the history of the Church, or about religious society, knows well that a man may have, or at least may express, not only belief in the name, but the sincerest trust in the finished work of Christ, and yet be bitter to those who differ from him, uncharitable to those who oppose him, and churlish to those who are at all in his way. St. Paul writes his Epistle to the Ephesians to men who realised the gospel far better than any Christians now do; and instead of "leaving the gospel to itself," and simply insisting on believing in Christ crucified, the apostle actually bids those who are supposed to believe the gospel not to lie, nor to steal, nor to use bad language, nor to grieve the Holy Spirit, but to walk in love, and put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil-speaking. Similarly with St. Peter. If there is any place in which he declares the precious truths of the gospel in terms full of consolation and good hope, it is in the first chapter of his Epistle; but, so far from thinking that all this would do its own work, he tells them at the beginning of the very next chapter to lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocries, and envies, and all evil-speaking. But what is "loving one another"? Why, according to St. Paul, the apostle of justification, it is keeping the last six commandments (Rom. xiii. 8). And in the next chapter he reckons working ill to our neighbour's soul, as well as to his body, as a breach of love. But what, according to St. John, is "loving one another"? This is His commandment, that ye believe in all the power and grace that is contained in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and seek out, visit, relieve, and comfort your sick and needy fellow-Christians. This is His commandment, that ye believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, and be kindly affectioned one to another, in honour preferring one another. This is His commandment, that ye believe in the name of Him who saves His people from their sins, and put away from you all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, and all malice. This is His commandment, that ye believe in the name of Him who was anointed by God to be a Prince and a Saviour, and covet earnestly that best gift of a charity that suffereth long, is kind, &c. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *Faith a work*:—I. THE WORD "BELIEVE," which enters this Epistle for the first time at this point, is one of the royal words of the New Testament. It contains three ideas. 1. First there is knowledge. That which you believe must first announce itself as a fact to your intellect. It must enter the crystal chamber of consciousness. 2. Then follows assent. That is the answer of your mind to the claims made upon it by the fact. 3. Then comes the last and most important of all, viz., trust. You say to yourself, "This is truth—this will bear," and you put your whole weight upon it. II. BUT WHAT IS TO BE DONE WITH IT? To what shall a man attach himself by means of this threefold cord? The object around which we are bid throw our faith is no series of propositions—not any Church—not even the Bible as a whole, but the full name of Jesus Christ. The full title of Christ, as given here, gathers up into itself every ray of spiritual truth diffused through the whole Bible. "His Son Jesus Christ." Say that seriously, simply, honestly, without qualification or reserve, and you have repeated the full Christian creed. That name is the gospel. III. THIS IS GOD'S COMMANDMENT. Note that well. Faith is set before us as a duty, as a work. Now, if God commands us to believe, then surely belief is something that is possible to us all. We cannot imagine God commanding the impossible. Then, too, unbelief is a sin. It is positive disobedience. And further, St. John says that belief in Christ is not simply a commandment, but that it is *the* commandment. Faith working by love is the

spiritual unity of all commandments, and unbelief is therefore the root of all sins. IV. Now, how far have we the power to believe in Christ? To what extent is faith subject to our will? It is worth while finding this out, for the measure of our power to believe will be the measure of our sin and of our punishment if we disbelieve. 1. If we look into the Bible we shall find two sets of texts. One set ascribes the whole work of redemption to God—faith, repentance, love, holiness, are all declared to be gifts of God. Another whole class of texts describes repentance, faith, purification, and love as acts which each man ought to, and therefore can perform himself. 2. Again, in the teaching of the Church we have two opposite camps of opinion on this matter. Augustine held very strong views on this point. He taught that when Adam fell he lost his freedom of will; the will sank into a state of infirmity, in which it had no power of choice at all between good and evil—only the power of always choosing the wrong; and through his sin all his successors fell into the same state of bondage. In fact, as one said, he taught that in the fall of man one whole piece of human nature had fallen out! But out of this mass of mutilated humanity God has elected a number to be saved. These must be saved. God's grace overpowers them, and they are saved by a fiat of the Almighty Will. As to the others, they must be lost—they are reprobate. Pelagius held very strong views on the subject of our text. "All men," he said, "are as free to choose as Adam was. The will is not impaired, and can of itself, at any moment, free itself from sin." Man stands at the parting of the ways, and he has full power to choose either. Man—man's own power, is the note that is heard sounding all through his teaching. Grace scarcely appears at all. Thus, while the one almost did away with the free will of man, the other almost did away with the grace of God. And these two men divided the Christian world into opposing factions. The majority followed Augustine, though many too followed Pelagius. And so from age to age the pendulum of opinion swung from extreme to extreme. 3. Neither of these views is right. The first libels both God and man. It represents God as partial and arbitrary. It reduces man to a poor puppet of destiny. It robs religion of morality and deprives heaven of holiness. It takes away the guilt of sin, and lifts the blame of hell from the souls of men and lays it at the feet of God. Equally distant from the New Testament truth is the other view. It renders the best half of Scripture meaningless, and the whole mediatorial work of Christ needless. It peoples the earth with an imaginary race of moral giants, each of whom is sufficient in himself, and fills heaven with a multitude of self-saved souls. 4. But while the many thus swung from one extreme to another, there have always been in the Church of Christ a party of common-sense men, able, like Melancthon, to combine the two sets of texts, and to see that they are not contradictions—only the two opposite poles of one great truth. Salvation, they teach, is a work of God's grace, in which each man is required and enabled to take an active part. Mankind is a fallen race, but not an abandoned race. Man cannot save himself, yet God's preparing grace has kept alive in each man enough of moral life to respond to the offer of Christ, a something living in each man to which the Christ can make His appeal. So men are utterly unable to save themselves. But they are not literally lifeless like a stone or stick. Faith is pre-eminently a matter of will. The text does not say, "Believe this doctrine or that," but "Trust yourselves in Christ's hands—trust Christ as your Saviour." (*J. M. Gibbon.*)

Ver. 24. **And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.—Our abiding in God by obedience:—**1. In the keeping of God's commandments there is this great reward, that he that doeth so "dwelleth in God, and God in him." If this mutual indwelling is not to be mere absorption, which some dreamers in John's day held it to be; if it is not to be the swallowing up of our conscious individual personality in the infinite mind or intelligence of God; if it is to conserve the distinct relationship of God to man, the Creator to the creature, the Ruler to the subject, the Father to the child; it must be realised and must develop itself, or act itself out, through the means of authority or law on the one side, and obedience or the keeping of the commandments on the other. It is, in fact, the very consummation and crown of man's old, original relation to God—as that relation is not only restored, but perfected and gloriously fulfilled, in the new economy of grace. 2. The manner of God's abiding in us, or at least the way in which we may know that He abides in us, is specified:—"Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." We are to distinguish here

between our dwelling in God and His dwelling in us. Our dwelling in God is to be known by our "keeping His commandments"; God's dwelling in us, by "the Spirit which He giveth us." And yet, the two means of knowledge are not far apart. They are not only strictly consistent with one another; they really come together in one point. For the Spirit is here said to be given to us—not in order to our knowing that God abideth in us, in the sense of His opening our spiritual eye and quickening our spiritual apprehension—but rather as the medium of our knowing it, the evidence or proof by which we know it. And how are we to recognise the Spirit as given to us? How otherwise than by recognising the fruit of the gift? The Spirit given to us is, as to His movement or operation, unseen and unfelt. But the fruit of the Spirit is palpable and patent. "It is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." For "against such there is no law" (Gal. v. 22, 23). 3. From all this it follows that the counsel or warning, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God" (chap. iv. 1), is as needful for us as it was for those to whom John wrote. We may think that it is the Spirit of God whom we are receiving into our hearts and cherishing there, when it may really be another spirit altogether—one of the many spirits inspiring the "many false prophets that are gone out into the world." Therefore we must "try the spirits." (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *Of the manner and importance of the Spirit's indwelling:—*

I. WHAT THE GIVING OF THE SPIRIT IMPORTS AND SIGNIFIES. The Spirit of God is said to come upon men in a transient way, for their present assistance in some particular service, though in themselves they be unsanctified persons. Thus the Spirit of God came upon Balaam (Numb. xxiv. 2), enabling him to prophesy of things to come. But whatever gifts He gives to others, He is said to be given, to dwell, and to abide only in believers (1 Cor. iii. 6). An expression denoting both His special propriety in them, and gracious familiarity with them. There is a great difference betwixt the assisting and the indwelling of the Spirit; the one is transient, the other permanent. II. HOW THIS GIVING OF THE SPIRIT EVIDENTLY PROVES AND STRONGLY CONCLUDES THAT SOUL'S INTEREST IN CHRIST UNTO WHOM HE IS GIVEN. 1. The Spirit of God in believers is the very bond by which they are united unto Christ. If, therefore, we find in ourselves the bond of union, we may warrantably conclude that we have union with Jesus Christ. 2. The Scripture everywhere makes this giving, or indwelling of the Spirit, the great mark and trial of our interest in Christ; concluding from the presence of it in us, positively, as in the text; and from the absence of it, negatively, as in Rom. viii. 3. That which is a certain mark of our freedom from the covenant of works, and our title to the privileges of the covenant of grace, must needs also infer our union with Christ and special interest in Him; but the giving or indwelling of the sanctifying Spirit in us is a certain mark of our freedom from the first covenant, under which all Christless persons still stand, and our title to the special privileges of the second covenant, in which none but the members are interested; and, consequently, it fully proves our union with the Lord Jesus. 4. If the eternal decree of God's electing love be executed, and the virtues and benefits of the death of Christ applied by the Spirit unto every soul in whom He dwelleth, as a spirit of sanctification, then such a giving of the Spirit unto us must needs be a certain mark and proof of our special interest in Christ; but the decree of God's electing love is executed, and the benefits of the blood of Christ are applied to every soul in whom He dwelleth, as a spirit sanctification. This is plain from 1 Pet. i. 2. 5. The giving of the Spirit to us, or His residing in us, as a sanctifying Spirit, is everywhere in Scripture made the pledge and earnest of eternal salvation, and consequently must abundantly confirm and prove the soul's interest in Christ (Eph. i. 13, 14). Uses: I shall lay down some general rules for the due information of our minds in this point, upon which so much depends. (1) Though the Spirit of God be given to us, and worketh in us, yet He worketh not as a natural and necessary, but as a free and arbitrary agent: He neither assists nor sanctifies, as the fire burneth, as much as He can assist and sanctify, but as much as He pleaseth; "dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. xii. 11). (2) There is a great difference in the manner of the Spirit's working before and after the work of regeneration. Whilst we are unregenerate He works upon us as upon dead creatures that work not at all with Him; and what motion there is in our souls is a counter-motion to the Spirit; but after regeneration it is not so, He then works upon a complying and willing mind; we work, and He assists (Rom. viii. 26). (3) Though the Spirit of God be given to believers, and worketh in them yet believers themselves may do or omit such things as may obstruct the working and obscure the very being of the Spirit of God in them. (4) Those things which dis-

cover the indwelling of the Spirit in believers are not so much the matter of their duties, or substance of their actions, as the more secret springs, holy aims, and spiritual manner of their doing or performing of them. (5) All the motions and operations of the spirit are always harmonious, and suitable to the written Word. (Isa. viii. 20). (6) Although the works of the Spirit, in all sanctified persons, do substantially agree, both with the written Word and with one another, yet as to the manner of infusion and operation there are found many circumstantial differences. (7) There is a great difference found betwixt the sanctifying and the comforting influences of the Spirit upon believers, in respect of constancy and permanency. Evidence 1. In whomsoever the Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of sanctification, to that man or women He hath been, more or less, a Spirit of conviction and humiliation. Evidence 2. As the Spirit of God hath been a convincing, so He is a quickening Spirit, to all those to whom He is given (Rom. viii. 2). Evidence 3. Those to whom God giveth His Spirit have a tender sympathy with all the interests and concerns of Christ. Evidence 4. Wherever the Spirit of God dwelleth, He doth in some degree mortify and subdue the evils and corruptions of the soul in which He resides. Evidence 5. Wherever the Spirit of God dwelleth in the way of sanctification, in all such He is the Spirit of prayer and supplication (Rom. viii. 26). Evidence 6. Wherever the Spirit of grace inhabits, there is an heavenly, spiritual frame of mind accompanying and evidencing the indwelling of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 5, 6). Evidence 7. Those to whom the Spirit of grace is given are led by the Spirit. Sanctified souls give themselves up to the government and conduct of the Spirit; they obey His voice, beg His direction, follow His motions, deny the solicitations of the flesh and blood, in obedience to Him (Gal. i. 16). And they that do so, they are the sons of God. (*John Flavel.*) *The indwelling of God:—*

I. THE PRIVILEGE. It is the indwelling of God in the soul—His “abiding in us.” The sentiment is not peculiar to John, but the frequency of it is. Let us look at this “abiding.” There was a time when the persons here referred to were without God in the world; when another being had possession of them—“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” But God hath delivered them from the power of darkness, and translated them into the kingdom of His dear Son. God has entered, and taken possession of the heart. Perhaps, too, after the parent had pleaded to no purpose; perhaps after the minister had long laboured for nought; perhaps after he had been wooed and awed, blest and chastised, in vain. Then, God says, “I will work, and who shall let it?” His abiding in us supposes not only entrance, but continuance. But how does He abide in them? If I should answer this question negatively, I should say, not personally, as it was in the Redeemer Himself. “In Him,” says the apostle, “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” “He that hath seen Me,” said He, “hath seen the Father.” Nor does He abide in them essentially. Thus indeed He is in them, as to the perfection of His nature, as to His Omnipresence, as to the presence by which He fills heaven and earth; but when His presence is spoken of by the way of providence or privilege, it intends some peculiar regard. “The Lord is nigh unto all those who are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” But if I am required to answer this question positively, I should say, first, objectively. He dwells in His people by a real union; a gracious union; by a spiritual operative influence in all the powers of their souls. Thus He dwells in them as water in a well, our Saviour’s own image. “The water that I shall give him shall be in him, a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” He dwells in them as the sap in the tree, sustaining its life and producing fertility. He dwells in them as the soul dwells in the body, enlivening every limb and pervading every part. Can you explain this? Why the doctrine of union is one of the hardest chapters in all natural philosophy? First, explain to me how the soul is in the body; the spirit, without parts, combining with matter and coalescing with substance; explain first, how God is in the highest heavens, and is also about our path, and about our bed, and spying out all our ways, words, and thoughts. **II. HOW IT IS TO BE ASCERTAINED.** The apostle says, “We know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us.” Now, what was the Spirit God had given to them? Not the Spirit of miraculous agency. No, but the Spirit which we call the common influences of the Spirit of God. We call it “common,” not because all men have it, but because all Christians have it; and all Christians will experience it to the very end of time. But as the thing exemplified should always be plainer than the thing proved, let us inquire what manner of spirit that is which evinces the privilege of union with God? “We know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.” I am

aware the Spirit is said to anoint us; He is said to seal us to the day of redemption; and to bear witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God. But this is not done by the sounds in the air, and by sudden impulses in the mind, but by His residing in us. Our having this Spirit is the anointing; our having this Spirit is the sealing; and our having it is the witness. This Spirit is known by five attributes. 1. It is the Spirit of conviction; and the process is generally this:—He first convinces of the guilt of sin; then of its pollution; and then awakens in us a sense of its abhorrence; causing us to repent before God as in dust and ashes. 2. It is the Spirit of faith. The work of the Spirit puts the man into the position of looking to Christ, and of coming to Christ, and of dealing with Christ, concerning all the affairs of the soul and eternity. "When He is come," says the Saviour, "He shall glorify me." 3. It is the Spirit of grace. It is expressly called the Spirit of grace and of supplication, which was to be poured upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 4. It is a Spirit of sanctification. Hence, He is so often called "the Holy Spirit," and in one place, "the Spirit of holiness." 5. It is the Spirit of affection. We read therefore of "the Spirit of love." "He that loveth Him that begat," says John, "loveth Him also that is begotten of Him." And, says the Saviour, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." III. THE USEFULNESS OF THIS SUBJECT. 1. The subject is useful to induce us to adore the condescension of God. David was struck with this; he was astonished that God should "try" man and "visit" him. Solomon was still more struck with His dwelling with man, "Will God in very deed dwell with man upon earth?" But John goes further than this, and speaks of God as not only visiting man, as not only dwelling with man, but of His abiding in him! "Who is a God like unto Thee?" 2. This subject is useful, also, as it reproves those who think there is nothing in religion connected with certainty. There are marks enough, if you are in the way everlasting, to show that you are not in a mistaken direction, but in a right road. 3. This subject is useful also, as it censures those who seek to determine their religious state by any other standard than that which is Divine. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." 4. Then this subject is useful to comfort those who are partakers of the Holy Ghost. They should rejoice in the Lord always. 5. Lastly, let us turn the medal, and then we shall see the subject is useful to alarm those who, as the apostle terms it, are sensual, not having the Spirit of God in you. Have you the Spirit?—the spirit of prayer, and the spirit of love, and the spirit of meekness? Rather, have you not a proud spirit? an ungrateful spirit? a careless spirit? a revengeful spirit? or a covetous spirit? "This spirit cometh not from Him that calleth you." And if you have nothing better to actuate you than this, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. (*W. Jay.*) *The abiding witness*:—Some persons crave for Christian assurance under a mistaken apprehension of its nature. They seem to regard it as something over and above the ordinary processes of grace. The assurance of faith is simply an exalted and confirmed faith, and rests therefore on the promises which are the common foundation of all faith. There are persons, on the other hand, who shrink from the name of assurance, and repudiate the thing as if it were arrogant and presumptuous. If our salvation were our own work, or if it were half our own work and half God's work; if our own wisdom, strength, or righteousness had anything whatever to do with the meritorious grounds of our acceptance, the scruple would be a just one. But the work is altogether God's work. Hence to doubt the full completion of the work is to doubt God, not ourselves. I. THE DIGNITY, NOT ONLY OF THE STATE OF THE SAINT, BUT ALSO OF THE EVIDENCE BY WHICH HE IS ASSURED OF IT. This state consists in the abiding presence of God; and this not only above us and around us, but in us. He who is Omnipotent, Omniscent, Omnipresent—the Creator who called this world into being—the Preserver, who maintains it in being—the King who rules and governs us—the Judge before whose tremendous throne we shall hereafter stand to give an account of the things we have done in the body—that God who is Indivisible, but is everywhere at once, the whole Deity with power and wisdom, majesty and truth, with every attribute and glory complete—He, He Himself, dwells within the saints. He dwells—not flashing a ray of His glory now and then, breaking the natural darkness of the soul for a moment, and then leaving it again darker than before, but abiding there, dwelling—like the sun in the heavens, with His beams hidden, it may be, sometimes with earthly clouds and mists, but like the sun behind the clouds filling the soul, as in ancient times He filled the material temple, with the glory of His presence. Yet let us take care not to mistake this matter. The cleansing blood of Christ must be

sprinkled upon us, and in that fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness must we be washed from the guilt of sin; the quickening power of the Holy Ghost must have descended upon us, dispelled the darkness, broken down the strength and taken away the love of sin, before this state can be ours. But even when this is done, the motions of sin still remain. Sanctification is so imperfect here below, our strongest faith so feeble, our brightest hope so dim, our most fervent love so cold and selfish, our waywardnesses and inconsistencies so many, that it is wonderful that God should dwell within such hearts. Yet, child of God, it is the sober, literal fact. II. WITH THIS DIGNITY WE MUST COMBINE THE DEFINITE CLEARNESS OF THE TEST, WHICH PROVES OUR POSSESSION OF IT, FOR WE MIGHT OTHERWISE FIND GREAT DIFFICULTY. "Hereby we know"—by what? The word "hereby" is not to be thrown forward as a mere synonym for the words "by the Spirit whom He hath given us"; but it is to be thrown back to the words, "He that keepeth His commandments." Hereby—namely, by keeping His commandments—we know. We have great cause to bless God for thus resting our hopes on our obedience, which every honest mind can see and recognise. The lesson draws close and indissoluble the connection between faith and holiness, the heart and the life, the religion and the character and conduct. It makes Christianity to be a real practical working power. Step by step, link by link, assurance of faith and hope is inseparably united to practical holiness of life. Yet there are one or two cautions to be borne in mind. The obedience which is the proof of the Spirit's presence is not a holiness finished or perfect; otherwise it would belong to none of us on this side heaven; it would be a hope of the future, not a blessing of the present. It is not a finished holiness, but only a holiness begun. The will is like a river which here and there beneath an overhanging bank may seem to stand still, and here and there in some narrow bay may seem to retrograde, but which in its main current still sets slowly, but surely, towards the ocean. It is, further, a holiness not complete, but progressive. Every day brings its struggle, but brings likewise its victory. Further yet, this Christian obedience is not partial. Christian obedience accepts and follows the whole law. III. THE INFINITE BLESSEDNESS BOTH OF THE STATE AND OF THE EVIDENCE. If Christian obedience were an outward and compulsory thing, bringing by mere force the unwilling heart into subjection to the letter of a law, it would be painful. But it is not this. It is a willing, loving, generous thing. It is a law working from within the soul itself, not a compulsion from the outside. It is not like a stream of water thrown from without upon us, but like a living fountain springing up within us—"a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And why is it this, but because it is the Spirit's work, and because God abideth in us? Is there not always joy in life? Is there not joy in nature's life, as, bursting the chains of death-like winter, happy creation breaks into beauty, and flowers and fruits and trees and birds sing together? Is there not joy in human life when, fresh and sweet as a spring flower, the buoyant child laughs, and sings, and plays? Is there not joy in the sense of life, and only so far pain in it as the mortality of a fallen nature interrupts it with the seeds of decay, and clouds it with the shadows of death? And is there not joy in the life of the soul, since it is the very life of God fresh from the indwelling Deity, as if He became a part of ourselves and filled us with His glory? (*Canon Garbett.*)

CHAPTER IV.

Vers. 1-3. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.—*The test of truth—confessing Christ:*—In the Word of God we are warned against sitting in judgment on others. Especially are we enjoined not to cultivate a censorious and uncharitable spirit. But in the text Christians seem to be enjoined to exercise their powers of judgment and discrimination in another way. They are called upon to try the spirits whether they are of God. To try a spirit is not to try an individual; it is not to try even a community of men; rather is it to put to the test of enlightened reason some principle they follow as true, some institution they uphold as right. I. THE SCIENTIFIC FALSE PROPHET; or anti-Christ in the schools, especially in connection with the study and interpretation of nature. There are three points in the scientific world that appear to be prominent.

These points are first, that our highest business here is to study nature—that nature at least in relation to this present life is supreme; second, that natural or physical law is absolutely uniform or unbending, and has been so since the creation of the universe; third, that the human race is to be elevated, regenerated, or truly developed from the basis of nature, and in accordance merely with natural laws. Now, if it really were so, we can have no hesitation in saying that the position and claims of the Christian religion are quite incompatible with it. If the dream of such thinkers were destined to be realised, Christianity must slowly fade from the earth, with other superstitions. It is only too evident what the spirit and hope of such systems is. Take the first position—that nature or the visible material scene around us is the supreme influence and power in relation to our life upon the earth. That involves the denial of a Divine revelation. Take the second position—that for incalculable ages Nature has been undeviating in her course. That law maintains its slow, grand march through millions of years, without deviation, acceleration, or interruption. That may be thought a grand idea; but as it is advanced in certain systems, it is not a true one; for it is a shutting out of the miraculous altogether. Take the third position—that man is saved by obedience to natural law, and that the human race will be elevated and ennobled only as men study the laws of nature, and conform themselves to them. That is a doctrine put forth by some. It looks with a sinister and disparaging eye on Christianity and the Church. It does not hesitate sometimes to say that all religions have been a misfortune to the world. When the plague comes this spirit declares that prayer is useless, and that the only thing that can save us is to perfect our sanitary arrangements. This is a spirit of antichrist, for it is the denial of a moral government in the Scriptural sense of the word. II. THE SECULAR FALSE PROPHET; or antichrist in the kingdoms of the world. In as far as the kingdoms of the world are necessary to maintain order, to suppress violence, and repel invasion, they are the ordinance of God, but in so far as they perpetuate injustice and wrong, of course they cannot be of God; they are babels and antichrists, standing in the way of His kingdom who has the absolute right to rule. Now it is the duty of every one to whom the light of the gospel comes to become a subject of the kingdom of Christ. That light will show him what is wrong in existing systems. It will show him that some of them are fundamentally wrong, but it will not teach him to remedy that wrong by violence and revolution. The eternal moral principle that truth and justice cannot be permanently advanced by mere physical force, enters into the foundation of Christ's kingdom. And if any one asks, How then are we to hold our own in the world? the only answer that can be given is, that it is our duty to do as Christ did. Because God lives all those who have faith in Him will live also. III. THE LITERARY FALSE PROPHET; or antichrist in the world of letters. This is a time of great thinkers, great writers, great book-makers. We do not speak of individuals. We have no right to judge them; but their works we may judge, and the spirit of their works we may try whether it is of God or no. Now we know that some of the greatest works in the world are books written in defence of Christianity; but it is also true that some writers of considerable power have taken up positive ground against Christianity and have sufficiently shown that they do not believe that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. They do not believe in Him as the eternal Son of God, and the only Saviour of men. Some of them have written books expressly to deny this. But this is not so much what the text suggests. There are other writers of great power and influence in both hemispheres of the world who occupy rather a negative and undefined position in relation to Christ and Christianity. They have written upon almost every subject of human thought—upon government and the Church, upon history and biography, upon morals and destiny. They have gone round the world to find heroes and representative men, and have said many true and striking things about them; but, strange to say, they have never clearly informed the world as to what they think of Christ. They are unaccountably reticent upon a subject that is the most important of all. IV. THE RELIGIOUS FALSE PROPHET; or antichrist in the ecclesiastical world. The antichrist of an atheistical, political system; of a poor, blind, hero-worship—the worship of mere intellectual ability and unfathomable cunning; and the antichrist of a barren Protestantism which has a name to live while it is dead—such forms as these are little better than the Papacy. V. THE SOCIAL FALSE PROPHET; or antichrist in the work of everyday life. That is the most deadly form of antichrist which professes great respect for Christianity, but lives in continual opposition to its principles; and we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that a great amount

of the Christian profession of this country seems little more than a mere profession. This is called a Christian country, but look at the woe that are festering in the midst of us; think of the rank worldliness and heartlessness that is baptized into the name of Christ. Is this not the reason why prayer seems unanswered, and troubles are thickening upon the land? (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*) *Our righteousness exercised in trying the spirits; the test, confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*:—I. It properly belongs to the Spirit to “confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” He had much to do with the flesh in which Jesus Christ came. He prepared for Him a body in the Virgin’s womb, so as to secure that He came into the world pure and sinless. And all throughout His sojourn on earth the Spirit ministered to Him as “Jesus Christ come in the flesh”; He could not minister to Him otherwise. It is the flesh, or humanity, of Jesus Christ that brings Him within the range of the Spirit’s gracious care. It was His human experience that the Spirit animated and sustained; and it is with His human experience also that the Spirit deals when He “takes of what is Christ’s and shows it unto us.” His object is to make us one with “Jesus Christ as come in the flesh.” That practically is His confession to us and in us. Let us see what it implies. 1. He identifies us with Jesus Christ in His humiliation. In our Divine regeneration He brings us to be subject to the authority and commandments of God—willingly subject—our nature being renewed into the likeness of His. 2. The Spirit identifies us with Jesus Christ, not only in His humiliation, but in its conditions and liabilities. His coming in the flesh is His consenting to be crucified for us; the Spirit in us confessing Him as come in the flesh makes us willing to be crucified with Him. “In my flesh I shall see God” was the hope of the patriarch Job. It is made sure by Jesus Christ come in the flesh, and by the Spirit confessing in us that He is come. II. This accordingly is the secret of our present victory over anti-Christian spirits and men: “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them” (ver. 4). 1. The victory is a real victory got over the false prophets or teachers, who are not of God, whom the spirit of antichrist inspires. And it is a victory over them personally; not over their doctrines and principles merely, but over themselves—“ye have overcome them.” It is the actual “coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh,” and His actual accomplishment, in the flesh, of all that in the flesh He came for, that they resent and resist. It is that which Satan, the original spirit of antichrist, would fain have set himself to hinder; moving Herod to slay Jesus in His childhood, and Judas to betray Him in his manhood; tempting Jesus to make shipwreck of His integrity. And it is your actual personal participation with Him, as “Jesus Christ come in the flesh”; your being really one with Him in that wondrous humiliation, in its spirit and its fruit; that, so far as you are concerned, they seek to frustrate. In realising that, you get the better of them; confessing thus Jesus Christ come in the flesh, you have overcome them. 2. Your having overcome them is connected with your “being of God” (ver. 4); which again is intimately connected with your “confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (ver. 2). Your being of God is the intermediate link between your confessing thus Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (ver. 2), and your having overcome them who reject that truth (ver. 4). The essential characteristic of the spirit of antichrist is that it is “not of God.” It does not look at the Saviour and the salvation as on the side of God; rather it takes an opposite view, and subjects God to man. It subordinates everything to human interests and human claims; looks at everything from a human and mundane point of view; measures everything by a human standard; submits everything to human opinion—in a word, conceives and judges of God after the manner of man. This, indeed, may be said to be the distinctive feature of all false religions, as well as of all corruptions of the true religion. They exalt man. They dislike such representations as bring in the element of God’s holy name and righteous authority, and lay much stress upon that element as one of primary consideration in the plan of saving mercy. Hence they naturally shrink from owning explicitly Jesus Christ as come in the flesh to make atonement by satisfying Divine justice. But “ye are of God, little children,” in this matter; in the view that you take, and the conception that you form of Jesus Christ come in the flesh; of the end of His coming, and the manner in which that end is attained. You look at that great fact, first and chiefly in its relation to God, and as on the side of God. It is from God and for God that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. So He always taught; and so you firmly believe. You sit at the feet of Jesus Christ come in the flesh. You stand beside His Cross. You do not now stumble at the mystery of its bloody expiation; or quarrel with the

great propitiation-sacrifice through unbelief of its necessity. Nay, being "of God," on His side and in His interest in the whole of this great transaction, you can meekly, in faith, commit to Him and leave in His hands even the most terrible of those ultimate and eternal consequences, involving the aggravated guilt and final ruin of many, that you cannot but see to be inseparably mixed up with the confession that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." (R. S. Candlish, D.D.)

Testing false teachers:—I. THE GENERAL COUNSEL—"Beloved, believe not every spirit," &c. Those who are called "spirits" in the first part of it are denominated "prophets" in the last. They are the ministers of the Word, whether they write or preach it. They are supposed to be under the dominion of other spirits. These may be good, or they may be evil. Such being the position of the teachers of the Church, we must at once perceive the propriety of the counsel which is given respecting them. "Believe not every spirit." You are not to suppose because a man is a minister he must be sound in his views, or faithful in his office, or exemplary in his life. All professing ministers must be tested by members of the Church. Nor let us fail particularly to notice what is to be tried in the matter of all ministers of the Word. It is "whether they are of God." How solemn the duty! Has God sent them? Do they bear their credentials from Him? Do they speak His truth? Do they maintain His cause? Do they promote His glory? A reason is assigned for this duty, "Because many false prophets are gone out into the world." It was so even in the days of the apostles. All their influence, and zeal, and fidelity could not prevent it. The opponents of the truth were many—many in numbers, many in their forms of error, and many in the spirit and practices of enmity which they discovered. It is, therefore, no strange thing that happens if the same be found in all subsequent ages. Nor let us overlook the powerful motive by which the members of the Church are urged to fidelity in the duty here required of them. Compassion for false teachers should operate on them. Their guilt is great and we should earnestly seek to deliver them from it. What is the crime of the man who sets up a false light on the dangerous shore? Such is that of the false teacher. But it is not he only that is concerned. Our Lord has said, "If the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch." In like manner they who mislead the members of the Church draw them with themselves to destruction. Above all, if we encourage false teachers we are held accountable with them and shall be partakers in their condemnation.

II. Having given this general counsel the apostle proceeds to give A PARTICULAR ILLUSTRATION of both the error that might be introduced and of the duty of opposing it in the subsequent verses—"hereby know ye the spirit of God," &c. There are signs by which the minister who is under the teaching and influence of the Spirit of God may be known. What are they? They are both positive and negative. "Every spirit that confesseth," &c.

1. To confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is to own the Divinity of His mission. 2. To confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is to own the Divinity of His person. 3. To confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is to own the grace of both His mission and His person (2 Cor. viii. 9). 4. Finally, to confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is to own Him to be an all-sufficient Saviour. (J. Morgan, D.D.)

The springs and motives of false pretences to the Holy Spirit; with the rules and marks of trying and detecting them:—These words very plainly pointed at the false pretenders to the Spirit, appearing in those early days.

I. FROM WHAT SPRINGS OR MOTIVES THE FALSE PRETENCES TO THE SPIRIT GENERALLY PROCEED. Vainglory, or a thirst after fame, is often the most prevailing motive. But to go a little deeper; self-love, of some kind or other, is the general root of all. Who does not wish to be one of the favourites of heaven, and to be extraordinarily illuminated, or conducted by God's Holy Spirit? When the pleasing delusion is once indulged thus far, the man begins presently to fancy himself a kind of saint upon earth, or perhaps an apostle. It is not to be doubted but that persons of this unhappy complexion must have some appearances whereby to deceive their own hearts.

II. BY WHAT RULES OR MARKS ANY PRETENCES OF THAT KIND MAY BE TRIED, AND DETECTED TO BE FALSE AND VAIN. 1. Boasting and ostentation are a flat contradiction to the very supposal of the ordinary graces boasted of; because humility and modesty are the very chief graces upon which all the rest hang. 2. Another sure mark of a false spirit is disobedience to rule and order, contempt of lawful authority, and especially any intruding into what does not belong to them. 3. Another sure mark of a false spirit is the laying down deceitful rules or tokens whereby to judge, whether or when a man has the spirit of God. There have been many who have laid great stress upon I know not what sensible

emotions, or violent impulses, coming upon them at times. III. How MUCH IT CONCERNS US TO BE UPON OUR GUARD IN SUCH CASES. Religion, like all other weighty concerns, is best carried on in the calm, regular, and sedate way; and therefore great care should be taken to keep up the old and well-tried methods, rather than to change them for new devices, which will never answer. (*D. Waterland, D.D.*)

Rules for trial of the spirits:—I. WHAT RULES THEY HAD IN THE APOSTLES' DAYS TO TRY THE SPIRITS, AND TO DISTINGUISH THE FALSE PROPHETS OR TEACHERS FROM THE TRUE. 1. The miraculous gifts which were then bestowed upon the true prophets or teachers. 2. Their obedience and subjection to the apostles of our Blessed Saviour, as the great directors of their ministry. 3. The agreement of their doctrine with the doctrines taught by Christ and His apostles. II. WHAT RULES THERE ARE IN OUR DAYS, TO KNOW AND DISTINGUISH THEM SO AS THAT THE HONEST AND WELL-MEANING Christians may not be imposed upon by false prophets or teachers. 1. If men pretend to come to us with an extraordinary message from God, or boast of an extraordinary inspiration, such as the apostles had, we may justly require of them to give the same, or the like extraordinary proof of it. 2. If they pretend to no more than a common and ordinary assistance of God's Holy Spirit, such as any good man may lay claim to, then are they subject to Christ and His apostles, and obey those orders and injunctions they have left us in the New Testament. 3. If any one, though never so regularly called to the office of the ministry, should preach a doctrine contrary to the doctrine of the gospel, such a teacher is not to be heard—his spirit cannot be from God. Conclusion: 1. From what has been said we may learn to make a true judgment of those who take upon them the office of preachers. 2. We should take care that the wild notions and practices of these men do not create a prejudice in us, and possess us with a less esteem for religion in general, or any particular doctrines of Christianity; for there is nothing so good but may be mistaken or abused, and an ill use made of it. 3. That God assists good men, both in the knowledge and practice of their duty, by the secret operation of His Holy Spirit, is a plain and certain doctrine of Christianity; but that the motions of the Holy Spirit are to be distinguished from the natural workings of our own minds, or the suggestions of the evil spirit by anything to be felt in these motions themselves, does not appear from Holy Scripture. The only way we have to distinguish them is to bring them to the standard of truth, and those rules of right and wrong, of good and evil, which are fixed and certain. (*Chas. Peters, M.A.*)

The duty of testing the spirits:—I. THE FAITH OF THE CHRISTIAN RESTS UPON INWARD CONVICTION, NOT ON OUTWARD AUTHORITY. 1. Scripture proof of this. (1) We are commanded to test the doctrines delivered to us. (1 Thess. v. 21; 1 Cor. ii. 10, 14, 15, x. 15). (2) The foundation of our faith is declared to be such (John vi. 45, xiv. 26, xvi. 13; Eph. ii. 18, iv. 21; 1 Thess. iv. 9; Heb. viii. 10, 11; 1 John ii. 27; also Rom. xiv. 5; Col. ii. 2; 1 Thess. i. 5). 2. The occasions on which the apostles spoke with authority of their own had to do with minor matters. The gospel they had to deliver was entrusted to them from above, (1 Cor. ix. 16; Gal. i. 8, 9). Over that they had no power, (Eph. iii. 2, 3; Col. i. 25; 1 Tim. i. 11). II. YET OUTWARD AUTHORITY HAS ITS OWN FUNCTION IN THE CHURCH OF GOD. It deals, not with the truths of Christianity itself, but with rules and ordinances, which touch, not the essence of the Church's life, but its details. III. THE TRUE LIMITS OF OUTWARD AUTHORITY. Every society must have its rules. Our conscience must be satisfied that there is nothing wrong in principle in these rules. IV. BY WHAT TEST ARE WE TO TRY THE SPIRITS? V. THERE ARE MANY ERRORS ABROAD. St. John warns the Christians of his day against error. The warning is equally necessary now. It needs not to specify instances. They fall under four heads: (1) traditional corruptions of the faith, whether in a Roman or a Protestant direction; (2) new revelations, such as Swedenborgianism, Irvingism, or Mormonism; (3) neglect of portions of revealed truth, such as has often led to the formation of sects; and (4) denial of all revelation, as in the various forms of infidelity. (*J. J. Lias, M.A.*)

The true and false spirits:—In this world there appears to be no truth without its counterfeit, no religion without hypocrites, no gold without tinsel, nor good wheat of God unmingled with tares. Christ is mimicked by Antichrist. Indeed, the more active is religious thought and life in any period, so much the more numerous and plausible are likely to be the forms of religious delusion and imposture. St. John has set forth in his last paragraph (iii. 19–24) the grounds of a Christian man's assurance; he has traced it to its spring in the gift of the Spirit, who first kindled the life of God within ourselves. But, alas! even on this point deception is possible, and a warning is necessary. "Beloved," he interjects, "don't be believing every

spirit, but test the spirits, to see whether they are of God." It is a common but perilous mistake occurring even in books of Christian evidence, to treat the supernatural as synonymous with the Divine. One is amazed at the facility with which many religious-minded people fall into the meshes of spiritualism. Let them be persuaded that they are witnessing manifestations from another world, and they bow to them at once as Divine revelation, without considering their intrinsic character, their moral worth, their agreement with Scripture and established truth. Let it be proved to me that certain phenomena are "spiritual," and I say, "Very possibly; but there are many spirits abroad in the world—some of them from the pit!" The Apostle Paul had had to deal with a similar opposition at Corinth, with spiritual and prophetic manifestations that contravened his teaching. And he speaks in 1 Corinthians xii. 10 of the "discerning of spirits," the power to distinguish genuine from spurious inspiration, as a supernatural grace bestowed upon certain members of the Church. On the same point he wrote to the Thessalonians earlier (vers. 19, 20). Our Lord Himself foretold in His last discourses the rise of "false Christs and false prophets" to deceive the Church. "The false prophet" figures side by side with "the wild beast" in his visions in the Apocalypse, representing a corrupt form of religion abetting a cruel and persecuting worldly power. Elymas, the Jewish sorcerer of Paphos, was a specimen of this kind of trader in the supernatural (Acts xiii. 6). In the later Old Testament times such upstarts were numerous, men who professed to speak by revelation in Jehovah's name, and who brought a more popular message than the true prophets, and for gain flattered the rulers and the multitude to their destruction. This last feature appears in St. John's false prophets: "They are of the world"—animated by its spirit and tastes; "therefore they speak of the world (they utter what it prompts; they give back to the world its own ideas, and tickle its ear with its vain fancies), and the world heareth them." Along with their worldly spirit, it is false doctrine rather than miracles or lying predictions that supplies the chief mark of the class of men denounced by our apostle. Accordingly, he puts them through a theological examination: he uses for their touchstone the Incarnate Deity of Jesus. In this way the apostle comes round again to the subject of chap. ii. 18-29, and the great conflict there announced between Christ and Antichrist. It is evident, from the whole Epistle, that the burning question of controversy just then was the nature of Jesus Christ—the reality of His bodily form, and the consistency of His seeming fleshly life with His higher Divine origin and being. 1. St. John's crucial test of Christian belief lies, then, in the true confession of Christ Himself. "In this," says the apostle, "you may know the Spirit of God." One may repeat a creed glibly enough, and yet be very far from "confessing Jesus Christ." We can only apprehend Him, and lay hold of the person of Christ with a realising mental grasp, by the aid of the Spirit of God: "No man can say Jesus is Lord," declared the other theological apostle, "except in the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3; Matt. xvi. 17). But mark the precise form given to this proof-question by St. John: "Every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in flesh." The content of this confession is variously construed by interpreters. Some read it, "confesseth Jesus Christ as come in flesh"—that is, "as the incarnate Messiah." I do not think that either grammatical usage or the doctrinal situation points to this construction. Others, "confesseth Jesus Christ to be come in flesh;" but this makes "Jesus Christ" the specific name of Godhead, equivalent by itself to "the Son of God" (else it is no antithesis to "come in flesh"); and this is not at all obvious, nor John-like. We must read the expression as one continuous object: "Confesseth Jesus Christ come in flesh." To "confess Jesus Christ" is to confess the human Jesus, known in the gospel history, as the declared Messiah of God; and to confess Him "come, in flesh," is to confess the Godhead in the humanity, to acknowledge Him as indubitable man, but more than man—to confess, in short, "the Word made flesh." For, of course, when you speak of one as "come (arrived) in flesh," it is assumed that he has issued from some other, spiritual region, and that his flesh is the garb of a higher nature; otherwise the words are pointless (John xvi. 28). St. Paul's watchword of confession in 1 Cor. xii. 3, belonged to the stage of conflict with original Jewish unbelief. As the Messiahship of the Nazarene was preached, the spirit of evil cried out—and Paul had frequently been thus interrupted in the Jewish synagogue—"Jesus is anathema, accursed of God! He was justly crucified; He is the abhorred, and not the elect of Israel!" But it is a more developed and subtle kind of error, bred within the Church, that is here unmasked. "Christ" is no longer, in St. John's Ephesian circle, the disputed title of the crucified Jesus; it is His accepted designation; and the words Jesus Christ have coalesced by this time

into the familiar name of the Redeemer. The rising Gnosticism of John's day separated the words in a new fashion, by metaphysical analysis, not by historical distinction. The new prophets recoiled not from a crucified Messiah, but from a humanised God. Now St. John's formula is precisely opposed to this popular heresy of Asia Minor, which tradition imputes to Cerinthus, the apostle's personal antagonist. To "confess Jesus Christ come in flesh" is to declare the oneness of His Divine-human person as an abiding certainty, not from His baptism, but from His birth and onwards. (Note the force of the Greek perfect *ἐλέλυτο*, "arrived, come for good and all.") The bearing of the expression is indicated by the marginal reading of the Revised Version in ver. 3, which is probably a very ancient gloss upon the text: "Every spirit which dissolveth Jesus is not of God." In this latter negative clause (ver. 3a) it is to be observed the apostle writes "Jesus" with the Greek definite article, as much as to say "this Jesus"—"the Jesus thus defined—Jesus as the Church knows Him, as the apostles preached Him." He it is whom the spirit of error rejects, and whose Person it would dissolve and destroy. 2. This brings us to St. John's second test of true doctrine in the Church, the general consent of Christian believers. The teaching he denounced was repudiated by the Church; it found acceptance only in the outside world. The seductions of the false prophets are "overcome" by John's "little children," because they are born "of God"; there is in them a Spirit "greater than" the spirit that lives "in the world." Plausible as the new teaching was, and powerful through its accord with the current of prevailing thought, St. John's readers, as a body, had rejected it. They felt it could not be true. They had struggled with the network of error flung about them, and broken through the snare. They had received an "anointing (the 'chrisim' which makes Christians) from the Holy One," in virtue of which they "know the truth," and detect, as by an inner, instinctive sense, the "lie" which is its counterfeit (ii. 20). Admittedly this test, taken by itself, is not easy to apply. The orthodoxy that prevails in any one Church, or at any given moment, is not necessarily the orthodoxy of the Spirit of God. You must take a sufficiently large area to get the consensus of Christian faith, and you must take the central and primary truths, not questions such as those of "the three orders" in Church government, or the refinements of the Quinquarticular controversy. The danger lies with us, not in the difficulty that attends a formal adoption of this confession of Christ, but in the ease with which men accept it in words but deny it in heart and life. 3. St. John in ver. 6 clinches the two previous tests of the true or false spirits at work in the Church by a third—that of agreement with the apostolic testimony. "You are of God," he declared in ver. 4; but now adds, speaking for himself and his brother witnesses who had seen and handled the Word made flesh (i. 1-3), "We are of God: and men are shown to be of God or not of God by the sole fact of their hearing or refusing us." This was an enormous assumption to make, a piece of boundless arrogance, if it was not simple truth. But the claim has now the endorsement of eighteen centuries behind it. "He that knows God" (*ho ginōskōn*, ver. 5) is, strictly, "he who is getting-to-know"—the learner of God, the true disciple, the seeker after Divine truth. Is it not to the teaching of the New Testament that such men, all the world over, are infallibly drawn when it comes within their knowledge? They follow it, they listen to the Gospel and the Epistles, as the eye follows the dawning light and the intent ear the breaking of sweet music and the famished appetite the scent of wholesome food. The soul that seeks God, from whatever distance, knows when it hears the words of this Book that its quest is not in vain; it is getting what it wants! (*G. G. Findlay, B.A.*) *A caution against fanaticism*.—There is in the human mind a strong propensity: to believe in supernatural communications; and where fancy is ardent, and the power of reflection little cultivated, this propensity renders men either so credulous as to believe in the arrogant pretensions of others, or so vain as to set up their own. Here then we must inquire into the state of our own convictions. Have we the least reason to suppose that God will act upon our minds or those of others either in revealing new truths, or in explaining old, or in making us acquainted with future events, by any influence out of the ordinary course of His providence? We know but one way of accrediting a messenger from God; and that is by the power of working miracles. But amongst the pretenders to a Divine commission, not one has been found since the first age of Christianity who has established his claim upon this ground. "It is finished." All the truths are promulgated which it concerns us to know; and all the miracles have been performed which were necessary to convince us that they are truths from God. To look after this for new revelations,

new prophets, new miracles, is to despise the gospel of Christ, and to turn His grace into wantonness. But though we ought upon this ground to lend a deaf ear to any one who in these times assumes a preternatural knowledge of the designs of God, this of itself will not guard us against the indulgence of a fanatical spirit. There are many who, though they believe in the sufficiency of Scripture, and in consequence reject such claims as we have just been exposing, yet entertain a notion not much less absurd, that the true sense of Scripture is revealed to them by the Spirit of God; whilst all those who do not admit their interpretation are actuated by the spirit of delusion. This is, in effect, to arrogate the gift of inspiration. By what evidence then is this claim supported? They tell you that they possess a certain consciousness of being born again; of having been guided to the truth by the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost. The same consciousness has been alleged, and with the same reason, for the most absurd and the most dangerous notions, political and religious, that ever were broached by the wildest or the weakest heads. But is not another man's consciousness as good as yours? And may not he who holds doctrines directly the reverse of yours persuade himself that he too has the guidance of a Divine spirit? Who then is to judge between you? It should never be forgotten on this subject that the Almighty, in acting upon our minds, acts by stated laws adapted to the nature and circumstances of moral agents. He submits the revelation of His will to the test of our inquiries, and in all essential points it is so plain, that he who runs may read. The natural province of religious feeling lies not in points of faith, but in the exercises of devotion. Here, however, we must still try the spirit in which these feelings are indulged. For here too there is ample scope for delusion. We would not encourage the cold and heartless religion which never rises with delight to the contemplation and worship of that Being who has given us affections, that they may centre in Himself. But to produce this salutary effect our piety must be under the control of rational and sober views; though animated, not extravagant; though earnest, not familiar. Above all, we must not confound those temporary feelings, which are the offspring of accidental circumstances, with that devout habit of the mind which, though less ardent, is more salutary because it acts by a steady and permanent influence. As to what regards our own practice, let us be equally careful to avoid loud pretensions on the one hand, and never to shrink from the open but modest avowal of what we deem important truth on the other. Let us examine our opinions by the standard of the gospel, and try their practical efficacy by their habitual influence upon our temper and conduct. Let us never rest in emotions, however strong, however pious, till they are cherished into good habits. But let us also beware, lest in avoiding the extreme of fanaticism, we run into that of apathy and indifference. (*J. Lindsay, D.D.*) *Try the spirits*:—So St. Paul (1 Thess. v. 21). Cf. among the distribution of gifts of the Spirit, those of criticism and discernment (1 Cor. xii. 10). The spirit of St. John and St. Paul, however deeply reverential and childlike, is not one of credulous fanaticism, or abject unreasoning submission to authority (1 Cor. xii. 10, xiv. 29; 1 Tim. iv. 1). It must have been a crisis-time in the spiritual world (Rev. ix. 1-3). We must remember that at Ephesus, and in Asia Minor generally, St. John found not only a heresy of the intellect in Cerinthus and the Gnostics, and a heresy of the senses in the Nicolaitanes, but also a heresy of magic and mysticism. The streets of Ephesus were full of theoleptics and convulsionaries; magical practices and invocations were pursued by the educated with a passionate interest to which modern spiritualism presents but a feeble parallel. St. Paul triumphed for a season (Acts xix. 17-20). But Persian Magi, with their enchantments and philtres, Egyptian hierophants, Chaldean astrologers, came to Ephesus year after year. Cabalistic letters, called Ephesian letters, were in reputation for their power of healing or divination. Apollonius of Tyana found an enthusiastic reception in Ephesus. It may be added that St. John's Epistles contain no point of the apostles exercising gifts of healing. (*Abp. Wm. Alexander.*) **Hereby know ye the Spirit of God.**—*Characteristic nature of the influences of the Holy Spirit with reference to personal religion*:—I. THE CHARACTERISTIC NATURE OF THE INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. 1. Their perfect accordance with the written Word. 2. Self-abasement under a sense of sin. 3. A faithful reliance on the covenanted mercy of God in Christ. 4. A spirit of prayer. 5. It uniformly excites in the soul a principle of love. 6. There is one other point characteristic of the influence of the Holy Spirit within the soul, to which we must advert—the influential principle of holiness. II. THE NATURE OF THIS IMPLANTED HOLINESS. It is no abstract reverie about the perfectibility of man's nature—a dream originating in a half-

informed imagination. The holiness of the believer has a definite character, and a model no less authoritative than it is luminously distinct. (*E. Young, M.A.*) **Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.**—*Christ made a phantom*:—Did ever human folly go so far as this, asserting the unreality of Christ's bodily presence, and making Him but a phantom? Even so is the testimony of history. The apostle had felt the heaving of that breast, the beating of that heart, and he arrayed himself firmly and intelligibly against the philosophy of his times, that really, in effect, made Jesus Christ a phantom—an existence without bodily proportions and substantiality. To exalt the purity of Christ, to make Him the illustrious soul they desired to recognise Him, they were forced to deny the reality of His bodily presence, and maintain that it was but show, without substance. That He actually died upon the Cross they could not allow, and some argued that when the Cross was taken by Simon the Cyrenean, a change was made, and the Cyrenean was actually crucified, while, in his shape and appearance, Jesus passed away. How absurd the conclusions to which theories drive men! Against these ideas the apostle protested. He that professeth not that Christ was really a man, a proper substantiality, is not of God—is not instructed by the Divine Spirit—hath not the truth. There are many who do not weigh well this matter. They deem it of little consequence whether they have an ideal or an historical personage as the embodiment of excellence. They say the idea is sufficient, and rest satisfied with that. They talk of Christianity being as old as creation; that it is but the growth of the idea of the race; but they overlook the essential difference between the effect of a mere idea and an actual person, and that if by any subtlety of metaphysics, or play of poetic fancy, or theological vagary, we make Jesus not to have laboured and suffered, died and rose, as the Gospels represent Him, the real, regenerating power of His example is gone; it is but as fine poetry, or fine music, and the whole of Christ's resistance of evil is less than the actor's performance. I pity those who thus dismiss Christ as a phantom that has spoken. Dream or reality, fable or historical fact, it is all the same to them. Not so with John's estimate of what man would need. He that confesseth not that the Christ of whom my Gospel treats, who is there portrayed as I saw Him; he who denies that that excellence came in the flesh, is not of God. He denies God's greatest benefaction. He accepts not the grandest thing ever done for humanity. He does not believe that the highest ideal of character has been realised. What we want is such a sight of Jesus as will exert a transforming power. It was this kind of seeing Jesus that wrought the vast change which took place in the first centuries of the Christian Church. It gave new elements to thought. It made life more to be desired. It poured into the channel of human activity new forces of civilisation and progress, and every department of social life felt the power of the grandest of all lives. Phantom though He may be to many, Jesus has filled the world with His presence. It cannot be denied. It is a moral, spiritual power. It has its judgment-seat in our midst, and men of the world, of the bar and the senate, instead of attempting to set aside His authority when it crosses their path, try their power to bring His consecrated name to the support of their position. Christ is no phantom. He is before us in social usages, laws, institutions—in the best blessings of our homes, the best aids to social improvement, the happiest tendencies of the wondrous activities of the world. (*Henry Bacon.*) *The object of faith*:—Three dangers, arising from as many different quarters, seem at this moment to assail the faith of the Church. 1. The first of these springs from the aversion which is very widely felt towards anything approaching to an exact and definite theological system. I speak of that large mass of half-educated minds, the aggregate or average of whose sentiments forms very largely what is commonly called public opinion; I speak of those, too, who aspire to be leaders of that public opinion. Such persons profess the utmost respect for what they believe to be Christianity, but repudiate whatever religion comes before them in a definite and tangible shape. Now, if these minor sceptics would carry out their own views with anything like consistency, they would at least wrong nobody but themselves. Content with denying the possibility of arriving at the truth, they would leave others to enjoy undisturbed their real or fancied possession of it; remembering that if it be impossible to prove that any religious system is true, it must be equally impossible to prove that any religious system is false. They would think it enough to regard creeds and orthodoxy with contemptuous pity, without expressing opinions on a subject upon which they are proud to be ignorant, or raising a clamour against those whose adoption of a fixed standard of belief rebukes their own indifference. 2. The next peril comes from men of a totally

different stamp, a nobler sort than the others, persons of strong religious convictions, and professing a rigid orthodoxy of a certain kind. They accept the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and other doctrines which, whether true or false, are not fundamental. But their creed is out of all keeping and perspective, for they lay but little stress upon the weightier matters of revealed religion; while the objects of present or recent controversy assume an exaggerated importance in their eyes. The end of it is that they become Protestants, or Churchmen, or Arminians, or Supralapsarians, or anything rather than Christians. And if, as is often the case, they have been led to dwell almost exclusively upon what may be called the subjective doctrines of the gospel—those which regard the work of redemption as it reveals itself in the inner man—the danger comes to them in a more subtle shape. For the internal and spiritual character of those doctrines seduces men readily into the belief that the profession of them is a guarantee for spirituality. 3. The third proceeds from persons who profess a perfectly correct belief, while they are not at all spiritual, nor always particularly practical. The true object of the confession is not so properly the Incarnation, as the Saviour regarded as Incarnate. Yet creeds and dogmas have their proper function, so far forth as they give our faith a definite object to fasten on. A Christ who is not come in the flesh would be no Christ at all. (*W. B. Jones, M.A.*)

Vers. 4, 5. **Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.**—*The advantages of truth, in opposition to error:*—I. DIVINE TRUTH CARRIES GREATER EVIDENCE ALONG WITH IT. 1. The doctrines which are from God have a more intrinsic goodness in them, and teach such things as are most worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from Him. 2. The external confirmation of Divine doctrines is greater and carries more conviction along with it. By external confirmation I mean chiefly that of miracles. 3. Besides the goodness of the doctrines which are from God, and the external confirmation of them by miracles, the Spirit of God doth likewise illuminate good men, and those who are desirous to know the truth, and hath promised to lead them into it, and to assist them in discerning between truth and falsehood (*John vii. 17*). II. THE MOTIVES WHICH GOOD MEN HAVE TO PERSUADE THEM TO ADHERE TO TRUTH AND HOLINESS ARE MORE POWERFUL THAN THE MOTIVES TO THE CONTRARY. The believing that “Jesus is the Son of God” infers the belief of His doctrine, and consequently of that eminent part of it, the eternal recompense of another world, which, whosoever firmly believes, will be able to resist and overcome all the temptations of this world. III. THOSE WHO SINCERELY EMBRACE AND OBEY THE TRUTH OF GOD HAVE A GREATER ASSISTANCE AND ARE ACTED BY A MORE POWERFUL SPIRIT AND PRINCIPLE, THAN THAT WHICH IS IN THE WORLD. 1. There are these two principles in the world, the Spirit of God and the devil, very active and powerful, the one in good, the other in bad men. 2. The Spirit of God which is in good men is greater than he that is in the world: He is more able and ready to assist men to good purposes than the devil is to tempt and help forward that which is evil. (1) The Spirit of God is more powerful than the devil. (2) The Spirit of God is as willing to assist men to good purposes as the devil is to the contrary. (3) The Spirit of God hath a more free and immediate access to the minds of good men, and a more intimate conjunction with, and operation upon them, than the devil. 3. In what ways the Spirit of God doth move and assist good men. (1) By exercising good motions in us, and enabling us to bring them to effect. (2) By supporting us under persecution for religion. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *The Spirit of Christ in us greater than the spirit of antichrist in the world:*—1. “He that is in the world is great.” And his greatness lies in this, that he operates in a twofold way. He forms and fashions the world spiritually; and he finds for it, or makes for it, appropriate and congenial spiritual food. The world, in a sense, lives, and moves, and has its being, in him. He is in it as the spring of its activities, the dictator of its laws, the guider of its pursuits and pleasures; in a word, “the ruler of its darkness.” The darkness of its deep alienation from God, he rules. And he rules it very specially for the purpose of getting the world to be contented with an image, instead of the reality, of godliness. He takes advantage of whatever may be the world’s mood at the time, as regards God and His worship, throws himself into it, controlling or inflaming it, as he may see cause, so as to turn it to his own account. And then he contrives to bring under his sway prophets or teachers, not always consciously false, often meaning to be true, able men, holy men, men of God and of prayer, pre-eminently so it may be. And bringing into contact the world which he has doctored and the

doctors whom he has tutored, he adjusts them skilfully to one another. He causes his teachers, perhaps insensibly, to draw much of their inspiration from the particular world which, as to its religious bias, he has influenced with an eye to their teaching. And so "they are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." II. But "greater is He that is in you, little children," for He is the Lord God Almighty. He is strong; and He "strengthens you with might by His Spirit in the inner man; Christ dwelleth in your heart by faith; and you being rooted and grounded in love." He is strong; and He makes you strong; strong in holding fast the form of sound words, and contending earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints; strong in cleaving to the truth as it is in Jesus; strong in your real, personal, close, and loving acquaintance with Him, "whom to know is life eternal." He who is in you is God; God abiding in you; giving you the Spirit. He is in you; not merely on your side, at your right hand, around you; but within you. He is working in you; so working in you as to secure your safe triumph, in this great fight of truth against error, over the world and him who is in it. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*)

The secret of overcoming Satan :—"He that is in you," refers to God, and "He that is in the world," refers to the devil; and the first thought that strikes us is that there is no attempt in the Bible to deny or dispute the greatness of Satan. I. First, then, let us consider THE GREATNESS OF SATAN so that we may understand the character of the adversary whom we have to contend with. The Bible represents Satan as the head of a great army of foes. If you examine the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, you will find there seem to be seven grades of fallen angels, as there are seven grades of unfallen angels. We read of "Principalities," "Powers," "Dominions," "Authorities," "Rulers," "Thrones," "Wicked Spirits," &c., and above them all, as I believe, there is a rank of arch-angels, or chief angels. So we are to imagine Satan as the highest over all the ranks of fallen angels. Suppose that, for instance, one of the provinces or colonies of Great Britain should rebel and cut loose from the parent government; it might carry into its rebellion all its officers, from its governor-general down to the mayors of its cities, and even its police magistrates; and apparently when this great rebellion took place among the angels of God they carried over into their revolt the ranks they had before rebellion came among them, so that Satan is a chief demon, an evil spirit, a fallen angel of tremendous power. Then, again, Satan has marvellous wisdom and knowledge. He knows how to reach the human soul; he knows how to deceive you and mislead you. When the Duke of Richmond presented his report about "fortifications," Sheridan said, "I compliment the noble president on his talents as an engineer, which were strongly evinced in planning and constructing that paper. . . . He has made it a contest of posts, and conducted his reasoning not less on principles of trigonometry than of logic. There are certain assumptions thrown up like advanced works to keep the enemy at a distance from the principal object of debate; strong provisos protect and cover the flanks of his assertions, and his very queries are his casemates." And Satan is a civil engineer. He constructs his fortifications to make the evil strong and repel the good. And so, as he is a demon of marvellous power and wisdom, is he also formidable in his familiarity with evil, and it is this that constitutes the great hold of Satan over the human soul. Remember that he has in himself the very secrets of hell. II. Yet notwithstanding this, we are bidden to remember that "He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world." Conceding the greatness of Satan, let us look for a moment at THE SUPERIOR GREATNESS OF JESUS CHRIST. In the first place, Jesus Christ has all power. Satan has great power, but not omnipotence. Christ is not only a God of all power, but He is a God of all wisdom. Satan is very wise, but he is not omniscient, and Christ is. Then Jesus Christ is everywhere present. He is in your heart, and in my heart, and the heart of every disciple, by the Holy Spirit, so that of a true child of God we may still say, "He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world," since He is the all-powerful, the all-wise, and the all-present God. And, then, remember that Jesus Christ represents perfect holiness, and holiness, like the light of the sun, positively dispels the darkness, that is to say infinite holiness repels evil and drives evil to the wall; and in the great ages to come, when Christ shall be crowned as King, we shall find darkness absolutely dispersed and light pervading the moral universe. II. WHAT IS THE SECRET OF OUR POSSESSION AND EXERCISE OF THIS OVERCOMING POWER? We are told in this epistle that there are three secrets of overcoming power (chap. ii. 14; iii. 8, 9, 24). The first secret is, the Word of God abides in you. The second is the seed of God abides in you; and the third is God Himself abides in you. Now look successively at these three

secrets. The Word of God is represented in the Scriptures as the "sword of the Spirit," "a two-edged sword." A Damascus scimitar has but one sharp edge and a dull back. Hence you can hew with a scimitar, but you cannot thrust with it successfully. But when you have two edges to a sword, and each side is keen, you can cut both ways with such a blade; and the two keen edges unite in one burning point, and you can thrust with such a sword. And so the Word of God is represented as having two keen edges and one burning piercing point. Again, it is represented as a living sword. The Word of God is quick, *i.e.*, alive and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. Knowing the Word, and having it in your heart, you shall find that Word going forth like a two-edged sword out of your mouth, a living sword, and a powerful sword, that hews men to pieces before God, and lays bare their thoughts and intents. Secondly, the seed of God abides in the child of God. The seed represents the living principle. I suppose you are all familiar with certain great facts of nature. You know how, for instance, in the vegetable world the seed is the most carefully preserved and guarded of all the products of plant life. Here is a little plant growing up and putting out its branches and leaves, and by and by its flowers. The flowers may be very beautiful and very fragrant, and you may value them and consider them the finest products of the plant, but, if I may use such language, the plant does not so regard them. The thing the plant cares most for in the economy of nature is not root nor stem, is not beauty nor blossom, nor even fruit, but seed. Now the seed in the plant and the seed in the animal represents not only the highest products of life, but the means of producing and propagating life, and therefore the seed is the most precious thing in nature. And how significant it is that the principle of life in God which represents the highest perfection of Deity and represents the means by which God's likeness is reproduced in you and in me is called by the sacred name of "seed," and we are told that when the seed of God remains in us we feel that we cannot sin. We have a new affinity. We are like a tree planted by the rivers of water with its little spongelets at the end of the roots drinking up the blessed water of life, and making sap of it. That is what John means when he says the seed of God is in the disciple, and he feels that he cannot sin because the seed of God leads him to love the things of God, and hate the things of the evil one. But we are told once more that God Himself abides in us (John xiv. 23). God would have you to feel this great fact, that if Jesus Christ dwells in you by the Holy Spirit, He makes you strong to overcome Satan, as He Himself was strong to overcome Satan in the desert and in the Garden of Gethsemane, and that is the secret of your triumph over evil. We are told that when Hercules was a little baby in his cradle, there were some serpents that came into the room and wound their way into the cradle and tried to sting him, and folding their coils round him to choke the life out of him. But we are told in the fable that with his little hands he just took hold of the necks of these serpents and strangled them to death. God would have you to feel that a little babe in Christ that is rocked in the cradle of the Church, when he comes into contact of the great serpent, the devil, if Jesus is in him, can beat back the serpent, the serpent cannot strangle him. But remember this, that you are only strong when you are on the Lord's ground, not on the devil's ground. Now I have read a story about a swan that was walking on the shore of a lake, and a wolf came up and ran after the swan, and would have torn him to pieces. But the swan said to himself, "I am not strong on the land, but I am strong on the water." So he plunged into the water, and when the wolf followed him into the water, he with his strong bill just gripped the wolf by the ears, and pulled his head down under the water, and drowned him. There are a great many people who try to fight the devil on the devil's ground, and they always get defeated; but if you can meet the devil on the Lord's ground you will defeat him. (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*) *The Christian's conquest over sin*:—Wherein consists the superiority of the power of good over the power of evil in us? 1. The power of God is much nearer to us, and, by its relation to our true nature, so much more capable of becoming ours than the power of evil or the devil. We are the children of God. Can the renewed child of God say that any evil power lies nearer to his heart and more appropriately belongs to him, than that influence of a Father's love which he acknowledges to be the holiest and most blessed thing in the universe? 2. The greater power of good over us may be seen by comparing those parts or elements of our nature to which good and evil influences respectively appeal. On the one hand, we have the appeal of God, of good, and of truth, to our reason, judgment, and conscience, to the deepest instincts and most fixed principles of the soul, and to love, in itself the strongest element in our

nature. On the other hand, the appeal of evil is only to prejudice, fancy, and appearance, to passion and to selfishness. 3. The objects through which good principle influences us are vastly greater than those with which evil is associated. Even in reference to the present visible world, we may see this contrast. Evil, which is necessarily selfish, limits the objects of our thought and life to our own mean, narrow selves. It knows no large and noble objects or ends. Good embraces all things, all beings, all great and lofty ends. Good objects and aims kindle the heart to an enthusiasm before which difficulties vanish; evil purposes sink the heart into meanness and weakness. But when we turn to the invisible and eternal world, how much more striking is the contrast. God Himself is the centre and fountain of all sublime thoughts, of all mighty emotions, and of all boundless hopes. The summit of greatness is before us in Christian perfection. All this greatness we as Christians can claim as our possession; and can all this dwell in and fill the soul, and yet awaken no sense of greatness and power? But what has evil to compare with this? Where are its sublime heights, grand conceptions, boundless prospects? What immortality invests it with unfading splendour, what solid reason guarantees its infinity of bliss? Can we, then, say that the ignoble and mean has the same power over us as the sublime and glorious? (*S. Edger, B.A.*) *The two spirits*:—I. THERE ARE TWO MIGHTY SPIRITS AT WORK AMONGST MANKIND. There is some correspondence between their operation. 1. Both act uncoercively. There is no invasion of the principles of responsibility in either case. 2. Both act universally. The one is the "prince of the power of the air"; the other is in all our hearts. 3. Both act perseveringly. 4. Both act productively. Both "produce fruits in their subjects" (Gal. v. 19-23). 5. Both act resistibly. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." "Ye do always resist the Spirit of God." II. THAT WHILST THESE SPIRITS ARE BOTH UNIVERSAL IN THEIR INFLUENCE, THE SPECIAL SPHERE OF THE ONE IS THE "WORLD," AND THE OTHER, THE "CHURCH." 1. The Church cherishes the Spirit, and resists the devil. 2. The world cherishes the devil, and resists the Spirit. III. THAT THE SPIRIT WHOSE SPECIAL SPHERE IS THE CHURCH IS INFINITELY GREATER THAN THE SPIRIT WHOSE SPECIAL SPHERE IS THE WORLD. "Greater is He that is in you," &c. 1. The one that is in the Church is absolutely independent; the one that works in the world is not so. The Holy Spirit can do whatsoever He please; Satan cannot move without His permission. 2. The one that is in the Church sways His influence by absolute right, the other by usurpation. 3. The one that is in the Church works to save, the other to destroy. 4. The one that is in the Church acts through truth, the other through error. The first stone of Satan's empire—the foundation-stone—was a lie. But the Spirit works by truth—regenerates, sanctifies, comforts, by truth. Which is the greater, truth or error? Truth is eternal, error is not; truth is a necessity, error is a contingency; truth is mighty, error is weak. A lie has no power, only as it wears the garb of truth. Conclusion: 1. The human soul is an object of stupendous interest. These two spirits are working for it. 2. The philosophy of human commotions is explained. Two opposite spirits are working in the heart of the world. 3. The ultimate triumph of goodness is certain. "Greater." (*Homilist.*) *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world.*—*The worldly speak of the world*:—The water riseth not (unless forced) above the fountain. Out of the warehouse the shop is furnished. (*J Trapp.*) *Speech is a child of thought*, which the mind always travaileth and teemeth with, and which after its birth is wont in features to resemble its parent. (*I. Barrow.*)

Ver. 6. *Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*—*The time spirit and the Holy Spirit*:—I. THE TIME SPIRIT. What the Germans call the *Zeit-Geist*; the spirit of the world, and of the age in which we live. What is that spirit? It is the world about us, this age of ours, speaking inarticulately to the soul of man. The world lies all around, a varied, splendid scene; vast, rich, fair, full of wealth and beauty. Till it can express itself, it is like a very lovely body without a soul. But it makes to itself a voice in the time spirit, and so talks to our hearts. Its mediums are manifold and diverse; among them are art and literature; the voices vary greatly, according to race, age, and clime. This is an age of marvels. Here are scholars studying and speculating; inventors planning and contriving; politicians doing their best as architects of their own fortunes. Here be poets, and painters, mechanics and artisans; here are grand cities, growing grander year after year; here we have luxury, comfort, delights of all sorts, music, world's shows, balls, dances, entertainments, with titles, dress, gala, and glory to the full. What is all this? A mere chaos of activities till the *Zeit-Geist* speaks.

To this it gives, what is needed, expression and interpretation; as the musician would say, it interprets the world's psalm of the world life. II. IS THERE THEN NO OTHER VOICE? Surely something is lacking here. There is such other voice: the voice of another spirit, greater than the time spirit. We name Him in the Creed when we say, "and I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life." This is the Spirit which speaks against the spirit of the age; which strengthens, purifies, and elevates, as the other weakens, corrupts, and depresses; whose utterances are wisdom and truth. III. Such are the two spirits, which, on either side, perpetually address the soul of man. HOW SHALL WE KNOW THEM APART? Or rather what constitutes their difference? It is marked and strong. The time spirit preaches boastfully of man, of the world, of life; the Holy Spirit of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The spirit of the age applauds and flatters us; the Holy Spirit rebukes, reproves, convicts. The time spirit talks to us of the glory and greatness of man, of temporal things as all-sufficient, of the world as the measure of our destinies, of a free and reckless life without responsibility, faith, or fear. The Holy Spirit on the contrary, speaks of the sin of man, his weakness and corruption; of a righteousness which consists in faith, obedience, and self-denial, of a battle against the world, of a coming judgment on the earth and its guilty tenants. And this is the essential difference between the voices; the one bids to indulgence, the other to discipline; the one addresses the physical, the other the moral nature; the one displays the kingdoms of this world and all the glory of them, the other points to that straight and narrow gate through which we enter into the kingdom of heaven. There are strange fables and legends of the old time and of the new; stories of syrens, who, singing in their rock-bound coasts, drew hapless mariners to wreck and death before their cruel eyes; stories of melodies so sweet and strange, that men, if once they listened, straightway forgot home, and kindred, and all that ever they knew, and cared for nothing but to listen to that song for ever. And we must choose what we will do; whether we will hearken to the syrens, and forget thenceforth all that ever we were taught of God and Christ, of sin and its dire penances temporal and eternal, of righteousness and its crown. Such is our choice; and it presses on us for a decision, since the time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away. (*M. Dir, D.D.*)

Vers. 7-10. **Beloved, let us love one another.**—*A triune philosophy*:—I. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE NEW BIRTH. "Every one that loveth is born of God." To begin to love deeply, truly, purely—that is to be born again, for he that loveth is born of God. II. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. "Every one that loveth, knoweth God." Not in creeds but through love shall come true knowledge of God. III. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ATONEMENT. "Herein is love," &c. (*B. J. Snell, M.A.*) *Love is of God—God is love*:—I. "Love is of God." This does not mean merely that love comes from God, and has its source in God; that He is the author or creator of it. All created things are of God, for by Him all things were made, and on Him they all depend. But love is not a created thing. It is a Divine property, a Divine affection. And it is of its essence to be communicative and begetting; to communicate itself, and, as it were, beget its own likeness. "Love is of God." It is not merely of God, as every good gift is of God. It is of God, as being His own property, His own affection, His own love. It is, wherever it is found, the very love wherewith God loveth. If it is found in me, it is my loving with the very love with which God loves; it is my loving with a Divine love, a love that is thus emphatically of God. "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." 1. None but one born of God can thus love with the love which, in this sense, is of God; therefore, one who so loves must needs be one who is born of God. 2. Being born of God implies knowing God. How it is the manner of God to love; what sort of love His is; love going out of self; love sacrificing self; love imparting and communicating self; love unsought and unbought; unconditional and unreserved; what kind of being, in respect of love, God is; you who are born of God know, even as the only begotten Son knows. II. The opposite statement follows as a matter of course—"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." To love with the love which is of God, is to know God; not to love thus, is not to know God; for God is love. In this view, the proposition, "God is love," really applies to both of the alternative ways of putting the case; the positive and the negative alike. It assigns the reason why it may be said on the one hand, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God"; and why it may also be said on the other hand, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God."

"God is love." It is a necessity of His nature, it is His very nature to love. He cannot exist without loving. "God is love" before all creation; love in exercise; love not possible merely but actual; love forthgoing and communicative of itself; from the Father, the fountain of deity, to the Son; from the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost. In creation, this love is seen forthgoing and communicative in a new way towards new objects. Sin enters, and death by sin; all sin, and all are doomed. Still "God is love"; the same love as ever. And "in this now is manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent," &c. This is its crowning glory; the saving mission from God of His only begotten Son. It is consummated in our "living through Him," through His "being the propitiation for our sins." For now, effectual atonement being made for our guilt, our redemption and reconciliation being righteously and, therefore, surely effected by His being the propitiation for our sins; we, living through Him, are His brethren indeed. The love wherewith God loves Him dwells in us. God loves us even as He loves Him. And so at last the love which, from all eternity, it is of the very nature of God's essential being to feel and exercise, finds its full fruition in the "mighty multitude of all kindreds, and peoples, and nations, and tongues, who stand before the throne and give glory to Him who sitteth thereon, and to the Lamb for ever and ever." (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *God's existence and love*:—There must of necessity be in some quarters to-day a denial that brotherly love rests upon love to God, because there is not a little denial of the being of God altogether. It is not merely the proposition "God is love" which is contested, but the previous and simpler proposition "God is." I do not, of course, mean that this is quite a new thing; anyhow it is as old as the fourteenth Psalm; but certain occurrences, political and social, and the attitude assumed by some of our scientific men, and the tone of much of our current literature, have tended to give a prominence and practical importance to the denial that "God is," which it had not half a century ago. But there is another tendency of our times which ought to be noted, and it is the tendency to deny that "God is love." The first part of the proposition, we are sometimes told, may be accepted if you think it worth asserting: if you like to explain the order of the physical universe by the hypothesis of what you call God, there is no harm in it, any more than making the hypothesis of an elastic medium pervading space, or of an electric fluid, or anything else which is hypothetical: but the moment you attribute purpose, and will, and love, and the exercise of moral government to this hypothetical God, then you are told that you fly in the face of modern observation and discovery. You are told, in fact, that the God whom science has revealed is an unbending, invariable, relentless, pitiless law, as different from love as the strokes of a steam-engine are from the throbbings of a mother's heart. Now I have no desire to under-rate or misrepresent scientific discovery; I do not deny, moreover, that there is much that happens in the world which it is difficult to reconcile with the conception of the overruling providence of a loving Father; any one who chooses to hold a brief for those who deny that "God is love" will have no difficulty in finding arguments. But I believe the truth that "God is love" to be too genuine to be overthrown by any one of them: I believe it to rest upon grounds deeper, more philosophical, and more scientific, than any of the denials or objections which can be opposed to it. I believe that there is something in the human heart, in the universal nature of man, to which it appeals and to which it cannot appeal in vain. In the New Testament the proposition "God is love" is not an abstract theorem to be proved by the help of axioms and postulates, but it is the condensation in three words of the life of Jesus Christ, our Lord. When I see that weary, wandering Son of man "going about doing good," when I see Him feeding the hungry, healing the sick, when I listen to Him preaching the gospel to the poor, and still more when I see Him nailed to the cross of shame, then I bow my head in humble adoration, and I say, "In very deed and truth, God is love." This demonstration of the love of God has changed the face of the world: many of its most crying evils have ceased; a bright principle of light and love, which was all but unknown in previous ages, has shined upon the earth; men have gone about doing good, so as they never did before: hospitals are common things: we have seen so great a light in Jesus Christ that no other light is able to dazzle us. In the warmth and brightness of this Sun of our souls, we know and are persuaded that directly or indirectly all love comes from Him. (*Bp. Harvey Goodwin.*) *The lessons of love*:—If I mistake not, our first instinct is to suppose that to know God must be some result of hard thinking, something to be got by books, or something which is granted to intellectual

power. Whatever truth there may be in this, there is no allusion to it all through Scripture which does not lead us to connect the thought of knowing God with the study, or the library, or the laboratory. It carries us into another region; it speaks of a knowledge which is open to the poor, the uneducated, the young. It speaks of a state of mind rather than of a degree of attainment; something which leads you to say and to feel as you see it in others, not "how wonderful!" but "how beautiful!"—not "how did he amass all those stores of learning?" but, "how did he become so noble and so like Christ?" He that loveth not, knoweth not God. Is that a hard saying to any of us? What, we ask, the mightiest intellect of modern times, rich with the spoils of time, does not that intellect know God? No, is the Divine answer, not if the man be selfish. It is one thing to know about God, to know what has been said of Him and written and thought of Him, and what science has revealed to us as to the modes of the operations of His hands. This is one thing; but to know God is another. To know God in any true sense is to be unselfish, to be loving, to have towards others the heart of a brother. He who gave us the intellect wishes us to use the intellect according to our age, our strength, our opportunities. Still all this knowledge is at the best knowledge about God not knowledge of God. Let us dare to look on yet further, and lift the wings of the soul. Are we speaking only of that which is, or of that also which shall be hereafter? Of what kind do you suppose will be that higher knowledge? Will it differ in kind from that which was learned often so painfully on earth? Will there be one measurement for the "pure in heart" who on earth have "seen God," and another for those who wake up after His likeness and see His face in heaven? Will the higher knowledge be more of the illumined intellect, and less of the adoring heart? If so, it would not be a higher knowledge in the spiritual order; it would be a lower, with more of earth in it and less of heaven. Every one that loveth will still know God, and he that loveth not will still not know God. Or, if we pass beyond the region of glowing words, and think calmly of what we have seen and felt in our short passage through life, what report have we to bring on this high matter? When have we seemed to ourselves to be least ignorant of our God, or, may I dare say, understand Him best? Has it been when we were trying to spell out some hard passages in the Bible, or the Creed, or when we caught the echo of some far off thunder of controversy; or has it not rather been when our hearts were touched by something "lovely" or "of good report"; when we mourned unselfishly some common loss; when something so moved us at the very centre of our being that all distinctions of age, of ability, of position were merged and lost in one full tide of brotherly affection, and we seemed for a time almost surprised at the nearness and clearness of heaven? There are times, for example, in early childhood, when we have committed some fault. Conscience acts with sternness, and makes her terrors known, but soon love casts out fear; we cannot bear to have done wrong to a mother, or a sister; confession is a necessity; we must have human forgiveness, because, though as yet we know it not, it is to us the image and the representative of the Divine. Then in that weakness and majesty of childish love which resists sin and insists on pardon, we have the knowledge of God. Young as we are, we look on life with the eyes of love and hope. We long to succour, to reform, to purify, to save. But these eyes of love and hope are in truth the eyes of God. Or once more, that which has touched us has been the closing scene of life. We have gathered round some good man's grave. Who shall measure the teaching power of the great? What pulpit, what creed, what treatise on theology, can match for one moment with the open tomb in teaching the knowledge of God? And why? Because we then have ears to hear; because the heart is not closed, but open; because, if I may dare to say so, the spirit of Christian love is in the air. Our hearts recall the gifts and the graces of the Christian dead which made him the loved and honoured. Such lives, such characters, such memories are, indeed, teachers in the knowledge of God. Yes, if it be, indeed, the sober truth, if it be the real state of the case in the external world, that "every one that loveth knoweth God," then our best, perhaps our only teachers in this high knowledge are those who have loving, unselfish hearts, and draw us, whether by the loving voice of an inexorable silence, to think of Him who in the language of heaven is love. (*H. M. Butler, D.D.*) *The love of God*.—I. The title "beloved." It comes most naturally from John. He was old, and yet the ardent affection of youth still animated his soul. It is a noble triumph of grace to see this spirit maintained and manifested to the last. John had seen and felt much to disappoint and distress him. How he must have been exercised when he wrote 3 John 9, 10.

All this, and much of the same kind, did not cool his warm heart. Its love still came gushing forth as it had done in the days of his Divine Master. II. THE DUTY OF CHERISHING BROTHERLY LOVE implied in the exhortation, "Let us love one another." While love is natural to the gracious soul, and cannot be suppressed, it is yet very susceptible of culture, and may be much strengthened by the exercise of the duty. Love may be increased by contemplating its object. In the present case that object is the believer. Suppose, then, that we consider him thoughtfully, what will be the effect? We think of his position and what is peculiar to it. His advantages and temptations, and duties and responsibilities present themselves to us. As we think of these we cannot help sympathising with him, and praying for him, and helping him as we have the opportunity. Again, as we are in the presence of a loved object, so is our affection increased. Hence arises the duty of cultivating the society of the godly. Acquaintance will secure many common advantages, and prevent many evils. How often have we cherished a prejudice against some one until it was dissipated by one friendly interview! We may add, the more we serve the object we love, the greater will be our attachment to it. It is not merely that habit confirms and increases the grace; but while this is true, every act of kindness we render draws out the heart in greater kindness. III. MANY COGENT REASONS are assigned by the apostle for the exercise of this duty, which we proceed to consider. 1. "Love is of God." It has its origin in Him. The more we possess it, the more we resemble Him. To have loved, therefore, is to be God-like. 2. "Every one that loveth is born of God." Such love as He cherishes is not natural to man. It is contrary to the spirit and habit of a sinner. It exists only in the renewed heart. It is inspired by the Holy Ghost. In all its exercises, its gracious nature and source are conspicuous. It is directed mainly to the people of God. 3. "Every one that loveth knoweth God." 4. "He that loveth not knoweth not God." This is said in the way of warning and confirmation. Let no man deceive himself. If there be not love there cannot be the knowledge of God. 5. But the weightiest reason of all yet remains, "God is love." The essence of God is love. Power is a perfection. Wisdom is a perfection. Truth is a perfection. But it would not be sufficient to say love is a perfection. It lies as the substratum of the Divine character beneath all the perfections of God. It stimulates and employs them all. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Christian love*:—Nothing can be more explicit. The whole nature of religion, as it is interpreted to us in Christianity, is comprised in that one word—love. The Divine nature is love; and piety in us is to be love. When a great structure is arising, there are multitudes of labourers; there are artisans in wood, in stone, in clay, in iron and metals; and each in his own department is in lawful authority. But higher than all of them is the artist and architect. His controlling authority brings all these various workers together, limits and directs their tasks, gives to their co-operative skill a central unity toward which they all are unconsciously tending. Does he, then, abate or limit the power of the heads of departments underneath him? Is not his influence necessary to their greatest development and the highest triumphs of their several skills? So in that temple of the human soul, which each one of us is building by the industries of many noble and potent faculties, Love is the architect, and gives the lines for a foundation, and forms the proportions, and teaches all these diverse faculties, not how to work in their kind and nature, but how, working in their kind and nature, to subserve higher purposes by a Divine unity, and purity, and moral excellence. Love unites their agencies. I. Let us employ this truth as a CRITERION OF HUMAN CHARACTER. The law of God is the only thing by which we can measure a character. That law, set forth for man's obedience, is Thou shalt love the Lord thy God supremely, and thy fellow man as thyself. Now let us apply this test. Does any man live that does not violate this command of God, "Thou shalt love"? Let us look inward for one single moment. Did you ever know a man who could say, I have never, from the hour of conscious intelligence, carried my intellect so that in its operations I have violated the law of love? Let a man summon to the bar of his own conscience, pride. What a man would be physically without a backbone, that he would be mentally without the element of pride. And yet, has this element been so controlled in any man that it can rise up and say, "I have never disregarded, either negatively or positively, the supreme law of love"? Summon that most lithe and nimble feeling—the love of praise—and what man can say, "I have so carried my vanity, my approbateness, that it has always been in subordination to the law of love"? Can any man say, "My imagination has so acted as never to infract the law of love"? Or, can any

man say, "My moral sentiments have so acted as never to overstep the law of love"? What, then, shall we say of the lower feelings? What of the business, executive powers? What of the passions and appetites? Go through the soul, and look at every one of the faculties, and is there one that has not violated this law? I go still further. The action of each element in the soul has been such that its obedience to the law of love has been occasional, has been rare. There are spots where almost everybody, first or last, has felt some glow and warming of love; but to the greatest number of men that ever dwelt on earth, love has been just what Northern days are, when the sun stands above the horizon only one short hour, is sunk below it for the other twenty-three, and is growing worse and worse toward the six-months night. Is not the whole of our outer life, is not our daily conduct, are not our ambitions, are not our secular ends, is not our treatment of men, organised and solidly constructed upon a selfish motive? Thus the inward life and the outward conduct of men both come to one and the same testimony. They are both of them built up not only outside of God's law, but right over against it, and in antagonism with it. These being the facts: God's command of love being neglected, and your character and whole history turning on the infraction of it, ought I not to lay this terrible truth before you, and roll it again and again upon you? In my own case, the belief of this doctrine, instead of being an injury, has been a benefit. My charity for men has been augmented in the proportion in which my opinion of their goodness has been lowered. When I deal with men on the supposition that they are good, I am roused with impatience at the manifestations of their wickedness; and when I deal with them on the supposition that they are altogether sinful, I expect nothing from them, and I find myself prepared beforehand to treat them with charity and forbearance.

II. This truth affords, also, a CRITERION OF CONVERSION. There are such loose notions of what religion is, that we cannot too urgently hold attention to the fact that in Christ's kingdom love is a characteristic element of piety; and that when a man is converted genuinely, he must be converted to the spirit of love. There may be other things with this spirit, but it is this that makes piety in Christ's kingdom. Let us make some discriminations. A man may come to a certain state of great and sudden joy, and of relish for religious exercises, and yet not be a Christian. Religious inspirations and great fertility of feeling, of fancy, fervour of emotion, and elegant utterance, are not evidences, in themselves, of piety. They are blessed concomitants of it often; but they may exist separately from and independently of piety. Your piety is to be tested by its consistency with God's law of love. The power of right ideas, the clearness with which you take hold of them, the aptness with which you are able to state them, your zeal for them—all these, while they are desirable in piety, are not characteristic of it; and a man may have them and not be a Christian. God's orthodoxy is of the heart always. That will make the head correct. A man, also, may have great faith and not be a Christian. I go further, and say that a man may be a very generous, good fellow, a very agreeable, companionable man, and yet not be a Christian. A man, likewise, may have an unflinching zeal in religion, and constancy in its service, even to martyrdom, and yet not be a Christian. How many there are that are wardens and doorkeepers of God's house, who have no love, no benevolence, no conscience, no fidelity. Zeal they may have, but summer in the soul they have not. I go still further, and say that religiousness is not piety. Far be it from me to say a word to discourage reverence, devoutness, awe, in the presence of God. But that alone, that without love, is not enough. With love, it makes piety broader and deeper, and life more massive and noble; but unless there be, first, intermediate, and last, the spirit and the law of love, there is no piety. When a man is converted, therefore, it is very important that he should be converted to the right thing. No man is a Christian till he is converted to the law of love. Since you made a profession of religion, are you kinder in the various relations of life? Is your life more full of the fruits of love? Have you a more comprehensive benevolence toward all mankind? Every year do you less and less accept the service of loving men as a task, and do you more and more accept it with cheerfulness? Do you find that the currents of your thought and feeling are setting outward instead of inward? Are you more full of the sweetness of a true Christian's love? In this direction you must measure to know whether you are growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Christian love*:—If a writer upon the vegetable kingdom should say, "The tree is of God," he would not be supposed to state any such commonplace fact that all the trees of the orchard and grove are His

handiwork, but would be thought to mean some special genus or species of tree, so far exalted in form, uses, or beauty above other trees as to entitle it to this great distinction. It is the tree by eminence—the tree of God. So when John says “love is of God,” he indicates a special kind of love—a peculiar form or expression of love, so different from every other, so far above and beyond every other as to merit the distinction that it is from God. I. Such is Christian love, and that we may understand and appreciate it, we must CONTRAST IT WITH OTHER FORMS AND DEGREES OF THAT AFFECTION OF THE SOUL WHICH WE CALL LOVE. 1. It is not the love of the parent for the child, nor of the child for the parent. This is, doubtless, God-implanted. 2. Christian love is not the love of friend for friend, nor what is called sexual love. This often springs from the most trivial causes—caprices of fancy. 3. It is not the love of complacency, which in its first and highest sense belongs to God, or His love for all men, which bears with sin, defiance, rebellion, and suspends penalty. 4. It is not to be confounded with even the finest intellectual apprehensions of the perfect and glorious attributes of God. 5. Nor is it identical with profound admiration for the work of God, with that easy and prevalent sentimentalism which is the creature of sublimity, magnitude, and natural beauty. II. LET US REACH IT BY DEGREES—POSITIVELY—1. With respect to God as its object, it is an affection largely independent of extensive and accurate knowledge. A man may be a sage or philosopher, and know it not. The savage or boor may know its meaning, feel its power. 2. It flows out toward man in the proportion that he is like God. 3. It is elective—knows by a singular instinct the true and the false. 4. It is unselfish and disinterested. 5. Christian love is charitable. 6. It is operative and practical. 7. It is progressive. (*J. C. French.*) *Love of relations and friends.*—There have been men who have supposed Christian love was so diffusive as not to admit of concentration upon individuals, so that we ought to love all men equally. And many, without bringing forward any theory, yet consider practically that the love of many is something superior to the love of one or two, and neglect the charities of private life, while busy in the schemes of an expansive benevolence, or of effecting a general union and conciliation among Christians. I shall here maintain, in opposition to such notions, that the best preparation for loving the world at large, and loving it duly and wisely, is to cultivate an intimate friendship and affection towards those who are immediately about us. It has been the plan of Divine Providence to ground what is good and true in religion and morals on the basis of our good natural feelings. What we are towards our earthly friends in the instincts and wishes of our infancy, such we are to become at length towards God and man in the extended field of our duties as accountable beings. To honour our parents is the first step towards honouring God; to love our brethren according to the flesh, the first step towards considering all men our brethren. The love of God is not the same thing as the love of our parents, though parallel to it; but the love of mankind in general should be in the main the same habit as the love of our friends, only exercised towards different objects. The great difficulty in our religious duties is their extent. This frightens and perplexes men, naturally; those especially who have neglected religion for a while, and on whom its obligations disclose themselves all at once. This, for example, is the great misery of leaving repentance till a man is in weakness or sickness; he does not know how to set about it. Now God’s merciful providence has in the natural course of things narrowed for us at first this large field of duty; He has given us a clue. We are to begin with loving our friends about us, and gradually to enlarge the circle of our affections, till it reaches all Christians, and then all men. By trying to love our relations and friends, by submitting to their wishes, though contrary to our own, by bearing with their infirmities, by overcoming their occasional waywardness by kindness, by dwelling on their excellences and trying to copy them, thus it is that we form in our hearts that root of charity which, though small at first, may, like the mustard seed, at last even overshadow the earth. Further, that love of friends and relations, which nature prescribes, is also of use to the Christian, in giving form and direction to his love of mankind at large, and making it intelligent and discriminating. A man who would fain begin by a general love of all men, necessarily puts them all on a level, and, instead of being cautious, prudent, and sympathising in his benevolence, is hasty and rude, does harm perhaps when he means to do good, discourages the virtuous and well-meaning, and wounds the feelings of the gentle. Men of ambitious and ardent minds, for example, desirous of doing good on a large scale, are especially exposed to the temptation of sacrificing individual to general good in their plans of charity. We can easily afford to be liberal on a large scale, when we

have no affections to stand in the way. Those who have not accustomed themselves to love their neighbours whom they have seen, will have nothing to lose or gain, nothing to grieve at or rejoice in, in their larger plans of benevolence. They will take no interest in them for their own sake; rather, they will engage in them because expedience demands, or credit is gained, or an excuse found for being busy. Hence too we discern how it is that private virtue is the only sure foundation of public virtue; and that no national good is to be expected (though it may now and then accrue) from men who have not the fear of God before their eyes. I have hitherto considered the cultivation of domestic affections as the source of more extended Christian love. Did time permit, I might now go on to show besides that they involve a real and difficult exercise of it. Nothing is more likely to engender selfish habits (which is the direct opposite and negation of charity) than independence in our worldly circumstances. And this is one among the many providential benefits (to those who will receive them) arising out of the holy estate of matrimony, which not only calls out the tenderest and gentlest feelings of our nature, but, where persons do their duty, must be in various ways more or less a state of self-denial. Or, again, I might go on to consider the private charities, which have been my subject, not only as the sources and as the discipline of Christian love, but further, as the perfection of it; which they are in some cases. The Ancients thought so much of friendship that they made it a virtue. In a Christian view, it is not quite this; but it is often accidentally a special test of our virtue. For consider—let us say that this man, and that, not bound by any very necessary tie, find their greatest pleasure in living together; say that this continues for years, and that they love each other's society the more the longer they enjoy it. Now observe what is implied in this. Young people, indeed, readily love each other, for they are cheerful and innocent, more easily yield to each other, and are full of hope—types, as Christ says, of His true converts. But this happiness does not last; their tastes change. Again, grown persons go on for years as friends; but these do not live together; and, if any accident throws them into familiarity for a while, they find it difficult to restrain their tempers and keep on terms, and discover that they are best friends at a distance. But what is it that can bind two friends together in intimate converse for a course of years but the participation in something that is unchangeable and essentially good, and what is this but religion? (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *Brotherly love*:—A famous writer has said that "religion is morality touched with emotion." That is a very inadequate and unsatisfactory definition of Christianity; the only word that can adequately define the religion of Christ is love. I. A VERY TENDER APPEAL: "Beloved." 1. The cold, stoical nature is a power, but it is a power that repels from it, it never draws, it has not the least attractive force in it. If we would win men and persuade them to act as brethren, let us use tenderness. We need not use it to the exclusion of the light, purity, and truth of religion. 2. The sweet reasonableness of the appeal would have great force with those to whom the apostle wrote. Did they not owe everything in a religious sense to love, for had they not been told over and over again that "God so loved the world?" &c. The hardest and most solid ice will yield to the genial influences of the sun, and the most hardened and stubborn hearts will yield to the gracious power of love when every other force will fail to influence them. 3. It was a consistent appeal. John's tender words came from a large and loving heart; it was because his heart felt that his lips spake the soft and gentle word. II. AN ARGUMENT. "For love is of God." Fire is found in many objects very dissimilar one from the other. It is found in coal in considerable quantity, it abounds in wood, it is contained in iron, and it is locked up in the flint; and it appears that there is some little measure of it in water even. It would seem that the sun cannot touch any object without imparting to some degree its own nature to that object; for, as you are aware, the sun is the inexhaustible source of fire wherever it is found, whether in the coal, or flint, or water. And wherever we meet with love, whether in the husband to the wife, or the wife to the husband, the brother to the sister, or the sister to the brother, the friend to the friend, or in one Christian to another; wherever we meet with it, God is the source of it, "for God is love." In this argument John appeals to one of the most powerful instincts in man—the desire to be like the great. To imitate the great is a universal passion in men. To paint like the great masters is the one all-consuming passion of artists. If we carefully considered the thought in our calmer moments that to love is to be like God, the very sublimity of the idea would be enough to inspire us to "love one another," even if every other motive failed. Where there is brotherly love, there is sure to be generous help if it be needed. III. TWO IMPORTANT

SIGNS OF LOVE. 1. Divine sonship—"And every one that loveth is begotten of God." These are very encouraging words. Almost all Christian people are sorely tried with dark and crushing doubts at one time or other in their history. In such moments of spiritual experience one of the most effectual ways of removing the wretched doubt is to ask ourselves the question, "Do I love God and my brethren?" If the answer be "Yes," then we may console ourselves that we possess one of the most unmistakable signs of sonship. 2. A power to recognise God. "And every one that loveth . . . knoweth God." The great intellect may recognise Him in His works and dealings with men, but much, if not everything, in regard to our knowledge of God depends upon the state of the heart. It is not of a mere superficial acquaintance with God that the apostle is speaking, such as we obtain of an object or a person by just seeing him a few times; he is speaking of that knowledge which is the grand result of apprehending God as the Father of our spirits and the Author of salvation—it is the knowledge that ripens into a firm faith and a calm trust in God as our unfailing Friend, who is reconciling the world to Himself in Jesus Christ. (*D. Rhys Jenkins.*) *The voice of God through human love:*—The true love, of which I would speak, may be thus defined—desire for the well-being of another. Whenever a person acts in the sole interest of another, and on his behalf alone, he is showing his love for him. 1. That love is an instinct or property of human nature needs little or no illustration. 2. There is a word to say also about the difference between love and the conscience. There is no conflict of claims here. Love and conscience both alike demand that we shall do our duty. But love will often discern what that duty is before the reason has a chance to be heard or the conscience has uttered its call. Love leaps up to enjoy doing what the colder and more sluggish conscience only says we ought to do. 3. That we depend largely on knowledge for a right indulgence of our love. Just as conscience requires us to do our best and to take pains to discover what is right, so true love demands still more anxiety. A mother bending over the sick bed of her son is racked with feverish anxiety to know what will do him good. With no less anxiety does a truly loving heart long to know and try to discover what is best to be done for the dear one's benefit. Love is an active, not a passive principle. It is self-sacrifice, not self-will or the worship of crotchets. True love begins at home, and if she is allowed her due rights there, she will not be wanting when we go abroad, nor fail us in our dealings with strangers or with the lower creation. 4. Love is the parent of many virtues. In the first place, love begets justice. Not only justice of deed but justice of thought, of which we all stand even more in need. You cannot be just to any one whom you dislike or hate, you cannot be just and true to any one for whom your love is not pure and true. True love then adds to justice the quality of mercy, not sparing in the condemnation of the sin, but tender, merciful, and forgiving to the sinner. Then we find love the faithful parent of patience, forbearance, humility, and meekness, all elements of the highest humanity and sources of unspeakable blessing and peace. When we truly love, we show all these virtues in their lustre. But I pass over them to lay emphasis on the healing and purifying effects of love upon our own sinful hearts. Nothing but love can make us truly repent. Just as we all have some unkindness to repent of, so we all have something to forgive. And love alone can teach us how to forgive right nobly and generously. We know also how love is the parent of the commonest virtues, diligence in business, honesty, trustworthiness—all such virtues are a thousand times over begotten and preserved by the love we bear to those dependent on us. For them we toil and work and keep our hands clean from dishonesty. For them we strive to preserve our character and the confidence of the world. And love is the mother of truthfulness. We all know and feel that the most cruel act we can do is to deceive one who trusts us. Never can we deceive or cheat one whom we truly love. And lastly, love begets courage and heroism. Time would fail me to recount the long and glorious catalogue of those who have given their lives for others—aye, for the undeserving. (*C. Voysey.*) **For love is of God.**—*Love is of God:*—The point which I wish to illustrate is that all the love in the universe is the gift of God. This proposition involves consequences of the most responsible character. Let us first unfold the principle, and then ascertain some of its resulting consequences. When the apostle tells us that "God is love" he wishes to convey to us the idea that love is the great motive power of the Divine Being. Love is that which shapes and guides all His attributes, so that each is manifested under the working of love, and each directed to the securing of love. But when the apostle says "Love is of God" he looks at love from another standpoint. He marks it in its human manifestations; and beholding it not so much as a great and original attribute of the Most High, but

as seen in daily life, ramifying through all the grades and conditions of society, he traces the affection to its source, and says, "Love is of God." 1. Take the first love which one human being ever felt for another—conjugal love—and mark how that is of God. In making the woman out of the rib of man—in uniting them, by the act of God Himself, in holy wedlock; in inspiring prophets and apostles to urge men to love their wives as their own bodies; and in likening the union of husband and wife to the mystical union which exists between Christ and the Church—God has indicated, by the most direct and authoritative way, that He was the author and giver of conjugal affection. 2. Take the second love which grew up on earth—parental love—and see how this is of God. We say, in common parlance, that it is natural for a man to love his child. But what constitutes the naturalness of this love, other than the fact that God implanted it in parents' hearts, as a part of their moral constitution? 3. Take the third kind of affection, which, in the order of time, rises in the human breast—the love of children for parents—and we shall find the same truth holds here also. What would a household be, devoid of children's love? What would a parent's heart be if its outgoings of affection found no response in prattling boys and gentle girls? And how much of the sunlight of home would become darkness if filial love were blotted out from mind and memory and heart? Filial love constitutes a large part of human happiness, and pervades every class and condition of our race, and as it could never, by its very nature, create itself, because it is begotten before reason and judgment begin their workings, it must be Divine. 4. The same line of remark applies also to that love of kindred which constitutes a part of man's moral being. He it is "who setteth the solitary in families," who groups men into social circles, and, bestowing upon His creatures affections, calls out these affections in the various forms of social and domestic life. 5. Once more, look at love in the form of philanthropy. Here we behold it breaking over the dikes and channels of conjugal, family, or social affection, and spreading away like the Nile in its overflow, until it covers the entire lowlands of our race. This earth-encompassing and man-elevating love is of God. It is because the Bible tells us that we have one common Father, one common Saviour, one common Comforter, one common salvation, and one common earthly destiny. Now, what would earth be without these various kinds of love? What without philanthropy? It would be a mass of conglomerate selfishness, a world of war, of social discord, and of domestic misery. What would earth be without this love of kindred? The interlacing bonds of family with family would be sundered; society would be disintegrated, save only when force or interest made a union of what was else repulsive and undesired. What would the world be without filial or parental love? A family where there was parental authority without parental love, and where filial obedience was required without filial affection rendered, would not be a home but a prison. And above all, what would earth be without conjugal love—if there was no heart-union between man and wife; no love to cheer, soften, and irradiate the lot of woman; no responsive affection to nerve and lift up and make happy the soul of man; if the marriage tie was only a bond of interest or of lust—a bond galling as the manacle of the convict? It would be as if some angel of the pit should pass through this world and turn its green fields into sand-wastes, its forest-crowned and picturesque hills into bald rock, its floral kingdom into bramble-land, its dancing, leaping, silvery waters into asphaltic streams, its exquisitely tinged clouds and its brilliant sunsets into Cimmerian gloom, its thousand bird-melodies into discordant screams. Seeing, then, that with all man's sins and ill-doings, with all God's punishments and curses, He has continued to us this love, the question arises, Have you ever seriously thought how much you ought to love God, who has given you the inestimable boon of human affection? Can you sum up your debt to Him for this one gift? Yet, when man rebelled against God, and cast off His sway, and virtually said to Him, "We desire not a knowledge of Thy ways," God might most justly have stripped him of love and left him to the curse of the loveless and the unloved. It was His love to us which caused Him to continue love in us. There is no love in hell. There is one other aspect of the subject which I must touch upon. Wondrous as is the fact that, notwithstanding our sins, God still continued to us human love, and highly exalting as that fact is of His grace and mercy, it is not so great a display of His love as that manifested in providing for man's redemption. (*Bp. Stevens.*) **Every one that loveth is born of God.**—*Love and religion*:—The phrase "begotten of God" is not a large, but it is a very great one. Whither can our genealogy be traced? I. The Bible answers this immense question by the doctrine that God and man stand to each other in the relation of Father and child. This fact gives to human sin its crimson dye, and to human

sorrow its peculiar pathos. Human sin is the sin of Absalom—of a son against his father. Here is a fall from heaven! II. But the phrase “begotten of God” means much more than this. It answers the question, What is religion? “Religion is orthodox belief,” say some; a “cult,” say others; “morality fired with emotion,” say others. But the New Testament says that “Except a man be born again from above he cannot see the kingdom of God.” So far as man is a son by nature only, he may grow up to be dissatisfied with his father’s mode of life, and with the law of his father’s house. He may also adopt a course of action so widely divergent from his father’s that the natural bond between them shall serve only to reveal the widening gulf of character that separates them. To become truly a son he must be born again—must of his own choice accept as his father the parent Providence gave him, and must by his own love and conduct make the house in which Providence placed him a home. To be then fully “born of God” is for the soul, being filled with the Holy Spirit, to accept the salvation that is in Christ by faith in His blood, to acknowledge God’s fatherly authority, accept God’s law, live His life, do His work; or, in one word, to love God—“he that loveth is born of God.” III. Religion, then, is love. Love is not something elementary, something for little children and babes in Christ. Love is final, infinite. It is both Alpha and Omega in religion. “But what,” you ask, “of life and conduct?” Well, a holy life is the natural outcome of love to God. If a man love God, he will avoid all sin and do all the good he can. It is related of an eminent singer that his teacher kept him day after day, and even month after month, practising the scales, in spite of the pupil’s entreaties for something more advanced. At last the master told him to go forth as the best singer in Europe, having mastered the scales. Not otherwise did our Lord teach His first disciples. For three years He taught them “to love” by miracle and parable, by prayer and sermon. He grounded them in love. When seated with them at the last supper He said: “A new commandment I give unto you,” and behold it was the old one, “That ye love one another.” After His resurrection He met the disciples on the beach, and He took the repentant Peter and put him through the scales: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?” Having learnt to love, their education was complete, their training ended. They could go everywhere and do all things. So, if we truly love God, and love all men in God, we are truly religious. (*J. M. Gibbon.*) **And knoweth God.**—*Love and knowledge*:—The desire for knowledge, like the thirst of riches, increases ever with the acquisition of it. Knowledge is like fire: it must first be kindled from without; but once set burning, it propagates itself. Man’s power is in his mind, not his arm. By his knowledge he is the true king of nature, saying to one element “Go,” and it goeth; to another “Come,” and it dare not disobey. I. Yes, **HEAVEN HAS SECRETS.** The soul, by the necessity of its constitution, must look for God; and its prayer is, “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” Now the text meets this desire of the soul to know God by the emphatic declaration that every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. Love knows God, serves God, possesses God. II. Well, every one that loveth **KNOWETH**—knoweth the men that have been, understandeth that which history saith of them. Love is very old. Love came in with Adam and Eve. Here is an old picture of love: “The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” He that loveth knoweth. He that loveth knoweth the love that Jonathan had for David, and his own heart is his best commentary on the verse. III. Move one step further: “He that loveth knoweth God.” Love is the clue to human love. Love is the clue to the love of God. Wouldst thou know God? Have love in thine heart, and when thine heart is full of love, look into it, and the image thou shalt see will be a likeness of the face of God. Wouldst thou know God’s feeling for thy sin? Look how sensitive a thing is love—how easily wounded! Wouldst thou know the joy of love? Then look at thine own joy at the recovery of a loved one, or the reclamation of an erring one. All faults are forgotten. And wouldst thou know something of the life beyond the veil, of the things that are to be? Go to your own home. See how, out of your love, you provide all things good for those you love most. See how love works, and watches, and prays—how tenderly it cares for the sick and the weak! Oh! what would not human love do had it the power? Well, God is love with wealth, love with knowledge, love with power. (*Ibid.*) **Knowing God by love**:—To know is man’s highest ambition. Knowledge of God—what is it and how can we secure it? I. I remark THAT KNOWLEDGE IS VERY VARIOUS, AND IN EVERY DEPARTMENT MUST BE SECURED BY ITS OWN METHODS, IN ITS OWN DIRECTION, BY ITS OWN APPLIANCES, AND FOR ITS OWN USES. If I wish to know an object that is near, I must use my eyes; an object that is remote, I call for a field-

glass or a telescope; an object that is minute, a microscope. If I would test the texture of an object, I touch it with my hands; the solidity, I strike it with a hammer. If I want to know the chemical or medicinal properties, I have my chemical tests, my medicinal tests. The most valuable knowledge is the knowledge of things with reference to their uses; with reference to what we can do with them by combining them with other things; with reference to how we can make them serve us. This is the dominion which God intended for man. If with reference to things immaterial, to things not seen and eternal, scientific men have sometimes said they are unknowable, it is because they have tried to test them by material appliances, with microscopes and telescopes and hammers, which cannot be done. Men have proposed a prayer-gauge on the principle of the rain-gauge. II. OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD MAY BE JUST AS VARIOUS AS OUR KNOWLEDGE OF MATERIAL THINGS, for He has put Himself variously into material things; but, like all other scientific knowledge, IT MUST ALWAYS BE RECOGNISED BY ITS OWN APPROPRIATE TESTS. The knowledge can come only in its own correspondent way. There is an intellectual knowledge of God—that is, if God is a thinker, an architect, a builder, man, who is made in God's image, may think God's thoughts over after Him, may trace his achievements to His plans and make inferences as to His wisdom and power—that is, may thus know Him. God is thus revealed in what we call nature. This is natural theology. If we want to know God as a thinker, we must use our thinking powers, employ our thinking processes. As a thinker, God reveals Himself to our thinking. Geology reveals to us God as an architect and builder; so does astronomy. One of the methods of intellectual culture is to think over the thoughts of other thinkers. When you say, "That man knows Shakespeare, is a good Shakesperean scholar," I understand this, that he has thought over Shakespeare's thought in all of his great dramas, knows Shakespeare through these thoughts. In one passage, for example, he has felt the power of Shakespeare's imagination, has felt it in his own imagination, by yielding his imagination up to the control of Shakespeare's imagination, as a sparrow might try the same flight as an eagle. Thus only can he feel it. There is an ethical knowledge of God—a knowledge of God as He has revealed Himself to the human conscience. When Coleridge says that the Bible finds him in deeper depths of his nature than any other book, he refers to this revelation of God which He has there made of Himself to man's moral sense. It is not the book, but the Author, who finds him there. It is this ethical revelation of God in the Bible which gives its grip upon man's nature. The conscience is man's deepest part, the essential man. There is an ethical knowledge of Shakespeare which is quite as real as our intellectual knowledge. To his treatment of our moral sense we respond with perfect unanimity. Hamlet's uncle and Lady Macbeth feel just as you and I should feel had we the conscience of a murderer. They both break down in their threefold nature under the burden of their guilt; go utterly to pieces in body, soul, and spirit. This ethical character of the Bible and of Shakespeare is revealed only to our moral sense. That this ethical character of the Bible appears to us so marked and prominent is partly owing to our own moral attitude toward its Author, to the moral hurt of our own nature. We feel as though a surgeon were dressing a wound which we dread to have disturbed. A creature of sinless nature would be very differently affected, would not find this ethical character at all offensive, even if he consciously recognised it. III. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT IS NEITHER INTELLECTUAL NOR ETHICAL, although it requires both the intellect and the conscience in order to reach it, to prepare the way for it. Those who do not go beyond the Sermon on the Mount stop with the intellectual and ethical in Christianity. They know God only so far as that. There is a higher mountain than that on which this sermon was delivered—namely, Mount Calvary. There is something beyond them that is distinctively Christian. God is the Creator; He is the moral Sovereign; but He is more, and Christianity shows it. The text reads, "Every one that loveth is born of God, for God is love." It is a charmed circle, to be entered only thus. It is very evident that the knowledge of God here spoken is not intellectual. Nor is it ethical knowledge. It does not imply any disrespect to the law of conscience to say this. They are both preparatory to something higher and better. If the views already presented are correct, if knowledge must come through methods correspondent to that knowledge, this other knowledge of God cannot come through the intellect or through the conscience. It is impossible. God is. Is what? He is a Creator. Yes. He is a Sovereign. Yes. These are what He does. God is. Is what? Is love! How can I know Him? By loving Him. There is no other way. "He

that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." It is just like saying, He that will not think God's thoughts shall not know God intellectually; he who will not observe the working of God in his conscience shall not know God morally. So, here, he who will not love shall not know God essentially, for God is love. Love understands love. Nothing else does. This is the solution, and God has adopted it. If you begin by asking how the Son of God knows God; He Himself has told us: by loving Him. "I and My Father are one." The teachings of the Saviour are thrown into the simplest intellectual form. Indeed it would be a strong epithet to apply to them to call them intellectual at all. Intellect is not prominent in them, does not preponderate there; truth is there; life is there. It is just so as to the conscience. Ethics are not prominent in them. He Himself has said, "For I came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Me might be saved." Humanity already carries its great burden of condemnation. How can the burden be relieved? Lifted? By showing humanity that God is love. The love which reveals to us God, is love which we are taught by experiencing it and trying to imitate it. We learn to know God by loving as God loves; loving Him, loving man, and entering into God's purposes to save him. We find God's love in the Bible. The Bible is the record of God's patience with men and nations. How are we to know God, who is love? Only by loving Him and walking in the footsteps of the Being who says, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." God, who is love, has taken this pains to show us Himself. By studying this life for the sake of making our lives like it, for the sake of putting into our lives the mind and spirit of it, we may come to know God. True knowledge of God can come only as we are like Him. You can come to an intellectual knowledge of the love of God as you see its exercise in the man Christ Jesus. Many a student of the Bible does that. You can bring yourself to know God in the sense of the text only as you try to do as Christ did, and from the motives that actuated Him. There is a proper emphasis to be put upon what are called good works. They have their place in the Christian system; but it is not in the light of present merit or of future reward that we are chiefly to regard them. They will have their suitable recognition when He shall come whose reward is with Him. But in good works—and that is of more practical importance—in imitation of the Son of Man in our lives, are we to find the sphere where we are to know God, since only thus do we become like Him. A great deal is said, and rightly said, about the necessity of being practical Christians in order to keep our Christianity alive; but it is the only way also in which we can keep vivid our knowledge of God, which is the basis of all our Christianity. Every such effort brings one into closer sympathy with that God who is love. The reformed man is urged to try to save other men who need the same change. It is his only safety. (*J. E. Rankin, D.D.*) *Only love can know love*:—Blindness cannot understand what light is; it has not the power to experience it. The degraded savage cannot appreciate the noble man. He has not in himself the moral qualities by which the higher nature can be understood. A coward cannot have just and adequate ideas of courage; it is a thing foreign to him. So, to understand the love of God, there must be something within us akin to it, to which it appeals. He who loves most understands God best; he who does not love does not know God in the slightest degree. (*Geo. Thompson.*) *Love the organ of the highest knowledge*:—The question is as to God revealing Himself, making Himself known to us as a loving Father. How can it be done? God is love, and love cannot be seen or handled or anatomised. It is even beyond the reach of the subtlest chemical tests. A spiritual test is needed to discover its presence. What is that test? It is love in our own hearts. Suppose some philosopher had been brought up from his birth by himself, apart, on the most rigid system of intellectual training, as, *e.g.*, John Stuart Mill, only still more apart than he or any one else could be, so that his heart could be utterly destitute of natural affection, so that he has plenty of logic but not a particle of love. Suppose that he is fully trained in scientific method, so that everything of the nature of an emotion has been rigidly suppressed. He can therefore approach every subject with the utmost impartiality. Well, one day he goes out to the world to spy its learning. He sees a mother fondling her babe. What can it mean? It is quite familiar to you; it is new and strange to our scientific critic. He proceeds by the true inductive method. And after he has noted all carefully down he goes home to discover what it all means. A plain, simple woman who never heard of induction has also witnessed the performance. She has taken no notes, made no calculations, and yet she knows a great deal more about it than a scientific man

does after spending a year about it. What is her advantage? There is something in her heart which answers to the mother love in the heart of the other woman, and there is nothing in the man's heart. He may apply every test and every method of inquiry that science knows without getting nearer. There are some cases in which an ounce of heart is worth more than a ton of intellect for the purposes of investigation. It is as true as ever that only love can understand love. It cannot possibly be discovered by any process of induction. It is the function, not of the critical faculty, but of the heart. It is a loving, longing heart that recognises the presence of Him whose name is Love. (*Christian Weekly*.)

Ver. 8. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.—*The love of God: the God of love*:—Is God knowable? The answer is no—and yes. No, He is not knowable to the intellect, with its prying and searching; provable, perhaps, but not knowable. Yes, He is knowable indeed to the heart. It is a poor kind of love that depends for its proof upon the skill of the logician. The love is lost by default that must hire counsel to take up its case and eloquently contend for its existence. Love must tell its own story, and carry its own proof. This loftiest knowledge dwells not with intellectual strength. See how the Lord Jesus Christ recognises this truth, and bases all prayer upon it. "Our Father which art in heaven." The relationship which is the strongest possible claim upon help and love is to be transferred to God. "Our Father"—what does it mean but that He is bending over us to pity us and to help us; to teach us and to make us good; glad indeed when we do well? This is the first step and beginning of the knowledge of God. Let us try to think how otherwise we can know God. Tell me of Him as the Omniscient—the All-wise. How can I know what that means? I know only by what I am conscious of in myself, or by what I see about me. But within me or about me what is there that can teach me of the All-wise? I am only bewildered as I hear of such an One—I know Him not. I hear of the Almighty, but what does it mean? I judge of strength by my own arm, or by the winds and angry seas; or by the power of human mechanism. In all these I can see only matter overcoming matter. I have nothing by which to know the Omnipotent. I hear of the Self-existent, the Independent. What is that? I see all things depending alike for their source and their sustenance upon others. What then can I know of Him whose name is "I Am"? And if I turn from these aspects to the moral character of God, I am yet more bewildered. Tell me of the righteousness of God. Sin has put out the eyes by which I can see true righteousness; and perhaps as much in mercy as in punishment. But think again. If I did know all this about God, I should not know Him. Vastness, immensity, knowledge, power, leave me as utterly as ever a stranger to God. But tell me that He is love—that what love is, that is God—then I know Him. I know now how He feels and thinks and acts. I know now how to come to Him, and to speak to Him. Now do I know Himself when I know that He is love. He that loveth knoweth God—look at this faculty within us by which we know God. Love is ours as nothing else is ours. The slow and irksome toil of learning is not needful for love. The dullest scholar may be a very master of this art, and the most unlettered may read aright the signs and mysteries of love. (*Mark Guy Pearse*.) *The loving heart the faculty for knowing God*:—I. The loving heart, not the INQUIRING INTELLECT. II. The loving heart, not the CREATIVE IMAGINATION. Imagination has swept the universe, and yet failed to discover God. III. The loving heart, not the EXCITED CONSCIENCE. The excited conscience has formulated a God, but it has been a God of vengeance, wrath, and fury. God is only known to the loving. If I know the controlling feelings of a being, I know him, though I may be ignorant of his person and his history. Profoundly philosophical, therefore, is the statement that "He that loveth not, knoweth not God." (*Homilist*.) *The love of God manifested by the sending of His Son*:—There is singular force in the expression "God is love." He does not say that God is benevolent, or kind, or merciful, or compassionate, or affectionate: he does not say that God is a Being of infinite goodness, or mercy, or loving-kindness: but, as if he intended to magnify above measure this most adorable of the Divine attributes, he pronounces Him to be the quality in the abstract, and thus, as it were, identifies the Godhead with love. I. With respect to THAT BEING WHOM WE CALL God, infinite as He is in all His perfections, our limited understandings can comprehend only a very small portion of His excellence. "The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him": still less can His nature be compassed by the little span of the human mind. Yet of this much we are assured, that His power is such, as to

be incapable of being controlled, and that His happiness is such, that nothing can enhance or augment it. And these are two of the Divine attributes which, when we reflect on the Godhead by Himself, tend most satisfactorily to prove His benevolence in condescending to interfere for the salvation of mankind. II. From the Sender, let us turn our thoughts to Him who was sent. "God sent His only-begotten Son." The greatest trial which human nature can sustain is perhaps the loss of a son, of an only son. III. AND WHITHER WAS HE SENT? He was sent into a world which was altogether "lying in wickedness." How unbounded, in this respect again, how great, how disinterested appears the love of God! IV. Let us not forget THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH HE WAS SENT, as a farther testimony that God is love. "He was sent that we might live through Him": for us men, and for our salvation He came down from heaven. And as the love of God is thus manifested, in that we were His enemies, for whose salvation His Son was sent, so is it, moreover, manifested by the greatness of the salvation, which was wrought by His coming: a salvation great in every particular respect; great in respect to its extent; great in respect of the deliverance which it affords; great in respect to the means of grace which it now affords us, and of the all-sufficient aid of Christ's Holy Spirit to overcome our natural weakness and corruption; and great in respect of the hope of everlasting glory which it reveals to those who shall hereafter be admitted into His presence. (*Bp. Mant.*) *Our salvation intelligible in the light of God's love*.—I. IN THE SIGHT OF GOD MAN IS A BEING OF UNSPEAKABLE WORTH. And the fact is only intelligible in the light of this first fact, "God is love." It is very easy to prove the insignificance of man. The scientist, for instance, traces him to the ape, and says, "This is where he came from"; or he dissects his brain, and says, "Thought, emotion, love, imagination, poetry, worship—see the marks of every one of them upon this material tablet, which we call the brain." And this gospel story—the cynic indulges in cheap sneers at it, and asks if you are going to make an angel out of this sorry being with his vulgar appetites and animal lusts. The sober-minded Deist, out of pure reverence for God, he thinks, refuses to believe the story. That the infinite God should concern Himself with man and his paltry destiny is incredible. And it is incredible. Man is so small, mean, ignoble, unworthy, until you read his story with the eyes of love; until you remember this—"God is love." But every mother will waste the wealth of her brave heart upon the boy in whom no one but herself can see one sign of grace or virtue. But it is a luxury to her to serve him. The man who believes in no prophet but the political economist thinks that Christian philanthropy is sheer infatuation, sheer waste of human energy. And so it is to everything but love. Love sees worth in what to every other eye is contemptible. The poorest, most sin-sodden is to God a mirror in which He sees Himself. Beautiful, of infinite worth to Him! Divine in Him, for "God is love." II. GOD SEEKS FOR EVERY MAN THE MOST PERFECT DESTINY; THE MOST PERFECT GOOD. 1. The good of man includes the whole man. It includes the body. To preach the gospel of health is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. God intended us to die as the ripe fruit falls from the tree. The physician is God's servant, as well as the preacher. It includes the mind. God claims every pure-minded writer as His workman. It includes the sunniest as well as the gloomiest sides of human life. The frosts of winter work for the harvest. 2. But these things are preliminaries. They exist merely for the sake of a greater thing than themselves. Beyond these there is something still sacred and more precious—the spirit. Here man finds his most perfect good, and God works through every other good to this. There lies the difference between Divine love and human love. We ignore the highest for the sake of the lowest. We ruin our children in the name of the vulgarest and ignoblest thing in them, and we imagine that to be love. The child's native indolence grumbles against the drill and what he calls the hard work of the school. "Poor overtaxed boy!" says the mother; "I must not permit it"; and he grows up with a flabby mind that is not fit for such a world as this. I often saw in Upper Egypt an ancient temple pulled to pieces to build a village of hovels. I have seen a band of roving gipsies tear down the exquisitely carved panels of an old palace to light a fire to boil their kettle with. And I have seen young people take the studies in which they had been long immersed, and with them light the fires of sordid pleasures and the many foolishnesses of fashionable life. We use the highest to light the lowest. Not so God. God also has His fire; and the fire is your religious life. And God uses your whole soul, your whole nature, to supply fuel for that fire. Your intellectual life; you read, you think; but you read and think that you may have fuel for the fire.

You go through the drill of your daily work, you wrestle with temptations; it is fuel for the fire. You join hands with others in the joy of worship. The Word of God feeds you, the common hymn and the common prayer thrill you; it is all fuel for the fire. This is man's highest good as God reads it; this God feeds, for "God is love." III. GOD HAS MADE SUFFICIENT PROVISION TO SECURE EVERY MAN'S HIGHEST GOOD. There is a very famous English poem—of course you know who wrote it—it is called "*Pictor Ignotus*," the painter who chose to remain unknown; the man of genius, the born painter, who refused to paint because men would not understand, would not properly appreciate his work. He would never degrade the genius that was in him by pandering to vulgar wealth. But that is not the noblest genius. Real genius must express itself, even for its own sake. Forgive the illustration. God must express Himself for His own sake. God has poured out the wealth of His redemption. We may reject it or receive it: God must give it. He has been telling it unweariably through the ages. Men have rejected it, treated it with contempt. It matters not: to God to tell Himself was a necessity, for "God is love." 1. In the redemption of man God has found a work by which He may fully express Himself. Men talk of the wonders of nature. They often become so absorbed in nature that they have no wish to look beyond it. But these were the mere trifles of God's works. God had never been able to tell Himself in these. But Christ came; Calvary came. This is God; this was the solution of the world's problem: God had told Himself at last. Pardon, hope, life, for all the world; the break of the eternal day. This is God. 2. The love of God makes it all credible. It would be impossible to believe it did we not know that "God is love." Every one believes the Bible to be a marvellous book. It is when you speak of the Cross, when you speak of the "Lamb of God," of the sins of the world being laid upon Him, that men begin to hesitate and stammer. "No, no; that is incredible; that can never be," they say. But love—the love of God—makes even that—makes every item of the story credible. I have seen the miracles that love works. The Cross shall be for ever the symbol of love's perfect triumph. It was love, it was love that did it. "God is love." IV. GOD WILL WORK OUT THE PROVISIONS THAT HE HAS MADE SO THAT THEY SHALL NOT MISS WHAT THEY AIM AT. Set it down as a certainty that God's love will win, that the gospel of love will tell. This love often uses terrible means to secure its purpose. Do not miss that. Not terrible means for the sake of using them, but terrible means because it will not submit to be beaten. Terrible disasters require terrible remedies; but he who can use terrible remedies, loves. So is it with some of you. You have been sore tried; but God set so much store upon the design He is cutting into you, that He may set you in the fire even yet. He will not miss His aim; for "God is love." (*J. Morlais Jones.*) *Affections essential to the moral perfection of the Deity*:—God is perfect love, all His affections are pure and clear as the crystal stream. 1. Benevolent affections form the moral beauty of the Divine character. God is love. His independence, almighty power, and unerring wisdom are mere natural perfections; but His benevolent feelings are moral beauties. 2. Men are required to imitate their heavenly Father. Power, wisdom, and all the natural perfections of the Deity are above imitation. There is nothing in the nature of God which any of His creatures can imitate, except His benevolent feelings. 3. The Scriptures ascribe affections to God in the most plain and unequivocal terms. (1) It may be said that the passages which ascribe affections to God are figurative, and ought not to be taken in a literal sense. We are never to depart from the literal sense of Scripture, without some apparent necessity. (2) It may be said that affections are painful, and consequently cannot belong to God, who is perfectly happy. It is true, affections are always painful when they cannot be gratified; and this is often the case among mankind. But since all the affections of the Deity are only different modifications of pure, disinterested benevolence, they admit of a constant and perfect gratification, and always afford him a source of complete and permanent felicity. (3) It may be asked, "How is this notion of Divine affections compatible with that perfect immutability and simplicity which all divines ascribed to the Deity?" We may observe here that there is a plain distinction between such a mutability as does, and such a mutability as does not, imply imperfection. If a man who was a sinner yesterday becomes a saint to-day, it implies no imperfection in God to change His affections towards that person. Improvement:—1. This subject may give us some faint conceptions of the strength and ardency of the Divine affections. 2. In the view of this subject we may discover what it was which moved God to the work of creation. 3. It appears from what has been said that God is pleased with the

existence of everything which takes place in the universe. His heart is in all His works. 4. This subject suggests matter of great consolation to those who are interested in the Divine favour. 5. This subject warns sinners to flee from the wrath to come. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *God and love*:—I. In the first place, I think we should take this text as it stands—as being literally and completely true. It needs no qualification, admits of no complement. That “God is love” is not one side of the truth, but the whole truth, about God. No addition is possible. The leaf, we are told, is the stem expanded—the stem is the leaf closed. This text is theology closed. All theology is this text expanded. II. We are to take it as true of God at all times and in all places. Nothing but love has ever reigned on the throne of creation; nothing but love ever will reign. Christ did not create, He revealed, the love of God. The love of God has no shallows. It is equally deep everywhere—Calvary deep wherever you try it. III. “God is love.” When? Always. “God is love!” Where? Everywhere. Love built heaven. Love made earth. Love made hell; and its pains are the measure of God’s love for goodness—its flames are love on fire. IV. Now, one word as to the effect this revelation ought to have on us. One effect is joy. This text, if we believe it, will assuage our sorrow, lighten our hearts, and brighten our lives. “God is love,” I say. “Of course!” you say. How commonplace! But look into old creeds, look into modern philosophy, where God is Force without heart, and Law without pity. Look at your own lives, at the records on the pages of memory. Are you not glad for your own sakes that God is love? (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *The love of the eternal*:—I. LOVE THE DOMINANT QUALITY. II. MAN’S PRESUMPTUOUS CRITICISM. St. John’s statement does not imply that love’s activities are necessarily in accordance with human conceptions of love. Who art thou, O man, with thy limited perception, blind to all the future—who art thou, that thou darest to say what infinite, omniscient, eternal love ought to do? As well expect the fly that crawls on the dome of this majestic cathedral to interpret the purposes and methods, the disposition and attributes of the architect. Do not expect that because God is love you are going to understand all that God is doing around you and for you. It may be a token of the greatest love that you know nothing of it. III. INDULGENCE NOT LOVE. It is the office of love to seek the final good of its object; to bless the object rather than pamper it; to raise and ennoble and glorify it rather than minister to its passing whims and caprices. Does not this thought interpret some of the mysteries of life to us? Does it not let in daylight and sunlight upon the dark experiences of this sorrowing earth? (*W. J. Hocking.*) *Originating love*:—God has many attributes, and we see Him and adore Him under many aspects; but the essence of Deity is single, and His being is “love”! Other things He does, but this He is. And observe the power of the present tense. It is not, “God was,” or “God will be,” but now,—in an eternal and unchanging now,—“yesterday, to-day, and for ever,”—“God is love!” Take the sweetest moment of your whole life,—take the moment of the greatest manifestation of God’s goodness that has ever been seen in this world, and it is the very same now, unshaded, undimmed; no sins of yours will alter it. Doubtless there are difficulties. The brightest lights throw the deepest shadows. But the mists which cloud the summer morning are only made to melt into the sweeter noonday brightness. “Was it love,” a man says, “to make man, and then let him fall into sin and misery?” The answer is two-fold. First, man was made a free agent. This was a first principle in the creation of this world. Secondly, man, the whole race of man, is better for the fall. Had man not fallen, Christ would not have come to this world. But another objects:—“See all the suffering and wretchedness there is now in this world—how is that consistent with the Divine government of love?” First, all the suffering, in the main, is man’s own fault. The suffering is the result, directly, or indirectly, of voluntary sin, which might have been avoided. But secondly, this world, having fallen, is now passing under discipline and training for another and better world; and the suffering is the discipline essential to the educating processes of the present life. Thirdly, if there are degrees in glory, the degree of the glory must depend on the degree of the grace; and, to a great extent, the degree of the grace is dependent on the degree of the schooling. But I hear it said again, “Why has God left such a vast proportion of the inhabitants of this earth ignorant of Christ, and of the way of salvation?” God has not left them ignorant. He willed and provided that “all should know Him.” He commanded His people from the very first, to “Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Had we done our duty, all would have been right, and this whole world have been

evangelised. And we believe that the heathen who have not known God will not be judged as we shall be. Every one will be judged according to his knowledge and his conscience. But, leaving all these cavils, let us look at this matter very practically. At this moment there is not a person—whatever his past might have been, or whatever his present is—who might not, this very day, be freely and perfectly forgiven, and be quite happy. He might have the sweetest peace, and perfect assurance in his mind. He might be quite confident of the love, the infinite love of God. He has a Father, a tender, loving Father in heaven. Treat God as “Love,” and you will find Him “Love.” But remember “love” is sensitive. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way.” If you wish a picture of God in your mind, study the “father” in the parable of the prodigal. If “God is love,” may I not say, “Love is God”? The highest characteristic of our religion is “love.” If you have no love, you have no God! The measure of the “love” is the measure of the “God.” (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The love of God*:—I. This emphatic description refers to THE NATURE, as well as to the operations of God. II. The truth of the assertion, that God is love, appears in HIS PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS with the children of men. III. IN THE REDEMPTION OF MANKIND our Lord has displayed the full glories of His love. IV. The truth of the assertion appears with peculiar evidence, by tracing THE DEALINGS AND METHODS OF HIS GRACE towards every individual who has interest in the Saviour. CONCLUSION: 1. Let me address careless sinners in the language of warning and reproof. 2. Let me address those who, drawn by the attractions of Divine love and redeeming grace, are saying in sincerity, “Whatever others do, we will serve the Lord.” (1) Submit, without murmuring, to the various dispensations of His providence. (2) Love this God with supreme regard and gratitude. (3) Imitate this God of love, and seek, through grace, to resemble your heavenly Father. (4) Is that glorious Jehovah, to whom you have devoted your hearts and lives, indeed the God of love? Then recommend Him as such to your friends and families while you are on earth, and long to be with Him in the heaven of heavens. (*A. Bonar.*) “God is love”:—A briefer sentence it would be difficult to find; yet how infinitely vast and wonderful is the truth which lies within its compass! The very centre and source of all things. Although this is the one truth about God which we can know, yet it is the last truth which we accept. Most men believe in the existence of God, in His power, in His wisdom. There are others who vaguely believe that He is good and kind. But there are few men who really think of God as love. And very many spend their time in putting up fences and limits to the love of God, as if it were beset with statutes, and thoughts of precedents, and dread of presumption. Would that we believed it as God has taught it in His Word! The great power in the world to redeem men, to uplift, to ennoble men, is the power of love. To love, to be loved, is a restraint, a constraint, a transformation. Love is the true salvation. And yet what can it avail to tell of love? Words may do for some things, but to hold love they are too little, too shallow, too coarse, too cold. And even if words could tell of it, who were the richer for hearing them? What avails to tell a hungry man of a banquet? To see and not to have may be an agony. A sermon about the love of God, if it be a sermon only, is a stone that mocks one's hunger. The love of God is ours not in words only, but ours in deed and in truth; ours to accept it; to rest in it; to delight in it. How then may we make it ours? Well, take the words and brood over them until the very Spirit of God speaks them to the heart. “God is His own interpreter”—and only love can tell of love. To its anointed eye all things are revelations and emblems, and to its tuned heart every breath is music. Love is not to a crowd; compassion, pity there may be for a multitude, but love is separate; it is personal; it is distinct and peculiar. God's love is like His sunlight, diffused throughout the heaven, catching the heights of the hills and crowning them with ruddy gold and clothing them in purple. So it seems to us an easy and a natural thing for God to love some people; outstanding men and women whose goodness might make them dear to Him. But this is not all that the sun does. It climbs higher that it may creep lower—down the hill-sides further and further, until it lifts the mists of the valley and covers the meadows with its glory; and kisses the daisy and fills its cup with gold, and puts energy and strength into its very heart. God loves the good, the true, the pure, but His love rises higher that it may come down lower; and He loves me—me. Do not grieve Him any longer by doubting it. God is love. Is—eternity lies within the compass of that little word. (*M. G. Pearse.*) *God's love unfathomable*:—I know what it means to love; but I have no conception what love is when it rolls in the bosom of an infinite God. I know what light is as it

shines from my candle, but do I know what the sun is from that? I know what water is when I take a drop of it in my tumbler, but do I know the thunder of the ocean from that? I know that when I see God He will be wise; but how little do I know of the wisdom of God? I know that He will be a God of love, but oh! how little do I know of the extent and grandeur of that love! How imperfect are my slender ideas as means by which to fashion this supreme attribute of the infinite and eternal God. It is by these qualities that I know my God; but I know Him only by specimens—by small samples. My conceptions of Him are imperfect. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *God always love*:—"God is love," was the motto on a weathercock. The owner on being asked "if he meant to imply that the love of God was as fickle as the wind?" replied, "No, I mean which ever way the wind blows, God is love; if cold from the north, or biting from the east, still God is love as much as when the warm south, or genial west wind refreshes our fields and flocks." Yes, so it is; our God is always love. *God's love changeless*:—"You have seen the stream that in summer was broad and flowing, in winter covered with a thick coating of ice; but God's love is a stream that never freezes. You have seen the fountains that in winter, when the springs were active, had an abundant supply of water, but when summer came with its drought, were dry; God's love, however, is a fountain that never becomes dry. You have seen the sun pour a flood of golden beams upon the earth through the live-long day, and set in darkness as night approached; but God's love is a sun that never sets. You shall see the world burning, and the stars drop from their orbits, and the heavens be rolled up like a scroll; but God's love lasts for ever and ever. (*W. G. Pascoe.*)

Vers. 9, 10. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world.—*Divine love in its highest manifestation*:—Mark in illustration of the immensity of that love—I. THE DIGNITY AND WORTH OF HIM WHO WAS GIVEN TO THE WORLD FOR ITS MANIFESTATION. "God sent His only-begotten Son into the world." This was the first step in the demonstration of His matchless benignity. II. Observe, as a further illustration of God's love as here set forth, THE CONDITION TO WHICH HE FREELY SURRENDERED HIS SON. "He sent Him into the world." "He sent Him to be the propitiation for our sins." And think!—this love has been shown to you! All this God did to prove Himself gracious to you—to you, the most ungrateful and hard-hearted here this day, who do not, will not love Him in return? III. Consider a third particular which the text adduces in illustration of the great love wherewith God has loved us, namely, THE GLORIOUS END, IN RELATION TO OUR RACE, WHICH THAT LOVE CONTEMPLATED. "God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." That which the apostle here means by "life," is happy existence—existence in connection with the highest and fullest development of all our powers, both of perception and enjoyment; existence in the possession of the Divine favour and love, moral rectitude, and internal purity. A life is it whose vigour no power of disease can undermine, whose actings are superior to waste and fatigue, whose duration is lasting as Jehovah. Oh! what, then, must be the measure of that love which gave Christ to procure for us such a benefit as this? IV. Consider, in the last place, how marvellously this love is enhanced by the fact, THAT IT WAS LOVE TO THE UNLOVING. "Herein is love," says our text, "not that we loved God." What should be the effect upon us of such contemplations. 1. Love begets love, and if God has so loved us, we should surely love Him in return. 2. Love is exemplary, and if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (*C. M. Merry.*) *The love of God*:—There are two notions of God that have more or less prevalence among men. One represents Him that if there were not a man on earth, if there were nothing in all creation from side to side, there is that in Himself that would make Him for ever overflow with taste, and feeling, and love. The one ascribes to Him a nature that is merely susceptible of being called out upon the application of the motive. The other ascribes to Him a nature that pours itself abroad in the earth by reason of its own fulness and richness. It is the latter of these two ideas that I suppose the Scriptures to teach. In our text God's love for us is not affirmed to exist because God perceived a spark kindled in us, gradually flaming forth and reaching up toward Him. God did not love man because man had prepared himself and made himself lovely, nor did Divine love spring forth from any deed of God's by which He, for purposes of government, aroused and incited Himself to strong emotion. Love springs not from an act, not from a fact of redemptive sacrifice. The love of God for the world was manifested in the Cross, instead of

being created by it. I. GOD'S LOVE DOES NOT DEPEND UPON OUR CHARACTER, BUT UPON HIS OWN. I do not mean to say that it makes no difference whether a man has a good or a bad character. I do not mean to affirm that there do not spring up, between the Divine nature and ourselves, by reason of our relations to that nature, certain deep intimacies and more wonderful affections. But I do mean to affirm that there is a great overshadowing of love to us, that exists, not on account of our character, but on account of His. II. THE DIVINE LOVE EXISTS AND WORKS UPON US, NOT ALONE WHEN WE ARE CONSCIOUS, BUT EVERMORE. Men mount up under flashes of glorious realisation, and it seems as if God then began to love them, because they then first become sensitive to His love. When a man has passed through religious changes from darkness to light; when he has put off his worldly character, and taken on the character of Christ; when, coming out of despondency, the compassionate Saviour rises before his imagination, and he says, "Christ has begun to love me"—his impression is that the Divine love for him began when the burden which had weighed down his soul was rolled off. This is as if a blind man, who had never seen the heavens, nor the earth, nor the sweet faces of those who loved him, should have a surgical operation performed upon his eyes, resulting in the restoration of his sight, and he should think to himself on going out of doors, "Oh! how things are blossoming! The earth is beginning to be beautiful! Mountains and hills are springing up in every direction! The forms of loving friends are being raised up to meet my gaze! And the sun has just begun to shine forth from the heavens!" But have not these things existed since the creation, although the man's eyes have not before been in a condition to enable him to see them? A man has lived in a cellar, where he has been a poor, confined creature, striving to live a life which was but like a prolonged death. At last he is permitted to go up one storey, and then one storey higher, and then yet another storey. Thus he keeps on exploring and going up, until finally he reaches the roof. There he beholds the heavens over his head, and the sun in the east, and he is tranced with amazement by the glory of the things which surround him. And yet, every single day during his existence, and for countless ages, the heavens have hung above the earth, the sun has shone forth in splendour, and the creations which astonish his vision have been beheld by men. For forty years he has been in the cellar, and now he has come up where he can see, it seems to him that objects now appear for the first time, because he sees them for the first time. So it is with the disclosures of the love of God in Christ Jesus to Christians. They think that the time at which they first realise God's love is the time when it is first shed upon them. But as God pours abroad infinite breadths of His being without an eye except His own to behold, so He spreads over our heads an unknown, an immeasurable love, waiting for our recognition, but in no wise depending upon it. III. There is something unspeakably affecting to me in this thought of THE SOLICITUDE OF DIVINE LOVE FOR MEN, AND ITS PATIENT CONTINUANCE IN GOD WITHOUT CONSCIOUSNESS ON OUR PART. There is something sweet in interpreting the nature of God from the family. Now who can tell the sum of the thoughts which the mother bestows on the child? And yet he is unconscious of most of her solicitude concerning him. He knows that she loves him, but he only feels the pulsations of her love once in awhile. I think we never know the love of the parent for the child till we become parents. Not only does God think of us constantly, and love us steadfastly, but there is a healing, curative nature, for ever outworking from the Divine mind upon ours, even although we may co-operate voluntarily with His will. All these yearnings which we have for good, are the crying out of the soul for God, under the influence of His love to us. Every throb of our spirits that answers to spiritual things is caused by the influence of God. And that is not all. We have testimony in the workings of the providence of God in the experiences of our daily life, that God's love is still shed upon us, although we may be unconscious of it. I recollect to have read the case of a man in a city of Southern Europe, who spent his life in getting property, and became unpopular among his fellow-citizens on account of what seemed to them his miserly spirit. When his will was read after his death, it stated that he had been poor, and had suffered from a lack of water; that he had seen the poor of the city also suffering from the same want, and that he had devoted his life to the accumulation of means sufficient to build an aqueduct to bring water to the city, so that for ever afterward the poor should be supplied with it. It turned out that the man whom the poor had cursed till his death had been labouring to provide water for the refreshment of themselves and their children. Oh! how God has been building an aqueduct to bring the water of life to us, He not interpreting His acts and we

not understanding them ! IV. GOD'S LOVE IS NOT, AS TOO OFTEN OURS IS, THE COLLATERAL AND INCIDENTAL ELEMENT OF HIS LIFE AND BEING. It is His abiding state. All time and all eternity are filled with it. All plans are conceived and directed by it. All histories and all administrations are transfused with and carried forward in it. All triumphs are to end in it, while all that cannot be made to harmonise, and blend, and co-operate with it shall be utterly swept away. 1. Can any other truth so justify and enforce an earnest, instant, manly search, to see if these things be so ? 2. If what I have said is true, can any honourable man justify himself for not coming into a living faith in and communion with God ? 3. Will not the realisation of such a nature, brought home to us personally, account for all the sometimes discredited Christian experiences ? (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Christ the manifestation of Divine love*:—1. The love of God as a principle is, of course, eternal. Like His own nature, it is uncreated, self-existent, and independent. 2. But, while the love of God as a principle is from everlasting, the manifestations of this love are related to events, and to circumstances, and to time. Now the manifestation of God's love not only makes us acquainted with it, but renders that love available to us. Now, in the text, a gift is introduced as manifesting God's love. I. THE NATURE OF THIS GIFT. Now here, you observe, a being is given to us, and a being closely related to God Himself ; so closely related to the Father that we must look upon Him as the Son of the Highest. This Being is sent into our world—sent to live in close connection with it ; for He is born of a woman, and sent into our world to become thoroughly identified with it. He is identified with it as a new-born babe ; He is identified with it as an infant ; He is identified with it as a child ; He is identified with it as a youth ; He is identified with it as a man ; He is identified with it as pursuing the ordinary occupations of His country and age. II. THE INTENT OF THIS GIFT. To give "life." Originally, life was staked upon a covenant. God said to our first father, "Do this, and you shall live." That was a covenant of works, and the continuance of life to Adam under that arrangement was his due. The covenant is broken, and it is utterly impossible for God to place us now under a covenant of similar character. If we are to have life now, it must be by a dispensation of mercy. And while He personally imparts to us that life which consists in freedom from condemnation, He gives us life in soul and spirit by "the Spirit of God." (*S. Martin.*) *The manifestation of Divine love in the gospel*:—The wife of Tigranes was among the captives on a certain public day when Cyrus, the conqueror of Asia, was reviewing his troops. While the captives pressed forward to see the conqueror, Tigranes presented himself before Cyrus and offered a thousand talents for the redemption of his wife. Among the observations afterwards made respecting the appearance and glory of the conqueror, this noble lady was asked what she thought of Cyrus. She had not seen him. On what then was your attention fixed ? On the man who offered a thousand talents for my redemption. And on whom should the attention of Christians be chiefly fixed, but on Him who gave, not a thousand talents, but His own most precious life, for their redemption ? We admire the magnanimity of Judah, when we behold him, in concern for the sorrows of an aged parent, offering himself to servitude in the room of the favourite son of the deceased Rachel. But what was this compared with Him who took the sinner's place under law, and so to speak, received the full discharge of wrath Divine ? Let all the archives of antiquity be explored ; bring forward all the generous sacrifices of Greece and Rome ; and what are they all to the amazing love here displayed ? The love which we celebrate stands alone and without a second. It is the most profitable subject of contemplation that can occupy the mind. It carries you up to those views of God which are the most sublime, the most transforming, and the most happy. (*E. D. Griffin, D.D.*) *The love of God to men in the Incarnation of Christ*:—I. It is a great evidence of the love of God to mankind, that HE WAS PLEASED TO TAKE OUR CASE INTO CONSIDERATION, AND TO CONCERN HIMSELF FOR OUR HAPPINESS. Now that He, who is far above us, and after that we by wilful transgression had lost ourselves, had no obligation to take care of us, but what His own goodness laid upon Him ; that He should be so solicitous for our recovery, is a great evidence of His good-will to us, and cannot be imagined to proceed from any other cause. II. Another evidence of God's great love to us is, that HE WAS PLEASED TO DESIGN SO GREAT A BENEFIT FOR US. This the Scripture expresseth to us by life ; because, as it is one of the greatest blessings, so it is the foundation of all other enjoyments. 1. We were spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins, as the apostle speaks (Eph. ii. 1, 2). 2. We were likewise judicially

dead in law, being condemned by the just sentence of it. What a surprise of kindness is here! that, instead of "sending His Son to condemn us," He should "send Him into the world to save us." But His love stopped not here; it was not contented to spare us and free us from misery, but was restless till it had found out a way to bring us to happiness. III. The last evidence of God's great love to us was this, that God was PLEASED TO USE SUCH A MEANS FOR THE OBTAINING AND PROCURING OF THIS GREAT BLESSING "He sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." 1. The person whom He was pleased to employ upon this design: "He sent His only-begotten Son." 2. How much He abased Him, in order to the accomplishing of this design, implied in these words, "He sent Him into the world." 3. To whom He was sent, to the world. 4. That He did all this voluntarily and freely, out of His mere pity and goodness; not constrained hereto by any necessity. What remains but to apply this to ourselves?

1. Let us propound to ourselves the love of God for our pattern and example. 2. Let us readily comply with the great design of this great love of God to mankind. 3. With what joy and thankfulness should we commemorate this great love of God to mankind. (*Abp. Tillotson.*)

The love of God:—I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD'S LOVE. 1. Everlasting in its date (Jer. xxxi. 3). 2. Unmerited in the objects of it (Ezek. xxxvi. 21-23). 3. Immutable in its nature (Psa. lxxxix. 30-36). 4. Of unspeakable value (Eph. iii. 17-19). 5. Eternal in its duration (Eph. iii. 11, 12). II. THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S LOVE. 1. The greatness and glory of the person sending: God (Isa. lvii. 15). 2. The dignity of the person sent: Christ, the God-man (Heb. i. 3). 3. The place into which He was sent: this world (1 John iv. 9). 4. The purpose for which He was sent: salvation (Gal. iv. 4, 5). III. THE GRACIOUS DESIGN. 1. A life of reconciliation with God (2 Cor. v. 18). 2. A life of justification before God (Rom. v. 1). 3. A life of Divine communion in God (1 John i. 3). 4. A life of consolation and genuine happiness (2 Cor. i. 5). 5. A life of eternal glory in heaven, body and soul (Psa. lxxxiii. 24; Gal. vi. 8). IV. IMPROVEMENT.

The nature of this life has many most paradoxical traits connected with it. 1. A warlike yet victorious life. 2. A painful yet pleasurable life. 3. A friendless yet friendly life. 4. An humble yet exalted life. 5. A dying yet eternal life. 6. A worthless yet most precious life. (*T. B. Baker, M.A.*)

The supreme manifestation of God's love:—I. THE AMAZING MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE LOVE, WHICH IS HERE DESCRIBED. As when some eminently beautiful object rivets the attention of a traveller, so that he scarcely gives even a passing glance to other objects; so the believer's thoughts are so fixed upon one manifestation of God's love. "In THIS was manifested the love of God," &c. II. FOR WHOM THIS WONDROUS LOVE HAS BEEN MANIFESTED. "God sent His only-begotten Son into the world." It might have happened that, for some reason known to the Creator, such a sacrifice should have been necessary for the world in its first state of innocence; and even in such a case the love of God in sending His Son would have been inconceivably great; but what was really the state of the world, when this love was manifested in its behalf? We shall learn what the state of the world is, by considering what we ourselves are. Some are sincerely desirous of living to the glory of God, while others are seeking to please themselves. But what are the best feelings of the best of us towards God? What is the best conduct of the best of us in comparison with the will of God? Alas! how cold are our affections! How inconsistent is our habitual deportment! The devices of Satan, how often we allow ourselves to be deceived by them! And, if the best are so bad, what must the worst be? And yet God sent His Son into such a world! Oh, what wondrous love! III. THE OBJECT WHICH GOD'S LOVE HAD IN VIEW WHEN HE SENT HIS SON. "That we might live through Him." (*A. Stackhouse, M.A.*)

God's love manifested in Christians:—The love of God is not a public spectacle. Love is not a material thing, that all can see alike. Thousands saw the Cross who saw nothing of the love. Where can the love of all that passion, that blood, that death, be seen? "In us," who by faith in the blood are saved to life eternal. A man goes down to the shore when a storm is raging. He sees a wreck in the offing and a crowd on the beach. He finds that he is too late to see what they have seen—the lifeboat manned and launched—to see the rescue of those on board. He has come too late for all that, but he can yet see the love of it all in the gratitude and gladness of the saved. In all those saved folk he can see the love of it all made manifest. Well, Calvary is hidden from us. The dying ended in three hours, but the love of it all is manifest in us—in every soul saved from hell—in every gleam of hope that lights the gloom of death—in all the ways by which

Christian charity ministers to the needs of men. "When thou seest an eagle," said Blake, "thou seest a portion of genius; lift up thy head." Yes, and when thou seest a Christian—a soul saved from hell, and being saved from sin—thou seest a manifestation of the love of God. Lift up thy soul in praise. (*J. M. Gibbon.*)

The love of God:—I. GOD LOVES MAN. Why, with a little child speaking of his mother's love, sometimes they fail; how much more when we speak of God's love! I saw a little child the other day clasp its arms round its mother's neck, and say, "Mother, I loves 'ou, and I know 'ou loves me, but I don't know how much 'ou loves me." So the little child spoke; and if it is true in that love, how much more in the love of God, of which all human love is but a shadow, a spark!

II. GOD HAS MANIFESTED HIS LOVE. "In this was manifested the love of God." Of course God has manifested His love in ten thousand ways. Why everything in Nature, if we only see it rightly, is a manifestation of God's love. Every ray of warm sunshine is but a going out of God in love. But oh, the manifestation of God's love in nature is not enough to make us live. When some great artist manifests his skill in a work of art, begotten of his genius, it is exhibited in carpeted saloons, amid grandeur and pomp, and within tapestried walls. But when God manifested this masterpiece of grace His only-begotten Son—it was in the manger of Bethlehem, amidst the surroundings of poverty. Oh, have you believed that love? Many of you have heard about it, but it makes a vast difference when you believe it. The other day I stood by the death-bed of a young man; his wife was beside it, and some friends were in the adjoining room; and I stayed there talking with them. And one earnest young man said, "Sir, can you understand why God allows such sorrow as that?" And I said, "Honestly, sir, I don't understand it; but I know that God loves us, and He knows what is best for us. Supposing I had a friend in trouble and I lent him £20,000; do you think that after I had done that I should see him starve for the want of a sixpence? Well, then, if God loves us so much that He gives His Son, let us trust Him for the rest, though we cannot understand it." (*M. Rainsford, M.A.*)

The love of God manifested in the Son:—"In this," it was shown, manifestly and undeniably, beyond the reach of misapprehension or comparison. It had been shown before, but how feebly, how doubtfully, compared with that strength of evidence, that display of power which attends its existence now. During that whole period which preceded the coming of our Lord, sin was thus spread over the whole of human kind; and like the fog that hangs on the surface of the earth, it intercepted those bright rays which issue externally from the great source of light in heaven. And this seems to have been the case with man previously to the dispensation of grace in the gospel. He felt the love of God in part. The love of God may be beheld in every object that we see, but they alone see this glorious attribute in its true colour, in its full development, who fix their eyes on the person of Jesus Christ, and who study the real greatness of the love of God as revealed in Him. *I. We say it is shown in the nature of that work which He came to do.* Let us consider that work, its character, its object, in order to understand the greatness of the love which prompted it. To silence every cavil, to give an evidence of the love of God which imagination should not reach, to place it above the level of every doubt or insinuation, Christ came, not to cure our natural evils, not to teach, not to direct, though any one of these acts might well have awakened amazement; but He came to die for sinners.

II. Let us now endeavour to remark the evidence of the love of God, which is included in the manner in which that work was accomplished, and the effect produced by His ministry. 1. Let us observe first, in the certainty of its accomplishment. Eternal life is purchased for us by Jesus Christ, and it is offered to all in Him, absolutely and universally. "This is the record," says St. John, "that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son." He hath given it. He who is the truth itself hath given it, and hath given it in His Son. "He, therefore, that hath the Son hath life." He that hath the one is secure, absolutely secure of the other. Unlike other marks of love, where there is no positive connection between the pledge and the possession, between the means and the end; unlike the gift of riches, for instance, which does not ensure contentment; unlike the gift of health, which does not ensure joy; unlike these, the gift of Christ ensures eternal life. 2. Again, let us observe it in the largeness of its offers, in the multitude, the innumerable multitude of those who are included in the compass of this love of God. Who has ever come to Christ, and been excluded for want of room? 3. Think, finally, how much it exceeds in magnitude all that was

ever before expected. Eternal life, a life of everlasting joy, of uninterrupted holiness and peace. Compared with this, what are the distinctions and circumstances of the world but the colours which adorn a shadow; the illusions of a dream which passes away and is gone? (*H. Raikes, M.A.*) *God's love manifested in redemption*:—I. THE REDEMPTION OF MANKIND WAS AN ACT OF THE FREEST AND MOST UNMERITED GRACE. 1. God's designs of mercy could not arise from His thinking the constitution He had made with Adam as the representative of his posterity severe and unrighteous. 2. God was not moved to provide a Saviour for His creatures by any sense that His law was too strict in its demands. 3. The inability to perform his duty, which man contracted by his fall, did not render his case in the least more deserving of compassion. 4. God was not moved to this act of unmerited grace by any foreknowledge He had that mankind would receive it with thankfulness. II. THE REDEMPTION OF MANKIND IS A FULL DEMONSTRATION OF THE UNBOUNDED LOVE OF THE DIVINE NATURE. (*R. Walker.*) *God's love proved*:—Does God's love need to be proved? Yes, as all paganism shows. Gods vicious, gods careless, gods cruel, gods beautiful, there are in abundance; but where is there a god who loves? Non-Christian thinkers can now talk eloquently about God's love, and sometimes reject the gospel in the name of that love, thus kicking down the ladder by which they climbed. But it was the Cross that taught the world the love of God; and, apart from the death of Christ, men may hope that there is a heart at the centre of the universe, but they can never be sure that there is. Nature and history give but ambiguous oracles on that subject. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. **Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**—*Herein is love*:—I. THE INFINITE SPRING OF LOVE. Our text has two words upon which I would place an emphasis—"not" and "but." The first is "not." "Herein is love, not"—"not that we loved God." Very naturally many conclude that this means "not that we loved God first." That is not exactly the truth taught here, but still it is a weighty truth, and is mentioned in ver. 19 in express words—"We love Him because He first loved us." We inscribe a negative in black capital letters upon the idea that man's love can ever be prior to the love of God. That is quite out of the question. "Not that we loved God." Take a second sense—that is, not that any man did love God at all by nature, whether first or second. The unregenerate heart is, as to love, a broken cistern which can hold no water. We come nearer to John's meaning when we look at this negative as applying to those who do love God. "Not that we loved God"—that is, that our love to God, even when it does exist, and even when it influences our lives, is not worthy to be mentioned as a fountain of supply for love. What poor love ours is at its very best when compared with the love wherewith God loves us! Let me use another figure. If we had to enlighten the world, a child might point us to a bright mirror reflecting the sun, and he might cry, "Herein is light!" You and I would say, "Poor child, that is but borrowed brightness; the light is not there, but yonder, in the sun: the love of saints is nothing more than the reflection of the love of God. We have love, but God is love. Let us contrast our love to God with His love to us. We do love God, and we may well do so, since He is infinitely lovable. When the mind is once enlightened it sees everything that is lovable about God. He is so good, so gracious, so perfect that He commands our admiring affection. In us there is by nature nothing to attract the affection of a holy God, but quite the reverse; and yet He loved us. Herein, indeed, is love! When we love God it is an honour to us; it exalts a man to be allowed to love a Being so glorious. He that loves God does in the most effectual manner love himself. We are filled with riches when we abound in love to God; it is our wealth, our health, our might, and our delight. It is our duty to love God; we are bound to do it. As His creatures we ought to love our Creator; as preserved by His care we are under obligation to love Him for His goodness: we owe Him so much that our utmost love is a mere acknowledgment of our debt. But God loved us to whom He owed nothing at all; for whatever might have been the claims of a creature upon his Creator, we had forfeited them all by our rebellion. Let us turn to the "but." "But that He loved us." I should like you to meditate on each one of these words—"He loved us." Three words, but what weight of meaning! "He," who is infinitely holy and cannot endure iniquity—"He loved us"; "He," whose glory is the astonishment of the greatest of intelligent beings—"He loved us." Now ring that second silver bell: "He loved us." He saw our race ruined in the fall, and He could not bear that

man should be destroyed. He saw that sin had brought men into wretchedness and misery, and would destroy them for ever; and He would not have it so. He loved them with the love of pity, with the love of sweet and strong benevolence. Would a man want any other heaven than to know for certain that he enjoyed the love of God? Note the third word. "He loved us"—"us"—the most insignificant of beings. Observe that the previous verse speaks of us as being dead in sin. He was wroth with us as a Judge, but yet He loved us: He was determined to punish, and yet resolved to save. II. THE MARVELLOUS OUTFLOW OF THAT LOVE. Consider every word: "He sent His Son." God "sent." Love caused that mission. Oh, the wonder of this, that God should not wait till rebellious men had sent to His throne for terms of reconciliation, but should commence negotiations himself! Moreover, God sent such a One: He "sent His Son." Yes, "He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all." He knew what would come of that sending of Him, and yet He sent Him. Note further, not only the grandeur of the Ambassador, but the tenderness of the relationship existing between Him and the offended God. "He sent His Son." The previous verse says, "His only-begotten Son." Christ's death was in fact God in human form suffering for human sin; God incarnate bleeding because of our transgressions. Are we not now carried away with the streams of love? Go a step further. "God sent His Son to be a propitiation," that is, to be not only a reconciler, but the reconciliation. His sacrifice of Himself was the atonement through which mercy is rendered possible in consistency with justice. III. THE CONSEQUENT OUTFLOW OF LOVE FROM US. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Our love then to one another is simply God's love to us, flowing into us, and flowing out again. If you and I desire to love our fellow Christians and to love the fallen race of man, we must be joined on to the aqueduct which conducts love from this eternal source, or else we shall soon fail in love. Observe, then, that as the love of God is the source of all true love in us, so a sense of that love stimulates us. Whenever you feel that you love God you overflow with love to all God's people; I am sure you do. Your love will respect the same persons as God's love does, and for the same reasons. God loves men; so will you; God loves them when there is no good in them, and you will love them in the same way. Our love ought to follow the love of God in one point, namely, in always seeking to produce reconciliation. It was to this end that God sent His Son. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The perfect love*:—God is love. But if we say that, do we not say that God is good with a fresh form of goodness, which is not justice, nor truthfulness, nor purity, bounty, nor mercy, though without them it cannot exist? And is not that fresh goodness, which we have not defined yet, the very kind of goodness which we prize most in human beings? And what is that? What—save self-sacrifice? For what is the love worth which does not show itself in action; and more, which does not show itself in passion, in the true sense of that word, namely, in suffering? On the Cross of Calvary, God the Father showed His own character and the character of His co-equal and co-eternal Son, and of the Spirit which proceeds from both. For there He spared not His only-begotten Son, but freely gave Him for us. The comfortable prosperous man shrinks from the thought of Christ on His Cross. It tells him that better men than he have had to suffer; that the Son of God Himself had to suffer. And he does not like suffering; he prefers comfort. The lazy, selfish man shrinks from the sight of Christ on His Cross; for it rebukes his laziness and selfishness. Christ's Cross says to him—Thou art ignoble and base, as long as thou art lazy and selfish. Rise up, do something, dare something, suffer something, if need be, for the sake of thy fellow-creatures. He turns from it and says in his heart—Oh! Christ's Cross is a painful subject, and Passion-week and Good Friday a painful time. I will think of something more peaceful, more agreeable than sorrow, and shame, and agony, and death. Yes, so a man says too often, as long as the fine weather lasts, and all is smooth and bright. But when the tempest comes; when poverty comes, affliction, shame, sickness, bereavement, and still more, when persecution comes on a man; then, then indeed Passion-week begins to mean something to a man; and just because it is the saddest of all times, it looks to him the brightest of all times. For in his misery and confusion he looks up to heaven and asks, Is there any one in heaven who understands all this? Then does the Cross of Christ bring a message to that man such as no other thing or being on earth can bring. For it says to him—God does understand thee utterly. For Christ understands thee. Christ feels for thee. Christ feels with thee. Christ has suffered for thee, and suffered with thee. Thou canst go through nothing which Christ has not gone

through. Passion-week tells us, I believe, what is the law according to which the whole world of man and of things, yea, the whole universe, sun, moon, and stars, is made: and that is, the law of self-sacrifice; that nothing lives merely for itself; that each thing is ordained by God to help the things around it, even at its own expense. On this day Christ said—ay, and His Cross says still, and will say to all eternity—Wouldest thou be good? Wouldest thou be like God? Then work, and dare, and, if need be, suffer, for thy fellow-men. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*)

The love of God:—I. JOHN WOULD HAVE US MAGNIFY THE LOVE OF GOD BY THE DEMERIT OF ITS OBJECTS. God had thoughts of love towards us before man had existence. "We rejoice in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath given us before the world began." Then view man as created. "God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions." Sin soon entered our "world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The apostle, speaking of the heathen nations, says, "When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful," &c. So when God looked down upon the children of men, to see if there were any that sought after God, He says, "They are all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Do you ask, "Were not the Jews an exception here? for to them were committed the oracles of God." God planted them in His vineyard, and fenced it in, and gave it every kind of culture, so that He said, "What more could have been done than I have done to My vineyard?" Yet what was His testimony? "When I looked that it should bring forth grapes, wherefore brought it forth wild grapes?" We pass from the prediction, and read the history of the transgression. "He was in the world, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." What must have been the condition of man, not to love the perfection of holiness, the source of excellence, the fountain of life, the supreme good? What must have been the perversity of his mind which should induce Him to regard God as an invader, and to say, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways"? Now the carnal mind is enmity against God; there is no neutrality here. "He that is not with Me," says the Saviour, "is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth abroad." We are alienated in our minds by wicked works. II. *THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF THE EXERCISE.* (*W. Jay, M.A.*)

The love of God, and the response due to it:—I. IN REFERRING TO THE LOVE OF GOD, AS EXHIBITED BY THE APOSTLE, THERE ARE A VARIETY OF ASPECTS OFFERED TO OUR NOTICE. 1. There is the fact that the free, unbought love of God, is the source of human redemption. 2. The matchlessness of the Divine love, as demonstrated in the mode of its expression. 3. The signal issues of the Divine love, as it achieved a propitiation for sin. 4. A propitiation has been made. II. *THE RESPONSE WHICH IS DUE ON THE PART OF MAN TO THESE MATCHLESS DISPLAYS OF THE DIVINE LOVE.* 1. It is by faith that we embrace the propitiation of the gospel. 2. The costly character of the propitiation of God bespeaks a corresponding dedication to its benefits. 3. Infinite love bespeaks fervent response from us. (*A. Forman.*)

The great benefit received by the Incarnation:—I. FROM THE EXCELLENCY OF THE FOUNTAIN AND ORIGINAL, FROM WHICH IT SPRINGS; that is the love of God to us. 1. The instance: "Herein is love." A speech it is of great emphasis, spoken by the apostle with great strength of affection; and it carrieth with it a threefold intimation. (1) It is a specification of that affection, or rather attribute, in God, which most of all shone in this great work of Christ's Incarnation. It was His love that employed His wisdom, His power, His righteousness; set them on working for our good and benefit. (2) It shows the real proof and manifestation of His love. It was love testified in the reality of love. It intimates not only an act of love, but an effect of love, a fruit of love. It was not a well-wishing love only, but a love that breaks forth into action and evidence. (3) It carries with it the most clear and full demonstration of love to us. Other fruits of love He hath vouchsafed us, and we enjoy them daily; but none so evident proofs of His love as the sending of His Son to us. 2. The illustration of the greatness and excellency of this love. "Not that we loved Him, but that He loved us." (1) We may resolve these words into a preventing sense. We began not with Him in this league of love, but He began with us. That is one excellency of His love; it was a forward, antecedent, preventing love. (2) We may resolve it into a negative sense. We loved not Him, and yet He loved us. That is another excellency of His love; it was a free, undeserved love, no way due to us. (3) We may resolve it into a comparative sense. Had we loved Him, or do we love Him? Yet that is nothing in comparison of His love to us. "Herein is love, not that we loved Him": no great matter in that. Our love to Him—it is not worth the naming. II. *THE EXCELLENCY OF THE BENEFIT WHICH FLOWS FROM*

THE FOUNTAIN—that is the sending of Christ to accomplish our salvation. And here are three great and gracious fruits of love. 1. That He would send to us. (1) This act of sending to us argues much love. It had been much for Him to admit of our sending addresses to Him. Consider upon what terms we stood with God, and we will confess it. (a) The inferior should send and seek to the superior. (b) The party offending to the party offended. (c) The weaker should send to the stronger. (d) They that need reconciliation should seek to him that needs it not. (2) God sent Him to us wittingly and willingly. Our Saviour came not of Himself only, but the Father sent Him. It was a full mission and commission. He sent Him; yea, more than so, He sent Him and authorised Him (John vi. 27). (3) He sent Him—(a) Not as a Messenger only but as a Gift also; that is the best kind of sending. He so sent Him as that He gave Him to us. (b) He was a gift not only promised but actually bestowed and exhibited to us. We enjoy Him, whom the prophets promised, the patriarchs expected. 2. Here is an higher expression of His love in that He sent His Son to us. (1) Take notice of the dignity of Him that was sent (Phil. ii. 6, 7). (2) For so great a God to send any, though never so mean, to such wretches as we were, had been a favour more than we could expect; but to send His only Son, His beloved Son, is a testimony of love beyond all comprehension. 3. The purpose and end of sending Him—that is, “to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1) It was for sins. (a) It had been much for just and good men and for their benefit. (b) To mediate for those that have offended another is a kindness and office of love that may be found amongst men; but God is the Person wronged, our sins are all against Him, His law was broken, His will disobeyed, His name dishonoured. Yet see His love—He sends to propitiate and expiate our sins against Himself. (c) To send to rebels in arms and to offer them pardon, hath been found amongst men; but for rebels subdued and under the power of their sovereign, nay, shut up—we lay all at His mercy—and then He sends unto us His propitiation. (2) It was for the propitiating of our sins. That was the great work for which He came (Isa. xxvii. 9). That was His errand on which He came. This He published and made known to the world. (a) To propitiate is to appease God’s wrath and displeasure, justly taken against us, and to reduce us into grace and favour again. He loved us in our deformity, that He might put upon us a spiritual beauty. He loved us when we displeased Him, that He might work in us that which pleaseth Him. (b) He did it by the means of making a full satisfaction to the justice of God for us. He hath done away our sins, not by a free dispensation, but by a full and just compensation. (c) What is the matter of our propitiation—the price of our ransom? That is the highest improvement of love. He is our propitiation: not only our propitiator, but our propitiation. He is not only our Saviour, but He is become our salvation—as David speaks. He is not only our Redeemer, but our ransom (1 Tim. ii. 6; Isa. liii. 10; Rom. iii. 25; Lev. xvii. 11). He was not only the Priest, but the Sacrifice also. He not only acted for us, but suffered for us (Gal. ii. 20, iii. 13). III. WHAT EFFECT SHOULD THIS LOVE OF GOD WORK IN US? 1. It should teach us to fasten our admiration on this great love of God, to work ourselves to an holy wonderment, that God should bestow such love upon us. 2. This great love of God to us calls for another effect: that is an holy retribution of love to Him again. Provoke thyself, inflame thine heart with the love of Him who hath so loved thee. 3. This love of God requires in us an holy imitation. In particular, imitate this love of God in all the characters of love expressed in my text. (1) The reality of thy love. Show thy love by the fruits of love, as St. John speaks (1 John iii. 18). (2) We must imitate this love of God in the preventions of love, in showing of love, going one before another. (3) We must imitate this love of God in the condescensions of His love to our inferiors, to our enemies. (4) We must imitate this love of God in that great and main effect of His love to our souls in freeing them from sin (Lev. xix. 17). Love to the soul of thy brother, it is the best love; and to keep him from sin, or to free him of sin, it is the best love to his soul. (*Bp. Brownrigg.*) *Christ the great propitiation:*—Leave Christ as God’s salvation out of the Bible, and it is of little account to a guilty, perishing sinner. I. WE ARE TO STATE THE IMPORT OF THE TERM, OR SHOW YOU WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY PROPITIATION. And here I would appeal to the understanding of all men, whether we have not some other idea of this word than what is contained in repentance, amendment, and mortification. The Jews well understood the meaning of it: they had their eucharistical and expiatory or atoning sacrifices. Now can it reasonably be supposed that the apostles would recede from the well-known meaning of this word, especially in their writings to the Jews, and always use it in a metaphorical or

figurative sense? Further, the heathens were no strangers to the sense of the word propitiation. II. TO INQUIRE INTO THE NECESSITY AND IMPORTANCE OF IT. By necessity, I do not mean that God was obliged to provide an atonement for the sin of man. Misery may excite but not oblige to pity, especially where guilt is the spring of it; and ruin the just consequence of apostasy. I know the Socinians suppose the goodness of God will not admit Him to demand or receive a satisfaction. Mercy is abundantly more natural and glorious without a propitiation; but the Scripture asserts the fact, and points out the necessity of it. I stay not to inquire whether God could not have fixed on any other method of recovery. Had we proper apprehensions of the holiness and justice of God when we consider this, and our circumstances as transgressors without saying what He might do, we may well adore Him for what He has done. The necessity of an atonement might be further evinced from the sanction of the law, clothed with the authority of a God who cannot lie; a God as jealous of His glory as of His faithfulness. As to the importance of the blessing of propitiation. Is there anything valuable in the favour and friendship of God? III. TO POINT OUT SOMETHING OF THE EXCELLENCE AND PERFECTION OF THIS PROPITIATION. 1. That God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 2. The doctrine, worship, and faith of the Old Testament saints were directed to this as the great centre of efficacy and perfection. 3. God the Father, sustaining the character of a Judge, has declared the highest satisfaction in it, by raising His Son from the dead and crowning Him with honour and glory as Mediator. 4. He will receive no confession, petition, or thanksgiving but through His hands. No man can come unto the Father but by Him. Lastly, the virtue of this sacrifice remains the same through all ages. IV. THAT PROPITIATION IS THE PURE EFFECT OF DIVINE LOVE, AND THE BRIGHTEST DISPLAY OF IT. By love we mean not a foolish, weak passion, but such favour, grace, or mercy as founded in infinite wisdom and in full agreement with all the perfections of God; and that the gift of His Son is the fruit of Divine love stands uncontested. Love is the noble spring of all the good the believer has in time, and all the glory he will possess in eternity; but the gift of God's Son exceeds them all. Application: 1. Sinner, art thou deeply affected with thy guilt, and afraid of the consequences of thy transgressions? Here is a remedy exactly suited to thy case. 2. Let believers labour, in the strength of grace, after the comfortable evidence of an interest in that which is to be their great support in death and security in judgment. Lastly, let us all take heed that we are not deceived; repentance and reformation without Christ will leave us short of heaven. (*Samuel Wilson.*) *The propitiation:—*I. THE STATE OF MAN REQUIRED A PROPITIATION. 1. The perfection and excellence of the law which he has broken. 2. The inability of man to expiate his offences. 3. The inflexible nature of Divine justice, which supports the honour of the law, and enforces its claims. II. JESUS CHRIST IS THE PROPITIATION REQUIRED. 1. No creature could or would become a propitiation for man. 2. Jesus Christ is every way adapted to become our propitiation. 3. The Scriptures everywhere testify that Jesus Christ is our propitiation (Isa. liii. 5, 6, 7, 10; Matt. xx. 28; Rom. iii. 24, 25, iv. 25; 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13; Col. i. 20; 1 Tim. i. 15; Heb. ix. 22–26; 1 John ii. 2). The Father gave the Son (John iii. 16). The Son gave Himself (Gal. i. 4). He offered Himself through the Eternal Spirit (Heb. ix. 14). III. THIS PROPITIATION IS A GLORIOUS DISPLAY OF THE LOVE OF GOD. 1. Unparalleled in its nature. 2. Intense in its ardour. 3. Immense in its extent. 4. Glorious in its purpose and final issue. Inferences: 1. How pernicious is the doctrine of Socinianism, which completely destroys this only hope of a penitent—redemption by Christ! 2. How dangerous is the delusion of the self-righteous! 3. What abundant consolation does this subject afford penitent sinners! 4. In this love of God we are furnished with a rule and a motive for love to each other, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." (*Sketches of Sermons.*) *The atonement for sin, by the death of Christ:—*I. STATE THE CASE, WITH REGARD TO THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF THE ATONEMENT, AS REPRESENTED IN SCRIPTURE. II. ESTABLISH THE FACT THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS OFFERED A TRUE AND PROPER ATONEMENT FOR SIN. 1. I am well aware it does nothing towards the proof of this proposition to observe that this is precisely such a provision as the circumstances of man required, while it was perfectly consistent with all the attributes of Deity that God should grant it. There is nothing in the Scripture doctrine of the atonement by Jesus Christ repugnant to the most correct ideas of fitness and propriety, with regard either to the offending or the offended party. If man had never sinned, we should have seen the glory of the Divine power, wisdom, and benevolence in the creation of

the world. If, having sinned, man had been left to perish, we should have seen the glory of the Divine justice. If he had been freely pardoned, without any satisfactory atonement, we should have seen the glory of the Divine mercy; but, having sinned, and receiving free forgiveness and eternal life by means of an adequate, because infinitely valuable, atonement, we see the glory of all the Divine attributes, and, overwhelmed with the astonishing exhibition, exclaim with the apostle, "Herein is love." 2. The universal prevalence of sacrifices. 3. The sacrifices of the Mosaic economy. 4. The language of the prophets. 5. The testimony of the apostles, from that of Philip, in his preaching to the eunuch, to that of John, in the visions of the Apocalypse. 6. The language of Jesus Christ Himself. (*T. Raffles, LL.D.*) *Love descends*:—Love is its own perennial fount of strength. The strength of affection is a proof not of the worthiness of the object, but of the largeness of the soul which loves. Love descends, not ascends. The Saviour loved His disciples infinitely more than His disciples loved Him, because His heart was infinitely larger. Love trusts on, ever hopes and expects better things, and this a trust springing from itself and out of its own depths alone. (*F. W. Robertson.*) *God seeks our love*:—A mother said to her pastor, "I wish some one could tell me why the Saviour died for us. I have never heard it answered to my satisfaction. You will say it was because He loved us; but why was that love? He certainly did not need us, and in our sinful state there was nothing in us to attract His love." "I may suppose," said her pastor, "that it would be no loss for you to lose your deformed little babe. You have a large circle of friends, you have other children, and a kind husband. You do not need the deformed child; and what use is it?" "Oh, sir," said the mother, "I could not part with my poor child. I do need him. I need his love. I would rather die than fail of receiving it." "Well," said her pastor, "does God love His children less than earthly, sinful parents do?"

Ver. 11. **Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.**—*The Divine love a pattern for the human*:—"God is Beauty," said the Greek; "God is Strength," said the Roman; "God is Law," said the Jew; "God is Love," says the disciple. "It came to this that the Son of God had for love to lay down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." St. John seems to say, "Yes; but you will not be much called on to do that when things are settled. You will not be asked for your life—will you then give up something of your living? There is more call for that. Whoso hath the world's livelihood (*βίος*) and looks on his brother in want, and locks his compassions out of his reach—how is God's love imminent in him?" The barbed question is followed up by a glowing indignation, called for it would seem, even in those days of first love. Ah! "Little children of mine, do not let us be loving in word, nor even in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Not so much theory, not so much even of warm expression, but reality. "If God so loved us, as now we know He did, we owe it to love one another." It is a debt. That life was given, and given to us. There must be some obligations growing out of that utterly unearned increment. Surely it is by our working that God will cease to permit the misery that He has not made. Repay, redress, rebalance, we cannot by mere almsgiving, however liberal. But "this world's goods"—"the life of this world (*βίος κόσμου*)" of which St. John asks us to give him some—"this world's life" is more than its spare monies. Breath, light, space to be decent, and healthful food; order and peace and rest, and beautiful sights and sounds; knowledge and the power to care for it, time to consider, religion, and a belief that religion and worship are for the likes of them, and not a form of luxury; these are regions of "the life of this world" which we inherit, but which have been fenced and walled from millions. When we with the best intent are building, broad and high, castles of dwellings for artisans we still are not working on the lines of nature and society. Sanitation and accommodation, with even recreation added, are not all that the simplest society claims. Society, to be society, must have society. It cannot be all of one grain. The simplest must have some little range of ranks. It must have some elements of inspiration from without it, and from above it, in force sufficient to be felt. Some loving spirits must go and dwell among them; who will not hear of brutality being regarded as the natural law even of the lowest; who will begin by expecting of them, even as of others, soberness and honesty and care for the family, and through expecting patiently will create. There are the *ἀρχηγοί* of a new society, and there is no form of influence fuller of power, fuller it may be of trial, but also fuller of reward, and richer for the future. What the few bear who live thus, what discouragements, what broken

pledges, what fallings back, what mad sounds by night, what sights by day, no novel and no visitor can describe. None know but they who live there. And yet there are the elements of society. There is duty constantly scorning selfishness, suffering brutality rather than wrongly escape from it, working itself to death for the children rather than take them to the workhouse. There are sacrifices as strange as the sins that impose them. Again, there are ears that will hear, men and families that will advance their whole standard of life, under the influence of those whom they have seen loving them for nought. (*Abp. Benson.*) *The Divine example of love* :—I. LOVE SHOULD BE EXERCISED BY US AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF THE LOVE OF GOD (ver. 11).

What, then, were the features of the Divine love, and what ought to be those of our love? 1. The love of God was universal. He expressed it to all, good and bad, worthy and unworthy. 2. More than this, the love of God has been conspicuous toward His enemies (Rom. v. 6, 8, 9). In this respect also we are bound to imitate the Divine example. 3. This is farther demanded, though it should be at the cost of the greatest self-denial. It need not be asked at what expense did God express His love for sinners? What, then, shall we refuse to suffer for the benefit of others? 4. Nor let us overlook that our love, like God's, should be aggressive. We are not to wait until we are besought. God did not so deal by us. 5. To complete all, love should be constant. Nothing should weary it or cause it to relax.

II. IN THE EXERCISE OF THIS LOVE WE ENJOY COMMUNION WITH GOD (ver. 12). "No man hath seen God at any time." It is as if it had been said, although "no man hath seen God at any time, yet, if we love one another, God dwelleth in us."

1. When we engage in duties of brotherly love we are conscious of the Divine approval. And this applies to all duties of brotherly love, whether those that relate to our immediate connections, or the Church of Christ, or the world. 2. There is a sustaining sense of the Divine co-operation. God is with us in them. 3. He will bless us and our work! III. THUS ALSO "HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US." This expression may be understood either of the love of God, as it is perfected when it produces love in us, or of our love when it is perfected in the exercises of brotherly love.

1. The love of God is perfected in us. From the beginning He had a design of love toward every one of His people. But that design is not carried out into completion until His grace secures the heart, and fills it with His love. 2. Or the saying may be understood of our love when it is perfected in the exercises of brotherly love. The Divine love is perfected when it inflames our souls, and makes us like God in love. And our love, thus kindled by the love of God, is perfected in the deeds of charity.

IV. IN OUR BROTHERLY LOVE WE ARE FURNISHED WITH THE EVIDENCE OF OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, as it is seen to arise out of the indwelling of the Spirit. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." These fruits do not grow on the soil of nature. They are the plants of grace alone, and proclaim their heavenly origin. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*)

The love of the Father :—I. THE LOVE OF THE FATHER AN INCENTIVE TO MUTUAL LOVE AMONG CHRISTIANS. 1. On the principle that like begets like—(1) The primal source of real spiritual love is the Divine nature; (2) The manifestation of Christly love is an evidence of spiritual regeneration; (3) The incentive to mutual love among Christians thus becomes all-inspiring and important.

2. On the principle of Christian professions—(1) Every professing Christian professes to "know" God; (2) But "he that loveth not, knoweth not God"; (3) Not to manifest the spirit of love is thus inconsistent with the profession a Christian makes of knowing God.

II. THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IN ITS MARVELLOUS EXAMPLE. III. THE POSSESSION OF THIS DIVINE LOVE IS AN ASSURANCE OF RICHEST SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS—the Divine indwelling and perfection of love.

LESSONS: 1. The revelation of the Divine love in Christ and in Christianity the highest truth, and its demonstration most scientific and clear. 2. The leading design of the manifestation of God's love in the new birth of souls into the same love the sublimest and most blessed of all possible objects. 3. The importance of each Christian being an exemplification of the reality of God's love and of the gift of His Son is thus seen to be most vital, as constituting one of the leading features in Christian apologetics—an unanswerable argument for the fundamental fact of Christianity. 4. As love is the most essential force for elevation and regeneration of the human race, Christianity is the only spiritual force yet discovered for that most-devoutly-to-be-wished-for consummation. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*)

Brotherly love :—I. WHAT RELATION WE STAND IN TO GOD. II. THE RELATION WE BEAR TO ONE ANOTHER. 1. We are all creatures made of the same ignoble materials, and derived from the same Hand. 2. We all agree in one common nature. 3. We have all of us occasion for the assistance of

one another. 4. As to the injuries we may receive, they do not come up to our sinning against God. (1) Our sins against God are more numerous than the injuries one man offers to another. (2) Another difference is the greatness as well as multitude of our sins. 5. Let us consider the relation we bear to one another as being united in one common Christianity, and having embraced the same profession of faith. A motive this, to love, the most prevailing that can possibly be urged. III. WHAT BENEFITS GOD HATH CONFERRED UPON US. Were our minds fully possessed of a hearty sense of the extreme bounty of God, we could not be so base as to deny Him the only returns we are capable of making, that is love and compassion for one another. IV. THE KINDNESS AND LOVE WE ARE CAPABLE OF SHOWING THOSE OF THE SAME FRAME AND CONSTITUTION WITH OURSELVES, COMES PRODIGIOUSLY SHORT OF THE MARVELLOUS FAVOURS AND REPEATED KINDNESSES WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM GOD. (R. Warren, D.D.) *God's love the pattern for our love*:—"If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1. Because ignorance of what God means by love must now be wilful. 2. Because doubt and uncertainty as to the objects of love are for ever excluded. 3. Because the power of love to conquer obstacles and impediments is, in God's case, most gloriously shown. 4. Because the restoration of love between man and man is one of God's objects in that redemption which so proves His love for us. 5. Because we are required to be followers of God as dear children. 6. Because love on our part must be pleasing to God. 7. Because "hereby we express our love towards God." (S. Martin.) *The Divine prototype of love*:—"If God so loved us." How? The preceding verse shows us some of the glorious traits of this love. 1. Its greatness and depth. One may dip out the ocean with a shell sooner than exhaust the ocean of God's love with the little bucket of human conceptions. It is as boundless as God Himself, for "God is love" (ver. 8). But the apostle puts into our hand a scale to measure even such greatness (ver. 9). Is there for a father a greater offering than to give up his only son? "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." The greatness of this Divine love ought also to be the motive to and the example for our love to our neighbour. (1) Surely the motive. How often are we stirred to love by beauty merely, by talent, or other excellences, or even sometimes by pleasing weaknesses; but not first and foremost by the thought that God the Lord in Christ went after him in love! (2) And our example. We are by nature egoists. "For all seek their own" (Phil. ii. 21). The soul of God's whole activity, from the creation to the new creation, is love. And now has God, indeed, opened "the bowels of His mercy and compassion" (Luke i. 78), and in Christ given Himself, His best, His heart, to men for their own; so that "whosoever receiveth Christ receiveth the Father that sent Him" (Luke ix. 49). But we? Even when we make our loving sacrifices, we keep back to ourselves the greater part of ourselves. Do thou, my hard, selfish heart, with thy scanty, wretched love, which scarcely ever deserves the name, be transformed after this great, Divine pattern! But love shames us yet in many other things. We are further amazed at—2. The all-embracing extent of this love. God sent His Son into the world. He gave Him not to some few, but to all. How often our love suffers from a miserable straitness of heart! Towards some, sometimes towards those who love us, we are very kind and pleasing, but towards others indifferent. Some attract us, numberless others are repulsive. And oh! what wretched pettinesses often suffice to lock up our hearts so that not the least drop of love can flow out! God's love did not suffer itself to be held back, nor to set itself any bounds: it embraced all, even its enemies. God finds people enough to love His beautiful and richly-gifted children; but few whose love goes far enough to receive the miserable ones also. If we desire to do what is pleasing to God's heart, let us also love those whom no one else is likely to love! And if our courage fails us for this—for such love requires much courage—let us look up to the primal example of God's love, which condescended to this miserable world. 3. The clearness and calmness of God's love. The greater and stronger the love of men, so much the harder for it to remain clear and calm. The bleeding Lamb of God on Calvary shows not only how deeply and all inclusively, but also how clearly, and soberly, and holily God loves the world. He will heal its sin and guilt, and therefore He suffers the Lamb to bleed. He must judge while He heals, and He heals while thus judging. Thus clear and calm, too, was the love of Christ, in all its greatness. How He loved His disciples, and yet how soberly and calmly He pointed out to them their errors! "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Do we do it? Alas, how rare among us is that great and therefore sober love which steadily seeks to make our neighbour better! Either we continue

clear and calm, and our love is, commonly, very lukewarm; or else it is great and warm, while we are as it were blind and dull. 4. Its unselfish disinterestedness. We love those who please us, who love us, or from whom we expect love. Therein appears the interestedness of our love. God loves those who love Him not; from whom, moreover, He can have no great hopes of love. Just as unselfish, too, is Christ's love. In all His life of love He never seeks His own gain—not His honour, not His advantage, not His proper esteem, but only the honour of the Father and the salvation of the world. He puts away all self-help from His love (Matt. iv. 3, &c.; xxvi. 53, &c.); renounces the applause of the great masses, especially of the rulers; and walks the way of self-abnegation and the Cross. "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another"—so unselfishly, so disinterestedly. How rare is the love in which one thinks not of himself, but only of the welfare of another; which forgets one's self, seeks stillness and retirement, lets not its left hand know what its right hand doeth; yes, even expects nothing for itself, because it has its own reward in itself; which therefore rewards evil with good, which blesses them that curse us, and does good to them that hate us! 5. The steadfastness and faithfulness of the love of God; which is not less worthy of imitation. Only the unselfish love "never faileth." Selfish love, in its very selfishness, has a worm in itself which speedily gnaws away its life. The purer love is, the less it changes. Because God's love is without any mixture of impure self-seeking, therefore is it so steadfast. (*Prof. T. Christlieb.*) *Reflected love*:—Observe clearly this line of thought. "If God so loved us, we ought also so to love Him." That is the first plain inference. But how? There is only one way—"loving one another." To love God as He is, in Himself, is an abstract thing. This is only a feeling. To "love one another" in Him, and Him in "one another," is action, and love is action, and action tests reality. "We ought"—we are under a debt to love one another. God's love has placed us under this obligation. Whom are we to "love"? "One another." Who is "one another"? All the great brotherhood; in the family of God. And if it be asked, What! all? All! The poorest, the meanest, the most wicked, the vilest? Find your answer in that "us"; or rather, for so each one of us ought to do—in the "me," which goes to make the "us." But "to love one another"—one another! It is, by reciprocity, not only to love, but to be loved. Now, am I wrong in thinking that to some of us it is a harder thing to consent to be loved than it is to love? There is a feeling of superiority in being kind to a person. It is pleasant to nature. It is a sort of patronising. But to receive kindnesses, especially from some persons, is an act of great humiliation. But you must love, and be loved, if you would fulfil the duty. You must so speak and act as to make yourself lovable to everybody. But there is a little word in the text which teaches us great lessons. "God so loved us." How did God love us? That is our copy. 1. I notice that God's love was originating love. He completely took the initiative. We should do the same—not wait to be loved. 2. And I notice that God's love is a wise and thoughtful love. Our love is often very unwise and unthoughtful. There is very little mind in it; no consideration; therefore our love often does harm where it is meant to do good. God's love is so carefully, so exquisitely adjusted. It is so very wise. 3. And God's love, tender as it is, is always faithful. So far as reproof is faithful, God's love is faithful. An unfaithful love is worse than hatred; and I may say very unlike God's! 4. And God's love is self-sacrificing love. "He spared not His own Son." 5. And God's love is never capricious. It never changes, except to deepen. Is your love so? Concerning love, let me further observe this—God always looks to the reflection of Himself in all His creatures. He expects to find the image of one or other of His attributes. If He finds it not, He passes unsatisfied. If He finds it, He "rests." There He is content. Many different gifts and graces reflect different parts of the character of God; but God reflects all. Love gives back God to Himself, for "God is love." 6. And love is the atmosphere of heaven. We are all to love now, that we may be ready to go forward. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Ver. 12. **No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.**—*The nearness of God*:—There is a saying of Hazlitt's, bold, and at first seeming to be wondrous true, "In the days of Jacob there was a ladder between heaven and earth; but now the heavens have gone further off, and have become astronomical." This may be taken as illustrating the belief of a large number of people who imagine that somehow or other the earth in its youth was better off and nearer God than it possibly can be, with the larger,

fuller, and more accurate scientific knowledge that it has now; a fancy that the heavens have gone further away because of our knowledge of them. But no wise man would wish to go back from the effect of the scientific analysis, or undo those results of it which are the glory of the age. Because by a flash of lightning I can speak to the other side of the world—because I live in a generation in which men gain the strength of giants, and can move mountains—am I further from God? I think not. Man's nearness to God, or distance from Him, arises from no scientific knowledge, or from the want of it. Man grows near to God by the likeness of his own soul. Still, you may say, that the revelation of God's power made by science has removed the sense of His immediate presence. Then science has done a good work. Such a sense of nearness, brought about by a want of knowledge and a mean apprehension of God's power, might belong to idiots, and is certainly unneeded by mankind. God is to us a greater Being than the ancients ever knew. Though we may fancy that the heavens or whatever other material place men may have thought He dwelt in have grown distant, His Spirit has grown near. It is the glory of earthly love to clasp, to hold, to have in near communion, to see, to hear, to touch. If we were speaking of mere humanities, we might, with Hazlitt, lament the time when earth was so near to heaven. But when we come to speak of Him whom no man hath seen at any time, we go to the spirituality of things—we measure no longer by earthly measure. If the God you long to know is the God of the Spirit who comes to the hearts of all who seek for Him in spirit and in truth, who, in every motion of desire and love, lives in the soul, who stirs men to penitence, draws them from His own sweet influence—if this is the God you seek and long to know, your God is always near you. So long as men can hold to this spiritual perception of God, science has done no mischief; and whilst it has increased man's knowledge has increased, too, his belief in his nearness to God; has shown Him that his knowledge of nature has altered no canon of the eternal laws; has cast no shade on any brightness of human mercy or human love; has made no change in any way in the glorious relationships between the human soul and God, by which man alone can rise to the height of his own marvellous capacities, and which alone is his belief, his pride, his hope. A religion, such as you and I profess—a religion which teaches that God's dear Son came down from heaven to earth, and took upon Him the form of man; and which teaches, further, that in the Spirit God is still as near as when in the person of His Son He walked in Nazareth, dignifies alike the earth and man—makes man more lovable, the earth more glorious—and the presence of God to such as care to know it, an eternal reality. (*G. Dawson, M.A.*)

Ver. 13. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit.—*The evidences of true religion in man:*—The exercises of the mind, influenced by the Holy Spirit, are the evidences of true religion in man. The state of the mind is known only by its exercises; and spiritual exercises indicate the operations of the Spirit of Christ. I. SELF-ABASEMENT is a certain evidence of true religion. It is a gracious exercise, the effect of a saving work of the Spirit in the soul. II. ENTIRE DEPENDENCE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST is certain evidence of a state of grace. III. SUBMISSION TO THE LAW OF CHRIST is an evidence of true godliness. IV. JOY IN GOD, the Saviour of the soul, is an evidence of piety. (*A. Macleod, D.D.*) *The work of the Holy Spirit:*—The recovery of man to his lost righteousness must be by means of an agency from above. The strong evil element in our nature must be dispossessed by a stronger element for good. I. THE NATURE of the agent spoken of. Who and what is the Holy Spirit? He is "a Divine Being, of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God." But what is this work of the Holy Spirit in man, in regard to his salvation? In the text, it is set forth as the occupation or possession of the soul by a Divine principle, designed so to counteract the evil of our nature as to admit of our restored fellowship with God. The Spirit in us is heaven's witness and heaven's interpreter. Through Him Christ becomes "Immanuel, God with us." It is when we are "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man," and not before, that "Christ dwells in our hearts by faith." II. What is the appointed medium and METHOD of this Spirit's OPERATIONS? and how is this renovating influence brought into effective contact with the human spirit? The result is commonly effected through the instrumentality of the revealed Word, "Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God." 1. In these passages the Word is spoken of as an instrument only. It is only when the Spirit takes the veil away that it can be said of us, "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light." 2.

But if the Word does not convert without the Spirit, so neither, as a rule, does the Spirit convert without the Word; that is, without taking of the facts and statements of revelation, and through them, as a medium, operating upon the religious conscience. 3. In what way does the Holy Spirit ordinarily bring about in us these convictions? Is the influence absolutely miraculous, or is it bestowed in entire harmony with the known laws of mind? Plainly the latter. Taking the written Word as the instrument, the Spirit acts through the natural conscience—using that term in its broad theological acceptance, as describing the judgment which a man passes upon the rightfulness of his own conduct. And this He does by reviving its impressions; by strengthening its empire; by restoring its delicacy of moral perception, and then presenting to it objects suited to its new condition and worthy of its awakened powers. Conscience, of itself, may reprove of sin; but it must be conscience with the Spirit that turns the sinner. Conscience may witness to the law, that it is broken; to God, that He is offended; to retribution, that it is awaiting us; but the Spirit only can witness to the impiety of rejecting Christ and the guilt of neglecting so great salvation. And this view of the method of the Spirit's working, through the Word upon the conscience, will be found to be entirely congruous with the principles of our mental and moral constitution. He does not give us any new physical power to turn, but He gives us the inclination and the willingness. And the bias of inclination is that which constrains to action. As Sir William Hamilton has well expressed it, "The greatest spontaneity is the greatest necessity." We are not driven by the Spirit, but we are "led." (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *God's life in man*:—It is said that the finest rose-tree in the world is one in Holland, which a few years ago had six thousand flowers in bloom at the same time. The poor brier in the hedgerow might well despair of rivalling that wonderful rose-tree and attaining world-wide distinction. But if some kindly hand could transplant it to a choicer soil, and give it nurture of needful skill, and if some bud from that wonderful Dutch tree could be grafted into its central fibres, the poor despised growth of the hedgerow might hope one day to bear its thousand blooms, and be the wonder of a nation. And poor in all high moral and spiritual qualities as we ourselves may be, grudging in sacrifice, ignoble in spirit, grovelling in motive, yet if God infix His own life within us, no limit can be put to our spiritual development. (*T. G. Selby.*)

Ver. 14. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.—*Christianity a fact and a power*:—I. CHRISTIANITY IS AN EXTERNAL FACT IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD. 1. The condition of the world was desperate. Man through sin had destroyed himself. Nothing short of salvation would have met the case of man as a sinner. The sinner can destroy himself, but he cannot save himself. 2. This salvation was of necessity a fact. It was a great act. Thoughts and words would not have sufficed to save us; good wishes would not have availed us. To speak would not have been enough. To do was essential. Redemption was a work of infinite greatness and difficulty. And it is this that we find in the history of the Man Christ Jesus—the eternal thoughts and feelings of the Godhead realised in glorious works. II. CHRISTIANITY IS A SPIRITUAL POWER, OR A SOURCE OF PERMANENT INFLUENCE ON THE WORLD. 1. The Incarnation of the Son of God was the indispensable condition of the reunion of man with God. This is the highest greatness that any creature is ever capable of attaining—that God should "dwell in him, and he in God." This does not mean to be lost like a wavelet in the ocean of Godhead, as the Pantheist imagines, but to become one with God in the affinity of holiness and the fellowship of love, and yet to preserve for ever our personal individuality in the conscious enjoyment of that union. Man could not have been saved by ascending—by the mere development of his natural powers. Our salvation has been wrought by a descent of unparalleled magnitude. Descent is the ground of ascension. 2. It follows that the Incarnation and death of the Son of God form the spiritual power that is to create the world anew—the moral lever for raising humanity to God. If we see a Christian of extraordinary attainments in godliness, we may be sure that this is the secret of his strength—his thoughts and affections revolve constantly around this great centre, "God manifest in the flesh"; he abides by faith and love in Christ, and thereby God dwells in him, and he in God. This is the "secret of godliness." 3. Hence the facts of our redemption accomplished in Palestine years ago remain in the world yet, as great spiritual forces operating on the souls of men to raise them to God. Conclusion. 1. Let us appreciate the gospel above all things. 2. Let us ever

remember that godliness, and all progress in holiness, draws its strength from Christ and His Cross, His life, death, and resurrection. (*G. Parry.*) *The Saviour's mission and its blessed consequence*:—I. THE EVIDENCE FOR THE TRUTH. 1. "We have seen." The apostles and others had sensible evidence of the truth of the gospel. It was impossible they could be deceived. The life of Jesus was a fact about which there could be no mistake. It may be supposed the early disciples had an advantage over us in the sensible evidence which they enjoyed of the truth of the gospel. Yet it is doubtful whether our privileges are not greater than theirs. The benefit of their satisfaction is enjoyed by us in the record of it contained in their writings. We have found the Saviour to be all that they have declared. 2. There is, however, the testimony as well as the personal observation of the apostles. "We have seen and do testify," they say. And is not theirs a credible testimony? They were competent to observe and report accurately. They deserve our confidence, and while we give it to them, we put their testimony to the proof. We have found that the "gospel of Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. II. THE TRUTH SO ATTESTED, "that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1. The origin of the gospel. "The Father sent" the Saviour. Redemption arose from the counsel of the Godhead. It could have no other origin. Had it been revealed to the intelligent creation that men might be saved by the death and incarnation of the Son of God, they would have pronounced the sacrifice to be impossible. But the mystery has been solved by the great fact. 2. The agent whom the Father employed. "He sent His Son." He did so, because no other was sufficient. He was chosen because He alone is equal to the task. 3. The design of His mission. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour." What a precious name and office! It is a complete salvation which He has provided. 4. The universal efficacy of the gospel of Christ. "The world" is the object whose redemption is proposed. III. THE VIEW WHICH THE TEXT PRESENTS OF ITS RECEPTION—"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God." IV. THE BLESSED CONSEQUENCE—"God dwelleth in him, and he in God." These terms, so often used by the apostle, express the endeared communion, that arises out of faith in Christ, between the believer and God. It supposes an enjoyment of the Divine favour. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." It supposes confidence in the Divine strength. Waiting upon God in prayer, that he may be enabled to resist temptation and faithfully perform the duties required of him, he is sustained by the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." It supposes an earnest effort after the Divine holiness. Sin is more and more seen to be hateful, and holiness to be increasingly excellent. It supposes unreserved devotedness to the Divine service. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Christ the Saviour of the world*:—I. TAKE NOTICE OF SOME THINGS IMPORTED IN THIS TESTIMONY. 1. The world needed a Saviour; otherwise one had not been provided for them by Him who does nothing in vain. (1) It was a sick world (*Matt. ix. 12*). (2) It was a cursed world, and needed a Saviour to remove the curse, and bring in the blessing (*Acts iii. 26*). (3) It was a lost world (*Luke xix. 10*). 2. None of inferior dignity to the Son of God could be the Saviour of the world. 3. Christ was sent Saviour of the world from heaven's proper motion. The plot to save man was concerted entirely without him. 4. Christ is fully furnished for the saving of a lost world. His being sent in that character speaks His ability to answer it (*Heb. vii. 25*). 5. The salvation of lost sinners of the world of mankind is very acceptable to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, as well as to Himself, otherwise He had not sent His Son Saviour of the world (*1 Tim. ii. 3, 4*). II. OPEN THIS CHARACTER, SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, IN WHICH CHRIST WAS SENT. 1. In what sense Christ is Saviour of the world. (1) He is the actual and eventual Saviour of the elect. (2) He is the official Saviour, not of the elect only, but of the world of mankind indefinitely. 2. What is the business committed to Him as Saviour of the world. (1) It is to save sinners from their sin (*Matt. i. 21*). (2) It is to save sinners from misery, to free them from destruction (*Hos. xiii. 9*). Use I. Of information. 1. Behold here, admire, and believe the great love of God to a lost world, in providing a Saviour, and such a Saviour, for them, even His own Son. 2. Behold here a broad and firm foundation of faith for all and every one of you; that you may come to Christ, whatever your case is, and claim His righteousness and His whole salvation for yourselves. 3. Sinners living in their sins, pining away, and about to perish eternally in them, are without excuse. 4. Believers themselves may be ashamed and confounded, for that iniquity prevails so against them. Alas! it is a sad sign the Saviour is little employed among us. Use II. For trial. 1. If Christ has really begun to save you, ye will have the saved

man's thoughts of sin, and of the wrath of God. 2. Ye will have a transcendent esteem of and love to your Saviour (1 Pet. ii. 7). 3. Ye will be groaning under the remains of the disease of sin ye are saved from; your conscience will witness ye would fain be wholly rid of it (Rom. vii. 24). Use III. Receive the Lord Jesus, then. O sinners, in that character wherein His Father sent Him, as the Saviour of the world, and your Saviour. 1. Consider you need a Saviour. Your disease of sin will ruin you, if ye be not saved from it. 2. There is no Saviour besides Christ (Acts iv. 12). (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *The Saviour of the world.*—I. THE FACT. II. THE AUTHOR. "The Son." 1. Because He was the most precious of all God's possessions. 2. Because He was in sympathy with God's own heart. No one else understood the mysteries of Divine love. 3. Because no one else was able to effectually carry out the work of salvation, or to accomplish redemption. III. THE ORIGINATOR. "The Father." 1. This reminds us that although the Father is a God of justice, He did not desire to destroy. 2. It shows us how intense is His love. 3. It suggests the Divine purpose of elevating the lost, for none but a Divine Being could set a perfect example. IV. THE PROOF. "We have seen and do testify." 1. The persons who record their testimony are above suspicion. 2. They saw Christ's life, teaching, power, death. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 15. **Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.**—*Confessing Jesus as the Son of God*:—This implies—1. A deep and living conviction, a true perception of mind and heart, that "Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins" and the only Saviour for lost mankind. 2. A vital belief in His salvation, in the efficacy of His blood, and the power of His grace. 3. A hearty and full acceptance of the gospel of the Son of God; a resting in all the doctrines, a waiting for all the promises, an observance of all the ordinances, an obedience to all the commandments. 4. A proclaiming of the Lord as our Divine Redeemer in the face of the world. (*J. Slade, M.A.*)

Ver. 16. **And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.**—*Loving God is but letting God love us*:—1. All men living in sin repel or draw back from the love of God, and will not let it come in upon them. We do not say "go thy way," but we go our own way, and that means just the same thing. Doubtless it is good in God to be tendering Himself in such love, and a certain sensibility is moved by it, still there is a revulsion felt, and no fit answer of returning love is made; where, as we can see, the true account of the matter is, that the love is unwelcome, because there is no want of it, or consentingness of mind towards it; which is the same as to say that the man does not let God love him. As if the artist at his camera were to put in nothing but a plate of glass, prepared by no chemical susceptibility, saying to the light, "Shine on if you will, and make what picture you can." He really does not let the light make any picture at all, but even disallows the opportunity. 2. Observe how constantly the Scripture word looks to the love of God, for the ingeneration of love in men, and so for their salvation. The radical, everywhere present idea is, that the new love wanting in them is to be itself only a revelation of the love of God to them, or upon them. Thus the new-born life is to be "the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost." "Love is of God, for every one that loveth is born of God." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." "We love Him because He first loved us." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us." The plan is to beget love by love, and nothing is left us to do in the matter, but simply to allow the love, and offer ourselves to it. There is no conception anywhere that we are to make a new love ourselves; we have only to let the love of God be upon us, and have its immortal working in us. That will transform, that will new-create, in that we shall live. 3. What tremendous powers of motion and commotion, what dissolving, recomposing forces come upon, or into a soul, when it suffers the love of God. For it is such kind of love as ought to create, and must, a deep, all-revolutionising ferment, in the moral nature. It is the silent artillery of God, a salvation that wins by a dreadful pungency; raising up conviction of sin, to look on Him whom it hath pierced, moving agitations deep, stirring up all mires. So that when the love gets welcome, it has dissolved everything, and the new-born peace is the man new composed in God's living order. Letting God love us with such love, is adequate remedy therefore and complete, and is no mere nerveless quietism, as some might hastily judge. Or if any doubt on this point may remain, I proceed—4. To ask what more a sinner of mankind, doing the utmost

possible, can be expected or required to do. Can he tear himself away from sin by pulling at his own shoulder? Can he starve out his sins by fasting, or wear them out by a pilgrimage, or whip them out by penances, or give them away in alms? No! All that he can do to beget a new spirit in his fallen nature, is to offer up himself to the love of God, and let God love him. As he can see only by allowing the daylight to stream into his eyes, so he can expel the internal disorder and darkness of his soul, only by letting the light of God's love fall into it. Furthermore, as he cannot see a whit more clearly than the light enables him, by straining his will into his eyes, so he can do no more in the way of clearing his bad mind than to open it, as perfectly as possible, to the love of God. And now it remains to say—5. That when we come to accurately understand what is meant by faith, which is the universally accepted condition of salvation, we only give, in fact, another version of it, when we say that the just letting God love us, amounts to precisely the same thing. For if a man but offers himself up trustfully and clear of all hindrance to the love of God in Jesus Christ, saying, though it be in silence, "Be it upon me; let it come and do its sweet will in me"; plainly that is but letting God love him, and yet what is it but faith? In proposing it then as a saving condition, that we let God love us; we do not dispense with faith. We only say "believe" with a different pronunciation. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *A psalm of remembrance*:—It is very pleasant to read descriptions of the Holy Land from observant travellers, who in glowing language have depicted its interesting scenes. How much more delightful must it be to journey there one's self, to stand on the very spot where Jesus preached and prayed, and to kneel upon that blood-stained garden of Gethsemane, in which He sweat that sacred sweat of blood. Now, this law of nature I would transfer to matters of grace. Let me tell you this day what I may concerning the acts of God's goodness in the souls of His people, my description will be dulness itself compared with the glorious reality. Let me add another figure to render this truth yet more apparent. Suppose an eloquent foreigner, from a sunny clime, should endeavour to make you appreciate the fruits of his nation. He depicts them to you. He describes their luscious flavour, their cooling juice, their delicious sweetness; but how powerless will be his oration, compared with your vivid remembrance, if you have yourself partaken of the dainties of his land. It is even so with the good things of God; describe them as we may, we cannot awaken in you the joy and delight that is felt by the man who lives upon them, who makes them his daily food, his manna from heaven, and his water from the rock. I. THE ABSTRACT OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. 1. Sometimes the Christian knows the love of God to him. I will mention two or three particular ways in which he knows it. Sometimes he knows it by seeing it. He goes to his house and he finds it stored with plenty—"his bread is given him, and his water is sure." He is like Job; the Lord hath set a hedge about him, and all that he possesseth. Now, truly, he can say, "I know the love of God to me, for I can see it. I can see a gracious providence pouring forth out of the cornucopia of providence—an abundance of all that my soul can desire." This, however, might not completely convince him of God's love if it were not that he has also a consciousness that these things are not given him as husks are cast to swine, but they are bestowed on him as love-tokens from a tender God. His ways please the Lord, and therefore He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Another time in which he knows his Father's love is, when he sees it after coming out of affliction. In the hour of languishing he cried to the Lord for deliverance; and at last he felt the young blood leaping through his veins anew. New health was restored to him, "The Lord hath heard my cry, like Hezekiah, and has lengthened my days. Now I know the love which God hath to me." There are other ways in which God's children know their Father's love. Besides what they see there is something which they feel. Bitter though we sometimes think that our lives have been, yet have there been periods in them akin to heaven, when we could say, "If this is not glory it is next door to it. If I am not on the other side Jordan, at least my master is on this side of it." Then could he say, "Now I know the love that God hath towards me." 2. But times there are of thick darkness, when neither sun nor moon appear for many days; when the tempest rages exceedingly, and two seas meet in dread collision. At such a time, noble is the Christian who can say, "Now it may be I do not know the love that God hath to me, but I believe it." The first position, that of knowing God's love, is the sweetest, but that of believing God's love, is the grandest. To feel God's love is very precious, but to believe it when you do not feel it, is the noblest. 3. And now, do not these two states make up a summary of Christian experience? "We know and believe the love that God hath to us."

"Ah," says one, "we have sometimes doubted it." No, I will leave that. You may insert it in your confession, but I will not put it into my song. Confess your doubts, but write them not in this our psalm of praise. I am sure, in looking back, you will say, "Oh, how foolish I was ever to doubt a faithful and unchanging God!"

II. A SUMMARY OF THE BELIEVER'S TESTIMONY. Every Christian is to be a testifier. He is to be a witness with heart and lips. All the other creatures speak not with words. They may sing as they shine, but they cannot sing vocally. It is the believer's part in the great chorus to lift up voice and heart at once, and as an intelligent, living, loving, learning witness, to testify to God. 1. In the first place we have known that God's love to us is undeserved. 2. Another thing we can bear testimony to, is this—that the love of God is unconquerable. We strove against God's love, but it conquered us. 3. We can say concerning His love that it has never been diminished by all the sins we have ever committed since we believed. We have often revolted, but we have never found Him unwilling to forgive. 4. We have known and we have believed the love of God to us to be perfectly immutable. 5. I will make but one other remark here, and that is, we can bear our willing witness that the love of God to us has been an unfailing support in all our trials.

III. This great truth is THE GROUNDWORK OF CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGEMENT. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Love.—Love is the most essential and the most characteristic of Christian virtues. He who lacks this scarcely deserves the name of Christian at all, while he who possesses this is on the way to possess all. When we ask why such stress is laid upon the importance of possessing this virtue above all others, more than one answer suggests itself to our minds. First, we may observe that some explanation is given in the words of this text. A loveless soul can never be a God-like soul; for "God is love." On the other hand, when we dwell in love, when it is, as it were, the element in which we live and move and have our being, we cannot remain altogether dissimilar to God, just because God is love. For love is one, whether it exists in Him or in us; and wherever it reigns it must needs produce similarity to Him who is its Divine Source. Yet another explanation of the importance assigned to love in the Christian economy is to be found in the fact that love is designed to supply the motive-power in all truly Christian conduct and experience. For Christ looks at the quality even more than at the quantity of the work that we do for Him. A little offered as a love-offering to Him is worth a great deal done merely because we think we ought to do it, or just because it is expected of us. Nay, we may go further. We may be moved by a feeling of interest in the work for its own sake; and yet there shall be little or no pleasure occasioned to the heart of God, just because the true motive has been wanting. When we ask why faith, not love, should be the condition of salvation, it is not difficult to give a reasonable answer, as we contemplate the two side by side, and notice the difference between them. Love, we observe, is a condition of our emotional nature, a state of passive consciousness, or a moral habit formed within the soul. Faith, on the other hand, is a definite moral attitude, voluntarily assumed towards a definite object as the result of our intellectual apprehension of the characteristics of that object. It follows from this that love cannot be directly induced by an act of our will, and that we are therefore only indirectly responsible for its possession. But it may occur to some to object: if we cannot directly produce love, how can we be responsible for having it? and how can God find fault with us, as He seems to do, if we have it not? If we cannot make ourselves love our fellow-man by trying, how can we force ourselves to love God? To this it may be replied, love is not so capricious as at first sight it might appear to be. It springs from a combination of causes, which, however, it frequently happens that we never think of stopping to analyse. When, however, we carefully look into the matter, we soon find that our love has owed its existence either to some definite cause, or, as is more frequently the case, to some combination of causes. Now these causes may be, to a considerable extent, under our control; we may either avoid their influence, or put ourselves in the way of being influenced by them; and here, of course, moral responsibility comes in. Admiration either of appearances, or of physical or intellectual or moral qualities, frequently has much to do with the genesis of love, and this admiration may extend to the smallest things; indeed, I believe that it is more frequently by little things than by great that it is usually elicited. Intimacy again may have much to do with the genesis of love. Gratitude, too, frequently induces affection. We love because we owe so much, and love seems the only way of repaying what we owe. There are, no doubt, many other causes which may contribute to produce love; such as sympathy, affinity of tastes, or disposition, or unity of interest; but, after

all, nothing is so likely to cause love as love itself discovered to be pre-existent on the part of another. How often do we love because we find we are loved! How often does love, already supreme in our human heart, exert a species of irresistible fascination on the heart of another! Now it is clear that most of these various causes of love as existing amongst us men in our relations with each other, and as contributing to the genesis of a reciprocal affection, either exist in a much greater degree in the Divine Object than in any human being, or may be brought into existence as between us and Him. If we desire the Holy Spirit to work upon us efficiently in this respect, our wisdom lies in surrendering ourselves to His influence; and when we do He will always lead us up to the contemplation of those facts about the Divine Object and His relation to us, or to the apprehension of those experiences which tend to generate love. No gardener in the world can produce fruit; only the life within does that; yet how much does the fruit-tree depend for its fruitfulness upon human skill! Man must see to it that the tree shall be planted where the sunshine can fall upon it, and the dew and the rain can water it. He must take care that it is not exposed to unduly trying conditions. And even so love, being a fruit of the Spirit of God, can only be produced by His presence and mighty operations within our nature; but though we cannot produce or manufacture it, still we are indirectly responsible for its production. The tree cannot cultivate itself, and here the figure fails us. Man, on the other hand, is a free agent, and therefore responsible for his own culture. It is not for us to attempt directly to induce this all-important fruit of the Spirit, but it is for us to see to it that we comply with the conditions of fruitfulness. Let us expose ourselves to the spiritual sunshine; let us live in the presence of God; let us see to it that we do not strike our roots down into earth, lest the cold clay of worldly-mindedness check all our higher aspirations; let us guard against self-seeking and self-assertion; let us avoid exposing ourselves voluntarily to unfavourable influences as some Christians do, thinking more of worldly profit than of their spiritual interests; and let us cleanse off carefully the blight of impure thoughts and unholy desires, and then the Spirit of Love will be able to induce the fruit of love within our hearts. (*W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*)

God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.—*True love*:—How then did Christ love us? 1. It is, as opposed to mere natural love, an all-embracing love, not swayed by feelings or emotions or preferences, but loving all who can be loved, all who may become such as can be loved, or in order that they may be loved. 2. True love must be a self-denying love. 3. True love, like the love of God, "seeks not its own." 4. True love, like the love of God, must be ceaseless. That passing, capricious love, love and unlove, ebbing and flowing, laid dry because it has just seemed full, loving one and not another, grudging fresh acts of love because it has just shown what it thinks such, soon "wearied of well-doing," such is not the love which reflects the love of God. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*)

The love of God, as displayed in the economies of providence and grace:—I. IN THE CARES OF HIS UNIVERSAL PROVIDENCE. In the exercise of the love of benevolence He has not only conferred existence on a great variety and number of creatures, but He has bestowed on them countless properties and advantages, to minister to their utility and their welfare. For us, the sun shines, the rain falls, the air breathes, the seasons change, the harvests ripen, and all nature seems put in requisition to minister to our well-being. This love is impartial; for our heavenly Father makes His sun to rise on the righteous and the wicked, the rain to descend on the just and unjust, and is kind to the unthankful and the evil. It is constant. "His mercies are new every morning and every evening," and He crowns successive years with His goodness. It is universal. The bounties which flow from its exercise are dispensed to the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fishes which pass through the paths of the seas, and to the smallest insect which floats in the breeze, and the meanest reptile which creeps on the face of the earth. It will be perpetual. For we are assured that the ordinances of heaven and earth shall stand fast so long as the earth continues. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest." II. IN THE MERCIFUL PROVISIONS OF HIS GRACE. And this is the love of compassion. Look at this "love" in the gradual preparatives for the full development of its displays. See it in the first promise, which raised the prostrated hopes of our sinful progenitors; in the numerous and expressive types which were to usher in the bright day of discovery; in the accurate and splendid predictions of that long line of holy men "who testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow." At length the predicted time arrived for the full disclosures of the love of God to man. Does this close the exhibition of this scene of love? Did God give

His Son to die the just for the unjust, to restore to us the favour which we had lost? Are we left to shift for ourselves as we passed through the wilderness of this world? "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" What innumerable blessings flow down to us, from the exaltation and the advocacy of the Saviour! How rich are the results of the communication of the Holy Spirit, with His gifts and graces! And what shall we say of Divine ordinances, which are the mediums, the organs of conveyance of all spiritual good, to the souls of men? III. IN THE PROCESSES OF HIS AFFLICTIVE DISCIPLINE. 1. The most painful trials of life have often proved the means of conversion. 2. The procedures of His disciplinary providence have contributed to sanctification. They have proved the means of repressing or of extirpating corruption from the heart. They have quickened in your bosom the spirit of prayer. IV. IN THAT HOME OF REST AND JOY, WHICH HE HAS PREPARED FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE FAMILY OF HIS REDEEMED (Eccles. xii. 3-5). Happy, thrice happy they, who fall asleep in Jesus! (*John Clayton.*) *General and particular manifestation of the love of God:—I. THE DECLARATION MADE CONCERNING GOD HIMSELF, "God is love."* The Greek philosopher Aristotle defines love in this way, "The desire of any one for whatsoever things a person supposes to be good for his friend's sake, but not for his own, and the procuring of those things for the person beloved according to one's power." This he conceives to be love. The theory is fine, as unquestionably were many of the notions found in the schools of philosophers, and in the shades of academical retirement; but a grand question meets us at the threshold of the inquiry, Where is to be found the individual who is the subject of this love? It is easy to give the definition, but where, in our fallen race, shall we discover an individual with his heart thus disinterestedly affectionate? But that which is not in man by nature, is found in God—"God is love." He is the fountain from which love must have flowed wheresoever it is found. The very imposition of labour is a proof that God is love. A world of men and women unemployed, and with hearts so depraved, and characters altogether so alienated from the life of God as ours naturally are, would really be a hell upon earth, since men would have nothing to do except to torment one another. And what shall we say of the mystery of redemption—eternal redemption? II. THE PECULIAR CAUSE WHY THE REDEEMED OF THE EARTH, IN PARTICULAR, CAN BEAR WITNESS TO THIS TRUTH, THAT GOD IS LOVE. What reason have we to believe, that instead of perishing with the majority, we shall be in the minority of those who are saved? No general declaration of God's love will answer this purpose. We have known the love which God hath to us—it is not a matter of conjecture, but of demonstration: "We have known, we have believed the love that God hath to us." III. THE SPECIMEN INTRODUCED OF THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO HAVE FOUND GOD TO BE LOVE. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." And what do we behold in this declaration? First of all, the certain continuance of that spirit of love, whereby the Lord's people are called. There is no fear of this love waxing cold and being dried up in the redeemed, when we know that they live in God by a life of faith, and that God by His Spirit lives in them. But farther, what do we behold in this declaration, "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him"? Why, the security of those souls who are thus distinguished by the love of God, and by being the temples of the Holy Ghost. They dwell in God, and God dwells in them. (*W. Borrow, M.A.*) *God embodied and manifested in infinite love to man:—*Did we only give credit to the text—did we but view God as "love"—there would be the translation into another character—there would instantly emerge a new heart and a new nature. For let us attend, in the first place, to the original conception of humanity, constituted and placed, as it now is, in reference to that great and invisible Being revealed unto us in the Scriptures. There are two reasons why we should conceive God to be so actuated as to inspire us with terror, or at least with distrust, instead of conceiving Him to be actuated by that love which the text ascribes to Him, and which were no sooner believed than it would set us at ease, and inspire us with delightful confidence in Him. The first of these reasons may be shortly stated thus: Whenever we are placed within the reach of any being of imagined power, but without of unknown purposes, that being is an object of dismay to us. If such, then, be the effect on human feelings of a power that is known, associated with purposes that are unknown, we are not to wonder that the great and invisible God is invested, in our eyes, with the imagery of terror. It is verily because He is great and at the same time invisible, that we so invest Him. It is precisely because the Being who

has all the energies of nature at command is at the same time shrouded in mystery impenetrable, that we view Him as tremendous. But in what way could more palpable exhibition have been made of Him, than when the eternal Son, enshrined in humanity, stepped forth on the platform of visible things on the proclaimed errand "to seek and to save" us? But there is still another reason, and many may think, perhaps, a more substantial reason than the former, why, instead of viewing God as love, we should apprehend Him to be a God of severity and displeasure. It is not conjured up by fancy from a distant land of shadows, but drawn from the inferences of man's own consciousness. The truth is, that by the constitution of humanity there is a law of right and wrong in every heart, which each possessor of that heart knows himself to have habitually violated. But more than this, along with the felt certainty of such a law there is the resistless apprehension of a lawgiver—of a God offended by the disobedience of His creatures, and because of which we are disquieted with the thought of a reckoning and a vengeance yet to come. Now as, in counteraction to our first reason for viewing God with apprehension, and thus, losing sight of Him as a God of love, we adduced one particular doctrine of Christianity, so, in counteraction to our second reason, we now adduce another peculiar doctrine of Christianity, and that by far the noblest and most precious of its articles. The one was the doctrine of the incarnation; the other is the doctrine of the atonement. By the former—the doctrine of the incarnation—a conquest has been made over the imaginations of ignorance; by the latter—the doctrine of the atonement—a conquest has been made over, not the imaginations, but the solid and well-grounded fears of guilt. By the one, or through the means of a Divine incarnation, we are told of Deity embodied, and thus the love of God has been made the subject, as it were, of ocular demonstration; by the other, or through the means of a Divine sacrifice, we are told of the Deity propitiated; and thus the love of God has been made to shine forth in the midst of the law's sustained and vindicated honours. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a halo of all the attributes of God, and yet the pre-eminent manifestation there is of God as love; for it is love, not only rejoicing over all His works, but enshrined in full concentration, when shedding enhanced lustre over all, and amidst all, the perfections of the Divine nature. Before I leave this part of the subject, I should like, in as plain a way as possible, to meet a question which I consider of very great practical importance in Christianity. You may make out the demonstration that "God is love;" you may make that out as a general attribute; but then the question, in which each of us is personally interested, is to be asked still—How are we to be satisfied that this love of God is directed personally and individually to ourselves? Christ is set forth as "a propitiation for the sins of the world!" and "God so loved the world, as to send His Son into it." Let me, therefore, who, beyond all doubt, am in "the world," take the comfort of these gracious promulgations: for it is only if out of the world, or away from the world, that they do not belong to me. The blessings of the gospel are as accessible to all who will, as the water, or the air, or any of the cheap and common bounties of nature. The element of heavenly love is in as universal diffusion among the dwellings of men as the atmosphere which they breathe, and which solicits admittance at every door. This brings me to the third head of discourse. If we could only work this apprehension of God into your minds—if we could only prevail on you to believe that "God is love," then it would have this effect on your feelings towards Him—the effect, in fact, of giving you altogether a different feeling with regard to God. It would be the instrument of completely regenerating you: by its giving you a different view of God you would acquire a different feeling with regard to Him; and it would, in fact, throw within the constitution of your soul the great master-principle of all morality; and thus it is that it would be the elemental principle of what is called in the Bible regeneration. Faith would work by love. You would love the God who first loved you, and this love would yield all manner of obedience. In the first place, the way to call into your heart the love of God, and to keep it there, is to think on the love of God as manifested in the gospel, and to dwell upon the thought. It is only by thinking rightly, or believing rightly, that you can be made to feel rightly; and could we only prevail on you to dwell habitually, and with confidence, on God's love to you, then should we feel ourselves on the sure highway to the result of your habitually loving Him back again. But, secondly and lastly, you will perceive from this the mighty importance of a free gospel, and of your so understanding it that you may embark upon it, each individual for himself, all your hopes and all your dependence. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *Divine*

beneficence defended :—Apart from revelation there are, I conceive, two main evidences of the goodness of God. The one is to be found in the material universe, the other in the nature and capabilities of man. When man first begins to observe and reflect on the vast universe of which he forms a part, he can hardly fail to be struck with its order, its beauty, and its sublimity. But hardly has man formed to himself this grand conception of the unbounded power and the universal goodness of his Creator, before another aspect of the phenomena forces itself upon his attention. If on one side there is the fertile field or the smiling valley, on the other there is the howling wilderness or the raging sea. If here we find a man rejoicing in health and strength and prosperity, the happy peasant who has no wants which he cannot satisfy, the successful warrior, the gifted statesman, or the powerful monarch; there we find a man bowed down with disease, or sunk in misfortune, the captive in the hands of his enemies, the father bereft of his children, the beggar seeking his bread. How to account for this double aspect of nature and of human life has ever been one of the great problems which the curious intellect of man has set itself to solve. Is God really good, or is He a capricious Being, at one time dealing good and at another evil, selecting arbitrarily His friends and enemies, while He showers blessings on the one and inflicts vengeance on the other? "The wilder Bedouins," says an Eastern traveller, "will inquire where Allah is to be found." When asked the object of the question they will reply, "If the Eesa could but catch Him they would spear Him upon the spot,—who but He lays waste their houses, and kills their cattle and wives?" Others, in order to solve the difficulty, have imagined a co-ordinate, or almost co-ordinate Being, the author of evil, as God is the author of good; others, like the Platonists, believe that there are material obstacles which God can only partially overcome; whilst others, again, have supposed that God permits the existence of a subordinate but powerful spirit, who is engaged in marring the work which, as being of Divine origin, would otherwise be absolutely perfect. It may be of service to those who, amidst all the perplexities of modern speculation, would fain retain their hold on this fundamental principle of religious faith, the supreme goodness of God, if I attempt to point out certain considerations suggested to us by the study of nature and of human life which, amidst all our darkness and ignorance, may be regarded as, at least, indications of its truth. The question, then, is not whether evil is to be found in this world, for we cannot even conceive its absence, but whether, on a general survey of nature and life, good would seem to be, as it were, the rule, and evil the exception, or evil the rule and good the exception. Suppose, for a moment, the present constitution of things to be fixed, and let it be granted that the world proceeds from an omnipotent and intelligent Creator; the argument, as stated by Paley and others, that this omnipotent and intelligent Being is also a Being of infinite goodness, if not absolutely convincing, is, at least, one of very considerable force. There is much evil in the world. Granted; but good can only be understood by contrast with evil, and the good in the world, so far as we can make out, far counterbalances the evil. Those who, to the outside observer, seem to be subjected to the most cheerless and most sordid conditions, without, apparently, a ray of hope or of comfort, often, it is a matter of common remark, appear to cling to life with greater tenacity than those whom we deem the most prosperous. Even for them, therefore, life has its charms, and, whether they believe in a future world or not, at all events they are unwilling to quit this. Truly man has a marvellous power of adapting himself to the circumstances in which he is placed. Transport yourself, if it were possible, for a few hours, into the most unpromising position in human life, and you would probably find that it has its compensating advantages. A certain amount of happiness, in fact, seems invariably to result from the adaptation of the organism to the medium, whatever the organism and whatever the medium may be. Not only, therefore, do we probably vastly overestimate the amount of misery which there is in the world, but we are apt altogether to overlook the educating influences of pain. Let any one think within himself of what a vast amount of enjoyment he would be deprived if his pleasures came unsought, if they supervened on no previous desire, want, or pain. Let him think, too, what he would have been in character and attainments if he had never had any obstacles to overcome, any difficulties to grapple with, or wants to gratify. Self-denial, temperance, patience, industry—where would these be if we had been created beings without wants, without the capacity of pain, without the necessity of effort? Sympathy, compassion, forgiveness, tenderness, all these finer traits of our nature, where would they be if there were no sufferings to be compassionated,

no pains to be alleviated? Morality and intelligence alike, at least as they exist in man, seem to be the result of a long struggle with the powers of nature, of an unceasing effort to accommodate himself to the exigencies of his condition. But after all, it may be said, this is only a roseate view of human life and of the causes which determine it, a theory which prosperous men have not unnaturally framed in order to account for their own prosperity. Go into the stifling alleys of a crowded city, pass through the sordid dwellings, look at the haggard forms furnishing for want of food, and then say whether you can believe in a moral government of the universe, in the existence of a God of love from whom all these men and women have their being, from whose original disposition of events the circumstances in which they are now placed have proceeded! Is it not a cruel mockery to tell such as these of the love of their Creator? If they believe in a God, will they not turn round and curse Him? No! Amongst the oppressed, the suffering, and the afflicted are often found those who have the most intense faith in the love of God. It is in their prosperity rather than their adversity that men forget their Maker. And do these men, as I have said before, cling to life with less tenacity than we do? For them too, then, life has some secret charm; they, too, have a power of adapting themselves to circumstances, and their existence is not all that dreary, cheerless waste which to us it seems to be. But, before we blame God for this mass of human suffering, and consider it an argument against His beneficence and love, shall we not do well to look more closely into its causes, to ask how far it is unavoidable and how far avoidable, how far it is due to the actions of laws of nature, whose effects we cannot escape, and how far to the wickedness, the carelessness, or the ignorance of man? That man should be able to determine his own actions and to influence his fellows is surely not a defect but an excellence in the constitution of human nature. But we, at least, in the present constitution of our faculties, cannot see how we can have this power without the possibility of exercising it for evil as well as for good. Here, then, we encounter the same difficulty as before. As in the individual it would seem as if there must be alternations of pleasure and pain, so in society it will seem as if there must be a mixture of good and evil, of suffering and enjoyment, of prosperity and adversity. But part of this evil and suffering we have said is avoidable, and part unavoidable—that is to say, part is due to man himself, and part to the inexorable forces of nature. Now, so far as man's lot admits of being modified by himself, we find, if we take a sufficiently wide retrospect, that the improvement in his condition has been almost incalculable; in comfort and security, even in refinement and intelligence. The laws which govern the evolution of society seem, with some few exceptions not difficult to be accounted for, to have an invariable tendency to improve man's condition. And if this has been the effect of advancing civilisation in the past, is there any reason to suppose that the process will be arrested in the future? May we not hope that, as the sympathies of men expand and their knowledge increases, many of the more glaring inequalities which now exist between man and man will be gradually removed? Of all the characters which God has stamped upon His creation, physical and human, none is more patent to our observation than the capacity of progress. Man has undoubtedly even still much evil to contend with, but this evil he has an almost indefinite power of diminishing, and by struggling with it his faculties are enlarged, his character is strengthened, and he is being gradually prepared (so by an irrepressible instinct we divine) for a sphere far transcending this in dignity, in freedom, in knowledge, and in love. (*Prof. T. Fowler.*) *God is love*:—God's world might teach us hope—God's Word alone can give us the immovable certainty that He is love. I. "God is love"—A TRUTH UNKNOWN TO THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD. 1. One cause of the failure must be sought for in the spirituality and elevation of the idea itself. 2. In the scale of reason the question of God's love must often seem a balanced one. Whatever love in God is, it is not a love which cannot both do and look upon things which are very terrible; it is not a love which is regardless of law; it is not a love which cannot punish. 3. The workings of an evil conscience. II. GOD IS LOVE—A TRUTH REVEALED AND CERTIFIED IN CHRIST. 1. It is a love not out of harmony with the sterner aspects of God's government, as seen in the world around us. There was a certain granitic sternness in the character of Christ, as well as soft and gentle words and smiles. And as for pain, think of the bitter Cross, and of God not sparing His own Son there. 2. The place to which the gospel raises love in the character of God. It identifies love with God's essence, with the very root of His character and life. A pagan

said, "When God was about to make the world He transformed Himself into love." But the Christian gospel goes beyond this, and declares that God eternally is love.

3. The gospel is pre-eminently a revelation of God's love to sinners. (*J. Orr, B.D.*) *God is love*:—"The idea which men have of God," said a thoughtful writer, "is the most important of all influences on their religious character and tone of mind. They become as what they worship. If justice, Jews; if goodness, Christians. When men think of God chiefly as the Supreme Mind, they are philosophic; when chiefly as the Supreme Will, they are superstitious; regarding Him as a Sovereign, they strive to be His servants; as a Father, His sons." We can feel the truth of this view. I. IT IS INEVITABLE THAT OUR MAIN THOUGHT OF GOD SHOULD COLOUR OUR RELIGIOUS LIFE, AND THROUGH IT OUR ORDINARY LIFE AMONG MEN. The quality of our service will differ with the relationship we bear to those we serve. If we are afraid of them, we shall be timid, scrupulous in all work which comes under their eye, and along with our dread we shall cherish a subtle dislike. If we expect to win something from them, we shall be ostentatious in little acts of exaggerated service, and we shall catch ourselves acting as though we were challenging attention to the quality or quantity of our service. If we love them, all timidity and artifice will pass away. Simplicity of feeling will help forward single-mindedness of conduct. We shall serve with zeal, completeness, and trustworthiness because we love. It is true that love exercises a purifying influence over service. It is, therefore, no small influence for good upon the human character when the relationship between God and man is that of love. We do not render service to a taskmaster. We do not seek to be good out of fear, which means that we have no real love for good. We do not seek to be good for the sake of reward, for love's service is given for love's sake, and not for fee or gain. To know, therefore, that God is Love is to have in possession a thought and truth which, if we give it full play, tends to purify the dispositions, desires, and motives of our nature. The same thought may reach us in another way. God is love. God therefore desires for us the very best that can be. "Love worketh no ill to its neighbour," said St. Paul. And Love worketh no ill to its children. Therefore God can only seek man's highest good, and man's highest good is in character. Wealth is only good in seeming, knowledge is only good in transition; but character abides. And this abiding good, called character, is the good which God desires for His children. Thus we reach the same thought—God who is Love seeks the purifying and elevation of our characters. To understand that God is Love, and to realise that His love seeks and must seek our highest good, and that this good is in our spiritual resemblance to God our Father, is to take hold of a principle which enlightens our eyes as we look out on life. II. THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF LIFE THROUGH LOVE. It need not be denied that there are many enigmas in life. There are dark vicissitudes whose meaning we seek to penetrate. Who can understand why pain falls on the innocent, and, as it sometimes seems, the heaviest penalty on those who have not sinned the most? Who can explain why disease should descend from generation to generation? Two things need to be remembered, which, if they do not give answers to these hard questions, yet lift somewhat their burden. 1. Love must seek the highest good. The highest good is greatness, purity, goodness of character. The highest good is therefore spiritual, not physical, not intellectual. Now, the bulk of the difficult questions touch physical or intellectual problems. The ills that flesh is heir to and the mental perplexities awakened by strange questions press heaviest upon us. But meanwhile the opportunities of goodness, kindness, and truth lie at our door. It is not possible to escape the boundaries of the flesh or to break the bars of thought; but it is possible to cherish good and loving thoughts. Body and mind may complain that their scope is limited, but love's hour is always present. Now, love's scope is best seen in hours of trial and pain. Then the capricious and wayward woman becomes a ministering angel. Similarly the nobler qualities of character reveal themselves in hours of emergency and danger. Courage asserts itself in the hour of peril—on the battlefield and on the sinking deck; humanity and presence of mind in the midst of panic and risk—in the outbreaking of the fire or in the hospital ward. Does it not seem as though the finer aspects of character would have had little scope except in a world where pain and peril existed? Now these finer qualities do not appear only in moments of sudden heroism. They are sometimes and more often seen in the quiet fidelity and prolonged patience of love, in the ministry of devoted and self-denying lives. Lifelong tests are more severe, though perhaps not so brilliant, as momentary tests. And it is on fields like these that tenderness and pity and such high qualities have shown themselves. As stars on the background of the midnight sky, the higher qualities of human nature have been

seen among the dark mysteries of life. When we remember, then, that dark things not only reveal but call forth the better and higher dispositions of man, may we not see that the burden of some perplexing problems is somewhat lightened? Love seeks the highest good, and therefore love sets out the field of life in such a sort that the best qualities of life may be called forth. 2. Love seeks the freest good. God, who loves freely, wants our love as freely in return. He therefore will not enforce our love or compel our faith. The possession of freedom is a responsibility which plays a part in human education. But freedom is not the same as immunity from conditions. When we play the game, we are free to play our own game, but according to the rules. Life is like a game of chess. We may move our pieces where we please, but each piece has its assigned move. Out of the combination of our freedom and the fixed powers of the men come our discipline and skill in playing the game. The laws of life are like the rules of the game. Break the chess rules and we only provoke disappointment. Break the laws of life and we only meet grief. It is no part of true love, therefore, to relax laws or alter rules in order to please our fancy. The character could not ripen save under clear and well-defined conditions which gave scope to freedom and yet checked caprice. Love which is weak and foolish tries to spare its children pain. Love which is wise and strong knows that experience must play a large, perhaps the largest, share in education. To check the education by experience is often to tamper with the freedom. The fulness of life's lesson is not otherwise learned. And God, who is Love, leaves His children to learn through experience. His laws safeguard much and yet provide the sphere of education. It needs, however, an eye akin with God's to perceive His will and His way. Then, when we perceive how love is at the back of all life's discipline and pain, we are like those who have hold of the silver thread which leads through the labyrinth. We may not understand all, but we know that the thread of which we have hold will lead us to the heart of the mystery. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God. (*Bp. Boyd Carpenter.*) *God is love*.—I. BY WHAT RIGHT OF REASON DO WE SAY "GOD IS LOVE"? One only caution we must bear in mind, that in the very necessity of the case the terms we use are inadequate; they convey considerably less than the reality for which they stand. When we speak of the mind, will, or heart of God, we know all the while that the terms "mind," "will," and "heart" are to be understood in a sense infinitely higher than that in which we speak of the mind, will, and heart of man. With this caution, let us proceed at once to the consideration of the question, By what right of reason do we say that God is love? This is the last step of a climax of sound reasoning of which the following is an outline. Having granted the existence of a God, we infer some of His attributes from objects which we perceive, and which we call His "works." These, for convenience, may be divided into two classes—the phenomena of the outer world and the phenomena of human nature. Both must be observed in order to form any approximately true conception of Him who is the cause of both. The observation of the outer world by itself, *e.g.*, would furnish little if any conception of the moral attributes of God. All it teaches is the presence and activity of vast forces acting not in an irregular and chaotic, but in an orderly and steadfast manner according to fixed principles or laws. The recognition of these laws compels us to call their author intelligent, and to attribute to Him mind or reason. But how do we know anything about mind or reason except through the previous observation of a part of our own human nature? We first feel and know what reason, mind, or intelligence is in ourselves, and then we recognise it on a grander scale in the production, preservation, and control of the outer world. Thus we get hold of the first attribute of God—intelligence. Next we find in ourselves what we call the moral sense. This must not be confounded, as it too often is, with the list of duties to be done and of evil things to be not done. The conscience is the sense of being bound to do what we know or believe to be right, and not to do what we know to be wrong. This moral sense has been universally associated with the idea that our Creator or Divine Ruler is on the side of our consciences. Thus we arrive at once at the second attribute of God, *viz.*, His righteousness. But here again we no more dream of limiting His righteousness to our small conceptions and experience of it than of limiting His intelligence to our small conceptions and experience of mind. If man is intelligent and moral, *à fortiori* God must be intelligent. The foregoing argument leads at once to the consideration of another and nobler feature in man's nature, *viz.*, his love. That this is a higher and nobler faculty than the reason, and even higher than the conscience, is universally admitted. Love is conscience in an ecstasy; it is a

perfect enthusiasm of goodness, because it does not stop to reason with itself and to balance the *pros* and *cons* of right and wrong, but with eager bound rushes to its goal—the slave of inspiration. Conscience says, “Do this because it is right”; love says, “I will do this for you.” Among the faculties of man love holds the highest place. It is the instinct of doing the best possible good. While reason is our guide to what our duty is, and conscience is our authority for doing it, love leaps into the act without needing any sanction at all. I have, then, only to urge that as man is the noblest product known to us in the universe, and as love is the noblest part of man, so we must infer that God must be at least as loving as the most loving of men. Thus we reach a third attribute and say “God is love.” He may be, and to our adoring eyes of faith He surely is, far and high exalted above His noblest creature: but less than that He cannot be. II. ON WHAT GROUND OF EXPERIENCE HAVE WE ANY RIGHT TO ASSUME THAT THERE IS ANY COMMUNITY OF NATURE BETWEEN OUR HIGHEST SELVES AND GOD? The first and most obvious ground is the knowledge gained by experience that we are possessed of a twofold nature, one the material, and the other, which, for want of a better term, we call the spiritual. Under the spiritual are of course included thought, conscience, and emotion. Possessing this spiritual nature as human beings we naturally believe in its likeness to, if not identity with, the nature of Him who is the Author and cause of all. The highest outcome of theological speculation is “God is a Spirit,” by which we mean emphatically to deny that He is matter and has dimensions and can be located in space; and emphatically to affirm that, like thought itself, He is distinct from matter and does not share its properties or limitations. God is Spirit and we are spirit too. But our ground of experience is wider and deeper still when we view the obvious purpose for which the spiritual part of our nature is given. That purpose includes the attainments of all kinds of knowledge—knowledge of the world outside of us, and knowledge of ourselves, and as a fruit of our honest search, a knowledge of God. We cannot avoid the conclusion that the faculty by which it is possible to perceive and understand a given law must be similar to the faculty by which the law was ordained. So by experience of scientific knowledge we prove some degree of community of nature between ourselves and the Author of the world around us. Much more do we discern this, when we go higher still in the range of our spiritual nature. I will not expatiate on the functions of conscience and of love which are spiritual faculties bestowed for the moral government of ourselves and of the race and for the supreme and noblest kind of happiness attainable on earth. In these regions of experience we discern the moral nature of Him who endowed us with a moral nature; and still more clearly and blissfully do we discern the Divine love, full of compassion and mercy, in the human love wherewith He has blest our own hearts. If we may with any reason ascribe to Him the faculty of knowledge, with much greater reason may we assure ourselves that He is infinite goodness and infinite love. (*C. Voysey.*)

The revealed Deity :—There is a manner of Divinity in such a saying as this! It prepossesses the mind in favour of its supernal origin. And happy is it for us if such a statement as this—the very identification of the Godhead—fully agrees with our most fixed sentiments and easily coalesces with our most intimate feelings. For it is averse from all that man, left to his mere reason and arguing upon his naked information, ever entertained. Enter the Pagan temple, olden or extant. How merciless, how vindictive, how greedy of victims, how defiled with blood-stains, are the idols of all! These are but the speculations we have formed of the Almighty Being who has made us. Our mind hates its own creations, but cannot paint them in any fairer hues. In opposition to these conjectures of an unconscious negligence and of a sanguinary malignity, God is love. And do you not feel the tender distinctiveness of this designation? It is not an appellative, it is not an epithet, it is not a quality. It is not only His name and His memorial. It is His nature! It is His being! It is Himself! I. LOVE MAY BE CONSIDERED TO SUBSIST IN THE DIVINE NATURE UNDER THE FOLLOWING MODIFICATIONS. 1. Goodness. This is the disposition to communicate happiness. It displays its earliest effect in creating objects for itself. It calls into existence all whom it wills to bless. It adapts them to the means of enjoyment provided for them. 2. Complacency. This is the disposition which dwells in the mind of the Framers of all things to delight in whatever He has done. His works are great, and reflect back upon Him, in proportion to their kind and purpose, all His different perfections. 3. This Love not only includes goodness and complacency, but, as it now exists, and is now revealed, it takes the form of “the kindness and

philanthropy of God our Saviour." This supposes certain dispositions of favour towards sinful men. (1) Forbearance. This is not security from punishment it still is imminent and due—but such delay that, if it be improved, the punishment may be wholly averted. (2) Grace. This opposes every idea of claim or worth in them to whom it is extended, regarding only their total demerit. (3) Mercy. This contemplates simply moral obnoxiousness and liability, or guilt, meeting it with acts which may remove it, as also by influences that may subdue the depravity from which that exposure to punishment or that guilt could alone arise. (4) Compassion. This concerns itself with the misery and ruin which sin entails, and furnishes, in the room of these evil consequences, peace and joy and hope, everlasting consolation and eternal life. II. IN DWELLING UPON DIVINE LOVE IN THIS ORDER OF ITS PARTICULAR AFFECTIONS AND OPERATIONS, SOME IMPORTANT DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE MUST BE MAINTAINED. 1. God is love, contemplated in Trinity. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." "The love of the Spirit." "He that sitteth on the throne." "The Lamb in the midst of the throne." "The seven-fold Spirit before the throne." 2. God is love, regarded in Covenant. A purpose is revealed as reigning in the Uncreated Mind which supposes engagements and stipulations. The Father seals the Mediator. Jesus is sent. The Holy Ghost is given. There is inauguration into office. There is subordination of trust. 3. God is love, engaged in special redeeming acts. To save the sinner He has not only to will. An immense arrangement must be contrived and established to give that will efficiency. The redemption of the soul is most precious and most difficult. It can be saved, but merely because with God all things are possible. He only can save it by means absolutely infinite. III. A NECESSARY CONCEPTION OF DIVINE LOVE IS, THAT IT IS THE LOVE OF GOD PRIMARILY TO HIMSELF. 1. The original law illustrates this truth by presuming that He is love. For if this be "the first and great commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," then those qualities are to be found in Him which should be thus esteemed. 2. All the Divine perfections resolve themselves into love. If God were not faithful, righteous, holy, He could not be love: for that cannot be love which must only provoke whatever is contrary to itself. We, therefore, knowing that God is love because He is most holy, cry to Him, "How excellent is Thy loving-kindness!" "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" 3. If God be love, He cannot introduce, nor act upon, any opposite principle. He is love in being the adversary of all that interrupts its exercise and diffusion. 4. The love of God cannot, therefore, be justly disputed if He leave unremitted the consequences of sin. To carry out a benevolent plan must be as benevolent as the plan itself. Any act of mercy, being extra-judicial, being of a different order from the case supposed, cannot enter into our present vindication of essential love. IV. LET US NOW ATTEMPT TO REFUTE CERTAIN OBJECTIONS WHICH ARE COMMONLY RAISED AGAINST THE THEME OF THE TEXT. 1. God was pleased to create man an intelligent and reasonable being. 2. God could not endow a creature with such mental gifts without including in them a natural liberty. 3. God must, in the event of such a creation, hold the subject of it responsible for the exercise of his liberty. 4. God must, in rendering the creature accountable, promulgate a law. 5. God has so constituted us that we must always feel that we are free. 6. God can only treat the individual creature in agreement with the general welfare. 7. God has intimated to us that our planet-dwelling does not include all His intelligent family, and that His system towards us is very imperfectly developed. 8. God may not be blamed for the consequences which He has forewarned, which are wilfully incurred, and which He has given His creatures the fullest liberty, and urged them by the strongest remonstrance, to avoid. V. LET US NOW EXHIBIT THE MONUMENTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS OF THIS LOVE. The love of God in the gift, the humanity, and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, stands not apart from efficient results. There is no scheme of good but it avails to uphold and operates to secure. (R. W. Hamilton, D.D.) *The heart of God* :—The nearest approach to a definition of the Deity is found in the sayings, "God is Spirit," "God is Light," "God is Love." The last saying declares to us that, considered in relation to moral beings, God's essential nature is love—that the Eternal has a heart, and is not without sensibilities and emotions. Thus God meets the deep yearnings of our hearts for a personal love to respond to our own. We must have "something to love, to clasp affection's tendrils round." If there were nothing in God to which our hearts could appeal, we should retire within ourselves and become encased in icy selfishness. A biting frost would wither out

affections, and each soul would become like a barren tree, having but a starved existence in solitude and shade. Now, that we may know that in this case the wish is not father to the thought, let us listen while reason, Scripture, and experience utter their joint protest against the notion that God is without feeling. Reason compels us to conclude that all the love in the universe is Divine in its origin, and that He who is the source of love must Himself possess it. We are forced to think that, as the sap in branch and leaf has all flowed up from the roots, so all those streams of beautiful affection which redeem human life from barrenness have gushed warm from the heart of God. As the sea is the source from which every blade of grass gets its own drop of dew, and the thirsty earth gets refreshment through gentle rains, so all kindness, generous impulses, beneficent ministries that gladden the parched and weary hearts of men, have their origin in that "ocean of love without bottom or shore," which lies in the depths of the nature of God. As every ray of light that warms the atmosphere and makes the day beams from the face of the sun, so all the glow and beauty that are felt and seen in filial affection and the amenity of family life, in leal-hearted friendship and goodwill amongst men, are the reflection of the light of love that streams from our God in the sky. Some may, however, object that it is profane to speak of God's love as a passion. But the text loses its charm if the word "love" does not mean in it what it means when applied to ourselves. Besides, let it be remembered that the passions are not in themselves sinful; it is the use they are put to, and the objects upon which they are expended, that determines whether or not they should be called sinful. Scripture shows that in God is a love which not only lives while it is reciprocated, but survives rebuffs, and it is not quenched by ingratitude. His is a love that "suffereth long and is kind, is not easily provoked, beareth all things, and never faileth." Experience unites with reason and Scripture to emphasise the text. We have had many proofs that God is interested in our welfare, and feels intensely for us. There have been times when we have felt the rapture of living, and there were lyric poems within us struggling for expression. In such seasons the truth has been borne in upon us that our creation was an act of pure benevolence—an expression of the Creator's love. And when the sunshine gave place to shade, and rapture to pain, our God caused us to nestle in His arms, and charmed our griefs to rest. (*Jas. T. East.*) *The love of God revealed by Jesus Christ:*—There was a day in history when a man of genius discovered the law of attraction which connects the worlds. Through the unlimited course of ages that law had always existed, ever the same, ever unaltered, ever acting, before men had learned to spell its familiar formula. What attraction is in the physical world, such is the love of God in the moral world. God is immutable. God is love. He has ever been so. But there was a day when that love of God was revealed to mankind by Jesus Christ, and it is through Him alone that the world has known it. I. The first feature of the love of Christ for man is its **DISINTERESTEDNESS**. It is not for Himself, but for them that He loves them. II. I remark next that the love of Christ for mankind is void of **ILLUSION**. He knew what the disciples were; nevertheless, such as they were, He loved them. III. A third feature of the love of Christ for His own is **FAITHFULNESS**. IV. The love of Jesus for His own is a **SANCTIFYING LOVE**. There are affections which weaken, enervate, and degrade the soul. Love is the most energetic auxiliary of the will. V. The love of Christ is **UNIVERSAL**. The heart that beats in His breast is that of the High-priest of mankind. VI. And nevertheless, that universal love is at the same time an **INDIVIDUAL LOVE**. (*E. Bersier, D.D.*) *The love of God:*—All men believe in the existence of God. But what is God or what God is, is a question differently answered. As many words are substituted for the predicate as there are systems, if not men. I. AN **EXPLANATION OF THE TEXT**. "God is love," says John. John does not mean that love is the essence of Deity—the substratum of all His moral character; or that all the attributes of God are simply modifications of His love, as the different colours of the rainbow are simply modifications of the pure sunray, or as light itself and heat and sound are simply modifications of the same material element. He does not mean that God is love, to the exclusion of justice, holiness, or truth. I take the text to mean that the love of God is manifested in a most striking manner in the history of our world; but most of all in the subject which the apostle has been discussing—the salvation of the lost and sinful through the mediation of Christ. II. A **DEMONSTRATION OF ITS TRUTH**. The first development of individual character is thought. Thought ever precedes action, or a mental act is prior to a physical one. To understand, then, the Divine character, we are led first to the Divine thoughts or plans, and

then to the Divine actions or the development of those plans. God's actions may be momentary or continuous. The momentary is seen in creation, and the continuous in the government of the world or Providence. In all these various manifestations of the Divine character, we find evidence of the text, "God is love." Consider, then—First: The plans or thoughts of God. God's works were known to Him from eternity. He never had any need to plan or contrive. He ever knew what was best, how He should act, and what He should do, without any previous meditation or thought. We cannot see these thoughts or plans in the Divine mind; we see them as they are developed, in time. Secondly: The actions or works of God. What could have been the primary object which the Creator had in view in the works of creation? The replies to these questions are three—(1) That God's chief end in creation was the securing of His own glory. The great objection to this solution of the question is, that it exhibits the Divine Being as more selfish than many human creatures. Besides, this supposition exhibits God in a way in which He was not exhibited by Jesus. Our Saviour never did, or said, anything to show His own greatness as a purpose. But, granting that this was the chief purpose of creation, the showing of God's glory, and the securing of His praise, it still follows that the works of nature must be a manifestation of His love. The glory of God is inseparably connected with His love. Take away the love of God, His disposition to make His creatures happy, and what does He become? Could any moral creature give Him praise? If the Divine Being had no love He could not care whether they were happy or miserable. He would thus regard pain and pleasure, happiness and misery, with indifference at least; or, maybe, identical. So that if the Governor of the universe be devoid of the attribute of love, He cannot be depended upon for the execution of justice; and a character in which justice and love form no essential elements cannot be esteemed glorious by any intelligent being. Glory and love are inseparably connected. (2) Take the next view of the chief purpose of creation, viz., that it was to secure the exhibition of moral good, or the development of genuine virtue. The question then is, What is moral good—genuine virtue? It is justice, truth, holiness, love. Take away any, and you have destroyed the symmetry and beauty of the whole. Take away love, and a body without a soul is left behind. The glory has departed, and the very life is gone. (3) The next supposition is that the chief end of creation was the production and supply of creature happiness. The Divine Being was so happy in Himself that He made this vast universe. A miserly, yet happy, being is an impossibility. A happy soul is necessarily communicative. But creation generally shows the love of God. It shines on every gleaming page. But the body, with all its senses, is only a means to an end. It is only the medium of conveying impressions to the mind within, and thus secure the development of the soul and the gradual expansion of its dormant powers. But as an instrument it is without its equal. Every change in the external world is faithfully conveyed to the mind within, and body and soul can participate in the joys and sorrows of each other. Every pleasure is thus doubled to man. He enjoys it first as to his body, his animal nature, and then as to his soul. Light and colour are pleasant to the eye, as sound is to the ear, as mere sensations in reference to the organisms which they affect, and apart from the perception of them by the intellect and the feeling of them by the heart. It is thus that the freshness of the gale and the fragrance of the flower can be enjoyed by the soul as perceptions as well as by the body as sensations. But look at the mind as an entity apart from its special relation to a material form. Mind! Is not this the glory of the universe, the image of God? The mind can study the material and the spiritual, the creature and the uncreated. Creation without mind is a body without soul, a dead form without vitality. Matter cannot think or study. One nebula cannot see the glory of another as it is resolved to its constituent stars. But mind can study all, and in all find pleasure and enjoyment. We are often told of the "verdant earth," the "azure sky," the thundering crash of the Niagara's falls, the beautiful plains of Italy. Is this true information? The beast of the field sees not the beauty of the flower. Where is the difference? nature is the same to all. The beauty and the glory of all are in the soul that looks and feels and is enraptured. The mind of man has been so wonderfully constructed, too, that he can find true enjoyment in the moral and the religious, in holy living and in praising God, and that, too, when his day of earthly toil is ended, and the frail body which was so useful to him is mouldering in the dust. Government in every case implies two things—punishment and reward. God planned the world; He also made it and governs it. Let us

consider them in order. First: That the love of God is manifested in the exercise of justice, or in the punishment of sin. It has been proved that where there is no love there can be no justice. Is it equally true that where there is no justice there cannot be love in its highest form? Partiality or favouritism, without reference to personal merit, is a mark of weakness, which is common in the human, but impossible in the Divine. True love, or love in its highest or Divine form, excludes all partiality. Men must be treated according to their actions. If the thief and the honest man, the murderer and the philanthropist, were all treated alike, I ask what would be the impression made upon the mind of any rational being? Would not every man look upon such a ruler with contempt, and turn from him with disgust? Apart from justice, goodness is impossible. If, therefore, the Supreme Ruler of the universe is to be respected by intelligent beings, and loved for His wisdom and moral excellence, He must vindicate the right and banish the evil-doer. The conclusion is evident, viz., that the love of God is as truly seen in the punishment of the wicked as in the salvation of the good, as truly in the pains of hell as in the joys of heaven. Secondly: That the love of God is manifested in the exercise of His mercy, or in the salvation of the godly. (*Evan Lewis, B.A.*)

He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.—*Dwelling in love*.—It is a very strong and eloquent term, “to dwell in love”—a home of love. And the promise of that home of love is more wonderful still—that God shall be our home. And then more stupendous beyond it—and we shall be God’s home. What is it to “dwell in love”? The first thing, it is quite clear, is that it must not be a mere negative state. It is not only that there be no dislikes, no variance. Love is a positive thing, showing itself in positive feelings, positive words, positive acts, without which a person cannot be said to “dwell in love.” Another eminent first principle is that the love which is here spoken of must include the love of souls. And, again, all love is one love, just as all light is one light. It is not love in God’s sense unless it be a reflection of God’s love to us. You must begin by being sure that there is no exception. We are not called to love all equally—our Lord Himself made distinctions in His love—but there should be no one who does not feel you friendly. The next thing to which the very language of the text leads us on is home. Our home should be a home of love. You must carry a word, a thought, a look of gentleness and cheerfulness and tenderness wherever you go. This may bring love into every room. All will feel it, consciously or unconsciously. It will create its own atmosphere. The Christ in you may make everything lovely. But there are other circumstances of life which every man has to occupy. There is the Church, and in the Church a communion—a blessed communion of hearts, visible and invisible; and to “dwell in love” is to go up and down continually conversant with that union of saints. And the world—the world about us—is a world which sadly needs our love. And you are called, and your privilege is to go about in the world an element of comfort. Therefore has God kindled a heavenly fire in your breast, that He may warm the world you live in! (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

The soul dwelling in God.—The words embody one of the manifold aspects of the Christian ideal. They suggest the inwardness and exaltation of Christian life. 1. The love, dwelling in which is one with dwelling in God, is not any love; it is not all that passes by the name of love: it is that love only which has been poured forth in Christ for the salvation of the world. Our readiest entrance into the experience of a soul meditating on that love will be to think of the soul as a disciple bending himself to the study of it, brooding over it as a vision from God, and telling his thoughts and admirations forth upon it daily. A young soul’s first admiration of a great book, a beautiful picture, or a heroic deed, draws all its thoughts towards that object. Far more is this the case with a mature soul’s admiration of some far-reaching principle in nature or art. It is a fascination. A great principle rises like an Alp to the clear heavens, and spreads itself in countless heights and hollows over the world of thought. It seems to become more and more fertile, more filled with springs and streams of new thought, more glorious with dawns and sunsets of vision and human hope, the oftener it is visited. Just in that way rises overhead and around the Christian soul the vision, the thought and memory of the love of God in Christ. It is a real home for the spirit, a real dwelling-place for thought. It is joy, strength, and new life to let the feelings of the heart flock to it. The better it is known the more it is frequented by the meditating spirit. It is the spirit’s promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey, where the King of the spirit is to be seen in His beauty. 2. But the love in which in this way the soul finds a home is much more than an object of thought; it is life, power, law as well;

it is the life that stirs at the heart of Providence, the power that causes all things to work together for good, the unseen law behind events, which Christian faith searches for, and in which at last, in sunshine or cloud, it rests. In this very way the Divine love reveals itself to us. It is a shelter within which the soul finds safety. In this sacred enclosure all things work together for good: even things evil do not come to us with power to hurt. Nothing can hurt or destroy in the fastnesses where love dwells, not even sin itself. 3. But now we have come to that step in the ascent of our inquiry at which we are face to face with the wonder we have been preparing from the outset to understand. It is not enough to know that a soul, by meditation and trust, can dwell in love: how should its dwelling in love be at the same time a dwelling in God? And in what practical sense are we to receive the statement that a soul dwells in God? The love of God in which the Christian spirit dwells is not an impersonal thing. It is the very life of God, the very outflow of His personality. Love is the life of God in the same sense that a mother's love is the outflow of a mother's life. And it depends as much on its being the outflow of a living person as a mother's love does. Love is not only the element in which God works, but what works in that element is love. The motives, acts, and purposes of the Divine life are love. Wherever love is, God is; wherever God is, He manifests Himself by love. The world we think of and enter when we take refuge in the love of God is a world in which everything is of God, a world whose inhabitants live and move and have their being in God. What breathes in the government, what pulses in its acts, what is expressed in its laws, is the very life of God. It is this which makes the Divine love so fitting a home for spiritual thought and a refuge for spiritual anxiety. The beauty we behold in the love is the very beauty of God: the strong fortress we flee to is God Himself. The everlasting arms to which the soul confides itself are the arms of God. 4. But now, having ascended this third step, and being face to face with the fact that our life is a life in God, that, in the most vital sense, we are encompassed by God, we are like timid people who find themselves for the first time on the ridge of a mighty mountain; we tremble, we are afraid to remain in the position, we shrink from the transcendent vision. Is it an ideal from every-day life—for life's duties, burdens, sorrows? Or is it a dream far above us—a cloudland, mocking us with its gorgeous colours? I can best reply to these questions by recalling two or three facts familiar to our Christian life. And first of all this, that the life we are called to imitate was the fulfilment of this very ideal. Christ dwelt in God. I will take two qualities of His human life—the qualities of insight and power—and I will show you in their exercise the contact and influence of the life of God. Christ's insight is a great manifestation of a human life dwelling in God. He not only saw as God sees, but what He saw was God. He saw the possibilities of better life, the gleams of the buried image of God, the ruins of the once glorious temple of the soul, the witnesses at once of the glory from which the souls He had to address had fallen and of the life to which they might yet be brought back. The same manifestation of a human life dwelling in God is to be discovered in Christ's exercise of power. It was to foreshadow the great future awaiting our race, as much as to reveal God, that His miracles were wrought. In the light of this fact we see at once how the life from which they proceeded must have been first of all a human life, and next a human life in God. The hand which touched the blind to sight was human, but it would have been powerless if it had not moved in the stream of the power of God. The words of tenderness spoken to the healed were from human lips; but the love which informed them, and the life by which they had power to heal, were Divine. 5. I observe next that the elements in Christ's life which reveal this dwelling of the soul in God are present, however dimly, in all Christian life. Let us take the element of insight first. A Christian eye, like the Master's, sees possibilities of penitence, of well-doing, and salvation in outcasts, heathen people, and embroiled slaves, in whom other eyes see nothing but material for wrath and scorn. Better still, this eye sees Christ in every human being. As with insight so with power. We are set to subdue the evil which is in the world. In what way, other than by the descent of Divine power through the life which God's people live, can this evil be subdued, and the wide kingdom it usurps be reclaimed to God? In this work our action at every step must be miraculous, for it is the going forth from us of an influence absolutely invisible and spiritual, whose force to be effective must be the force of God. 6. The soul who is dwelling in love is, up to the measure of his indwelling, already in possession of the future. The blessedness which awaits us in the future is but the unfolding of the present

life of the soul. It will be happiness then to dwell in the memory of Christ's love, to think of its sacrifices, its beautiful unfoldings, and its mighty victories. But just that is our happiness, as redeemed creatures, now. The gladness of a life redeemed is the first-fruits of the fuller gladness of heaven. The spiritual insights to which dwelling in love admits us are foregleams of the vision we shall behold in heaven. The Christian activities, tendernesses, and mercies to which love impels us, are earnest of the as yet unimaginable activities and tendernesses of the world to come. The very form of our earthly experience is a suggestion and type of the experience of the future. It is a dwelling in God here: it will be a dwelling in God there. I must not conclude without saying that it is only one half of a twofold mystery I have attempted to set before you. The other and still greater half I do not attempt to describe. Who, indeed, is sufficient to tell how God enters into us and dwells in us? But this much ought to be said, that the two parts of the mystery are but one in experience. No soul can dwell in love into whom first the Holy Spirit has not descended bringing the love. (*A. Macleod, D.D.*)

At home in God's love:—To "dwell" in love—what is this? What but to make it our element, to reside in it, to make it our permanent resting-place, to make it our home. Home is the place where we dwell, where we abide, where our joys nestle and sing, where the springs of our comfort are. There is the place, No. 48 in such a street. To another man who passes by, it is simply a house; to us it is home. We make many journeys from it, north, south, east, west; but we always return home. We hurry thither when the cold storm beats on us, and we run with as quick steps when we have some joy to tell of. How well we know that iron gate, that step, that door!—it is our home. Now let us grasp a great truth. You, Christians, are to make your home in the love of God, to live in it as your element, to abide in it as your rest, to dwell in it as the home of your soul. Mark, "in the love of God": not the dread—you have done with that now you are His children; not the fear, though God is greatly to be feared, and that fear of God is to be ever before your eyes; not the favour, though that is your glorious heritage now; but the love, the love. (*I. E. Page.*)

Fellowship with God begets love:—We must be like God—all love—love to those who have hurt us—love even to our enemies. How can we grow like God? By thinking of Him, and keeping near Him, and listening to Him, and talking to Him. Why does the sea shine in the sun? Because it is shone upon. The little hare turns white when it is taken to the arctic regions and lives in the snow. We must live in God's love. Love is the reflection of God. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Living in love:—It is said that all organic germs cease a few miles out at sea. Air taken from the streets or the warehouse of the city yields large numbers of these germs. The air circulating through the ship in dock is charged with them. After the shore has been left behind, the air taken from the deck is pure; but they are still found in air taken from the hold. After a few days at sea the air on deck and in the hold alike yields no trace of these microscopic spores that are closely connected with disease. Let us be ever breathing the spirit of God's love. Let us get away from the din and dust and turmoil of life, out upon that infinite sea of love that is without length or breadth or depth, and our worst faults will vanish away, and we shall by and by stand without offence in the presence of God's glory. (*T. G. Selby.*)

God in us and we in Him:—How, it may be asked, can Christ be in us, and we, at the same time, be in Him? An infidel once attempted to embarrass an unlettered but very intelligent coloured man by putting to him this very question. The reply of the coloured man was amusing, but very impressive and pertinent. "Well, dat are," he replied, "don't trouble me. You take dat are poker and put it in de fire. In a little while de fire will be in de poker, and de poker in de fire." (*Asa Mahan, D.D.*)

Dwelling in love:—I could not tell what was the matter with my beautiful fern that had hung on my window and grown so beautifully all the season. The leaves were drying and turning white. I took it down, and to my great surprise found that the soil had been all washed from the roots. It had actually nothing to grow in. I immediately procured fresh soil, and while pressing it to the bare roots I thought how easily the soil may get washed away from the roots of our spiritual being. A human heart must have soil to grow in, and that soil is love. Paul prayed that he might be rooted and grounded in love. Now, life may have washed from you that which you felt you needed—human love—and you may feel that you are bare; but there is abundance of soil in the love of God for you to grow in. Some of the grandest plants in God's conservatory have no other soil. And nothing can wash God's love away. (*Mrs. M. Bottome.*)

Ver. 17. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.—*The perfection of love* :—I. "HEREIN IS OUR LOVE MADE PERFECT." Love is like every other grace in the Christian bosom, susceptible of various degrees of intensity. It is our duty to aim at perfection in all things, and eminently in love. Our happiness is bound up in our attainment of it. Just as we advance in this grace we secure our growing peace and prosperity. II. A BLESSED EFFECT OR EVIDENCE OF SUCH LOVE. "That we may have boldness in the day of judgment." What are we to understand by the day of judgment? We are certainly not to exclude from our thoughts days of trial, such as may come upon us in the course of life, or at death. Nor can we doubt that the perfection of love would greatly contribute to our boldness at such times. But the mind of the apostle is manifestly directed to the final judgment. In that dread hour they who have cultivated the grace of love shall be enabled to meet it with boldness. How so? This boldness cannot be said to arise out of love, as the reason or ground of it. Were it so viewed, its deficiencies would fill us with terror and cover us with confusion. Neither our love nor any other grace can be pleaded for our acceptance at the bar of God. Yet there is an important sense in which boldness in the day of judgment is dependent on the cultivation of love. As love is cultivated, the evidence of our union with Christ is manifested. III. HOW MAY LOVE BE SO EXERCISED AND ADVANCED AS TO LEAD US INTO THIS HOLY AND HAPPY BOLDNESS? "Because as He is, so are we in this world." It is by studying conformity to Christ our love is strengthened, and the evidence of our union with Him is made clear. IV. THE ARGUMENT BY WHICH THE APOSTLE CONFIRMS AND ILLUSTRATES HIS VIEWS (ver. 18). 1. The nature of love—"There is no fear in love." 2. More strongly the same view is presented in the operation of love—"perfect love casteth out fear." 3. This view is farther confirmed by the very nature of fear. "Fear hath torment." We avoid the person whom we fear. 4. Finally, the operation of fear is to destroy love. "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." How powerful, then, is this argument for the cultivation of love. Would we be happy in God now, and would we meet Him at last with joy? Then let us love Him. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Perfect love* :—I. Love is capable of many degrees; it is the same principle in its commencement as in its termination, the difference being not in the quality, but in the amount; and this must be ever borne in mind in our dealing with inquiring and awakened souls. The weak and just commencing child of God should not be cast down and believe that because he is imperfect in love he therefore has no love. In estimating of the condition of men's minds with regard to the degree of love which they possess, we take many things into account. There are some upon whom the consciousness of Christ's sacrifice comes with such tremendous power that they are melted and subdued at once, and withal attracted to the One who displayed such wondrous love toward them. There are others who have attained this consciousness by slow degrees, and so gradually become acquainted with their Lord that from the very gentleness of the way in which they have been led on, they themselves realise more the simple fact that they love than that they are made to love. There are some who have naturally unloving hearts to be changed, and some who have loving hearts to be consecrated; and the processes of God's actings are so different, and hearts are so varied in their constitution that we can scarce expect to find any two exactly alike. Be encouraged, but be not satisfied, ye who find some love within yourselves; pray and strive for an increase. 2. Love, then, may exist in different degrees; it is further capable of high attainment. Can any one amongst us produce a reason why he should not be enabled to love as much as Peter, Paul, or John? Can any one show us anything so supremely bad in his own natural disposition, or so supremely good in that of these apostles, that it is a moral impossibility that he can ever do as they did? or can any prove that the actings of the Spirit are more limited in our case than they were in theirs, and that assistances were given to them which by God's decrees are withheld from us? There lies before you a glorious course, if only you will run upon it; a magnificent possession, if only you will lay hold of it; an exquisite state, if only you will enter on it. Allow yourselves to be carried on by the Spirit. 3. Thus we see that love may be of different degrees, and also that it is capable of high attainment; we would observe further that it is able to produce a great result. The songs of poets, the tales of real life, the stern records of history, are all full of the triumphs of love; and fallen though we be, love has won more victories than all else beside. When love is true, it is impregnable by assault, it is irresistible in attack, it is indestructible by time; it is not spent by its efforts, it is not wearied out by its vigils; firm in its grasp, yet

tender in its touch, that which it lays hold of escapes not from it, that which it caresses is not injured by it. Love is a watcher and love is a warrior—love is a servant and love is a king. True love in things spiritual as well as in things temporal is omnipotent; he who loves most will believe most, and in his faith and love will win the highest goal. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*) *The triumph of Christ-like love: I. THE DESCRIPTION OF SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT.* "Herein is our love made perfect." None can doubt that being as the Son of God is in this world is the only possible perfection, and the only ground of "boldness in the day of judgment." The text shows—First. An attainment of affection to God. God wins our hearts by His love; we then love Him more and more. Secondly. An attainment of complete affection to God. In this asserted perfection of our love there is clearly a recognition of the supremacy of our affection. II. *THE ADDUCED EVIDENCE OF THAT ATTAINMENT.* "Because," &c. This clause seems to belong both to our being made perfect in love and our having boldness in the day of judgment. First. The meekness of Christ is reproduced in His followers. Secondly. The endurance of Christ characterises Christians. "Who endureth such contradiction of sinners against Himself." Thirdly. The truth-witnessing of Christ is seen in His disciples. "I am the truth." III. *THE DIVINE DESIGN IN OUR EVIDENCED ATTAINMENT IN CHRIST-LIKE LOVE.* "That we may have boldness," &c. First: This is not an evil boldness, or a boldness in evil (*Eccles. viii. 1*). It is not—(1) the boldness of ignorance; (2) the boldness of self-sufficiency; (3) the boldness of iniquity; (4) the boldness of presumption. Secondly. This is a holy boldness (*Heb. x. 19*). It is—(1) The boldness of fearlessness. "Perfect love casteth out fear." (2) The boldness of approving conscience. "It is God that justifieth." St. Paul was bold in chains, because the Divine Judge approved him. (3) The boldness of perfect sympathy and unity with the Judge. "He that confesseth Me," &c. (*Homilist.*) *Boldness in the day of judgment:—I. EXAMINE THE GENERAL CONCEPTION OF "THE DAY OF THE JUDGMENT,"* as given in the New Testament. But against one somewhat widely-spread way of blotting the day of judgment from the calendar of the future—so far as believers are concerned—we should be on our guard. Some good men think themselves entitled to reason thus: "I am a Christian. I shall be an assessor in the judgment. For me there is therefore no judgment day." The only appeal to Scripture which such persons make, with any show of plausibility, is contained in an exposition of our Lord's teaching in *John v. 21, 29*. But clearly there are three resurrection scenes which may be discriminated in those words. The first is spiritual, a present awakening of dead souls, in those with whom the Son of Man is brought into contact in His earthly ministry. The second is a department of the same spiritual resurrection. The Son of God, with that mysterious gift of life in Himself, has within Him a perpetual spring of rejuvenescence for a faded and dying world. A renewal of hearts is in process during all the days of time, a passage for soul after soul out of death into life. The third scene is the general resurrection and general judgment. The first was the resurrection of comparatively few; the second of many; the third of all. 1. General history points to a general judgment. If there is no such judgment to come, then there is no one definite moral purpose in human society. Progress would be a melancholy word, a deceptive appearance, a stream that has no issue, a road that leads nowhere. 2. If there is to be no day of the general judgment, then the million prophecies of conscience will be belied, and our nature prove to be mendacious to its very roots. II. *THE REMOVAL OF THAT TERROR WHICH ACCOMPANIES THE CONCEPTION OF THE DAY OF JUDGMENT,* and of the sole means of that emancipation which St. John recognises. For terror there is in every point of the repeated descriptions of Scripture—in the surroundings, in the summons, in the tribunal, in the trial, in one of the two sentences. "Boldness!" It is the splendid word which denotes the citizen's right of free speech, the masculine privilege of courageous liberty. It is the tender word which expresses the child's unhesitating confidence, in "saying all out" to the parent. The ground of the boldness is conformity to Christ. Because "as He is," with that vivid idealising sense, frequent in St. John when he uses it of our Lord—"as He is," delineated in the fourth Gospel, seen by "the eye of the heart" with constant reverence in the soul, with adoring wonder in heaven, perfectly true, pure, and righteous—"even so" (not, of course, with any equality in degree to that consummate idea, but with a likeness ever growing, an aspiration ever advancing)—"so are we in this world," purifying ourselves as He is pure. (*Bp. Wm. Alexander.*) *Because as He is, so are we in this world.—Christ's poverty in relation to our selfishness and luxury:—*It is too common to fix our thoughts almost exclusively on

the Redeemer's death, and to leave out of sight the nature and tenor of the life preceding. St. John gives us a corrective of this view. He says that in those who will not be afraid to meet Christ when He appears on His judgment throne, the spirit, character, and habit that belong to Jesus now in glory, as they belonged to Him when on earth, shall be in them. The outward manner of His life, the kind of circumstance which clothed Him here cannot, of course, be reproduced, but the way in which He behaved under those circumstances, the disposition with which He met them, must mark every one of His disciples—"as He is, so are we in this world." Now, Christ's earthly life was distinctly one of poverty. House or property of His own He had none. Now, if our Lord's poverty encourage the poor and the poor family to struggle against the lowering influence of their lot, to keep themselves respectable and orderly, consider with what earnest pleadings it seems to address all richer folk, especially in an age like our own. Society is fastidious and extravagant. Entertainments are reckoned, not by the pleasure which they are calculated to give, but by their variety and costliness. Turn upon these aspects of our modern civilisation the light of Jesus' life in that noble endurance of poverty, that abiding sense of the real value of life, which consisteth not in the abundance of the goods which a man possesseth, that unswerving devotion to His Father's will which constituted His very meat. His example may yet prove our safety, if we will follow it. (*D. Trinder, M.A.*) *The servant as his Lord:*—The connection of my text is quite as striking as its substance. John has been dwelling upon his favourite thought that to abide in love is abiding in God, and God in us. And then he goes on to say that "Herein"—that is, in such mutual abiding in love—"is love made perfect with us." I. A CHRISTIAN IS CHRIST'S LIVING LIKENESS. It is the Christ as He is, and not only—true as that is—the Christ as He was, who is the original of which Christian men are copies. Is there anything, then, within the glory to which I, in my poor, struggling, imperfect life here on earth, can feel that my character is being shaped? Surely there is. I have no doubt that, in the words of my text, the apostle is remembering the solemn words of our Lord's high-priestly prayer, "I in Thee, and Thou in Me, that they also may be in us." Or, to put the whole thing into plainer words, it is the religious and the moral aspects of Christ's being, and not any one particular detail thereof. And these, as they live and reign on the throne, just as truly as these, as they suffered and wept upon earth, it is these to which it is our destiny to be conformed. We are like Him, if we are His, in this, that we are joined to God, that we hold fellowship with Him, that our lives are all permeated with the Divine. And thus "we," even here, "bear the image of the heavenly, as we have borne the images of the earthly." But, then, I have another point that I desire to refer to. I have put an emphasis upon the "is" instead of the "was," as it applies to Jesus Christ. I would further put an emphasis upon the "are," as it applies to us—"so are we." John is not exhorting, he is affirming. He is not saying what Christian men ought to strive to be, but he is saying what all Christian men, by virtue of their Christian character, are. Or, to put it into other words, likeness to the Master is certain. It is inevitably involved in the relation which a Christian man bears to the Lord. My text suggests that to us by its addition, "So are we, in this world." The "world"—or to use the modern phraseology, "the environment"—conditions the resemblance. As far as it is possible for a thing encompassed with dust and ashes to resemble the radiant sun in the heavens, so far is the resemblance carried here. Now, you Christian people, does that plain statement touch you anywhere? "So are we." Well! you would be quite easy if John had said, "So may we be; so should we be; so shall we be." But what about the "so are we"? What a ghastly contradiction the lives of multitudes of professing Christians are to that plain statement! The world has for the illustrations of the gospel the lives of us Christian people. In the Book there are principles and facts, and readers should be able to turn the page and see all pictured in us. That is what you have got to do in this world. "As the Father sent Me, even so I send you." "As He is, so are we in this world." It may be our antagonist, but it is our sphere, and its presence is necessary to evoke our characters. Christ has entrusted His reputation, His honour, to us. II. SUCH LIKENESS TO JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY THING THAT WILL ENABLE A MAN TO LIFT UP HIS HEAD IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. "We have holdness," says John, because "as He is, so are we." Now, that is a very strong statement of a truth that popular evangelical theology has far too much obscured. People talk about being, at the last, accepted in the beloved. It is true! But do not let us forget the other side, that the question put to every man will be, not what

you believe, but what did you do, and what are you? And I want to lay that upon your hearts, because many of us are too apt to forget it, that whilst unquestionably the beginning of the salvation, and the condition of forgiveness here, and of acceptance hereafter, is laid in trust in Jesus Christ, that trust is sure to work out a character which is in conformity with His requirements and moulded after the likeness of Himself. The judgment of God is according to the truth, and what a man is determines where a man shall be, and what he shall receive through all eternity. III. THE PROCESS BY WHICH THIS LIKENESS IS SECURED. Our love is made perfect by dwelling in God, and God in us; in order that we may be thus conformed to Christ's likeness, and so have boldness in that great day. To be like Jesus Christ, what is needed is that we love Him, and that we keep in touch with Him. But remember such abiding is no idle waiting, no passive confidence. It is full of energy, full of suppression, when necessary, of what is contrary to your truest self; and full of strenuous cultivation of that which is in accord with the will of the Father. Lie in the light, and you will become light. Abide in Christ, and you will get like Christ. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.**—*The place of fear in the gospel:*—Some readers of the Bible, some preachers of the gospel, have thought that fear was a dangerous, was even a forbidden principle, under the dispensation of the fulness of times. This is a hasty inference. Our Lord says, "Fear Him which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." St. Paul says, "Work out their own salvation with fear and trembling"; and St. Peter commends a "chaste conversation coupled with fear"; and even St. John, who speaks of "perfect love casting out fear," yet uses this, in the Revelation, as a description of the faithful—"them that fear Thy name." Fear has a place in the gospel, may we but find it. Indeed it is an old remark, that every natural principle of our mind has an object assigned to it—is not to be crushed, only to be re-directed. Fear is not the whole of religion. Some Christian people have made it so, and suffered greatly in consequence. But in these cases we may hope that there is a blessed surprise of love in store for souls which here lived too much in the darkness of mistrust and self-suspicion. As they emerge out of that thick gloom which we call life into a world where there is neither puzzle of intellect, nor oppression of the world, nor assault of the devil, they learn, as in a moment, how much better God was to them than they felt or saw. How shall it be with another class—with those who have banished fear altogether from their religion, not by that perfecting of love which St. John speaks of, but by a refusal to read anything in their gospel but that which was instantly bright, indiscriminately alluring? If now we try to grapple closely with the very question itself, What is the place of fear in the gospel? we must begin by guarding ourselves against one great confusion. The object of fear may be either a thing or a person. 1. We fear a thing which, being possible, is also undesirable or dreadful. Our own Prayer-Book, commenting in the catechism upon the Lord's Prayer, bids us call three things evil: (1) Sin and wickedness; (2) Our ghostly enemy; (3) Everlasting death. 2. There is a fear also of persons. In some respects nearly allied to the other—as where we dread the arrival of a judge who is to try us, and whose sentence must certainly bring after it imprisonment or execution. There it is scarcely the person—it is simply the instrument of the thing—which is really the object of the fear. The fear of God as a Person is essentially of a higher order. To feel that there is One above me, to whom I am accountable, if it be but as my Judge, there is something elevating in the very conception. But this, if it stop here, is the religion of fallen nature; it is scarcely the religion even of law—for the law itself gave many glimpses of a Divine heart that could feel and a Divine grace that could comfort. This mere dread, though it is a higher thing than indifference, is no part of the gospel. From this kind of fear the convinced man, if he yields himself to Christ's teaching, will pass on into a higher. And it is in reference to this step that there is the greatest need of Christian guidance. We do not speak of a spirit of bondage, making a man crouch before God as his stern taskmaster. Not of a life of toilsome, unloving labour, which hopes in the end to make God its debtor. There is no trace of gospel fear in all this. But that humble, filial reverence, which never forgets or slights the distance between the Creator and the creature which exercises itself day by day "to have always a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward man"—this is a Christian grace: if there be yet one higher, it must be sought, not in the abandonment, but in the strengthening of this. When a man has lived for long

years in the pursuit of God—when he has brought his life by daily self-discipline into a condition of habitual watchfulness—then, as the fear of falling away becomes less predominant, there takes its place, by little and little, that absolute oneness of will with the will of God, of which it has been boldly yet beautifully written that then, then at length, self-indulgence itself may become a virtue. In that man fear has indeed been cast out, not by carelessness, but by love; in him, at last, as God's free gift to a life of godly reverence, "in him verily is the love of God perfected." (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Love and fear*:—I. The apostle here contemplates a UNIVERSAL DOMINION OF FEAR, wherever there is not the presence of active love. Of course, he is speaking about the emotions which men cherish with regard to God. All men everywhere have some more or less faint or clear conviction of the existence of a God. All men everywhere have some more or less active or torpid working of conscience. Blend together these two things, and take into account that the fact of sin necessarily brings about much ignorance of the true character of Him whom the consciousness of sin arrays in awful attributes of holiness and justice; and there follows inevitably, universally, though not always with equal strength and prominence, this feeling towards God, I knew Thee that thou wert austere, and I was afraid. The truth of this representation of the universal dominion of fear is not made in the least degree doubtful by the fact that the ordinary condition of men is not one of active dread of God. There is nothing more striking than that strange power that a man has of refusing to think of a subject because he knows that to think of it would be torture and terror. Heathenism is, to a large extent, the offspring of fear. All thoughts of sacrifice as propitiating an offended God come from that dark and coiling fear which lurks in the heart. And it affects so-called Christianity too. There are plenty of people who call themselves Christians whose whole religion consists in deprecating the wrath of God, whom they dimly think of as angry with them, and who, their consciences tell them, might well be so! Sometimes, again, this same fear takes the understanding into its pay, and appears as enlightened disbelief in God and immortality. The brain is often bribed by the conscience, and the wish becomes the father of the thought. Sometimes it takes the shape of vehement efforts to get rid of unwelcome thought by fierce plunging into business, or into wild riot. II. THE FEARLESSNESS OF LOVE—how "perfect love" casts out fear. Love is no weak thing, no mere sentiment. It is the harvest of all human emotions. It makes heroes as its natural work. The love of God is declared in this text to be the victorious antagonist of that fear of sin which has torment in it. In general we can see, I think, without difficulty, how the two, love and fear, do exclude one another. Fear is entirely based on a consideration of some possible personal evil consequence coming down upon me from that clear sky above me. Love is based upon the forgetfulness of self altogether. The very essence of love is, that it looks away from itself, and to another. Fill the heart with love, and there is an end to the dominion of fear! 1. But, more specifically, the love of God entering into a man's heart destroys all fear of Him of which we have been speaking. All the attributes of God come to be on our side. He that loves has the whole Godhead for him. "We love Him, because He first loved us." There is no foundation for my love to God except only the old one, "God loves me." There is no way of building on that foundation except only the old one, We believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Saviour of the world! The love which casts out fear is not a vague emotion setting towards an unknown God; nor is it the result of a man's willing that he will put away from himself his hatred and his indifference, and will set himself in a new position towards God and His mercy; but it rises in the heart as a consequence of knowing and believing the love which God hath to us. Hence, again, it is the conqueror of fear. Whatever betide, nothing can separate us from the love of God. We are bound to Him by that everlasting loving-kindness with which He has drawn us. There is lifted off the heart the whole burden of "fearful looking-for of judgment," the whole burden arising from the dark thought, God is mighty, God must be righteous, God may strike!—because we know "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." 2. The love of God casts out all other fear! Every affection makes him who cherishes it, in some degree, braver than he would have been without it. It is not degrading to this subject to remind you of what we see away far down in the scale of living beings. Look at that strange maternal instinct that in the lowest animals—out of weakness makes them strong, and causes them to forget all terror of the most terrible at the bidding of the mighty and conquering affection. Look at the same thing on the higher level of our own human life. It is not self-reliance that makes the hero. It is having the

heart filled with passionate enthusiasm born of love for some person or for some thing. Love is gentle, but it is omnipotent, victor over all. And when we rise to the highest form of it, namely, the love which is fixed upon God—oh! how that should, and if it be right, will, strengthen and brace, and make every man in whom it dwells, frank, fearless, careless of personal consequences! Cowardice and anxiety, perplexity about life, trembling about the future, the bowed head and the burdened heart—these are not the “fruits of the Spirit.” “Perfect love casteth out fear,” sets our faces as flints, if need be, before human opposition, lifts us up above being at the mercy of events and circumstances, rises coping with and mastering the fear of death, soars on lofty wing high above the darkness of the grave, and, as the apostle in the context tells us, is made perfect herein, that we have the boldness in the day of judgment. III. LOVE, which destroys fear, HEIGHTENS REVERENCE, AND DEEPENS SELF-DISTRUST. 1. A man who is trembling about personal consequences has no eye to appreciate the thing of which he is afraid. There is no reverence where there is desperate fear. He that is trembling lest the lightning should strike him, has no heart to feel the grandeur and to be moved by the solemn awfulness of the storm above his head. And a man to whom the whole thought, or the predominant thought, when God rises before him, is, How awful will be the incidence of His perfections on my head! does not and durst not think about them, and reverence Him. Perfect love takes out of the heart all that bitter sense of possible evil coming on me and leaves me at liberty, with thankful, humble heart, and clear eye, to look into the centre of the brightness and see there the light of His infinite mercy. 2. Love destroys fear, and perfects self-distrust. “Work out your own salvation,” is the apostle’s teaching, “with fear and trembling.” If you call Him “Father” (the name that breathes from the loving heart), “pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” What sort of fear? The fear that is timid about self, because it is, and in order that it may be, confident of God; fear which means, I know I shall fall, unless Thou hold me up, and which then changes, by quick transition, into, I shall not fall, for the Lord is able to make me stand. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Love and fear*:—Love is pure; love is kind and tender; love is bold and confident. There is no fear in perfect love. Much of the would-be unbelief of the day springs from terror. No doubt there is real honest unbelief—a failing to believe—inability to find truth. These deserve our tenderest pity. You should pity and pray for those out in the godless, hopeless gloom, as you pity and pray for the sailors at sea when the wind howls round your house, and you hear the loud boom of the storm-driven waves on the shore. Much of the feverishness with which men plunge into business, and whirl in the eddies of pleasure, arises from their dread of God. But, worse still, many so-called religious people never get beyond this state of dread. They only know God as the Terrible One. James Mill taught his son John Stuart to think of God as “the Almighty Author of Hell,” and to hate the idea of Him therefor. Of all that the New Testament says of God, James Mill chose to seize only on that. He said nothing of heaven, nor of God’s efforts to keep men from hell. And many people follow his example; they seem to know nothing of God’s love; they spend their lives deprecating God’s wrath. Now, if you live in this state, your religion is of the poorest, lowest possible description. Fear paralyses all the powers of the soul, and must be got rid of before progress can take place. The bird newly caught is afraid of everything and everybody—of the hand that feeds and caresses it: and you get no song while that fear lasts. A fresh boy in school, on the first day, is afraid of everything, and while that fear lasts he learns nothing. He cannot read or write, he can neither draw nor reckon, till the fear is gone. Now so has it ever been with men. As long as men dreaded nature they made no progress in knowledge or power. As long as men throughout the length and breadth of Europe believed that God the Father, and even Christ the Saviour, were so awful and implacable to men, that Mary, the gentle Virgin, must intercede with them for the sinful and the needy, so long could the priests make them believe whatever they chose to tell them, and make them do whatever they pleased to bid them. For fear is credulous. Everything startles it. Now those times, though called the ages of faith, were very barren of religion. Fear demoralised men. There was no joy in religion and no love. Now what is true of others is true of us. If you dread God, then you do not love Him—you cannot. In time, you are bound to hate what you dread. This fear must be got rid of. It is the work of perfect love to cast it out of the soul. “Perfect love casteth out fear.” You must not be afraid to accept the broad statement that “God is love.” (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *The spirit of fear* (with 2 Tim. i. 7; Rom. viii. 15; John xiv. 27):—I have brought

together several passages to show that the spirit of the gospel is not a spirit of fear, and that Jesus came to deliver us from all fear. There are some objections to be first considered. If life is full of danger and evil, ought we not to be afraid? it may be asked. And if the Bible contains passages which teach us not to fear, does it not contain other passages which teach that we ought to fear? (Matt. x. 28; Phil. ii. 12; 1 Pet. i. 17; Prov. iii. 7). How are these facts and statements to be reconciled with the assertion that it is the duty of Christians not to fear? First, we may say that a distinction can be taken between fear as a subordinate motive and fear as a ruling motive of human action. Fear as the ruling motive of conduct is degrading, because it is essentially selfish. But fear, when controlled by reason, subordinate to hope, joined with courage, becomes caution, watchfulness, modesty. The Christian fears, but is never governed by his fears. But, again, how much we need to fear and ought to fear depends upon the progress of our inward life and Christian experience. The work of Christ is to deliver us from all excessive fear, and to leave in its place calmness and sober watchfulness and a profound peace. But this work is not done suddenly; it is a progressive work. And how this is let us now consider. First, consider fear of sin and of its consequences. The main purpose of Christianity is to save us from sin, and thereby to save us from its consequences, which are moral and spiritual death. And it saves us, not by inspiring fear, but by inspiring faith and courage. It assures us that "sin shall not have dominion" over us. The law of God shows us what our duty is, but gives us no power to do it. The purer and higher the standard, the less ability we feel to reach it. And discouragement is moral death. What we need is the spirit of adoption, whereby we may cry, "Abba, Father!" Then there will be no more fear, neither fear of man nor fear of God, nor fear of sin, nor fear of death, nor fear of what follows death. But in order to be freed from fear, it is not enough to be told not to fear. In the midst of a battle tell the coward not to be afraid; in the midst of a thunderstorm tell the person who shrinks from the vivid flash and the astounding peal that he need not fear. What good will it do? The source of fear is within, and that must be removed. So preach as much as we may the mercy of God, I tell you that men will still fear, will fear death, will fear hell, as long as unreconciled, unrepented sin is in their hearts. To cure our souls of fear, to fill them with hope and trust, there is but one way, and that is to look our sins in the face, to look God's law in the face, to see the eternal connection between right and good, death and evil; and then, when we have had an experience of duty, of responsibility, of sin, of danger, we are ready to enter into the deeper experience of pardon, of hope, of entire, present joyous salvation. Thus delivered from the fear of sin by the power of the gospel, we are also delivered from the fear of God. This statement also requires some consideration. There is a fear of God which is always right, and which we shall always need to cherish. Heathenism is a religion of fear; Judaism is the religion of conscience; Christianity is the religion of grateful affection. Where God is regarded essentially as an Almighty Ruler, the chief duty of man is implicit, unquestioning obedience. Where God is regarded chiefly as a judge, the principal duty of man is righteous conduct. Where He is regarded as a father, the chief duty of man is childlike trust and love. So that there is a gradual progress in the conception which men have had of the Deity. Beginning with power, they ascend to justice, and terminate in love. And when perfect love is attained, it casts out all fear. (*Jas. Freeman Clarke*.) *Perfect love*:—I. ITS PROPERTIES. 1. Supreme. Love to God cannot exist as a subordinate principle. 2. Pure. Before love can reign sole monarch in the soul, the "old man" must be destroyed. 3. Entire. It will not only admit of no rival, allowing neither the allurements of the world nor the charms of the creature to alienate it from the object that has engrossed it; but it admits of no comparison. 4. Constant. It is not a spark emitted from the blaze of worldly prosperity and fanned by the softness of worldly pleasure, but a flame enkindled by the Sun of Righteousness, and like the fire on the altar it never goes out. 5. Practical. 6. Progressive. For though perfect, it does not preclude the possibility of increase or enlargement. II. ITS OPERATION—"casteth out fear." 1. What kind of fear? (1) Not—(a) A reverential fear of God. (b) A cautionary fear of the holiness, justice, and power of God. (c) Natural fear, which is necessary to the preservation of life. (2) But—(a) Servile fear. (b) Fear of meeting the necessities of life. (c) The fear of man, which bringeth a snare. (d) The fear of the last enemy. (e) The fear of the judgment. (f) The fear of hell. 2. How does it do this? (1) By removing sin. (2) By transforming us into God's image. (3) By perfecting all the other graces of Christianity. Faith is perfected by

love. Distrust is the offspring of suspicion, and want of confidence is want of love. Where there is perfect love there is true tranquillity, the sweetest harmony: all is peace—perfect, perpetual, eternal peace. (*Samuel Dunn.*) *Love and fear*:—John has been speaking of boldness, and that naturally suggests its opposite—fear. He has been saying that perfect love produces courage in the day of judgment, because it produces likeness to Christ, who is the judge. In my text he explains and enlarges that statement. For there is another way in which love produces boldness, and that is by its casting out fear. These two are mutually exclusive. I. THE EMPIRE OF FEAR. Fear is a shrinking apprehension of evil as befalling us, from the person or thing which we dread. God is righteous; God righteously administers His universe. God enters into relations of approval or disapproval with His responsible creature. Therefore there lies, dormant for the most part, but present in every heart, and active in the measure in which that heart is informed as to itself, the slumbering cold dread that between it and God things are not as they ought to be. I believe, for my part, that such a dumb, dim consciousness of discord attaches to all men, though it is often smothered, often ignored, and often denied. But there it is; the snake hibernates, but it is coiled in the heart all the same, and warmth will awake it. Arising from that discomfiting consciousness of discord there come, likewise, other forms and objects of dread. For if I am out of harmony with Him, what will be my fate in the midst of a universe administered by Him, and in which all are His servants? Whilst all things serve the soul that serves Him, all are embattled against the man that is against, or not for, God and His will. Then there rises up another object of dread, which, in like manner, derives all its power to terrify and to hurt from the fact of our discordance with God, and that is, the “shadow feared of man,” that stands shrouded by the path, and waits for each of us. God; God’s universe; God’s messenger, Death—these are facts with which we stand in relation, and if our relations with Him are out of gear, then He and all of these are legitimate objects of dread to us. But now there is something else that casts out fear than perfect love, and that is—perfect levity. For it is the explanation of the fact that so many of us know nothing about what I am talking about, and fancy that I am exaggerating or putting forward false views. II. That brings me to the second point—viz., THE MISSION OF FEAR. John uses a rare word in my text when he says, “fear hath torment.” “Torment” does not convey the whole idea of the word. It means suffering, but suffering for a purpose; suffering which is correction; suffering which is disciplinary; suffering which is intended to lead to something beyond itself. Fear, the apprehension of personal evil, has the same function in the moral world as pain has in the physical. It is a symptom of disease, and is intended to bid us look for the remedy and the Physician. What is an alarm-bell for, but to rouse the sleepers and to hurry them to the refuge! And so this wholesome, manly dread of the certain issue of discord with God is meant to do for us what the angels did for Lot—lay a mercifully violent hand on the shoulder of the sleeper, and shake him into aroused wakefulness, and hasten him out of Sodom. The intention of fear is to lead to that which shall annihilate it, and take away its cause. There is nothing more ridiculous, nothing more likely to betray a man, than the indulgence in an idle fear which does nothing to prevent its own fulfilment. Horses in a burning stable are so paralysed by dread that they cannot stir, and get burnt to death. I fear; then what do I do? Nothing! And that is true about hosts of us. What ought I to do? Let the dread direct me to its source—my own sinfulness. Let the discovery of my own sinfulness direct me to its remedy—the righteousness and the Cross of Jesus Christ. He, and He alone, can deal with the disturbing element in my relation to God. So my fear should proclaim to me the merciful “name that is above every name,” and drive me as well as draw me to Christ, the Conqueror of sin and the Antagonist of all dread. I think we shall scarcely understand the religion of love unless we recognise that dread is a legitimate part of an unforgiven man’s attitude towards God. My fear should be to me like the misshapen guide that may lead me to the fortress where I shall be safe. Oh! do not tamper with the wholesome sense of dread. Do not let it lie, generally sleeping, and now and then awaking in your hearts and bringing about nothing. III. Lastly, THE EXPULSION OF FEAR. My text points out the natural antagonism and mutual exclusiveness of these two emotions. If I go to Jesus Christ as a sinful man, and get His love bestowed upon me, then, as the next verse to my text says, my love springs in response to His to me, and in the measure in which that love rises in my heart will it frustrate its

antagonistic dread. As I said, you cannot love and fear the same person, unless the love is of a very rudimentary and imperfect character. But just as when you pour pure water into a bladder, the poisonous gases that it may have contained will be driven out before it, so when love comes in dread goes out. But remember that it is "perfect love" which "casts out fear." Inconsistent as the two emotions are in themselves, in practice, they may be united by reason of the imperfection of the nobler. And in the Christian life they are united with terrible frequency. There are many professing Christian people who live all their days with a burden of shivering dread upon their shoulders and an icy cold fear in their hearts, just because they have not got close enough to Jesus Christ, and kept their hearts with sufficient steadfastness under the quickening influences of His love, to have shaken off their dread as a sick man's distempered fancies. A little love has not mass enough in it to drive out thick, clustering fears. See that you resort only to the sane, sound way of getting rid of the wholesome, rational dread of which I have been speaking. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

A soul-tormenting fear and a fear-expelling love:—I. A SOUL-TORMENTING FEAR. 1. This slavish fear is co-extensive with the unregenerate race. A slavish fear of—(1) Poverty. (2) Death. (3) Retribution. (4) God. 2. This slavish fear is ever associated with mental suffering. It makes the present miserable by its horrid forebodings of the future.

II. A FEAR-EXPELLING LOVE. This includes—1. A consciousness that God loves us. 2. A settled confidence in God's fatherly regard for us. 3. The influential dwelling of God within us. 4. The extinction by God of all selfishness within us.

*Conclusion: This subject—*1. Supplies the test of true religion. 2. Indicates the criterion of true preaching. 3. Shows the philosophy of the gospel. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

*Fear and love:—*The words of St. John as to fear and love would probably startle us if they were less familiar. What they say is, in effect, that "fear" and "love" are, as such, in antagonism; that in proportion as "love" gains strength, it tends to oust "fear"; that to be, in a religious sense, under the influence of "fear," is to be in an imperfect condition with regard to "love." And yet Scripture assigns to fear a considerable place in the apparatus, so to speak, of religious motives and forces (Luke xii. 5; 2 Cor. v. 10, 11; Phil. ii. 12, 13; 1 Pet. i. 17). In such passages the underlying purport is obvious: "Do this, avoid that, or it will be the worse for you: obey, on peril of the consequences of disobedience." How, then, will the text stand when confronted with a line of address at once so authoritative, so luminous, and so stern? The answer is, that our Lord and St. Peter and St. Paul are urging men to fear the penal consequence of sin, considered in their whole length and breadth, and concentrated into that one supremely terrible consequence—perpetual exclusion from the presence of God; whereas St. John is looking at "fear" of penal suffering considered in itself—the dread of hell, pure and simple. This is the fear which, he says, "hath torment," or rather "punishment"; it carries punishment in its bosom. It regards God not as the all-holy and all-good Father, who has every right to filial obedience, but as an irresistible Power, not to be trifled with or escaped from, who can and will inflict tremendous penalties on those who venture to defy His authority. Fear of punishment, either as imminent or as distant, is not a false or bad principle of action in its own place and for its own time. It is appropriate for the earlier stage of spiritual training; it marks a stage in the moral progress through which the Supreme Educator, Divinely equitable and patient, conducts His children by slow steps, in consideration of hearts not fully softened and consciences not thoroughly enlightened, which, as yet, are unfit for a high religious standard. Is not this "fear" worth something? Bishop Andrewes, alluding to it, observes that it is "as the base-court to the temple," and adds that a man must do his duty "for fear of punishment, if he cannot get himself to do it for love of righteousness." As St. Augustine says, this is not the fear that "is clean"—it arises not out of love of God, but out of the terror of suffering; yet it may make the whole difference to a person's moral future whether, at a particular critical time, he has it, or has it not. If he has it, he resists the temptation, he does not commit the sin; and that is to gain much. The perilous hour is got through safely; the conscience escapes a defilement and a burden; the ground so far, is clear for the further operations of grace. And these will, by degrees, absorb the fear of punishment, simply as such—into what? Into such a love for God as excludes all fear whatsoever? No, rather into a fear which is so absolutely compatible with love that it may even be said to grow out of love, to be contained in love's very heart. For what is the love here intended, but a closer and closer adhesion to the will of God as the supreme good,

an ever-growing desire to please Him and to be right with Him, because He is what He is to us? But as long as we live, failure is possible; there must be the possibility of ultimate failure, even on the part of the gray-haired saint, as Bunyan in his "dream" saw that "there was a way to hell from the gates of heaven as well as from the city of destruction"; as, before now, men have fallen from God at their very "last hour." And that possibility involves a fear which dwells not on the mere pain of future punishment, but on that which is the essential and misery of hell—the forfeiture of the life-giving love of God. This fear may be called filial, and not servile; for in proportion as a child loves heartily a good parent, the more solicitous will he be not to grieve, displease, disappoint that parent by an exhibition of thankless perversity. (*W. Bright, D.D.*) *Fear* has many eyes. *Fear hath punishment* (R.V.):—This is true in two ways—(1) *Fear* involves the idea of punishment; (2) *fear* is a foretaste of punishment. (*Cambridge Bible for Schools.*) *Fear* by anticipating punishment has it even now. (*Dean Alford.*) *Perfect Love*:—Love is like honey, but perfect love is like the honey with all the comb and wax strained out. Love is like fire, but pure love is like the same fire free from all smoke and soot. Love is like water, but unmixed love is like the same water freed from all earthy matter. Love is like light, but simple and perfect love is like the same light freed from all cloud, and fog, and smoke. (*G. D. Watson.*)

Ver. 19. We love Him, because He first loved us.—*The priority of God*:—Everything which we do God has first made it possible for us to do. Everywhere God is first; and man, coming afterward, enters into Him and finds in God the setting and the background of his life. There is no part of life in which this is not true. We may say a few words first upon the whole subject of the backgrounds of life in general. Man never is sent first into the world and bidden to evolve out of his own being the conditions in which he is to live. Always something is before him; always there is a landscape in which he finds his figure standing when he becomes conscious of himself. The material is background for the spiritual—the earth, which is body, for man, who is soul. A child was born yesterday. How he lies to-day in his serene, superb unconsciousness! And all the forces and resources of the earth are gathered about his cradle offering themselves to him. He takes what they all bring as if it were his right. Not merely on his senses, but even on his mind and most unconscious soul, the world into which he has come is pressing itself. Its conventionalities and creeds, its prejudices and limitations and precedents, all its discoveries and hopes and fears—they are the scenery in which this new life stands. They are here before him, and he comes into them. Shall we talk about all this as if it were a bondage into which the new child is born? Shall we dream for him of a freedom which he might have had if nothing had been before him? Surely that is no true way to think about it. There are men who, if they cannot destroy the world of assured truths, would at least destroy the consciousness of it. They would ignore it. They would seem at least to be trying experiments as if nothing had yet been proved. Far be it from me to deny the exceptional value of such men; but their value is the value of protest and exception. The normal, healthy human life lives in its environments and keeps its backgrounds. It is not their slave, but their child. It fastens itself into them, and realises and fulfils its life by them, and makes in its due time along with them the background for the lives of the years to come. Now all of this is not religious, save in the very largest sense; but all of this becomes distinctly religious the moment that all this background of life gathers itself into a unity of purpose and intention and becomes a Providence, or care of God. When once that truth has opened on us, then all the interest of life centres in and radiates from this—that He, God, is before it all. Every activity of ours answers to some previous activity of His. Do we hope? It is because we have caught the sound of some promise of His. Do we fear? It is because we have had some glimpse of the dreadfulness of getting out of harmony with Him. Do we live? It is a projection and extension of His being. Do we die? It is the going home of our immortal souls to Him. Oh, the wonderful richness of life when it is all thus backed with the priority of God! It is the great illumination of all living. And the wonder of it is the way in which, in that illumination, the soul of man recognises its right. That is what it was made for. See what the religious world really is in its idea, and shall be when it shall finally be realised. A world everywhere aware of and rejoicing in the priority of God, feeling all power flow out from Him, and sending all action back to report itself to

Him for judgment—a world where goodness means obedience to God, and sin means disloyalty to God, and progress means growth in the power to utter God, and knowledge means the understanding of God's thought, and happiness means the peace of God's approval. That is the only world which is religious. And now see how all this truth comes to the full display of its richness in the Christian faith. The Christian faith is the sum and flower of the religious life of man. Whatever has struggled in all other religions comes to its free and full expression there. And so the truth of the priority of God is the first and fundamental truth of Christianity. With Jesus it was always, "God loves you." He went about saying that from house to house, from man to man. He built this background behind every life. What will you do if you are sent to carry the Gospel to your friend, your child? Will you stand over him and say, "You must love God; you will suffer for it if you do not?" When was ever love begotten so? "Who is God?" Why should I love Him?" "How can I love Him?" answers back the poor, bewildered heart, and turns to the things of earth which with their earthly affections seem to love it, and satisfies itself in loving them. Or perhaps it grows defiant and says, "I will not," flinging back your exhortation as the cold stone flings back the sunlight. But you say to your friend, your child, "God loves you," say it in every language of yours, in every vernacular of his, which you can command, and his love is taken by surprise, and he wakes to the knowledge that he does love God without a resolution that he will. How shall you make man know that God loves him? In every way there is no speech nor language in which that voice may not be heard—but most of all by loving the man with a great love yourself. We may think again not of the way in which we shall get our friends to love God, but of the way in which we shall get ourselves to love Him. Oh, the old struggles! How many have said, "I will love God; I ought to, and I will," and so have wrestled to do what they could not do—what in their hearts they knew no real reason for doing—and have miserably failed, and now are satisfying themselves with loveless obedience, or else have left God altogether, and tell their hearts that they must forego all such beautiful, hopeless ambitions. Ah, what you need is to get away round upon the other side of the whole matter. It is not whether you love God, but whether God loves you. If He does, and if you can know that He does, then give yourself up totally and unquestioningly to the assurance of that love. Rejoice in it by day and night. Sometimes it seems good to sweep aside all the complications of spiritual experience and bring it all to absolute simplicity. Here is God, and here is a child of God. The Father loves the child, not because the child is this or that, or anything but just His child. He says to you, "Go, save My child for me." And you say, "How, my Father?" And He says, "By Me." And you say, "Yes, I see," and go and take the Father's love and press it on that child of His, just as you find him. You know that the fire and the wood belong together. You are sure that if the fire gets at the wood, the wood will burn, and by and by, look! the wood is burning. The wood turns to fire because the fire gave itself to the wood. The wood loves the fire because the fire first loved it. And now I wonder whether in some of your minds there does not come a question regarding all this that I have said. "After all," you may ask yourself, "what does it matter? If the end is gained, if God and man come together, what matter is it from which side the first impulse came? But must it not make a difference? Is there a situation or a fact or a condition anywhere which is absolute and identical, and does not vary with the character of him who occupies it? The man is more than the situation. The situation means little without the soul of the man giving it its meaning. When then I see man reconciled to God and walking with his Lord in the white garment of a new life, it makes vast difference what is the spirit of that reconciled, regenerated man. If it is the first fact of his new existence—that which he never loses for a moment—that the impulse of it came from God; that before he ever thought of the higher life its halls were made ready for him and its Lord came forth into the wilderness to find him—then the strength of a profound humility is always with him. The paralysis of pride does not creep over him. Besides this, the appeal of the new life to the soul which lives it is largely bound up with the truth of the priority of God. The man is stone whom that does not appeal to. How shall he overtake this love which has so much the start of him? This is what makes his service eager and enthusiastic. Again this truth, that God is first, gives me the right to keep a strong and lively hope for all my fellow-men. It gives me also the chance to believe that I can help them. I have only to tell them over and over again how near He is; I have only to beg them to open their

eyes and see! Have I talked to-day too generally of the priority of God? Then make it absolutely special and conerete. There is some duty which God has made ready for you to do to-morrow; nay, to-day! He has built it like a house for you to occupy. You have not to build it. He has built it, and He will lead you up to its door and set you with your feet upon its threshold. Will you go in and occupy it? Will you do the duty which He has made ready? (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *Love, not fear, the animating principle of a believer's conduct:—*I. IT IS A PRINCIPLE EXACTLY SUITED TO OUR MENTAL CONSTITUTION. Take the case of our love to the creature, and whence does it arise? Two elements invariably attach, in our apprehension, to the object of it. These are excellence in itself and some advantage arising from it to ourselves. Neither of these alone will produce love. Even in the natural love of the parent for the child or of the child for the parent, it will be found these two elements exist. Relative goodness seems to be essential to love. It may be said, such a view destroys the disinterested nature of love, and introduces an element of selfishness. Even were this true, it would not set aside a fact of which all must be conscious in their mental constitution. But we do not admit that a regard to our own happiness is of the nature of selfishness. It is in itself good. The Creator has implanted it in all His intelligent offspring, and it is therefore not blameworthy. Now this is the very ground on which the love of God is based. Every perfection that can command our approval and admiration belongs to Him. But this excellence is all relative to us. In every feature of it we recognise an advantage to ourselves. That unerring wisdom is our guide, that almighty power is our protection, that boundless goodness is our support. We look upon them with delight, and say, "This God is our God." And so we acquiesce in the apostle's sentiment—"We love Him because He first loved us." II. THIS PRINCIPLE IS AS SCRIPTURAL AS IT IS REASONABLE. How naturally and properly does David express himself (Psa. xviii. 1-3). Excellence upon excellence he discovers in God and celebrates with the highest praise, but every one of them is regarded as a source of benefit to himself. The Scriptures unite the glory of God and our good. III. THIS PRINCIPLE IS WELL ILLUSTRATED IN THE HISTORY OF REDEMPTION. It began with God. The first movement was on His part. When our first parents fell they fled from God, and discovered no disposition to return to Him. But He followed them with proposals of love. Observe, then, the practical effect of such a revelation on the mind of him who becomes concerned about his own redemption. He sees what the mind of God is. He can have no doubt upon the great truth that "the will of God is his salvation." He has only to acquiesce in an arrangement that has been made already by unerring wisdom and infinite love. IV. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE TEXT APPLY TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL WHO IS SAVED, AS WELL AS TO THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION BY WHICH HE IS SAVED. God has not devised redemption, and then left it to men to receive it if they will and reject it if they will. The same grace that provided it applies it. V. WHEN THE SOUL IS THUS BROUGHT UNDER THE POWER OF GRACE, IT CONTINUES TO BE POWERFULLY INFLUENCED BY ITS APPREHENSION OF THE UNDESERVED AND GRACIOUS LOVE OF GOD. VI. EVERYTHING IS SO ORDERED IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER AS TO EXERCISE AND ADVANCE THIS DIVINE PRINCIPLE. He is taught to trace up all he enjoys to the gift of God in Christ Jesus (1. Cor. iii. 21-23). He lives in the midst of continual remembrances of God and His love. He looks upon the world in which he has been placed. The marks of sin are many, but the tokens of the Divine love are many more and greater far. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Love:—*I. THE PARENTAGE OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD. There is no light in the planet but that which cometh from the sun; there is no light in the moon but that which is borrowed, and there is no true love in the heart but that which cometh from God. From this overflowing fountain of the infinite love of God, all our love to God must spring. II. Love, after it is Divinely born in our heart, MUST BE DIVINELY NOURISHED. Love is an exotic; it is not a plant that will flourish naturally in human soil. On what, then, does love feed? Why, it feeds on love. That which brought it forth becomes its food. "We love Him because He first loved us." The constant motive and sustaining power of our love to God is His love to us. And here let me remark that there are different kinds of food in this great granary of love. When we are first of all renewed the only food on which we can live is milk, because we are but babes and as yet have not strength to feed on higher truths. The first things, then, that our love feeds upon when it is but an infant, is a sense of favours received. And mark, however much we grow in grace this will always constitute a great part of the food of our love. But when the Christian grows older

and has more grace he loves Christ for another reason. He loves Christ because he feels Christ deserves to be loved. But mark at the same time, we must always mingle with this the old motive. We must still feel that we begin with that first stepping-stone, loving Christ because of His mercies, and that although we have climbed higher and have come to love Him with a love that is superior to that in motive, yet still we carry the old motive with us. We love Him because of His kindness towards us. This, then, is the food of love; but when love grows sick—and it does sometimes—the most loving heart grows cold towards Christ. Do you know that the only food that ever suits sick love is the food on which it fed at first? Take it to the Cross and bid it look and see afresh the bleeding Lamb; and surely this shall make thy love spring from a dwarf into a giant, and this shall fan it from a spark into a flame. And then, when thy love is thus recruited, let me bid thee give thy love full exercise; for it shall grow thereby. You say, “Where shall I exercise the contemplation of my love to make it grow?” Oh! Sacred Dove of love, stretch thy wings and play the eagle now. Come! open wide thine eyes and look full in the Sun’s face, and soar upward, upward, upward, far above the heights of this world’s creation, upwards, till thou art lost in eternity. III. THE WORK OF LOVE. “We love Him.” Children of God, if Christ were here on earth, what would you do for Him? “Do for Him!” says one; “do for Him!” “Did He hunger, I would give Him meat though it were my last crust. Did He thirst, I would give Him drink, though my own lips were parched with fire. Was He naked, I would strip myself and shiver in the cold to clothe Him. Did He want a soldier, I would enlist in His army; did He need that some one should die, I would give my body to be burned if He stood by to see the sacrifice and cheer me in the flames.” Ah! we think we love Him so much that we should do all that; but there is a grave question about the truth of this matter after all. Do you not know that Christ’s family are here? And if ye love Him, would it not follow as a natural inference that you would love His offspring? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Love’s logic*:—Our love to God is like a trickling rill speeding its way to the ocean because it first came from the ocean. All the rivers run into the sea, but their floods first arose from it: the clouds that were exhaled from the mighty main distilled in showers that filled the water-brooks. Here was their first cause and prime origin; and, as if they recognised the obligation, they pay tribute in return to the parent source. The ocean love of God, so broad that even the wing of imagination could not traverse it, sends forth its treasures of the rain of grace, which drop upon our hearts, which are as the pastures of the wilderness; they make our hearts to overflow, and in streams of gratitude the life imparted flows back again to God. I. THE INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY OF LOVE TO GOD IN THE HEART. You will find in the seventh verse of this chapter, that love to God is set down as being a necessary mark of the new birth. “Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” In the eighth verse we are told also that love to God is a mark of our knowing God. True knowledge is essential to salvation. God does not save us in the dark. Further, the chapter teaches us that love to God is the root of love to others (ver. 11). He, who, being in the Church, is yet not of it heart and soul, is but an intruder in the family. But since love to our brethren springs out of love to our one common Father, it is plain that we must have love to that Father or else we shall fail in one of the indispensable marks of the children of God. Again, keeping to the run of the passage, you will find by the eighteenth verse that love to God is a chief means of that holy peace which is an essential mark of a Christian. Love must co-operate with faith and cast out fear, so that the soul may have boldness before God. We also see, if we turn again to St. John’s Epistle and pursue his observations to the next chapter and the third verse, that love is the spring of true obedience. “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” Though the fruit be not the root of the tree, yet a well rooted tree will, in its season, bring forth its fruits. Love to God is as natural to the renewed heart as love to its mother is to a babe. Who needs to reason a child into love? As certainly as you have the life and nature of God in you you will seek after the Lord. II. THE SOURCE AND SPRING OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD. “We love Him because He first loved us.” Observe, then, that love to God does not begin in the heart from any disinterested admiration of the nature of God. Again, our love to God does not spring from the self-determining power of the will. A man can only love God when he has perceived some reasons for so doing; and the first argument for loving God which influences the intellect so as to turn the affections, is the reason mentioned in the text, “We love Him because He first loved us.” Now, having thus set the text in a negative light let us look at it in a more positive

manner. It is certain that faith in the heart always precedes love. We first believe the love of God to us before we love God in return. And, oh what an encouraging truth this is. Your first step is to believe that God loves you, and when that truth is fully fixed in your soul by the Holy Spirit, a fervent love to God will spontaneously issue from your soul, even as flowers willingly pour forth their fragrance under the influence of the dew and the sun. Rest assured that in proportion as we are fully persuaded of God's love to us, we shall be affected with love to Him. Do not let the devil tempt you to believe that God does not love you because your love is feeble; for if he can in any way weaken your belief in God's love to you he cuts off or diminishes the flow of the streams which feed the sacred grace of love to God. Oh for a great wave of love to carry us right out into the ocean of love. Observe day by day the deeds of God's love to you in the gift of food and raiment and in the mercies of life, and especially in the covenant blessings which God gives you, the peace which He sheds abroad in your hearts, the communion which He vouchsafes to you with Himself and His blessed Son, and the answers to prayer which He grants you. Note well these things, and if you consider them carefully and weigh their value, you will be accumulating the fuel on which love feeds its consecrated flame. III. THE REVIVAL OF OUR LOVE. Perhaps some of you have become so cold in your affections that it is difficult to be sure that you ever did love God at all. Now note well that the cause which originated your love is the same which must restore it. You went to Christ as a sinner at first, and your first act was to believe the love of God to you when there was nothing in you that evidenced it. Go the same way again. Think of the Lord's unchanging grace, and you will feel the spring-time of love returning to your soul. Many considerations ought to aid you, a backslider, to believe more in the love of God than ever you did. For think what love it must be that can invite you still to return, you, who after knowing so much have sinned against light and knowledge; you, who after having experienced so much have given the lie to your profession. IV. THE PERFECTING OF OUR LOVE TO GOD. There are few of us who know much of the depths of the love of God; our love is shallow. Love to God is like a great mountain. The majority of travellers view it from afar or traverse the valley at its base: a few climb to a halting place on one of its elevated spurs whence they see a portion of its sublimities: here and there an adventurous traveller climbs a minor peak, and views glacier and alp at closer range; fewest of all are those who scale the topmost pinnacle and tread the virgin snow. As fear goes out love comes in at the other door. So the more faith in God the more room there is for soul-filling love. Again, strong faith in God's love brings great enjoyment; our heart is glad. This deep enjoyment creates the flaming love of which I have just now spoken. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Love's birth and parentage*:—I. We shall use the text for DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTION; and one point of doctrinal instruction is very clear, namely, that God's love to His people is first. From all eternity the Lord looked upon His people with an eye of love, and as nothing can be before eternity His love was first. Another part of the doctrine of the text is this, that the love of God is the cause of our love to God. A thing may be first and another second, and yet the first may not be the cause of the second, there may be no actual link between the two: but here we have it unmistakeably, "We love Him because He first loved us"; which signifies not merely that this is the motive of which we are conscious in our love, but that this is the force, the Divine power which created love in us. If you love God it is with no love of yours, but with the love which He has planted in your bosoms. Unrenewed human nature is a soil in which love to God will not grow. There must be a taking away of the rock and a supernatural change of the barren ground into good soil, and then, as a rare plant from another land, love must be planted in our hearts and sustained by power divine or else it will never be found there. There is no love to God in this world that is of the right kind except that which was created and formed by the love of God in the soul. II. Secondly, we shall use the text for EXPERIMENTAL INFORMATION; and here—1. We learn that all true believers love God. I do not say that they all feel an equal love, or that they all feel as much love as they should. I will not say that they do not sometimes give cause to doubt their love. But there is love in the heart of every true-born child of God; it is as needful to spiritual life as blood is to natural life. 2. Observe carefully the kind of love which is essential to every Christian—"We love Him because He first loved us." Much has been said about disinterested love to God; there may be such a thing, and it may be very admirable, but it is not mentioned here. You may not be able to rise into those heights into which others have ascended because you are as yet only a babe in grace;

but you are safe enough if your love be of this simple character, that it loves because it is loved. See whether such a humble, grateful love towards God dwells in your hearts, for it is a vital point. 3. Love to God wherever it is found is a sure evidence of the salvation of its possessor. If you are loving God you must have been loved of God: true love could not have come into your heart in any other conceivable way; and you may rest assured that you are the object of His eternal choice. III. Thirdly, we shall use the text as a matter of PRACTICAL DIRECTION. The text tells you how to love God. The text shows us the method of the Holy Spirit. He reveals the love of God to the heart, and then the heart loves God in return. Go thou to the fragrant mystery of redeeming love, and tarry with it till in those beds of spices thine own garments shall be made to smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia. There is no way of sweetening thyself but by tasting the sweetness of Jesus Christ; the honey of His love will make thy whole nature to be as a honeycomb, every cell shorter of thy manhood shall drop sweetness. (*Ibid.*) Love of God:—The phrase of the revised version has the larger meaning. "We love" includes "We love Him," and it is evident from the rest of the passage that we have here a distinct though not an exclusive reference to the love of God. How can we love Him then, the Invisible, the Infinite, and Omnipotent? Might we not as well try to love illimitable space or embrace the elastic and viewless air? And yet a great multitude which no man can number declare with St. John that they do love God. Yes, and moreover you will find that the love of God will stand all the tests which can be applied to any love known among men. Things widely different in their nature are often much alike in their appearance. Artificial flowers are very like real ones; gilt is very like gold; and paste is made to look like gems. Wise men, therefore, apply tests which only the real articles can stand. They find the real flower by its scent; test gold by acids, and the file tells them at once which is the gem and which is the worthless imitation. What, then, are the marks of true love? I. TRUE LOVE IS UNSELFISH. False love rushes onwards to its own low ends. It is meanly selfish, and when resisted, cruel as the grave. But true love gives up and goes without. 'Tis finely prodigal, royally extravagant, and divinely liberal. Well, men's love for God has this mark upon it; it teaches men to deny self—to give up and go without. Oh, what sacrifices men have made for God! The sacrifice of God's love for men is indeed, and ever must be, the great fact of all history. But the next great fact is the sacrifice of men's love for God. God's love in Christ gave its "all" to men, and the love of God in Christian hearts gives "all" to God to-day. It is a constraining power in men's lives. II. TRUE LOVE HAS PLEASURE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH ITS OBJECT. As the needle turns to the pole, so love, if true, seeks communion with its object and is only there at rest. Sir Henry Taylor, in his autobiography, says that when the affection of a certain couple of friends for each other was spoken of in Wordsworth's hearing, the poet asked, "Are they, so far as circumstances permit, continually together: for that is the test?" Yes; fellowship is the measure of love. "It is good for me to draw near to God," said one psalmist; and sacred history proves that such is the conviction of all saints. Every halting place along the patriarch's line of march became at once a place of worship. These men and their God were continually together. They delighted in God; and all who love Him still live with Him. They go to prayer and worship, not as the "whining schoolboy, with his satchel and shining morning face, creeping like snail unwillingly to school," but rather as children run from their tasks to play. III. TRUE LOVE IS ENNOBLING IN ITS INFLUENCE. Passion degrades, and lust dehumanises man; but love makes all men better and nobler. Sir Richard Steele said of Lady Hastings that "to love her was a liberal education." But all true love educates. You cannot tend in love a wounded bird, or pity a hungry dog without thereby being taught something of the lore of angels. A mother cannot love her helpless babe without thereby being lifted nearer God. Love, like mercy, is twice blessed, "it blesseth him that gives and him that takes." Well, men's love to God does this. It cleanses speech of all impurities and gruffness. It refines manners and educates the taste. It expands sentiment and deepens sympathy. It makes the clown gentle and the coward brave. IV. TRUE LOVE IS FAITHFUL UNTO THE END.

"Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
Oh, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering barque,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken."

It is no fickle fancy, no passing mood, no fair-weather affection. (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *Love God and humanity*:—I. LOVE TO GOD IS ESSENTIAL TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. The Lord is not satisfied unless He obtains our love. 2. Unless we love the Lord there cannot be complete personal union. 3. Love to Him makes our obedience sweet. 4. Love to God acts as an irresistible magnet to draw us from sin. 5. The mutual love between the Christian and his Lord is the heart music of life. II. THE LOVE OF GOD IS THE GRAND MOTIVE POWER OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. The love of God is the fountain of our love to each other. To do good to those who need our active sympathy merely because it is our duty to do so is pulling up stream, and the best of us would soon tire of it, but to bless men because we love them constrains us to be faithful in active goodness unto death. 2. The love of God is needful to inspire us to noble deeds. In olden times the maiden promised her hand to the knight if he did some valiant deed of warfare; but in our case the Lord loves us first of all, and that love is the impulse of a noble life. 3. The love of God to us is a sure foundation for our faith. 4. The love of God to the world is an ever present rainbow of hope to the Christian. Why? Because God will second your efforts. He loves them, and therefore let us hope for the worst of men. III. WE ARE COMMANDED TO LOVE OUR BROTHER-MAN. 1. This love oils the wheels of service. 2. Love to our brother-man is the motive of self-denial for his sake. Pure love is its own exceeding great reward. IV. I would now remind you WHY YOU LOVE GOD. 1. We love Him because He first loved us. 2. We also love Him because He laid down His life for us. 3. We love Him because His love is unchangeable. (*W. Birch.*) *God's love to us, and ours to Him*:—Our nature is so constituted that we are never really happy until we love God. A bold assertion this; but does not our experience prove that it is a true one? We can love Him. Millions have done so already. And having the capacity within us, which we must admit to be the highest of all our capacities, when we consider the object on which it may be exercised, we are never quite at ease till it has fastened itself on its proper object. Till then there is uneasiness, insecurity, a sense of disproportion between the promise of our nature and its performance. We are like guests at a banquet who cannot find their place, and go hunting up and down bewildered. But when once we have got to love God there is tranquillity. But if it be true that man is so constituted that he cannot be really happy unless he love God, it is also true that he cannot love God unless he knows Him. Not till an object is brought in some way or other into contact with our experience can we have any emotion about it, much less that highest and most appreciative of all emotions—love. And therefore man, with that inborn capacity of his for loving God, has at all times, however imperfectly, sought to know Him. He has “felt after God.” But here an obstacle rises up, before which some, who may have so far gone with us, turn back in despair. They grant that it were man's happiness to love God if he could, and that to love Him he must know Him; but who, they ask, can know the Unknowable? We can but enumerate the things He is not, but that is far from discerning what He is. In reply, we grant the difficulty, but remain undiscouraged by its existence. It only shows that if a man is to know God, God must take the initiative; God must reveal Himself to man. And to reveal Himself means not to disclose His whole essence, but so much of His being, and so much of man's relation to Him, as it may be well or possible for man to know. Now this, if revelation be true, is what God in His wisdom and His goodness has seen fit to do; and we might as well refuse the aid of a lamp in the darkness because it is not the sun as decline to be guided by such knowledge of Himself as He has given us because it is not and cannot be complete knowledge. But God's revelation is manifold, and they do ill, and lose much of it that is precious, who confine it within the four corners of a book, which does but contain the imperfect record of a part, though it be far the most important part, of it. God reveals Himself in nature as the sustaining power, by which all things exist and have their being, and as a power working through fixed laws, which reach from the minutest particles of matter on earth to the most distant star, not one of which laws varies one hair's breadth, not one of which ever fails. God reveals Himself in history as the moral governor of the world; and here also He works by fixed, unalterable laws. He shows us that He loves good and hates evil, and that evil shall in the end be overcome by good. God reveals Himself in conscience to each individual man with that inevitable, unimpeachable verdict on our past actions as they proceed from us one by one, and those promptings and monitions as to future actions, which we may neglect, because we are free, but which, “whether we hear or whether we forbear,” have

still been given us. These are some of the revelations by which God imparts, or is ready to impart, to all men some knowledge of Himself. But as yet we touch but the hem of His garment, we do not see His face. God is on His throne in heaven, and we are poor mortals upon the distant earth. But what if God, in His infinite goodness, sees fit to bridge over from His side the chasm which we cannot pass, to satisfy the longing which, if He has made us, He has Himself imparted in our souls, and to reveal Himself to man, not now in a cold immutable law, but in a living breathing person like ourselves, who can gather up all our God-ward affections as in a focus, and transmit them in concentrated fulness to the awful throne on high? Shall we not know Him then as we never knew Him before? And shall we not be able to love Him then as we never loved Him before? But this is the revelation which He has actually vouchsafed to give us in His Son Jesus Christ. And this manifestation of God was not opened on us unexpectedly, in which case we might have missed its full significance, but prepared for and led up to by a long course of discipline and aroused anticipation. The record of this preparation we have in the pages of the Old Testament and the record of its fulfilment in the New. What if those to whom it was first tendered misunderstood it in part, as we can now see, mixed up much that was local and temporary with it, and failed to come at the whole truth? Their knowledge of God was coloured knowledge, but it was not therefore unreal; their expectations of a further revelation of Him were coloured expectations, but they were none the less inspired from a Divine source. In this as in other things connected with the education of our race the same order prevails: "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual." And when that fuller revelation was made, did not illusion cease, and did men see nothing but the pure absolute light? By no means. They saw as much as they were capable of seeing; they understood as much as they had capacities for understanding. Now, if we turn from the manner of the revelation of Himself which God has made in Christ Jesus to the matter of it, we find that it conveys to us precisely that which we most need to know. I admit that God is my Creator, but does He regard me as the workman regards the machine that he has made? There is no sympathy between them. He can make it and break it, so far as the machine is concerned, with equal indifference. I admit that God controls the affairs of men by fixed moral laws, but so far men may be to Him but as pawns are in the hand of the chess player. The player cares not for the pawns in themselves, he moves them this way or that, according to the requirements of the game. I admit further that the working of these laws, when considered through a long period of time, convinces me that God approves of good and punishes evil, and so far I may recognise a kind of moral similarity between my own imperfect character and what I may reverently style the character of God; but does this warrant me in hoping for any closer union with Him? If I desire to draw nearer to Him, will He suffer it? The unlikeness is greater than the likeness, and, besides, sin bars the way. Yes, answers Jesus of Nazareth to all these questionings, God is not your Maker and Governor only, but your Father. He loves you and desires your love. I know it and reveal it to you. My life itself is the manifestation of His love. I am His Son, He sent Me to you. Behold in Me, so far as human eyes can see, the character of God. But beautiful, winning, soul-satisfying as this revelation is, there are difficulties in the way which make some men hesitate to accept it. Doubtless there are such difficulties, but do they lie in our path here only, or are they not greater for him who rejects it? Our life is hemmed in with difficulties on every side, they are the necessary accompaniment of our limited faculties, and we may sit reckoning them up for ever, till they paralyse every thought and every action. To complain of them is to complain that God has made us men, and not a creature quite different from man. He is wisest and most loyal to his Master who bears the burden laid upon his back and moves on in spite of it as best he can. And further, whilst we admit the existence of these difficulties, we must be careful not to exaggerate their number or their importance. We may divide them into two classes: those which are inherent in the subject itself, and those which we create for ourselves or others have created for us. The former we shall never abolish, there is nothing for it but to put up with them; the latter we may, in some cases, extenuate or remove. Is it possible, we ask, for God to reveal His very self in a man? That is an inherent difficulty, and the only answer we can make is that we cannot fully understand it, neither can we expect to understand it, because we do not know the limits of possibility with God, but we can believe and act on

the belief, as we do in a score of other instances every day, and when we do so we find rest for our souls. He gave us a person and a life to imitate, to trust in and to love; let us beware lest we substitute for Him in our hearts a theory and a scheme of salvation. Let us observe further, for our comfort, how many of the difficulties which so perplex us are merely intellectual difficulties, not moral. That shows us, perhaps, that they are somehow of our own creating. It is much learning that doth make us mad. The poor and the ignorant do not feel them. It is with the heart they believe, not the head; and we must humbly imitate them. Let us then be encouraged to cast away the thought of difficulties, and open our hearts to receive in simple faith, and respond to, the full stream of Divine love. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." That may suffice us. God loves us—stupendous thought!—and therefore we may love Him. When a little child has done wrong and offended his father he goes about uneasy and with an aching heart. He tries to distract himself with other things; he turns to this amusement or to that—innocent amusements, it may be, in themselves—but they have all lost their interest. There is something amiss in the relation of perfect love between him and his parent, and the consciousness of this goes with him wherever he goes. He fortifies himself in his pride, dwells on the fancied wrong that he has suffered by being rebuked, not on the real wrong that he has wrought by disobedience, and resolves to be self-sufficient and do without the love which seems withheld; but the aching heart is still there, the dull sense of unhappiness. At last his father calls to him with a father's voice, full of pity and of love, and at the sound of that voice his heart is melted like wax within him, not with fear, but with penitent, trustful love; all the barriers which pride had raised are broken down, and he rushes to his father's arms and is folded once more in a loving embrace. (*E. H. Bradby, M.A.*) *God's love to man*:—To many it seems that perfect amiableness and goodness in our Creator requires Him to look with entire approbation and indulgence upon men, without regard to the principles upon which they are acting, whether holy or unholy. And yet some of this very class of persons, when brought to a more intimate acquaintance with themselves and to a higher conception of what they ought to be, see that a holy God must hate them; and if He hates them they cannot imagine that He loves them at the same time. Here are the two extremes of error, one of which, probably, mankind generally regard as truth. I. GOD CAN HATE AND LOVE THE SAME PERSON AT THE SAME MOMENT. It is shown in—1. The very nature of benevolence. What is a good man? Try him by a case of this kind. He knows a man who is addicted to drunkenness, and who in his paroxysms abuses his family. How does this good man regard the case? He abhors the drunkard's character and conduct, yet he loves and pities the man. And thus God exhibits Himself to us as a holy God. He abhors all our sins. He threatens us with eternal destruction, and yet, while we were still enemies, He gave His Son to die for us. 2. Scriptural representation of God's feelings towards the children of men. Notice the case of those who murdered Christ. None can doubt that they were most hateful to God. And yet the dying Son, who fully represented His Father's feelings, regarded them as deserving the wrath of God at the same time He prayed for their forgiveness. And was that prayer ineffectual? No; for on the day of Pentecost, a servant of Christ is commissioned to go and charge upon them their crime, not to condemn them, but to bring them to repentance. And then the Holy Spirit descends to bring them to exercise repentance, and some of them, at least, are forgiven. Then look abroad upon a world lying in wickedness, sometimes as great as that which brought the deluge of water on the world or that of fire on Sodom. But He sendeth His rain upon the thankful and the unthankful. II. GOD DOES LOVE ALL MEN. It is seen in—1. The very act of creation. What endowments has He bestowed on man! 2. Forming a moral government for man. The laws under which He has placed us all aim at our personal perfection and the highest degree and form of happiness of which we are capable. But the crowning proof of God's love—3. Is in Christ and redemption. III. EVERY HUMAN BEING SHOULD LOVE HIM. The benevolence of God claims our admiration, complacency, and gratitude. (*E. N. Kirk, D.D.*) *Gratitude not a sordid affection*:—Some theologians have exacted from an inquirer, at the very outset of his conversion, that he should carry in his heart what they call the disinterested love of God. They have set him on the most painful efforts to acquire this affection. They have led him to view with suspicion the love of gratitude, as having in it a taint of selfishness. The effect of all this on many an anxious seeker after rest has been most discouraging. With the stigma that has been

affixed to the love of gratitude, they have been positively apprehensive of the inroads of this affection, and have studiously averted the eye of their contemplation from the objects which are fitted to inspire it. 1. The proper object of the love of gratitude is the Being who has exercised towards me the love of kindness; and this is more correct than to say that the proper object of this affection is the Being who has conferred benefits upon me. Just let the naked principle of kindness discover itself, and through it have neither the power nor the opportunity of coming forth with the dispensation of any service, it is striking to observe how, upon the bare existence of this affection being known, it is met by a grateful feeling on the part of him to whom it is directed; and what mighty argumentations may be given in this way to the stock of enjoyment, and that by the mere reciprocation of kindness begetting kindness. For to send the expression of this kindness into another's bosom it is not always necessary to do it on the vehicle of a positive donation. It may be conveyed by a look of benevolence; and thus it is that by the mere feeling of cordiality a tide of happiness may be made to circulate throughout all the individuals of an assembled company. Now this is the very principle which is brought into action in the dealings of God with a whole world of malefactors. It looks as if He confided the whole cause of our recovery to the influence of a demonstration of good-will. It is truly interesting to mark what, in the devisings of His unsearchable wisdom, is the character which He has made to stand most visibly out in the great scheme and history of our redemption; and surely if there be one feature of prominence more visible than another it is the love of kindness. As soon as His love of kindness is believed, so soon does the love of gratitude spring up in the heart of the believer. As soon as man gives up his fear and his suspicion of God and discerns Him to be his friend, so soon does he render Him the homage of a willing and affectionate loyalty. There is not a man who can say, I have known and believed the love which God hath to us, who cannot say also, I have loved God because He first loved me. The law of love begetting love will obtain in eternity. Like the law of reciprocal attraction in the material world, it will cement the immutable and everlasting order of that moral system, which is to emerge with the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Now, by looking more closely to this affection, both in its origin and in its exercises, we shall perceive in it more clearly all the characteristics of virtue. Let it be remarked, then, that an affection may simply exist, and yet be no evidence of any virtue or of any moral worth in the holder of it. I may enter the house of an individual who is an utter stranger to the habit of acting under a sense of duty; who is just as much the creature of mere impulse as the animals beneath him; and who therefore, though some of these impulses are more characteristic of his condition as a man and most subservient to the good of his fellows, may be considered as possessing no virtue whatever, in the strict and proper sense of the term. But he has the property of being affected by external causes. And I, by some ministration of friendship, may flash upon his mind such an overpowering conviction of the good-will that I bear him as to affect him with a sense of gratitude, even unto tears. The moral obligation of gratitude may not be present to his mind at all. But the emotion of gratitude comes into his heart unbidden, and finds its vent in acknowledgments and blessings on the person of his benefactor. We would say of such a person that he possesses a happier original constitution than another who, in the same circumstances, would not be so powerfully or so tenderly affected. And yet he may have hitherto evinced nothing more than the workings of a mere instinct, which springs spontaneously within him and gives its own impulse to his words and his performances, without a sense of duty having any share in the matter, or without the will prompting the individual by any such consideration as, Let me do this thing because I ought to do it. The first way, then, in which the will may have to do with the love of gratitude is by the putting forth of a desire for the possession of it. It may long to realise this moral accomplishment. It may hunger and thirst after this branch of righteousness. Even though it has not any such power under its command as would enable it to fulfil such a volition, the volition itself has upon it the stamp and the character of virtue. But, again, there are certain doings of the mind over which the will has a control, and by which the affection of gratitude may either be brought into being or be sustained in lively and persevering exercise. At the bidding of the will I can think of one topic rather than another. I can transfer my mind to any given object of contemplation. I can keep that object steadily in view, and make an effort to do so, when placed in such circumstances as might

lead me to distraction or forgetfulness. And it is in this way that moral praise or moral responsibility may be attached to the love of gratitude. Ere the heart can be moved by this affection to another there must be in the mind a certain appropriate object that is fitted to call it and to keep it in existence—and that object is the love of kindness which the other bears me. It is this which arms with such a moral and condemnatory force the expostulation which He holds with Israel, "that Israel doth not know, that My people do not consider." It is because we like not to retain God in our knowledge that our minds become reprobate; and, on the other hand, it is by a continuous effort of my will towards the thought of Him that I forget not His benefits. It is by the strenuousness of a voluntary act that I connect the idea of an unseen benefactor with all the blessings of my present lot and all the anticipations of my futurity. It is by a combat with the most urgent propensities of nature that I am ever looking beyond this surrounding materialism and setting God and His love before me all the day long. There is no virtue, it is allowed, without voluntary exertion; but this is the very character which runs throughout the whole work and exercise of faith. To keep himself in the love of God is a habit, with the maintenance of which the will of man has most essentially to do, because it is at his will that he keeps himself in the thought of God's love towards him. 2. We now feel ourselves in a condition to speak of the gospel in its free and gratuitous character—to propose its blessings as a gift—to hold out the pardon and the strength and all the other privileges which it proclaims to believers as so many articles for their immediate acceptance—to make it known to men that they are not to delay their compliance with the overtures of mercy till the disinterested love of God arises in their hearts, but that they have a warrant for entering even now into instant reconciliation with God. Nor are we to dread the approach of any moral contamination, because when, after their eyes are opened to the marvellous spectacle of a pleading and offering and beseeching God, holding out eternal life unto the guilty, through the propitiation which His own Son hath made for them, they must from that moment open their whole souls to the influences of gratitude and love the God who thus hath first loved them. We conclude, then, with remarking that the whole of this argument gives us another view of the importance of faith. It brings the heart into contact with that influence by which the love of gratitude is awakened. The reason why man is not excited to the love of God by the revelation of God's love to him is just because he does not believe that revelation. This is the barrier which lies between the guilty and their offended Lawgiver. Could the kindness of God in Christ Jesus be seen by him, the softening of a kindness back again would be felt by him. This also suggests a practical direction to Christians for keeping themselves in the love of God. They must keep themselves in the habit and in the exercise of faith. They must hold fast that conviction in their minds, the presence of which is indispensable to the keeping of that affection in their hearts. (T. Chalmers, D.D.)

*The reciprocal action of love:—*I. DIVINE LOVE IN ITS MANIFESTATION TO THE CREATURE. II. THE RECIPROCAL INFLUENCE OF THAT LOVE. III. THE PRIORITY OF THE DIVINE LOVE TO THE HUMAN. IV. THE DIVINE LOVE CAUSATIVE OF THE HUMAN. (John Tesseyman.)

*On love to God:—*I. THE NATURE AND ACTINGS OF OUR LOVE TO GOD. 1. Love to God supposes or springs from the knowledge of Him and faith in Him. 2. Love to God includes the highest esteem of Him. 3. Love to God includes earnest desires after His grace and favour, communion with Him, and the enjoyment of Him. 4. Love to God includes or produces complacency, joy, and delight in Him. 5. Love to God includes or springs from a thankful sense of His benefits. 6. Love to God may also include good-will to, and zeal for, His honour and glory in the world. II. REASONS AND MOTIVES TO IT. 1. How unjust and how unhappy the disposition opposite to this love is. 2. Consider that love to God is the true honour and happiness of your souls. 3. To excite your love to God consider what a transcendently glorious, excellent, and amiable Being He is in Himself. 4. Consider that God, and He alone, can be a suitable and satisfying portion to your souls. 5. Consider the goodness and mercy, love and grace of God, and the blessed fruits of it, to you and others. (T. Fernie, M.A.)

*Why we love Him:—*Love is said to be the fulfilling of the law; and, in its highest conditions, it casts out all fear. A soul that is filled with love to God has no anxieties in reference to the future. A man so filled with love is elevated; and while he walks on earth, his conversation is in heaven, his associations with the invisible. But how shall this love be developed in our hearts? What is the law

of its development and of its manifestations? How shall we love God with that perfect love which thus associates us with the redeemed, and makes us confident in the midst of all dangers? Love Divine has the same law of origin and of development as love human. We love a mother because she first loved us. We love God because He first loved us. And that long tutelage and care which the child receives fixes on its heart this sentiment of love. It grows with its growth, it strengthens with its strength; and were there no depravity, no stains on human nature, that love would grow up in all its beauty, strengthening from year to year. But let us look at some of the manifestations that God has given of Himself to develop this emotion of love in our hearts. And, first, in the works of creation around us, God has manifested Himself as the loving Creator. He hath placed us in a world framed for our enjoyment. Not only have we indications of God's love around us in this creation, but we can rise higher as we come to the realm of mind. If I compare, step by step, as I advance: A child's affection for a parent is increased by beautiful material arrangements made for the comfort of the child. The chamber, the furniture, the clothing, everything prepared by a father's affection or a mother's love, indicate to the child that affection. So, in these material arrangements, God tells us He loves us; and as we gaze on these arrangements, we ought to love God; but as the book of the mind opens up before us, how this care is multiplied! The thought of God strangely drops into our bosom. There is thought in animate beings. We take those animals that serve our comfort, that labour for us, that watch for us, and there are indications of thought evidently in them. They are made to serve, and their range of thought is exceedingly small. We are made to rule, and our thought seems to be almost limitless. How ought we to love God, in that He loved us so much as to give us this power! And then could He call us up while the great mass of us are all the time disposed to look downward! Man not loving God, not looking upward and outward, becomes sensual. He spends his time in feeding his body, in satisfying his appetites, and he forgets the realm of empire over nature, and over ideas, and over thoughts, that God opens out before him; and hence, without love of God, man is the animal; with love to God, he is the seraph; with love to God, he lives in His affections and rises toward glory; without love to God, he crawls like the worm; without love to God, he goes downward until he is ready to make his bed with demons; with love to God, he rises above angels and archangels, and is preparing for the throne of God. What a glorious provision, and how ought we to love God in that He loved us, and gave to us such prerogatives! But then, again, God hath not only given this mental power, this dominion of thought, this government of the lower world, but He hath given unto us an exalted spiritual nature. Now, this spiritual nature has in it this power: First, in looking at the objects of admiration, in seeing what God has done, reflecting toward Him gratitude; and, secondly, in reflecting that gratitude, growing into His image, and when that image is formed, becoming like God Himself in radiating light, and giving satisfaction to all around us, just as the eyes develop love. Now, as God develops in us this love from our first growing up into the likeness of God, as our hearts are grateful, we recognise Him to be the grand idea, the perfect pattern; our souls long for His image, we want to be like God in the development of this love, we long to be changed into His image, and we are changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Oh, as we grow up into the image of the Master, then we would be like Him in action, imitating Him; and this brings up in our hearts the desire to do good to others. Oh, were all men filled with love to God, this earth would be quite on the verge of heaven; tears would be wiped away by some soft hand; darkness would be illuminated by the smile of love; wants would be provided for by the supply of affectionate charity; and this earth would bear the impress of being the footstool of God. We love Him in the origin of our love; we love Him in the law of the development of our love; we love Him in the manifestation of love as we grow into His likeness. But this law of Divine love is not like that of human love, merely in its origin; it is like it in the means of its growth. Human love increases, as we know, most perfectly the object of that love, if the being be entirely lovable. In God there is no blemish. The more we can know of Him, not only do we love Him better, as we love our friends, but there is no drawback to that love. In Him is love without blemish—no selfishness, no defect; and hence the more we know of God, the better we must love Him. (*M. Simpson, D.D.*) *The genesis of love* :—When we read one of the writings of St. John the Divine it is as if one heard strange and beautiful music, and for the moment our mind is filled with the sound

of composed emotions. First, we are lifted above this earth, and taken, with that eagle eye, into the blue above where old things have passed away and all things have become new. We next become conscious of the things that have before haunted us, the vague thoughts that have entered into our minds, the unfulfilled desires that were ever eluding our grasps, and the ideals which have floated before our imaginations; and we see for the first time what before we had only imagined—the perfect shape of heavenly and spiritual beauty. And then, after that, we become conscious of something else, and that is our own unloveliness and our own imperfection. But I find that the last feeling left upon one's mind, if one is in a healthy state, is this: a great longing to be rid of one's own self, and to be lifted up and made like God. You see, St. John is the master of the philosophy of love, and there is one question I should like to ask you. How can a person create love if love does not exist? And if it does, how can a person increase it? If there be no fire at all upon my cold hearth, how shall I light it? And if there be a flicker of flame upon the cold ashes, how shall I bring it to a blaze? It is a very difficult question. No person, for instance, can love by an act of will. I can, by an act of will, lift my arm, because my arm is moved by voluntary muscles. I cannot, by an act of will, make my heart beat. And neither I, nor any other man, nor all men together, shall be able to make it give one beat more on some future day fixed upon by the Divine will. I will to love, but what follows? I find I cannot love. "Love is not a duty, but a virtue." That is why love can never be commanded. Before you can obey, you must have love. Now I turn to St. John, and he just meets my question about how love can be created. It is with love exactly as with life. Life cannot spring into existence, it must be communicated. It is exactly the same thing with regard to love. You cannot make the black coals on your hearth burst into flame until you apply a light. If you want to love, you must wait till love comes from without. There is just one source of love, and that is God. And there can be no love in the human heart till the love of God comes in and creates it there. It must come by a genesis, not by spontaneous generation. We love because God has first loved us. What He means is this: there may be a great many secondary and important reasons and causes for love, but there is only one Source of love in the whole universe, just as to this world there is only one source of heat. Remove any human soul from the perpetual consciousness of the Divine and Fatherly love, you have got no love in that soul. Now let me illustrate this spiritual truth, first from the reverse side. Take a street arab. How do you expect he can be approached? Leave him alone. He will then become an outcast, a vagabond, perhaps a murderer. Now ask yourselves this question, How is it that this man is a curse to himself and a danger to society? Ask yourselves another question, Was he ever loved? His father—why his father kicked him when he came across him, and swore at him as a nuisance! His mother sent him out to beg as soon as he could stand. His companions, in Court No. 6, off Street So-and-so, why they were just young savages, and they treated him like a savage! Depend upon it, if you deny a human being his natural rights, if you treat him with injustice, and disregard all his feelings, you will turn him into a fiend. Why should he not? He cannot help it; it is the constitution of human nature. He hates because he is hated. Now there is the other side. Take the opposite product of our civilisation. Nothing, I suppose, is more beautiful than the way in which some boys are trained. They are then natural boys; ay, spiritual boys too! A boy comes home from school after morning lessons; the first thing he asks is, "Where is mother?" Not because he wants her, but just to take her hand to tell her what has happened at school. If she is not at home he is miserable. And if she goes away for a little he is never happy till she returns. What is the reason? "It is natural," you say, "because he loves her." What do you mean by "natural"? Do you mean that there is a little germ of love in every human heart? I believe that, too, whether it is nurtured or not. Do you believe it still lives? In some homes the boys are happier when they are away at school. "How that boy does love his mother!" Well, what do you argue from that? I argue that his mother first loved him. The mother shone on him, now he shines on her. The sun gave out its heat, now the earth gives out its heat. "A capital son that to his mother!" He does not think so. She is getting in her old age what she gave before. Again, if you see a man that is pleasant and kind to everybody, men like that man. He never says a mean thing about any one. Do not praise him too much. Pass it back! He has had a good mother, a good father. Do not praise the tropics because the fruit is there. The arctic regions might have done

as well if they had had as much sun. We will "love Him because He first loved us." Let us see how this applies in the sphere of religion. If a man believes that God is, but never has got the length of believing that God is love, then I do not expect much from that man. I expect him to be uncharitable, narrow, not particularly generous in his feelings. The Pharisee did not believe that God was love, so he did not love. He could not help it any more than the arctic regions can help being frozen. Now you turn to the other side. Why, how the children loved Jesus! Why, how all kinds of people followed Jesus! Because He was lovable; because He loved. We are getting on now. Why did Jesus love as no person has ever loved yet, or ever can love again? Because He could not help it. St. John tells us that He "lay in the bosom of the Father," where all is love. Now this law of St. John throws a marvellous light upon many events. The devotion of some people in the history of the world is quite beyond explanation unless you understand St. John's principle. There is one of the saints whose life was so beautiful that the story of it is one of the most wonderful that ever was written. The beasts of the field all loved him; all living things loved him. You may call it legend, but I do not see any limit to the possibilities of human love. I cannot tell what might have followed if that man had lived. When all creation is reconciled it will be through the reconciliation of love. Francis Xavier was ordained for the salvation of the East, and he used to cry out in his prayers, "Give me more suffering that men may be saved." It seems marvellous; but it is not marvellous when you know that the love of God burned inside that man's heart just like a flame from the day of his conversion to the day of his death. (*J. Watson, M.A.*) *The love of God reciprocated*:—I. THE LOVE OF GOD. 1. Its antiquity. 2. Its sovereignty. 3. It is displayed in Christ. 4. It has ever been a love of complacency and delight. 5. It is unchangeable and everlasting. II. THE CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE TO GOD. 1. It is not natural to man. 2. It is caused or produced by the love of God. 3. It is influenced by the love of God. 4. It is manifested in various ways. (1) It boldly professes Christ before the world. (2) It manifests anxious solicitude and suitable exertions to advance Christ's kingdom in the world. (3) It constrains to the consecration of our talents to God's service. (4) It readily makes sacrifices when necessary. (5) It is manifested by loving that which God loves. 5. Love to God is necessary. (*Pulpit Themes.*) *Love for love*:—I. CHRISTIANS CHERISH GREAT AFFECTION FOR CHRIST. "We love Him." 1. It is implied that they are an exception to others. The majority of the human race either ignore or oppose Christ. 2. It is implied that there was a time when they did not. Religion is not inherent. It is an after-production. 3. It is implied that they are fully conscious of their love. 4. It is implied that it is personal. "We love Him"—not His gifts, but Himself. II. CHRISTIANS CHERISH GREAT AFFECTION FOR CHRIST BECAUSE OF HIS GREATER AFFECTION FOR THEM. "Because He first loved us." Natural if we consider—1. The greatness of the Lover. 2. The wretchedness of the loved. 3. The wonderfulness of the love. (1) Gracious in its source. (2) Sovereign in its initiation. (3) Infinite in its sacrifice. (4) Unchangeable in its power. (5) Unspeakable in its benefits. CONCLUSION: 1. Jesus continues to love. 2. He loves all. 3. All should love Him. (*B. D. Johns.*) *God's love the cause of ours*:—Reciprocity is the crown of love. And although it may be absent in one case or another, we cannot use the word "love," except metaphorically, in any field which does not admit of its possible reciprocation. Any injunction to love God, therefore, will sound abstract and unreal, till we remember that its cause and condition is that "He first loved us." God's condescension, not man's aspiration, is the beginning of religious life. There have been times when the sense of the Divine oppressed men, and led to superstition. But such times are not ours. The world of the present day believes, but does not tremble. It thinks, and speaks, and acts, and goes about its business as if our race were, for practical purposes, self-centred and alone. Many causes have contributed to this. The psychological character of our philosophy, leading to agnosticism; our overestimate of liberty, with its attendant shadow self-assertion, to the comparative neglect of obedience, humility, reverence and awe; the splendid spectacle of our vast achievements in mechanism and science—have all tended to reinforce the natural pride of the human heart. It needs, therefore, a very real effort to bear constantly in mind the fact that we are creatures, and that our nearest relation is our Creator. If we turn, then, to the Divine share in the development of our faculties, we shall see that what we call our action may be better described as God's attraction, and that we advance in exact proportion as we let ourselves be led by Him. We are the

creatures, science tells us, of our environment. Yes; but the reason why we are so is that our true environment is God. Take the instance of the will. The denial of its freedom is only a parody of the truth that it must be developed by external law. The laws of nature, the laws of society, the laws of conscience, if we obey them, slowly determine our wills towards that uniform course of conduct which constitutes our character. The character of the scientific, the civilised, the moral man is formed by successive acts of more or less difficult obedience to a particular class of laws. We do not form ourselves, we are conformed to the law; and by every step in that conformity our true freedom is enlarged. And what is this but saying that God, the Source of all law, is for ever at work, attracting our wills into harmony with His will, increasing our liberty, and expanding our capacities, in proportion as that harmony grows more complete; teaching us to see, in what once seemed relentless forces, tokens of His truthfulness, His holiness, His love. The same is the case with our minds. We study a great author, and in doing so, as the phrase goes, make his thoughts our own. But in reality it is he who throws the spell of his personality upon us, and makes our thoughts his. So with all other mental objects, the course of the stars, the laws of mathematics, chemical properties, mechanical forces—they are there, they exist before us; we do not create, we only discover them. Our intellect grows with nourishment, but the nourishment must be given from without. Knowledge, therefore, rightly viewed, is the progressive acceptance of revelation; and thence the moral qualities which we see that it involves. So, too, our power of loving is drawn into activity from without. The tenderness of our mother, our father's protecting pride, the warm-hearted affections of the companions of our youth, bodily beauty, nobleness of life, sanctity of soul—all these draw the heart out of us, and teach us what it is to love. But who created them all, and endowed them with their loveliness? God, that He might draw us with the cords of a man, with bands of love. The love of God for us once realised has a constraining power that compels us to return it with all our heart, and soul, and mind. But such realisation never can be ours till our faculties are duly disciplined. Only the heart that knows what true love is can read the indications of God's love for us aright. Only the mind that is directed upward can teach the heart that heavenly knowledge. Only the will that has learned obedience can give the mind its true direction. We must will in order to know, and know in order to love, before we can consciously enter within the sphere of the Divine attraction. There remains the crowning evidence that He first loved us. He gave Himself for us. The Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme appeal to our love, because it is the supreme proof of His. And yet there are many earnest theists in the present day willing enough to trace the signs of a Divine presence in the universe, but inconsistently stopping short of a belief in the Incarnation. For it is an inconsistent stoppage on the part of any real theist, since God, who is conceived of as caring for His creatures, must be supposed to reveal Himself in ways suiting their capacity; and an Incarnation, as many a pre-Christian thinker saw, would be the reasonable culmination of such ways of self-revealing. There is evidence enough of God's love for us in the beauty of the world, the beneficence of nature, and all the joy of human intercourse. It is only when we come to the dark sad side of life that our faith begins to fail. And here the Incarnation takes up the thread of proof, not by removing the problem of the mystery of sorrow from our minds, but by revealing God Himself as willing to bear it with and for us, and so enabling our hearts to feel it the crowning testimony of His love. The soul that has reached this certitude needs no other motive to ensure its obeying the commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." (*J. R. Illingworth, M.A.*) *Love more attractive than light*:—What is the force that draws men? Somebody says it is light. But men are not all drawn to Christ by light; they are sometimes driven from Him by it. By all means let people have their board schools and so on, but do not imagine that that will ever do the work of the Church. No, Christ must do that. Have you noticed that, in this brush we are having with the Egyptians, Arabi Pasha promised not to go on with the earth-works? But when the sun went down, there were the fellows with their barrows hard at work. Admiral Seymour one night turned the electric light on the gentlemen, and there they were. But they did not at once put down their barrows and their spades and go away home, feeling very much ashamed at being detected. They rather kept on working day and night. Sometimes when men get light, they rebel against it, and use the truth they have learned as an instrument to their detriment. That has often happened. I would, if I could, turn the electric light

on some men's minds and let them see themselves; but I know that in many cases it would increase responsibility and increase hostility, and it would not win the soul. How, then, are men won to Christ? It is by the force of love. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Creed and life*:—"Religion is not a creed, but a life." We will venture to put two little words into that sentence, "Religion is not *only* a creed, but *also* a life." Is not this nearer the truth? 1. In religion there is a creed. "He first loved us." 2. In religion there is a life. "We love Him." 3. In religion there is a life *because* there is a creed. "We love because He loved." (*C. Clemance, D.D.*) *God's love*:—"If we want to know just what the apostle meant when he used these words we must refer to other verses in this Epistle. 1. One of these gives us love's expression. "He sent His Son, the propitiation for our sins." 2. We have love's object. "He first loved us." 3. We have love's intensity. "Herein is love." 4. We have love's achievements. "Behold, what manner of love," &c. (chap. iii. 1). 5. We have love's ultimate intentions. "It doth not yet appear," &c. (chap. iii. 2). (*Ibid.*) *Love*:—"Every Christian grace is some form or other of love. Repentance is love—grieving. Faith is love—leaning. Hope is love—expecting. Courage is love—daring. Patience is love—waiting. And so on through all the list of Christian virtues. And thus we see how it is that a man has just as much religion as he has love and no more. (*Ibid.*) *Paganism and Christianity*:—"We find indications of the Pagans fearing their gods, dreading them, trying to appease their wrath by sacrifices and offerings, being very much obliged to their gods if they gave them a good harvest, and so on; but nowhere can we recall any indications of a Pagan loving his god! And why? Because the Pagans never knew of God loving them! (*Ibid.*) *Our love the reflex of God's*:—"And as the reflected beams of the sun are weaker than the direct, so are our affections weaker than God's. (*J. Trapp.*) *Richard Baxter's prayer*:—"Draw my soul to Thyself by the secret power of Thy love, as the sunshine in the spring draws forth the creatures from their winter cells; meet it half way, and entice it to Thee, as the loadstone doth the iron, and as the greater flame attracts the less. (*R. Baxter.*) *Doctrine and morals*:—"God first loved us is the summary of Christian doctrine; we love Him is the summary of Christian morality. (*Luthardt.*) *The Christian's love*:—"I can think of no better illustration of the relation of the Christian's love to the love of God, than that which is afforded by the contemplation of the rising spray from the Falls of Niagara. Who that has stood beside that mighty cataract, and looked upon the water pouring in a thundering torrent over that stupendous precipice, and watched the mist as it floats upward and backward over the Falls, and outward over the river and land, has not been charmed and filled with holy admiration as he has contemplated this parable in nature? That mighty torrent, pouring itself with ceaseless and exhaustless energy, day and night, into the river below, is what the love of God is to sinners. Who can measure it? Who can estimate it? The thin, and yet beautiful spray, arising from the foot of the Falls, is just a little of these same waters going back in grateful acknowledgment to the source whence they came. So is the believers' love to God. It is the rebound of His own love—only a little, yea, only an infinitesimal portion given back to Him who so loved us. As the spray does not rise by any forced effort of its own, so the believer, who stands under the Niagara of God's love poured out through Christ, will not have to make an effort to love God; his love will ascend without effort. (*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*) *Action and reaction between God and man*:—"You have seen a flowering-plant unfold itself under the kindly rays of the morning sun. It eagerly drank in the heat and life that came to it in each rill of celestial fire, and opened itself more and more fully as the beams grew in strength, until at length its whole being seemed to go forth in a glad return of fragrance and beauty. That plant, in its relation to the sun, was a type or symbol, in the material world, of the action and reaction that pass between God and man in the spiritual realm. Analyse the symbol and you observe—1. That in the nature of the plant there must be a certain affinity with the sun and his rays. But for that the sun might shine for ever, and produce no more vital effect on the plant than he does on a stone. 2. That the plant does not find the sun, but the sun the plant. Initial action proceeds from the sun—the plant at first is only passive and receptive. 3. That what the sun sends down is energy, not instruction how or where to get it, but energy, life, direct and simple. 4. That the life thus radiated evokes responsive action. The plant lifts its head, expands every leaf and petal, follows the sun wherever he goes, and spends itself in works of fragrant beauty in praise of Him who rescued it from darkness and decay. (*P. H. Steenstra, D.D.*)

Vers. 20, 21. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.—I. THE LESSON IS TAUGHT WITH PECULIAR FORCE WHICH IS DESERVING OF ATTENTION. The several clauses of the text are so constructed as to cast light upon it. "A man may say, I love God." He may say it and think it, and yet not do it. In that case he is self-deceived. Or he may say it and not think it. In such a case he is a hypocrite. In the midst of such self-deception or hypocritical profession the man "may hate his brother." The man who so speaks and acts is pronounced to be "a liar." There is an entire inconsistency between what he says and does. His conduct towards men is a contradiction to his profession toward God. An argument is next used to prove the inconsistency of professing love to God, while hatred is indulged to men. "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" This is assumed to be an impossibility. And it really is so. His brother is the child of God. Can I love a man and hate his child? My brother is to me the representative of God, and in hating him I hate God. To confirm the argument, it is added, "and this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." We say we love God. Of that love the great proof is that "we keep His commandments." But one of His commandments is, that we love one another. II. THE INCOMFATIBILITY OF THE LOVE OF GOD WITH THE HATRED OF MEN. It is to be feared that, in this matter, a widespread delusion prevails among men. Many say they love God who are seen to hate men. It may be well, therefore, to notice some of the principal forms under which this incongruity has appeared in both past times and the present. 1. A remarkable example of it may be seen in the national spirit that prevailed among the Jews in the time of our Lord and His apostles. The Jew said he loved God, and yet he was injurious to men. And so far did this spirit prevail that it formed the national character in the time of our Lord. 2. This habit, however, did not arise out of anything peculiar to Judaism; for, it may be observed next, that it is found to prevail in all unenlightened nations. The Mussulman, out of zeal for God, as he alleges, goes forth with his sword to demand subjection from all men; and, when he has the power, to plunge it into the bosom of any one who dares to resist him. It is the same under other and more aggravated forms in nations that are purely heathen. The Hindoo, out of zeal for God, refuses to eat with his brother of another caste, lest he should be defiled. The Chinaman has been taught from his infancy to reckon all men barbarians beyond the boundaries of his own land. All heathen people entertain the same idea of religion. They regard it as a service of certain forms due to God; but which, it never occurs to them, is designed to regulate their deportment toward one another. The love of God, prompting love to mankind, is nowhere to be found, even as a theory, among men devoid of revelation. Greece and Rome, at the height of their enlightenment, made no such discovery. It is humiliating to see the vanity of their worship, which was neither intended nor fitted to influence their conduct toward men. We may suppose it to be an easy thing to see the connection between the love of God and the love of man. But we should remember we are indebted for the knowledge of it entirely to the Divine Word. 3. But alas! even where the light of revelation shines, this simple truth has been sadly obscured. Men have thought that, because they had been born and lived within certain geographical boundaries, they were not required to seek the good, but rather the injury of those beyond them. They have engaged in the most savage attacks upon one another in the name of religion. How necessary it is that the nations should learn the lesson of the text—"that he who loveth God love his brother also." 4. We may go for another illustration beyond the nations of the earth, and fix upon the Christian churches themselves. In some we discover the most uncharitable zeal for their doctrines. They construct a system which they hold is founded on the Word of God, and agreeable to it. Admit that it is so. Its views, they maintain, are essential to salvation. Admit that they are so. Forthwith they proceed to denounce all who do not see with them eye to eye. We have need to be watchful lest our love for God, in maintaining His truth, should degenerate into bitterness against men. In others, again, we discern the uncharitableness of sect. We may go further, and find an example even among those who hold the same truths, and worship in the same sanctuary. We may profess love to God in His ordinance, and yet be indulging ill-will to our brother. Worse than that, we may do him much injury. We may injure him in his good name, in his property, in his peace, and still maintain the profession of love for God. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Love to God promotive of love to man:—*There is an element of Christian ethics present in

the Gospels, and everywhere attributed to Jesus, which we scarcely find at all in the Epistles. It is the setting up of an antagonism between duty to God and the claims of natural affection. It will, I think, be profitable to inquire whether our duty to God and our love of Him ought ever to override our duty to our families and our natural affection for our nearest and dearest relations. Turning over the leaves of that flesh-bound revelation, we find our home-love to be the most precious, most redeeming, most sanctifying of all our spiritual treasures. According to our possession of family love our home is either our heaven or our hell. But love is much more than this—it is our real moral teacher. It is at home that our characters are formed for fatherly, motherly, sisterly, and brotherly lives in the outer world. And how love purifies and restrains! Who, looking back on his past life, cannot remember the many times when he would have fallen before temptation but for the love he bore to his father or mother, or wife or children? Last of all, our actual possession and exercise of love is our only key to the knowledge of the love of God. From this springs all true religion, all true worship of the Father in heaven, and all service acceptable to Him. So I read in our poor human hearts this sublime truth. Love is our highest bliss, our best guide to duty, our strongest impulse to perform it, the most efficient cultivator of a noble character, our surest defence in the face of temptation, and the highest revelation of God Himself. And now I venture to affirm that our duty to God never does conflict with our duty to each other. And why? It needs no argument. It is the very principle of religious morality that our duty to God consists mainly in our duty to each other. We can render to Him no service at all but in and through the service of our brethren who are His children. Our love to God never yet weakened—nay, it has evermore strengthened—our family love. The more conscientious we have become in the discharge of what we thought to be our duty to God, the more loving and faithful we have been to our dear ones at home. (*C. Voysey.*) *The great commandment:*—We enter the family circle now. It has become a very large family, and is destined to become still larger, till it includes all the families of the earth. Whether large or small, there is one grand principle which is to flow through the hearts of all its members, and to constitute a bond which neither time nor eternity can dissolve. That one principle is mutual love. Nothing else can take its place. Nothing else can do its work. I. It will be well for us to look a little carefully at **THE PERSON FOR WHOM THIS LOVE IS CLAIMED**—our brother. Our brother, in the New Testament, has a new and definite meaning. It is not our neighbour, as such. To a Jew, it was not his fellow-Jew. Nor is it necessarily the son of our own father and mother. There may be many such sons whom, alas! we cannot regard in this high sense as our brothers. There are those who come nearer to us as Christians, and are endeared to us by stronger ties. The elements of the union between us, and which constitute them our brethren, are altogether peculiar. The first of these is faith in our common Saviour. From the moment that faith is exercised a new set of conditions spring up. We have parted company with the world, and shall soon find that we have forfeited its love and its sympathy. Then the faith which unites us to Christ unites us to all who are thus united to Him. And that irrespective of all external differences. Another of these elements is regeneration by the same Spirit. And now there opens before us another view of our subject, although necessarily glanced at already. Our Creator has become not only our God, but our Father. Further, our heavenly Father has embraced us all alike in the arms of His adopting grace. II. We shall next have to enter into **SOME OF THE REASONS WHY THIS LOVE IS REQUIRED**. And we need hardly insist on the fact that all the reasons why we are called upon to love our neighbour obtain, and obtain with redoubled force, here. The ethics of the Second Table are not abrogated by the great law of brotherly love. Nay, those ethics are carried up to a higher plane, and enforced by sanctions of a higher order. Then He bases this precept on the deep ground of His own love to us. “As I have loved you.” We can understand how He can have loved others. But us? There is the difficulty. Yet we have His own word for it, and that ought to be enough; and most persuasive in its eloquence. Learn from this unique example of My love to you to love one another. My love to you has been unmerited, disinterested, self-sacrificing, all-enduring. Let your love to each other take this as its pattern. “Love one another as I have loved you.” It will also be seen that the claim of our brother to our love is founded on our love to God. “And this commandment have we from Him, that He who loveth God, love his brother also.” John, however, touches the deepest foundations of all for this demand in the tenth and eleventh verses of this same chapter.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." III. There must be SOME PRACTICAL METHODS AVAILABLE FOR THE UNEQUIVOCAL MANIFESTATION OF THIS BROTHERLY LOVE. Love to our brother is not a mere profession. Nor will this association be a mere formal and external thing; but we shall be led into real and intimate fellowship of heart and spirit with our brother. Readiness to sympathise with and help will, in like manner, present itself as an evidence and display of this love. Love can withhold nothing from its object. The love in question will at the same time lead to mutual charity and forbearance. IV. A CURSORY GLANCE AT THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLE WHICH IT HAS BEEN OUR EARNEST DESIRE TO INCULCATE. And let us begin at home. We have a deep personal interest in this matter. Nothing tends more to promote our own happiness, profit, and usefulness than that love which we owe to our fellow-Christians. It fills the heart with sunshine. If the Church is ever to become the power for good in the world which she was intended to be, this will be the secret and fountain of her strength. Beside and above all these considerations, the honour of our Divine Lord and Head is bound up with this matter. Nothing pleases Him so much as the love which should unite all His disciples together in one close but grand confraternity. Nothing can furnish so powerful a demonstration of the might and benignity of His truth. Nothing can present so worthy and influential an exhibition of His character. (*J. Drew.*) *Love to God produces love to man*:—When God comes to man, man looks round for his neighbour. (*Geo. Macdonald, LL.D.*) "*He's my brother*":—Dr. Macgregor met in a great Scotch city a little girl carrying in her arms a baby, so bonny that she fairly staggered under its weight. "Baby's heavy, isn't he, dear?" said the doctor. "No," replied the winsome bairn, "he's not heavy; he's my brother." (*U. R. Thomas, B.A.*)

CHAPTER V.

VER. 1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.—*Belief in Jesus as the Christ*:—This is the third virtual repetition of this truth (see chap. iv. 2, 15). Now in the apostles' days every Christian as such believed that Jesus was the Christ. By this belief and its confession he was distinguished from a Jew on the one side and a heathen on the other; and the same might be said of the confession that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, for this in the apostle's eyes would be the same as that Jesus is the Christ, for if He was the Christ, His assertion of Himself as being the true and only begotten of God, who came down from heaven, must be true, for God would never send into the world one who would so misrepresent His truth as to say that He was His special anointed messenger and representative when He was not; and so with Jesus being the Son of God of chap. iv. 14. *Faith and regeneration*:—I. WHAT IS THE BELIEVING INTENDED IN THE TEXT? 1. The believing here intended is that which our Lord and His apostles exhorted men to exercise, and to which the promise of salvation is always appended in the Word of God. 2. The faith here intended is the duty of all men. Jesus Christ is worthy of the confidence of all men; it is therefore the duty of men to confide in Him. 3. At the same time this faith, wherever it exists, is in every case, without exception, the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. He has wrought all our works in us, and our faith too. 4. The faith intended in the text evidently rests upon a person—upon Jesus. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." What is meant by "Jesus is the Christ," or Jesus is the Anointed? First, that He is the Prophet; secondly, that He is the Priest; thirdly, that He is the King of the Church, for in all these three senses He is the Anointed. 5. True faith is reliance. Have you confidence as well as credence? A creed will not save you, but reliance upon the anointed Saviour is the way of salvation. Moreover, true faith is not a flattering presumption, by which a man says, "I believe I am saved, for I have such delightful feelings, I have had a marvellous dream, I have felt very wonderful sensations;" for all such confidence may be nothing but sheer assumption. Faith, again, is not the assurance that Jesus died for

me. On such a theory every believer in a universal atonement would necessarily be born of God, which is very far from being the case. Neither is it faith for me to be confident that I am saved, for it may be the case that I am not saved, and it can never be faith to believe a lie. II. We must now pass on to show that WHEREVER IT EXISTS IT IS THE PROOF OF REGENERATION. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "Ah!" I hear thee say, poor soul, "the new birth is a great mystery; I am afraid I am not a partaker in it." You are born again if you are relying upon a crucified Saviour. Mystery or no mystery, the new birth is yours if you are a believer. Electricity is a great mystery, and you cannot see it; but the operator tells you that the electric current is moving along the wire. How does he know? "I know it by the needle." How is that? I could move your needles easily. "Yes; but do not you see the needle has made two motions to the right, one to the left, and two to the right again? I am reading a message." "But," say you, "I can see nothing in it; I could imitate that clicking and moving very easily." Yet he who is taught the art sees before him in those needles, not only electric action, but a deeper mystery still; he perceives that a mind is directing the invisible force, and speaking by means of it. Not to all, but to the initiated is it given to see the mystery hidden within the simplicity. The believer sees in the faith, which is simple as the movements of the needle, an indication that God is operating on the human mind, and the spiritual man discerns that there is an inner secret intimated thereby, which the carnal eye cannot decipher. To believe in Jesus is a better indicator of regeneration than anything else, and in no case did it ever mislead. Now let me reply to certain questions. Must not a man repent as well as believe? Reply: No man ever believed but what he repented at the same time. Faith and repentance go together. They must. If I trust Christ to save me from sin, I am at the same time repenting of sin, and my mind is changed in relation to sin, and everything else that has to do with its state. All the fruits meet for repentance are contained in faith itself. III. Now WHAT FLOWS OUT OF THIS? Love is the legitimate issue! We must love if we are begotten of God all those who are also born of God. First, I love God, and therefore I desire to promote God's truth, and to keep God's gospel free from taint. But then I am to love all those whom God has begotten, despite the infirmities and errors I see in them, being also myself compassed about with infirmities. Life is the reason for love, the common life which is indicated by the common faith in the dear Redeemer is to bind us to each other. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The theory of brotherly love*:—Four things are here associated, and said to arise out of one another—faith, regeneration, the love of God, and the love of man. I. FAITH—"whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ." Jesus is found to be all that the Scripture predictions declared the Messiah should be. They who discover this harmony can say, "we have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Even in this state of mind there are the elements of rich promise, but there is far more in the reception of Jesus as the Christ. He is acknowledged, not merely in general terms, as a Divine Saviour; but He is appreciated in the special offices which He bears for the redemption of men. II. THE REGENERATION CONNECTED WITH IT—"is born of God." Faith and regeneration are united. This view is brought out still more fully in John i. 12, 13. We ask what must be the moral effect produced by accepting Christ in His gracious offices? It is plain it must be vital and saving. We see at once how just and reasonable is the representation of the text—that faith and regeneration are united. III. IN EVERY MIND THUS INFLUENCED THE LOVE OF GOD OBTAINS A PROMINENT PLACE. "Every one that loveth Him that begat." It must be so, considering the change that has been produced. It is a new birth. God is seen to be the only Master who can claim unreserved obedience. A mind thus enlightened must love God. Especially must it be so when it is considered that He is the Author of this change. In His gracious love He has been pleased to put forth His power, and create the soul anew in righteousness. How calculated is such a contemplation to call forth the warmest exercise of love! Add to this, that when such a change is effected in the soul by God, it brings us into a new relation to Him, and one that eminently calls forth our love. It is that of a child. It is natural to a child to love his parent. Nor let it be overlooked how God is continually increasing His claims on His own children. They are constrained to say (Eph. i. 3). IV. THE LOVE OF GOD IS ACCOMPANIED BY THE LOVE OF MAN. "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him." (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Love to man inspired by new life*:—If we do not love Him more than what lies around us—houses and lands, father or

mother, son or daughter—we are not worthy of Him. Nor are we worthy of them. Unless we come to them and they to us in the richness of a life inspired and quickened by Him, in the wealth of affections, impulses, desires, and hopes thus quickened and inspired by a loftier faith, we come to one another as trees encased in ice. But if, first of all, we give ourselves to Him, and the generous hopes and affections which faith in Him may awaken in us, we shall be like these same trees, lifting up their branches to the spring-day sun, till from the lowest root to the highest twig they feel the pulses of a new life bursting out into leaf and blossom, while birds nestle within their shade, and the air is burdened with their melodies. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Vers. 2, 3. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments.—*How shall we be certified that we love the brethren:—* To reply to this inquiry seems to be the specific object of these verses. Contemplating them in this connection, they suggest four evidences. I. The first is **THAT WE LOVE GOD.** “By this we know,” &c. It must seem strange, at first sight, to find the love of God cited as a proof of the love of His people. We would expect rather the reverse order. This too is found to be the usual practice (see chap. iv. 7, 8). At the same time there is a sense in which the love of God ought to be sought in our hearts as a proof of the love of His people. It is one that will readily occur to a mind jealous of itself. It is not unnatural to ask, Does his love of the people of God arise out of the love of God? In this view he might properly seek for the love of God as a proof of the love of the brethren. The least reflection may show the necessity for such an inquiry. Brotherly love, or what appears to be such, may arise from other sources besides the love of God. It may be a natural feeling and not a gracious affection. We may love our kindred, friends, neighbours, benefactors, and yet not love God. It is possible there may be even an active benevolence where this heavenly principle does not exist. It will be asked how is such a subject to be investigated? And we reply in one of two ways, or in both. It may be either by examining whether our deeds of brotherly love are prompted and influenced by the love of God; or by inquiring into the general principle, whether the love of God has ever been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. II. **THE PROFESSION OF BROTHERLY LOVE MAY BE TESTED BY OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.** “We know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments.” Viewing the subject in the restricted light of the context, the meaning of this test must be, that in our exercises of brotherly love, we are guided by the commandments of God. Assuming this to be the just interpretation, there are two aspects in which our conduct may be contemplated, the one a refusal to do that which God forbids, although it may be desired as an expression of brotherly love, and the other a readiness to exercise it in every way which God has required. III. **THE NEXT EVIDENCE OF BROTHERLY LOVE IS AKIN TO THE SECOND, and may be regarded indeed as a summary of the two already considered, and an extension of their meaning and application.** “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” There is great force in the expression, “This is the love of God.” This is that in which it consists, by which its existence is manifested, and without which it cannot be. A child obeys his parent because he loves him, and as he loves him. The same may be said of the master and servant, the king and his subjects. If there be not love, uniform and hearty obedience cannot be rendered. In the case of Christ and His people, the claims are peculiarly strong on the one hand, and the obligations specially felt on the other. There is no love so strong as that by which they are bound to one another. It takes precedence of every other. The consequence is, that the love of Christ urges His people to the obedience of every commandment. No matter how trifling it may seem to be, it is enough that He has declared it to be His will. IV. **There is one other evidence in the verses before us, but it may almost be regarded as a part of that which has just been noticed. It is SUCH AN APPREHENSION OF THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD THAT THEY ARE NOT CONSIDERED TO BE A BURTHEN.** “His commandments are not grievous.” This saying is universally and absolutely true of the commandments of God in their own nature. They are all “holy, and just, and good.” Such, however, is not the sentiment of the ungodly. They consider many of God’s commandments to be grievous. We might instance such commands as these—“Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God,” “Abstain from all appearance of evil,” “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; your whole spirit, and soul, and body.” These are felt to be grievous by the

ungodly. No so by the godly. They may not obey them as they would, but they approve of them. 1. The great reason is their love of God. They so love Him that they account nothing which He has commanded grievous. 2. Another reason is that his heart is in the service itself. He likes it. Prayer and holiness are agreeable to him. They are not a drudgery, but a delight. 3. He forms, moreover, the habit of obedience, and this greatly confirms his desire for it. The more he practises it, the better he finds it. 4. Besides, the Holy Spirit helps his infirmities, and furthurs his labours. 5. And we may add, he is animated by the prospect of a rich reward. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *Whereby know we that we love God's children* :—

I. WHO ARE DESCRIBED BY THIS TITLE—"the children of God." This title, "the children of God," is given upon several accounts.

1. By creation the angels are called "the sons of God," and men His "offspring." The reason of the title is—(1) The manner of their production by His immediate power. (2) In their spiritual, immortal nature, and the intellectual operations flowing from it, there is an image and resemblance of God. 2. By external calling and covenant some are denominated His "children"; for by this evangelical constitution God is pleased to receive believers into a filial relation.

3. There is a sonship that arises from supernatural regeneration. II. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN OUR LOVE TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD. 1. The principle of this love is Divine (1 Pet. i. 22).

2. The qualifications of this love are as follows: (1) It is sincere and cordial. A counterfeit, formal affection, set-off with artificial colours, is so far from being pleasing to God, that it is infinitely provoking to Him. (2) It is pure. The attractive cause of it is the image of God appearing in them. (3) It is universal, extended to all the saints. (4) It must be fervent. Not only in truth, but in a degree of eminency. "This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John xv. 12).

(5) This love includes all kinds of love. (a) The love of esteem, correspondent to the real worth and special goodness of the saints. (b) The love of desire, of their present and future happiness. (c) The love of delight, in spiritual communion with them. (d) The love of service and beneficence, that declares itself in all outward offices and acts for the good of the saints. If Christians thus loved one another, the Church on earth would be a lively image of the blessed society above.

III. THE LOVE OF GOD AND OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMANDS, THE PRODUCT OF IT. 1. The love of God has its rise from the consideration of His amiable excellences, that render Him infinitely worthy of the highest affection; and from the blessed benefits of creation, preservation, redemption, and glorification, that we expect from His pure goodness and mercy.

2. The obedience that springs from love is—(1) Uniform and universal. (2) This is a natural consequence of the former. The Divine law is a rule, not only for our outward conversation, but of our thoughts and affections, of all the interior workings of the soul that are open before God. (3) Chosen and pleasant (chap. v. 3). The sharpest sufferings for religion are sweetened to a saint from the love of God, that is then most sincerely, strongly, and purely acted (2 Cor. xii. 10).

(4) The love of God produces persevering obedience. Servile compliance is inconstant. IV. FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, AND WILLING OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMANDS, WE MAY CONVINCINGLY KNOW THE SINCERITY OF OUR LOVE TO HIS CHILDREN. 1. The Divine command requires this love. 2. Spiritual love to the saints arises from the sight of the Divine image appearing in their conversation. As affectionate expressions to the children of God, without the real supply of their wants, are but the shadows of love, so words of esteem and respect to the law of God, without unfeigned and universal obedience, are but an empty pretence.

3. The Divine relation of the saints to God as their Father is the motive of spiritual love to them. (IV. Bates, D.D.) *The love of God and universal obedience* :—

I. THE NATURE OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD. 1. The peculiar acts of true love to God. (1) It has a high approbation and esteem of God. (2) It has a most benevolent disposition towards God. (3) Its earnest desire is after God. (4) Its complacency and delight is in God. (5) It is pleased or displeased with itself, according as it is conscious to its own aboundings or defects.

2. The properties of true love to God. (1) It is a judicious love. (2) It is an extensive love. (3) It is a supreme love. (4) It is an abiding love. 3. The effects of this love. A holy imitation of God and devotedness to Him, self-denial, patience, and resignation to His will, the government of all our passions, appetites and behaviour, a departure from everything that offends Him, and laborious endeavours by His grace, to approve ourselves to Him, and glorify His name in all that we do.

II. THE INFLUENCE THAT TRUE LOVE TO GOD HAS UNTO OUR OBEDIENCE, OR UNTO OUR KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS. 1. Love to God enters into the very nature of all true and acceptable obedience. 2. Love to

God inclines and even constrains us to keep all His commands. 3. Love to God gives us a delight in keeping His commands. They are suited to the holy nature of a new-born soul, whose prime affection is love to God; this takes off distastes, and makes all His precepts agreeable to us; it makes them our choice and our pleasure; it sweetens our obedience, and makes us think nothing a trouble or a burden that God calls us to, and nothing too great to do or suffer for Him, whereby we may please and honour Him, and show our gratitude, love and duty to Him. 4. Love to God will make us persevere in keeping His commands. Use: 1. Let this put us upon serious inquiry whether the love of God dwells in us. 2. Let the sinner against God behold how odious and unworthy the principle is that refuses to obey Him. 3. Let us prize the gospel of the grace of God, and seek help from thence to engage our love and obedience. 4. Let us look and long for the heavenly state, where all our love and obedience shall be perfected. (*John Guyse.*) *Loving God through human love:*—The love of man is involved in the love of God. There is no real love of God that does not include the love of His children. Love is a state of the human spirit; an atmosphere in which one abides; he who is in that atmosphere loves the human that appeals to him no less than the Divine. Loving God is not merely a feeling toward Him—a gushing out of emotion: it is a practical exercise of His Spirit. It is a real doing of His commandments. "What is loving God? Is it anything more than loving men, and trying in His name to do them good?" "I do not think I love God, for I do not feel towards Him as I do towards those I love best." "It is hard to think of God as the Great Energy that fills all things, and yet to love Him as a Father." These are all expressions of sincere minds trying to get into the real atmosphere of the truth and to live the spiritual life. I should like, if possible, to help clear up the difficulties indicated. Let us recognise the fact that nothing but emptiness and disappointment can come from the effort to love an abstract conception. Love goes out only toward personality. And the personality must lie warm and living in our hearts, or it fails to quicken affection into life. Israel, for instance, was labouring for a thousand years to bring forth its idea of Godhead. In the old notion of Jahveh as God of Israel only, there was a sort of personal warmth akin to patriotism; a common affection which went out in a crude way to their personal champion. When the prophets began to see in Him much more than this—the God of all the earth, "who formeth the mountains and createth the wind, and declareth to man His thought"—while there was an immense gain in breadth and truth of conception, there was a loss of the nearness that begets personal attachment, until, a little later, God's relation to the whole nation gave place to the new idea of His direct relation to every man in all the affairs of his life. That gave birth to all that is best in the Psalms of Israel, with their outgoing of personal confidence and affection. Then after the coming of Jesus and the intense feeling that sprang up on His departure that He was God manifest in the flesh, there was a leap of thought and life which showed how the real heart of man hungered for something more close and personal than Judaic religion could ever give it. So complete was this change, and so central to the Apostolic age, that for eighteen hundred years the same phenomenon has been witnessed of placing Jesus in the central place, with God removed to a vague background, the Being "whom no man hath seen or can see," dreaded, revered, and worshipped, but never standing in the intimate relation of close fatherhood in which He was the warmth and light of the life of Jesus Himself. There was abundant reason for this. The human heart, seeking for a real religion, must have something concrete and close and warm; it cannot love an abstract idea. Jesus was seen as God reduced to the human compass, enshrined in a human and personal love. The whole responsive life of man went out to Him. And so it came to pass that He did what He did not in the least aim to do, but rather the contrary—He did not bring the real Godhead of the universe nearer to the average mind, but took the place of it, letting it even sweep backward, farther out of sight—farther into the impenetrable mystery. We are pillowed in our infancy on a bosom of affection. It is long before we know it; but when we do awake, it is to our mothers that the earliest love goes forth. And if we ever do love God, we come to it by rising from the home love, or some later and even stronger love that awakes in us, to the higher affection. This makes the common affections of life sacred and Divine, in that without them there is no ground in us for the love to God. All love has one source. Do our mothers love us? It is God in them that breaks out into love in its highest manifestations, with its Divine unselfishness and its clinging power. Wherever love is, we get a glimpse of the Divine and infinite. It is only as such love responds

to the Spirit of God in it that it does and dares, and clings to us and will not let us go, though it cost struggle and patience and sacrifice and pain. And this love, as a channel of the love of God, is the power that most often lifts us up into the clearer realms where we are at one with the Divine, and its love becomes real to our hungry hearts. The love we have to God is realised in our love to men. It cannot abide alone. They who have thought to gain it by retirement and meditation have found it only a will-o'-the-wisp save as it has issued in the love that seeks men and tries to do them good. For the love of God is not a mere feeling, a gush of emotion in which the soul is rapt away to things ineffable. It is a spirit, an atmosphere, in which one lives; and "he who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." But to dwell in love, to be really baptized with its spirit, is to have that energy of it within us that seeks continually to find exercise for itself and actually to give itself to others. Unfortunately, the service of God has too often been conceived of as the conferring of something on Him by worship or sacrifice, by which it is thought He will be pleased. But what can we do for Him by our offering of gifts for His use, or by the singing of His praises, save to give expression to what is in us and thereby satisfy our own cravings? The real love of God will manifest itself in what we do for men. It will set itself to help on the kingdom of God on earth as the dearest end it can set before itself. The Samaritan did not worship in the Jerusalem temple; his own on Mount Gerizim had long been levelled to the ground. But when he took care of the wounded man on the road to Jericho, he showed himself a lover of God beyond the priest and Levite of orthodox connections and habits, who passed by on the other side. Men and women are warned not to love each other too dearly, lest God be jealous; not to love their children too much, lest He take them away. This is not religion. Real love does not exhaust itself by giving; it *grows* by giving. The more you love your child, if it be unselfish love, the more you will love God, for the loving of a little child brings you into that atmosphere and spirit of love where the heart is living and warm and goes forth to God as naturally as the sunlight streams into the ether. You will need to be cautioned lest your love of human kind become selfish and exclusive, and is indulged as a mere luxury. That vitiates it. But the more you love your brother whom you have seen, unselfishly, the more you will love God and see Him, too, with the spiritual vision. To sum up, then, this relation of Divine and human love: all love is of One, and the line cannot be drawn where the human stops and the Divine begins. But we may feel sure of this, that to see the love of God in all the love that comes to us, to recognise it in all the unselfishness we see, is the only way to know it truly, and the most direct road to the clearer sense of it as an indwelling life. (*H. P. De Forest, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. His commandments are not grievous.—*The service of love*:—Viewing the Christian dispensation as a fuller expansion of the Jewish, we naturally look to the New Testament for additional motives rather than for additional commandments. An unexpected meaning, indeed, was often brought out by our Lord from ancient enactments and precepts which had long lain in the statute-book, were proved applicable to cases which they had never before been supposed to concern; but still the showing the hidden force of what is old is widely different from the introducing what is new. With respect, indeed, to the sanction by which law is accompanied, there was a vast accession through the preaching of the gospel. If we are not prepared to go all lengths with the theory that under the Mosaic dispensation men were not acted on at all by the engines of the invisible world, at least we must admit that heaven and hell were not so clearly made known as to effect by their realities the general deportment of society. And unquestionably it was a mighty throwing of life into the commandments of the law when Christianity opened up the mysteries of an after state of being, and showed men how by means of obedience or disobedience there was glory or terror crowding its unmeasured expanse. And yet after all there would have been very little done had Christ merely taught men what apportionments may be looked for hereafter. We can go further. We can say of Christianity, that though it brought no new commandments, it leads men to yield obedience to the old upon an entirely new principle. The way in which Christianity teaches you to serve God is by teaching you to love God. St. Paul describes the love of God as the "fulfilling of the law," so that what fear could not effect, and what hope could not effect—results which would never have been brought round by the sternest threatenings and the richest promises—these follow most naturally on the implanting in the heart the simple

principle of love to the Almighty; and precepts which man would have set at naught, though hemmed round by penalties and neglected, though attended by rewards, win all their attention and all their powers as coming from a Benefactor whom it is a delight to obey. The words of our text are in exact accordance with these statements. They contain, you see, two definitions: first, of the love of God, and then of the commandments of God. The love is defined as the keeping the commandments"; the commandments are defined as "not being grievous." Our text shows us, in the first place, that love makes men earnest to obey; in the second place, it shows us that the obedience which love produces it also renders easy. Let us examine both these points. I. LOVE MAKES MEN EARNEST TO OBEY—"this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." Love makes it easy to obey—"for His commandments are not grievous." Now, there followed on the entrance of evil into Paradise a great degeneration of human capacities, but not in strict truth an actual destruction. Love, beneath every state, has been, and still is, a working principle, so that on whatever object it fastens it urges at once whether to the undertaking of labour or the endurance of privation. You may perceive from the commonest instances of everyday life that from love considered as the working principle of man, springs all that complex mechanism which is made up of the business of an active population. We take this acknowledged fact as a fair groundwork of argument, that if the rational soul be driven out as it were from the circle of the animal, and man be taught to love the Creator, in place of centring all his affection on the creature, all his faculties will quickly be enlisted in the service of God. Thus it is quite demonstrable that the love of God must produce the keeping His commandments. You put a principle into the immortal part of man which causes that part to rise from her degradation and to vindicate the almost forgotten nobleness of her mission. God is then known, for until God is loved He is not and cannot be known. The reason is simple and Scriptural. Love is not so much an attribute of God as His very essence. And if, therefore, in order to our loving God, there must be a supernatural bringing home to the heart of the love which God hath turned on the wandering and the lost, it is evident that we know only as we love Him, seeing that to love God presupposes an acquaintance with God as love. From this reasoning we fetch fresh illustration that the loving God is keeping His commandments. It is not merely because I love Him I shall of necessity be anxious to please Him, and therefore to obey Him; but in the degree that I love Him, in that same degree do I know Him, and to know Him is to obtain altogether a different view of His character and properties from any which I have heretofore possessed. It is to have done with vague and indefinite notions, and to entertain others which are strict and unbending; it is to understand with something of precision the power and place of His every attribute, and thus to sweep from my calculation all those mountains of lies which the world are building out of mistaken properties of Godhead. And if through the act of loving the Creator I thus pass to such a knowledge of His several characteristics as have never hitherto found place in my mind, why, love must throw an inexpressible power into the commandments; it must make their every letter breathe of Deity. II. Now we desire to show you, in explaining our text, that love not only makes men earnest in obeying, but that THE OBEDIENCE WHICH IT PRODUCES IT ALSO RENDERS EASY. The man who is making it the business of his days to endeavour to obey God's commandments is only striving to exhibit to others the beauty of a system to which he himself is bound. Conscious of the glory of every property of the Almighty; conscious also that as a mirror each property figures itself in law with the most accurate fidelity, his efforts to fulfil the requirements of this law are so many struggles in the sight of the world, that "men seeing His good works, may glorify His Father which is in heaven." If this be a true account of Christian obedience, it plainly follows that whatever God's commandments may be to the man who merely observes their tenor, to the man who is striving with all his heart and all his soul to obey them, they are not, and they cannot be, grievous. He sees a beauty and a holiness and a wisdom in their every enactment, in their every requisition, even the beauty, the holiness and the wisdom of Him who delivered such a code to His creatures. And when, therefore, he sets himself to the keeping the law, and so to the endeavouring to express in living and legible characters the moral loveliness which has been disclosed to him by the Spirit, we see not how he can find it burdensome, though he may find obedience difficult in the writing, in the vivid tracery of action what God hath written in the rich alphabet of His purposes. Are the commandments of Satan grievous to those

who are His bondsmen? grievous when they bid them handle the wine-cup, mix in the carnival, and gather the gold? And why not grievous? Are they not heavy with the chains of the prison-house, ponderous with accumulated penalties, burdened with woe and wrath sufficient to weigh down creation? Yet to those who obey them, they are not grievous. The inclination is towards obedience; and when these meet there cannot be grievousness. In like manner are the commandments of God not grievous to those who are His children. And why not grievous? Are they not weighty with massive duties, laden with impositions under which the very giants in religion sink and bow down? We own it, yet we maintain that to those who obey they are not grievous. The desire is towards obedience; the wish, the longing, all are towards obedience. And if God by His grace have brought round such a revolution of the sentiments and affections, that keeping His commandments is synonymous with loving Him, you must show that loving God is "grievous" ere you can show that His commandments are "grievous." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Christ's commandments not grievous*:—I. RELIGION IS NOT AN IMPRACTICABLE THING, AS SOME MEN SUGGEST, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR US TO LIVE UP TO IT. Take the hardest part of the Christian yoke, that is to say, forgiveness of enemies, denying our worldly interests, and renouncing all we have for the sake of Jesus Christ. Yet there is nobody can say that these things are impossible. Thousands have actually done all these things, and that upon far lighter motives and considerations than Christ's religion offers. And if these things be practicable, why must we not think the same of the rest of the Christian precepts, such as owning God for our Creator, and as such paying Him our constant tribute of worship, and prayer, and praise, using with temperance and moderation the good things He vouchsafes us, being honest and just and faithful in all our dealings, and showing kindness and charity to all our fellow-creatures. Ay, but it will be said I have not fairly represented the matter; the impossibility of keeping God's commandments doth not lie in any particular instance of duty; but the objection is that our duty is impracticable in the whole. But it was never intended to leave out of the account the gracious allowances that God hath promised by Christ Jesus to make for the infirmities of human nature. II. AS THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD ARE NOT GRIEVOUS UPON ACCOUNT THAT THEY ARE IMPOSSIBLE, SO NEITHER ARE THEY GRIEVOUS IN THIS RESPECT, THAT THEY ARE UNNATURAL, OR A FORCE UPON THE CONSTITUTION OF MANKIND. As long as human nature is as it is, the happiness of mankind can consist in nothing else but in using their liberty according to the best rules of reason, and those we are sure are but another name for the laws of religion. And the very transgressing those rules, though God had annexed no penalties to the transgression, would of itself have found a sufficient punishment. Ay, but it will be said, is it not plain that men are born with several strong inclinations to pleasure, to wealth, to power, and greatness, and the like? And doth not religion put a terrible curb upon all those appetites and passions, how then can you call the laws of it agreeable to nature? Why, to this I answer, that as to all the appetites and passions that men are born, religion, as it is taught us in the gospel, doth not hinder the satisfaction of any of them. All that our religion forbids is the irregularity and exorbitancy of our passions. III. LET OUR NATURAL INABILITIES AND OUR AVERSIONS TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD BE AS GREAT AS THEY WILL, YET THE SUPERNATURAL ASSISTANCE WE MAY EXPECT FROM GOD FOR THE CARRYING ON OF THIS WORK WILL BE SUFFICIENT AT LEAST TO MAKE THE SCALES EVEN. Though the devil and our own corrupt natures may tempt us strongly one way, yet the spirit of Christ and His invisible attendants that pitch their tents round about us, do incline us as much the other way. Nor can there be any snares laid for us by the wicked one, but what by the assistance of this invisible spiritual army that fights for us we shall easily break and overcome. IV. This ought also to be acknowledged in this argument, that though there be great difficulties in religion, though as the temper of mankind now generally stands it is much against the grain to serve God, yet these difficulties are chiefly occasioned by our prejudices and evil habits, by our being used to a contrary course of life. But then we are to remember that IN A LITTLE TIME THESE DIFFICULTIES WILL WEAR OFF AND WE SHALL FIND AFTER SOME TRIAL THAT A LIFE OF SINCERE RELIGION WILL BE FAR MORE NATURAL AND DELIGHTFUL THAN ANY COURSE OF SIN THAT WE WERE FORMERLY ENGAGED IN. If custom and long usage have such a strange power as to make vice and sin not only supportable, but also pleasant to us, then much more will the same custom and usage make virtue so, than which, as we have seen, nothing is more agreeable, more natural to the minds of men. We shall then acknowledge that we never till now enjoyed our true

liberty, and shall rather choose to die than to return to that hard bondage we before served in to sin and Satan. V. WHEREAS IT IS URGED AGAINST A LIFE OF RELIGION, THAT THERE IS MUCH PAINS AND WATCHFULNESS REQUIRED TO IT: THIS IS SO FAR FROM BEING A REAL DIFFICULTY OR INCONVENIENCE THAT REALLY IT IS BUT THE NATURAL EFFECT OF OUR MAKE AND CONSTITUTION. We cannot possibly be happy but in motion, and therefore to charge this as a hardship in religion that it set our wits at work, that it exercises our diligence, is a very unreasonable thing. That which makes any man uneasy in labour is not his being busy and intent upon a thing, but his spending himself upon such things or in such ways as are no ways agreeable to him. As, for instance, when he is either employed on such exercises as do more than ordinarily exhaust his animal spirits, and bring great heaviness and languor upon him; or when he lays out his pains upon that which no ways suits with his temper and genius; or, lastly, when he hath such a business in hand that he hath no prospect of bringing it to good effect, but his labour seems likely to be lost upon it. But now the diligence and application that we must use in this matter of virtue and religion (let it be otherwise as great as you please) yet hath none of those inconveniences attending upon it. VI. Let all the hardships and difficulties of religion be magnified as much as we please, yet THE MIGHTY MOTIVES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS WE HAVE FROM THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST TO UNDERTAKE THAT WAY WILL VERY MUCH OUTWEIGH THEM. 1. Let the difficulties of religion be never so great, yet we have God's promise that He will stand by us, and enable us both to support them and to overcome them, if we ourselves be but honest (1 Cor. x. 13). 2. Though our religion were attended with very great difficulties, yet is there nothing in that peace of conscience which every good man enjoys while he pursues virtuous ways for the smoothing those difficulties. 3. If to this we add the mighty unspeakable rewards that are promised to all faithful persevering Christians in the other world, and the sad portion that doth await all wicked men, let the difficulties of religion be never so great, yet there will be no comparison between sin and virtue, which of them is the easier, and which of them most recommends itself to the choice of mankind. (*Abp. John Sharp.*) *God's commandments not grievous*:—It must ever be borne in mind that it is a very great and arduous thing to attain to heaven (Matt. xxii. 14, vii. 14; Luke xiii. 24, xiv. 26). On the other hand, it is evident to any one who reads the New Testament with attention that Christ and His apostles speak of a religious life as something easy, pleasant, and comfortable. Thus, in the text, "His commandments are not grievous." In like manner our Saviour says (Matt. xi. 28–30). Solomon, also, in the Old Testament, speaks in the same way of true wisdom (Prov. iii. 17–24). Again, we read in Micah (chap. vi. 8), "What doth the Lord require of thee," &c., as if it were a little and an easy thing so to do. Now it must be admitted, first of all, as matter of fact, that God's commandments are grievous to the great mass of Christians. Accordingly, men of worldly minds, finding the true way of life unpleasant to walk in, have attempted to find out other and easier roads; and have been accustomed to argue that there must be another way which suits them better than that which religious men walk in, for the very reason that Scripture declares that Christ's commandments are not grievous. Some have gone as far as boldly to say, "God will not condemn a man merely for taking a little pleasure," by which they mean leading an irreligious and profligate life. And many there are who virtually maintain that we may live to the world, so that we do so decently, and yet live to God; arguing that this world's blessings are given us by God, and therefore may lawfully be used moderately and thankfully. Now then let us proceed to consider how God fulfils His engagements to us, that His ways are ways of pleasantness. 1. Now, supposing some superior promised you any gifts in a particular way, and you did not follow his directions, would he have broken his promise, or you have voluntarily excluded yourselves from the advantage? Evidently you would have brought about your own loss; you might, indeed, think his offer not worth accepting, burdened, as it was, with a condition annexed to it, still you could not in any propriety say that he failed in his engagement. Now when Scripture promises us that its commandments shall be easy, it couples the promise with the injunction that we should seek God early (Prov. viii. 17; Eccl. xii. 1; Mark x. 14). Youth is the time of His covenant with us, when He first gives us His Spirit; first giving then that we may then forthwith begin our return of obedience to Him. Now it is obvious that obedience to God's commandments is ever easy, and almost without effort to those who begin to serve Him from the beginning of their days; whereas those who wait awhile find it grievous in proportion to their delay. For consider how gently God leads

us on in our early years, and how very gradually He opens upon us the complicated duties of life. A child at first has hardly anything to do but to obey his parents; of God he knows just as much as they are able to tell him, and he is not equal to many thoughts either about Him or about the world. And while on the one hand his range of duty is very confined, observe how he is assisted in performing it. First, he has no bad habits to hinder the suggestions of his conscience; indolence, pride, ill-temper, do not then act as they afterwards act, when the mind has accustomed itself to disobedience, as stubborn, deep-seated impediments in the way of duty. To obey requires an effort, of course; but an effort like the bodily effort of the child's rising from the ground, when he has fallen on it; not the effort of shaking off drowsy sleep; not the effort (far less) of violent bodily exertion in a time of sickness and long weakness: and the first effort made, obedience on a second trial will be easier than before, till at length it will be easier to obey than not to obey. Doubtless new trials would come on him; bad passions, which he had not formed a conception of, would assail him; but (1 John v. 18; iii. 19). And so he would grow up to man's estate, his duties at length attaining their full range, and his soul being completed in all its parts for the due performance of them. Thus Christ's commandments, viewed as He enjoins them on us, are not grievous. They would be grievous if put upon us all at once; but they are not heaped on us, according to His order of dispensing them, which goes upon an harmonious and considerate plan; by little and little, first one duty, then another, then both, and so on. Moreover, they come upon us while the safeguard of virtuous principle is forming naturally and gradually in our minds by our very deeds of obedience, and is following them as their reward. 2. All this being granted, it still may be objected, since the commandments of God are grievous to the generality of men, where is the use of saying what men ought to be, when we know what they are? and how is it fulfilling a promise that His commandments shall not be grievous, by informing us that they ought not to be? It is one thing to say that the law is in itself holy, just, and good, and quite a different thing to declare it is not grievous to sinful man. In answering this question, I fully admit that our Saviour spoke of man as he is, as a sinner, when He said His yoke should be easy to him. On the other hand, I grant, that if man cannot obey God, obedience must be grievous; and I grant too (of course) that man by nature cannot obey God. But observe nothing has here been said, nor by St. John in the text, of man as by nature born in sin; but of man as a child of grace, as Christ's purchased possession, who goes before us with His mercy, puts the blessing first, and then adds the command; regenerates us, and then bids us obey. When, then, men allege their bad nature as an excuse for their dislike of God's commandments, if, indeed, they are heathens, let them be heard, and an answer may be given to them even as such. But with heathens we are not now concerned. These men make their complaint as Christians, and as Christians they are most unreasonable in making it; God having provided a remedy for their natural incapacity in the gift of His Spirit. Hear St. Paul's words (Rom. v. 15-21). And now to what do the remarks I have been making tend, but to this?—to humble every one of us. For, however faithfully we have obeyed God, and however early we began to do so, surely we might have begun sooner than we did, and might have served Him more heartily. Let each of us reflect upon his own most gross and persevering neglect of God at various seasons of his past life. How considerate He has been to us! How did He lead us on, duty by duty, as if step by step upwards, by the easy rounds of that ladder whose top reaches to heaven! What could have been done more to His vineyard, that He hath not done in it? And "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous." Why, then, have they been grievous to us? Why have we erred from His ways, and hardened our hearts from His fear? Let us, then, turn to the Lord, while yet we may. Difficult it will be in proportion to the distance we have departed from Him. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *Love and law*.—I. WHAT IS THE AFFECTION THAT A GOOD CHRISTIAN BEARS TO CHRIST? It is love; yes, that is the Christian virtue, that is the Evangelical grace. It is the main difference betwixt the law and the gospel, timor and amor. Not that a Christian ought to be free from all kind of fear. There is a threefold fear to which we are liable. 1. As we were in our primitive state of subjection, so we owe to God a fear of loyalty as good subjects to their Prince and Sovereign. 2. Our state of rebellion, that brought upon us the fear of slavery. 3. Our state of adoption, that begets in us a filial and son-like fear. Fear, then, is not wholly excluded from the state of a Christian; but yet the grace that the gospel aims at is the grace

of love (1 Tim. i. 5). 1. This love of God gives a chief title and denomination to Christians; it is their badge and cognizance (1 Cor. viii. 3). He sets much by such, and owns them, and highly accounts of them. 2. This love is the title and assurance of all His promises. 3. Love is the ingratiating quality of all our services; it is that which commends us and our services to God's acceptance. It is love that is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. xiii. 10). Thus Christ shows what kind of obedience He expects at our hands (Job xiv.). "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." The language of the gospel is not, if ye will avoid wrath, vengeance, escape damnation, then perform obedience to me; but, If ye love Me. 1. All other motives are base and servile without this willing and loving affection. 2. The service of love is only accepted because it alone is an ingenuous service, and of a right intention. 3. This service out of love is most acceptable to God because this kind of service is most honourable to God. God is a gracious sovereign, not a cruel tyrant, and so desires to be served as good subjects serve their king—out of love. 4. The service of love is the only service that God sets much by, because that service which arises from love is the only constant and lasting service. Love is long-breathed and will hold out and persevere; whereas fear is a flincher and will soon tire and start aside. II. THE FRUIT OF THIS LOVING AFFECTION, the action that flows from it, that is obedience. Herein is love, that we keep His commandments—that is the kindly proof of our love. 1. It shows our love to God must be an active, and operative, and working love. Indeed, love is seated in the will, the fountain of action; it rests not in our understanding, the knowing faculty. It is not a mere notion or speculation, swimming in the brain, but a devout affection rooted in the heart. 2. It puts another qualification on our love; it is not a love of equality, but a love of subjection and inferiority; such a love as the inferior bears to his superior that hath a power to command him. 3. It shows that our love to God must be a love regulated and restrained to what God commands us. Offer to Him not thine inventions, but His own prescriptions. 4. This shows our love to God must be entire and universal, of as large extent, as all God's commandments. As before ye heard of a restriction, so here we meet with an extension. Love must be the fulfilling of the law. III. WHAT IS THE DISPOSITION AND INCLINATION THAT HE WHICH LOVES GOD FINDS IN HIMSELF TO GOD'S COMMANDMENTS? 1. Indeed, in some respects, it is most true, God's commandments are exceeding heavy. (1) Take the law of God at its full height and pitch of perfection, so it hath a great difficulty in it; yea, in a manner, an impossibility in it to all men since Adam. (2) Take the law in the lowest pitch of righteousness, yet an unregenerate man cannot obey it. He is so far from fulfilling all the law that he cannot perform the least part of it. If the root be not good, which is faith working by love, the fruit, though outwardly specious, is inwardly vicious. (3) Consider the law in the evangelical mitigation and abatement of it, yet still the saints of God find difficulty in it. A regenerate man is two men. That which is spiritual and renewed in him, that readily conforms to the law of God. "The Spirit is willing," saith our Saviour. Aye, but the flesh is weak; nay, oftentimes wilful, stubborn, and resisting. 2. But yet it is most true what the text affirms, God's commandments are not grievous. His service is no such hard service as the world accounts it. It is a hard service indeed (for why should we be left to a lawless liberty?), but it is an ingenuous service. God's servants find no grievances in this employment. (1) Look upon their state and condition. God's people are not in any base, servile condition; but (a) they are called unto a state of liberty, and liberty is sweet in itself and sweetens all our employments. (b) As it is a free so it is an honourable service. As we know, the greatness of the Master dignifies and ennobles the service that is done unto Him. (2) Look upon their task and employment, you shall find the service of God is no such wearisome service. (a) The work which God enjoins them is possible to them. God's commandments are made possible to a regenerate man (Phil. iv. 13). Flesh and blood sees nothing in the law of God but impossibility; like the unbelieving spies—oh, we cannot conquer the land. But faith and love, like Caleb and Joshua, conceive it may be done, and undertake it readily. (b) This work is easy; I said it even now. (c) This work is not only possible and easy, but pleasant and delightful. A good Christian finds exceeding great pleasure and sweetness in it. (3) Look upon the encouragements that Christians find in the service of God; they will make it appear that the service of God is no such irksome service. (a) God helps and assists His servants in all their works. This He doth by putting their souls into a right frame of holiness. (b) God's merciful

connivance. When His servants that desire to serve Him, yet fail, and fall short of what is their duty, God winks at their failings, and passes by them. See this graciously promised to us (Mal. iii. 17). (c) The many heartenings and secret cheerings that God vouchsafes to His servants in the course of their obedience. He is no churlish Nabal, sour and harsh to His poor servants, but puts life and heart into them. (i.) He vouchsafes His presence to them, as Boaz to his reapers. The Master's eye, the cheerfulness of His countenance, is the man's encouragement. (ii.) He speaks cheerfully to their hearts. "Well done, faithful servant" (Acts xviii. 9). (d) His loving acceptance of our poor services. Our faithful endeavours, our honest desires, our sincere intentions, are graciously accepted. (e) His bountiful rewarding of us, besides the grand payment, the weight of glory, the reward of the inheritance. How many encouraging blessings and favours doth He bestow upon His servants, over and above? Besides their wages they have their avails out of their Master's bounty. David found it and acknowledgeth it. Thou hast dealt bountifully with Thy servant. (*Bp. Brownrigg.*) *The practicableness of our Christian duty*:—I. THE LAWS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION ARE REASONABLE IN THEMSELVES; that is, they are agreeable to the natural light of our minds and the answers of inward truth, whenever we put the question to it. It is true, there are some few positive commands in the gospel which do not directly arise from any principle of natural reason, but then they are such as cannot be urged to prove the difficulties of revealed religion; yet supposing the truth of the Christian revelation, God had wise reasons for their institution. II. THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION LAYS THE ONLY FOUNDATION OF INWARD PEACE AND SATISFACTION OF MIND. This indeed is a necessary consequence of our acting as becomes reasonable agents. And who would not be content to undergo some slight trouble and inconvenience, or to deny himself in many things, provided he may have all things calm and quiet within? 1. The practice of religion has a natural tendency to secure the peace and freedom of our minds, as it preserves them in an even and sedate temper; as it removes every occasion of the disorders which are apt to ruffle us, and keeps our appetites within their due bounds. 2. Upon a moral account, religion gives us the supports of a good conscience, the assurances of God's favour, and fills the mind with bright and pleasing ideas. 3. Christians, in a faithful discharge of their duty, have their hearts frequently filled with the delights of an overcoming and supernatural grace. III. WE ARE ENCOURAGED TO THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION BY THE ASSISTANCES OF A SUPERNATURAL POWER AND GRACE. IV. WE ARE FURTHER ENCOURAGED TO THE PRACTICE OF OUR CHRISTIAN DUTY BY THE PROPOSAL OF A GLORIOUS AND ETERNAL REWARD. Conclusion: 1. Are the laws of religion reasonable in themselves? Let us then either follow them, or renounce reason. 2. Does the practice of religion conduce to the inward peace and satisfaction of our minds? Why do we oppose our own happiness? How strange is the infatuation of sin! How fraught with contradiction! 3. Have we indeed a Divine principle to assist us in the performance of our duty? Let us then, in all our spiritual wants and conflicts, be fervent in our prayers to God for the assistances of His Holy Spirit, and faithfully comply with them. 4. Besides all these motives to religion, has the good God still encouraged us to the practice of it by proposing to us the great and glorious rewards of eternity? Let us live as if we really believe them. It is impossible that any difficulty should stand before a firm and steady belief in them. (*R. Fiddes, D.D.*) *The commandments of Christ not grievous*:—Christ's commandments cannot justly be esteemed grievous, because they are not—1. Unreasonable. 2. Impracticable. 3. Dishonourable. 4. Dangerous. 5. Unpleasant. 6. Unprofitable. (*S. Palmer.*) *The perfection of the law of God*:—This does not mean that even the sincere Christian finds no difficulty in obedience. His life is a daily struggle. Does not the passage following our text speak of a victory? And does not victory imply the previous conflict? And yet, on the other hand, it is true that "the yoke of Christ is easy and His burden light" (Matt. xi. 30). I will not dwell on the mild and gentle character of the gospel ordinances, in contrast with the complex and burdensome ritual of Moses. But leaving this point, I ask whether the commandments of God are grievous when brought into comparison with the law of sin, when that tyranny is established in the soul? Oh, the labours, the toils, the vexing cases, the soul-destroying practice, of those who are governed by Satan! Earthquake and pestilence, and famine and sword, have cut off multitudes; but who slow all these? If the hand of God hath slain in its direct judgment its thousands, wilful sin hath offered on its thousand altars its ten thousands. The commandments of God, indeed, are not grievous comparatively. But neither are they

grievous considered in themselves absolutely, irrespective of all comparison. 1. For, consider the Lawgiver, is He not such a Being, that, could it be proved that any commandments, purporting to come from Him, are rigid and unbearable to a well-constituted mind, it would be at once a sufficient evidence that they did not derive their origin from Him? "God," our apostle says, "is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (chap. i. 3). Then, we are assured, that His commandments will be very pure, and strictly just (Psa. xix. 9). But God is "love," benevolence, untinged by any infusion of malignity. 2. Let us take another view of the subject, and contemplate the persons who obey these commandments. The commandments are grievous to the people of the world, it is admitted; for that which is the object of the mind's distaste and hatred, must of necessity be burdensome. But every true Christian has a mind attuned to the will of God. He is "born of God," and as the invariable consequence of this change a similarity of character, of judgment, of taste, is formed within him. God, and the child of God, therefore, view the commandments in the same light. God does not esteem them grievous; neither does he that is begotten of Him (Psa. cxix. 128). 3. We shall take another view of the subject, by considering the assistances which are given to those who obey the commandments. The Holy Ghost is promised (Isa. xl. 30, 31; xli. 10; lix. 19; Eph. iii. 16). 4. Regard their nature. Resolving the commandments into their most simple element, we find that love is the fulfilling of the whole law. There could be no defect in our obedience did such a love exist in its perfection. Then, I ask, can God's commandments be grievous to the man who obeys them? Can it be a burdensome thing to the soul to overflow with benevolence? 5. Consider the effect of obedience to the commandments upon the happiness of life, and you arrive at the same conclusion—that they are not grievous. "The statutes of the Lord," David says, "are right, rejoicing the heart" (Psa. xix. 8). In keeping them there is great reward. "Great peace have they which love Thy law" (Psa. cxix. 165). And who shall say how many miseries are turned away from the lot of him who keeps in the narrow way of the heavenly precepts? 6. One further view of the subject is necessary to complete the argument for the truth of our text. Let us consider it, then, in the connection which exists between the observance of the commandments and the attainment of future glory. Obedience is a preparatory formation of the tempers of heaven; the tuning of the soul for the anthems of eternity. The labourer rises up early, and late takes rest, and eats the bread of carefulness; but his toil is reckoned as nothing for the wages that are to recompense it. The adventurer ploughs the stormy deep, travels over continents of ice, and explores the frost-bound north; and his labours are not grievous, even in hope, of some discovery with which his name shall in after days be linked. On every hand fatigue is cheerfully borne, privations are submitted to, for some recompense bounded by the present life. And is not the Christian's glory lofty enough, and his crown bright enough, to induce us to say that the commandments, in obeying which he is preparing for it, are not grievous? (T. Kennion, M.A.)

Ver. 4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.—*The greatest character and the greatest conquest*:—I. THE GREATEST CHARACTER: "Born of God." This means a moral generation in men of a Divine character. It implies three things. 1. Filial devotion. 2. Moral resemblance. Like begets like, children are like their parents. He who is morally born of God resembles God in spirit and in character. 3. Glorious heirship. "If a son, then an heir of God through Christ." II. THE GREATEST CONQUEST. "Overcometh the world." The world is here used to represent the mighty aggregation of evil. The conquest of the world includes the subordination—1. Of matter to mind. The rendering of all material elements, circumstances, and influences, subservient to the elevating of the reason and the ennobling of the soul. It includes the subordination—2. Of the mind to God. The devotion of the intellect to the study of God; of the heart to the love of God; of the conscience to the will of God. Sublime conquest this! The grand difference between a man Divinely born and others is this, that he conquers the world whilst others are conquered by it. (Homilist.) *Worldliness*:—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE IS A LENGTHENED CONTEST WITH THE THREE ENEMIES—"sin, the world, the devil." What is the "world," and what is "worldliness"? Can we find in the Scriptures any full lists of acts which are worldly? No. It is the genius of Christianity to give us principles, and not precise rules. II. IN THIS VERY LIBERTY CONSISTS THE STRICTNESS OF THE LAW. And owing to this, too, there is a difficulty in obeying it, far beyond that of obeying a law. To escape this difficulty various attempts have been

made to lay down precise rules, and to define exactly what is and what is not "the world" and "worldly." The most common of these tests is, as is well known, that of presence at social reunions and amusements of a particular class. It seems uncharitable to pronounce as necessarily irreligious those who, with every other token of sincere piety, are found nevertheless sometimes in places where others of us are never to be seen. If a person whose whole life and walk is that of a Christian says that he really before God has come to the conclusion that his spiritual growth is in no wise retarded by the enjoyment of some pleasure—not in itself sinful—and that his example is not likely to be injurious to others, it does seem monstrous to say to him, "That is one of the things I have set down as belonging to the world; and as you see no harm in it, you are outside the covenant." To our own Master we each of us stand or fall. Moreover, the test is insufficient, and therefore deceptive. It is quite possible to bear it without a particle of religion, or without even any profession of religion. Another evil arising from this arbitrary and most inadequate test of worldliness is, that the persons who apply it are very liable to be deceived by it themselves. From habitually speaking of one kind of worldliness they lapse into the practical belief that there is none other; and, having clearly overcome that—sometimes after a long trial of physical rather than spiritual strength—they imagine that they have given up the world, and that their contest with that enemy, at all events, is at an end. If we do strip off our ornaments of gold and cast them into the fire, we must take heed lest we worship the calf into which they are molten. Another, and not a trifling danger of these false tests arises from the fact that very many of those who use them are among the best, the most pious, and the most truly unworldly persons on earth. Now, when such persons use as tests of victory over the world the forsaking of those two or three courses or habits, the impression conveyed to the thoughtless votary of dissipation is this—"These amusements, then, are what I have to give up; on the subject of these is the main difference between myself and those about whose piety there can be no doubt. Well, I shall give them up assuredly at some time, as many have done before me, and then I shall stand in their position." And, as time and change of circumstances will in many cases bring about this resemblance, they leave it to time to bring about, and make no effort to overcome a "world" which, as they have been accustomed to hear it described, will in all probability one day fly away of its own accord.

III. PRECISE RULES UPON MATTERS INTRINSICALLY INDIFFERENT, BUT CAPABLE OF BEING MADE OCCASIONS OF FOSTERING A WORLDLY SPIRIT, ARE TO BE AVOIDED, BECAUSE THEY GIVE TO THOSE WHO AT PRESENT WANT TO BE GUIDED NEITHER BY THE LETTER NOR THE SPIRIT A FALSE IMPRESSION AS TO WHAT THAT WORLD IS BY THE SUBJUGATION OF WHICH WE ARE TOLD THE CHILD OF GOD IS CHARACTERISED. Before you come to be Christians you must bear far stricter tests than these. Especially in these cravings for excitement and gaiety, which are by your own admissions the forms in which the world is most alluring, and because they are so, you must be completely changed. But the contest does not end there or then. To you and all of us it ends on earth, and while we live, nowhere and never. For "the world" is not a time, or a place, or a class of persons, or a definable course of acts, or a definite set of amusements; it is a system pervading every place, extending from age to age, tempting us in all our occupations, mixing itself with all our thoughts, insinuating itself under forms the most unsuspected, lurking in pursuits the most harmless—yea, in pursuits, without it, the most holy—checking aspirations the most noble, sullyng affections the most pure. (*J. C. Coghlan, D.D.*)

*The glory of a truly good man:—*I. HE HAS THE HIGHEST MORAL PEDIGREE. In conventional society there are fools who pride themselves in their ancestry. 1. In him there is a moral resemblance to the greatest Being. As the human offspring partakes of the nature of his parent, so the good man partakes of the moral character of God, a character loving, pure, just. 2. Over him there is the tenderest care of the greatest Being. "As a father pitieth his children," &c. 3. In him there is the most loyal devotion to the greatest Being. He loves the "Most High" supremely, constantly, practically. II. HE ACHIEVES THE HIGHEST MORAL CONQUEST. He overcomes the world. He conquers errors, lusts; he overcomes bad habits and reforms corrupt institutions. (*Homilist.*)

*Overcoming the world:—*I. THE CONTEST WITH THE WORLD. It is assumed to be universal. None can avoid it. If we follow Christ we must resist the world. The forms in which this warfare must be maintained are many and dangerous. The apostle had in his view the persecutions which believers were required to encounter in his day from the world. We have cause to be thankful that we are not exposed to the trials of those times. Even supposing, however, that

our danger does not lie in this direction, it may still be great in another. The love of money may eat as a canker into the soul. It may tempt to practices of very doubtful propriety. It may harden the heart against the claims of others. Even the enlightened and godly man finds the extreme danger of this subtle enemy. It is a principal hindrance to his growth in grace. It can be withstood only by a most determined resistance. II. How THIS VICTORY MAY BE GAINED. 1. Regeneration. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." There is great force in the term "whatsoever." It refers to the work of the Spirit in the soul. So far as that prevails there is a power and principle in direct antagonism to the world. And so far as the new man prevails, it overcometh the world. Paul reiterates the same sentiment (Rom. xii. 2). He takes for granted that unless there be this transformation of mind, there will be conformity to the world, but that such transformation will overcome it. How it does so may easily be shown. (1) The mind is then enlightened. It sees the world in its true character. (2) The conscience is quickened. There is the utmost jealousy lest the world should obtain the place of God. (3) The heart is purified. Thus the taste is rendered pure and heavenly. The world, therefore, cannot please nor satisfy. 2. Faith. "This is the victory," &c. Show how faith secures such a blessed issue. (1) It does so by engaging the attention with Jesus Christ. This is prominent in the verse before us. "He believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." His mind becomes thus occupied with the high themes of the person and work of Christ. In comparison with them, all other things fall into insignificance in his esteem. (2) Again, the believer is much strengthened in these elevated views by observing that one design of Christ's salvation is to secure a victory over the present world. (3) Further, he is encouraged while he is warned by considering the example of Christ and of those who have been conformed to Him. They conquered, and so may he. (4) Finally, his faith carries him into close and constant intercourse with eternity, and thus a mighty influence is brought to bear upon him, and deaden his attachments to the present world. It is of the very nature of faith to unveil the eternal world. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *The conflicts and conquest of the born of God*:—I. THE SUBJECT PRINCIPALLY SPOKEN OF, the born of God. This doctrine, however ridiculed by some, our Saviour preached with great plainness, as absolutely necessary. To be born of God is to have a supernatural principle of spiritual life implanted by God in the soul. Concerning this principle of grace, whereby a dead sinner is made alive, let it be observed that it is infused and not acquired. The first principle or spring of good actions may, with equal reason, be supposed to be infused into us as Christians, as it is undoubtedly true that the principle of reasoning is infused into us as men: none ever supposed that the natural power of reasoning may be acquired, though a greater facility or degree thereof is gradually attained. Again, as in nature the seed produces fruit, and in things moral the principle of action produces action, as the principle of reason produces acts of reason, so in things spiritual the principle of grace produces acts of grace. And this principle of grace, which is at least in the order of nature antecedent to any act of grace, is the immediate effect of the power of God. But the words here are not whosoever, in the masculine gender, but whatsoever, in the neuter; and so may with as much, or more propriety, be applied to things than persons. They seem to refer to the inward or spiritual embellishments peculiar to the man of God as a soldier of Christ. As the Christian is one born of God, all his graces are born so too. To instance in faith, hope, and love, the cardinal or principle and most leading of them. How little a matter soever some persons make of believing, as if they had faith at their command, or could believe at pleasure, the Apostle Paul says expressly that "Faith is a fruit of the Spirit," so not the work of man. True Christian hope is also of Divine original. "It is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who giveth us a good hope, through grace" (2 Thess. ii. 16, 17). And that love is a heaven-born grace nothing can be more clear than what this loving apostle says, "Love is of God, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John iv. 7, 16). So that He and His Spirit may properly be called the God, or Spirit of faith, hope, and love. These are a specimen of the rest; for as these, so in like manner the spiritual peace, joy, and consolation of saints, and all their other graces, are born of God; i.e., they receive their birth, rise, and first beginning from Him; and as their first life and all their motion is from Him, He only can put them into motion. Thus the soldier of Christ is girded of God Himself, and furnished by the Holy Spirit with every grace that is needful for his office and exercise. II. To what is said or predicated of the subject of the words—the born of God. IT REFERS TO HIS HONOUR, TO OVERCOME THE WORLD. Neither the gospel of grace nor the graces of

the gospel are given in vain to any person or people. The world is the theatre of action, or field of battle. 1. No man, as a descendant of the first Adam, is born a Christian or a saint, but a sinner. 2. Christians are soldiers by their calling, and their life is a continued warfare. 3. It may animate Christians as soldiers of Christ, inasmuch as all their armour and artillery is proved, and born of God. His Spirit has formed and fitted it for them. 4. We see here the excellency of spiritual grace. 5. To preserve their humility and heighten their thankfulness to God the Spirit, Christians should always remember that whatever advantages or conquests they gain over their spiritual enemies are not owing to their wisdom, power, and fortitude of mind, as men, but to the instrumentality of their graces. III. How or WHEREBY THE CHRISTIAN'S HONOUR OF VICTORY IS ATTAINED; and it is by his faith—"And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The gaieties, pleasures, and advantages of the present life are the arms with which the world has slain its thousands, and with which it still endeavours to delude and destroy mankind; but faith in Jesus Christ detects its fallacy and defeats its purpose on believers. If hope wavers, love chills and loses its wonted fervour, or patience; faith brings in new succours when it tells them, "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 37). In a word, faith is the enemy's killing and the Christian's conquering grace. (*G. Braithwaite, M.A.*) *The world overcome*:—I. THE REAL CHRISTIAN, IN HIS WAY TO HEAVEN, HAS A CONQUEST TO MAKE, A VICTORY TO WIN—he must overcome the world. Why is this? Because the world is fallen from God. Satan is its prince and ruler; and, therefore, at our very baptism we have vowed to renounce it. The devil finds in the world temptations suited to each one of us. One is tempted by riches to deny his God. The smile of the world and hope of its favour make many traitors to God; the fear of its frown, and still more of its sneers, keeps many from confessing Christ before men. II. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN DOETH GAIN THE VICTORY OVER ALL: for "whosoever is born of God overcometh the world." Such a one hath that within him which is greater than the world, even the Spirit of God. The grace of God enables him to persevere; to get the better from day to day of his own evil desires; to resist the world's temptations. III. AND BY WHAT MEANS DOES THE CHRISTIAN GAIN THE VICTORY? "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Not as though there were any strength in ourselves; not as though there were any merit in our faith; but by crediting His testimony, and by daring to act upon it, we obtain knowledge, and strength, and motives which make us conquerors. Let me show this by a comparison. A report is brought that in a distant country labour is wanted and high wages may be gained; that all things are abundant and flourishing. One man who hears the report, though he is able to go, continues where he is, to struggle with poverty. Another, when he hears it, forthwith sells all he has, removes his family, crosses the deep, encounters trials, and at length reaches the promised land of plenty. Why did he go? Because he believed; he had faith in the report; and his strong belief made him overcome all obstacles. So it is with that far higher faith, that gospel faith which is the gift of God, which He works in the heart, and which receives His testimony as true. Let us see how it is that every one who has a true faith in Christ will overcome the world. 1. It is because the believer is fully convinced that the world is evil, that therefore the Son of God came to redeem him from its power, and to bring him to heaven and to God. 2. Again, the believer knows that the Lord Jesus conquered the world, not for Himself but for His followers, and that they must study and strive to be sharers in His victory. 3. The Christian sees by the example of Jesus Christ, by His life of humiliation and self-denial, and yet more by His bitter sufferings and death, that the world is to be renounced. This is the lesson of His Cross. 4. Faith teaches the Christian that the Saviour is able to make all grace abound towards him. 5. And once more, it is by faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, in His exaltation to Heaven, and His constant intercession for us there, that we are begotten again unto a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*) **THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, EVEN OUR FAITH.**—*Faith's conquest of the world*:—I. WHAT DID ST. JOHN MEAN BY THE "WORLD"? The old Greeks had employed the very word which St. John here uses, to describe the created universe, or this earth, in all its ordered beauty; and the word often occurs in this sense in Scripture (Rom. i. 20; Acts xvii. 24; 2 Pet. iii. 6). But neither of these senses can belong to the word in the passage before us. This material world is not an enemy to be conquered; it is a friend to be reverently consulted, that we may know something of the Eternal Mind that framed it (Psas. xix. 1; xxiv. 1). Does St.

John then mean by the world the entire human family—the whole world of men? We find the word, undoubtedly, used in this sense, also in the Bible (Matt. v. 14; xiii. 38; xviii. 7; John viii. 12; viii. 26; xii. 19; 1 Cor. iv. 13). This use of the word is popular as well as classical: it is found in Shakespeare and Milton; but it is not St. John's meaning in the present passage. For this world, which thus comprises all human beings, included the Christian Church and St. John himself. Whereas the world of which St. John is speaking is plainly a world with which St. John has nothing to do; a world which is hostile to all that he has at heart; a world to be overcome by every one that is born of God. In this passage, then, the world means human life and society, so far as it is alienated from God, through being centred on material objects and aims, and thus opposed to God's Spirit and His kingdom. And this is the sense of the word in the majority of cases where it occurs in the writings of St. John (John. vii. 7; xiv. 17, 27, 30; xv. 18, 19; xvii. 9, 14; 1 John ii. 15–17; v. 4, 19). This world, according to St. Paul, has a spirit of its own, opposed to the Spirit of God; and there are "things of the world" opposed to "the things of God"; and rudiments and elements of the world which are not after Christ; and there is a "sorrow of the world that worketh death," as contrasted with a "godly sorrow unto repentance, not to be repented of"; so that, gazing on the Cross of Christ, St. Paul says "that by it the world is crucified to him, and he to the world"—so utter is the moral separation between them. To the same purpose is St. James's definition of true religion and undefiled, before God and the Father; it consists not only in active philanthropy, but in a man's keeping himself unspotted from the world. And there is the even more solemn warning of the same apostle, "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God." II. This body of language shows that the CONCEPTION OF THE WORLD AS HUMAN LIFE, SO FAR AS IT IS ALIENATED FROM GOD, IS ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT AND DISTINCT TRUTHS BROUGHT BEFORE US IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. The world is a living tradition of disloyalty and dislike to God and His kingdom, just as the Church is or was meant to be a living tradition of faith, hope, and charity; a mass of loyal, affectionate, energetic devotion to the cause of God. Of the millions and millions of human beings who have lived, nearly every one probably has contributed something, his own little addition, to the great tradition of materialised life which St. John calls the world. The world of the apostolic age was the Roman society and empire, with the exception of the small Christian Church. When a Christian of that day named the world, his thoughts first rested on the vast array of wealth, prestige, and power, whose centre was at Rome. Both St. Peter in his first Epistle (v. 13), and St. John in the Revelation (xviii. 2), salute pagan Rome as Babylon; as the typical centre of organised worldly power among the sons of men, at the very height of its alienation from Almighty God. The world, then, of the apostolic age was primarily a vast organisation. But it was not a world that could last (Rev. xviii. 1, 2, 4, 5). Alaric the Goth appeared before Rome; and the city of the Cæsars became the prey of the barbarians. The event produced a sensation much more profound than would now be occasioned by the sack of London. The work of a thousand years, the greatest effort to organise human life permanently under a single system of government, the greatest civilisation that the world had known, at once so vicious and so magnificent, had perished from sight. It seemed to those who witnessed it as though life would be no longer endurable, and that the end had come. But before the occurrence of this catastrophe, another and a more remarkable change had been silently taking place. For nearly three hundred years the Church had been leavening the empire. And the empire, feeling and dreading the ever-advancing, ever-widening influence, had again and again endeavoured to extinguish it in a sea of blood. From the year of the crucifixion, A.D. 29, to the Edict of Toleration, A.D. 313, there were 284 years of almost uninterrupted growth, promoted by almost perpetual suffering; until at last, in St. Augustine's language, the Cross passed from the scenes of public executions to the diadem of the Cæsars. The world now to a great extent used Christian language, it accepted outwardly Christian rules. And in order to keep this world at bay, some Christians fled from the great highways and centres of life to lead the life of solitaires in the Egyptian deserts; while others even organised schisms, like that of the Donatists, which, if small and select, relatively to the great Catholic Church, should at least be unworldly. They forgot that our Lord had anticipated the new state of things by His parables of the net and of the tares; they forgot that whether the world presents itself as an organisation or as a temper, a Christian's business is to encounter and to overcome it. The great question was and is, how to achieve this; and St. John gives us explicit instructions. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our

faith." III. This is, I say, THE QUESTION FOR US OF TO-DAY, no less than for our predecessors in the faith of Christ. For the world is not a piece of the furniture of bygone centuries, which had long since perished, except in the pages of our ancient and sacred books. It is here, around and among us; living and energetic, and true to the character which our Lord and His apostles gave it. It is here, in our business, in our homes, in our conversations, in our literature; it is here, awakening echoes loud and shrill within our hearts, if, indeed, it be not throned in them. Is the world-temper to be overcome by mental cultivation? We live in days when language is used about education and literature, as if of themselves they had an elevating and transforming power in human life. In combination with other and higher influences mental cultivation does much for man. It softens his manners; it tames his natural ferocity. It refines and stimulates his understanding, his taste, his imagination. But it has no necessary power of purifying his affections, or of guiding or invigorating his will. In these respects it leaves him as it finds him. And, if he is bound heart and soul to the material aspects of this present life, it will not help him to break his bonds. Is the world, then, to be overcome by sorrow, by failure, by disappointment; in a word, by the rude teaching of experience? Sorrow and failure are no doubt to many men a revelation. They show that the material scene in which we pass our days is itself passing. They rouse into activity from the depths of our souls deep currents of feeling; and we may easily mistake feeling for something which it is not. Feeling is not faith; it sees nothing beyond the veil. Feeling is not practice; it may sweep the soul in gusts before it, yet commit us to nothing. Feeling deplores when it does not resist; it admires and approves of enterprises which it never attempts. Consequently, self-exhausted, in time it dies back; leaving the soul worse off than it would be, if it had never felt so strongly; worse off, because at once weaker and less sensitive than before. Certainly, if the world is to be overcome, it must be, as St. John tells us, by a power which lifts us above it, and such a power is faith. Faith does two things which are essential to success in this matter. It enables us to measure the world; to appraise it, not at its own, but at its real value. It does this by opening to our view that other and higher world of which Christ our Lord is King, and in which His saints and servants are at home; that world which, unlike this, will last for ever. When "the eyes of a man's understanding are thus enlightened that he may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the saints," faith enables him to take a second step. Faith is a hand whereby the soul lays actual hold on the unseen realities; and so learns to sit loosely to and detach itself from that which only belongs to time. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The victory of faith*.—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S ENEMY, THE WORLD. 1. The tyranny of the present. Worldliness is the attractive power of something present, in opposition to something to come. In this respect, worldliness is the spirit of childhood carried on into manhood. The child lives in the present hour—to-day to him is everthing. Natural in the child, and therefore pardonable, this spirit, when carried on into manhood, is coarse—is worldliness. The most distinct illustration given us of this, is the case of Esau. In this worldliness, moreover, is to be remarked the gamster's desperate play. There is a gambling spirit in human nature. Esau distinctly expresses this: "Behold I am at the point to die, and what shall my birthright profit me?" He might never live to enjoy his birthright; but the pottage was before him, present, certain, there. Now, observe the utter powerlessness of mere preaching to cope with this tyrannical power of the present. 2. The tyranny of the sensual. I call it tyranny, because the evidences of the senses are all powerful, in spite of the protestations of the reason. The man who died yesterday, and whom the world called a successful man—for what did he live? He lived for this world—he gained this world. Houses, lands, name, position in society—all that earth could give of enjoyments—he had. We hear men complain of the sordid love of gold, but gold is merely a medium of exchange for other things: gold is land, titles, name, comfort—all that the world can give. 3. The spirit of society. The spirit of the world is for ever altering—impalpable; for ever eluding, in fresh forms, your attempts to seize it. In the days of Noah the spirit of the world was violence. In Elijah's day it was idolatry. In the day of Christ it was power concentrated and condensed in the government of Rome. In ours, perhaps, it is the love of money. It enters in different proportions into different bosoms; it is found in a different form in contiguous towns; in the fashionable watering-place, and in the commercial city: it is this thing at Athens, and another in Corinth. This is the spirit of the world—a thing in my heart and yours: to be struggled against not so much in the case of others, as in

the silent battle to be done within our own souls. II. THE VICTORY OF FAITH. Faith is a theological expression; yet it is the commonest principle of man's daily life, called in that region prudence, enterprise, or some such name. It is in effect the principle on which alone any human superiority can be gained. Faith, in religion, is the same principle as faith in worldly matters, differing only in its object. The difference between the faith of the Christian and that of the man of the world, or the mere ordinary religionist, is not a difference in mental operation, but in the object of the faith—to believe that Jesus is the Christ is the peculiarity of Christian faith. Do you think that the temperate man has overcome the world, who, instead of the short-lived rapture of intoxication, chooses regular employment, health, and prosperity? Is it not the world in another form, which has his homage? Or do you suppose that the so-called religious man is really the world's conqueror by being content to give up seventy years of enjoyment in order to win innumerable ages of the very same species of enjoyment? Has he not only made earth a hell, in order that earthly things may be his heaven for ever? Thus the victory of faith proceeds from stage to stage; the first victory is, when the present is conquered by the future; the last, when the visible and eternal is despised in comparison of the invisible and eternal. (F. W. Robertson, M.A.)

The victory of faith:—I. First, the text speaks of a GREAT VICTORY—the victory of victories—the greatest of all. A tough battle, I warrant you; not one which carpet knights might win; no easy skirmish; not one he shall gain, who, but a raw recruit to-day, put on his regimentals, and foolishly imagines that one week of service will ensure a crown of glory. Nay, it is a life-long war—a fight needing the power of a strong heart. 1. He overcomes the world when it sets up itself as a legislator, wishing to teach him customs. Men usually swim with the stream like a dead fish; it is only the living fish that goes against it. It is only the Christian who despises customs, who does not care for conventionalisms, who only asks himself the question, "Is it right or is it wrong? If it is right, I will be singular. If there is not another man in this world who will do it, I will do it. I care not what others do; I shall not be weighed by other men; to my own Master I stand or fall. Thus I conquer and overcome the customs of the world." 2. The rebel against the world's customs. And if we do so, what is the conduct of our enemy? She changes her aspect. "That man is a heretic; that man is a fanatic; he is a cant, he is a hypocrite," says the world directly. She lets no stone be unturned whereby she may injure him. 3. "Well," saith the world, "I will try another style," and this, believe me, is the most dangerous of all. A smiling world is worse than a frowning one. It is not in the cold wintry wind that I take off my coat of righteousness and throw it away; it is when the sun comes, when the weather is warm and the air balmy, that I unguardedly strip off my robes and become naked. Some men cannot live without a large amount of praise; and if they have no more than they deserve, let them have it. 4. Sometimes, again, the world turns jailer to a Christian. Many a man has had the chance of being rich in an hour, affluent in a moment, if he would but clutch something which he dare not look at, because God within him said, "No." The world said, "Be rich, be rich"; but the Holy Spirit said, "No! be honest; serve thy God." Oh, the stern contest and the manly combat carried on within the heart! II. But my text speaks of a GREAT BIRTH. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." This new birth is the mysterious point in all religion. To be born again is to undergo a change so mysterious that human words cannot speak of it. As we cannot describe our first birth, so it is impossible for us to describe the second. At the time of the new birth the soul is in great agony—often drowned in seas of tears. It is "a new heart and a right spirit"; a mysterious but yet an actual and real change! Let me tell you, moreover, that this change is a supernatural one. It is not one that a man performs upon himself. It is a new principle infused which works in the heart, enters the very soul and moves the entire man. III. There is a GREAT GRACE. Persons who are born again really do overcome the world. Who are the men that do anything in the world? Are they not always men of faith? Take it even as natural faith. Who wins the battle? Why, the man who knows he will win it, and vows that he will be victor. "Never was a marvel done upon the earth, but it had sprung of faith; nothing noble, generous, or great, but faith was the root of the achievement; nothing comely, nothing famous, but its praise is faith. Leonidas fought in human faith as Joshua in Divine. Xenophon trusted to his skill, and the sons of Matthias to their cause." Faith is mightiest of the mighty. Faith makes you almost as omnipotent as God by the borrowed might of its divinity. Give

us faith and we can do all things. I want to tell you how it is that faith helps Christians to overcome the world. It always does it homeopathically. You say, "That is a singular idea." So it may be. The principle is that "like cures like." So does faith overcome the world by curing like with like. How does faith trample upon the fear of the world? By the fear of God. How does faith overthrow the world's hopes? "There," says the world, "I will give thee this, I will give thee that, if thou wilt be my disciple. There is a hope for you; you shall be rich, you shall be great." But faith says, "I have a hope laid up in heaven; a hope which fadeth not away," and the hope of glory overcomes all the hopes of the world. "Ah!" says the world, "why not follow the example of your fellows?" "Because," says faith, "I will follow the example of Christ." "Well," says the world, "since thou wilt not be conquered by all this, come, I will love thee; thou shalt be my friend." Faith says, "He that is the friend of this world cannot be the friend of God. God loves me." So he puts love against love, fear against fear, hope against hope, dread against dread, and so faith overcomes the world by like curing like. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The true hero:—*

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S POWERFUL FOE. The "god of this world" seeks to "blind men's eyes," and He does this with the "man born of God," chiefly by presenting to him the world's purest good, and tempting him to centre his affections upon that. The constant and bitter struggle is with that which is lawful and right, in its attempts to assume an unlawful and a wrong position; the most arduous contest is with earthly good in its attempts to win back his warmest affections. II. THE CHRISTIAN'S POWERFUL WEAPON. The faith spoken of in the text has its foundation in the belief of the Divine testimony respecting the Son of God. It is the being habitually influenced by that which is spiritual. It is the Cross ever present and trusted in; heaven ever visible and longed for. The world points below, faith above. The world influences us to live to ourselves; faith, to live to Christ. The world would confine our thoughts to time; faith would fix them on eternity.

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S PECULIAR TRIUMPH. That faith which is the gift of God, in its feeblest influence, will impart to the soul higher hopes, nobler pursuits, and warmer affections than can belong to this world. But whilst the Christian thus triumphs over the world, his triumph is peculiar. "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" None but the Christian places himself in opposition to the world. The battle of life indeed rages everywhere around. Interest clashes with interest, and passion strives with passion; but it is not against the world, but for it. And not only is the Christian the only man who is contending against the influence of the world, but he alone possesses the means for such a contest. (*J. C. Rook.*) *The faith that overcometh:—*

I. It is a matter of some consequence for a soldier to be aware of THE ENEMY WITH WHOM HE IS CALLED UPON TO CONTEND, his resources, and the plans which he is likely to resort to in order to overcome him. There is less danger in fighting with an enemy who can be seen, however powerful and determined he may be, than with one who hides himself in a forest and lurks in inaccessible regions. This is a harassing kind of warfare, which is always intended to weary out and exhaust those against whom it is employed. The soldiers of the Cross have little ground of complaint on this head, because they have been told of the enemy who is before and around them, of his character, and of the artifices to which he is certain to resort. II. THE VICTORY WHICH IS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO FIGHT SO AS TO OVERCOME. The victory of faith over the world differs from all other conquests, which individuals or armies of men obtain over each other. When men quarrel, and resort to the tribunals of the country to have their differences settled, the litigant who gains the cause triumphs over his opponent and inflicts upon him serious loss either in his character or in his means, or both. When nations have recourse to war to settle their disputes, disasters, losses, physical suffering, and many evils always follow in the train even of victory. Such are the victories of armies over each other, but such is not the character of the victory of faith which the children of God achieve over the world. No treasure is wasted, no lives are lost, and no suffering is inflicted upon the vanquished enemy. The world is external to the Christian combatant, so that the warfare in its main features is essentially defensive, the valour of faith being employed to repel attacks and to defeat spiritual aggression. Temptation must be met and overcome by peculiar tactics, so that every successful act of resistance is so much gained toward the final victory, with no loss to the vanquished and with every gain to the victor. Victories over enemies are always followed by great rejoicings, which drown the cry of suffering and cause the people

to forget their previous distresses in the exultation of the moment. The high song of eternity can only be chanted by the saints who have overcome the world, proved their valour on the battle-field of spiritual conflict, and received the guerdon of victory from the hands of the Arbiter of the destinies of the living and the dead.

III. THE INSTRUMENT BY WHICH THIS GREAT VICTORY IS TO BE OBTAINED. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith is one of the simplest of principles, because it is nothing more than a confidence in another, which never wavers or hesitates, but it is at the same time one of the mightiest which can enter into the soul. The power which is ascribed to it in Scripture is almost surpassing belief. Faith never stops to estimate the nature of a difficulty, but goes straight forward to its object without turning aside to the right hand or to the left. Faith laughs to scorn the power of the world. (J. B. Courtenay, M.A.)

Faith's victory :—I. THE CHRISTIAN, BY FAITH, OVERCOMES THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE WORLD.

II. THE UNKINDNESS OF THE WORLD A CHRISTIAN OVERCOMES BY FAITH. Under this head I include persecution, reproach, calumny, treachery, and misrepresentation. All men are exposed to these more or less—Christians not excepted. Nothing so sours the temper and breaks the spirit, throws men off their guard, so provokes them to revenge, as unkind, unjust, and cruel treatment. Men of the world are overcome by it. They cannot brook an insult—their honour is touched, their pride wounded. Faith makes a Christian conquer here—faith in such exhortations as these (Rom. xii. 14, 17–21; 1 Pet. ii. 20–23).

III. THE CALAMITIES OF THE WORLD A CHRISTIAN OVERCOMES BY FAITH. Adversity and misfortune, as it is called, will overtake us in some shape or other. Men destitute of religion, who have no faith, sink beneath the weight of the burden, are driven to despair, break forth into loud complaints of Providence. 1. Let those persons who are the friends of the world remember they are the enemies of God, and dying so, will be condemned with it at last. 2. Let the Christian "be of good cheer." Christ has overcome the world for him, and through faith in Him he shall overcome it too. (Essex Remembrancer.)

The Christian's victory :—I. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS VICTORY BELONGS. He assigns it to those who are "born of God," and are "believers in Jesus Christ." Both descriptions apply to the same individuals. 1. Regeneration introduces us into the new world of grace—the Christian state. While such is the Christian's state, his distinguishing character is that of a believer in Jesus Christ. 2. Regeneration allies us more especially to the Father; faith to the Saviour. 3. Regeneration is the pledge of our victory over the world, and faith is the instrument of effecting that victory.

II. CONSIDER THE VICTORY ITSELF. 1. Christians overcome the influence of the world as an example. The same passion which impels us to seek the society of others, impels us to adopt their habits and pursuits. And the same depravity which leads one class of men to set an evil example, leads another to copy and follow it. God, however, requires our imitation of others to cease whenever, by advancing, it would resist His will. 2. Christians overcome the spirit of the world as a guide. "Now," they say, "we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, by which we may know the things which are freely given to us of God."

3. Christians overcome the love of the world as a portion. Both their judgment and their taste respecting it are completely changed by regeneration and faith. 4. Christians overcome the fear of the world as an adversary. Born of God, they are under His special paternal protection; believing in Christ, they are strong in Him, and in the power of His might; hence the world has no more terrors than it has claims in their view.

5. Christians overcome the hope of the world as a recompense and a rest. Reducing to holy and habitual practice their belief of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and "knowing that they have in heaven a better and more enduring substance," they preserve a constant anticipation of death and eternity, and say, "I am ready to be offered, when the time of my departure is come." (H. Lacey.)

Faith's victory over the world :—The conquest of the world may be considered the highest object of human ambition. But we cannot renounce the world as a portion without incurring its displeasure. I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS SPIRITUAL WARFARE vary exceedingly with the condition of the world and of each individual.

Sometimes the battle is fierce and dreadful; while, at other times, there is the appearance of a truce. This, however, is always a deceitful appearance. On the part of the enemy there never is any real cessation of hostility; and on the part of the Christian there should be none. The opposition of the world is of two kinds; or it assumes two aspects, of a very opposite nature. The first is an aspect of terror. It endeavours to alarm him, by holding out the prospect of losses to be

sustained of things naturally desirable, of pains to be endured which are abhorrent to our nature, and does not merely threaten these evils, but actually inflicts them, in a very terrific form. There is another aspect which the world assumes in regard to religion. It does not always frown, but sometimes insidiously smiles. These are the temptations which are more dangerous than fires and gibbets. And the danger is greater because it does not appear to be danger. No apprehensions are awakened. Prosperity and indulgence are naturally agreeable to every one. At this point, the world is powerful, and the best of men, left to themselves, are weak. Indeed, few who have set their faces Zionward, have escaped unhurt in passing over this enchanted ground. II. Having shown how the world opposes the Christian, we come next to explain HOW THE CHRISTIAN GAINS THE VICTORY. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." None achieve this great victory but souls "born of God"; for none beside possess a true faith. Genuine faith is a conviction, or full persuasion of the truth, produced by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. The evidence on which this faith is founded, being the beauty and excellence of the truth perceived, cannot but be operative; for it is impossible that the rational mind should see an object to be lovely, and not love it. Such a faith must, therefore, "work by love and purify the heart," and be fruitful of good works. It will only be necessary to bring to view two principles, to account for the power of faith, by which it achieves this great victory. The first is, that our estimation of the value of objects is always comparative. The child knows nothing which it esteems more valuable than its toys; but when this child rises to maturity, and the interesting objects of real life are presented to it, the trifling baubles which engaged the affections in childhood are now utterly disregarded, and considered unworthy of a moment's thought. The other principle to which I alluded is this. The true method of expelling from the soul one set of affections is to introduce others of a different nature and of greater strength. When faith comes into operation, and love to God becomes the predominant affection, there is not only a great change, but a moral transformation of the soul, from the sinful love of the creature, to the holy love of the Creator. Now the world is conquered. Faith working by love has achieved the victory. (*A. Alexander, D.D.*) *Faith's victory*.—I. WHO IS THE GREAT CONQUEROR OF THE WORLD? It is not he who out of a restless ambition and insatiable thirst for glory and empire carries his victorious arms to the remotest parts of the earth, but the man under this twofold character: 1. Who hath subdued his inclinations and appetites to all things here below, and moderated his affections and passions about them. 2. Who, as a consequence of this, will not, either to gain the world or to keep it, do a base and unworthy action; whom all the glories of the world cannot tempt into a wicked enterprise, nor all its oppositions hinder from pursuing virtuous ones. II. WHAT THAT FAITH IS THAT OVERCOMES THE WORLD. Now of faith there are several kinds: there is a faith grounded on probable reason, upon likely and promising arguments, which yet are not evident nor certain, but may possibly prove false, though they seem to be true; and this is rather opinion than faith. Again, there is a faith grounded on evident and certain reason, wherein if a man's faculties themselves are to be trusted, he cannot be mistaken; and this is rather knowledge than faith. But then there is a faith grounded on Divine revelation, the Word of God; and this is properly called faith, and that faith that overcomes the world: to wit, an hearty belief of all those things that God heretofore by His prophets, and in this last age by his Son, hath made known to the world. III. WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS AND FORCES OF FAITH BY WHICH IT OBTAINS THIS VICTORY? 1. The Christian faith affords many excellent precepts to this purpose (1 John ii. 15; Matt. vi. 19; Col. iii. 2; Rom. xii. 2; 1 Cor. vii. 31; James i. 27). Precepts of that direct use and tendency to the ease and tranquillity, to the honour and perfection of human nature, that, were they not enforced by Divine authority, would yet be sufficiently recommended by their own intrinsic worth and excellency. 2. The Christian faith sets before us a most powerful example, that of our blessed Saviour, who voluntarily deprived Himself of the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world. 3. The Christian faith assures us of supernatural assistances, those of the Holy Spirit. 4. The Christian faith assures us of most glorious rewards after the conquest—rewards so far surmounting all that this world can pretend to, that they exceed them a whole infinity, and will outlive them an eternity. 5. The Christian faith represents to us the dismal effects and consequences of being overcome by the world; no less than the loss of the soul, and all that is glorious and happy, together with an endless state

of insupportable torments. IV. IF THE FORCES OF FAITH ARE SO STRONG AND NUMEROUS, HOW COMES IT TO PASS, THAT NOTWITHSTANDING THEM, FAITH IS SO OFTEN OVERCOME BY THE WORLD? 1. Because our faith is many times weak, either through the shallowness of the root it has taken, or for want of being excited by due consideration. 2. Because it is many times corrupted; and at this door also are we to lay in a great measure the many shameful overthrows the Christian receives from the world, his corrupt opinions and doctrines; the false glosses and expositions, the forgeries and inventions of men have usually the same fatal influence on faith, as sickness and diseases have on the body; they soon enfeeble and dispirit it, by degrees taint the whole mass, and so alter its very constitution, that it becomes another faith, and administers to other purposes. The conclusion of all is this: that since it is faith that overcomes the world, and it is, through the weakness and corruption of it, that it so often miscarries, that we should use our utmost diligence to keep our faith strong and vigorous, pure and undefiled. (*S. A. Freeman, D.D.*) *The victory of faith*:—1. In the world all seems full of chance and change. One man rises, and another falls, one hardly knows why: they hardly know themselves. A very slight accident may turn the future of a man's whole life, perhaps of a whole nation. What, then, will help us to overcome the fear of chances and accidents? Where shall we find something abiding and eternal, a refuge sure and steadfast, in which we may trust, amid all the chances and changes of this mortal life? In that within you which is born of God. 2. In the world so much seems to go by fixed law and rule. Then comes the awful question, Are we at the mercy of these laws? Is the world a great machine, which goes grinding on its own way without any mercy to us or to anything; and are we each of us parts of the machine, and forced of necessity to do all we do? Where shall we find something to trust in, something to give us confidence and hope that we can mend ourselves, that self-improvement is of use, that working is of use, that prudence is of use, for God will reward every man according to his work? In that within you which is born of God. 3. In the world how much seems to go by selfishness! But is it really to be so? Are we to thrive only by thinking of ourselves? No. Something in our hearts tells us that this would be a very miserable world if every man shifted for himself; and that even if we got this world's good things by selfishness, they would not be worth having after all, if we had no one but ourselves to enjoy them with. What is that? St. John answers—That in you which is born of God. 4. In the world how much seems to go by mere custom and fashion! But there is something in each of us which tells us that that is not right; that each man should act according to his own conscience, and not blindly follow his neighbour, not knowing whither, like sheep over a hedge; that a man is directly responsible at first for his own conduct to God, and that "my neighbours did so" will be no excuse in God's sight. What is it which tells us this? That in you which is born of God; and it, if you will listen to it, will enable you to overcome the world's deceit, and its vain fashions, and foolish hearsays, and blind party-cries; and not to follow after a multitude to do evil. What, then, is this thing? St. John tells us that it is born of God; and that it is our faith. We shall overcome by believing. Have you ever thought of all that those great words mean, "Jesus is the Son of God"?—That He who died on the cross, and rose again for us, now sits at God's right hand, having all power given to Him in heaven and earth? For, think, if we really believed that, what power it would give us to overcome the world. 1. Those chances and changes of mortal life of which I spoke first. We should not be afraid of them, then, if they came. For we should believe that they were not chances and changes at all, but the loving providence of our Lord and Saviour. 2. Those stern laws and rules by which the world moves, and will move as long as it lasts—we should not be afraid of them either, as if we were mere parts of a machine forced by fate to do this thing and that, without a will of our own. For we should believe that these laws were the laws of the Lord Jesus Christ. 3. If we believed really that Jesus was the Son of God, we should never believe that selfishness was to be the rule of our lives. One sight of Christ upon His cross would tell us that not selfishness, but love, was the likeness of God, the path to honour and glory, happiness and peace. 4. If we really believed this, we should never believe that custom and fashion ought to rule us. For we should live by the example of some one else: but by the example of only one—of Jesus Himself. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*) *Victory over the world*:—I. THE WORLD, in Holy Scripture, is the creature as opposed to the Creator; what is fleeting, as opposed to Him who alone is abiding; what is

weak, as opposed to Him who alone hath might; what is dead, as opposed to Him who alone hath life; what is sinful, as separate from Him who alone is holy. The "world" is everything short of God, when made a rival to God. Since, then, God is the life of everything which liveth, in whatever degree anything be without God, separate from God, it is without life; it is death and not life. The world, then, is everything regarded as distinct from God, beside God; it matters not whether they be the things of the sense or the things of the mind. II. WHAT IS VICTORY OVER THE WORLD? Plainly, not victory over the one or other thing, while in others people are led captive; not soundness in one part, while another is diseased; not to cultivate one or other grace which may be easier to us, leaving undone or imperfect what to us may be more difficult. It is to cut off, as far as we may, every hold which everything out of God has over us. And this struggle must be not for a time only, but perseveringly; not in one way, but in all ways; not in one sort of trials, but in all: whatever temptations God permits Satan to prepare for us, whatever trials He Himself bring upon us. It avails not to be patient in sorrow or sickness, if we become careless when it is withdrawn; to be humble to men, if we become self-satisfied with our humility; to overcome indolence, if we forget God in our activity. God be thanked, we are not left to ourselves, to perish. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world; we are not only the frail creatures which we seem, flesh and blood, but we are spirit, through the indwelling Spirit; we have been born, not only of the earth, but "from above," by a heavenly birth, of God; and so, since born of God, we are stronger than the world. III. THIS IS "THE VICTORY WHICH OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, OUR FAITH," which realiseth things invisible, looks beyond the world. So that we must beware not only that we are in earnest striving, but striving with the right faith, that is, with the faith in which we were baptized, the faith in the Holy and Undivided Trinity. (E. B. Pusey, D.D.) *Faith conquering the world*:—I. WHAT IS THE TRUE NOTION OF CONQUERING THE WORLD? Where did John learn the expression? It comes from that never-to-be-forgotten night in that upper room, where, with His life's purpose apparently crushed into nothing, and the world just ready to exercise its last power over Him by killing Him, Jesus Christ breaks out into such a strange strain of triumph, and in the midst of apparent defeat lifts up that clarion note of victory:—"I have overcome the world!" He had not made much of it according to usual standards, had He? His life had been the life of a poor man. Neither fame nor influence, nor what people call success had He won, judged from the ordinary points of view, and at three-and-thirty is about to be murdered; and yet He says, "I have beaten it all, and here I stand a conqueror!" That threw a flood of light for John, and for all that had listened to Christ, on the whole conditions of human life, and on what victory and defeat, success and failure in this world mean. Following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ Himself, the poor man, the beaten man, the unsuccessful man may yet say, "I have overcome the world." What does that mean? Well, it is built upon this,—the world, meaning thereby the sum total of outward things, considered as apart from God—the world and God we take to be antagonists to one another. And the world woos me to trust to it, to love it; crowds in upon my eye and shuts out the greater things beyond; absorbs my attention, so that if I let it have its own way I have no leisure to think about anything but itself. And the world conquers me when it succeeds in hindering me from seeing, loving, holding communion with and serving my Father, God. On the other hand, I conquer it when I lay my hand upon it and force it to help me to get nearer Him, to get like Him, to think more often of Him, to do His will more gladly and more constantly. The one victory over the world is to bend it to serve me in the highest things—the attainment of a clearer vision of the Divine nature, the attainment of a deeper love to God Himself, and of a more glad consecration and service to Him. That is the victory—when you can make the world a ladder to lift you to God. II. THE METHOD BY WHICH THIS VICTORY OVER THE WORLD IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. We find, according to John's fashion, a three-fold statement in this context upon this matter, each member of which corresponds to and heightens the preceding. There are, speaking roughly, these three statements, that the true victory over the world is won by a new life, born of and kindred with God; that that life is kindled in men's souls through their faith; that the faith which kindles that supernatural life, the victorious antagonist of the world, is the definite, specific faith in Jesus as the Son of God. The first consideration suggested by these statements is that the one victorious antagonist of all the powers of the world which seek to draw us away from God, is a life in our hearts kindred with God, and derived from God. God's

nature is breathed into the spirits of men that will trust Him; and if you will put your confidence in that dear Lord, and live near Him, into your weakness will come an energy born of the Divine, and you will be able to do all things in the might of the Christ that strengthens you from within, and is the life of your life, and the soul of your soul. And then there is the other way of looking at this same thing, viz., you can conquer the world if you will trust in Jesus Christ, because such trust will bring you into constant, living, loving contact with the Great Conqueror. He conquered once for all, and the very remembrance of His conquest by faith will make me strong—will “teach my hands to war and my fingers to fight.” He conquered once for all, and His victory will pass with electric power into my life if I trust Him. And then there is the last thought which, though it be not directly expressed in the words before us, is yet closely connected with them. You can conquer the world if you will trust Jesus Christ, because your faith will bring into the midst of your lives the grandest and most solemn and blessed realities. If a man goes to Italy, and lives in the presence of the pictures there, it is marvellous what daubs the works of art, that he used to admire, look when he comes back to England again. And if he has been in communion with Jesus Christ, and has found out what real sweetness is, he will not be over-tempted by the coarse dainties that people eat here. Children spoil their appetites for wholesome food by sweetmeats; we very often do the same in regard to the bread of God, but if we have once really tasted it, we shall not care very much for the vulgar dainties on the world’s stall. So, two questions:—Does your faith do anything like that for you? If it does not, what do you think is the worth of it? Does it deaden the world’s delights? Does it lift you above them? Does it make you conqueror? If it does not, do you think it is worth calling faith? And the other question is: Do you want to beat, or to be beaten? When you consult your true self, does your conscience not tell you that it were better for you to keep God’s commandments than to obey the world? (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

The victory of faith:—Among the many figures to which life is likened in the Bible none commends itself more to the average human experience than that of a battle. Life goes always from a playground to a battle-ground—from playing soldiers when we are children to being soldiers when we are men and women. We may be having easy times as the world regards us, but as we regard ourselves we are conscious of more or less fighting. Ah! the life-battle is a thing deeper than that old, old question of “What shall I eat and drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?” This is a very stupid world. Thousands of years have been impressing on us the real significance of life, disclosing the real conflict; and still men measure by these most superficial estimates and call us victorious or defeated in proportion as we get or fail to get fat lands and fair houses. I think we might define the word world, as the Scriptures use it, by these three words—self, sin, and death. Those words stand for the three divisions of the world army. That is the kingdom of this world. Over against it is the kingdom of heaven. Against self is God; against sin is holiness; against death is life. You see how the ranks of this battle are world-wide. No condition escapes it. No soul without a hindering self, without sin, without the shadow of death. What, now, is the victory? I said self was the first of the three divisions of the world. What is a victory over self? There is and has always been a negative Christianity which thinks the way to overcome the world is to crush it—the way to overcome self or selfishness is to crush self. It is a barren victory. You have left only a wreck—as in ancient warfare they made a desert by killing the people and called it victory! Such victories defeated Xerxes. Rome was wiser: she conquered people, then incorporated them into her own life, and so had their strength and their service. And the only way to win a useful victory over human selfishness is to get self to be an ally of the kingdom of heaven; not to crush self—that is both easy and useless; but to win it over from the service of this world to the service of God. The second division of what is called the world is sin, sin as an inner experience and condition, and sin as an outward seduction and force. The second branch of the victory, then, is to overcome sin. Here, again, we may say a true and lasting victory over sin is not accomplished by repressive measures, by tying it down and crucifying it, by casting it out and leaving the house empty. Not thus is the devil cast out. You can cast him out in the passion of some moral struggle, you can drive him away; but if you stop there, there are seven others ready to come back with him. The intemperate man renounces his cups, but takes no partner in to fill the vacant place, and the old enemy comes back. It,

is not a victory; it was only a truce. The only way to conquer sin is by filling the heart with the love of God. Again, we need a victory over death; not for the last hour—that spasm is soon over. The fear of dying is seldom a fear that is realised. But that bondage of which the apostle speaks, when people through fear of death are all their life long in slavery. Oh, for a sure victory over that dreary part of this world! The shadow of our mortality we cannot escape. It is constantly flung across our path. Nature writes it before us in flaming colours every autumn day. Here, once more, we cannot win a victory by repression, by saying, “Death is common,” or by cultivating stolidity. The only battalion you can effectively set opposite the grim spectre on life’s battlefield is the battalion of a new life. Death will have no dominion then. He will be only a porter to open for us a gate to the enjoyment of our life. Now, if I could give you a weapon to win this kind of a victory would it not be worth while?—a victory that would give new power to your selfhood, that would hold your manhood against sin, and that would banish death in glory as sunlight transfigures a cloud! For just such a victory the apostle provides; the weapon is faith. Faith is making a real connection between the soul and God; it is like connecting-poles in a battery, our negative brought to God’s positive. Some people speak of faith as if there were some magic potency in it. They trouble themselves for fear their faith is not the right kind. But it is not the quality of the faith that gains the battle; it is dropping into God’s hand that does that. (*C. L. Thompson, D.D.*) *The victory over the world*:—We do not live long before we come to understand that it has pleased God so to order things in this life, that no worthy end can be attained without an effort—without encountering and overcoming opposition. It is difficult to do anything that is good; and the Christian life is in keeping with all things around it. If we would live the Christian life, if we would reach the Christian’s home—there is no other course—we must “overcome the world!” And, first, this world is an obstacle, needing to be overcome—it exerts, that is, an influence which we must every day be resisting and praying against—just in this: that it looks so solid and so real, that in comparison with it, the eternal world and its interests look to most men as though they had but a shadowy and unsubstantial existence. The supreme importance of the life to come is the doctrine on which all religion rests: but though we often hear and repeat the words, that “all on earth is shadow, all beyond is substance”—how fast this world of sense grows and greatens upon us again—while the unseen world and all its concerns seem to recede into distance, to melt into air, to fade into nothing! And what is there that shall “overcome” this materialising influence of a present world: what is there that shall give us the “victory” over it;—but Faith—Faith which believes what it cannot see, with all the vividness of sight? It is too much, perhaps, to expect that the day should ever come when, for more than short seasons of special elevation, we shall be able to realise the unseen and eternal as plainly as we do the seen and temporal: we cannot look to be always so raised above worldly interests, as to feel that not what we grasp, but what we believe, is the true reality: it will be enough if we carry with us such a conviction as shall constrain us to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”: and if we ever do so, this must be “the victory which shall overcome the world, even our faith.” Next we remark that the world is an obstacle in our Christian course, because its cares, business, interests, tend strongly and directly to choke the good seed of religion in the heart—to fill up our minds so completely as that they shall have no room for thoughts of eternity and salvation. How many a time have you knelt down in your closet to say your evening prayer; and in a little while found that some worldly anxiety or trouble was coming between you and your God. Only the “faith that overcometh the world” can save from this. Only that child-like confidence in our Saviour’s love and wisdom and power, which trusts everything to Him—which “casts all our care upon Him”—and so feels the crushing burden lifted from our own weak hearts! Give us that faith; and we have “overcome the world”: it is our tyrant, and we are its slaves, no more! Give us that faith, not for isolated moments of rapture only, but to be the daily mood and temper of our hearts: and then we shall engage without fever in the business of this world, as feeling that in a few short years it will matter nothing whether we met disappointment or success. There is yet another sense in which the world is an obstacle to our Christian life, needing to be overcome by faith. As you know, the phrase the world is sometimes used in contrast with the Church. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Taken in this way, the world means all human beings who are without the Christian fold: who are devoid of Christian faith, and

of Christian ways of thinking and feeling. And you know well that on the most important subjects there is an absolute contrariety between the doctrines of the Church and of the world: and many a believer has found the world's frown or the world's sneer something which it needs much faith to resist and to overcome. How cheaply and lightly will that man hold ridicule and mockery of him and his religion, who realises to his heart that the all-wise and Almighty God thinks upon that subject as he does: who realises that God approves the course he follows, whether man does or no. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *The true confession of faith:—I. How THE VICTORY IS GAINED.* "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." Beware of mere outside enlargement. Accretion is not increase. But where there is true life, you have growth and increase. The victory of vitality is onward, upward, skyward, heavenward. Look at this tree—a poor puny twig, you put it in the ground. Yet it is a victor, a conqueror proud and unbending; the very earth that keeps it up is thrust below it in triumph. One of the mighty forces of the universe next comes meddling with it, to coerce it downward, to overthrow it. Gravitation, from its march among the mazes of stellar light, from the holding up in its great hand of the swinging suns in yon far-off abyss, now attacks this little newcomer. But there's life in the attacked, and the merest cell of protoplasm is greater than a whole universe of Jupiters and Saturns and stars and suns. The treeing conquers. Watch it rearing its tufted little head, upward stretching, upward reaching, upward growing, upward in spite of the steady downward pull of that blind nigh-infinite force, upward. It's a marvel, a conquest, a triumph, an overcoming indeed. This shrublet lives, and because of life "born of God" it conquers and overcomes. Take another view-point, for I wish to lead you up to all that is implied in the phrase "born of God." The "born" of man, what is that? Intellect, idea, mind, soul, thought. Is there not the march of a conqueror here? "No!" says the opposing Firth of Forth to the beseeching request of man for permission to cross, and it stretches out the broad arm of waves and waters to prevent and protest. No? but the "born" of man says Yes, and Inchgarvie bares its rocky back for the giant piles, and the great Bridge in levers and cantilevers springs in mocking triumph from shore to shore, and the roll of ordinary traffic now heralds the conquest in a daily song. Ay, wherever you look, whatsoever is "born" of man overcometh, rocks rend, valleys rise, and the great sea's bosom is beaten by revolving paddles and screws into the very king's highway. This is the victory, born of man, "born of God, LIFE!" At conversion the spiritual principle of the new creation starts its onward programme of evolution to the full stature of the perfect man in a glorified Christ. The new man lives, the old man dies and disappears. What is involved must be evolved, and the Creator has pledged Himself to it. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." The world is no friend to grace. It threatens and frightens, annoys, vexes, and checks. It may deform and deface, but kill? Never. The Mugho pinetree shaken by the headlong winds, just thrusts its roots more deeply into the crevices of the rock; the threatening vibrations but make it embrace the cliff and imbed itself in the strong Alpine heart all the more firmly; it's the better for all the blaud and bluster of the storm. So if your soul has got life, the merest atom, the minutest cell, the feeblest flicker, the faintest breath, it will grow the higher and higher for these assaults of Satan, for all the downward pulling of the gravitation of the pit. II. *THE CERTAINTY OF THE VICTORY.* The Calvary is over, the great battle in the darkness is by, the devil is defeated, but it is yours now to pursue and to keep him in the "glorious confusion" of flight. It is yours, Christians, to be after the fleeing foe. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The faith here referred to by the apostle is not so much an attribute of our poor tired bankrupt hearts, but it is an objective outside thing, in fact, just an outward Creed or Confession. It is the *fides quæ* and not the *fides quæ*, the faith believed and not the faith believing. In the present ebb and flow of religious opinion or non-opinion, a creed is as necessary to the Church as the vertebral column to the human body. In the storm everything else may go by the board; the whole cargo may lie jettisoned on the surf, but one thing is never flung over the gunwale to lighten the ship, and that is the compass. The binnacle sticks to the deck, and the faithful needle points on through the dash of the storm to the haven of safety and rest. (*John Robertson.*) *Victory over the world:—I. VICTORY or overcoming is a subjugation or bringing under an opposing party to the power and will of another. And this victory is of two kinds, complete and perfect, or incomplete or imperfect. 1. The notion of a*

complete victory is when either the opposing party is totally destroyed, or at least when despoiled of any possibility of future resistance. Thus the Son of God, the captain of our salvation, overcame the world (John xvi. 33). 2. There is a victory, but incomplete, such as the victory of the Children of Israel over the Canaanites. And this is the condition of the Christian militant in this world. II. *THE PERSON* exercising this act of victory and conquest, he that is born of God. III. *THE THING* upon which this victory is obtained and conquest made is the world, which comprehends in its latitude a double world; the world within us and the world without us. 1. The world that is within us taketh in the two great faculties or powers, viz., (1) The passions of the soul; and (2) the sensual appetite; both these are in their own nature good, placed in us by the wise God of Nature, for most excellent ends and uses. Our business therefore is to keep them in subjection. 2. The world without us is of three kinds. (1) The natural world, which is the work of Almighty God, is most certainly in itself good; and only evil accidentally by man's abuse of himself or it. (2) The malignant and evil world, the world of evil angels, and of evil men. (3) The accidental, or more truly the providential world in relation to man and his condition in this world, and is commonly of two kinds, viz., prosperous or adverse. IV. *THE FAITH* WHICH THUS OVERCOMETH THE WORLD is nothing else but a deep, real, full persuasion of and assent unto those great truths revealed in the Scriptures of God. 1. What are those Divine truths which being really and soundly believed, doth enable the victory over the world? (1) There is one most powerful, wise, gracious, bountiful, just, and all-seeing God, the author of all being, that is present in all places, knows our thoughts, our wants, our sins, our desires, and is ready to supply us with all things that are good and fit for us beyond all we can ask or think. (2) This most wise and just and powerful God hath appointed a law or rule according to which the children of men should conform themselves. (3) This law and will of His He hath communicated and revealed to men in His holy Word, especially by the mission of His Son. (4) He hath given unto mankind, in and through Christ, a full manifestation of a future life after this of rewards and punishments, and according to that law of His thus manifested by His Son He will, by the same Jesus Christ, judge every man according to his works. (5) The reward of faith and obedience, in that other life to come, shall be an eternal, blessed, happy estate of soul and body in the glorious heavens, and in the presence and fruition of the ever glorious and eternal God. (6) The punishment of the rebellious and disobedient unto His will and law of God thus manifested by His Son shall be separation from the presence of God. (7) The Son of God hath given us the greatest assurance imaginable of the truth of this will of God by taking upon Him our nature, by His miracles, by His death and resurrection and ascension into glory, and by His mission of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation into His apostles and disciples. (8) God, though full of justice and severity against the obstinate and rebellious, yet is full of tenderness, love, and compassion towards all those that sincerely desire to obey His will, and to accept of terms of peace and reconciliation with Him, and is ready upon repentance and amendment to pardon whatsoever is amiss. 2. As touching the act itself, it is no other than a sound, real, and firm belief of those sacred truths. He that hath this firm persuasion will most certainly repent of his sins past, will most certainly endeavour obedience to the will of God, which is thus believed by him to be holy, just, and good. V. *HOW FAITH OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, WHICH TAKES IN THESE TWO CONSIDERATIONS.* 1. Touching the degree of the victory that faith gives, it is a victory, but not without a continued warfare. 2. Touching the method whereby our faith overcometh the world. (1) In general the great method whereby faith overcometh the world is by rectifying our judgments and those mistakes that are in us concerning the world and our own condition. (2) But I shall come to particulars, and follow that track that is before given, in the distribution of the world, as well within as without us, and consider the particular method of faith in subduing them. 1. As for our passions. (1) Faith directs their due placing upon their objects by discovering what are the true and proper objects of them out of that large and comprehensive law of God which present them as such to the soul, and to be observed under the pain of the displeasure of the glorious and Almighty God. (2) Upon the same account it teacheth our passions and affections moderation in their exercise, even about their proper objects, and due subordination to the supreme love a man owes to the supreme good, God Almighty. (3) Upon the same account it teacheth us, under our obligation of duty to God, to cut off and mortify the diseases and corruptions of passion, as malice, envy, revenge, pride, vain-

glory, ostentation. 2. In reference to our desires. (1) Natural; it teacheth us great moderation, temperance, sobriety. As touching those degenerate and corrupt lusts, as covetousness, malice, envy; faith doth first of all in general show us that they are prohibited by the great Lord and Lawgiver of heaven and earth, and that under severe penalties; again, secondly, it shows us that they are the great depravers of our nature, the disturbers of the peace, security, and tranquillity of our minds; again, thirdly, it shows us that they are vain, impertinent, and unnecessary perturbations, such as can never do us any real good, but feed our vain imaginations with deceits instead of realities. 3. I come to the consideration of the world without us, as that which possibly is here principally intended, and the victory of the Christian by his faith over it, and first in relation to the natural world. This world is a goodly palace fitted with all grateful objects to our senses, full of variety and pleasantness, and the soul fastening upon them grows careless of the thoughts of another state after death, or to think of the passage to it, or making provision for it; but to set up its hope and happiness, and rest in it, and in these delights and accommodations that it yields our senses. Faith overcometh this part of the world—(1) By giving us a true estimate of it, to prevent us from over-valuing it. (2) By frequent reminding of us that it is fitted only to the meridian of life, which is short and transitory, and passeth away. (3) By presenting unto us a state of future happiness that infinitely surpasseth it. (4) By discovering our duty in our walk through it, namely, of great moderation and vigilancy. (5) By presenting unto us the example of the Captain of our salvation, His deportment in it and towards it. (6) By assuring us that we are but stewards unto the great Lord of the family of heaven and earth for so much as we have of it, and that to Him we must give an account of our stewardship. (7) By assuring us that our great Lord and Master is a constant observer of all our deportment in it. (8) And that He will most certainly give a reward proportionable to the management of our trust and stewardship. 4. As to the malignant world of evil men and evil angels; and therein first in relation to the evil counsels and evil examples, that solicit or tempt us to the breach of our duty to God. The methods whereby faith overcometh this part of the malignant world are these. (1) It presents unto us our duty that we owe to God and which we are bound indispensably to observe under the great penalty of loss of our happiness. (2) It presents us with the great advantage that we have in obeying God, above whatsoever advantage we can have in obeying or following the sinful examples, counsels, or commands of this world, and the great excess of our disadvantage in obeying or following the evil examples, or counsels of the world. (3) It presents Almighty God strictly observing our carriage in relation to these temptations. (4) It presents us with the displeasure and indignation of the same God in case we desert Him, and follow the sinful examples or counsels of men, and with the great favour, love, approbation, and reward of Almighty God if we keep our fidelity and duty to Him. (5) It presents us with the noble example of our blessed Saviour. (6) It presents us with the transcendent love of God in Christ Jesus, who, to redeem us from the misery of our natural condition, and from the dominion of sin, and to make us a peculiar people zealous of good works, chose to become a curse and die for us, the greatest obligation of love and gratitude and duty imaginable. And secondly, as to the other part or scene of this malignant world persecutions, reproaches, scorns, yea death itself, faith presents the soul not only with the foregoing considerations, and that glorious promise, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," but some other considerations peculiarly proper to this condition. (1) That it is this state that our blessed Saviour hath not only foretold, but hath annexed a special promise of blessedness unto. (2) That there have gone before us a noble cloud of examples in all ages, yea, the Captain of our salvation was thus made perfect by suffering. (3) That though it is troublesome, it is but short, and ends with death, which will be the passage into a state of incorruptible happiness. 3. Concerning the third kind of world, namely, the providential world, consisting in external dispensations of adversity or prosperity. And first concerning the dark part of the world, namely, adversity, as casualties, issues of wealth, or friends, sicknesses, the common effects whereof are impatience, distrust, murmuring, and uneasiness. (1) Faith presents the soul with this assurance, that all external occurrences come from the wise dispensation or permission of the most glorious God; they come not by chance. (2) That the glorious God may, even upon the account of His own sovereignty, inflict what He pleaseth upon any of His creatures in this life. (3) That yet whatsoever he doth in this kind, is not only an effect of His power and sovereignty, but of His wisdom, yea, and of His goodness and bounty.

(4) That the best of men deserve far worse at the hands of God than the worst afflictions that ever did or ever can befall any man in this life. (5) That there have been examples of greater affliction that have befallen better men in this life: witness Job. (6) That these afflictions are sent for the good even of good men, and it is their fault and weakness if they have not that effect. (7) That in the midst of the severest afflictions, the favour of God to the soul, discovering itself like the sun shining through a cloud, gives light and comfort to the soul. (8) That Almighty God is ready to support them that believe in Him, and to bear them up under all their afflictions that they shall not sink under them. (9) That whatsoever or how great soever the afflictions of this life are, yet faith presents to the believer something that can bear up the soul under these pressures, namely, that after a few years or days are spent, an eternal state of unchangeable and perfect happiness shall succeed.

2. As to the second part of this providential world, namely, prosperity, which in truth is the more dangerous condition of the two without the intervention of the Divine grace. (1) Faith gives a man a true and equal estimate of this condition, and keeps a man from over valuing it, or himself for it; lets him know it is very uncertain, very casual, very dangerous, and cannot outlast this life. (2) Faith assures him that Almighty God observes his whole deportment in it, that He hath given him a law of humility, sobriety, temperance, fidelity, and a caution not to trust in uncertain riches, that he must give an account of his stewardship also. (3) Faith lets him know that the abundance of wealth, honour, friends, applause, success, as they last no longer than this short transitory life, and therefore cannot make up his happiness, no nor give a man any ease or rescue from a fit of the stone or colic; so there is an everlasting state of happiness or misery that must attend every man after death. (*Sir M. Hale.*) *The ability of faith to overcome the world*:—I. THE MERE LIGHT AND STRENGTH OF NATURE IS NOT ABLE TO SUBDUCE THE WORLD. 1. Before we can readily give up all that is dear to us in this world, we must be very sure of something better in the next, and of this we cannot be sufficiently assured by unassisted reason. 2. An authoritative rule of life was wanting to the Gentile world. 3. A sinner by the light of nature cannot tell what will satisfy for sin. 4. To this want of knowledge we add want of strength in the natural man to perform his duty when known. 'Tis not enough that we have eyes, but we must have strength also to walk in the way that is set before us. II. THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS PERFECTLY QUALIFIED FOR THIS END; for raising a true believer above all the temptations here on earth. 1. The evidence given for the truth of the Christian faith. 2. The helps and encouragements proposed in the gospel for overcoming the world. (*W. Reeves, M.A.*) *Victorious faith*:—I. THE CONQUEST ITSELF "overcometh the world." We mingle among men of the world, but it must be as warriors who are ever on the watch, and are aiming at victory. Therefore—1. We break loose from the world's customs. 2. We maintain our freedom to obey a higher Master in all things. We are not enslaved by dread of poverty, greed of riches, official command, personal ambition, love of honour, fear of shame, or force of numbers. 3. We are raised above circumstances, and find our happiness in invisible things: thus we overcome the world. 4. We are above the world's authority. Its ancient customs or novel edicts are for its own children: we do not own it as a ruler or as a judge. 5. We are above its example, influence, and spirit. We are crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to us. 6. We are above its religion. We gather our religion from God and His Word, not from human sources. II. THE CONQUERING FUTURE. "Whatsoever is born of God." 1. This nature alone will undertake the contest with the world. 2. This nature alone can continue it. All else wearies in the fray. 3. This nature is born to conquer. God is the Lord, and that which is born of Him is royal and ruling. III. THE CONQUERING WEAPON—"even our FAITH." We are enabled to be conquerors through regarding—1. The unseen reward which awaits us. 2. The unseen presence which surrounds us. 3. The mystic union to Christ which grace has wrought in us. 4. The sanctifying communion which we enjoy with the unseen God. IV. THE SPECIALITY OF IT. "This is the victory." 1. For salvation, finding the rest of faith. 2. For imitation, finding the wisdom of Jesus, the Son of God. 3. For consolation, seeing victory secured to us in Jesus. Lessons: 1. Behold your conflict—born to battle. 2. Behold your triumph—bound to conquer. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Faith the secret of world-victory*:—A survey of history discovers to us the presence of a constant law, which may be thus described, progress through conflict. The conflict is of two kinds—physical, as where one nation hurls itself against another in war, or one party seeks to overcome another by sheer force of numbers; and moral, where the

battle is one of truth against error, of righteousness against injustice, of religion against the forces of ungodliness. Corresponding to these two kinds of conflict are two kinds of victories—the one material, where present success is often on the side of the strongest battalions; and the other moral, where more permanent results are achieved by gradually transforming men's ideas, by substituting better institutions for corrupt and defective ones, and above all, by making men themselves better. Now Christianity, if it is anything, aims at being a world-conquering principle. This is its ultimate aim, but it has a nearer aim, which is really the guarantee for its accomplishing the wider result. Its nearer aim is to give the individual in his own spirit the victory over the world, to implant there the Divine principle of victory, to make the individual himself a type of that fuller victory which is yet to be realised in society as a whole. I. There is a power we are to overcome—THE WORLD. By the world, in John's sense, we are to understand a set of principles, the principles that rule and operate in godless society, and stamp their character on its thought, habits, and life; or rather, it is society itself, viewed as ruled and pervaded by these principles, and for that reason hostile to godliness. But if this is what is meant by the world, it might seem as if the task of overcoming it, or at least of preventing ourselves from being overcome by it, were one of no great difficulty. We might be tempted to despise our foe. It might seem as if all we had to do was to withdraw from the world—not to mix with worldly people, not to mind their opinion, not to follow their example. But in the first place even this is not so easy a thing to do. The slave of the world may think himself bound to it by only silken ties; it is when he tries to emancipate himself from its bondage that he finds how really they are iron fetters. There is, for example, the tyranny of public opinion. How few have the courage to go against that? There is the tyranny of fashion. Is it so easy, in circles where fashion is regarded, to emancipate oneself from its imperious mandates, and to take the brave Christian stand which duty may require. There is the power of old-established custom. What a hold there is in that! Most difficult of all to escape from is the spirit of the world. You think to escape from the world, but go where you will its dark, hostile form still confronts you. Thus far I have spoken only of taking up a defensive attitude to the world—keeping the world at arm's length—preventing ourselves from being overcome by it. We must feel, however, that the ringing note of victory in our text must mean far more than this. To overcome the world is not only to conquer evil, but to establish good. And though the effort to do this, as regards the world outside, may sometimes fail—though the world, as has often happened, may rise up against the man who seeks to make it better, and may crush him; still is he the real victor who has refused to bow his knee to the Baals that are round about him, for in his own spirit he has the consciousness of having been able to stand by the good, and withstand the bad, and whatever may be the immediate result of his witness, he knows it is that which he has contended for which shall in the end prevail.

II. WHAT IS THE POWER BY WHICH WE ARE TO OVERCOME IT? It is, the apostle says, "our faith." The words in the original are even more emphatic. The passage reads, "this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." In the power of Christian faith the victory is already won. Not that long conflict has not still to be carried on, but in principle, in spirit, in the certainty of the issue, the battle is already decided. Beliefs—I speak here, of course, of real, not merely nominal beliefs—are the most potent factor in human life, the real power that make and shape the course of history. The first apostles were men with beliefs, and as they went forth speaking out the beliefs that were in them, it soon began to be said of them, "Lo, these men that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." Columbus was a man with a belief, and this belief of his gave the world a new continent. Lord Bacon was a man with a belief—belief in a new method of science—and his belief inaugurated the new era of scientific invention and discovery. The early political reformers were men with beliefs, and some of the wildest of their beliefs have already become accomplished realities of legislation. To have in you a belief which is fitted to benefit and bless your fellow-men is to be not only in your own small way a social power; it is to be in the truest sense a benefactor of mankind. But what is this belief which Christianity implants in our hearts which has these wondrous effects? The answer is given in the next verse, "who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Now, of course, if belief in Jesus as the Son of God were only belief in a theological proposition, it neither would, nor could, have any effect of the kind alleged. But this is not its real nature. Belief in Jesus as the Son of God, in him

who truly entertains it, is not belief in a theological proposition, but belief in a great Divine reality, and if we look at the nature of that reality we have no difficulty in seeing that it not only will have, but must have, the particular virtue here ascribed to it. To overcome the world, or in plain modern words, to fight successfully the battle of good against evil, there are at least necessary these conditions: First of all we must have firm faith in the reality of goodness—of that we are contending for. In the next place we must have the firm conviction that the powers working on the side of goodness in the world are stronger than the powers that can be arrayed against them. In the third place, we must know ourselves to be in our own inmost life linked with these victorious powers. And lastly, as the outcome of all this, we must have undoubting confidence in the ultimate triumph of our cause. These conditions are fulfilled in the man who believes from the heart that Jesus is the Son of God. (*Jas. Orr, D.D.*)

Faith's victory over the world:—I. WHAT IT IS IN THE WORLD THAT THE CHRISTIAN HAS TO OVERCOME. 1. Its allurements. The world holds out many fair, enticing charms. It addresses the senses and imagination. Its temptations are artfully varied. 2. Its terrors. II. HOW THE CHRISTIAN'S FAITH ENABLES HIM TO OBTAIN THE VICTORY OVER THE WORLD. 1. Faith enables the Christian to overcome the allurements of the world—(1) By showing him the vanity and unsatisfying nature of all earthly enjoyments. (2) By pointing out to him the dangerous consequences of the unlawful pursuits of worldly men. (3) By filling his soul with those pure and spiritual delights which produce a disrelish for the perishing pleasures of sin. 2. Faith enables the Christian to overcome the terrors of the world—(1) By the gracious supports which it yields under every trial. (2) By setting before him the example of the great Author and Finisher of our faith. (3) By the glorious hopes with which it inspires him. Conclusion: 1. This subject furnishes us with a rule by which to judge whether our faith be genuine. 2. The danger of worldly prosperity. Apt to produce pride, self-sufficiency, forgetfulness of God, insensibility to spiritual objects. 3. The benefit of sanctified affections. They aid us in the exercise of faith. (*D. Black.*)

The victory of faith:—I. We notice FAITH AS THE POWER FOR OVERCOMING THE WORLD. II. FAITH IS ITSELF A VICTORY. Simple as it seems, all will bear witness it is not easy to possess this faith, and so says the direction here given. It is a victory. Our position stands like this. You have hitherto been seeking the conquest of the world directly. You have subdued your lusts by turning away from temptation, and they have smouldered in your hearts. You have kept from sin by shunning the acquaintance and occasion of open violation. Now, says Christ, instead of doing this, you must bring your heart into subjection to Me. You must overcome every feeling and thought which leads you to look away from Me, and you must believe in Me. Again, your course is not to come to open contest with the world. You are not to go into danger so that you may prove your strength. But you are to wage war on a smaller ground. You are to contend with your own hearts, as they would lead you not to trust on that which you cannot see, or on that which you cannot perfectly understand, until you have that childlike confidence, that trust on Christ which shall enable you to make your cause the cause of Jesus. This is the victory of faith. That the possession of this faith is a victory I purpose now to show. It is a victory over self-assertion. Self is to us naturally the wisest, the most important of all beings. Our own opinions are always the best, our own interests always those which we most keenly look after. Hence, on the one hand, we oppose the entrance of Christ into our hearts, because we love self. We form our own opinions and we act upon them; but when Christ takes possession we are no longer self-assertive on this matter. Thus the belief that saves is a victory over what I have called our self-assertion. Another form in which self appears is self-interest. We refuse to hear and to receive because it is against our supposed interests to do so. We shall suffer some trouble, or lose some preferment. Full of self; how, then, can Christ find admittance? Dagon must fall before the ark of God: how much more must self before the Son of God! It is not only so, but self will fight for sole possession. Shall I mortify myself, inflict injury on myself? So we reason, and so we oftentimes drive Christ away. This must all be subdued before faith comes. To obtain an entrance into so well-protected a city, demanding forces of such power and nature may well be called a victory. But it is also a victory over the natural unbelief of the heart. There is a difficulty in receiving spiritual things. The natural man is of the earth, earthy. It is as though the choicest music were played to charm the deaf, or the utmost skill exerted to please the blind by the combination of colour. Thus it is that men oppose reason and faith, as though the man who had reason could not have faith.

This unbelief must go before a man can receive Christ. All this pride of intellect, all this self-conceit of wisdom, must give place to the higher and nobler attribute of faith. But you must see that it is a victory not won by man alone. Yes, men may believe; but it is when evidence convinces. The Spirit of God must arouse the dormant soul. 111. THE WORLD IS SUBJECTED, OR OVERCOME, BY THIS VICTORY. It is overcome to us each as we have this faith in our Lord. 1. The strength of the world over us lies in the undue value which we set on sensuous things. Faith overcomes the world by opening up issues and pressing claims which men do not feel without it. 2. This world has power over us because we feel so dependent on it. When a man is called on to leave father and mother, all the attractions, the joys, and the comforts of home are a constraining influence to keep him from the sacrifice. Ah! but faith gives the man something higher to possess. He is provided for. This is the support of faith, and the world is overcome. 3. Other similar reasons could be given for the victory over the world, all of them fixed, centred in the person of Jesus Christ. Take Christ away, and there is no ground for faith; but while Christ lives and is set forth before men, so long faith can keep her hold, and overcome the world. The soul makes Christ's work its own; and as He overcame, so also shall all the faithful. (*H. W. Butcher.*) *The world overcome by faith*:—There is a sound of war in this saying. John, apostle of love though he be, has not that solvent charity which, under an affection of breadth, fails in rectitude, and comes at length to accept things, morally the most opposite, as equally good. 1. THE WORLD, WHAT IS IT? And here a dozen voices are ready with a definition, which commonly is an abstract of personal experience or opinion. The most opposite things have been described as worldly; curiously, men have agreed to condemn worldliness, but they have not agreed what the thing condemned really is. One man, having no sacred reserves, gives himself wholly to the pursuits of this life; by diligence and energy he succeeds, and he has his reward. Another mingles his daily work with some other pursuit; he is fond of pictures, of music, of science, or what not; and yet a third, as he thinks favoured by his circumstances, gives himself largely to the enjoyments of life: work is but the fringe, the web of existence is made up of pleasure. After the lapse of years let these men compare notes; ask each his opinion of the others, and what do you find? You find probably that they have a sort of good-natured contempt for one another as having lived in a vain and worldly way. Yes, and you may find a fourth man, who has lived a more austere and closely ordered life than any of the rest, equally ready to condemn them all for their worldly spirit. Of these several men each had something of truth in his opinion, but not the whole truth, nor that which goes to the root of the matter. Worldliness is a principle, a spirit, which can take this shape or that: it can be found in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day, or in the rags and self-denials of the anchorite. The world, then, may lie in the predominance of things seen and temporal. The Bible is full of examples of this, set out for our learning by a Divine hand. There was the sunny-haired Samson, with a high commission and a noble energy, forgetting the great work he had to do in the indulgence of the passion of the moment; there was Esau, who, to satisfy the hunger of the hour, flung away his birthright for a mess of pottage. When Satan said to our blessed Lord, "All these things will I give Thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me," he pitched the temptation upon the same principle; its force lay in the power of the seen and temporal to obscure the unseen and eternal. Worldliness lies in the predominance of self, that inseparable foe, that idol of the heart which men carry with them wherever they go. The world, too, is found in the predominance of the world of men, that care for human opinion, for the judgment of our fellows which brings with it unreality, eye-service, and a disregard to the supreme will of God. This spirit makes men at once cowardly and audacious, filling them with the fear of man and yet making them regardless of the fear of God. We have it exemplified in Saul, king of Israel, that strange sad union of strength and weakness, magnanimity and folly. He had sinned by directly disobeying the Divine command; but when he hears his sentence from the lips of Samuel he grieves over the dishonour which might accrue to himself far more than over his sin against the Most High: "I have sinned, yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of Israel." "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" that is, "has Christ become respectable? have the fashionable party—the men in power—accepted Him? If they have, then will we, but not otherwise." This drew from our Lord the strong exclamation, "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh

from God only?" This form of worldliness is one of the deadliest enemies of the truth. Everywhere it is potent to keep men from Christ. II. How is it to be overcome? This is a pressing question for every one who thinks seriously. How is it to be kept out of my heart, how shall I be kept in the world and yet not of it? "This is the victory, even our faith." This meets the world, not in any particular form of it, but in the heart where its real root is. Take this principle, faith the world's victor, in the lower sphere, and it is true. Faith, a strong over-mastering conviction, even though a poor one, has a wonderful power to lift men above the world, above themselves. But it is not of faith in a general way that John speaks. It is of "our faith," a faith born of God, a faith that lays hold of Jesus Christ, a faith that works by love; it is faith in a person, that is, trust in Jesus Christ. This is the Divine remedy for the power of worldliness. It meets the love of the world with another love, a mightier, higher, nobler love—the love of Jesus Christ. How wonderfully this great principle of faith, fixed on the Saviour, can meet each of the three great forms of worldliness which have been delineated! We are in danger of being absorbed in the present, in the things which we taste and touch and handle; but if we receive Christ into our hearts what do we get with Him? Eternal life, the opening prospect of glory, honour, immortality. He enables us to "die daily," because of the eternity with Christ beyond the veil. See, too, how faith in Christ helps a man to conquer himself as nothing else can. The ascetic, who proclaims upon the housetops his self-abnegation, yet worships himself; but when a man can say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," then Christ has become the inmate of that heart and the centre of that life. Again, that sensitiveness to human opinion, that love of praise, can be put under by faith in Jesus Christ, because in Him we have brought close to us the pure atmosphere of heaven, where the one aim and desire is to obtain the approval of God. Thus everything is moved up into a higher sphere, and the objects of life are seen in a true perspective. But this is not all, for us in our weakness and guilt and cowardice, there is another side to this truth, a side higher than that which lies in the natural action of faith. For the poorest, weakest, darkest souls that with much trembling lay hold of Jesus Christ, His strength is pledged. His might becomes their might. A man who soberly measures the forces of the world about him, who has any experience of the fickle shifting nature of his own heart, may well feel how helpless he is to overcome the world. Yes, but you are not alone. The great Captain of Salvation will fight for you, with you, in you. Finally, it is only those who overcome the world by faith who know rightly how to use it. Look at the Lord Himself. "I," said He, "have overcome the world." He gives the pattern of an absolutely unworldly life, and what sort of life was His? The lilies pleased Him, the birds sang sweetly to Him, the social gathering welcomed Him, the children climbed fearlessly upon His knee, sorrowful faces broke into sunshine when He came. He used the world as not abusing it. Depend upon it we must either conquer or be conquered—we must be the slaves of the world or its masters. Which shall it be? (*E. Medley.*) *The faith which overcomes the world*:—I. FAITH IS THE DIVINELY APPOINTED MEDIUM FOR THE CONVEYANCE OF GOD'S POWER TO US. We are joined to Christ by faith and love both; but let us now distinguish their respective functions. The first breath of the Christian life is faith; love is subsequent. The unalterable condition of salvation is faith, not love. The condition required for Pentecostal power was faith. So all the gifts of God are according to our faith. But here is the distinction: faith is the receptive attitude, love the distributive. Love sacrifices, faith appropriates. Faith is before, love after a great blessing. They form really the same wire in complete circuit, but faith is the current our way, love the return to God. We can easily penetrate to the philosophy which makes faith the medium of receiving. It is such a medium between man and man of that which belongs to spirit and character. The man in whom I believe influences me most and makes my character. I may love another far more, but unless I also give my confidence to him or have faith in him he does not mould me. Faith in this marvellous way takes the being it clings to into our innermost nature and gladly surrenders to him. It alone truly expels haughtiness and pride, which, while they exist, make it impossible to save. With no more faith in Him than in Socrates or Seneca, they are never saved nor even sensibly influenced by the Spirit of Jesus. Faith alone, and there is no substitute whatever, completes the preparation of the heart for Christ. At the same time it gives Him most agreeable and wondrous honour. Faith is the coronation of Jesus in the heart. Faith is the only basis for co-working with God. Man selects a business partner whom he can trust, not because he is his bosom friend nor because

he passionately loves him. He must believe in him. So will man call upon God to be his partner in all the affairs of life only when he has faith. And all our qualifications for co-operating with God come by faith. God's great workers were all men of mighty faith. II. TO HAVE AND TO HOLD SUCH FAITH IS ITSELF AN INSPIRING VICTORY. It is called "victory," faith, and its abiding in the soul denotes a complete rout of self-sufficiency, that conceit of little souls and that real delusion of great ones; it proclaims that the reign of the senses and of sense-fettered reason is over! The man of faith has already overcome a vast world within himself, which the sinful world outside had made by hardening and blinding. What declarations there are concerning this faith! There is a characteristic of that faith which best pleased Jesus not to be overlooked. It goes beyond express promises to the love and the power of God. The promises are in human language painfully inadequate. From them bold faith gathers its original conceptions of Jesus, and here the Centurion and the Syrophenician woman distanced all the Jews and saw, the one the possibilities of Omnipotence, the other the fullness of love. (*C. Roads.*) *Victorious in the world by faith*:—In nature you will find a wonderful illustration of separation in the life of the water-spider. That wonderful little creature needs air to breathe, as we do, and yet it lives in its cocoon under water, and enjoys life. Why is this? Because in a peculiar way it takes beneath the surface supplies of fresh air with which to fill its cocoon, and just breathes an atmosphere of its own, surrounded all the time with an alien element, which, if it rushed in, would speedily kill the little creature. (*F. C. Spurr.*) *Soldiers of the overcomer*:—Believers! forget it not! You are the soldiers of the overcomer. (*J. H. Evans.*) *Faith conquering worldliness*:—His mouth will not water after homely provisions, that hath lately tasted of delicate sustenance. (*J. Trapp.*) *Conquering faith*:—A believer walketh about the world as a conqueror. He saith of these things here below, as Socrates did when he came into a fair, and saw there sundry commodities to be sold, as another said, I neither have these things, nor need them, nor care for them. (*Ibid.*) *The nobility of faith a defence*:—Children admire gawds and gewgaws; but let a nobleman that hath been used to the pomp and bravery of the court, pass by a whole stall of such toys and trifles, he never casts his eye towards them. (*Ibid.*) *Faith overcoming the world*:—When a traveller was asked whether he did not admire the admirable structure of some stately building, "No," said he, "for I've been at Rome, where better are to be seen every day." Oh, believer, if the world tempt thee with its rare sights and curious prospects, thou mayest well scorn them, having been, by contemplation, in heaven, and being able, by faith, to see infinitely better delights every hour of the day. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 6. **This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ.**—*Christ coming by water and blood*:—1. There was living then at Ephesus a conspicuous and enterprising teacher, whom not a few were likely to regard as more profound and philosophical than St. John, who himself, very probably, looked down with superb indulgence on the aged Galilean as pious enough in his simple way, but quite uncultured, without any speculative ability,—with crude and unspiritual views of God and the universe, and wholly unfit to interpret Hebraic ideas to men who had breathed the air of Gnostic wisdom. "One confusion," he would say, "which John makes, must be most carefully avoided: you must draw a sharp distinction between 'Jesus' and 'Christ.' 'Jesus' was simply a man eminent for wisdom and goodness, but not supernaturally born,—on whom, at His baptism, a heavenly power called 'Christ' descended, to use Him as an instrument for revealing truth and working miracles, but to depart from Him before He suffered and died." Now St. John contradicts this absolutely. He insists that Jesus is Christ, that Jesus, who is Christ, is also the Son of God. "You must," he says in effect, "be quite clear in your minds on this point; Cerinthus has tried to break up one Person into two; you must keep no terms with that theory of separation; you must hold to the truth of the oneness. This one Jesus Christ came by water and blood; that is, His Baptism and His Passion were means to the end for which He came. The self-same Person who stooped to the waters of Jordan gave up His blood to be shed for us on Golgotha. This is He, the one indivisible Christ, in whom to believe is to overcome the world." 2. But then comes in, we may be sure, a reference to underlying spiritual realities. Water and blood, in connection with Christ, could not but be invested in St. John's mind with the ideas of cleansing and of propitiation, as when he saw the gush of blood and water from the side of the sacred body he was

apparently struck with a combination which seemed to present in a kind of symbolical unity the purifying and the atoning aspect of Christ's work. Many will accept Christ as a peerless model of conduct, and will honestly desire to guide their lives by the rule of His ethical teaching, who yet recoil from the mystery of what the apostles call "propitiation," and explain away the emphasis with which apostles attribute virtue to His "blood." And yet the theory which reduces the Atonement to a signal display of sympathy, whereby One who was Himself sinless identified Himself with the shame and misery of sinners in order to reclaim them, will be found to impair the belief in our Saviour's personal Divinity, and fails to account for, or to justify, the mass of varied language by which Scripture conveys to us the significance of His death. No, believe it, both sides of truth are indispensable; our Lord was given "to be a sacrifice"; and also to be "an example"; and the dependence of purification on the Atonement may at least be illustrated by the order of those words, "forthwith out of His side came blood and water." 3. But yet once more: when we hear that He "came by water and blood," it is well-nigh impossible not to think of that great ordinance in which water is made the "effectual sign," that is, the organ or instrument, of a new birth; and of that still greater rite which embodies for us, in a concrete form, the new and "better covenant," and in which, as St. Augustine says, we "drink that which was paid for us." By the mercifully considerate provision of Him who is God and man for us who have souls and bodies, the sacraments of the gospel, with their outward forms and inward gifts, are the chief means whereby His purifying and propitiating action is applied to those on whose behalf He came. The whole thought, then, unfolds itself symmetrically; the events of Christ's baptism and death call up the idea of His twofold spiritual activity, which again presents itself in close revealed connection with the "laver" or font of our "regeneration," and with the cup which conveys to us the blood of the Great Sacrifice, and which, from that point of view, may naturally be taken to represent "both kinds" of the Holy Eucharist. And here, too, the warning sentence may be needed. The baptized Churchman who is not a communicant would do well to remember that Christ came not with water only, but with water and blood. (*W. Bright, D.D.*) *The water and the blood*:—By the form of the expression, "not by water only," it is implied that there are two beliefs as to the object of Jesus Christ's coming into the world—one of them going beyond the other, and taking in something that the other leaves out. There were probably those then, there are certainly those now, who would have no difficulty in accepting the main facts of Christ's birth and biography, would admit Him to be a memorable teacher, a reformer of society, a leader among moralists and philanthropists; but they would allow nothing further in His claims, as the Head of the Church or the Saviour of mankind. They would probably declare that nothing further was needed to make men all that they ought to be. But they were wrong. Four thousand years of Jewish and Gentile self-righteousness had proved that there is no self-recovering power in humanity alone. First the "water." Water is the emblem of spiritual purification, because it is the common instrument of outward washing. Our Lord Himself, who was able to set all symbols and all forms aside if He chose, went down into the water, at the beginning of His life's work, in order, we are told, that He might fulfil all righteousness. He "came by water." "Go teach the nations of the earth and baptize them" with water, was His last commission, when His work was done. So it is that each individual Christian life, as well as the whole body of Christ, after Him, came "by water." Why is this? Because one great part of our Saviour's work is to purify men's lives. He was baptized with their baptism, and they with His. The world was to sneer at Him, and spit upon Him, in spite of His purity: in being holy for them He will also be washed with them. He "came by water." Accordingly one great part of the power of Christ among men, through the gospel and the Church, is the cleansing away of moral corruptions. "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself." Stains on the lips, the hands, the habits; stains on social courtesies, domestic dispositions, and even on Church observances; worst of all, stains on the sacred temple walls of the soul itself—these all have to be washed away. Christ came to cleanse His followers from all unrighteousness. He "came by water." But now shall we not only say, "This is true," but shall we go on to say, "This is all that our Saviour gives us, and this is the whole of His gospel: Christianity is a system of moral education and religious improvement; nothing more"? "This is He that came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood." The daily sacrifice of four thousand preparatory years had presignified it to a waiting

world. As the passion-flower sprang out of the common earth, and held up its bright blossom and natural image of the tree at Calvary, ages before the real Cross was planted in its soil, so the passion-promise of prophecy bloomed in the expectant faith of the race at the very gates of Eden. The serpent had polluted Paradise; but after all, the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head. Man knew from the beginning that he must have a Saviour to look to, or humanity itself would die. Somewhere among the sons of men there must be One Perfect Obedience, One Sufficient Sacrifice, needing not, like those shadowy sacrifices which prepared the way, to be often offered, but "once offered." Then a living and loving faith in Him will work out the true and healing life in every believing heart. "There is a fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness"; but it is not a water fountain. Only he who doeth the deeds of the Law—so it reads—will live by them. Who of us has done them? Where are we then if there is "water only," example and precept only, commandments only, sorrow upon sorrow when they are broken, and the breaking repeated still? Among the most remarkable of Overbeck's striking series of pictures illustrating the life of Jesus, there is one that represents Him as a Child in the carpenter's shop. Like other children, He has been playing with the tools, and has taken up the saw. A look of solemnity passes over His radiant face; and by the shadow that falls on the floor underneath you see that the block of wood He is sawing out is taking the shape of a cross. Joseph looks on in a kind of perplexed reverence, and the Virgin-mother by His side with a sad admiration, as if Simeon's prediction were already beginning to have its accomplishment, and the sword were piercing her own soul also. This is not imagination; it is rather interpretation. The artist is only an expositor of the evangelist. "This is He that came by water and blood." From the outset of His personal ministry—as it had been from the foundation of the world—the Saviour was pointing to the sacrifice,—journeying always towards Calvary. Other prophets and reformers had come "by water," preaching purification for the future. He alone came "by blood," giving, in Himself, atonement for past and future both. (*Bp. Huntington.*) *Redemption by blood*:—I. THIS IS HE THAT CAME BY WATER. Our Lord came from Galilee to Jordan, a lengthened journey, for the purpose of being baptized. This shows the importance of the ordinance. II. THIS IS HE THAT CAME BY BLOOD—NOT BY WATER ONLY, BUT BY WATER AND BLOOD. The manner in which this announcement is made, is well fitted to impress us with its importance. The blood is noticed with peculiar emphasis. Important as it was, that "Christ came by water," it was still more so that "He came by blood." By the one He undertook the work, but by the other He executed it. 1. Christ came by blood that the prophecies might be fulfilled. 2. Christ came by blood, and so accomplished the design of the ancient law. 3. When Christ came by blood He secured all the blessings of redemption for His people. 4. When He came by blood He opened up a way of access for the sinner to God and to glory. III. THE CONFIRMATION OF THE SPIRIT'S TESTIMONY. "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." The witness of the Spirit was borne to Christ during the whole period of His ministry. But the witness of which the text speaks points to that which was borne by the Spirit after the death of Christ. It began with His resurrection. He was "quickened by the Spirit" on the third, the appointed day. And oh, what a glorious testimony was borne to Him then (Col. ii. 15; Rom. i. 4). This testimony was continued in His ascension. During His sojourn of forty days on earth, subsequent to His resurrection, Jesus spoke much of the Spirit to His disciples. Then, in due time, was the Spirit poured out from on high. On the Day of Pentecost He came in "a rushing mighty wind, and in cloven tongues like as of fire." By the transactions of that day the triumphs of the Saviour were manifested to all. Nor did the Spirit then cease His testimony. He continued and increased it in the ministry of the apostles (Mark xvi. 20). (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *The water and the blood; or complete purification*:—The design of Christ's death was to procure both the justification and sanctification of the Church. I. THE FIRST PART OF THIS DESIGN is declared by St. John, in this epistle (chap. i. 7). Cleansing is a term which supposes defilement; and sin is, in Scripture, represented as horribly defiling, rendering the soul impure, odious, and abominable in the sight of God, who is perfectly pure and holy. If we are duly sensible of our sinful defilement, we shall certainly be anxious for cleansing. And how can this be obtained? The tears of repentance will not wash away our sins. Nor is mere reformation and moral improvement sufficient. But, behold the Divine provision! Behold the precious blood issuing from the wounded side of the Son of God! The blood of which we

speak, procures the justification of all who believe. We are said to be "justified through faith in His (Christ's) blood"; elsewhere, to be "brought nigh by His blood"; and again, to be "redeemed by His blood"; and to be "washed from our sins in His blood." But it is "through faith" that we are thus justified; Jesus Christ is "the propitiation for our sins": but it is "through faith in His blood"; it must be received by every man, for himself, in particular. The perfect efficacy of this blood is frequently expressed in Scripture in very strong terms: "I have blotted out," saith God, "thy sins, as a thick cloud." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Yea, saith the penitent psalmist, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow"; and again, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." "This is He that came by blood." II. **THIS IS HE THAT CAME BY WATER.** This signifies a second blessed effect of the death of Christ, the sanctification of believers, in virtue of that death. 1. It is by the mediation of Christ, meritoriously. We owe to Jesus Christ the renovation of our nature in the image of God; for He died to "bring us to God"; to "redeem us to God" (Eph. v. 25, 27). 2. It is through faith in Christ, instrumentally. 3. But it is efficiently, by the Holy Spirit, that believers are sanctified. 4. The sanctification of believers is promoted by the means of grace, as religious ordinances of Divine appointment are properly called. 5. To these we may add, the various afflictions with which God, in His holy providence, visits His people. Conclusion: 1. Let us reflect, with becoming humility, on our natural defilement. 2. If we are by nature thus defiled, how necessary is it that we should be cleansed? 3. Let believers in Christ, already sanctified in part, still look to Jesus for further supplies of grace. (*G. Burder.*) **And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.**—*Grounds of faith in the resurrection*:—It is natural to ask, What is the evidence that Christ did really rise from the dead? St. John says, "It is the Spirit that beareth witness." St. John, indeed, is speaking immediately of that faith in our Lord's eternal Sonship which overcomes the world. But since the resurrection is the main proof of our Lord's Divinity, it follows that the Spirit must also bear witness to the resurrection. And He does this in two ways. It is His work, that those historical proofs of the resurrection which have come down to us, and which address themselves to our natural reasoning faculties, have been marshalled, recognised, preserved, transmitted in the Church of Christ. He bears another witness, as we shall presently see, by His action, not so much on the intelligence, as on the will of the believing Christian. I. **IN ORDER TO KNOW THAT OUR LORD DID REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD, WE HAVE TO SATISFY OURSELVES THAT THREE DISTINCT QUESTIONS CAN BE ANSWERED.** 1. Whether Jesus Christ did really die upon the Cross. The wonder is not that He died when He did, after hanging for three hours in agony, but that, after all His sufferings at the hands of the soldiers and the populace, before His crucifixion, He should have lived so long. Yet suppose that what looked like death on the Cross was only a fainting-fit. Would He have survived the wound in His side, inflicted by the soldier's lance, through which the blood yet remaining in His heart and the water of the pericardium escaped? But suppose, against all this evidence, that when Jesus was taken down from the Cross, He was still living. Then He must have been suffocated by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus when they embalmed Him. The Jews carefully inspected and sealed His tomb: they had sentinels placed there; and were satisfied that the work was thoroughly done. To do them justice, the Jews have never denied the reality of our Lord's death; it is impossible to do so, without paradox. 2. Whether the disciples did not take our Lord's dead body out of His sepulchre. (1) They would not have wished to do it. Why should they? They either believed that He would rise from the dead, or they did not. If they did believe it, they would have shrunk from disturbing His grave, as from an act not less unnecessary than profane. If they did not believe in it, and instead of abandoning themselves to unreflecting grief, allowed themselves to think steadily, what must have been their estimate of their dead Master? They must now have thought of Him as of one who had deceived them, or who was Himself deceived. On either supposition, why should they rouse the anger of the Jews, and incur the danger of swift and heavy punishment? (2) But had they desired, they surely would not have dared it. Until Pentecost, they were, by their own account, very timid men. (3) And, once more, had they desired and dared to remove our Lord's body from its grave, such a feat was obviously beyond their power. The tomb was guarded by soldiers. 3. The amount of positive testimony which goes to show that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead. (1) The witness of all the apostles.

They gave their lives in attestation of this fact. Their conduct after the day of Pentecost is throughout that of men whose trustworthiness and sincerity of purpose are beyond dispute. (2) The testimony of a large number of persons besides the apostles. Take the case of the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost. They had unrivalled opportunities for satisfying themselves of its being a reality or a fiction. Yet at the risk of comfort, position, nay, life, they publicly professed their belief in its truth. Or consider the case of the two hundred and fifty and more persons still living when St. Paul wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians, who had seen the risen Jesus on one occasion during the forty days. Five hundred persons could not be simultaneously deluded. Their testimony would be considered decisive as to any ordinary occurrence, where men wished only to ascertain the simple truth. II. THE FORCE OF THIS BODY OF TESTIMONY IS NOT REALLY WEAKENED BY OBJECTIONS WHICH DO NOT DIRECTLY CHALLENGE IT, AND WHICH TURN ON ACCESSORY OR SUBORDINATE POINTS. 1. For instance, it is said that the evangelical accounts of the resurrection itself, and of our Lord's subsequent appearances, are difficult to reconcile with each other. At first sight they are; but only at first sight. In order to reconcile them two things are necessary: first, patience, and secondly, a determination to exclude everything from the narrative which does not lie in the text of the Gospels. The differences are just what might be expected in four narratives of the same event, composed at different periods, by different authors, who had distinct sources of information at command. Each says what he has to say with blunt and simple directness, without an eye to the statements of the others, or to the possible comment of hostile critics. 2. It is, further, objected that the resurrection was not sufficiently public. Jesus Christ ought to have left His grave, so it is urged, in the sight of a crowd of lookers-on; and, when risen, He ought to have hastened to show Himself to the persons least likely to believe in His resurrection—to the Jews at large, to the high priests, to Pilate, to His executioners. (1) Here it is obvious, first of all, that the guards may very well have seen Jesus leave His tomb. Scripture says nothing on the point. But they were terrified, almost to death, at the sight of the angel of the sepulchre. Any number of witnesses who had been present would have been as much frightened as were the guards. (2) Nor is the old objection of Celsus, that Jesus Christ ought to have shown Himself to the Jews and to His judges in order to rebuke their unbelief, more reasonable. Had He appeared to the chief priests, would they have believed in Him? Would they not have denied His identity, or argued that a devil had taken His form before their eyes, just as of old they had ascribed His miracles to Beelzebub? The Jews had ample opportunities of ascertaining that the resurrection was a fact, if they had desired to do so. But as it was, they were not in a mood to be convinced, even by the evidence of their senses. (3) Far deeper than these objections is that which really lies against all miracles whatever, as being at variance with that conception of a rigid uniformity in the processes of nature, which is one of the intellectual fashions of our day. Suffice it to say, that any idea of natural law which is held to make a miracle impossible, is also inconsistent with belief in the existence of God. III. Here, then, we are coming round to the point from which we started. For it is natural to ask, WHY, IF THE RESURRECTION CAN BE PROVED BY EVIDENCE SO GENERALLY SUFFICIENT, IT WAS AT THE TIME, AND IS STILL, REJECTED BY A GREAT MANY INTELLIGENT MEN? The answer to this natural and legitimate question is of practical importance to all of us. There can, I apprehend, be no sort of doubt that if an ordinary historical occurrence, such as the death of Julius Cæsar, were attested as clearly as the resurrection of our Lord—not more clearly, nor less—as having taken place nineteen centuries ago, all the world would believe it as a matter of course. The reason why the resurrection was not always believed upon the evidence of those who witnessed to it is, because to believe it means, for a consistent and thoughtful man, to believe in and to accept a great deal else. To believe the resurrection is to believe implicitly in the Christian faith. It is no mere speculative question whether Jesus Christ did or did not rise from the dead; it is an eminently practical one. The intellect is not more interested in it than the will; perhaps it is even less interested. The real difficulties of belief lie, generally speaking, with the will. And nothing is more certain, I may add, more alarming, than the power of the will to shape, check, promote, control conviction. And such is the power of the will that it can give effect to this decision. It can baulk and thwart the action of the intellect; give it a perverse twist, and even set it scheming how best to discredit or refute the truth which but now it was on the point of accepting. And thus we may understand what it is that the Spirit does to produce

faith. He does not set aside or extinguish the operations of the natural reason; reason too is a guide to truth which God has given us. But He does change the temper, or the direction of the will. And thus He sets the reason free to do justice to the evidence before it. It is thus that within us the Spirit beareth witness. The evidence for the resurrection was not stronger on the Day of Pentecost than it was on the day before. But the descent of the Spirit made it morally possible for three thousand converts to do that evidence something like justice. And now we can see why St. Paul makes so much of faith—especially in a risen Christ—in his great Epistles. If the understanding were alone concerned there would be no more reason for our being justified by faith in a crucified and risen Christ than for our being justified by our assent to the conclusion of a problem in Euclid. It is because the will must endorse the verdict of the understanding, and so must mean obedience as well as assent, that “by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” (*Canon Liddon.*) *The Spirit's witness to Christ:*—There are five respects in which that Divine agent may be represented as bearing witness to Christ. (1) He bore witness by the types and prophecies of the Jewish dispensation—both of which foretold Christ's advent, character, and work. (2) He bore witness by qualifying Christ, as man, for His mediatorial offices (*Isa. xi. 1-3*). (3) The Spirit bore witness to Christ by the signs and wonders which He enabled the apostles to perform in attestation of their Divine commission. (4) He bears witness to Christ in that Holy Bible which so clearly and impressively unfolds His glory and His grace. (5) He bears witness also by “revealing God's Son in” the soul—by bringing the gospel practically to bear on the understanding, the conscience, and the heart. (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*)

Vers. 7, 8. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.—*The Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity not repugnant to sound reason:*—I. I shall attempt to show what conceptions the Scripture leads us to form of the PECULIAR MODE OF THE DIVINE EXISTENCE. 1. The Scripture leads us to conceive of God, the first and supreme Being, as existing in three distinct persons. The one living and true God exists in such a manner that there is a proper foundation in His nature to speak of Himself in the first, second, and third person, and say I, Thou, and He, meaning only Himself. There is a certain something in the Divine nature which lays a proper foundation for such a personal distinction. But what that something is can neither be described nor conceived. Here lies the whole mystery of the Trinity. 2. The Scripture represents the three persons in the sacred Trinity as absolutely equal in every Divine perfection. We find the same names, the same attributes, and the same works ascribed to each person. 3. The Scripture represents the three equally Divine persons in the Trinity as acting in a certain order in the work of redemption. Though they are absolutely equal in nature, yet in office the first person is superior to the second, and the second is superior to the third. The Son acts in subordination to the Father, and the Spirit acts in subordination to the Son and Father both. 4. The Scripture teaches us that each of the Divine persons takes His peculiar name from the peculiar office which He sustains in the economy of redemption. The first person assumes the name of Father, because He is by office the Creator or Author of all things, and especially of the human nature of Christ. The second person assumes the name of Son and Word, by virtue of His incarnation, and mediatorial conduct. The third person is called the Holy Ghost, on account of His peculiar office as Sanctifier. 5. The Scripture represents these three Divine persons as one God. This is the plain language of the text. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three in respect to their personality, and but one in respect to their nature and essence. II. This Scriptural account of the mysterious doctrine of the sacred Trinity is NOT REPUGNANT TO THE DICTATES OF SOUND REASON. 1. The doctrine of the Trinity, as represented in Scripture, implies no contradiction. There may be, for aught we know, an incomprehensible something in the one self-existent Being which lays a proper foundation for his existing a Trinity in Unity. 2. If it implies no contradiction that the one living and true God should exist in three persons, then this mysterious mode of the Divine existence is agreeable to the dictates of sound reason. We cannot suppose that the uncreated Being should exist in the same manner in which we and other created beings exist. And if He exists in a different manner from created beings, then His mode of existence must necessarily be mysterious. And whoever now objects against the Scripture account of the sacred Trinity would have equally objected against any other account which

God could have given of His peculiar mode of existence. 3. The doctrine of the Trinity, as represented in Scripture, is no more repugnant to the dictates of sound reason than many other doctrines which all Christians believe concerning God. It is generally believed that God is a self-existent Being, or that there is no cause or ground of His existence out of Himself. But who can explain this mode of existence, or even form any clear conception of it? It is generally believed that God is constantly present in all places, or that His presence perpetually fills the whole created universe. But can we frame any clear ideas of this universal presence of the Deity? It is generally believed that God is the Creator, who has made all things out of nothing. But of that power which is able to create, or produce something out of nothing, we can form no manner of conception. This attribute of the Deity, therefore, is as really mysterious and incomprehensible in its operation as the doctrine of the Trinity. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood.—*The three-fold witnesses on earth* :—I. THE SPIRIT BEARS WITNESS.

The Holy Ghost is meant. What is the permanent testimony which He bears to Christ and His gospel? The Scriptures are His witness to Christ. It would be impossible to overrate the value of this testimony. It is a written Word, and therefore not liable to change. We can study it in a way altogether different from the attention which we can give to a spoken discourse. We can carry it with us, whither we go. We can refresh our memory with it as often as we need it. Not only, however, did the Scriptures proceed from the Spirit at the first, but they have been preserved by Him in a most remarkable manner. He has used the most scrupulous care to maintain their purity. Nor does the testimony of the Spirit cease in the publication and preservation of the Scriptures. He continues to enlighten men in the knowledge of them, to impress their hearts by the belief of them, and to bring them under their power. But how are we to speak of the testimony itself which is thus borne by the Spirit to Christ? Then truly the words are verified, "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and show it unto you." He gives the soul views of Christ such as it never entertained before, the most honourable to Him and assuring to it. He produces affections towards Him such as never existed before, the most ardent and self-denying. He causes unreserved submission to His will, so that it is either borne with patience or done with diligence. II. THE WATER BEARS WITNESS TO CHRIST.

1. What are we to understand by this water? There is only one use of water in the Christian economy. This is in the administration of baptism. But the fact that an ordinance is made to be a witness to Christ is not to be passed unnoticed. It resembles the Scriptures in being permanent, but it possesses a feature peculiar to itself. It is a testimony to the eye, and by it to the understanding and heart.

2. What is the amount of the testimony borne by the water of baptism? It is very simple, yet very expressive. In this ordinance we behold reflected, as in a mirror, the gospel of Christ. It is a standing testimony to the depravity of the sinner. If we come to it at all, it is because we are defiled. At the same time the efficacy of cleansing is no less clearly signified. It says, here is a fountain, and every one that washes in it is made clean. Nor is it the pardon of sin only that is figured in baptism. We are at the same time reminded of the destruction of its power. A great moral change is made to pass upon the soul that is pardoned. Pardon is received by faith, but this grace is ever accompanied by regeneration. III. THE BLOOD IS A WITNESS UNTO CHRIST.

How is it to be understood? The reference appears to be to the Lord's Supper, as a lively representation of the death of Christ.

1. His person is presented to our faith in the bread and wine. They are emblems of His body, of its reality, that He was truly a partaker of flesh and blood. But this fact cannot be separated from His original and higher nature. 2. Equally clear is the representation of His work. It is testified in the broken bread. That calls up the fact of His crucifixion. 3. We are also taught how we are saved by it. Eating and drinking are essential to the preservation of life. 4. But these exercises are not observed by us singly and alone. We are associated with others. The Lord's table is thus the emblem of the Church of Christ. There is at it the interchange of a holy and heavenly communion. (*Jas. Morgan, D.D.*)

The Spirit, and the water, and the blood :—We dismiss, without any misgiving, the clause respecting the heavenly Trinity from 1 John v. 7. The sentence is irrelevant to this context, and foreign to the apostle's mode of conception. It is the Church's victorious faith in the Son of God, vindicated against the world (ch. v. 1-5), that the writer here asserts, and to invoke witnesses for this "in heaven" is nothing to the purpose. The contrast present to his thought is not that between heaven and

earth as spheres of testimony, but only between the various elements of the testimony itself (vers. 6-10). (For this manner of combining witnesses, comp. John v. 31-47; viii. 13-18; x. 25-38; xiv. 8-13; xv. 26, 27.) The passage of the three heavenly witnesses is now admitted to be a theological gloss, which crept first into the Latin manuscripts of the fifth century, making its way probably from the margin into the text: no Greek codex exhibits it earlier than the fifteenth century. "This," the apostle writes in ver. 6—this "Jesus" of whom we "believe that He is the Son of God" (ver. 5)—"is He that came through water and blood—Jesus Christ." By this time "Jesus Christ" and "Jesus the Son of God" had become terms synonymous in true Christian speech. The great controversy of the age turned upon their identification. The Gnostics distinguished Jesus and Christ as human and Divine persons, united at the baptism and severed on the Cross, when Jesus cried, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" St. John asserts, therefore, at every turn the oneness of Jesus Christ; the belief that "Jesus is the Christ" he makes the test of a genuine Christianity (ch. v. 1; comp. ii. 22; iii. 23; iv. 2, 3, 15). The name thus appended to ver. 6 is no idle repetition; it is a solemn reassertion and reassumption of the Christian creed in two words—Jesus Christ. And He is Jesus Christ, inasmuch as He "came through water and blood—not in the water only." The heretics allowed and maintained in their own way that Jesus Christ "came by water" when He received His Messianic anointing at John's baptism, and the man Jesus thus became the Christ; but the "coming through blood" they abhorred. They regarded the death of the Cross, befalling the human Jesus, as a punishment of shame inflicted on the flesh, in which the Divine or Deiform Christ could have no part. Upon this Cerinthian view, the Christ who came through water went away rather than came through blood; they saw in the death upon the Cross nothing that witnessed of the Godhead in Jesus Christ, nothing that spoke of Divine forgiveness and cleansing (ch. i. 7, 9), but an eclipse and abandonment by God, a surrender of the earthly Jesus to the powers of darkness. The simple words, "that came," are of marked significance in this context; for "the coming One" (*ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, Matt. xi. 3; John i. 15, 27; xi. 27; Heb. x. 37; Rev. i. 4, 8, etc.) was a standing name for the Messiah, now recognised as the Son of God. "He that came," therefore, signifies "He who has assumed this character," who appeared on earth as the Divine Messiah; and St. John declares that He thus appeared disclosing Himself through these two signs—of blood as well as water. So the beginning and the end, the inauguration and consummation of Christ's ministry, were marked by the two supreme manifestations of His Messiahship; and of both events this apostle was a near and deeply interested witness. When he speaks of the Lord as "coming through water and blood," these are viewed historically as steps in His glorious march, signal epochs in the continuous disclosure of Himself to men, and crises in His past relations to the world; when he says, "in the water and in the blood," they are apprehended as abiding facts, each making its distinct and living appeal to our faith. This verse stands in much the same relation to the two sacraments as does the related teaching of chs. iii. and vi. in St. John's Gospel. The two sacraments embody the same truths that are symbolised here. Observing them in the obedience of faith, we associate ourselves visibly with "the water and the blood," with Christ baptized and crucified, living and dying for us. But to see in these observances the equivalents of the water and blood of this passage, to make the apostle say that the water of baptism and the cup of the Lord's Supper are the chief witnesses to Him and the essential instruments of our salvation, and that the former sacrament is unavailing without the addition of the latter, is to narrow and belittle His declaration and to empty out its historical content. Nearer to St. John's thought lies the inference that Christ is our anointed Priest as well as Prophet, making sacrifice for our sin while He is our guide and light of life. To the virtue of His life and teaching must be added the virtue of His passion and death. Had He come "in the water" only, had Jesus Christ stopped short of Calvary and drawn back from the blood-baptism, there had been no cleansing from sin for us, no witness to that chief function of His Christhood. This third manifestation of the Son of God—the baptism of the Spirit following on that of water and of blood, a baptism in which Jesus Christ was agent and no longer subject—verified and made good the other two. "And the Spirit," he says, "is that which beareth witness" (*τὸ μαρτυροῦν*, "the witnessing power"); the water and the blood, though they have so much to say, must have spoken in vain, becoming mere voices of past history, but for this abiding and ever active Witness (John xv. 26; xvi. 7-15). The Spirit, whose witness comes last in the

order of distinct manifestation, is first in principle; His breath animates the whole testimony; hence He takes the lead in the final enumeration of ver. 8. The witness of the water had His silent attestation; the Baptist "testified, saying, I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and it abode upon Him," &c. (John i. 32, 33). "It is the Spirit," therefore, "that bears witness"; in all true witness He is operative, and there is no testifying without Him. "For the Spirit is truth," is "*the truth*"—Jesus called Him repeatedly "the Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 17; xv. 26; 1 John iv. 6; comp. John iv. 23, 24)—truth in its substance and vital power is lodged with Him; in this element He works; this effluence He ever breathes forth. Practically, the Spirit is the truth; whatever is stated in Christian matters without His attestation, is something less or other than the truth. Such, then, are the "three witnesses" which were gathered "into one" in the Apostle John's experience, in the history of Jesus Christ and His disciples: "the three" he says, "agree in one," or more strictly, "amount to the one thing" (*καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν*, ver. 8); they converge upon this single aim. The Jordan banks, Calvary, the upper chamber in Jerusalem; the beginning, the end of Jesus Christ's earthly course, and the new beginning which knows no end; His Divine life and words and works, His propitiatory death, the promised and perpetual gift of the Spirit to His Church—these three cohere into one solid and imperishable witness, which is the demonstration alike of history and personal experience and the Spirit of God. They have one outcome, as they have one purpose; and it is this—viz. "that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (ver. 11). The apostle has indicated in vers. 6-8 what are, to his mind, the proofs of the testimony of Jesus—evidences that must in the end convict and "overcome the world" (ver. 5). So far as the general cause of Christianity is concerned this is enough. But it concerns each man to whom this evidence comes to realise for himself the weight and seriousness of the testimony which confronts him. So St. John points with emphasis in vers. 9 and 10 to the Author of the threefold manifestation. "If we receive the witness of men"—if credible human testimony wins our ready assent—"the witness of God is greater." The declaration of the gospel brings every soul that hears it face to face with God (comp. 1 Thess. ii. 13). And of all subjects on which God might speak to men, of all revelations that He has made, or might conceivably make, to mankind, this, St. John feels, is the supreme and critical matter—"the testimony of God, viz., the fact that He has testified concerning His Son." The gospel is, in St. Paul's words, "God's good news about His Son." God insists upon our believing this witness; it is that in which He is supremely concerned, and which He asserts and commends to men above all else. Let the man, therefore, who with this evidence before him remains unbelieving, understand what he is about; let him know whom he is rejecting and whom he is contradicting. "He has made God a liar"—he has given the lie to the All-holy and Almighty One, the Lord God of truth. This apostle said the same terrible thing about the impenitent denier of his own sin (ch. i. 10); these two denials are kindred to each other, and run up into the same condition of defiance toward God. On the other hand, "he who believes on the Son of God," "hearing from the Father and coming" to Christ accordingly (John vi. 45), he finds "within himself" the confirmation of the witness he received (ver. 10a). The testimony of the Spirit and the water and the blood is no mere historical and objective proof; it enters the man's own nature, and becomes the regnant, creative factor in the shaping of his soul. The apostle might have added this subjective confirmation as a fourth, experimental witness to the other three; but, to his conception, the sense of inward life and power attained by Christian faith is the very witness of the Spirit, translated into terms of experience, realised and operative in personal consciousness. "The water that I will give," said Jesus, "will be within him a fountain of water, springing up unto life eternal" (John iv. 14). It is thus that the believer on the Son of God sets to his seal that God is true. His testimony is not to the general fact that there is life and truth in Christ; but "this is the witness, that God gave to us life eternal, and this life is in His Son" (ver. 11). This witness of God concerning His Son is not only a truth to be believed or denied, it is a life to be chosen or refused; and on this choice turns the eternal life or death of all to whom Christ offers Himself: "He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life" (ver. 12). Life appears everywhere in St. John as a gift, not an acquisition; and faith is a grace rather than a virtue; it is yielding to God's power rather than the exerting of our own. It is not so much that we apprehend Christ; rather He apprehends us, our souls are laid hold of and possessed by the truth concerning

Him. Our part is but to receive God's bounty pressed upon us in Christ; it is merely to consent to the strong purpose of His love, and allow Him, as St. Paul puts it, to "work in us to will and to work on behalf of His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13). As this operation proceeds and the truth concerning Christ takes practical possession of our nature, the assurance of faith, the conviction that we have eternal life in Him, becomes increasingly settled and firm. Rothe finely says, "Faith is not a mere witness on the man's part to the object of his faith; it is a witness which the man receives from that object. . . . In its first beginnings faith is, no doubt, mainly the acceptance of testimony from without; but the element of trust involved in this acceptance, includes the beginning of an inner experience of that which is believed. This trust arises from the attraction which the object of our faith has exercised upon us; it rests on the consciousness of a vital connection between ourselves and that object. In the measure in which we accept the Divine witness, our inner susceptibility to its working increases, and thus there is formed in us a certainty of faith which rises unassailably above all scepticism." The language of St. John in this last chapter of his Epistle breathes the force of a spiritual conviction raised to its highest potency. For him perfect love has now cast out fear, and perfect faith has banished every shadow of doubt. "Believing on the name of the Son of God," he "knows that he has eternal life" (ver. 13). With him the transcendental has become the experimental, and no breach is left any more between them. (*G. G. Findlay, B.A.*)

*The gospel record:—*I. THE VIEW HERE GIVEN OF THE GOSPEL TESTIMONY. 1. Unspeakably important. 2. Exceedingly comprehensive. 3. Pre-eminently gracious. 4. Remarkably distinct and definite. II. THE EVIDENCE ADDUCED IN CONFIRMATION OF ITS TRUTHS. 1. The voice from heaven. 2. From earth. 3. Scripture testimony. 4. Personal experience. III. THE CLAIMS WHICH IT HAS, AS THUS ESTABLISHED, UPON OUR REGARDS. It claims our earnest attention and most serious study; but, above all, it claims our unwavering faith. This is the main point which is here set forth. 1. The nature of faith. It is nothing more nor less than receiving the Divine testimony, especially concerning Jesus Christ. 2. Its reasonableness. 3. Its importance. Through it we have eternal life. 4. The opposite of faith is unbelief—a sin most heinous in its nature, and most awful in its results. (*Expository Outlines.*)

*The three witnesses:—*Christianity puts forth very lofty claims. She claims to be the true faith, and the only true one. She avows her teachings to be Divine, and therefore infallible; while for her great Teacher, the Son of God, she demands Divine worship, and the unreserved confidence and obedience of men. Now, to justify such high claims, the gospel ought to produce strong evidence, and it does so. The armoury of external evidences is well stored with weapons of proof. The gospel also bears within itself its own evidence, it has a self-proving power. It is so pure, so holy, so altogether above the inventive capacity of fallen man, that it must be of God. But neither with these external or internal evidences have we to do now, but I call your attention to the three witnesses which are spoken of in the text, three great witnesses still among us, whose evidence proves the truth of our religion, the Divinity of our Lord, and the future supremacy of the faith. I. OUR LORD HIMSELF WAS ATTESTED BY THESE THREE WITNESSES. If you will carefully read in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Exodus, or in the eighth chapter of the Book of Leviticus, you will see that every priest came by the anointing Spirit, by water, and by blood, as a matter of type, and if Jesus Christ be indeed the priest that was for to come, He will be known by these three signs. Godly men in the olden times also well understood that there was no putting away of sin except with these three things; in proof of which we will quote David's prayer, "Purge me with hyssop"—that is, the hyssop dipped in blood—"and I shall be clean; wash me"—there is the water—"and I shall be whiter than snow"; and then, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit." Thus the blood, the water, and the Spirit were recognised of old as necessary to cleanse from guilt, and if Jesus of Nazareth be indeed able to save His people from their sins, He must come with the triple gift—the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Now it was evidently so. Our Lord was attested by the Spirit. The Spirit of God bore witness to Christ in the types and prophecies, "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; and Jesus Christ answers to those prophecies. The Spirit abode with our Lord all His life long, and to crown all, after He had died and risen again, the Holy Ghost gave the fullest witness by descending in full power upon the disciples at Pentecost. It is also manifest that our Lord came with water too. He came not by the water merely as a symbol, but by that which the water meant, by unsullied

purity of life. With Jesus also was the blood. This distinguished Him from John the Baptist, who came by water, but Jesus came "not by water only, but by water and blood." We must not prefer any one of the three witnesses to another, but what a wonderful testimony to Christ was the blood! From the very first He came with blood, for John the Baptist cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" In His ministry there was often a clear testimony to His future sufferings and shedding of blood, for to the assembled crowd He said, "Except a man eat My flesh and drink My blood, there is no life in him"; while to His disciples He spake of the deace which He should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem. However pure the life He led, had He never died He could not have been the Saviour appointed to bear the iniquity of us all. The blood was needed to complete the witness. The blood must flow with the water, the suffering with the serving. II. THESE THREE REMAIN AS STANDING WITNESSES TO HIM TO ALL TIME. And first, the Holy Spirit is witness at this hour that the religion of Jesus is the truth, and that Jesus is the Son of God. By His Divine energy He convinces men of the truth of the gospel; and these so convinced are not only persons who, through their education, are likely to believe it, but men like Saul of Tarsus, who abhor the whole thing. He pours His influences upon men, and infidelity melts away like the iceberg in the Gulf Stream; He touches the indifferent and careless, and they repent, believe, and obey the Saviour. Then, too, the Spirit goes forth among believers, and by them He bears witness to our Lord and His gospel. How mightily does He comfort the saints! And He does the same when He gives them guidance, enlightenment, and elevation of soul. The next abiding witness in the Church is the water—not the water of baptism, but the new life implanted in Christians, for that is the sense in which John's Master had used the word "water": "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The world's conscience knows that the religion of Jesus is the religion of purity, and if professed Christians fall into uncleanness the world knows that such a course of action does not arise out of the religion of Christ, but is diametrically opposite to it. The gospel is perfect, and did we wholly yield to its sway sin would be abhorred by us, and slain in us, and we should live on earth the life of the perfect ones above. The third abiding witness is the blood. The blood of Christ is still on the earth, for when Jesus bled it fell upon the ground and was never gathered up. O earth, thou still art bespattered with the blood of the murdered Son of God, and if thou dost reject Him this will curse thee. But, O humanity, thou art blessed with the drops of that precious blood, and believing in Him it doth save thee. The blood of Jesus, after speaking peace to the conscience, inflames the heart with fervent love, and full often leads men to high deeds of consecration, self-denial, and self-sacrifice, such as can scarce be understood till they are traced back to that amazing love which bled upon the tree. III. THIS TRIPLE YET UNITED WITNESS IS PECULIARLY FORCIBLE WITHIN BELIEVING HEARTS. John tells us, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." Now, these three witnesses bear testimony in our souls abidingly. I speak not of years ago, but of last night, when you prayed, and were heard. Did not the Spirit when He helped you to pray, bear witness that the gospel was no lie? Was not the answer to your prayer good evidence? The next witness in us is the water, or the new and pure life. Do you feel the inner life? You are conscious that you are not what you used to be, you are conscious of a new life within your soul which you never knew till the date of your conversion, and that new life within you is the living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever. Witnessing within us is also the blood. This is a witness which never fails, speaking in us better things than the blood of Abel. It gives us such peace that we can sweetly live and calmly die. It gives us such access to God that sometimes when we have felt its power we have drawn as near to our Father as if we had seen Him face to face. And oh, what safety the blood causes us to enjoy! We feel that we cannot perish while the crimson canopy of atonement by blood hangs over our head. Thus I have tried to show that these three witnesses testify in our souls; I beg you now to notice their order. The Spirit of God first enters the heart, perhaps long before the man knows that such is the case; the Spirit creates the new life, which repents and seeks the Saviour, that is the water; and that new life flies to the blood of Jesus and obtains peace. Having observed their order, now note their combination. "These three agree in one," therefore every true believer should have the witness of each one, and if each one does not witness in due time, there is cause for grave suspicion. IV. THESE WITNESSES CERTIFY TO US THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF OUR

RELIGION. Is the Spirit working through the gospel? then the gospel will win the day, because the Spirit of God is almighty, and complete master over the realm of mind. He has the power to illuminate the intellect, to win the affections, to curb the will, and change the entire nature of man, for He worketh all things after His own pleasure, and, like the wind, He "bloweth where He listeth." Next, the gospel must conquer, because of the water, which I have explained to be the new life of purity. What says John? "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." It is impossible for the gospel to be vanquished so long as there remains in the world one soul that is born of God. Living and incorruptible seed abideth for ever! Lastly, the gospel must spread and conquer because of the blood. God, the everlasting Father, has promised to Jesus by covenant, of which the blood is the seal, that He "shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." As surely as Christ died on the Cross, He must sit on a universal throne. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **This is the witness of God, which He hath testified of His Son.—Faith, and the witness upon which it is founded:**—Faith stands, under the covenant of grace, in a leading position amongst the works of the regenerate man and the gifts of the Spirit of God. The promise no longer stands to the man who doeth these things that he shall live in them, else we were shut out of it, but "the just shall live by faith." God now biddeth us live by believing in Him. I. First, then, since our great business is that we believe God, let us see what reason we have for believing Him. I. THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCE given is stated in the first verse of the text, as the evidence of God to us, and it is prefaced by the remark that "we receive the witness of men." We do and must believe the testimony of men as a general rule; and it is only right that we should account witnesses honest till they have proved themselves false. Now, God has been pleased to give us a measure of the witness of men with regard to His Son, Jesus Christ. We have the witness of such men as the four evangelists and the twelve apostles. We have the witness of men as to the facts that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven. Further, we have the testimony of men as to the present power of that same Jesus to forgive men their trespasses, and to save them from the power of sin. From the first day when our Lord was taken up till now men and women have come forward, and have said, "We were once lovers of sin; whatever our neighbours are, such were we, but we are washed, but we are sanctified; and all this by faith in Jesus." Some years ago there went into a Methodist class meeting a lawyer who was a doubter, but at the same time a man of candid spirit. Sitting down on one of the benches, he listened to a certain number of poor people, his neighbours, whom he knew to be honest people. He heard some thirteen or fourteen of these persons speak about the power of Divine grace in their souls, and about their conversion, and so on. He jotted down the particulars, and went home, and sat down, and said to himself, "Now, these people all bear witness, I will weigh their evidence." It struck him that if he could get those twelve or thirteen people into the witness-box, to testify on his side in any question before a court, he could carry anything. They were persons of different degrees of intellect and education, but they were all of the sort of persons whom he would like to have for witnesses, persons who could bear cross-examination, and by their very tone and manner would win the confidence of the jury. "Very well," he said to himself, "I am as much bound to believe these people about their religious experience as about anything else." He did so, and that led to his believing on the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart. Thus, you see, the testimony of God to us does in a measure come through men, and we are bound to receive it. But now comes the text: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." God is to be believed if all men contradict Him. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Now, what is the witness of God with regard to Christ? How does He prove to us that Jesus Christ did really come into the world to save us? God's witnesses are three: the Spirit, the water, and the blood. God says, "My Son did come into the world: He is My gift to sinful men; He has redeemed you, and He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto Me by Him: and in proof that He is so the Holy Spirit has been given." Then the water, that is to say, the purifying power of the gospel, is also God's witness to the truth of the gospel. If it does not change men's characters when they receive it, it is not true. But as God everywhere, among the most savage tribes, or amongst the most refined of mankind, makes the gospel to be a sacred bath of cleansing to the hearts and lives of men, He gives another witness

that His Son is really Divine, and that His gospel is true. The blood also witnesses. Does believing in Jesus Christ do what the blood was said to do, namely, give peace with God through the pardon of sin? Hundreds and thousands all over the world affirm that they had no peace of conscience till they looked into the streaming veins of Jesus, and then they saw how God can be just and yet forgive sin. II. I come now to THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE, or the witness in us. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." When a man is led by the Spirit of God to believe that God cannot lie, he inquires what it is that God says; and he hears that atonement has been made, and that whosoever believeth in Jesus shall have eternal life. He sees the witness to be good, and he believes it. That man is saved. What happens next? Why, this man becomes a new creature. He is radically changed. "Now," says he to himself, "I am sure of the truth of the gospel, for this wonderful change in me, in my heart, my speech, and my life, must be of Divine origin. I was told that if I believed I should be saved from my former self, and I am. Now, I know, not only by the external witness, nor even because of the witness of God, but I have an inner consciousness of a most marvellous birth, and this is a witness in myself." The man then goes on to enjoy great peace. Looking alone to Jesus Christ for pardon, he finds his sins taken from him, and his heart is unburdened of a load of fear, and this rest of heart becomes to him another inward witness. As the Christian thus goes on from strength to strength he meets with answers to prayer. He goes to God in trouble. In great perplexity he hastens to the Lord, light comes, and he sees his way. He wants many favours, he asks for them, and they are bestowed. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself"; and there is no witness like it. Except the witness of God, which stands first, and which we are to receive, or perish, there is nothing equal to the witness within yourself. Many a poor man and woman could illuminate their Bibles after the fashion of the tried saint who placed a "T. and P." in the margin. She was asked what it meant, and she replied, "That means 'Tried and proved,' sir." Yes, we have tried and proved the Word of God, and are sure of its truth. III. HOW ARE WE TREATING THE WITNESS OF GOD? For it is written in our text, "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the witness that God witnessed of His Son." Now, are we believing the witness of God? Do you unconverted people believe that the wrath of God abideth on you? Then you must be insane if you do not seek to escape from that wrath. If you believe that Jesus Christ saves from sin, and gives to the soul a treasure far beyond all price, you will make all speed to obtain the precious boon. Is it not so? He who believes in the value of a gift will hasten to accept it, unless he be out of his mind. Methinks I hear one say, "I would believe if I felt something in my heart." You will never feel that something. You are required to believe on the witness of God, and will you dare to say that His evidence is not sufficient? If you will believe on the Divine testimony you shall have the witness within by and by, but you cannot have that first. The demand of the gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe upon God's testimony." What testimony do you want more? God has given it you in many forms. By His inspired book; by the various works of His Spirit, and by the water and the blood in the Church all around you. Above all, Jesus Himself is the best of witnesses. Believe Him. (C. H. Spurgeon.) **He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.**—*The inward witness of faith*:—Testimony and experience constitute two separate and independent grounds of faith. That we may have full confidence in the skill of a physician, it is not necessary that we should have seen him, or have personally witnessed any of the cures effected by him. Our faith may rest simply on the testimony of competent witnesses. But there is also a faith that grounds itself on our own personal experience. The physician whom we first employed, because he was recommended to us by others, may now receive our confidence from what we have ourselves seen and felt of his skill. Our faith in him began with testimony, but now it has become independent of it. The general order of God's moral government is, first belief, afterwards experience. We must begin by using testimony, not by rejecting it; by cherishing not a proud and sceptical, but a childlike and confiding spirit. The gospel of Christ comes to us in the form of Divine testimony. We may have witnessed its effects upon others. We may have heard them telling with joyful accents what it has done for their souls. But this, too, is testimony; very weighty and valuable when accompanied by such a life as convinces us of its sincerity, but still only human testimony, with its usual alloy of error and imperfection. It cannot convey to us an adequate apprehension of the blessedness and power of faith in Christ, any more than a description of light can

be a substitute for seeing the sun shining in his strength. To understand fully how worthy the gospel is of our acceptance, we must feel its efficacy. But this we cannot till we have received it. Our reception of it, then, must rest on God's testimony. After that, we shall have both the outward and the inward witness of its truth. It is reasonable, therefore, when God calls upon men to repent and believe the gospel, that He should furnish them with clear evidence that it is His gospel, and no invention of man. This He has done from the beginning. Our Saviour did not ask His hearers to receive Him as the Son of God, without first furnishing them with many "infallible proofs" of His Divine mission (John v. 31, x. 37, v. 36). This outward evidence which Jesus furnished of His Messiahship left all who rejected Him without excuse. But to those who received Him in faith and love there was a higher testimony (Matt. xvi. 17). The man who has received the gospel in faith and love knows, from his own experience, that it satisfies all the wants of his spiritual nature, and must therefore be true; since it is inconceivable that the soul should be nurtured by error, and kept by it in a vigorous and healthful condition, as that the body should thrive on poison. I. THE GOSPEL QUIETS THE CONSCIENCE, AND THAT ON REASONABLE GROUNDS. The moment the soul apprehends the mighty truth that God has manifested Himself in the flesh; that in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ the true God has taken into union with Himself a true human nature, and in this nature has borne the curse of the law in our stead, it cries out with joy—"This it what I need; a propitiation of infinite worth to meet the immeasurable guilt of my sin." II. THE GOSPEL GIVES THE VICTORY OVER THE INWARD POWER OF SIN. Of the greatness and difficulty of this work the careless and light-minded have no conception. But let one who has gained some true knowledge of the Divine law as a spiritual rule for the regulation of the inner man set himself in earnest to the work of obeying it inwardly as well as outwardly, and he will soon make distressing discoveries of his moral impotence; an impotence which lies not in the absence or defect of any of those faculties which are necessary to qualify him to render to God's law perfect obedience, but only in his free guilty preference of earthly above spiritual good. To emancipate him from this bondage to indwelling sin, and raise him to holiness and communion with God, he needs help from above. Here the gospel, in the fulness of its grace, comes to his relief. It offers him the all-sufficient help of the Holy Spirit to illumine his dark mind, cleanse his polluted soul from the defilement of sin, strengthen his weakness, and give him a victory over the world. III. THE GOSPEL RESTORES THE SOUL TO COMMUNION WITH GOD. Lessons: 1. Only they who receive the gospel can fully apprehend the evidence of its truth. 2. It is possible for a man to put himself in such an attitude that he cannot judge rightly of the evidence by which the gospel is supported. 3. Our assurance of the truth of Christianity is intimately connected with the growth of our piety. (*E. P. Barrows, D.D.*) *The inward witness*:—I. HOW COME WE TO BE BELIEVERS? You know how faith arises in the heart from the human point of view. We hear the gospel, we accept it as the message of God, and we trust ourselves to it. So far it is our own work; and be it remembered that in every case faith is and must be the act of man. But, having said that, let us remember that the Godward history of our believing is quite another thing, for true faith is always the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings us to perform the act of faith by which we are saved; and the process is after this manner, though varying in different individuals: 1. We are brought attentively to listen to the old, old story of the Cross. 2. Further, the Holy Spirit is also pleased to make us conscious of our sinfulness, our danger, and our inability, and this is a great way towards faith in Christ. 3. Moreover, while attentively hearing, we perceive the suitability of the gospel to our case. We feel ourselves sinful, and rejoice that our great Substitute bore our sin, and suffered on its account, and we say, "That substitution is full of hope to me; salvation by an atonement is precisely what I desire; here can my conscience rest." 4. There is but one more step, and that is, we accept Jesus as set forth in the gospel, and place all our trust in Him. 5. When the soul accepts the Lord Jesus as Saviour, she believes in Him as God: for she saith, "How can He have offered so glorious an atonement had He not been Divine?" This is why we believe, then, and the process is a simple and logical one. The mysterious Spirit works us to faith, but the states of mind through which He brings us follow each other in a beautifully simple manner. II. HOW KNOW WE THAT BELIEVERS ARE SAVED? for that seems to be a grave question with some. God declares in His Word, even in that sure Word of testimony, whereunto ye do well to take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, that every believer in Jesus

Christ is saved. Again, we know on the authority of Scripture that believers are saved, because the privileges which are ascribed to them prove that they are in a saved condition. John goes to the very root of every matter, and in chapter i. 12 he tells us, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Once again, the whole tone of Scripture regards the believer as a saved man. "Believers" is a common synonym for saints, for sanctified persons; and truth to say the Epistles are written to believers, for they are written to the Churches, and Churches are but assemblages of believers. III. HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE ARE BELIEVERS? It is clear that if we are believers we are saved, but how do we know that we are believers? First of all, as a general rule, it is a matter of consciousness. How do I know that I breathe? How do I know that I think? I know I do, and that is enough. Faith is to a large extent a matter of consciousness. I believe, and if you ask me how I know it I reply, "I am sure I do." Still there is other evidence. How do I know that I am a believer? Why, by the very remarkable change which I underwent when I believed; for when a man believes in Jesus Christ there is such a change wrought in him that he must be aware of it. Things we never dreamed of before we have realised now. I remember one who when he was converted said, "Well, either the world is new or else I am." This change is to us strong evidence that faith is in us, and has exercised its power. We have further evidence that we believe, for our affections are so altered. The believer can say that the things he once loved he now hates, and the things he hated he now loves; that which gave him pleasure now causes him pain, and things which were irksome and unpleasant have now become delightful to him. Especially is there a great change in us with respect to God. We know, also, that we believe because though very far from perfect we love holiness and strive after purity. And we know that we have believed in Jesus Christ because now we have communion with God; we are in the habit of speaking with God in prayer, and hearing the Lord speak with us when we read His Word. We know that we have believed in the Lord Jesus because we have over and above all this a secret something, indescribable to others, but wellknown by ourselves, which is called in Scripture the witness of the Holy Spirit: for it is written, "The Spirit Himself also beareth witness with our spirit that we are born of God." There comes stealing over the soul sometimes a peace, a joy, a perfect rest, a heavenly deliciousness, a supreme content, in which, though no voice is heard, yet are we conscious that there is rushing through our souls, like a strain of heaven's own music, the witness of the Spirit of God. In closing, let me ask, Do you believe in Jesus Christ or no? If thou believest thou art saved; if thou believest not thou art condemned already. Let me next ask, are any of you seeking after any witness beyond the witness of God? If you are, do you not know that virtually you are making God a liar? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The internal witness:—*I. IT INCLUDES A CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE EXISTENCE OF FAITH IN OUR OWN MINDS. What is faith? "The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It draws aside the curtain which hides the eternal world from view. It gives reality, in our apprehensions, to the future condition of rational and immortal beings. It causes us to live under the influence of things unseen by the eye of sense and that are eternal. It is a grace, because it is the gift of God, produced in the soul by the operation of His Spirit. It is a saving grace, because wherever it is produced salvation is its concomitant result. Can it be said that these are exercises which elude our observation? Surely, if we can be conscious of any thing that passes within us, we may and ought to be conscious of the existence and operation of faith. II. BY THE EXERCISE OF FAITH THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BELIEVER IS MADE TO HARMONISE WITH THE TESTIMONY OF THE DIVINE WORD, SO THAT THE INTERNAL WITNESS IS CONFIRMED AND STRENGTHENED. Our Lord has said, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." As we act upon it we find it to be true. This statement admits of a very extensive illustration. Every doctrine of the Divine Word may be included in it. III. THE EFFECTS AND CONCOMITANTS OF FAITH ARE A CONSTANT AND GROWING TESTIMONY TO ITS REALITY. It is not too much to say that faith produces a complete revolution in the soul. Our views undergo an entire change. God, and self, and sin, and holiness, and salvation, and time, and eternity, are seen in a new light. Now, is a work such as this to be maintained in the soul without the consciousness of the subject of it? It must be most strange if it be so. Of all mysteries and miracles that is certainly one of the greatest. Surely if it be unobserved we should fear it does not exist. If the sun shines we behold his light. "He that

believeth in God hath the witness in himself." (*J. Morgan, D.D.*) *The witness in oneself*:—A Christian minister should often press upon his hearers the difference between historical and saving faith, and entreat them to take heed lest, to the ruin of the soul, they confound things which are so essentially distinct. The historical faith requires nothing but what are popularly called the evidences of Christianity; and a volume from Paley or Chalmers gathering to a point the scattered testimonies to the Divine origin of our religion, suffices, with every inquiring mind, to produce a conviction that the Bible is no "cunningly-devised fable." But saving faith, whilst it does not discard the evidences which serve as outworks to Christianity, possesses others which are peculiar to itself; and just as historical faith being seated in the head, the proofs on which it rests address themselves to the head, so saving faith being seated in the heart, in the heart dwell the evidences to which it makes its appeal. The character to which the apostle refers here is unquestionably that of a true believer in Christ, one who believes to the saving of the soul, and not merely with the assent of the understanding. The Messiahship of Jesus is a kind of centre whence emanate those various truths through belief in which we become raised from the ruins of the Fall; and no man can have faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Anointed of God, except so far as he has faith in the life-giving doctrines which He was anointed to proclaim. No correct estimate can be formed of sin unless we measure its enormity by the greatness of the satisfaction which was required for its pardon. And only so far as the heinousness of sin is discovered can the fearfulness be felt of our condition by nature; and therefore we may justly maintain that he alone understands rightly the fall of man who understands rightly the evil of transgression. But external testimony will never satisfy us of this evil; whereas he who "believes on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" to the immensity of sin, for he has in himself a vigorous perception of the mysterious and awful things of the atonement. Sin is beheld through the wounds of the Saviour; and, thus beheld, its lightest acting is discerned to be infinitely dishonouring to God and infinitely destructive to man. But it is "in himself" that the believer finds the witness. Faith brings Christ into his heart; and then the mysteries of Calvary are developed; and the man feels his own share in the crucifixion; feels, as we have already described, that his own sins alone were of guilt enough to make his salvation impossible without that crucifixion. And if such internal feeling be the necessary accompaniment, or rather a constituent part, of saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is it not undeniable that "he who believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" to the heinousness of sin; in other words, "hath the witness in himself" to the ruin consequent on transgression? We hasten to the second and perhaps more obvious truth—namely, that "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" to the rescue perfected by redemption. We enter not now on any proof of this indissoluble connection between simple faith and active zeal. We refer to believing experience; we appeal to its records. Has it not always been found that the strongest faith is accompanied by the warmest love; and that in the very proportion in which the notion has been discarded of works availing to justification, have works been wrought as evidences and effects of justification? The believer feels and finds the truth of this "in himself." His whole soul is drawn out towards God. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Christian consciousness as a witness*:—We acquire knowledge by different witnesses. There is—1. The witness of the senses. 2. The witness of testimony. All history is but a collection of human testimony regarding past events. 3. The witness of logic. There is a class of truths, a species of knowledge which we reach by conclusions drawn from known facts. 4. The witness of consciousness. Consciousness assures us of the reality of all our mental impulses and states. The text brings under our notice the witness of Christian consciousness. I offer three remarks concerning this witness. I. IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL WITNESSES. Why is it the most important? Because it bears witness to the most momentous realities. 1. The truth of the gospel. Fully acknowledging the value of other evidences in favour of Christianity, such as that of history, prophecy, miracle, and success, none are to be compared in value to that of consciousness. The gospel "commends itself to every man's conscience." This is the witness that gives to the majority of believers in Christianity their faith. 2. The soul's interest in the gospel. II. IT IS THE MOST INCONVERTIBLE OF ALL WITNESSES. The evidence of the senses, which often deceives; of human testimony, which is fallible; of logic, which often errs, is all convertible. Doubts may be raised at all the statements of these witnesses. But what consciousness attests is at once placed beyond argument, beyond debate, beyond doubt. It never lies, it never mistakes.

What consciousness attests, lives, despite the antagonism of all philosophy and logic. The verities attested by consciousness burn as imperishable stars in the mental hemisphere of the mind. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." III. IT IS THE MOST AVAILABLE OF ALL WITNESSES. In some cases, logic, through the natural feebleness of the understanding, and in other cases, through the lack of data, without which, however naturally strong, it cannot speak, is not always available even with its feeble testimony. But the witness of consciousness is always in the court. The availability of the witness, it must be remembered, depends upon the possession of personal Christianity. If we have it not, consciousness cannot attest it. Have we this witness? It is no transient phenomenon. It is a Paraclete that comes to abide with him for ever. (*Homilist.*)

Evidences of personal piety:—I. CONVERSION. Here we must begin in all our inquiries after religion. II. HUMILITY. III. FAITH. IV. PRAYER. Without prayer a man cannot have "the witness in himself" that he is the subject of true piety. V. LOVE. The man that would know whether he be a true Christian must search for evidences of supreme love to God and Christ, and love to the people of God for His sake. VI. HATRED OF SIN. VII. HOLINESS OF LIFE. Essential as the evidences of the heart are to prove a man a Christian, none of them can be considered as genuine unless they are corroborated by the outward conduct. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

The believer's "witness in himself":—I. THE DECLARATION—"he that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself." "The witness" of what? I do not understand it to be the same as that which we meet with in the eighth of the Romans, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." I think "the witness" here is to the truth connected with the former verse—"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God, which He hath testified of His Son." The declaration of the text, then, amounts to this: that he that truly believes on the Son of God hath internal proof that God's Word is true. If we take it in its most general view, it is so. He reads in that book declarations concerning man, as a guilty, lost, ruined, weak, helpless creature; and he that believeth hath inward witness that it is so. But especially does it refer to the Lord Jesus, as the great sum and substance of the gospel. The believer in Him has internal witness "that Jesus is the Christ." II. HOW IS IT THAT HE HAS IT? It is a thing altogether spiritual. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. If you ask by what it is that He conveys it, I answer, by faith. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." A man does not really know a truth till he believes it; a man does not really know Christ, till he believes in Him. It is faith that gives body to the truth; it is faith that reveals Christ to the soul of man. But do you ask what it is that confirms it? A man sees what effects it produces, a man observes the consequences of it. He has been working hard for righteousness, and he has the revelation of Christ and His righteousness to pacify his conscience. And if you ask in what school it is that the Lord the Spirit teaches a man and instructs him, I answer, in the school of experience. "In His Word I read it; in the experience of my soul I know it." III. THE QUALITIES THAT MARK THIS INWARD WITNESS. Beloved, it is a Scriptural witness. The Spirit of God uses His Word as the great medium of all consolation and all sanctification. Not that He is to be limited by us; "who shall say what direct communication He may have with us? I dare not deny it. But it must be tested by the Word of God. Bring it to the Word of truth; if it be of God, it will stand the test of truth; for all truth is to be tried by its own test, and whatever comes from God must be that which leads to God. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*)

The true position of the witness within:—Here then—I. BELIEVING ON THE SON OF GOD COMES BEFORE THE INNER WITNESS. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself"; he believes before he has that witness, and it is only as a believer that he obtains it. 1. The basis of faith is the testimony of God concerning His Son—the testimony of God as we find it in Holy Scripture. Dare we ask more? We must not go about to buttress the solid pillar of Divine testimony. 2. Note that the words which follow our text assure us very solemnly that the rejection of this basis, namely, God's own testimony, involves the utmost possible guilt. "He that believeth not God, hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record which God gave of His Son." 3. Now, this basis of faith is abundantly sufficient. If we were not alienated from God, we should feel this at once. 4. Now, though this basis is sufficient, the Lord, knowing our unbelief, has been pleased not to add to it, but to set it before us in a graciously amplified manner. He says, "There

are three which bear witness in earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and those three agree in one." There is the witness of the Spirit. Instead of miracles we have the presence of the Holy Ghost: men quickened from death in sin, hearts renewed, eyes enlightened, souls regenerated—these are the standing witnesses of God in the Church to the truth of the gospel. Then, there is the witness of the water. By the water I understand the spiritual life which abides in the Church—the life and the cleansing which God gives to believers. Then there is the blood—a third witness—that blood of atonement which brings peace to the guilty conscience, and ends the strife within. There is no voice like it to believing ears. Beyond this evidence, the hearer of the gospel may expect nothing. What more can he need? What more can he desire? If you refuse Christ upon the witness of God, you must refuse Him outright, for other witness shall never be given unto those who believe not upon the solemn testimony of God. 5. And let me say that this basis which has been so graciously amplified in the triple witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, has this to commend it, that it is everlasting and immutable. 6. Now, the faith which will not and cannot rest on this basis is evidently no faith in God at all, but a proud resolve to demand other evidence than His word. "Well," saith one, "but suppose I were to see a vision, I should then believe." That is to say, you would believe your vision, but that vision would, in all probability, be the result of a fevered brain, and you would be deceived. "Oh, but if I could hear a voice, then I could believe." That is to say, you refuse the sure word of testimony in the Bible, and will only believe God if He will condescend to indulge your whims. Voices which you might think you heard are not to be depended upon, for imagination easily creates them. 7. Let me tell those of you who will not believe in God till you get a certain experience, or sign, or wonder to be added to God's word, that those of His people who have been longest walking by faith have to come back full often to the first foundation of faith in the outer witness of God in His Word. Whether I am saint or sinner, there standeth the word, "He that believeth in Him is not condemned." I do believe in Him and I am not condemned, nor shall all the devils in hell make me think I am, since God has said I am not. On that rock my faith shall stand unshaken, come what may. II. THE INNER WITNESS NATURALLY FOLLOWS UPON FAITH. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1. It is quite impossible that the inner witness should precede faith. If you refuse to believe God's word how can you think that the Spirit will bear witness of anything in you except it be to your condemnation? There must be faith going before, and then the witness will follow after. 2. But be it remembered especially that a man may have the witness within him and sometimes he may not perceive it. Now, what is this witness within? Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners—that is the main point to be witnessed. First the Spirit, after we have believed, bears witness in our soul that it is so, because we perceive that the Spirit has led us to believe in Jesus, and has given us repentance; the Spirit has renewed us, the Spirit has made us different from what we were. Then the water bears witness within us—that is to say, we feel a new life. Thirdly, the precious blood within our souls bears further witness, for then we rejoice before God as cleansed by the blood from all sin. Now we have confirmatory witness within our spirits, given not because we demanded it, but as a sweet reward and gracious privilege. We should never have received it if we had not believed first on the naked word of God, but after that the witness flows naturally into the heart. And what if I were to speak of growing holiness of character, of increased conformity to Christ's image? Do not these form a good inner witness? What if I were to speak of growing strength, so that the things we dare not once attempt we now accomplish with ease, or of growing patience under tribulation. Either of these would be noble proofs. III. THIS INNER WITNESS IS EXCEEDINGLY EXCELLENT. 1. Because it is very plain and easy to be understood. Numbers of you have never read "Butler's Analogy," and if you were set to study it you would go to sleep over it. Never mind, you may have an unanswerable "analogy" in your own souls. 2. That is another point of its excellence—that it is unanswerable. A man is told that a certain medicine is mere quackery, "See here," says he, "it healed me." What do you say to such an argument? You had better let the man alone. So when a Christian is told that the gospel is all nonsense he replies, "It saved me. I was a man of strong passions, and it tamed me, and more." What can you say to such facts? Why, nothing. 3. Such argument as this is very abiding in its results. A man who has been transformed by the gospel cannot be baffled, because every day his

argument is renewed, and he finds fresh reasons within himself for knowing that what he believed is true. Such argument is always ready to hand. Sometimes if you are challenged to a controversy you have to reply, "Wait till I run upstairs and consult a few books," but when the evidence is personal—"I have felt it, I know it, I have tasted it, handled it"—why you have your argument at your fingers' ends at all times. 4. Such witness as this gives a man great boldness. He does not begin to conceal his opinions, or converse with his neighbour with an apologetic air, but he is positive and certain. IV. Excellent as this inner witness is, IT MUST NEVER BE PUT IN THE PLACE OF THE DIVINE WITNESS IN THE WORD. Why not? Because it would insult the Lord, and be contrary to His rule of salvation by faith. Because, moreover, it is not always with us in equal clearness, or rather, we cannot equally discern it. If the brightest Christian begins to base his faith upon his experience and his attainments, he will be in bondage before long. Build on what God hath said, and not upon your inward joys. Accept these precious things not as foundation stones, but as pinnacles of your spiritual temple. Let the main thing be—"I believe because God hath spoken." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The evidential importance of the inner witness:—All the objective witness is crowned and perfected when it passes inwardly into the soul, into the heart and life—when the believer on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. The evidential importance of the inner witness is well stated by Baxter. "I am now much more apprehensive than heretofore of the necessity of well grounding men in their religion, and especially of the witness of the indwelling Spirit; for I more sensibly perceive that the Spirit is the great witness of Christ and Christianity to the world. And though the folly of fanatics tempted me long to overlook the strength of the testimony of the Spirit, whilst they placed it in a certain internal affection or enthusiastic inspiration, yet now I see that the Holy Ghost in another manner is the witness of Christ and His agent in the world. The Spirit in the prophets was His first witness; and the Spirit by miracles was the second; and the Spirit by renovation and sanctification, illumination and consolation, assimilating the soul to Christ and heaven, is the continued witness to all true believers. And therefore ungodly persons have a great disadvantage in their resisting temptations to unbelief." (Abp. W. Alexander.)

Believing and knowing:—Two and two make four—that is mathematics; hydrogen and oxygen in certain proportions make water—that is science; Christ and Him crucified is the power and wisdom of God for salvation—that is revelation. But how do you know? Put two and two together and you have four; count and see. Put hydrogen and oxygen together and you have water; taste and prove. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved; believe and thou shalt know. The last is as clear a demonstration as the others. (G. F. Pentecost, D.D.)

He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.—*Rejecting the Divine testimony:*—I. THE SIN OF REJECTING CHRIST IS VERY AGGRAVATED, SEEING IT IS AN OFFENCE AGAINST GOD. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." The language is fearfully strong. "He hath made Him a liar." Strong, however, as it is, it is only calling the sin by its right name. God has borne witness to His Son in every way that ought to satisfy the most scrupulous mind. It is the testimony of God Himself which they withstand. Therefore are they charged with virtually pronouncing His testimony false. Our Lord presents the subject in the very same light, denouncing the sin of unbelief with equal severity, and exposing its enormity by tracing it up to the deep-seated love of sin in the heart (John iii. 18, 19). "Because their deeds are evil." There lies the secret of opposition to Christ and His gospel. It is the love of sin. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." II. SUCH CONDUCT IS DISTINGUISHED AS MUCH BY FOLLY AS BY SIN, considering the nature and value of that which is rejected. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." 1. Eternal life. How are we to describe it? It comprehends all the blessedness which man is capable of enjoying in this life, and in that which is to come. The lowest idea we can attach to it is the remission of all our sins. The sentence of death which on their account has been passed upon us is removed. What an unspeakable blessing! Great, however, as such a blessing is, it is accompanied by another, greater and better. This is "acceptance in the beloved." Not merely is there deliverance from condemnation, but admission to favour. The two blessings arise out of the same source, and that is union with Christ. On the ground of His atonement we are at once freed from death and crowned with life,

Nor is this all. The same prolific source yields another blessing, which is never separated from pardon and acceptance. The dead soul is at the same time quickened and made alive unto God. The eyes are opened to see the vileness of sin and the beauty of holiness. The ears are unstopped to hear the voice of God in His Word and works. The tongue is unloosed to speak with Him in prayer, and for Him to man. The hands are emancipated to engage in His service. And the feet are turned into His ways, and run in the paths of His commandments. The blessings of life are now enjoyed. There is activity with all its healthful exercises. There is purity, with all its peace and prosperity. There is enjoyment, with all its precious treasures. In the measure in which spiritual life is restored, we are made like unto God. To consummate this blessedness, the stamp of eternity is put upon it. 2. The source from which this blessing is represented to proceed is calculated greatly to enhance and recommend it. It is the gift of God. 3. Farther, not only has the apostle described the blessedness, and the source from which it comes, but the very channel through which it is conveyed to us. "This life is in His Son." The design of this announcement is at once to instruct and encourage us. It seems to contemplate the mind awakened by such a blessedness as was proposed to it, and inquiring where shall I find it? To such a one it is said, go unto Jesus. III. IT IS INEXCUSABLE, SEEING IT MAY BE SO SIMPLY AND EFFECTUALLY SECURED. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." To "have the Son" is identified, in the text itself, with believing on Him. We may have Christ and eternal life in Him simply by believing. This is the constant testimony of the Divine Word. "He that hath the Son hath life." So soon as we are united to Christ by faith, we are put in possession of life. This is true of all the blessings contained in it. But how solemn is the alternative! "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." He cannot have pardon, for "without the shedding of blood is no remission." He cannot have favour, for, "if a man shall keep the whole law, and offend in one point, he is guilty of all." He cannot have holiness, for, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." And he cannot be an heir of glory, for Jesus hath said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." (*J. Morgan, D.D.*)

A solemn impeachment of unbelievers:—It is always well for every man to know exactly what he is at. On the sea of life the oftener we take observations as to our longitude and latitude the better. I believe there is such a thing as pitying sinners and comforting them till they consider themselves to be no longer blameworthy, and even regard themselves as unhappy people who deserve sympathy. I. THE SINNER'S INABILITY TO BELIEVE DISSECTED. He pleads that he cannot believe. He often says this, and quiets his conscience with it. Let me take your unbelief to pieces and show why it is that you cannot believe. 1. The inability of many of you lies in the fact that you do not care to think about the matter at all. You give your mind to your business, your pleasure, or your sin: you dream that there is time enough yet to think of heavenly things, and you think them to be of secondary importance. Many, however, say, "Oh, yes, I believe the Bible, I believe it is God's book, I believe the gospel to be God's gospel." Why, then, do you not believe in Jesus? It must be because you do not think the gospel message important enough to be obeyed; and in so doing you are giving God the lie practically, for you tell Him that your soul is not so precious as He says it is, neither is your state so perilous as He declares it to be. 2. A second reason of the sinner's inability to believe lies in the fact that the gospel is true. "No," you reply, "that is precisely why we would believe it." Yes, but what does Jesus say in John viii. 45? When religious impostures have arisen, the very men who have heard the gospel from their youth up, and have not received it because it is true, have become dupes of imposition at once. The truth did not suit their nature, which was under the dominion of the father of lies, but no sooner was a transparent lie brought under their notice than they leaped at it at once like a fish at a fly. The monstrous credulity of unbelief amazes me! 3. There are persons who do not receive the gospel because it is despised among men. Sinner, this is no small offence, to be ready to accept the verdict of your fellow-men, but not ready to accept the declaration of your God. 4. Many, however, do not receive the gospel because they are much too proud to believe it. The gospel is a very humbling thing. 5. Another reason why men cannot believe God's testimony concerning Jesus lies in the holiness of the gospel. The gospel proclaims Jesus, who saves men from their sins, but you do not want that. II. THE NATURE OF THE SIN OF UNBELIEF, in that it makes God a liar. Those are guilty of this sin who deny that Jesus is the

Messiah, the promised Saviour, the Son of God. When a man says that Jesus is not God, and the Father says He is, the lie direct is given; but, as I believe there are very few of that kind of unbelievers, I will leave such persons and pass on. A poor trembling, weeping sinner comes to me, and amongst other things he says, "My sins are so great that I do not believe they can be pardoned." I meet him thus. God says, "Though your sins be as scarlet," &c. "But, sir, my sin is very great indeed." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "But my transgressions have been exceedingly aggravated." "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c. "Sir, I cannot believe it." Stand up, then, and tell the Lord so in the plainest manner. Another will say, "Oh, but my heart is so hard I cannot believe in the power of God to make a new man of me and deliver me from the love of sin." Yet God declares in His Word, "A new heart also will I give them," &c. In many there exists a doubt about the willingness of God to save. They say, "I believe that the blood of Jesus Christ does blot out sin, but is He willing to pardon me?" Now, listen to what Jehovah says: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that He turn unto Me and live." "Alas," cries one, "my ground for doubt is deeper; I hear that God can pardon, regenerate, and all that, and I believe it, but then I cannot see that any of this is for me. I do not see that these things are meant for me." Listen, then, to what God says, "Ho every one that thirsteth," &c. You adroitly reply, "But I do not thirst." More shame for you, then! Listen again, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "But I do not labour." Do not labour? How do you get your living? I am sorry for you if you are such a lazy man that you have no labour. That text includes every labouring man and every heavy laden man under heaven. Listen yet again, "Whosoever will, let him come." Does not that invite every living man who is willing to come? If you say, "I am not willing," then I leave you, for you confess that you are unwilling to be saved, and that is exactly what I am trying to prove—you cannot believe because you are unwilling to do so. Yet hear me once again. Jesus has said to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."—Are you a creature? "Yes, I am a creature." Well, man, God has put it as plain as it can be put that the gospel is to be preached to you, and, therefore, it has a relation to you. Would God send it to you to tantalise you? When you say, "It is not for me," you give God the lie. "Well," says one, "but I cannot see how simply trusting in Christ, and believing God's witness of Him, would save my soul." Are you never to believe anything but what you can see, and how are you to see this thing till you have tried it? The faith which is commanded in the gospel is faith in the record which God has given concerning His Son, a faith which takes God at His word. Believe, then, on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have believed God to be true: refuse to trust in Jesus Christ, unless you get some other evidence beyond the witness of God, and you have practically said that God's testimony is not enough, that is to say, you have made God a liar. III. THE EXECRATION OF THIS SIN. To disbelieve God is a sin indeed! It was the mother sin of all, the door by which all other evil came into the world. Oh, accursed unbelief! How can the absolutely true submit to be charged with falsehood? This sin of making God a liar I do pray you look at it very solemnly, for it is a stab at God Himself. Then, remember, this unbelief insults God on a very tender point. He comes to the guilty sinner and says, "I am ready to forgive." The sinner says, "I do not believe Thee." "Hear Me," says the Lord. "What proof do you ask? See, I have given My only-begotten Son—He has died upon the tree to save sinners." "Still I do not believe Thee," says the unbeliever. Now, what further evidence can be given? Infinite mercy has gone its utmost length in giving the Saviour to bleed and die: God has laid bare His inmost heart in the wounds of His dying Son, and still He is not believed. Surely man has reached the climax of enmity to God in this: nothing proves the utter baseness of man so much as this refusal to believe his God, and nothing proves so much the greatness of almighty grace as that God should after all this condescend to work faith in a heart so depraved. IV. THE FATE OF THE UNBELIEVER. If this man continues to say he cannot believe God, and that Christ is not to be trusted, what will happen to him? I wonder what the angels think must befall a being who calls God a liar? They see His glory, and as they see it they veil their faces, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy"; what horror would they feel at the idea of making God untrue! The saints in heaven when they see the glory of God fall down on their faces and adore Him. Ask

them what they think must happen to those who persist in calling God a liar, and a liar in the matter of His mercy to rebels through Jesus Christ. As for me, I cannot conceive any punishment too severe for final unbelief. Nothing on earth or in heaven can save you except you believe in Jesus. Not only will the unbeliever be lost, but he will be lost by his unbelief. Thus saith the Lord, "He that believeth not is condemned already." Why? "Because he hath not believed on the Son of God." Has he not committed a great deal else that will condemn him? Oh, yes, a thousand other sins are upon him, but justice looks for the most flagrant offence, that it may be written as a superscription over his condemned head, and it selects this monster sin and writes "condemned, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The immorality of unbelief*:—The sources of our knowledge are various. I know that the sun shines because I see it shine. The man who has travelled most widely has seen but a small fragment of God's illimitable empire. The bulk of my knowledge has been derived from other sources than the observation of my senses. All that I know of other countries or regions than the little spot I call my home I have learned from others. I know that in Kentucky there is a mammoth cave, extending ten miles or more under ground, not because I have actually seen it, but because I have been told of it by those who have seen it. And this knowledge is just as certain as knowledge derived in any other way. I am just as certain that Queen Victoria rules over the British Empire, though I have never seen her, as that I am occupying this pulpit to-day and that you are seated before me. Now, this principle which holds society together, which is the key to all progress in knowledge, to all achievements in science, which is the spring of all useful activity in the world, and which, in a religious sense, is the source of all piety in the soul, is faith. For faith is but dependence upon the word of another. Now, just as in relation to those countries which lie outside of the limits of our daily experience and observation, we are indebted for our knowledge to the evidence of others, so in relation to those worlds which lie beyond the range of this material universe, and those spiritual truths which transcend the bounds of human experience and reason, we must depend for our knowledge upon the testimony of another. What can we know of heaven or the state beyond the grave from our own observation? For this knowledge we must depend upon the testimony of none other than the Almighty Himself. He alone can disclose to us His purposes and plans. To accept the testimony of God is to exercise true faith. I. The text teaches, in the first place, THAT GOD HATH BORNE WITNESS CONCERNING HIS SON—that is, concerning the character and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the mere facts connected with the life of Jesus at Nazareth human testimony is a sufficient ground of evidence. But to the fact that He was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, Divine testimony is necessary to compel our assent. His mission must be authenticated by Him from whom He came and in whose name He professed to act. And Christ's work was authenticated. God the Father hath set His seal to the fact that Jesus is His Son. None but an Almighty Mind could have conceived a plan of redemption such as is made known in this Book. None but God could have accomplished it. None but God could have made it known. The human imagination has brought forth some grand conceptions, but no human imagination evolved the grand and glorious scheme of salvation contained in the Word of God. The true revelation of God's will may have many counterfeits. II. The text implies THAT SOME MEN DO NOT CREDIT THE TESTIMONY OF GOD. Very many, indeed, reject the evidence which God gives of His Son. It was so when Christ yet dwelt upon the earth. III. But, finally, the text teaches THE REJECTION OF THE WITNESS OF GOD WITH RESPECT TO HIS SON IS NOT SIMPLY AN ERROR OF JUDGMENT, A MISTAKE OF THE INTELLECT, BUT AN INSULT OF THE DEEPEST DYE OFFERED TO THE GREATEST OF ALL BEINGS IN THE UNIVERSE. Unbelief says: "There is no coming wrath that we need dread. No hell that we need shun. No heaven to which we need hope to attain. No fellowship with God and Christ and redeemed spirits beyond the grave." Unbelief declares: "There is no sin that needs an expiation; no justifying righteousness required by man; that he can save himself from all the dangers to which he is exposed." See what unbelief does. It justifies the greatest of all crimes, the murder of the Lord Jesus Christ. It enters the chamber of sickness, and ridicules the prayers that go up from pallid lips, and derides the faith and confidence of those who fall asleep in Jesus. It enters the sanctuary of God, mocks at the worship of the Most High, and sneers at the preaching of His Word. Unbelief says: "God is untrue. He is endeavouring to deceive His creatures. He is imposing upon the world a false system of doctrines,

an untrustworthy scheme of salvation through a crucified Redeemer." This is the hideous character of unbelief as painted by the inspired apostle. (*S. W. Reigart.*)

Ver. 11. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.—*The Divine record*:—It is obvious that the designs of God respecting the work of His hands entirely depend on His own will, and that, unless He please to favour us with an express declaration of those designs, we may, indeed, by debating about the probabilities of the case, bewilder ourselves in all the mazes of metaphysical conjecture; but, as for anything like certainty respecting what so deeply concerns us, that is a point which it is utterly beyond our abilities to attain. Such a declaration, however, God has been pleased to make. In the record of the Old and New Testaments we have an express revelation of His will. **I. THE UNMERITED GRANT OF OUR GOD.** 1. The nature of the blessing here said to be granted to us. (1) It is life, life worthy of the name, a life perfectly exempt from every kind and degree of evil, and accompanied by every conceivable and by every inconceivable good. (2) This life is eternal, not like our present life, which is but as a vapour that appeareth for a short time and then vanisheth away. (3) It is a life, too, which includes everything that appertains to it, the pardon of our sins, reconciliation with God, adoption into His family, and all those sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit which constitute the foretaste of this eternal life in the heart of the Christian. 2. The person to whom this grant is here also said to be made. "To us," the sinful children of sinful parents; "to us," miserable sinners, who thus were lying in darkness and in the shadow of death, provided only we will accept the boon in His appointed way; "to us" hath God given eternal life. 3. The gratuitous nature of the grant. For in what way but in that of a free gift could eternal life be made over to those who have both forfeited the blessing and incurred the curse? **II. THE CHANNEL THROUGH WHICH THIS GRANT IS CONVEYED TO US.** 1. The obstacles which stood in the way of this grant were of the most formidable description. These were no other than the severer perfections of the Divine nature, and the honour both of God's law and of His universal government. 2. But by the determination that this free gift of life should be in the Son of God, to be sought for through Him alone, all the obstacles to the grant, which presented themselves from the quarters just referred to, were at once removed. **III. THE CHARACTER OF THE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL OBTAIN THE BENEFIT OF THIS GRANT AND OF THOSE WHO WILL FAIL OF IT.** "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1. It is clear, then, on the one hand, that we are interested in this grant of eternal life if we have the Son. 2. And it is the undisputed testimony of the record that he that thus hath the Son hath life, and that he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (*John Natt, B.D.*) *Eternal life a gift*:—**I. THE SUBJECT OF THE "RECORD"—"ETERNAL LIFE."** What is it? It is not endless existence. The "record" refers not to this point. The Bible assumes man's immortality. "Eternal life" consists in the soul's well-being—its intrinsic, internal blessedness: "the kingdom of God is within you." This life is "eternal." It is drawn from the Eternal One; His principles of rectitude imbedded in the heart and "springing up into everlasting life." **II. THE DOCTRINE OF THE RECORD, "GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS IS IN HIS SON."** 1. It is a gift. Not something for which men need to toil, but something to be simply received. 2. It is a gift already given. "God hath given," &c. The believer has its foretaste. 3. It is a gift already given "in His Son." Not in systems, churches; "grace and truth" come by Jesus Christ. 4. This is for "record." It is testified that men may know it on God's authority and live. (*Homilist.*) *Eternal life*:—Before opening up the passage there are two preliminary questions that press for answer. In the first place, what is meant by the Scriptural phrase, "eternal life"? The term, eternal life, is hardly at all one of quantity, but of quality. Just as there is wheat-life in the wheat plant, bird-life in the winged creatures, lion-life in the lion, so there is Christ-life in the Christian. It is a condition of existence in which the very life of God pulsates through every faculty of the life of man, bringing him into affinity of love and purpose and aspiration with the Eternal Himself. Eternal life is, therefore, the imparting of Christ's own life to those who accept Him as Saviour and Master. A second preliminary question presses for answer. When and where is this eternal life attained? It seems clear from the Word of God that it is attained in this world and not in the world to come. Men do not go to heaven to get it, but they go to heaven because they

have it. If these things are true it surely becomes a pressing interest to every thoughtful man as to how this priceless gift may become his own personal possession, as to how he may grow in eternal life and eternal life grow in him, and as to how he may have the joy, the power, and the prospect of it. These questions are all clearly answered in the text. I. **ETERNAL LIFE IS PROVIDED IN CHRIST.** "This life is in His Son." It is of the very last importance to note well the fountain of this eternal life. It is not in man as natural, for as natural he is fallen, and the fall implied the loss of this life of God in the soul of man, the passing away of all conscious affinity with God, and the coming in of a spirit of alienation and hostility. And as it is not in man naturally, neither does man find it in what is called his environment. We think that the power of environment over human life is greatly exaggerated in our day, and is essentially the reversal of a central principle in God's dealings with the world. It is never the new environment that makes the new man, but it is the new man that creates the new environment. Let us, therefore, face the fact that eternal life is provided only in Jesus Christ our Lord. Those in quest of it have, therefore, not to wander over a wilderness of abstract thought, and not to whip the energies of mind and heart to attain this great end; but, as a person deeply convinced that this gift is not now theirs, to come humbly and trustfully to the feet of the living personality of the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone has this gift to give, and who is longing to bestow it. II. **ETERNAL LIFE IS PUBLISHED IN CHRIST.** "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life," and this life is in His Son essentially. The whole Word of God is an apocalypse or unveiling of Christ. The testimony of God Himself, of the Holy Spirit, of inspired historian, poet, prophet, and evangelist, all converges on the Lord Jesus Christ. III. **ETERNAL LIFE IS POSSESSED IN CHRIST.** God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son; "he that hath the Son hath life." The gift has not only been provided and published, but it has in a very real sense actually been given. God has given to us eternal life. We stand firm on the ground that Christ's part, both in provision and offer, has already been finished; but salvation by gift implies the part of the receiver as well as the part of the giver, and while the gift has been offered there is no salvation, and there can be no salvation till the gift is accepted. This view of the possession of eternal life delivers man from all perplexity as to the ground of his acceptance with God, and as to his humble assurance of the certainty of his salvation. It causes feelings, for example, to fall into due perspective in spiritual experiences. When a man comes to see that he possesses Christ, and on that possession can call eternal life his own, there will come, and must come, those feelings of peace and rest and certainty and enjoyment, and until he is quite sure that he possesses Christ, and with Him all things, the feelings will be fitful and the whole life will be clouded. IV. **ETERNAL LIFE IS PERPETUATED IN CHRIST.** "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." The entrance of eternal life into the soul of man is the entrance of Christ Himself to dwell and reign and unfold the nature that He inhabits and permeates. The whole Christ, and only Christ, is needed to save, and the whole Christ in perpetual indwelling is needed to sanctify. There is no possible life for the Christian apart from his abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in him. Out of this flows all the sweetness of sanctity, all the dignity of lowliness, all the enlarging of love, all the practical power of obedience, and all the finished graces of a complete character. (*G. Wilson.*) *Example and life:*—It will be admitted, of course, that Christ has given us a perfect example. He has not only told us what to do, He has shown us how to live. He was Himself, by the method which He followed, the great object teacher, and His life was the great object lesson. Example is more powerful than precept; its influence goes deeper and takes hold of us with a stronger grasp; but after all it is of the same nature as precept. You can give a child in words some idea of the rules of polite behaviour; you can give him an example of politeness which will be much more instructive and effective in forming his manner than any verbal rules; but the rules and the example would both operate in the same way; they would reach and influence him through his intellect and his will. In both cases the effect produced would be the result of a voluntary effort. It is easier for him to imitate your actions than it is to remember and obey your rules; but both address the will through the intelligence. Now, while the imitation of an action is easier and pleasanter than the obedience of a precept, there is still a great lack of beauty and of vigour in the conduct that is simply the result of imitation. There is a per-

ceptible hardness and stiffness and unreality about it; it is artificial. So, then, if a perfect example were put before us, and we should set ourselves resolutely and carefully to the copying of that example, we should be sure to fail; our lives, though they might seem outwardly very like the life we were trying to imitate, would resemble it only as the artificial flower resembles the real one. When God gave you being He gave you character and personality of your own. What He meant you to be is indicated in the very constitution of your soul. And although by disobedience and alienation from Him you may have badly injured your own character, though the Divine perfection in which it ought to shine may but dimly appear in it, yet the ground plan, so to speak, is there, and that is the plan on which your character is to be built; the thing for you to do is simply to become what God meant you to be, and this you cannot do by trying to imitate the character and conduct of some one else. What men most need is the healing, the quickening, the replenishing of their spiritual life. It is not a model to live by, it is "new life and fuller that we want." And this is the want that Christ supplies. "I am come," He says, "that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." How is it that He imparts to men this life? Ah, I do not know that. How does the sun impart life to the seeds and roots and bulbs that during all this long winter have been waiting for him underground? I do not know how he does it, but I know that he does it. Some of them have heard his voice already and have come forth from their graves. The subtle might of his regenerating rays is seeking them out; they begin to feel in every fibre the influence of his power; life is quickened within them by his genial influence. And as many as receive Jesus Christ, as many as will accept Him as the Lord of their life, and will let Him instruct them and lead them and inspire them, sweetly yielding to the influences of His grace, will find that He is doing for them something like what the sun does for the germs beneath the soil; that He is imparting spiritual life to them; that He is kindling in their souls the love of all things right and true and good, and increasing in them the power to realise such things in their lives. This is what He does for all who will receive Him. But the text says that this life is eternal life. The witness is that God has given to us eternal life and the life is in His Son. Yea, verily! The life whose organising principles are righteousness and truth and love is a life that takes hold of the æons to come with a sure grasp. God has so made the universe that these principles are indestructible; in the nature of things virtue is immortal; the life that is incorporate with it has the promise of an everlasting day. (*W. Gladden, D.D.*) *Life in Christ*:—Mark the grammatical form. The statement is not part of the record, but "the record" itself, as if God had given none else. "This is the record," standing out alone in its sublime grandeur. "This is the record" that transcends all others by its brilliancy, upon which every conscience might rest. So in chap. ii. 25 he uses exactly the same emphatic expression—"This is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life," as if not a single star shone in the firmament above except this; as if not one promise had been given except this, standing out distinct, full, alone in hopes and comfort to all. And not only he, but St. Paul, so different in the characteristic order of intellect, uses the same kind of expression—"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23); "the gift," as if no other boon had been granted—the gift towering out above all, and standing in its holy Alpine grandeur, the noblest blessing God had ever given to His people. Put these three passages together, and then we have brought before us this glorious truth, that He is emphatically the gift, the record to us, the promise of God of life eternal through His Son.

I. THE RELIGION WHICH WE PROFESS, TRUE PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY, IS LIFE. This truth lies at the foundation of this passage; and what type can be more glorious of good conferred? The most despised creature upon earth clings to life. I need not say that the life here spoken of is not physical life, not a life in common with an ungodly man, not a life in common with the beasts that perish, but spiritual life, life in the soul, life in the thinking elements of our nature, life in that part of our nature which links us with God Himself, and which, if lost, consigns us to everlasting ruin. Such then is the boon; the Christian lives. Religion is no dead thing; it is not formalism, it is not mere professionalism, it is not the assent of the understanding to certain dogmas, it is not the experience in the heart even of certain sentimental emotions. Religion, if it be anything at all, is a living, practical reality. I have the conviction that I have spiritual life, because I think with God, I feel the presence of God, I move in the ways of God. The Christian,

then, lives; that life may be mysterious, but it is the distinguishing character of the Christian man that he has this spiritual life in him. I add that it is, moreover, a progressive thing. Here religion harmonises with all the phenomena and rules of life. II. **THIS LIFE IS DIVINE IN ITS ORIGIN**—"God hath given to us eternal life." All life is of Divine production. Pierce as far as you may into eternity, the deeper and closer our examination of its realities, the more fully and simply are we thrown on our conviction of the Divine origin. All life is the production of the eternal God. The spiritual life of which I speak is, therefore, certainly of His production. The old Greek fable, myth, to use the fashionable expression of modern times, brings out the truth in a simple shape—"You may take a man and set him up by the pillar of the temple, but unless the god who inhabits it touches him he cannot move a step." Or, according to another Greek fable, you may take clay and form and fashion it into the mould of a man, but unless the celestial fire penetrates the frame and imparts life it has no power of action. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God gives the increase." All means and appliances are in vain until the power of God Himself shall visit the Church—all in vain until Jesus Christ, who, when His message is proclaimed, shall accompany that message with His own living power and waken up dead spirits into eternal life. III. **THIS LIFE IS IN CHRIST**. The source, I say, of that life which is the gift of God, the source of all life, is Christ Himself. Again, for this purpose He is described as having life in Himself. Mark the emphatic expression. It corresponds with that expression of the living God, "I am that I am"—Jehovah. Pray for this gift, but pray for it in union with Christ's sacrifice, for without His death the Spirit never had come down. IV. **THIS LIFE IS NOT ONLY THROUGH THE SON, BUT IS IN THE SON, AND WILL JUST BE IN US AS IT IS IN HIM**. In other words, the character of the life of the Son of God is a model character to all the brotherhood of Christ; every Christian is a Christian just in the degree that he is Christ-like. V. **THIS LIFE, THIS DIVINE GIFT, IS ETERNAL**. Now the soul is eternal, and as such, therefore, this life must endure for ever. That man is a fool who tries to procure something by great labour which will last only till to-morrow. But this eternal life never comes to a close. Moreover, it is a life which shall expand. I can set no limits to it. VI. **WHO HAVE THAT LIFE?** What man possesses it? Who has a distinct credential that he does possess it? "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." Tell me not of spasmodic enjoyments of spiritual elevation, of occasional paroxysms of spiritual life. I ask, is Christ's life in you? Is His law in your hearts, and is it exemplified in your lives? If so, you have clear proof of the possession of that gift which is everlasting. (*T. Archer, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.—*To have Christ is to have life*.—We may be said to have or receive the Son in these three modes—as a teacher, an example, and a Saviour; and in each of these He is life to those who have Him. I. **CHRIST IS LIFE IN HIS INSTRUCTIONS**. He is so, because His instructions are truth, and truth brings life. In another, and yet a kindred sense, is Christ life by His word. He teaches us how to live, and for what ends. Honour, happiness, respect, love, usefulness, those things without which life is only animal, or worse, are most easily and completely to be secured by adopting the principles and obeying the precepts of the gospel. It is life, by eminence, to live temperately, soberly, justly, kindly, peacefully, doing good actions, exercising good affections, gaining good opinions. It is the only proper life of a moral, intellectual, accountable creature of God. He then lives as his Maker would have him live; lives most acceptably in the sight of heaven, and most profitably to himself and to the world. He lives, answering the best purposes of life; contributing to the means of human advancement; making his actions to be counted in the sum of human felicity. In a moral sense he protracts his life, because he employs it fully and well. II. **HE WHO HAS OR RECEIVES CHRIST AS AN EXAMPLE HAS LIFE**. The life-giving word is not only taught, but embodied and made incarnate in the teacher; it is not only didactic, but possesses the merit and charm of historical interest. The Son not only points the way to the Father, but He precedes the disciple, and guides him in it and through it. Whoever walks as Christ walked, lives; and in proportion to the exactness of his imitation is the vigour and health of his life. To know that we are, in any degree, sharing the life and spirit of our Master, is enough to give us an increase of vital warmth, to cause the pulse of our spirit to beat firmer and more true,

because it beats in happy and honoured union with the heart of Jesus. If His life was true and eternal, then that which is borrowed from His is so too. The seeds of corruption are not in it. The process of dissolution cannot commence in it. It is a sound and pure and heavenly life, for it is the very life of the Son of God.

III. HE WHO HATH THE SON BY FAITH, HE WHO RECEIVES HIM AS THE CHRIST OF GOD AND THE SAVIOUR OF MEN, by this faith also, as well as by obedience and imitation, HATH LIFE. And why? Because the hope and assurance of eternal life is contained and perfected in such faith. (*F. W. P. Greenwood, D.D.*) *Alive or dead—which?*—I. CONCERNING THE LIVING. "He that hath the Son hath life." 1. I shall remark, in the first place, that having the Son is good evidence of eternal life, from the fact that faith by which a man receives Christ is in itself a living act. Furthermore, faith in Jesus is good evidence of life, because of the things which accompany it. No soul asks for pardon or obtains it till he has felt that sin is an evil for which pardon is necessary; that is to say, repentance always comes with faith. Where there is faith, again, there is always prayer. So might I say that the consequences of receiving Christ are also good evidences of heavenly life; for when a man receives the Son of God he obtains a measure of peace and joy; and peace with God and joy in the Holy Ghost are not to be found in the sepulchres of dead souls. 2. The possession of the Lord Jesus Christ is the evidence of faith in many ways. It is God's mark upon a living soul. Whatever else we cannot see, if a simple trust in Jesus is discernible in a convert, we need feel no suspicions, but receive him at once as a brother beloved. Moreover, the possession of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a clear evidence of life, because, indeed, it is in some sense the source, fountain, and nourishment of life. While the branch is vitally in the stem it will have life; if it is not always bearing fruit, yet it always has life; and thus the fact of having the Son becomes an evidence of life, because it is the source of life. In another aspect of it, having the Son is not only the source of life, but the result of life. Now, when a man receives Jesus into his soul as life from the dead, his faith is the sure indicator of a spiritual and mysterious life within him, in the power of which he is able to receive the Lord. Jesus is freely preached to you, His grace is free as the air, but the dead do not breathe that air—those who breathe it are, beyond all doubt, alive. 3. Let me further remark that the possession of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith is sufficient evidence of eternal life. "I do not know," says one, "when I was converted." Have you the Son of God? Do you trust in Jesus Christ? That is quite enough. 4. It is a great mercy that having the Son is abiding evidence. "He that hath the Son hath life." I know what it is to see every other evidence I ever gloried in go drifting down the stream far out of sight. 5. I may close this first head by saying that having the Son is infallible evidence of life. "He that hath the Son hath life." It is not said that he may perhaps have it, or that some who have the Son have life, but there is no exception to the rule. II. CONCERNING THE DEAD. "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life"—that is, he hath not spiritual life, sentence of death is recorded against him in the book of God. His natural life is spared him in this world, but he is condemned already. Now observe that the not having the Son of God is clear evidence of the absence of spiritual life; for the man who has not trusted in Jesus has made God a liar. Shall pure spiritual life make God a liar? Shall he receive life from God who persists in denying God's testimony? Let me tell you that for a hearer of the gospel not to believe on the Son of God must be, in the judgment of angels, a very astounding crime. Recollect, if you have never received Christ, that this is overwhelming evidence that you are dead in sin. I tell thee, moralist, what thou art: thou art a corpse well washed and decently laid out, daintily robed in fair white linen, sprinkled plentifully with sweet perfumes, and wrapped in myrrh and cassia and aloes, with flowers wreathed about thy brow and thy bosom bedecked by the hand of affection with sweetly blushing roses; but thou hast no life, and therefore thy destiny is the grave, corruption is thy heritage. III. CONCERNING THE LIVING AS THEY DWELL AMONG THE DEAD. As the living are constrained to live among the dead, as the children of God are mixed up by Providence with the heirs of wrath, what manner of persons ought they to be? 1. In the first place, let us take care that we do not become contaminated by the corruption of the dead. You who have the Son of God, mind that you are not injured by those who have not the Son. 2. If we must in this life, in a measure, mingle with the dead, let us take care that we never suffer the supremacy of the dead to be acknowledged over the living. It would be a strange thing if the dead were to rule the living. Yet sometimes I have seen the dead have the dominion of this world; that is to say,

they have set the fashion and living Christians have followed. 3. What I think we should do towards dead souls is this—we should pity them. “The most of these I meet with are dead in sin.” Ought not this to make us pray for them: “Eternal Spirit, quicken them! They cannot have life unless they have the Son of God. Oh, bring them to receive the Son of God”! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The sublimest possession*:—Deep in the soul of man is a desire to appropriate something outside of itself—the instinct for getting, what phrenologists call the “acquisitive faculty.” But what is the good it really wants, the chief good, that without which it will never be satisfied? I. THE HIGHEST POSSESSION OF MAN IS THE POSSESSION OF CHRIST. 1. It is something more than to possess an intellectual knowledge of Him. 2. It is something more than to admire His character and to sympathise with His enterprise. 3. It is to possess His ruling disposition, or, in other words, the moral inspiration of His soul. It is to have His spirit. II. The possession of Christ INVOLVES THE HIGHEST LIFE. Eternal life does not mean eternal existence, but eternal goodness; and eternal goodness is the highest paradise of the soul. 1. The life of supremacy. He will be in the highest sense a king. 2. The life of self-oblivious devotion. “Not my will, but Thine be done.” 3. The life of the highest knowledge. (*Homilist.*) *The natural man and the spiritual man*:—The natural man belongs to the present order of things. He is endowed simply with a high quality of the natural animal life. But it is life of so poor a quality that it is not life at all. He that hath not the Son hath not life; but he that hath the Son hath life—a new, distinct, and supernatural endowment. He is not of this world. He is of the timeless state, of eternity. The difference, then, between the spiritual man and the natural man is not a difference of development, but of generation. The distinction is one of quality, not of quantity. The scientific classification of men would be to arrange all natural men, moral or immoral, educated or vulgar, as one family. One higher than another in the family group, yet all marked by the same set of characteristics—they eat, sleep, work, think, live, die. But the spiritual man is removed from this family so utterly by the possession of an additional characteristic that a biologist would not hesitate to classify him elsewhere, not in another family, but in another kingdom. It is an old-fashioned theology which divides men into the living and the dead, lost and saved—a stern phraseology all but fallen into disuse. This difference, so startling as a doctrine, has been ridiculed or denied. Nevertheless the grim distinction must be retained. It is a scientific distinction. “He that hath not the Son hath not life.” (*Prof. H. Drummond.*) *Christ the life of the soul*:—He, who has a right to speak, has said that there is a certain thing, the possession of which constitutes “life,” and so constitutes it that he who has it “has life,” and he who has it not “has not life.” There is a “life,” dependent upon the possession of a certain thing, so much worthier than anything else of the name of “life,” that, compared to it, nothing besides is real “life.” Could you at this moment do it by a word, would you immortalise the “life” you are now living? The real Christian would. To him the change which he wishes is not one of kind, but of degree. He has that which he only wants purified and increased a thousandfold. The “life” he lives is what he wishes to be the germ of a “life” which he shall live for ever and ever. Now this possession of Christ appears to me to be made up of three things. Properly speaking, the life which Christ lived upon this earth before His Cross was not the “life” which He came to communicate to His people. All that “life” He lived simply that He might purchase the “life” which He was going to give. The “resurrection-life” is the “life” which Christ imparts to man. It is a “life” springing out of death. It is a “life” out of which the element of death has been altogether extracted. It is a “life” as essential as the Godhead of the Christ—as the “life” in which that Godhead resides is essential “life.” “Life” is not what we live, but how we live it. To live indeed you must live livingly. To this end, then, if a man would “live” indeed, a man’s soul must be always, in some way, receiving Christ. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Christ in man*:—Before proceeding to analyse this passage, contemplate for one moment the mysterious grandeur of human nature’s position through the Incarnation; for it is obviously through the Incarnation that we “have the Son.” Think, then, that in all other works of Deity communication is the distinction. When God creates, He communicates being to nothing; in nature, God communicates beauty, form, and harmony to materialism; in providence, God communicates wisdom, truth, power, responsibility, and so forth, to agents and agencies; in legislation God communicates will and law to moral nature; and in revelation God communicates grace and truth to mankind; but in the Incarnation

God does not communicate, but He assumes. Observe the words, "He that hath the Son hath life." There is no man named. God Almighty, when He speaks from the throne of revelation, speaks to human nature. He does not by His word lay hold on the conventional, the local, the chronological, or the transitory in man. Now mark the decisive grandeur of this; for it intimates a connection between our nature now and our condition hereafter. Christianity now is Christianity for ever; every stone which is now laid to your spiritual fabric is to form part of an ascending structure of conscious humanity, which is to rise higher and higher towards perfection throughout the everlasting ages. He, therefore, "that hath the Son hath life," and the same life that he will have hereafter. 1. **WHAT IS IT TO "HAVE THE SON"?** We say, then, in the first place, every human being on God's earth "hath the Son." There is not a pulse in your body but proclaims Calvary; there is not a drop in your veins but preaches Christ. You are not to imagine creation proceeding by one principle, providence administered by another, and grace acting by a third; the same God who acts in creation and rules in providence bestows in grace. And therefore I charge it upon every unconverted man, with this truth bound upon his heart, "Verily Christ is in me, and I knew it not." But more particularly, to take the words spiritually: a man may be said to "have the Son" when He is the sovereign of his intellect. He will ascertain upon clear grounds and through an honest logic whether this book be or be not Divine; but the moment the man has come to the conclusion, "Verily God is in this thing, verily God is in these syllables," then all that he has to do is to submit his intellect to Christ, then he "has the Son." Secondly, a man may be said to "have the Son" when he hath Him as the ruler of his desires. If we "have the Son" our desires are submitted to Christ even as our intellect. Thirdly, Jesus Christ may be said to be ours, or we "have the Son," when He is the pacifier of our conscience. Lastly, a man may be said to "have the Son" when Jesus Christ is the centre of his affections. The worldling's centre is the world; the sensualist's centre is the enjoyment of the passions; the rationalist's is the cultivation of the intellect; the politician's the progress of his party. But the Christian hath one centre and one circumference—Jesus Christ in the beginning and the middle and without end. His supreme attractor is Christ. II. **THE POSSESSION OF CHRIST IS TANTAMOUNT TO THE POSSESSION OF LIFE.** In the first place, then, this connection contains (though not here stated) three marvellous views. First, it is the unfathomable mystery of heaven; secondly, it is the infinite mercy of earth; and, thirdly, it is the unrivalled miracle of all eternity. Lastly, we go on to show you the right connection between "having Christ" and "having life." It is to be drawn from the contrast to the fall. The fall of man was the death of man through the first Adam; the rise of man is the life of man in the second Adam. (*R. Montgomery, M.A.*)

Ver. 13. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.—*Helps to full assurance*:—I. **TO WHOM WAS THIS WRITTEN?** It is important to observe the direction of a letter; for I may be reading a communication meant for somebody else, and if it should contain good tidings, I may be deceiving myself by appropriating the news. 1. This Epistle, and this particular text in it, were written for all those who believe on the name of the Son of God. 2. To unbelievers this text is not written: it is for all who trust in Jesus; but it is for none beside. If you inquire why it is not addressed to unbelievers, I answer, simply because it would be preposterous to wish men to be assured of that which is not true. 3. We may gather from this address being made to all the people of God and to none beside, that there are some believers in the world, and true believers too, who do not know that they have eternal life. Again, a large number of Christ's people who may be perfectly sound in the doctrinal view of the nature of this life do not know that they possess it at this present moment if they are believers. We want children of God who believe in Jesus to feel that the holy flame which kindles their lamp to-day is the same fire which will shine forth before the throne of God for ever; they have begun already to exercise those holy emotions of delight and joy which will be their heaven: they already possess in measure those perceptions and faculties which will be theirs in glory. Yet again, there are some Christians who believe all this, and are perfectly right in theory, but yet they each one cry, "I want to know that I have eternal life. I want a fuller assurance of salvation than I have already obtained." That is also our desire for you. II. **TO WHAT END JOHN HAS WRITTEN.** 1. When he says, "that ye may know that ye have eternal life," I think his first meaning is

that you may know that everybody who believes in Jesus Christ has eternal life. You are not to form an opinion upon it, but to believe it, for the Lord hath said it.

2. I think that John in this passage meant, and we will consider him as meaning, something more—namely, he would have us know that we personally have eternal life by having us know that we do personally believe in Jesus. Rationally a living man should know that he is alive. No man should give sleep to his eyes or slumber to his eyelids while he has a doubt about his eternal state. It is possible, and it is very desirable; for when a man knows that he has eternal life, what a comfort it is to him! What gratitude it produces in his spirit! How it helps him to live above the world! And it is our duty to obtain full assurance. We should not have been commanded to give diligence to make our calling and election sure if it were not right for us to be sure.

III. WHAT HAS JOHN SAID IN THIS EPISTLE WHICH CONDUCTS TO OUR FULL ASSURANCE? How does he help us to know that we are believers, and consequently to know that we have eternal life? 1. You will find, first, that John mentions as an evidence truthful dealing with God, in faith and confession of sin. Naturally men walk in darkness or falsehood towards God; but when we have believed in Jesus we come to walk in the light of truth. Read in the first chapter of the Epistle from verse 6 to 9. 2. Next, John gives us obedience as a test of the child of God. Look to the second chapter, and begin to read at the third verse. 3. Follow me as I call attention, next, to the evidence of love in the heart. In the second chapter read at the ninth verse. Then go on to the fourteenth verse of the third chapter. This will greatly help you to decide your case. Do you hate anybody? Are you seeking revenge? Then you are not dwelling in the light; you are of Cain and not of Christ. 4. Next to that comes separation from the world. Read in the second chapter at the fifteenth verse. This is backed up by the first verse of the third chapter. Thus slander, abuse, and other forms of persecution may turn to your comfort by showing that you are of that sect which is everywhere spoken against. 5. Next to that, in the second chapter, we have the evidence of continuance in the faith. "And the world passeth away, and the lust," &c. 6. The next evidence you will find in the third chapter, the third verse, namely, purification. Do you every day endeavour to keep clear of sin; and, when you have sinned, do you at night go with bitter repentance to God, and beg to be delivered from it? 7. Again, in the twenty-first verse of the third chapter, we meet with another blessed evidence, and that is a clear conscience. 8. Furthermore, we find an evidence in answer to prayer: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." 9. Adherence to the truth is another help to full assurance. Read the whole fourth chapter. If you bear witness to the truth, the truth bears witness to you. Blessed are those who are not removed from the hope of their calling. 10. One of the best evidences of true faith, and one of the best helps to full assurance, is a holy familiarity with God. Read in the fourth chapter the sixteenth verse. When you have no longer that slavish fear which makes you stand back, but that childlike confidence which draws you nearer and yet nearer unto God, then are you His child. He who can call God his exceeding joy is among the living in Zion.

IV. THE APPENDIX TO JOHN'S DESIGN. "That ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." I think he means this—you are never to get into such a state that you say, "I have eternal life, and therefore I need not trust simply in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Years ago I was born again, and so I can now live without the daily exercise of faith." "No," says the apostle, "I am writing this to believers, and I tell them that while they may have full assurance, it cannot be a substitute for habitual faith in the Lord Jesus." Every vessel, whether it be a great flagon or a little cup, must hang upon the one nail which is fastened in a sure place. If you get from Jesus, you wander into a land of darkness and of the shadow of death. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The blessing of full assurance.—I. JOHN WROTE WITH A SPECIAL PURPOSE. 1. To begin with, John wrote that we might enjoy the full assurance of our salvation. Full assurance is not essential to salvation, but it is essential to satisfaction. May you get it—may you get it at once; at any rate, may you never be satisfied to live without it. You may have full assurance. You may have it without personal revelations; it is wrought in us by the word of God. He begins thus: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Can anything be more clear than this? The loving spirit of John leads him to say, "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him." Do you love God? Do you love His only-begotten Son? You can answer those two questions surely. John goes on to give another evidence:

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments." You can tell whether you love the brethren, as such, for their Master's sake, and for the truth's sake that is in them; and if you can truly say that you thus love them, then you may know that you have eternal life. Our apostle gives us this further evidence: "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous." Obedience is the grand test of love. By the fruit you can test the root and the sap. But note that this obedience must be cheerful and willing. "His commandments are not grievous." I said to one who came to join the Church the other day, "I suppose you are not perfect?" and the reply was, "No, sir, I wish I might be." I said, "And suppose you were?" "Oh, then," she said, "that would be heaven to me." So it would be to me. We delight in the law of God after the inward man. Oh, that we could perfectly obey in thought, and word, and deed! John then proceeds to mention three witnesses. Do you know anything about these three witnesses? Do you know "the Spirit"? Has the Spirit of God quickened you, changed you, illuminated you, sanctified you? Next, do you know "the water," the purifying power of the death of Christ? Do you also know "the blood"? Do you know the power of the blood to take away sin? Then in the mouth of these three witnesses shall the fact of your having eternal life be fully established. One thing more I would notice. Read the ninth verse: the apostle puts our faith and assurance on the ground that we receive "the witness of God." The inmost heart of Christian faith is that we take God at His Word; and we must accept that Word, not because of the probabilities of its statements, nor because of the confirmatory evidence of science and philosophy, but simply and alone because the Lord has spoken it. 2. Furthermore, John wrote that we might know our spiritual life to be eternal. We are said to be "made partakers of the Divine nature." Immortality is of the essence of the life of God. If our life is Christ's life, we shall not die until Christ dies. Let us rest in this. 3. Once more, John desired the increase and confirmation of their faith. "That ye might believe on the name of the Son of God." Many a Christian man is narrow in the range of his faith from ignorance of the Lord's mind. Like certain tribes of Israel, they have conquered a scanty territory as yet, though all the land is theirs from Dan to Beersheba. John would have us push out our fences, and increase the enclosure of our faith. Let us believe all that God has revealed, for every truth is precious and practically useful. It will be well for you if your faith also increases intensively. Oh that you may more fully believe what you do believe! We need deeper insight and firmer conviction. This is John's desire for you, that you believe with all your heart, and soul, and strength. He would have you believe more constantly, so that you may say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise." He would have us trust courageously. Some can believe in a small way about small things. Oh, for a boundless trust in the infinite God! We need more of a venturesome faith; the faith to do and dare. We need also to have our faith increased in the sense of its becoming more practical. We want an everyday faith, not to look at, but to use. God give to you that you may believe on the name of the Son of God with a sound, common-sense faith, which will be found wearable, and washable, and workable throughout life. We need to believe more joyfully. Oh, what a blessed thing it is when you reach the rest and joy of faith! If we would truly believe the promise of God, and rest in the Lord's certain fulfilment of it, we might be as happy as the angels. II. THE PURPOSE WHICH JOHN HAD IN HIS MIND WE OUGHT TO FOLLOW UP. If he wished us to know that we have eternal life, let us try to know it. The Word of God was written for this purpose; let us use it for its proper end. Our conscience tells us that we ought to seek full assurance of salvation. It cannot be right for us to be children of God, and not to know our own Father. Are you not bidden to make your calling and election sure? Are you not a thousand times over exhorted to rejoice in the Lord, and to give thanks continually? But how can you rejoice, if the dark suspicion haunts you, that perhaps, after all, you have not the life of God? (*Ibid.*) *The Christian's title*:—Suppose I should come to you some day and call in question your ownership of your house, and demand that you give it up—a homestead bequeathed to you by your father. "Why do you make such a demand upon me?" you ask. "Because," I reply, "it is not your house; you have no right to it; at least you do not know that it is yours." "Oh, yes," you reply, "I am quite sure it is my house." "How do you know? what is your reason for believing that it is your house?" "Why, because my father lived here before me." "That is no good reason." "Well, I have lived here undisturbed

for five years myself." "It does not hence follow that the house is yours." "But I am very happy in it: I enjoy myself here." "Well, but, my dear sir, that you may do and still have no right to it." At last, pushed to the wall, you take me with you down to the court-house, and show me your father's will, duly written, signed, sealed and recorded. This may serve to illustrate the point. A great many Christians are at a loss where and how to ground their "title." It is not in the fact that you are a descendant of a saintly family, a child of believing parents: for as old Matthew Henry says: "Grace does not run in the blood": nor is it that you have membership in the visible Church of Christ; nor is it to be found in delightful frames and feelings—in a word, not even a genuine Christian experience constitutes your "title-deed." Where then are we to lay the foundation of our hope? Why, just in the naked, bare Word of God (John v. 24). Straight to the record do we appeal for a final test as to our possession in God (1 John v. 11-12). (*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*) *Eternal life*:—Eternal life is not in the Scriptures limited to God as an incommunicable attribute or essence, nor to the angels even as a possession shut up within the walls of heaven; but is spoken of as something that may be conveyed to and shared with men. Eternal life is the life of the spiritual nature, the life of sentiment and affection, of moral and religious principle. Indeed, in the New Testament, many phrases might equally well be translated either eternal or spiritual life; as, for example, "No murderer hath eternal life," hath spiritual, holy, religious, divine life, "abiding in him." Moreover, that eternal life is not simply enduring, or literally and only everlasting life, is plain, because we never speak of the devil and his angels as having eternal life, though it is supposed in our theology they have a life that endures through all the future, contemporaneously with that of Divinity and seraph. The bad surely do not live the eternal life, though they have before them the same unbounded prospect of existence with the good. There is a state of eternal or spiritual death. Eternal life in God is the life of absolute goodness, purity, rectitude, and truth. Eternal life in man is the life of justice and love, of fidelity in all his relations. It is a right, holy, and becoming life. When we are elevated above selfish and trifling cares into noble thought and generous feeling, our life, so far from having the character of a life that simply endures or is to endure for a long succession of time, seems no longer concerned with time at all, but to have risen above it. Days and weeks are no longer the terms of our existence; but thoughts, emotions, dictates of conscience, impulses of kindness, and aspirations of worship—these make the eternal life, because we feel there is something really fixed and impregnable in them, which neither time can alter, nor age wrinkle, nor the revolutions of the world waste, nor the grave bury, but the eternity of God alone embrace and preserve. It is true, that in that life, as in the absolute and perfect Spirit of God, is involved also the quality of permanence. The pure, loving, righteous, and devoted heart feels its own imperishableness. Its immortality is secretly whispered to it in a great assurance. The Spirit bears witness with it to its incorruptible nature. Even here, rising above the earth, "nor feeling its idle whirl," it shall vindicate its superiority to all that is material, as it drops the flesh, and takes the celestial body. But the heavenly and indissoluble life begins in this world. Jesus Christ had it here. For who thinks of Him as any more immortal after His resurrection and ascension than before? Jesus Christ, the only perfect possessor on earth, is accordingly the great and incomparable communicator of this eternal life. To Him, especially and above all, we are to go for it. Shall this spiritual or eternal life become at length universal throughout the intelligent and moral creation? The theme is perhaps too great for the comprehension of the human mind, nor is it even by the light of inspiration so cleared up that we can hope for an entire agreement respecting it among equally wise and good men. Better is it that we should, by all the motives and sanctions, hopes and fears, of the gospel, try to awaken the moral and spiritual nature in our own and in others' hearts, than that we should exercise the fancy with predicting the fortunes to arise in the coming ages. (*C. A. Bartol.*)

Vers. 14, 15. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.—*The answer to prayer received by faith*:—A very considerable amount of error prevails in regard to the answer of prayer. That answer is by many supposed to be a more tangible and ascertainable result than it really is. To answer prayer God has promised; to make the answer of prayer evident He has not promised. Religion is in all its departments a business

of faith. In all that it calls us to do, we "walk by faith and not by sight." Prayer is no exception. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." In pursuing our subject further, then, let us consider first, that—I. **GOD IN ANSWERING OUR PRAYERS ALLOWS HIMSELF GREAT LATITUDE OF TIME.** We are impatient creatures, eager for speedy and immediate results. But God is always calm, deliberate, judicious. He waiteth to be gracious, not capriciously but discreetly. A benefit often owes its chief value to its being seasonable, opportune. And the discipline of delay is frequently even a greater profit than the bliss of fruition. II. **Consider that THE ANSWER OF PRAYER IS WITHOUT LIMITATION IN REGARD TO THE MODE.** God binds Himself to grant our requests, but He limits Himself to no particular method of granting them. God is not wont to bestow His favours, especially spiritual favours, on men directly. He far more commonly employs indirect and circuitous processes for their conveyance. Hence, we do not often perceive the success of our petitions as the fruit of God's immediate agency. We lose sight of its connection with its true source in the multiplicity of intermediate objects and events, not for the most part evidently relevant or suitable to the end. We pray for a new heart, and we expect our answer in the upspringing and operation within us of new desires. Or we ask for the production or increase of some spiritual grace. But the real answer may come in changes of our external state unlooked for and unwelcome, such as will call us to toil and suffering, under the operation of which, by the secret influences of the Divine Spirit, the result we desire may be slowly and painfully developed. We looked for the blessing by immediate and easy communications; it comes under a course of prolonged and afflictive discipline. III. **Consider that GOD IN ANSWERING PRAYER HOLDS HIMSELF AT PERFECT LIBERTY IN REGARD TO THE SHAPE OF ITS ANSWER.** Whether that which we ask for be really or only apparently good for us, or whether it be compatible with higher interests pertaining to ourselves or others must be left to His decision. "Our ignorance in asking," and especially in reference to temporal things, we ought not to overlook. In all true prayer, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities." He will in all such cases hear us according to the Spirit's meaning, and not according to our own. The removal of a trouble, for instance, may not be so great a blessing to us as grace to bear it; and in that case God will withhold the inferior good which we ask. From all these considerations it must appear to reflecting minds that the answer of prayer must necessarily be a thing of great obscurity and of manifold disguises; and that our confidence in it, and consequent satisfaction from it, must rest far more on the Word of God than upon direct experience, observation, recognition, consciousness. (*R. A. Hallam, D.D.*) *Praying and waiting*.—I. **EXPLANATION**: and let the explanation be taken from instances in Holy Writ. Elijah bowed his knee on the top of Carmel, and prayed to God for rain. He sent his servant till at last he brought back the news, "There is a little cloud the size of a man's hand." Quite enough for Elijah's faith. He acts upon the belief that he has the petition, though not a drop of rain has fallen. II. **COMMENDATION.** Expect answers to prayer. 1. By this means you put an honour upon God's ordinance of prayer. 2. Such a spirit, in the next place, having honoured prayer, also honours God's attributes. To believe that the Lord will hear my prayer is honour to His truthfulness. He has said that He will, and I believe that He will keep His word. It is honourable to His power. I believe that He can make the word of His mouth stand fast and stedfast. It is honourable to His love. The larger things I ask the more do I honour the liberality, grace, and love of God. It is honourable to His wisdom, for I believe that His word is wise and may safely be kept. 3. Again, to believe that God hears prayer, and to look for an answer, is truly to reverence God Himself. If I stand side by side with a friend, and I ask him a favour, and when he is about to reply to me I turn away and open the door and go to my business, why what an insult is this! Merely to knock at mercy's door without waiting a reply, is but like the runaway knocks of idle boys in the street: you cannot expect an answer to such prayers. 4. Furthermore, thus to believe in the result of prayer tries and manifests faith. 5. Such a habit, moreover, helps to bring out our gratitude to God. None sing so sweetly as those who get answers to prayer. Let me add how this would make your faith grow, how it would make your love burn, how every grace would be put in active exercise if, believing in the power of prayer, you watched for the answer, and when the answer came went with a song of praise to the Saviour's feet. III. Having thus spoken by way of commendation, we pause awhile, and turn to speak by way of gentle rebuke. I am communing this morning with those persons to whom John

wrote; you who believe on the name of the Son of God; you who do believe in the efficacy of prayer. How is it that you do not expect an answer? I think I hear you say, "One reason is my own unworthiness; how can I think that God will hear such prayers as mine?" Let me remind thee that it is not the man who prays that commends the prayer to God, but the fervency of the prayer, and in the virtue of the great Intercessor. Why, think you, did the apostle write these words: "Elias was a man of like passions with us"? Why, precisely to meet the case of those who say, "My prayer is not heard because I have such and such faults." Here is a case in point with yours. "Yes," say you, "but, sir, you do not know the particular state of mind I have been in when I have prayed. I am so fluttered, and worried, and vexed, that I cannot expect my prayer, offered in such a state of mind, to prevail with God." Did you ever read the thirty-fourth psalm, and carefully consider where David was when his prayer had such good speed with God? Do not, I pray you, get into the ill habit of judging that your prayers are not heard because of your failings in spirit. "Yes," says a third, "it is not merely that I do not so much doubt the efficacy of prayer on account of myself, but my prayers themselves are such poor things." This is your sin as well as your infirmity. Be humbled and pray God to make you like the importunate widow, for so only will you prevail. But at the same time let me remind you that if your prayers be sincere it shall often happen that even their weakness shall not destroy them. He may rebuke the unbelief of your prayer, and yet in infinite mercy He may exceed His promise. Further, I have no doubt many of God's people cannot think their prayers will be heard, because they have had as yet such very few manifest replies. You say you have had no answers! How know you? God may have answered you, though you have not seen the answer. God has not promised to give you the particular mercy in kind, but He will give it you somehow or other. Many do not pray expecting an answer, because they pray in such a sluggish spirit. They called some of the early Christians on the Continent, "Beg-hards," because they did pray hard to God; and none can prevail but those who pray hard. Then there are so many, again, who pray in a legal spirit. Why do you pray? Because it is my duty? A child does not cry because the time to cry has come, nor does a sick man groan because it is the hour of groaning, but they cry and groan because they cannot help it. When the new-born nature says, "Let us draw nigh unto God," then is the time and the place. A legal spirit would prevent our expecting answers to prayer. Inconsistencies after prayer, and a failure to press our suit, will bring us to doubt the power of prayer. If we do not plead with God again and again, we shall not keep up our faith that God hears us. IV. EXHORTATION. Let us believe in God's answering prayer, I mean those of us who have believed in Jesus; and that because we have God's promise for us. Hear what He says, "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee." Again, prayer must be answered, because of the character of God our Father. Will He let His children cry and not hear them? He heareth the young ravens, and will He not hear His own people? Then think of the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. When you pray it is the blood that speaks. Think, again, that Jesus pleads. Shall the Father deny the Son? Besides, the Holy Spirit Himself is the Author of your prayers. Will God indite the desire, and then not hear it? (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Confidence in prayer*.—I. THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER is expressed in the words, "This is the confidence that we have in Him." The nature of this confidence is determined by the connection. It is not the confidence of presumption, but of children in a father. God is dishonoured by distrust. Christ is dishonoured by unbelief. II. THE RULE OF PRAYER prescribed in the text—"If we ask anything according to His will." It is clear this rule is intended to remind us there is to be a limitation in our prayers. It plainly suggests there are many things which we may not ask of God in prayer. We must not suppose we are to follow our own desires in our supplications. We may wish for many things which we ought not to obtain. They may be wrong in themselves. Or, though proper in themselves, they might be hurtful to us. In either of these cases it would be contrary to the wisdom and goodness of God to grant them. This rule also reminds us there are certain blessings which are right in themselves, and which it may be the will of God to bestow, but which we must ask only in subservience to His pleasure, and service, and glory. For example, I am justified in asking for health within these limitations. So also may I ask a reasonable share of temporal prosperity. With all these exceptions, however, the rule before us assumes there are some things clearly declared to be in such full harmony with the will of God, that we may ask them absolutely and confidently, and without

any reserve. They contain all that is essential to our real interests, for both time and eternity. We may ask at once for the pardon of our sins. The promise is plain and universal (Isa. i. 18). The same is true of the renewal of the soul in righteousness. So also may we ask for increasing holiness. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." We need set no limits to our desires after holiness. God has set none. In a word, we may ask for the Holy Spirit, and this is the sum and centre of all blessings. We may go beyond ourselves, too, and ask for others. We may pray for the conversion and godliness of our household; for the advancement of the cause of Christ in earth.

III. THE ACCEPTANCE OF OUR PRAYERS AND THEIR GRACIOUS ANSWERS. "He heareth us." This is universally true. He is more ready to hear than we are to ask. God then often hears and answers our prayers, although it may not seem to be so at the time of our entreaty. Or He may hear and answer, but not in the way we desire. Besides, we may have answers to our prayers, although we know neither the time nor the manner of them. The very exercise is good. Still, we may have manifest answers to our prayers. If we mark the providence of God we shall discover that He has heard us. But it is in eternity we shall see all the answers to all our prayers. (*J. Morgan, D.D.*)

Prayer:—I. PRAYER IS THE EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD. 1. In general, the language of want, desire, and necessity. 2. Specially, the language of the soul enlightened by the Spirit of God to discover its necessities, and to desire what the Divine bounty has provided for them. 3. It is intelligent, discriminating, definite—embracing the exercise of faith in the Divine purpose and integrity.

II. OUR PETITIONS, EMBODYING THE SOUL'S CONFIDENCES, ARE REGULATED BY GOD'S PROMISE AND WARRANT. His will as revealed. Precepts concerning our progress in holiness to which everything else is subordinate. Promise—revelation of Divine intention in relation to the moral progress of the soul. God hath said—then faith may confide.

III. FAITH BRINGS WITHIN THE RANGE OF OUR EXPERIENCE THE BLESSINGS WE THUS DESIRE. Faith, not an opinion, nor a bare persuasion, but an intelligent, active principle. 1. Apprehending the good promised and sought. 2. By its moral influence it prepares and qualifies for the enjoyment of the promised good. 3. The love thus relying on the promise becomes conscious of the blessings bestowed. (*John A. Williams, B.A.*)

*Confidence in Him:—*Faith towards God in Jesus Christ is the essential activity of the Christian religion. Salvation begins where faith begins. When man opens his hand to receive, God opens His to give. Again, prayer is the essential function of faith—its natural activity. Prayer comes from faith, from the confidence we have in Him. Let us see, then, what is the confidence on which prayer is founded.

I. That if we ask anything, HE HEARETH US—that it is possible to make known our thoughts, feelings, and desires to God. I cannot believe that He who built the cells of hearing is Himself deaf; nor that amid the myriad eyes His hands fashioned, and in the blaze of all the suns kindled by His power, God alone is blind! No, it is infinitely more consonant to right reason to believe with John that He heareth us.

II. Yes, no doubt He can; but WILL He? Will He pay any attention to the woes and the wants of so insignificant a creature as man is? Well, shifting the emphasis one word on, I say, "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that He heareth us"—men and women with nothing special about them except their mere humanity. God Himself, by His love, has proved the greatness and value of man.

III. "That if we ask ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." I said that without faith in God's being and intellect prayer would be impossible; and now I say that without this saving clause—without the confidence that God only grants petitions which accord with His own will—prayer would be dangerous. What could be more fatal than for the power of God to be at the disposal of human caprice? But, thank God, He will not yield. God is inexorable. Love always is inexorable. The doctor's child wishes to have the run of the surgery, that he may play with the keen blades and taste of every coloured powder and potion; and the servant may yield to his importunities, simply because her love is weak; but the father is inexorable, deaf, unyielding. Why? Because he loves his child intensely. I can venture to draw near to God; it is safe, because I have this confidence in God that He will not yield to me against His own wisdom and will. He is inexorable for my highest good. But God's refusal of one thing always means a grant of something better. "According to His will." Why so? Because nothing that is not on a level with that will is good enough for thee. (*J. M. Gibbon.*)

Prayer:—I. REGENERATE HUMANITY AS THE SUBJECT OF CONTINUAL NECESSITY. Man is a suppliant. There is no moment in his immortality in which he can declare absolute independence of a

Superior Power. Our salvation has not lessened our dependence on the Divine bounty. We feel necessities now of which in our natural state we are totally unconscious. 1. There is our want of a world-conquering faith. Without faith man is the mere sport of swelling waves or changeful winds—faith gives him majesty by ensuring for all his energies an immovable consolidation! 2. There is our need of infallible wisdom. The realities of life rebuke our self-sufficiency. The countless errors for whose existence we are unhappily responsible are teaching us that our unaided powers are unequal to the right solution of life's problems. 3. There is our need of renewing and protective grace. All who know the subtlety of sin feel their danger of being undermined by its insidious influence. Without the "daily bread" of heaven we must inevitably perish. II. REGENERATE HUMANITY INTRODUCED TO THE INFINITE SOURCE OF BLESSING. 1. This source is revealed by the highest authority. It is the Son revealing the Father—the Well-beloved who is intimately acquainted with the feelings which characterise the Infinite Being in regard to an apostate race; so that in accepting this testimony we accept it at the lips of a Divine witness. 2. This source is continually accessible. It would indeed have been graciously condescending had God appointed periodical seasons at which He would have listened to human cries; but He has appointed us audience-hours—He is ever ready to hear man's song and to attend man's suit. 3. This source is inexhaustible. The ages have drunk at this fountain, but it flows as copiously as though no lip had been applied to the living stream. III. REGENERATE HUMANITY ENGAGED IN SOCIAL DEVOTION. 1. Prayer is the mightiest of all forces (Matt. xviii. 19, 20). 2. Special encouragement is given to social worship. 3. Am I surrounded by those who inquire how they can serve their race? I point to the text for answer: you can agree to beseech the enriching blessing of God! IV. REGENERATE HUMANITY CAUSING A DISTRIBUTION OF THE RICHES OF THE UNIVERSE. While man is a moral alien he has no influence in the distribution of Divine bounty; but when he becomes a child he may affect the diffusion of celestial blessings. If God has given us His Son will He not with Him freely give us all things? If He has given us the ocean we know that He will not withhold the drop! This assurance is solemnly suggestive. 1. It silences all complaints as to the Divine bounty. Do you wait that you feel so little of holy influence? The reason is at hand: "Ye have not because ye asked not, or because ye asked amiss." 2. It places the Church in a solemn relation to the unsaved world. That world is given us as a vineyard. The fruitful rain and glorious light may be had for asking. Are we clear of the world's blood in the matter of prayer? 3. It defines the limit of our supplication. "If we ask anything according to His will." There is a mysterious boundary separating confidence and presumption. We must not interfere in the settled purposes of God. Conclusion: 1. Earth is intended to be a great sanctuary—"if two of you shall agree on earth." 2. All worship is to be rendered in connection with the name of Christ. 3. The true suppliant retires from the altar in actual possession of the blessings which he besought. "We know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." We have too long acted as though we wished some visible manifestation or audible proof of answered prayer, whereas the scriptural doctrine is—believe and have. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Life and prayer*:—Very naturally, very opportunely, does the doctrine of prayer follow that of eternal life. For the new life brings with it new needs. Every higher grade of life brings with it a sense of need undreamt of in the lower grades of life. Buddha, for instance, preached a very noble doctrine and lived a very noble life. He preached salvation by self-control and love. He set up in India a sublime ideal of character, and dying, left behind him the memory of a singularly pathetic and beautiful career. And by his life and teaching he raised India to something like a higher life. But he forgot the main thing. He forgot that the soul of man pants for the living God; that it must have God. It cannot live on words however true, nor on an example however noble. It can only rest in God. Mahomet, too, woke in his people the sense of a new life to be lived by them. To a people that had worshipped gods he proclaimed God. "God is one, and God is great. Bow down before Him in all things." A noble message surely as far as it went. But it did not go far enough. It did not bring God near enough. Man wants something human, something tender, something near and dear in God. And the fierce followers of Mahomet were driven by the love-hunger in them to half-deify the Prophet, and to invent a system of saint-worship, a ladder of sympathetic human souls by which they hoped to come a little nearer to God. The vision of a higher life had awakened new needs within them. "Necessity," says the proverb, "is the mother of invention," and man's religious inventions bear startling witness to the

great religious necessity, the imperative God-hunger that is in him. "Let us take the precepts of Christ and follow the example of Christ, leaving all the doctrinal and redemptive parts behind." No! The life without the love will crush you. The law of God without the grace of God will bear you down. Dr. Martineau says that since Christ lived a profound sense of sin has filled the whole air with a plaint of penitence. He who despises the blood of Christ as Saviour has not yet seen the life of Christ as his example. But eternal life, while it brings new seeds, brings also a new boldness in prayer. "We know that He heareth us." Love does not exhaust itself by what it gives. We kneel securely when we kneel on Calvary. The Cross is the inspiration and justification of prayer. We can ask anything there. There no prayer seems too great, no petition too daring. (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *The qualifications of prayer, with respect to the subject matter of it:—I. THE PROPER QUALIFICATIONS OF PRAYER, WITH RESPECT TO THE SUBJECT MATTER OF IT.* 1. What we pray for must be as to the matter of it, innocent and lawful. To pray that God would prosper us in any wicked design is not to present ourselves as humble suppliants to His mercy, but directly to affront His holiness and justice. 2. What we pray for must not only be lawful in itself, but designed for innocent and lawful ends. 3. The subject matter of our prayers must be according to the ordinary course and events of God's providence, something possible. We must not expect that God will interpose by a miraculous power, to accomplish what we pray for. 4. What we pray for ought to tend chiefly to our spiritual improvement and growth in grace. II. *HOW FAR, WHEN WE PRAY ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL, WE MAY, WITH HUMBLE CONFIDENCE, RELY ON THE SUCCESS OF OUR PRAYERS.* 1. Whatever God has promised absolutely, He will faithfully and to all intents and purposes perform (Numb. xxiii. 19). 2. Where the promises of God are made to us upon certain conditions or reserves, we have no right to the performance of them any further than is agreeable to the reason of such conditions. (1) God alone perfectly knows what would be the consequence of His granting us our requests. (2) The heart of a man is very deceitful; it is not easy for him at all times to discover the secret insincerity which lies at the bottom of it. Conclusion: 1. If prayer be a means of giving us access to God, and procuring for us so many and great blessings, it is just matter of reproof to Christians especially that this duty is so generally neglected among them. 2. What has been said affords good men matter of great consolation, even when they do not find the return of their prayers in the blessings they pray for. God intends the very denial of their requests to them for good. (*R. Fiddes, D.D.*) *The power of believing prayer:—*Some of the natural forces of the universe can only be manifested through the special elements and agencies that are adapted to transmit them. Electricity must have a pathway of susceptible matter over which to travel, even if that pathway be one of indefinitely minute particles of ether only. So with the spiritual forces of the universe. If the power of the mediatorial presence have no conducting lines of faith along which to travel, it must sleep for ever, and the world be left to swing on in its old grooves of evil and death. The manifestation of all the energies of that presence can only come through the believing request of the disciples. (*T. G. Selby.*)

Vers. 16, 17. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.—The sin unto death:—The sin mentioned here is not the same as the "sin against the Holy Ghost." The persons spoken of as respectively guilty are very different from each other. In the latter sin it is the Scribes and Pharisees, the malignant enemies of Christ; in the case before us it is a Christian brother that is the offender: "If any man see 'his brother' sin." This clears the way so far, or at least it narrows the ground, and so facilitates our inquiry. Much depends on the meaning of the expression, "a sin unto death." Death may mean either temporal or eternal death; either the death of the soul or that of the body. In the passage before us it seems to mean such a sin as God would chastise with disease and death, though He would not exclude the doer of it from His kingdom. In the case of Moses, we have this paternal chastisement involving death. The most remarkable instance of the kind is in the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. xi. 30). Weakness, sickness, and death were the three forms of chastisement with which the Corinthian Church was visited. These passages show the true meaning of our text. The sin unto death is a sin such as God chastises by the infliction of disease and death. What this sin is we do not know. It was not the same sin in all, but different in each. In the case of the Corinthian Church unworthy communicating was "the sin unto death"; but what it was in others is not recorded. But then the question would arise, How are we to

know when a sin is unto death, and when it is not unto death, so that we may pray in faith? The last clause of the 16th verse answers this question. It admits that there is a sin unto death: which admission is thus put in the 17th verse: "All unrighteousness is sin; but all sin is not unto death." But what does the apostle mean by saying, in the end of the 16th verse, "I do not say that he shall pray for it"? If we cannot know when a sin is unto death, and when not, what is the use of saying, "I do not say that he shall pray for it"? The word translated "pray" means also "inquire," and is elsewhere translated so (John i. 19). (See also John i. 21, 25, v. 12, ix. 2, xix. 21.) If thus rendered the meaning would be, "I say he is to ask no questions about that." That is to say, if he sees a brother sick and ready to die, he is not to say, Has he committed a sin unto death, or has he not? He is just to pray, letting alone all such inquiries, and leaving the matter in the hands of God, who, in answer to prayer, will raise him up, if he have not committed the sin unto death. Let us now come to the lessons of our text. 1. Don't puzzle yourself with hard questions about the particular kind of sins committed. Be satisfied that it is sin, and deal with it as such. It is not the nature or the measure of its punishment that you have to consider, but its own exceeding sinfulness. 2. Be concerned about a brother's welfare. 3. Don't trifle with sin. Count no sin trivial, either in yourself or another. Do not extenuate guilt. 4. Take it at once to God. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The sin unto death*:—Noble men and women have gone mad over this sentence. In the shadows of this mystery the gentle spirit of William Cowper wandered many a weary month, wounding itself with bitterest accusations—the noble intellect distraught, "like sweet bells jangled out of tune," weaving the phantasies of despair—the burden of its sad song being, "There is a sin unto death." I. There are DEGREES in sin. Guilt has its gradations. There are sins of ignorance and of deliberation—of weakness and of wickedness: sins which show a lack of goodwill, and others that express intense malignity of will. There are the sins of a Peter, and there are the sins of a Judas. II. EVERY ONE SIN TENDS TO OTHERS MORE GUILTY THAN ITSELF. It gives the will a wrong bias. It breaks the prestige of virtue. Fact tries to become precedent. Acts become habits. Choice hardens into destiny. Sin becomes master and the sinner a slave. III. THIS SAD DEVELOPMENT REACHES ITS CLIMAX IN THE SIN UNTO DEATH. Beyond this it cannot go. What then can it be? It is evidently not any one act or word. It is a condition, a settled state of heart and mind—a state of opposition to and hatred of good as good, and God as God. The sin unto death is unbelief of heart and mind: rejection of the holy as holy. IV. THIS IS SIN UNTO DEATH. It hath no forgiveness under law or gospel. Why? How so? Because God will not? No. The way of return to God is closed against no one who does not close it against himself. The unholy cannot be saved. V. LET US LOOK AT OUR RELATION TO THE SIN UNTO DEATH. With regard to ourselves let us not yield to morbid fears, nor sleep in over security. The door is never closed till we close it, and yet all sin tends to the sin unto death. Let us then beware of all sin. (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *The sin unto death*:—The leading thought which St. John had in his mind was not the distinction between different kinds of sin, but the efficacy of a Christian's prayers. He shows it to be an immediate consequence of our faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, that we should offer up our prayers in full confidence that those prayers will be heard, and that they will be answered, provided only that the petition is in accordance with God's holy will; and then he applies it to the question of intercession one for another; he would have us to remember, that if we have the privilege of coming to God's mercy-seat, we ought not to use the privilege merely on our own behalf, but that we ought to pray for our brethren as well; and we may even pray for the forgiveness of their sins. But does this direction extend to all kinds of sins? Is there no limit to the power of intercession to obtain forgiveness of sin? St. John asserts that there is a limitation; he says that a Christian may obtain forgiveness for his brother by intercession, provided that the sin for which he prays has not been a deadly sin, a sin unto death. And though it may be very difficult to draw an exact line between the two kinds of sin of which the apostle speaks, yet we may sufficiently illustrate his meaning by taking two extreme cases. On the one hand, take the faults and failings which beset the very best amongst Christ's disciples; or again, taking the great question of steadfastness in the faith, which in St. John's day was a question of overwhelming importance to every Christian, one Christian might see his "brother sinning a sin not unto death" in this respect; then the faults of a weak brother such as this would be, as I conceive, a proper subject for the intercession of his brethren. But take the other

extreme, suppose a man who has known what is right to have turned his back upon his convictions and to have wallowed in the filth of sin, or suppose you know him to have committed any atrocious sin, would you have any reasonable ground to intercede for such a person at the throne of grace, and to expect to obtain forgiveness for him? Or suppose a person not merely to have shown some faltering and weakness concerning the faith, but to have openly and expressly denied the faith (which may have been the case that St. John had chiefly in his mind), then would a Christian have any right to ask for the forgiveness of this sin? It seems to me that in this case the very nature of the sin cuts off all possibility of intercession; for to intercede for pardon would be to plead those merits of Christ the virtue of which the apostate has himself expressly renounced. (*Bp. Harvey Goodwin.*) *The mortal sin* :—In very deed there is no sin that is not unto death, in a momentous sense of the words, although the inspired penman, when viewing the subject under another aspect, affirms that "there is a sin which is not unto death." Alienation from God is the essence of sin; and since God is life, the slightest estrangement from Him is a tendency to death. 1. The sin unto death appears sometimes to be a single deed of extraordinary wickedness. It seems to extinguish conscience at a blast, and to rob the moral sense of all its energy and discernment. It breaks down the barriers which had hitherto restrained the vicious tendencies of nature; and forth they flow in a vast irrepressible torrent. In a moment it produces an impassable gulf between God and the soul. It turns the man into a bravo: it makes him desperate and reckless. He has taken the leap; he has made the plunge; and on he goes, wherever unbridled concupiscence or malignity may urge him, "as a horse rusheth into the battle." 2. Still more common is that ruin of the soul which grows out of the long indulgence of comparatively small sins. When people go on sipping sin, although abstaining from a large draught; when, in spite of a reproving conscience, they persist in practices to which the lust of gain, or of pleasure, incites them, not pretending that these practices are altogether right, but only that they are not extremely wrong; when the protest of the inward monitor against this or the other misdeed is put aside with the base apology, But, "is it not a little one"; it may well be feared that the Holy Ghost, disgusted with such double-dealing, will leave the heart a prey to its own deceitfulness. 3. Habitual carelessness in matters of religion is also a sin against the Holy Ghost, which, after a certain continuance, "bringeth forth death." If absolute, irretrievable ruin is no rare fruit of careless indolence, in the business of this world, or, I should rather say, is its natural consequence, why should we deem it unlikely that everlasting ruin, in another world, will prove the consequence of having neglected in our lifetime religion and the interests of the soul? To slight the message, and hardly give it a thought, seems to me an outrage even more atrocious than that of rejecting it after examination. 4. Unprofitableness under means of grace, there is reason to suspect, becomes in numerous instances the sin unto death. A dull insensibility steals over the soul that has repeatedly been plied in vain with spiritual incentives, till at length a lethargy possesses it, invincible to human urgency, from which it will not awake till the day of judgment. (*J. N. Pearson, M.A.*)

Ver. 18. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.—*Three views of the truly regenerate man* :—1. He "sinneth not." As regenerate, he has a new nature. The power of sin is broken in his soul, and therefore its influence over his character and conduct is subdued. 2. He "keepeth himself." The Holy Spirit, indeed, regulates his mind. But still, his own faculties and affections are in exercise; he voluntarily and earnestly endeavours to avoid sin and to practise righteousness; he steadily and energetically sets himself in opposition to the temptations by which he is beset, and, by the grace of God, he is successful. 3. The "wicked one toucheth him not." The devil may stand up against him; he may even sometimes gain an advantage over him. But to overpower—to conquer—him, is beyond the utmost of Satan's arts and efforts. (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) *Whosoever is born of God sinneth not* :—John closes his letter with a series of triumphant certainties, which he considers as certified to every Christian by his own experience. "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not . . . we know that we are of God . . . and we know that the Son of God is come." I. WHO IS THE APOSTLE TALKING ABOUT HERE? "We know that whosoever is born of God"—or, as the Revised Version reads it, "begotten of God"—"sinneth not." This new birth, and the new Divine life which is its result, co-exists along with the old nature in which it is

planted, and which it has to coerce and subdue, sometimes to crucify, and always to govern. This apostle puts great emphasis upon that idea of advancement in the Divine life. So the new life has to grow—grow in its own strength, grow in its own sphere of influence, grow in the power with which it purges and hallows the old nature in the midst of which it is implanted. And growth is not the only word for its development. That new life has to fight for its life. There must be effort, in order that it may rule. Thus we have the necessary foundation laid for that which characterises the Christian life, from the beginning to the end, that it is a working out of that which is implanted, a working out, with ever-widening area of influence, and a working in with ever deeper and more thorough power of transforming the character. There may be indefinite approximation to the entire suppression and sanctification of the old man; and whatsoever is born of God manifests its Divine kindred in this, that sooner or later it overcomes the world. Now if all this is true, I come to a very plain answer to the first question that I raised: Who is it that John is speaking about? "Whosoever is born of God" is the Christian man, in so far as the Divine life which he has from God by fellowship with His Son, through his own personal faith, has attained the supremacy in him. The Divine nature that is in a man is that which is born of God. And that the apostle does not mean the man in whom that nature is implanted, whether he is true to the nature or no, is obvious from the fact that in another part of this same chapter he substitutes "whatsoever" for "whosoever," as if he would have us mark that the thing which he declares to be victorious and sinless is not so much the person as the power that is lodged in the person. That is my answer to the first question. II. WHAT IS ASSERTED ABOUT THIS DIVINE LIFE? "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not." That is by no means a unique expression in this letter. For, to say nothing about the general drift of it, we have precisely similar statements in a previous chapter, twice uttered. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not"; "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Nothing can be stronger than that. Yes, and nothing can be more obvious. I think, then, that the apostle does not thereby mean to declare that unless a man is absolutely sinless in regard of his individual acts he has not that Divine life in him. For look at what precedes our text. Just before he has said, and it is the saying which leads him to my text, "If any man seeth his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life." And do you suppose that any man, in the very same breath in which he thus declared that brotherhood was to be manifested by the way in which we help a brother to get rid of his sins, would have stultified himself by a blank, staring contradiction such as has been extracted from the words of my text? I take the text to mean—not that a Christian is, or must be, in order to vindicate his right to be called a Christian, sinless, but that there is a power in him, a life-principle in him which is sinless, and whatsoever in him is born of God, overcometh the world and "sinneth not." Now, then, that seems to me to be the extent of the apostle's affirmation here; and I desire to draw two plain, practical conclusions. One is, that this notion of a Divine life-power, lodged in, and growing through, and fighting with the old nature, makes the hideousness and the criminality of a Christian man's transgressions more hideous and more criminal. The teaching of my text has sometimes been used in the very opposite direction. There have been people that have said, "It is no more I, but sin, that dwelleth in me; I am not responsible." The opposite inference is what I urge now. In addition to all the other foulnesses which attach to any man's lust, or drunkenness, or ambition, or covetousness, this super-eminent brand and stigma is burned in upon yours and mine, Christian men and women, that it is dead against, absolutely inconsistent with, the principle of life that is bedded within us. "To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required." Another consideration may fairly be urged, as drawn from this text, and that is that the one task of Christians ought to be to deepen and to strengthen the life of God, which is in their souls, by faith. There is no limit, except one of my own making, to the extent to which my whole being may be penetrated through and through and ruled absolutely by that new life which God has given. It is all very well to cultivate specific and sporadic virtues and graces. Get a firmer hold and a fuller possession of the life of Christ in your own souls, and all the graces and virtues will come. III. WHAT IS THE GROUND OF JOHN'S ASSERTION ABOUT HIM "THAT IS BORN OF GOD"? My text runs on, "But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself." If any of you are using the Revised Version, you will see a change there, small in extent, but large in significance. It reads, "He that is begotten of God keepeth him." Let

me just say in a sentence that the original has considerable variation in expression in these two clauses, which variation makes it impossible, I think, to adopt the idea contained in the Authorised Version, that the same person is referred to in both clauses. The difference is this. In the first clause, "He that is begotten of God" is the Christian man; in the second, "He that is begotten of God" is Christ the Saviour. There is the guarantee that "Whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not," because round his weakness is cast the strong defence of the Elder Brother's hand; and the Son of God keeps all the sons who, through Him, have derived into their natures the life of God. If, then, they are kept by the only-begotten Son of the Father, then the one thing for us to do, in order to strengthen our poor natures, is to take care that we do not run away from the keeping hand nor wander far from the only safety. When a little child is sent out for a walk by the parent with an elder brother, if it goes staring into shop-windows and gaping at anything that it sees upon the road, and loses hold of the brother's hand, it is lost, and breaks into tears, and can only be consoled and secured by being brought back. Then the little fingers clasp round the larger hand, and there is a sense of relief and of safety. If we stray away from Christ we lose ourselves in muddy ways. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

The keeping:—A lady was leaving home, and was concerned for the safety of a jewel box too precious to be left in an empty house. Asking a friend to undertake the charge, responsible as it was, and receiving a promise that she would do so, she left it with her. But, reflecting that in her absence she might wish to wear some of her trinkets, the lady took three of them with her. On her return home, her first concern was with the box which contained so many precious things. It was safe. Yes, there it was; and one by one the jewels were examined and found all there. The friend had been faithful; she had kept them all in safety. But of the three which had been taken with her, one had been dropped somewhere on the journey and could not be found! Who was to blame? Was it the fault of the friend who took charge of the box? Nay, she could only keep "that which had been committed" to her. She would, no doubt, have kept this other also, had it been left in her care. That which you have not committed to Christ you cannot expect Him to keep. (*J. B. Figgis.*)

Ver. 19. We know that we are of God.—*All true believers are of God, and so separated from the world lying in wickedness*:—I. **HOW TRUE BELIEVERS ARE OF GOD.** 1. By creation; and so all things are of God (Rom. xi. 36). Thus the devils themselves are of God as their Creator, and so is the world. But this is not the being of God here meant. 2. By generation, as a son is of the father. 3. The work of regeneration is held forth under a double notion, showing the regenerate to be of God. (1) It is a being begotten of God (ver. 18). God Himself is the Father of the new creature: it is of no lower original (James i. 18; 1 Peter i. 23, 25). (2) It is a being born of God (ver. 18). By His Spirit alone the new creature is formed in all its parts, and brought forth into the new world of grace (John iii. 5). II. **HOW BELIEVERS, AS THEY ARE OF GOD, REGENERATE PERSONS, ARE SEPARATED FROM THE WORLD LYING IN WICKEDNESS.** 1. Negatively. (1) Not in respect of place (1 Cor. v. 9, 10). (2) Not in respect of gathering them into pure unmixed societies for worship. There are no such visible Church societies in the world (Matt. xiii. 28-30). 2. But positively, the regenerate as such are separated from the world—(1) In respect of their being broken off from that corrupt mass, and become a part of a new lump. They are become members of Christ's mystical body, of the invisible Church, a distinct though invisible society. (2) Their being delivered from under the power of the god of this world, viz., Satan (Acts xxvi. 18). (3) Their having a Spirit, even the Spirit of God dwelling in them, which the world have not (Rom. viii. 9; Jude 19). (4) Their having a disposition, and cast of heart and soul, opposite to that of the world; so that they are as much separated from the world as enemies are one from another (Gen. iii. 15). From this doctrine we may learn the following things. 1. This speaks the dignity of believers. They are the truly honourable ones, as being of God; they are the excellent of the earth. 2. It speaks the privilege of believers. Every one will care and provide for his own: be sure God will then take special concern about believers (Matt. vi. 31, 32). 3. It speaks the duty of believers. Carry yourselves as becomes your dignity and privilege, as those that are of God. 4. It shows the self-deceit of unbelievers, pretenders to a saving interest in God, while in the meantime they are lying together with the world in wickedness. (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

People's being of God may be known to themselves:—I. Men may know themselves to be of God, by giving

diligence to make their calling and election sure (2 Peter i. 10). Spiritual discerning, a spiritual sight, taste, or feeling of the things of God, in ourselves or others (1 Cor. ii. 14). Spiritual reasoning on Scripture grounds (ver. 13). 1. One may know that others are of God, and separated from the world, discerning the image of God shining forth in them. 2. A true believer may know himself to belong to God, and not to the world. We should not be rash in giving or refusing that judgment, but hold pace with the appearance or non-appearance of the grace of God in them. The love bestowed on hypocrites is not all lost, and therefore it is safest erring on the charitable side. Let us carry our judgment of others no farther than that of charity, and not pretend to a certainty, which is not competent to us in that case, but to God only. In our own case, we may have by rational evidence a judgment of certainty, without extraordinary revelation. What moves ourselves so to walk, we can assuredly know; but what moves others, we cannot know that. A true child of God may assuredly know his relative state in the favour of God.

II. I exhort you to be concerned to know whether ye are of God, separated from the world or not. To press you thereto, consider—1. We are all of us naturally, and by our first birth, of the world lying in wickedness (Eph. ii. 2, 3). 2. The world lying in wickedness is the society appointed to destruction, as in a state and course of enmity against God (Eph. ii. 3). Therefore all that are to be saved are delivered and gathered out of it (Gal. i. 4). 3. Many deceive themselves in this matter, as the foolish virgins (Matt. xxv.). Christ's flock is certainly a little flock (Luke xii. 32; Matt. v. 13, 14). 4. Death is approaching; and if it were come, there will be no separating more from the world. 5. It is uncertain when death comes to us, and how (Matt. xxiv. 42). At best it is hardly the fit time of being new born, when a-dying. 6. It is an excellent and useful thing to know our state in this point. For if we find that we are not of God, but of the world, we are awakened to see to it in time. (*Ibid.*)

The triumphant Christian certainties:—I. I ask you, then, to look first at THE CHRISTIAN CERTAINTY OF BELONGING TO GOD. "We know that we are of God." Where did John get that form of expression? He got it where he got most of his terminology, from the lips of the Master. For, if you remember, our Lord Himself speaks more than once of men being "of God." As, for instance, when He says, "He that is of God heareth God's words." "Ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God." The first conception in the phrase is that of life derived, communicated from God Himself. Fathers of flesh communicate the life, and it is thenceforth independent. But the life of the Spirit, which we draw from God, is only sustained by the continual repetition of the same gift by which it was originated. The better life in the Christian soul is as certain to fade and die if the supply from heaven is cut off or dammed back, as is the bed of a stream, to become parched and glistening in the fierce sunshine if the head-waters flow into it no more. You can no more have the life of the Spirit in the spirit of a man without continual communication from Him than a sunbeam can subsist if it be cut off from the central source. Divine preservation is as necessary in grace as in nature. If that life is thus derived and dependent, there follows the last idea in our pregnant phrase—viz., that it is correspondent with its source. "Ye are of God," kindred with Him and developing a life which, in its measure, is cognate with, and assimilated to, His own. Then there is another step to be taken. The man that has that life knows it. "We know," says the apostle, "that we are of God." That word "know" has been usurped by certain forms of knowledge. But surely the inward facts of my own consciousness are as much reliable as are facts in other regions which are attested by the senses, or arrived at by reasoning. Christian people have the same right to lay hold of that great word "we know," and to apply it to the facts of their spiritual experience, as any scientist in the world has to apply it to the facts of his science. How do you know that you are at all? The only answer is, "I feel that I am." And precisely the same evidence applies in regard to these lofty thoughts of a Divine kindred and a spiritual life. But that is not all. For the condition of being "born of God" is laid plainly down in this very chapter by the apostle as being the simple act of faith in Jesus Christ. So, then, if any man is sure that he believes, he knows that he is born of God, and is of God. Ah! But you say, "Do you not know how men deceive themselves by a profession of being Christians, and how many of us estimate their professions at a very different rate of genuineness from what they estimate them at?" Yes! I know that. And this whole letter of John goes to guard us against the presumption of entertaining inflated thoughts about ourselves. You remember how continually in this Epistle there crops up by the side of the most thoroughgoing mysticism, as people call it,

the plainest, home-spun, practical morality. "Let no man deceive you; he that doeth not righteousness is not of God; neither he that loveth not his brother." There is another test which the Master laid down in the words, "He that is of God heareth God's words. Ye, therefore, hear them not because ye are not of God." Christian people, take these two plain tests—first, righteousness of life, common practical morality; and, second, an ear attuned and attent to catch God's voice. It is a shame, and a weakening of any Christian life, that this triumphant confidence should not be clear in it. "We know that we are of God." Can you and I echo that with calm confidence? "I sometimes half hope that I am." "I am almost afraid to say it." "I do not know whether I am or not." "I trust I may be." That is the kind of creeping attitude in which hosts of Christian people are contented to live. Why should our skies be as grey and sunless as those of this northern winter's day when all the while, away down on the sunny seas, to which we may voyage if we will, there is unbroken sunshine, ethereal blue, and a perpetual blaze of light? II. We have here THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE SURROUNDING WORLD. I need not, I suppose, remind you that John learned from Jesus to use that phrase "the world," not as meaning the aggregate of material things, but as meaning the aggregate of godless men. Now, the more a man is conscious that he himself, by faith in Jesus Christ, has passed into the family of God, and possesses the life that comes from Him, the more keen will be his sense of the evil that lies round him. Just as a native of Central Africa brought to England for a while, when he gets back to his kraal, will see its foulnesses as he did not before, the measure of our conscious belonging to God is the measure of our perception of the contrast between us and the ways of the men about us. I am not concerned for a moment to deny, rather, I most thankfully recognise the truth, that a great deal of the world has been ransomed by the Cross, and the Christian way of looking at things has passed into the general atmosphere in which we live. But the world is a world still, and the antagonism is there. The only way by which the antagonism can be ended is for the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. III. Lastly, consider THE CONSEQUENT CHRISTIAN DUTY. Let me put two or three plain exhortations. I beseech you, Christian people, cultivate the sense of belonging to a higher order than that in which you dwell. A man in a heathen land loses his sense of home, and of its ways; and it needs a perpetual effort in order that we should not forget our true affinities. So I say, cultivate the sense of belonging to God. Again, I say, be careful to avoid infection. Go as men do in a plague-stricken city. Go as our soldiers in that Ashanti expedition had to go, on your guard against malaria, the "pestilence that walketh in darkness." Go as these same soldiers did, on the watch for ambushes and lurking enemies behind the trees. And remember that the only safety is keeping hold of Christ's hand. Look on the world as Christ looked on it. There must be no contempt; there must be no self-righteousness. There must be sorrow caught from Him, and tenderness of pity. Work for the deliverance of your brethren from the alien tyrant. The solemn alternative opens before every one of us—Either I am "of God," or I am "in the wicked one." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Certainties*:—This has been called the Epistle of Love, and it well deserves that title, but it might be almost more appropriately called the Epistle of Certainties; there is the ring of absolute assurance from the opening words to the finish. I. THE STRENGTH AND PREVAILING POWER OF THE EARLY DISCIPLES WERE IN THEIR CERTAINITIES; they went forth with decision upon their lips, with the fire of intense conviction in their hearts, and it made their testimony irresistible, and gave them their victory over the world. It was the age of the sceptic, a period of almost universal uncertainty. Agnosticism was bringing forth its inevitable fruit of pessimism and despair. Man hungered for the spiritual food which he has cast away. That was the secret sigh and groan of all the world in the days of the apostles. And then these men appeared, declaring in tones to which the world had long been unaccustomed that they had found the Truth, and the Eternal Life. It was the one clear beacon light in a waste of darkness. No wonder that men gathered around them. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." II. IT WAS THE CERTAINITIES OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH THAT MADE IT A MISSIONARY CHURCH. Each illumined soul passed on the light to another. Each convert was as good as two, for each one made a second. Prisoners whispered the glad news to their gaolers, soldiers to their comrades, slaves to their masters, women to every one who would listen. Nor could it be otherwise. They were swayed by the force of a mighty conviction. There was no hesitation because there was no doubt, III. THE MEASURE OF OUR CERTAINTY IS THE MEASURE OF OUR

POWER. We cannot lift others on the rock unless our own feet are there. No man ever wrought conviction in his fellow-men until conviction had first swept hesitation out of him like a whirlwind, and cleansed his heart from doubt like a fire. No man believes the witness who only half believes himself. If there be no certainty there will be no fervour, no enthusiasm, no pathos in the voice, no pity in the eyes, no thrill of sympathy. There will only be cold words falling on cold hearts, and returning, as they went out, void. The whole Church is beginning to feel and rejoice in a powerful reaction towards positive beliefs. Those who talk somewhat boastfully of their advanced thought are being left behind, though they do not know it, by advance of a nobler kind. The Church sweeps past them in the impatience of a renewed assurance. Missions can only march to the music of the words "We know." If the steps are taken with dubious feet and trembling misgivings in the heart there will be perpetual haltings and paralysing weariness. If we are not sure that our Bible is the very Word of God, and our Christ the only possible Saviour of the world, shall we expend treasure and blood and send men out to solitude and danger, and often into the very grip of death, to make them known? There will be an end of all our missionary zeal if we are to believe or be influenced by that talk about the heathen systems which students of comparative religion have recently made current. Many hands have been busy of late whitewashing the darkness and laying guilt upon corruption. It has become fashionable in certain quarters to extol Buddha and Confucius and Mahomet, and by implication to depreciate Christ; to hold up to admiration the light of Asia, and by implication to bedim the Light of the World. And the levelling down of the Bible and the levelling up of the heathen writings have gone on together until the two are made to meet almost on common ground. If we had nothing more to carry to the heathen world than our moral precepts, who would waste the least effort or treasure on that task? Christ did not come so much to teach men what they ought to be and do, not to mock them by a revelation of their own impotence, but to give them that which is more than human, and to enable them to ascend to the heights which He showed. IV.

WE COME BACK, THEN, EVER TO THIS CONFESSION OF THE APOSTLE, for to question it is to make missionary enterprise, if not a laughing-stock, at least a "much ado about nothing." "We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." Perhaps in Christian lands we cannot draw the line so clearly as it was drawn of old. The darkness shades into the light where Christian influences are working in all societies, and permeating all thought. And the measure of assurance is the measure of obligation. The more absolutely we know these things the heavier is our burden of responsibility. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*)

The regenerate and the unregenerate:—I. THE REGENERATE. 1. Their relation to God. (1) Of His family. (2) Of His school. (3) His willing servants. 2. Their consciousness of this relation. II. *THE UNREGENERATE.* "Lieth in the wicked one"—in his power, dominion, influence. Some lie there as a sow in the mire; they are satisfied with their filth, they luxuriate in the pollution. Some as sufferers in a hospital; they writhe in agony, and long to get away. What a condition to be in! Better lie on the deck of a vessel about going down, or on the bosom of a volcanic hill about to break into flame. (*Homilist.*)

The whole world lieth in wickedness.—The unregenerate world described:—That world is (as it were two hemispheres) twofold. 1. The lower world lying in wickedness. That is the region of eternal death; the lake of fire. 2. The upper world lying in wickedness. That is the land of the living, this present evil world.

(1) The lower and upper unregenerate world are indeed one world, one kingdom of Satan, one family of his. (2) But they are in different circumstances. (a) The state of the one is alterable, as of those who are upon a trial; of the other unalterable, as those on whom a definite sentence is passed. (b) So the case of the one is not without hope, but that of the other absolutely hopeless. (c) Here they lie in wickedness with some ease and pleasure; there they lie in it with none at all. Their pleasurable sins are there at an end (Rev. xviii. 14).

I. THE PARTS OF THE UNREGENERATE WORLD. 1. The religious part of it. Wonder not that we speak of the religious part of the world lying in wickedness; for there is some religion, but of the wrong stamp. (1) A natural conscience, which dictates that there is a God, a difference betwixt good and evil, rewards and punishments after this life (Rom. ii. 15). (2) Interest, which sways the men of the world to it several ways. In some times and places religion is fashionable, gains men credit. 2. The moral part of it. Some such there have been among heathens, and some among Christians. Two things, besides natural conscience and interest, bring in morality into the

world lying in wickedness. (1) Civil society, by which means men may live at peace in the world, and be protected from injuries. (2) Natural modesty and temper, in respect of which there is a great difference among even worldly men. 3. The immoral part of it. This is the far greatest part of that world (1 Cor. vi. 9; Gal. v. 19-21; Titus iii. 3). (1) The corruption of human nature, the natural bent of which lies to all enormities. This was the spring of the flood of wickedness, and of water, that overflowed the old world (Gen. vi. 5). (2) Occasions of sin and temptations thereto, which offer themselves thick in this evil world; because the multitude is of that sort (Matt. xviii. 7). (a) The wealth of the rich makes immorality abound among them. It swells the heart in pride, and fills them with admiration of themselves; it ministers much fuel to their lusts, and affords them occasions of fulfilling them. (b) The poor, those who are in extreme poverty. Their condition deprives them of many advantages others have. 4. If we compare the immoral part of the world lying in wickedness with the other two, though it is true they are all of the same world, and will perish if they be not separated from it; yet the religious and moral have the advantage of the immoral. (1) In this life, in many respects. They walk more agreeable to the dignity of human nature than the immoral. They are more useful and beneficial to mankind. They have more inward quiet, and are not put on the rack that immorality brings on men. And so they have more outward safety, their regular lives being a fence to them, both from danger without and within. 2. In the life to come. Though the world, the unregenerate world's religion and morality will not bring them to heaven, yet it will make them a softer hell than the immoral shall have (Rev. xx. 12, 13). II. THE STATE OF THE UNREGENERATE WORLD. 1. I am to confirm and evince the truth of the doctrine in the general. (1) Satan is the god of the whole unregenerate world; how can it miss then to be wholly lying in wickedness? (2 Cor. iv. 4). (2) Spiritual darkness, thick darkness, is over the whole of that world (Eph. v. 8), how can anything but works of darkness be found in it? The sun went down on all mankind in Adam's transgressing the covenant; the light of God's countenance was then withdrawn. (3) They are all lying under the curse (Gal. iii. 10). For not being in Christ, they are under the law as a covenant of works (Rom. iii. 19). The curse always implies wickedness. (4) They are all destitute of every principle of holiness, and there cannot be an effect without a cause of it; there can be no acts of holiness without a principle to proceed from. They are destitute of the Spirit of God; He dwells not in them (Jude 19; comp. 1 Cor. ii. 14). II. EXPLAIN THIS STATE OF THE UNREGENERATE WORLD, THERE LYING IN WICKEDNESS. 1. What of wickedness they lie in. (1) In a state of sin and wickedness (Acts viii. 23). They are all over sinful and wicked, as over head and ears in the mire (Rev. iii. 17). (a) Their nature is wholly corrupted with sin and wickedness (Matt. vii. 18). (b) Their lives and conversations are wholly corrupted (Psa. xiv. 3). For the fountain being poisoned, no pure streams can come forth from thence (Matt. xii. 34). (2) The whole unregenerate world lies under the dominion and reigning power of sin and wickedness (Rom. vi. 17). (a) Sin is in them in its full strength and vigour, and therefore rules and commands all. (b) It possesses them alone without an opposite principle. (3) They lie in the habitual practice of sin and wickedness (Psa. xiv. 1). The best things they do are sin, unapproved, unaccepted of God (Prov. xv. 8; Isa. lxvi. 3). 2. How the unregenerate world lies in wickedness. They lie in it in the most hopeless case; which we may take up in three things. (1) Bound in it (Acts viii.), bound in it like prisoners (Isa. lxi. 1). They are in chains of guilt, which they cannot break off; there are fetters of strong lusts upon them, which hold them fast. (2) Asleep in it (Eph. v. 14). They have drunk of the intoxicating cup, and are fast asleep, though within the sea-mark of vengeance. (3) Dead in it (Eph. ii. 1). A natural life, through the union of a soul with their body, they have; but their spiritual life is gone, the union of their souls with God being quite broken (Eph. iv. 18). Use 1. Of information. See here—1. The spring and fountain of the abounding sin in our day. The whole world lies in wickedness; and wickedness proceedeth from the wicked (1 Sam. xxiv. 13). Hence—(1) The apostacy in principles, men departing from the faith. (2) Apostacy in practice. There is a deluge of profanity gone over the land. 2. The spring of all the miseries that are lying on us, and we are threatened with. The world is lying in wickedness, and therefore lies in misery; for God is a sin-hating and sin-revenging God. Men will carry themselves agreeable to their state of regeneracy or irre-generacy; and to find unregenerate men lying in this and the other wickedness, is no more strange than to find fish swimming in the water, and birds flying in the

air; it is their element. 4. The world must be an infectious society; it must be a pestilential air that is breathed in it, and wickedness in it must be of a growing and spreading nature. 5. This accounts for the uneasy life that the serious-godly have in the world. For unto them—(1) It is a loathsome world, where their eyes must behold abominations that they cannot help (Hab. i. 3). (2) It is a vexatious world; the temper of the parties is so different, so opposite, that they can never hit it, but must needs be heavy one to another. (3) It is an ensnaring world, wherein snares of all sorts are going, and they are many times caught in the trap ere they are aware (2 Tim. iii. 1, 2). (4) It is a world wherein wickedness thrives apace as in its native soil, but any good has much ado to get up its head (Jer. iv. 22). 6. This accounts for the frightful end this visible world will make, by the general conflagration (2 Pet. iii. 10). 7. This shows the dangerous state of the unregenerate world; they lie in wickedness. (1) They now lie under wrath, hanging in the threatening and curse which is over their heads (Eph. ii. 8). (2) They will perish under that wrath, whoever continue and come not out from among them (Matt. xxv.; Rev. xx. 14, 15). Use 2. Of exhortation. 1. To all I would say, Search and try what society ye belong to, whether ye are still of, or separated from, the world lying in wickedness. 2. To saints separated from the world, I would say—(1) Do not much wonder at the harsh entertainment ye meet with in it. (2) Watch against it while ye are in it, as being in hazard of sins and snares in a world lying in wickedness. (3) Look homeward, and long to be with Christ, where you shall be for ever out of the reach of all evil, and enjoy such peace and freedom as your enemies can disturb no more. 3. To sinners of the world lying in wickedness, I would say, Come out from among them, and be separated, as ye would not be ruined with them, and perish eternally in their destruction. (T. Boston, D.D.)

Ver. 20. **We know that the Son of God is come.**—*The gospel of the Incarnation*:—"He is coming" is the word of the Old Testament; "He is come" is the better word of the New. John knew Jesus as the Son of God; and in his writings he only tells us what he knows. "We know that the Son of God is come." Well, this is a simple fact, simply stated; but if you go down deep enough into it, you will find a whole gospel inside. I. BY HIS COMING HE HAS "GIVEN US AN UNDERSTANDING THAT WE MAY KNOW HIM THAT IS TRUE." Now this does not mean, of course, that Christ gives men any new intellectual power, that He adds to the faculties of the mind any more than to the senses of the body. "Understanding" here signifies rather the means of knowing, the power of understanding. By word and life He has given us ideas about Fatherhood, holiness, pity, kindness, and love, that we had not before. Purity, meekness, patience, and all the graces, mean more now than they did before Christ lived and died. The horizon of language has been widened, and its heaven lifted higher than before. II. WELL, FOR WHAT PURPOSE HAS CHRIST GIVEN US THESE NEW IDEAS AND OPENED THE EYES OF OUR UNDERSTANDINGS? In order that we may "know Him that is true," in order that we may know God. In Christ you will find the truth about God. There are mysteries still? Yes, but they are all mysteries of goodness, holiness, and love. In a recently published book of travel the authoress tells of gigantic camellia-trees in Madeira, and says that one man made an excursion to see them, and came back much disappointed, having failed to find them. He was desired to pay a second visit to the spot, and was told by his friends to look upwards this time, and was much surprised and gladdened to see a glorious canopy of scarlet and white blossoms fifty feet overhead! Is not that the story of many more in our days? They grub and moil amid molluscs and ocean slime; "they turn back the strata granite, limestone, coal and clay, concluding coldly with, Here is law! Where is God?" "I have swept the heavens with my telescope," said Lalande, "but have nowhere found a God!" Sirs, you are looking in the wrong direction: look higher! Look as Ezekiel looked—above the firmament. In the presence of Christ Jesus you will find what you shall in vain seek elsewhere, God, in all that He is, made manifest in the flesh. III. "We know that the Son of God is come, and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ," i.e., IN CHRIST WE ARE IN GOD. Dr. Arnold used to say that though the revelation of the splendour of God in the infinite fulness of His nature may be something awaiting him in the world to come, he felt sure that in this world he had only to do with Christ. Yes! it is with Christ we have to do. God Himself is the ultimate, but Christ is the immediate object of our faith. In our penitence we go straight as the Magdalene went, and, sitting at the feet of Jesus, we know that we are confessing our sins to God. Our prayers are as

direct as that of Peter, when, beginning to sink in the boiling sea, he cried, saying, "Lord, save me!" and we know that we are crying to God for help. IV. Lastly, the Son of God is come, and TO BE IN HIM IS TO HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. "This is the true God (the God in Christ) and eternal life." Victor Hugo said on his death-bed in a fit of great pain, "This is death: this is the battle of the day and the night." Yes, but for those who are in Christ the day wins, not the night, and death is the gate leading to a larger life. (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *Three greatest things:—*In this verse we have three of the greatest things. I. The greatest FACT IN HUMAN HISTORY. That the Son of God has come. There are many great facts in the history of our race. But of all the facts the advent of Christ to our world eighteen centuries ago is the greatest. This fact is the most—1. Undeniable. 2. Influential. 3. Vital to the interests of every man. II. The greatest CAPABILITY OF THE HUMAN MIND. What is that? "An understanding, that we may know Him that is true." Men are endowed with many distinguishing faculties—imagination, memory, intellect. But the capacity to know Him who is true is for many reasons greater than all. 1. It is a rare faculty. The mighty millions have not this power, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee." 2. It is a Christ-imparted faculty—"He hath given us." What is it? It is love. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God." Christ generates this love. Love alone can interpret love, "God is love." III. The greatest PRIVILEGE IN HUMAN LIFE. "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." This means, Jesus Christ is the true God. (*Homilist.*) *Soul evidence of the divinity of Christ:—*Christ was Divine. As there can be no argument of chemistry in proof of odours like a present perfume itself; as the shining of the stars is a better proof of their existence than the figures of an astronomer; as the restored health of his patients is a better argument of skill in a physician than laboured examinations and certificates; as the testimony of the almanac that summer comes with June is not so convincing as is the coming of summer itself in the sky, in the air, in the fields, on hill and mountain, so the power of Christ upon the human soul is to the soul evidence of His divinity based upon a living experience, and transcending in conclusiveness any convictions of the intellect alone, founded upon a contemplation of mere ideas, however just and sound. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Christ manifested in the heart the life of His people:—*I. THE CHARACTER HERE GIVEN OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST—"Him that is true," "the true God and eternal life," "the Son of God." 1. The first object in this glorious description which claims our notice refers to the truth of our Saviour's character and mission—"Him that is true." This title is descriptive of our blessed Lord's faithfulness, and His punctuality in the performance of every engagement; He is true to His word of promise, though "heaven and earth shall pass away, yet His word shall not pass away till all be fulfilled." This title also refers to the validity of His claim to the character of Messiah. He was no pretender to a station which did not of right pertain unto Him—He was the true Messiah. Jesus Christ is also called "true," to express that all the types and shadows of the Levitical dispensation received a complete fulfilment in Him, "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." 2. The next appellation is, "the true God." This epithet is not conferred upon the Redeemer merely as an honorary distinction—no, it is given to Him as asserting His Divine nature; a declaration, that He is "very God of very God." If Christ be not truly and properly God, He cannot be the Saviour of sinners. 3. Another epithet here applied to Christ is, "eternal life." He is so called with reference to His glorious work, as the Saviour of sinners. By the gospel He has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light,"—has "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers"; and by His meritorious death has obtained life for them; hence He is called the Prince of life. By His mighty power spiritual life is revealed in the hearts of His people. 4. The concluding words of the clause now under consideration are, "His Son Jesus Christ," which confirms His claim to the Divine character. The Father and the Son are one in nature, as well as in affection. II. THE PRESENT STATE OF TRUE BELIEVERS. "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." To be in Christ is to be united to Him by faith, which worketh by love. The nature and necessity of this union with the Lord Jesus are most beautifully illustrated in His last discourse with His disciples previous to His sufferings: "I am the true vine," &c. Believers are "cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and are grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree," the influences of Divine grace flow into their souls, they bring forth fruit unto perfection, and are at length gathered into the garner of God. III. THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF

BELIEVERS. 1. "We know that the Son of God is come." The import of these words appears to be this—we are satisfied the promised Christ has actually made His appearance in the flesh; and believe that Jesus of Nazareth was that person. I apprehend that these words refer to the revelation of our Lord Jesus, in the believer's heart, by the Holy Spirit of God. 2. "He hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true." We have already observed that Jesus is the truth. Now we are not naturally acquainted with Him; we know not His glorious excellences; hence, when beheld by the eye of carnal reason, the Redeemer seems to have no beauty in Him; there is no form or comeliness, that we should desire Him. This darkness remains upon the mind till dispersed by a light from heaven, and when that light shineth, Jesus is revealed in the soul, and becomes the supreme object of the believer's affections. Men may, by dint of application, become systematic Christians; they may understand the theory of the gospel; but they cannot thus become wise unto salvation. (*S. Ramsey, M.A.*) *John's triumphant certainties*:—This third of his triumphant certainties is connected closely with the two preceding ones. It is so, as being in one aspect the ground of these, for it is because "the Son of God is come" that men are born of God and are of Him. It is so in another way also, for properly the words of our text ought to read not "And we know," rather "but we know." They are suggested, that is to say, by the preceding words, and they present the only thought which makes them tolerable. "The whole world lieth in the wicked one. But we know that the Son of God is come." Falling back on the certainty of the Incarnation and its present issues, we can look in the face the grave condition of humanity, and still have hope for the world and for ourselves. I. I would deal with THE CHRISTIAN'S KNOWLEDGE THAT THE SON OF GOD IS COME. Now, our apostle is writing to Asiatic Christians of the second generation at the earliest, most of whom had not been born when Jesus Christ was upon earth, and none of whom had any means of acquaintance with Him except that which we possess—the testimony of the witnesses who had companied with Him. "We know; how can you know? You may go on the principle that probability is the guide of life, and you may be morally certain, but the only way by which you know a fact is by having seen it. And even if you have seen Jesus Christ, all that you saw would be the life of a man upon earth whom you believed to be the Son of God. It is trifling with language to talk about knowledge when you have only testimony to build on." Well! There is a great deal to be said on that side, but there are two or three considerations which, I think, amply warrant the apostle's declaration here, and our understanding of his words, "We know," in their fullest and deepest sense. Let me just mention these briefly. Remember that when John says "The Son of God is come" he is not speaking about a past fact only, but about a fact which, beginning in a historical past, is permanent and continuous. And that thought of the permanent abiding with men of the Christ who once was manifest in the flesh for thirty years, runs through the whole of Scripture. So it is a present fact, and not only a past piece of history, which is asserted when the apostle says "The Son of God is come." And a man who has a companion knows that he has him, and by many a token, not only of flesh but of spirit, is conscious that he is not alone, but that the dear and strong one is by his side. Such consciousness belongs to all the maturer and deeper forms of the Christian life. Further, we must read on in my text if we are to find all which John declares is a matter of knowledge. "The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding." I point out that what is here declared to be known by the Christian soul is a present operation of the present Christ upon his nature. If a man is aware that through his faith in Jesus Christ new perceptions and powers of discerning solid reality where he only saw mist before have been granted to him, the apostle's triumphant assertion is vindicated. And, still further, the words of my text, in their assurance of possessing something far more solid than an opinion or a creed in Christ Jesus, and our relation to Him, are warranted, on the consideration that the growth of the Christian life largely consists in changing a belief that rests on testimony for knowledge grounded in vital experience. "Now we believe, not because of your saying, but because we have seen Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." That is the advance which Christian men should all make from the infantile, rudimentary days, when they accepted Christ on the witness of others, to the time when they accepted Him because, in the depth of their own experience, they have found Him to be all that they took Him to be. The true test of creed is life. The true way of knowing that a shelter is adequate is to house in it, and be defended from the pelting of every piti-

less storm. The medicine we know to be powerful when it has cured us. II. Note THE NEW POWER OF KNOWING GOD GIVEN BY THE SON WHO IS TO COME. John says that one issue of that Incarnation and permanent presence of the Lord Christ with us is that "He hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true." Now, I do not suppose that He means thereby that any absolutely new faculty is conferred upon men, but that new direction is given to old ones, and dormant powers are awakened. That gift of a clarified nature, a pure heart, which is the condition, as the Master Himself said, of seeing God—that gift is bestowed upon all who, trusting in the Incarnate Son, submit themselves to His cleansing hand. In the Incarnation Jesus Christ gave us God to see; by His present work in our souls He gives us the power to see God. The knowledge of which my text speaks is the knowledge of "Him that is true," by which pregnant word the apostle means to contrast the Father whom Jesus Christ sets before us with all men's conceptions of a Divine nature, and to declare that whilst these conceptions, in one way or another, fall beneath or diverge from reality and fact, our God manifested to us by Jesus Christ is the only One whose nature corresponds to the name, and who is essentially that which is included in it. But what I would dwell on especially is that this gift, thus given by the Incarnate and present Christ, is not an intellectual gift only, but something far deeper. Inasmuch as the apostle declares that the object of this knowledge is not a truth about God but God Himself, it necessarily follows that the knowledge is such as we have of a person, and not of a doctrine. Or, to put it into simpler words, to know about God is one thing, and to know God is quite another. To know about God is theology, to know Him is religion. That knowledge, if it is real and living, will be progressive. More and more we shall come to know. As we grow like Him we shall draw closer to Him; as we draw closer to Him we shall grow like Him. So, if we have Christ for our medium both of light and of sight, if He both gives us God to see and the power to see Him, we shall begin a course which eternity itself will not see completed. III. Lastly, note here THE CHRISTIAN INDWELLING OF GOD WHICH IS POSSIBLE THROUGH THE SON WHO IS COME. "We are in Him that is true." Of old Abraham was called the Friend of God, but an angustier title belongs to us. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of the living God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" But notice the words of my text for a moment, where the apostle goes on to explain and define how "we are in Him that is true," because we are "in His Son Jesus Christ." That carries us away back to "Abide in Me, and I in you." John caught the whole strain of such thoughts from those sacred words in the upper room. And will not a man "know" that? Will it not be something deeper and better than intellectual perception by which he is aware of the presence of Christ in his heart? (A. Maclaren, D.D.) **That we may know Him that is true.**—*Ultimates of knowledge and beginnings of faith:*—How can we now reach such heights of assurance as are marked by these words of St. John? First of all, we need to go straight through our own experiences, thoughts, and questionings, until we find ourselves facing the ultimates of our life and knowledge. Many a young man comes nowadays to church in a state of mental reserve; and this is one of the real practical hindrances to clear, bright discipleship. It hinders the progress of the Church as fogs hinder navigation. Men in this state listen to the great commandments of the gospel—repent, believe, confess Christ before men—and while not intentionally or deliberately rejecting them, they receive them and lose sight of them in this great fog-bank of mental uncertainty which lies in their minds all around the horizons of present and near duties. Back, then, let us force ourselves to the ultimates of our life! Back in all honesty and urgency let us go, until we face "the flaming bounds of the universe"! I find four ultimates, then, upon which to stand; four fundamentals of human life and knowledge from which to survey all passing clouds and turmoil. One of these ultimates—the one nearest to the common sense of mankind, and which I only need to mention—is the final fact that there is some all-embracing Power in the universe. This is the last word which the senses, and the science of the senses, have to speak to us—force. But when I look this physical ultimate of things in the face, and ask what it is, or how I have learned to give this name of power to it; then I find myself standing before a second ultimate of knowledge. That is the fact of intelligence. I cannot, in my thought, go before or behind that last fact of mind, and reason compels me to go up to it and admit it; there is mind above matter; there is intelligence running through things. Upon the shores, then, of this restless mystery of our life are standing, calm and eternal, these two ultimates of knowledge, Power and Reason, Intelligence and Force; and they stand bound

together—an intelligent Power, a Force of Mind in things. But there is another line of facts in our common experience, the end of which is not reached in these ultimates of science and philosophy. You and I had not merely a cause for our existence; I had a mother, and you had before you a fact of love in the mother who gave you birth. Love breathes through life and pervades history. It is the deathless heart of our mortality. Moreover, this fact of love in which our being is cradled, and in which, as in our true element, man finds himself, has in it law and empire. In obedience to this supreme authority men will even dare to die. There are, then, for us such realities as love, devotion, duty. And with this it might seem as though I had gone around the compass of our being and said all that can be said of the last facts of our lives. But I have not. There is another last fact in this world which not only cannot be resolved into anything simpler than itself, and with which, therefore, we must rest, but which, also, is itself the truth abiding as the light of day over these fundamental facts of our knowledge. It is the illumination of man's whole life. I refer, of course, to the character of Jesus Christ. The Person of the Christ is the ultimate fact of light in the history of man. We cannot resolve the character of Jesus into anything before itself. We cannot explain Him by anything else in history. The more definite we make the comparison between Jesus and men the more striking appears His final unaccountableness upon the ordinary principles and by the common laws of human descent. We can bring all human genius into organic line with its ancestry, or into spiritual unity with its nationality or age. Rome and the Cæsar explain each the other. Human nature in Greece, vexed by the sophists, must give birth both to an Aristotle and a Socrates. These two types of mind are constantly reproduced. And the Buddha is the incarnation of the Oriental mind. But Jesus is something more than Judæa incarnate. Jesus is something unknown on earth before incarnated in a most human life. He was in this world but not of it. He was the fulfilment of the history of God in Israel, yet He was not the product of His times. He chose to call Himself, not a Hebrew of the Hebrews, not a Greek of the Gentiles, but simply and solely the Son of Man. And we can find no better name for Him. He is for us an ultimate fact, then, unaccounted for by the lives of other men, unaccountable except by Himself; as much as any element of nature is an original thing not to be explained by anything else that is made, so is the character of Jesus Christ elemental in history, the ultimate fact of God's presence with man. Now, then, such being the fundamental facts of our knowledge—the ultimates of human experience—it is perfectly legitimate for us to build upon them; and any man who wishes to build his life upon the rock, and not upon the sands, will build upon them. A Power not ourselves upon which we are dependent—a first intelligence and love, source of all our reason and life of our heart—and Jesus Christ the final proof of God with us and for us—such are the elemental realities upon which our souls should rest. He who stands upon these Divine facts in the creation and in history shall not be confounded. (*N. Smyth, D.D.*) *The Holy Trinity* :—"The Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true." That advent lays open God's judgment on good and evil as it is involved in the Divine nature. That advent gives us the power of an ever-increasing insight into an eternal life and the strength of an eternal fellowship. It teaches us to wait as God waits. To this end, however, we must use ungrudging labour. "The Son of God . . . hath given us an understanding that we may know. . . ." He does not—we may say, without presumption, He cannot—give us the knowledge, but the power and the opportunity of gaining the knowledge. Revelation is not so much the disclosure of the truth as the presentment of the facts in which the truth can be discerned. It is given through life and to living men. We are required each in some sense to win for ourselves the inheritance which is given to us, if the inheritance is to be a blessing. We learn through the experience of history, and through the experience of life, how God acts, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and by the very necessity of thought we are constrained to gather up these lessons into the simplest possible formula. So we come to recognise a Divine Trinity, which is not sterile, monotonous simplicity; we come to recognise a Divine Trinity which is not the transitory manifestation of separate aspects of One Person or a combination of Three distinct Beings. We come to recognise One in whom is the fulness of all conceivable existence in the richest energy, One absolutely self-sufficient and perfect, One in whom love finds internally absolute consummation, One who is in Himself a living God, the fountain and the end of all life. Our powers of thought and language are indeed very feeble, but we can both see and to some extent point

out how this idea of the Father revealed through the Son, of the Son revealed through the Spirit, one God, involves no contradiction, but offers in the simplest completeness of life the union of the "one" and the "many" which thought has always striven to gain: how it preserves what we speak of as "personality" from all associations of finiteness; how it guards us from the opposite errors which are generally summed under the terms Pantheism and Deism, the last issues of Gentile and Jewish philosophy; how it indicates the sovereignty of the Creator and gives support to the trust of the creature. We linger reverently over the conception, and we feel that the whole world is indeed a manifestation of the Triune God, yet so that He is not included in that which reflects the active energy of His love. We feel that the Triune God is Lord over the works of His will, yet so that His Presence is not excluded from any part of His Universe. We ponder that which is made known to us, that when time began "the Word was with God" in the completeness of personal communion; that the life which was manifested to men was already in the beginning with the Father (1 John i. 2) realised absolutely in the Divine essence. We contemplate this archetypal life, self-contained and self-fulfilled in the Divine Being, and we are led to believe with deep thankfulness that the finite life which flows from it by a free act of grace corresponds with the source from which it flows. In this way it will at once appear how the conception of the Triune God illuminates the central religious ideas of the Creation and the Incarnation. It illuminates the idea of Creation. It enables us to gain firm hold of the truth that the "becoming" which we observe under the condition of time answers to "a being" beyond time; that history is the writing out at length of that which we may speak of as a Divine thought. It enables us to take up on our part the words of the four-and-twenty elders, the representatives of the whole Church, when they cast their crowns before the throne and worshipped Him that sits thereon, saying, "Worthy art Thou, our Lord, and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they are and were created;" they were absolutely in the ineffable depths of the mind of God, they were created under the limitations of earthly existence. The same conception illuminates also the idea of the Incarnation. It enables us to see that the Incarnation in its essence is the crown of the Creation, and that man being made capable of fellowship with God, has in his very constitution a promise of the fulfilment of his highest destiny. It enables us to feel that the childly relation in which we stand to God has its ground in the Divine Being; and to understand that not even sin has been able to destroy the sure hope of its consummation, however sadly it may have modified in time the course by which the end is reached. Any one who believes, however imperfectly, that the universe with all it offers in a slow succession to his gaze is in its very nature the expression of that love which is the Divine Being and the Divine Life; who believes that the whole sum of life defaced and disfigured on the surface to our sight "means intensely and means good"; who believes that the laws which he patiently traces are the expressions of a Father's will, that the manhood which he shares has been taken into God by the Son, that at every moment, in every trial, a Spirit is with him waiting to sanctify thought, and word, and deed; must in his own character receive something from the Divine glory on which he looks. What calm reserve he will keep in face of the perilous boldness with which controversialists deal in human reasonings with things infinite and eternal. What tender reverence he will cherish towards those who have seen something of the King in His beauty. With what enthusiasm he will be kindled while he remembers that, in spite of every failure and every disappointment, his cause is won already. After what holiness he will strain while he sees the light fall about his path, that light which is fire, and knows the inexorable doom of everything which defiles. So we are brought back to the beginning. The revelation of God is given to us that we may be fashioned after His likeness. "God first loved us" that knowing His love we might love Him in our fellow-men. Without spiritual sympathy there can be no knowledge. But where sympathy exists there is the transforming power of a Divine affection. (*Bp. Westcott.*) **This is the true God and eternal life.** *The eternal life* :—These are the strongest words that can be used in reference to any object. I. THE APOSTLE'S KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. 1. John knew that the long expected and earnestly looked for Saviour had made His appearance among men. What mere man could talk of going to and coming from heaven, as though he were speaking of going into and coming out of a room in a house and claim to be sane? He was "Emmanuel, God with us," who, while here below, remained there always. "And we know that the Son of God is come."

2. The apostle received a priceless gift from the "Son of God." And hath given us an "understanding." The importance of the "understanding" that Christ gives may be seen in the object which it understands. A teacher who succeeds in making a great and difficult subject clear to our minds deserves our profoundest gratitude and highest admiration. The "Son of God" gives mankind an understanding that apprehends the greatest of all objects—"Him that is true." The Son comprehends God and He gives us understandings to apprehend Him. Such an understanding is truly a great gift, the greatest of its kind possible. When we bear in mind that by it Christ places us in the light in which we may see and know God, we cannot fail to feel that it is indeed such. For, like all objects of the mind, God can only be known in His own light. The only way we can possibly understand a great author is to possess the light in which he wrote his work—we must see with his intellectual eyes as it were—then we shall understand him, not otherwise. The understanding which Christ gives us includes much more than a mere capacity to apprehend an object, it includes a suitable spirit in which to enter upon the study of it. Indeed, unless we are in fullest sympathy with the spirit of the object we are studying we shall fail to understand it. It is something to be able to understand the great works that have been produced by the illustrious men of the different ages; their sublime and inspiring poetry, their wise and informing philosophy, their splendid pictures, their fine statuary, and their grand architecture. But the "understanding" which the "Son of God" gives apprehends God; it knows "Him that is true." Such a mind must be capacious indeed. II. THE APOSTLE'S RELATION TO CHRIST AND GOD. 1. "And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." A closer relationship than these words describe cannot be conceived; they imply that the most thorough and vital union subsists between God, Christ, and the Christian. That is a triple union the strong hand of death cannot sever, nor will the damps and chills of the grave impair the golden cord that binds the Christian to God and the Saviour. Eternity will only add to its power and perpetuity. To be in Him that is true is to know Him. 2. They possessed an intelligent assurance of the intimate relation which they sustained to Christ: "And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." They had entered into the close union with God by means of Christ, but they had not severed themselves from Christ in order to keep up the union with God; they were in Him that is true, "even in His Son Jesus Christ." All who are in "His Son Jesus Christ" see God from the only standpoint from whence it is possible for the soul to see Him really and satisfactorily. A visitor who went to Trafalgar Square to view Landseer's lions, selected a position on low ground from which he could look up at them, where the stately proportions of the whole column could be seen to the greatest advantage. Quite another effect is produced by looking down upon them from the terrace in the front of the National Gallery; the column seems dwarfed and the lions out of proportion. The standpoint made all the difference in the view. Christ is the only standpoint from which we can see God really: in Christ we "stand on the mount of God, with sunlight in our souls," and see the Father of our spirits. III. THE APOSTLE'S SUBLIME TESTIMONY TO CHRIST. "This is the true God and eternal life." Jesus Christ was not a Divine man merely: if He were not more than that John would not have said that He was "the true God." He was the best of men, but He was infinitely more; He was "the true God and eternal life." As the earth is the source of the life of all the fields and forests—as much the source of the life of the majestic oak as the sweet and fragrant violet—so Christ is the source of the soul's life. Separated from the earth, the most vital plant or tree would wither, droop, and die; no plant, however vigorous and beautiful, has life in itself. Jesus Christ is, in the fullest sense, the source of the soul's life; "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." As the fountain of eternal life He imparts it to all who possess it. "I give unto them eternal life." The source of all the waters of the world must be an immense reservoir. If it were possible for the question to be put to all the waters found on the earth, to all streams, rivers, and lakes, "Where is your source?" do you think that they would answer, "Oh, some spring that takes its rise at the foot of a distant little hill." No, if any one hinted that such a spring was their source they would scout the idea at once as the very acme of absurdity. Their united answer would be, "Our source must be an inexhaustible ocean." Then can a mere man be the author of "eternal life"? Impossible. (*D. Rhys Jenkins.*) *The last words of the last apostle:—I. HERE WE HAVE THE SUM OF ALL THAT WE NEED*

TO KNOW ABOUT GOD. "This is the true God." When he says, "This is the true God" he means to say, "This God of whom I have been affirming that Jesus Christ is His sole Revealer, and of whom I have been declaring that through Jesus Christ we may know Him and dwell abidingly in Him." "This"—and none else—"is the true God." What does John mean by "true"? By that expression he means, wherever he uses it, some person or thing whose nature and character correspond to his or its name, and who is essentially and perfectly that which the name expresses. If we take that as the signification of the word, we just come to this, that the God revealed in Jesus Christ, and with whom a man through Jesus Christ may have fellowship of knowledge and friendship, that He and none but He answers to all that men mean when they speak of a God; that He, if I might use such expressions, fully fills the part. If we only think that, however it comes (no matter about that) every man has in him a capacity of conceiving of a perfect being, of righteousness, power, purity, and love, and that all through the ages of the world's yearnings there has never been presented to it the embodiment of that dim conception, but that all idolatry, all worship, has failed in bodying out a person who would answer to the requirements of a man's spirit, then we come to the position in which these final words of the old fisherman go down to a deeper depth than all the world's wisdom, and carry a message of consolation and a true gospel to be found nowhere besides. Whatsoever embodiments men may have tried to give to their dim conception of a God, these have been always limitations, and often corruptions of it. And to limit or to separate is, in this case, to destroy. No Pantheon can ever satisfy the soul of man who yearns for One Person in whom all that he can dream of beauty, truth, goodness shall be enshrouded. "This is the true God." And all others are corruptions, or limitations, or divisions, of the indissoluble unity. Then are men to go for ever and ever with the blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realised? For, consider what it is that the world owes to Jesus Christ in its knowledge of God. Remember that to us as orphaned men He has come and said, as none ever said, and showed as none ever showed: "Ye are not fatherless, there is a Father in the heavens." "God is a Spirit." "God is love." And put these four revelations together, the Father; Spirit; unsullied Light; absolute Love; and then let us bow down and say, "Thou hast said the truth, O aged Seer." This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. "This"—and none beside—"is the true God." I know not what the modern world is to do for a God if it drifts away from Jesus Christ and His revelations. II. HERE WE HAVE THE SUM OF HIS GIFTS TO US. "This is the true God, and eternal life." By "eternal life" He means something a great deal more august than endless existence. He means a life which not only is not ended by time, but which is above time, not subject to its conditions at all. Eternity is not time spun out for ever. That seems to part us utterly from God. He is "eternal life"; then, we poor creatures down here, whose being is all "cribbed, cabin'd, and confined" by succession, and duration, and the partitions of time, what can we have in common with Him? John answers for us. For remember that in the earlier part of this Epistle he writes that "the life was manifested, and we show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us, and we declare it unto you; and we declare it unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son." But we are not left to wander about in regions of mysticism and darkness. For we know this, that however strange and difficult the thought of eternal life, as possessed by a creature, may be, to give it was the very purpose for which Jesus Christ came on earth. "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." And we are not left to grope in doubt as to what that eternal life consists in; for He has said: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Thus, then, there is a life which belongs to God on His throne, a life lifted above the limitations of time, a life communicated by Jesus Christ, as the waters of some land-locked lake may flow down through a sparkling river, a life which consists in fellowship with God, a life which may be, and is, ours, on the simple condition of trusting Him who gives it, and a life which, eternal as it is, is destined to a future all undreamed of, in that future beyond the grave, is now the possession of every man that puts forth the faith which is its condition. III. LASTLY, WE HAVE HERE THE CONSEQUENT SUM OF CHRISTIAN ACTION. "Little children, keep yourselves from 'idols'"—seeing that "this is the true God"—the only One that answers to your requirements, and will satisfy your desires. Do not go rushing to these shrines of false deities that crowd every corner of Ephesus—ay! and every corner of Manchester. Is the exhortation not needed?

In Ephesus it was hard to have nothing to do with heathenism. In that ancient world their religion, though it was a superficial thing, was intertwined with daily life in a fashion that puts us to shame. Every meal had its libation, and almost every art was knit by some ceremony or other to a god. So that Christian men and women had almost to go out of the world in order to be free from complicity in the all-pervading idol-worship. You and I call ourselves Christians. We say we believe that there is nothing else, and nobody else, in the whole sweep of the universe that can satisfy our hearts, or be what our imagination can conceive but God only. Having said that on the Sunday, what about Monday? "They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living water, and hewed to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water." "Little children"—for we are scarcely more mature than that—"little children, keep yourselves from idols." And how is it to be done? "Keep yourselves." Then you can do it, and you have to make a dead lift of an effort, or be sure of this—that the subtle seduction will slide into your heart, and before you know it you will be out of God's sanctuary, and grovelling in Diana's temple. But it is not only our own effort that is needed, for just a sentence or two before, the apostle had said: "He that is born of God"—that is, Christ—"keepeth us." So our keeping of ourselves is essentially our letting Him keep us. Here is the sum of the whole matter. There is one truth on which we can stay our hearts, on God in whom we can utterly trust, the God revealed in Jesus Christ. If we do not see Him in Christ we shall not see Him at all, but wander about all our days in a world empty of solid reality. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.—The sin of idolising:—I. WHAT IS THE RIGHT NOTION OF IDOLATRY, AS IT STILL PREVAILS EVEN AMONG NOMINAL CHRISTIANS? I answer generally; whatever is so desired and loved, so trusted in or honoured, as to displace God from His pre-eminence is an idol. Accordingly the objects of human idolatry are exceedingly numerous; and one individual is far from being constant to the same. We see the idol of yesterday cast to the moles and bats to-day; and that which is deified to-day may probably be trampled in the mire to-morrow. This multiplicity of idols, this unsteadiness of taste and affection appeared among the heathen polytheists. It is the proper curse and punishment of forsaking the Creator that the heart roam from creature to creature with a sickly capriciousness, and never know where to settle. Consider, then, whether or not you are immoderately attached to any earthly object; to any friend or relation; to money, power, learning, reputation, pleasure, popularity. **II. THE WAY OF DETECTING THESE IDOLATROUS PROPENSITIES IN OURSELVES.** 1. What is their effect in filling your mind, and memory, and imagination? What do your thoughts chiefly run upon? To what do they naturally tend—God or Mammon? Your memory too, what scenes and discourses does it most fondly review? Those of a spiritual and devout, or those of a worldly cast? Tell me, also, which way your fancy flies when it makes excursions. To airy castles of augmented wealth and importance in this world; to higher distinctions, and finer houses, and more abundant comforts; or to scenes of heavenly holiness and bliss? Try yourselves, again, as to the influence of temporal things upon your religious exercises. 2. Is your sensibility to sin as lively as ever? If you have lost ground in this respect, and are less particular than once you were, what has so sadly altered you? Has it not been too warm an attachment to this or that person; too keen a solicitude for this or the other acquisition? 3. Are you greatly elated by gain, and greatly dejected by loss in your worldly affairs and connections? In thought survey your possessions and still more your friends. Now, which of all these is dearest to you? Have you ascertained? Then I ask whether you could bear to part with that possession by the stroke of misfortune; with that friend by the stroke of death? Ah, you exclaim, it would break my heart to be deprived of such a blessing. Would that indeed be the case? Then tremble lest that blessing turn into a curse by proving your idol. **III. SOME OF GOD'S METHODS OF DEALING WITH SUCH IDOLATERS;** for He is a jealous God. "The idols He will utterly abolish." Sometimes He sweeps them away as with a whirlwind. They are smitten to the ground and disappear in a moment. Health, strength, beauty, knowledge, fame, wealth, just now they were flourishing like a flower; and like a flower they have faded away. Sometimes the cup of idolatrous happiness is not dashed from our lips, but wormwood is mingled with it. God embitters to us our darling enjoyments, so that where we looked for peace and comfort we find nothing but misery. Was it the husband you loved more than God? That husband becomes faithless and unkind. Was it the wife? She grows sickly and fretful. The child? He turns out wild; or is lost to you in some other

way. Be assured that the over-eager pursuit of any worldly good is full of mischief and peril. And this dreadful consummation occurs when God leaves us to our idols; when he suffers them to take and keep possession of our souls. "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone. Leave him to his fatal infatuation. Let him take his fill of carnal delights till the day of repentance is closed and judgment bursts upon him." Merciful God, sever us from our idols by whatever visitation thou mayest see fit; only leave us not bound up with them to perish in the day of Thy coming! IV. THE MEANS OF KEEPING OURSELVES FROM IDOLS. 1. Exercise a sleepless vigilance, kept awake by a sense of your proneness to fall into this evil; and be much in prayer for Divine help, conscious that you are too weak to preserve yourselves without assistance from above. Understand, however, that what you have mainly to guard against is not any particular object, but the turning of that object into an idol. 2. Do not heedlessly form such connections and acquaintances, whether by marriage or partnership in business or domestic service, as threaten to absorb the heart and alienate the affections from God. Recollect that it is easier to abstain from making idols than afterwards to put them away. 3. Think much of the vanity of human things; what they really are and of what account. Often the dearest idol gives birth to the greatest sorrow. How common the remark upon something of which high expectations were conceived, "It has turned out quite the reverse." Oh, truly, it is most unwise to set our heart upon a gourd which may wither away at any moment and leave us more painfully sensible than ever of the scorching sunbeams. 4. Never forget that it is the prime end of the gospel to unbind your heart from the creature in order to its being reunited to your Father in heaven. Are you not to be "temples of the Holy Ghost"; to be sanctified into "an habitation of God through the Spirit"? What then have you "to do any more with idols"? (*J. N. Pearson, M.A.*) *The true God and shadows*:—By the "true God" St. John means the God not only truth-speaking, but true in essence, genuine, real; by "shadows" or "idols" he means the false principles which take possession of the senses—the unreal reflections of the only Real. There was indeed plenty of need for this warning in St. John's day and in the Churches under his care. Perhaps the antithesis of Christianity and the world is not now so sharply apparent. But the contrast still exists. Although the twilight realm may be vast, yet broad and deep are the shadows which men take for realities, and live in them, and worship them, and believe in them. Can there be a more evident example of shadow worship than the devotion of the world to the material—which in reality is the immaterial? In every form of matter there is indeed the hint of God, but it is a hint only, the pledge of the reality, not the great Reality Itself. It is from heedlessness of this great truth that the First Commandment of the Decalogue, which some imagine completely needless for themselves, is perhaps really more necessary than any of the other nine. For all around us is a world worshipping sham gods of its own deification. How then does Christ teach us the eternal distinction between shadows and realities? In His temptation we have exhibited to us the whole matter in a nutshell. Temptation is the battle of alternatives, the choice between the high and the low, the real and the shadowy. Alexander, conqueror of the world, wept for worlds beyond to conquer: Cæsar, with his hand grasping Satan's gift of the world-empire, dreamed of something more real when he told the Egyptian priest he would give up all, even Cleopatra herself, to discover the mysterious sources of the Nile. It is this reality, this wider conquest, this source of eternal life, which has been man's search in all his philosophies and religious systems. Napoleon, beset with quagmires in Egypt, bade his officers ride out in all directions, the first to find firm ground to return and lead the way for the rest. So man's heart has bidden him ride out in every direction to seek the Real, and St. John comes back from his fellowship with Jesus, and cries, "This is the real God and the life which is eternal. Little children, guard yourselves from the sham gods." (*H. H. Gowen.*) *Idolatry*:—If an idol is a thing which draws the heathen away from the living God, anything which does this for us may be named an idol. I. SELF. Love of self is born in us, and if not early checked will be our master. It feeds upon falsehood, unkindness, greediness, and pride. You must gratify it at whatever cost, and then it demands more and more. Self is a dreadful idol. Beware of it. II. DRESS. You may forget the pearl in anxiety about its setting. III. PLEASURE. Do not children encourage the passion for exciting amusements till they are miserable without them, though so many innocent recreations remain to them? We have known children whose Sundays were a weariness to them, and their studies a punishment. Their pleasures were their idols. (*British Weekly Pulpit.*)

The following Volumes are now Ready, price 7s. 6d. each, or a selection of four different vols. at 4s. 6d. each prepaid. Subscriptions may be paid in advance for the forthcoming volumes. From all Booksellers.

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR

OR ANECDOTES, SIMILES, EMBLEMS, ILLUSTRATIONS,
AND SERMON OUTLINES ON THE VERSES
OF THE BIBLE.

VOLUMES NOW READY.

Genesis, 2 vols.	2 Corinthians.
Exodus.	Galatians.
Leviticus and Numbers.	Ephesians.
St. Matthew.	Philippians and Colossians.
St. Mark.	1 and 2 Thessalonians and
St. Luke, 3 vols.	1 Timothy.
St. John, 3 vols.	2 Timothy, Titus, & Philemon.
Acts, 3 vols.	Hebrews, 2 vols.
Romans, 2 vols.	St. James.
1 Corinthians, 2 vols.	1 2 3 John and St. Jude.
	Revelation (in Press).

A Volume containing a most full and complete INDEX to all the volumes of THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR on the NEW TESTAMENT is in preparation, but it will not be printed unless fifteen hundred Subscribers are secured. It will be sent only to Subscribers who forward their names beforehand to the Publishers. Price 6s. net, 10s. 6d. after day of publication.

An INDEX VOLUME will be issued on the **OLD TESTAMENT** in due course, on same terms and conditions.

MESSRS. NISBET & CO., 21, BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.

TO BE HAD FROM ALL BOOKSELLERS.

Now Ready, price 2s. 6d. each.

THE MEN OF THE BIBLE.

ABRAHAM: His Life and Times. By Rev. W.
J. DEANE, M.A.

MOSES: His Life and Times. By Rev. Canon
G. RAWLINSON, M.A.

SOLOMON: His Life and Times. By Ven. Arch-
deacon F. W. FARRAR, D.D.

ELIJAH: His Life and Times. By Rev. Prof.
W. MILLIGAN, D.D.

ISAIAH: His Life and Times. By Rev. Canon
DRIVER, M.A.

SAMUEL and SAUL. By Rev. W. J. DEANE, M.A.

JEREMIAH: His Life and Times. By Rev. Canon
T. K. CHEYNE, D.D.

JESUS CHRIST THE DIVINE MAN. By Rev.
J. F. VALLINGS, M.A.

THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH. By
Rev. Canon RAWLINSON.

DANIEL: His Life and Times. By Rev. H. DEANE,
B.D.

DAVID: His Life and Times. By Rev. W. J.
DEANE, M.A.

JOSHUA: His Life and Times. By Rev. W. J.
DEANE, M.A.

THE MINOR PROPHETS. By Ven. Archdeacon
FARRAR, D.D.

ISAAC and JACOB: Their Lives and Times.
By Rev. Canon RAWLINSON.

ST. PAUL: His Life and Times. By Rev. Prof.
IVERACH, D.D.

**GIDEON AND THE JUDGES: Their Lives
and Times.** By Rev. J. M. LANG, D.D.

EZRA and NEHEMIAH. By Rev. Canon RAW-
LINSON.

MESSRS. NISBET & CO., 21, BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.