

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.
II. JOHN.

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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

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II. JOHN.

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VERS. 1, 2. The elder unto the elect lady.—*Truth the bond of love*:—How much is implied very often by the phrase or style with which a letter is begun or ended! How different is the formal "Sir" from "My dear Sir"; and, again, how much does this differ from the intimacy which addresses by a Christian name! Those different styles mean a great deal; and as it is now, so it was in the Apostolic age. St. John calls himself by way of endearment "the Presbyter," when writing to a family with which he has been long on terms of intimacy. Nothing is more welcome to persons of simple character who are in high office than an opportunity of laying its formalities aside; they like to address others and to be themselves addressed in their personal capacity, or by a title in which there is more affection than form. And he introduces himself to them by a description around which so much affection had gathered, and which seemed to have acquired a new appropriateness in his advanced age. To whom does he write? "The Presbyter to the elect lady and her children." It may be that the word translated "lady" is really a proper name, "Kyria." She was an elderly person, probably a widow, living with her grown-up children. When St. John says that she was loved by "all them that knew the truth," he makes it plain that her name was at least well known in the Asiatic Churches, and that she was a person of real and high excellence. What Dorcas was to St. Peter; what Lydia of Philippi, and Phœbe of Cenchrea, and Priscilla, and many others were to St. Paul, such was this Christian lady to St. John. I. THE ATMOSPHERE OF THIS FRIENDSHIP WAS SINCERITY. "Whom I love," not in the truth (there is no article in the original), but "in truth." Not "truly": St. John would have used an adverb to say that. What he means is that truth—truth of thought, truth of feeling, truth of speech and intercourse—was the very air in which his affection for this Christian lady had grown up and maintained itself. And the word which he uses to describe this affection points to the same conclusion. It stands for that kind of affection which is based on a reasoned perception of excellence in its object; and thus it is the word which is invariably used to describe the love that man ought to have for God. But such a love as this between man and man grows up and is fostered in an atmosphere of truthfulness. It is grounded not on feeling or passion, but on a reciprocal conviction of simplicity of purpose; and, being true in its origin, it is true at every stage of its development. That the sense of a common integrity of purpose, a common anxiety to be true, and to recognise truth, is an atmosphere especially favourable to the growth of personal friendships, is observable at this moment in England among students of the natural sciences. The common investigation, prosecuted day by day, into natural facts and laws; the assurance of a common nobility of purpose, of a common liability to failure, of a common anxiety to pursue and proclaim fact—creates a feeling of brotherhood which traverses other differences, and is an enrichment of human life. St. John loved this lady and her children "in truth"; and therefore he did not hesitate, when occasion made it a duty, to put a strain on their affection. Those who love in truth, like St. John, can, when it is necessary to do so, carry out St. Paul's precept about speaking the truth in love. St. John, as a great master of faith and charity, could be at once tender and uncompromising. It was necessary in these days at Ephesus. There were dangers to which the apostle could not close his eyes. His love was not a vague sentiment, unregulated by any principle; it was a love of all men, but it was pre-eminently a love of each man's immortal soul. Therefore

in proportion to its sincerity and intensity it was outspoken. It would be well if there was more of love in truth, as distinct from love by impulse, among us; among those of us, for instance, who are already bound to each other by ties of natural affection. Sincerity does not chill natural love; but it raises a mere passion to the rank of a moral power. How much trouble might parents not save their children in after years by a little plain speaking, dictated, not by the desire to assert authority, but by simple affection! Too often parents love their children, not in truth, but with a purely selfish love. They will not risk a passing misunderstanding, even for the sake of the child's best interests hereafter. II. WHAT WAS THE MOTIVE-POWER OF ST. JOHN'S LOVE? St. John replies, "For the Truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." He adds that all who knew the truth share in this affection. By the truth St. John here means a something the very existence of which appears improbable or impossible to some minds in our own day. He means a body of ascertained facts about God, about the soul, about the means of reaching God, and being blessed by Him, about the eternal future, about the true rule of man's conduct, and the true secret of his happiness and well-being. Other knowledge which human beings possess is no doubt true; such, for instance, as that which enables us to make the most of the visible world in which God has placed us. But St. John calls this higher knowledge the truth; as being incomparably more important; as interesting man, not merely in his capacity of a creature of time, but in his capacity of a being destined for eternity. And this truth, as St. John conceived it, was not merely a set of propositions resting upon evidence. It was that: but it was more. It centred in a Person whom St. John had seen, heard, touched, handled; who had died in agony, and had risen in triumph from death, and had left the world with an assurance that He would return to judge it. To share this faith was to share a bond of common affection. To have the same ideal of conduct before the soul; the same view of the meaning of life; the same hopes and fears about that which will follow it; above all, the same devotion to a Person—the Incomparable Person of Jesus Christ—was to have a vast fund of common sympathy. To us it might have seemed that, with the Church expanding around him, St. John's mind would have been wholly occupied with the larger interests of administration; and that he would have had no leisure to attend to the wants of individuals. And if St. John had been only a statesman, endeavouring to carry out a great policy, or only a philosopher intent upon diffusing his ideas, he would have contented himself, to use the modern phrase, with "acting upon the masses." But as an apostle of Christ he had a very different work to do: he had to save souls. And souls are to be saved, not gregariously, but one by one. They who are brought out of darkness and error into a knowledge and love of God and His Blessed Son, generally are brought by the loving interest and care of some servant of Christ. No philosophy can thus create and combine. The philosophers of all ages, even if good friends among themselves, can only set up a fancied aristocracy of intellect for themselves, and are very jealous about admitting the people into the Olympus of their sympathies. No political scheme can do this: history is there to answer. But love, with sincerity for its sphere, and with Jesus Christ for its object, can do it. Love did it of old, love does it now. And, among the counteracting and restorative influences which carry the Church of Christ unharmed through the animated and sometimes passionate discussion of public questions, private friendships, formed and strengthened in the atmosphere of a fearless sincerity, and knit and banded together by a common share in the faith of ages, are, humanly speaking, among the strongest. One and all, we may at some time realise to the letter the language of St. John to this Christian mother. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The elect lady.*—I. WHAT THE APOSTLE SAYS AS DESCRIPTIVE OF HER CHARACTER. 1. John does not mean to represent her as faultless. He views her not as infallible and impeccable, not beyond the need of cautions and admonitions, which he therefore administers. 2. Neither does he furnish us with a full delineation of her character, but gives us a few intimations which will enable us to estimate her worth. (1) The foundation of all her excellencies was her personal and evangelical godliness. (2) Her regard to the truth is expressed by her "walking in it." Walking implies life, action, and progress; and she exemplified the influence of the principle by walking in the knowledge of the truth; in the practice of the truth; in the profession of the truth; and in the service of the truth; or, as the apostle expresses it, in being a "fellow-helper to the truth." (3) She seems to have been a woman of some rank and distinction. (4) Again, we see that this excellent lady was in wedded life. Nothing, however,

is said of her husband. This may be accounted for in two ways. First, he may not have been a Christian: and if so, and if when she married him she was herself a Christian, she disregarded the requisition to marry "only in the Lord"; and she had no reason to complain of any trials resulting from it. But she may have been herself converted after the union; while he remained in the same state as before. Or, secondly, her husband might have been dead: and, considering the representation given here of the state of her family, this appears to be much more probable than that he was a heathen or an infidel. Now, if this was true, she had been called to sustain the most painful of all bereavements, and was a widow; and a "widow indeed," for she was a maternal widow. Her "children," like herself, were "found walking in truth." (5) Finally, this "elect lady" had not only holy offspring, but pious connections and relatives. "The children of thine elect sister greet thee." If you say this was no part of her character, yet it was, surely, no inconsiderable part of her happiness. And who can tell how far it was in answer to her prayers, and the result of her example, endeavours, and influence? II. WHAT THE APOSTLE DOES AS EXPRESSIVE OF HIS REGARD. 1. He writes her an epistle. How vain would many feel, if they could show a letter addressed to themselves from an extraordinary scholar, or genius, or statesman, or warrior—a Chatham, or a Wellington. What was it then to receive a letter thus indited and directed—"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth." 2. He honours her not only with a letter, but with a visit. (1) We ought to be thankful for ink and paper. They identify information; they perpetuate intelligence; they annihilate distance; they enable us to talk without being heard. Still, however nimble the pen of a ready writer may be, it cannot utter a thousandth part of the overflowings of the tongue. (2) We know not the place of the residence of this lady; and therefore we know not how far John had to travel: nor can we tell the mode of his conveyance; for he could hardly, at his age, travel on foot. He speaks of his intended journey with pleasure; yet he could not be insensible of the difficulties, dangers, and uncertainties of travelling; especially in those days, and under a weight of years. He, therefore, expresses himself concerning it dependently and piously; and says, "I trust to come unto you"; acknowledging the providence of God, and confiding for the issue in Him. (3) But see the advantage which John desires and expects from the journey itself—"That our joy may be full." They were to be blessings to each other; not only the apostle to the disciple, but the disciple to the apostle. There is no such thing as independence: all are needful, all are useful. We are not only "one body in Christ," but "every one also members one of another." 3. The power of the social principle; and the value, not only of friendship, but of actual intercourse. (1) How pleasing is it to meet "face to face," and commune, after long separation and absence; especially if, during that separation, we have experienced trying circumstances and perilous events. (2) How pleasing to meet "face to face," and commune, in the apartments and confinements of trouble. (3) How pleasing to meet "face to face," in the exercises of social devotion in the sanctuary. (4) What will it be to meet "face to face" in heaven? Then our joy will be full. (W. Jay.) *The salutation*.—Present-day pressure has driven the good old style of epistolary writing out of the market. The Church of Christ has well-nigh forgotten the power of the pen. We intrust all teaching to the tongue and the press. Parents, ministers, and Sunday-school teachers may keep in touch with the hearts of their children and scholars by an occasional letter, brimful of holy thoughts and aspirations. I. THE PERSON WHO SALUTES. "The elder." Many of the best expositors have naturally inferred that the apostle used the term elder because it had become an appellative among the people owing to his old age. John was the only survivor of the wonderful Apostolic band. II. THE PERSONS SALUTED. "The elect lady and her children." 1. We know that she was a Christian. Elect in Christ Jesus is the full meaning, for the election of grace must not be separated from the means which bring it about. Salvation is not favouritism, but agreement. It is the effect that points to the cause, as the river reminds one of the source. This view of election is in harmony with human liberty and responsibility. 2. We know that she was a mother. With the cares of the household and anxiety about their children, mothers are often depressed. The truly pious mother is more anxious about the salvation of her children than about any other matter. 3. We know that she was a mother surrounded by her family. III. THE GROUND OF MUTUAL UNION. "Whom I love in truth." Everything tends to show that the "elect lady" was possessed of many embellishments such as society delights to recognise, and the worth of

which the Apostle John would be the last to undervalue, and yet love for the truth is the only ground of affection which he acknowledges. Christian love can only be excited by character built upon Divine truth. IV. THE DEVOUT INVOCATION. "Grace, mercy, peace, shall be with us," &c. V. THE SOURCE OF ALL BLESSING. "From God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father." VI. THE FINAL CONDITION. "In truth and love." (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *Honour of women in the old world*:—We are sometimes told by Christian apologists that women have acquired an honour since the preaching of the gospel, which was almost denied them in the old world; and that because the feminine type of character is commended to us by the example of Him who was emphatically the sufferer. I believe both assertions have a foundation of truth in them; but that they are not true, and therefore would not have been adopted or commended by the apostle. It is not true that women were not honoured in the old world. I might allude to the Jewish feeling about mothers. In that character the highest and Divinest promises rested upon them. But they do not only appear as mothers. Deborah is a judge and a prophetess of the people. Miriam leads the songs which celebrate the deliverance of the nation from Pharaoh. Greek history, again, pays high honour to women. The Trojan war, the subject of its earliest legends, of its noblest song, is undertaken in vindication of female honour and the sacredness of the marriage bond. In the Homeric poems, the freewoman is treated with reverence; even the captive taken in war is not without honour. The Roman State, which almost rests on the authority of fathers, was anything but neglectful of the mother and the wife. The traditional origin of the Republic is the retribution for the wrong done to Lucretia. One of the earliest stories, that of Coriolanus, illustrates the honour which even the proudest, most wilful son paid to her who had borne and nursed him. Some of the noblest recollections of the perishing commonwealth are connected with the name of Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, and Portia, the wife of Brutus. It is dishonest to overlook these facts; and being dishonest, it is unchristian. We do not honour Christ by disparaging that which took place before He dwelt on earth. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) **Whom I love in the truth.**—*Christian friendship*:—"Whom I love in the truth." It was not an ordinary kind of friendship. It did not rest on kindred, nor on neighbourhood, nor on business, nor on country, nor on common tastes and pursuits, nor even on services rendered and gratitude for these returned; it was a friendship shared by "all who knew the truth," it was "for the truth's sake which dwelleth in us and shall be with us for ever." The Truth meant much for John and for such as he reckoned friends. It was a certain body of doctrine, no doubt, held by him and them very dogmatically indeed; but it was not abstract doctrine, it was doctrine subsisting in the personal, historical, living Christ. It is plain that friends who hold a common relation to the truth thus understood will be friends after a quite distinct and very lofty fashion. They have a birth and kinship not of this world (1 Pet. i. 22, 23). They live by virtue of a principle the world cannot understand, even "the truth which dwelleth in us." And they are practically influenced in their daily conduct by the hope of sharing the "many mansions of the Father's house." 1. Those who love one another "in the truth" will love in truth; sincerity marks all friendship worthy to be called Christian. 2. This friendship is always fruitful. Ten thousand little things done or not done, and which the friend who benefits by them may not always know, are the habitual outcome of friendship for the truth's sake. And there is one fruit which from its nature is least of all seen or talked about, which yet is both the commonest and the best that friendship can yield—prayer for one another. 3. Christian friendship may sometimes be severe. A friend, in proportion to the purity and spiritual intensity of his love, will discern faults and weaknesses and dangers which, for friendship's sake, he must not wink at. 4. This friendship hallows and strengthens all the other ties that bind us to one another. 5. It is another distinguishing excellence of Christian friendship that it bears strain best. This love yields mutual gentleness and forbearance and tender-heartedness. 6. Christian friendship has the widest reach. It boasts of its comprehensiveness here—"And not I only, but also all they that have known the truth." 7. The crowning distinction of this friendship is that it is not dissolved by death itself. (*A. M. Symington, D.D.*) *The permanent love of friendship*:—Some love for pleasure. Isaac loved Esau because venison was his delight. An adulterer loves an harlot for the satisfying of his filthy lust. Some love for profit: they love their friends as they do their cows, horses, and grounds—for the benefit they reap by them. Some love for beauty: so Shechem loved Dinah. Some love for honour and promotion, in hope

to be preferred by such a great man. All these stand upon a tickle ground; pleasure vanisheth, and that quickly too, then love vanisheth together with it. When Amnon had gotten his pleasure of Tamar he hated her more than before he loved her. Riches betake themselves to their wings, as Solomon speaketh, and fly away, then love flies away too. If a rich man become a poor man we set not much by him. Honour is mutable: the nail that is now aloft is in the dirt, as it fell out with Haman, then he is little regarded of any of his followers. Beauty fades away like a flower, then love fades away too; love for the truth's sake, for Christ's sake, for the gospel's sake, and that will be a permanent love. (*W. Jones, D.D.*) *Christ the inspiration of Christian love*:—The enthusiasm of humanity may be caught from the example and inspiration of Jesus Christ. The mill-wheel will cease to revolve when the waters of the rushing stream are cut off; the moving train will stop when the glowing heat cools within the hidden chamber, and charity in this world will degenerate into a professional schedule without inspiration and without power unless we keep Jesus as our example. (*J. Mitchell.*)

Ver. 3. Grace be with you, mercy, peace.—*Grace, mercy, and peace*:—Grace in Scripture comprehends all the senses that it bears, separately and apart, in our common dialects. When you say of a royal person, "How gracious he is"; when you say of a beautiful woman, "What grace there is in her"; when you speak of a man not having the grace to return a benefit that has been done to him; you indicate some aspect of that grace which the Source of all good bestows upon men; which becomes in them a comeliness answering to His from whom it is derived; which awakens the reaction that we call gratitude or thanksgiving. And this grace being manifested towards creatures who have need of daily forgiveness is inseparable from mercy, which, like it, proceeds from the nature of the being who shows it, and becomes an element in the nature of the being to whom it is showed—the merciful obtaining mercy. And this grace or mercy flowing forth towards creatures who have been alienated from their Creator, who have been at war with Him—and, being at war with Him, have been, necessarily, at war with each other and themselves—becomes peace or atonement. But that the grace, because it is royal, free, and undeserved, may not be supposed to be capricious; that the mercy may not be taken as dependent on the mercy which it calls forth; that the peace may not be judged by the results which it produces here, where oftentimes the proclamation of it is the signal of fresh fighting; they are declared to come from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in truth and love; these being the essential Godhead; these dwelling absolutely in the Father; shining forth to all in the life of the Son; while the Spirit in whom they are eternally united imparts them to the family in heaven and earth. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *Grace first*:—Our poverty wants grace, our guilt wants mercy, our misery wants peace. Let us ever keep the apostle's order. Do not let us put peace, our feeling of peace, first. The emotionalists' is a topsyturvy theology. Apostles do not say "peace and grace," but "grace and peace." (*Bp. Wm. Alexander.*) *The common salutation*:—In this short letter John does not grudge space for a salutation. It is the common salutation or benediction that might be pronounced on any Christian, whether having little more than a decent profession, or distinguished, as this lady was, by works truly good. What familiarity has made words of course to us were not words of course or empty form to John, although he must have repeated and heard them oftener than any of us. That is one thought: we should linger over the words till they get a firm grip on our hearts, till we feel their Divine meaning. And another thought is this: each individual needs the whole of this benediction. Do we not often lose ourselves in the mass? Grace, mercy, peace: the blessings stand in their due order, the first leading to the second, and the second securing the third. There is a fourth word, indeed, which includes all the three, the greatest word in any language—love. John reaches to it at the end of his sentence. But it could not have been used instead of grace and mercy. For grace expresses the Divine favour viewed as undeserved. It is the fountain of every good and perfect gift coming down from the Father of lights to us who have no claim on Him, who have nothing of our own to call forth love. Mercy, again, is more than simple grace; it is sovereign love pitying and pardoning sinners, those who positively deserve ill from God. Then peace comes in its place and order. If that peace with God, a clear and substantial reality in a crucified and interceding Mediator, then all other peace. The Elder is careful to make prominent the source from whence the supreme blessing comes. It

is from God indeed, but from God in His new covenant relation to man—"from God the Father." God was now for them not less the Creator, the Lawgiver, the Judge, but He was, in Christ, also and above all the Father. "And from the Lord Jesus Christ." Here there is no distracting perplexity, there is only fulness and rest, when the heart, rather than the head, is engaged about grace, mercy, and peace. In John's mind the holy mystery of the Trinity was, while none the less sublime, more a fact than a mystery, for he had beheld the Lord Jesus Christ manifesting the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth, and bearing away the sin of the world. This benediction is distinguished by the words being added, "In truth and love." (*A. M. Symington, D.D.*) *Grace, mercy, and peace* :—"Grace, mercy, and peace" stand related to each other in a very interesting manner. The apostle starts, as it were, from the fountain-head, and slowly traces the course of the blessing down to its lodgment in the heart of man. Grace, referring solely to the Divine attitude and thought; mercy, the manifestation of grace in act, referring to the workings of that great Godhead in its relation to humanity; and peace, which is the issue in the soul of the fluttering down upon it of the mercy which is the activity of the grace. "Grace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father." These two, blended and yet separate, to either of whom a Christian man has a distinct relation, these two are the sources, equally, of the whole of the grace. The Scriptural idea of grace is love that stoops and that pardons and that communicates. The first thing, then, that strikes me in it, is how it exults in that great thought that there is no reason whatsoever for God's love except God's will. The very foundation and notion of the word "grace" is a free, undeserved, unsolicited, self-prompted, and altogether gratuitous bestowment, a love that is its own reason. God's love is like an artesian well; whensoever you strike up comes, self-impelled, gushing into light because there is such a central store of it beneath everything, the bright and flashing waters. Grace is love that is not drawn out, but that bursts out, self-originated, undeserved. And then let me remind you that there lies in this great word the preaching that God's love, though it be not turned away by, is made tender by our sin. Grace is love extended to a person that might reasonably expect, because he deserves, something very different. Then, if we turn for a moment from that deep fountain to the stream, we get other blessed thoughts. The love, the grace, breaks into mercy. As grace is love which forgives, so mercy is love which pities and helps. God's grace softens itself into mercy, and all His dealings with us men must be on the footing that we are not only sinful, but that we are weak and wretched, and so fit subjects for a compassion which is the strangest paradox of a perfect and Divine heart. The mercy of God is the outcome of His grace. And as is the fountain and the stream, so is the great lake into which it spreads itself when it is received into a human heart. Peace comes, the all-sufficient summing up of everything that God can give, and that men can need, from His loving-kindness and from their needs. The world is too wide to be narrowed to any single aspect of the various discords and disharmonies which trouble men. Peace with God; peace in this anarchic kingdom within me, where conscience and will, hopes and fears, duty and passion, sorrows and joys, cares and confidence, are ever fighting one another; where we are torn asunder by conflicting aims and rival claims, and wherever any part of our nature asserting itself against another leads to intestine warfare and troubles the poor soul. All that is harmonised and quieted down, and made concordant and co-operative to one great end, when the grace and the mercy have flowed silently into our spirits and harmonised aims and desires. There is peace that comes from submission; tranquillity of spirit, which is the crown and reward of obedience; repose, which is the very smile upon the face of faith, and all these things are given unto us along with the grace and mercy of our God. And as the man that possesses this is at peace with God and at peace with himself, so he may bear in his heart that singular blessing of a perfect tranquillity and quiet amidst the distractions of duty, of sorrows, of losses, and of cares. And now one word as to what this great text tells us are the conditions for a Christian man, of preserving, vivid and full, these great gifts, "Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you," or, as the Revised Version more accurately reads, "shall be with us in truth and love." Truth and love are, as it were, the space within which the river flows, if I may so say, the banks of the stream. Or, to get away from the metaphor, these are set forth as being the conditions abiding in which, for our parts, we shall receive this benediction—"In truth and in love." To "abide in the truth" is to keep ourselves conscientiously and habitually under the influence of the gospel of Jesus

Christ, and of the Christ who is Himself the Truth. They who, keeping in Him, realising His presence, believing His word, founding their thinking about the unseen, about their relations to God, about sin and forgiveness, about righteousness and duty, and about a thousand other things, upon Christ and the revelation that He makes, these are those who shall receive "Grace, mercy, and peace." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth.—*The old apostle's chief joy*:—The affairs of the soul are not so entirely hidden as we may sometimes imagine. I do not see the roots of my plants; but if they grow, and are fragrant, and bear fruit, I know better than if I could look at them that the roots are thriving. Nothing is easier than to tell whether a man is walking or standing still; and again, whether firmly or with weary and fainting steps; and again, in what direction. Walking in the truth is that which is expected of all Christians; yet it does not so uniformly or so fully accompany a Christian profession but that the seeing of it and the hearing about it cause lively joy. It brings into the relations of friend and friend the best kind of gladness; for friendship is more concerned about the inside than the outside, and a good walk seen is taken as hopeful evidence of a prosperous state within, sure to end well. 1. For one thing, the life of one who walks in the truth will be governed by Divine principles. The standard of the new life is fixed by God, not by us; and the reason of it is the will of the Father, not our will; the strength to enter on and to keep going forward in it is His strength, not ours. 2. For another thing, if a man is walking in the truth, his life will be pure and consistent. Veracity in speech, integrity in all dealing with man, a sense of honour, are sure fruits of a life governed by Christ. Such clear, sterling integrity before man is not all by any means that is intended by "walking in the light as God is in the light," but it certainly is part of that. No; not all. For mark in what terms John expounds to the elect lady his conception of what walking in the truth means (vers. 6, 7). For a man to have ascertained the due balance of truth and love in the government of his conduct is to have made the most important of all discoveries. Love, without the backbone of truth, is weakness and sentimentalism. Truth wanting love is a grinning skeleton, is not true. 3. Looking to the case of the elect lady we find, for one thing, that walking in the truth means careful orthodoxy. 4. For another thing, it appears that walking in the truth means the maintaining of Christian influences at home. (*A. M. Symington, D.D.*)

A Christian family.—I. A CHRISTIAN MOTHER. 1. A praying mother. Every mother is a praying mother in the sense of wishing well, or of entertaining some hopes of the future prosperity of her children. A truly praying mother is anxious for the salvation of her children. Richard Cecil tried, when a boy, to be an infidel, but his mother's prayers blocked the way. Garibaldi never lost his courage on the field of battle, because he saw his mother on her knees praying for him. The wife of the late Rev. William Jones, Castle Street, Swansea, held a separate family worship with her children. A gentleman came one day to see Mr. Jones on business, and when he was told by the eldest boy, who opened the door, that his father was from home, he asked to see Mrs. Jones. The boy said, "You will have to wait, sir, until she finishes praying with the children." He immediately left the room to join the little party. The gentleman, while alone, said to himself, "I am the father of six children, and have never offered a prayer with them." The example of the praying mother made a new man of him. 2. An exemplary mother. The power of imitation is great in children, and the example sometimes is more powerful than prayer. Take a homely illustration. The hen has a swarm of a dozen little ones hopping about her. As she moves, how careful she is in putting down her foot, lest they be trampled upon. Unguarded mothers stamp on their children and crush the good out of them. 3. A watchful mother. The young heart is impressible, and will more readily receive evil impressions than good ones. The Christian mother will not tolerate indulgence in sin. The "elect lady" was the guardian angel of the hearts of her children, which she often found "prone to wander" from the paths of truth and virtue. 4. A happy mother. A gleam of joy on the countenance, a beam of hope in the speech, and a loving touch of the hand will recommend religion to the child beyond our expectation. The poet Cowper said of his mother's likeness, "I had rather possess that picture than the richest jewel in the British crown." Years never effaced her love and devotion from his heart. The "elect lady," as we may infer from the following verses, had learnt that love is the essence of the gospel. II. THE CHILDREN. 1. They believed the truth. They were converted children. There is

here no reference to natural beauty or grace of manner. There are many attractions both in the persons and the lives of children. It is a perpetual entertainment to live with some children. But on all points of natural endowment the apostle is silent. Their spiritual state alone engaged his attention. 2. They loved the truth. The tendrils of the Divine vine had extended from the intellect to the heart. When the heart is won for Christ the whole life will follow. 3. They lived the truth. The meaning of *περιπατεῖν* in the New Testament in reference to character signifies "habit and practice." The Apostle John had sufficient evidence that the children of the "elect lady" were consistent followers of Christ. III. THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IS A DUTY, "as we received commandment from the Father." It is a very old commandment (Deut. vi. 6, 7). (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *The right mother*:—My answer to the question, "How I was educated," ends where it began. "I had the right mother." (*T. Dwight, LL.D.*) *A good mother*:—Of his mother the late John Stuart Blackie said, "My mother died when I was ten years old, and I remember her only as everything that was womanly and motherly. I have no doubt that I owe much of what is best in my moral and emotional nature to her."

Ver. 5. Not as though I wrote a new commandment.—*The feminine danger*:—No one was more likely than a woman to think that the precept of loving was something altogether different in kind from the precepts of the old law; no one was more likely to say, "Love has nothing to do with precepts; it springs up unbidden in the heart." And no one was more likely than a woman to suffer from these very natural opinions; to turn love into a mere taste and sentiment; to suppose it had its origin in herself, and that its continuance might be trusted to her strong feelings; to separate it from obedience; to make it impractical; so to divorce it from self-denial and endurance. Nothing would be so fatal to all that is noblest in the female character, to the sacrificing and persevering affection for which women have been so eminent, as this temper of mind. Nothing, therefore, appears more entirely appropriate than the apostle's double admonition, which is enforced in the following verse: "This is love," &c. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*)

Ver. 6. This is love, that we walk after His commandments.—*Love, the principle of obedience*:—I. LOVE AS THE PRINCIPLE OF OBEDIENCE. 1. The excellency of this principle. It renders obedience. (1) Divinely acceptable. (2) Delightful to ourselves. "What are the most pleasing actions you ever performed?" was a question once addressed to a man, and who answered, "The services I have performed for those whom I love." (3) Perpetual. Christ's people are not detained in His service against their will; they are volunteers, "made willing in the day of His power." (4) Impartial. (a) In avoiding all sins. (b) In performing all duties. 2. How is this love produced and maintained? Power may cause a man to be feared; authority, to be revered; wealth, to be envied; learning, to be admired; genius, to be praised; but it is only goodness that chains one heart to another. And this is the grand and only expedient that God has devised and revealed to bring back the minds of His alienated creatures to Himself. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." II. OBEDIENCE AS THE FRUIT OF LOVE. 1. It is practical, consisting in nothing less than walking. In Scripture you will observe, that walking never refers to a single action, but always to our conduct at large. Everything else, however valuable in connection with this, will be found vain without it. Even endowments and exertion will not be substitutes for obedience. 2. It is prescribed. Walking shows that religion is not a speculation, a notion, a pretence, for we are not merely to walk, but we are to walk after His commandments—not after the course of this world—not according to the lusts of men—not according to the imagination of our hearts, but to walk after His commandments. (*W. Jay.*) *Love the great commanding commandment*:—Love is in the heart, "the great commanding commandment, that commands all other duties whatsoever. It is the first wheel that turns the whole soul about." (*R. Sibbes.*)

Ver. 7. For many deceivers are entered into the world.—*The prevalence and danger of negative error in matters of faith*:—I. THE NATURE OF THE ERROR DENOUNCED. It did not consist so much in openly impugning the principles of the gospel as in "not confessing them." It was insinuated rather than avowed. II. THE TENDENCY OF THE ERROR DENOUNCED. In temporal matters, that form of evil which is most injurious is not always that which is most so in appearance. "The

pestilence that walketh in darkness" is not less fatal than the "destruction which wasteth at noonday." In our religious concerns it is the same. The description will apply to those of the present day who, without openly patronising Socinianism, secretly advance it by the systematic omission of the Scriptural doctrines of Christ's deity and atonement. 1. The relation which the points omitted have to the other facts and doctrines of the Christian system. (1) The object of Christ's advent. (2) The tendency and results of Christ's advent. (3) The demerit of sin. (4) The love of God in our redemption. (5) The motives of Christian obedience. 2. The tendency which the omission has to subvert the principles omitted. Never hearing any distinct ideas in regard to the person and work of the Redeemer, the people come to regard them as matters of "doubtful disputation," if not as positively unscriptural. Lessons—1. Let this subject furnish a criterion of truth and error. 2. Let us learn the danger of erroneous principles in matters of religion. 3. Let us avoid those connections which would lead to the adoption of erroneous principles. (*R. Brodie, M.A.*) *Warning against false teachers*:—1. False teaching is injurious to faith, especially the faith of young Christians. Gnosticism is not actively taught in our day, but other forms of evil teaching abound. As a system of ethics, they say, the gospel is the best which has reached us from ancient times, but its miracles are legendary. We ask—Are not the Incarnation and the Resurrection the two pillars on which the whole fabric rests? How much of the literature of the New Testament will remain after the removal of these pillars? Some would say that it matters not what our sons and daughters believe, so long as their character is good. But does not belief shape character? Character is built on the great principles of the gospel, and our whole energy is required to complete it. 2. The great fact which is fundamental to the gospel, and animates the faith of the believer, is that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." The very mystery which envelops the fact stamps it with Divinity. That one of the gods should descend from heaven, become incarnate, and bear universal sway, was a thought and a desire which haunted the ancients. Their philosophers, thinkers, and poets felt the need of a restorer of purity, prosperity, and joy to the human race. The best of mortals had failed in the attempt to do so, and the gods were too far off, and too unsympathetic, to undertake the task. Some one of heavenly birth must come, and He came, who would unite in Himself power, wisdom, love, goodness, holiness, and method, at once both Divine and human. This regulating thought is also the all-animating thought of faith. 3. To profess this truth is both a duty and a privilege. The verb *ὁμολογῶ*, to speak the same language, suggests a beautiful thought in this connection. The "elect lady" had taught her sons the language of Bethlehem, Bethany, and the Cross. The deceivers did not speak that spiritual language. There was an imminent danger lest the children might pick up their shibboleth. For is it not the case that we are influenced by the words we speak? (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *The ingratitude of deceivers*:—The Volucellæ have a strong resemblance to the humble bee. Certain kinds make use and abuse of this resemblance to introduce themselves fraudulently into its nests, and to deposit their eggs therein. When these eggs have hatched, the larvæ, which have two mandibles, devour the larvæ of their hosts the bees. This is the return they make for the hospitality they have received. (*Scientific Illustrations.*)

Ver. 8. Look to yourselves.—*Self-inspection*:—I. LOOK TO YOUR CREED, WHETHER IT BE SCRIPTURAL. We know too well there may be a scriptural creed without real piety; but it does not appear how there can be the latter where faith in the gospel is entirely wanting. Every one that impartially reads the Scriptures must see how decidedly they speak of the really Divine character of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the cause and design of those sufferings which He endured in our world; also the weight and value that are attached to those subjects, and our reception in a believing manner of those Divine representations. II. LOOK TO YOUR STATE, WHETHER IT BE ONE OF CONVERSION TO GOD. However excellent religion is in theory, its theory is insufficient for your salvation. An artificial flower may strikingly resemble a natural one, but a nearer inspection will detect the difference. The delicate tints and scents of nature cannot be supplied by the most practised hand in art, so as long to deceive. The difference between a mere nominal and a real Christian is immense. But immense as it is, it cannot be detected but by examination; and that examination must be by yourself. What are you to examine? "Look to yourselves," to see whether you are born again? If there be the new birth, there will be spiritual life in the soul. If there be life there will

be spiritual feelings. You feel that you have a soul to be saved or lost for ever, and you are anxious to be instructed in the will of God, to cease to be what is wrong, and to become all that is right. And do you feel sin to be a burden? Souls born again do. "Look to yourselves" and see whether you do. What thoughts and feelings have you concerning Christ? We read, "To them that believe He is precious." And not less necessary is it that you look to your temper and walk. Everything in its proper place. The cause of our justification before God is not in our own goodness, but if grace does not infuse its goodness into us, we are not Christians.

III. IN CASE YOU ARE COMPELLED TO COME TO A CONCLUSION UNFAVOURABLE TO YOUR PRESENT CONDITION, "LOOK TO YOURSELVES" WITH APPREHENSION. Are you satisfied to be irreligious because others are? Will it be any palliation of your guilt, or diminution of your final misery, to be lost with the multitude? Begin at once to "look to yourselves"—to look to your souls. (*T. Pinchback.*)

Danger of inattention:—"Her pilot was asleep below" is given as the simple and sufficient explanation of the disaster that happened to the steamer *Montana*, which was grounded and wrecked upon a rock off the English coast. Of how many shipwrecked souls might the same thing be said, "The pilot was asleep below." *The duty of self-inspection*:—"It will not do for the sailor, however many dangers he may have passed safely through, or however far he may have advanced upon the voyage, to become unwatchful. While he is upon the sea he is in peril. So is it with the Christian, who is called so to pass through the waves of this troublesome world. It will not do for him to furl his sails, to neglect his compass, or to drop his hold upon the helm. I. "Look to yourselves." There is a looking to ourselves that is wrong, which we are to be careful to avoid, and which we are bound to overcome. Selfishness—the looking to ourselves, keeping always in view what we think is for our own personal interest or advantage—is one of the surest signs of a worldly and unbelieving mind. There is also a looking to ourselves in carnal confidence—putting confidence in our own goodness. What, then, are we to understand by "looking to ourselves?" When a man is going upon a dangerous journey, in which he may be very apt to make a false step or a slip—and that slip may cost him his life—you would naturally say to him, "Look to yourself." "Do not," you would say, "let your attention be distracted, or taken up by the things you see upon the road; do not let anything carry you out of your way, but 'look to yourself'; see that you are going right, see that you do not get betrayed into an unexpected snare, where you may lose yourself." Pay perpetual attention to the motives by which you are governed—to the ends you have in view, to the plans you are laying—see that they are all in accordance with God's truth and will; see that they are such as become the disciples of Christ; see that you are "walking worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called." Do not suppose it is all right with you, because you are comfortable and at ease, but suspect yourselves. We look at others often when we are hearing God's Word, and think how suitable the word is to such and such an individual, and how exactly it fits the case of another. But are we looking to ourselves? II. Note how beautifully this venerable and ripened servant of God, who stood prominent among the twelve, and who was now, we have every reason to suppose, a hoary-headed soldier in the army of Christ; look how he, with all humility, brings in himself; how he slips out of the address to others into an address that includes himself. At first he says, "Look to yourselves"; but he adds, "that we lose not the things which we have wrought." What are we to understand by "the things which we have wrought"? and what by "losing those things which we have wrought"? By "those things which we have wrought" is meant that work which through God's grace has been accomplished in us and by us, in the times that are gone past. Is there any Christian that has not a recollection of this? Yet all need to have their recollection revived and refreshed. To look back upon your high privileges: you have been taught from your earliest days that you ought to be "born again"; you can recollect when God led you to know and see the way of reconciliation for your sin, and to find your peace in the righteousness of Christ your Saviour. What holy thankfulness! What fervour of first love filled your hearts! You can recollect how careful and anxious you were not to offend—how you studied to know the will of God in all things. Consider the things that you wrought in former days. Where are they now? Are they still with you, or have they passed away? They may be lost. Can any man in a world like ours, with a mind like ours, and Satan's machinations ever against him, declare he is not in danger "of losing what he hath wrought"? III. And let us take heed for others, because if

we lose the "things which we have wrought" we shall also fail in the "recompense of the reward." "That we receive a full reward." It is called a reward in this sense because, though it is the free gift of God, it pleased God to ordain that in this world and in the world to come it should be proportionate to a man's diligence, and to the fruits he brings forth. We are judged solely with regard to our works; and the measure of our fidelity will be the measure of our "recompense of reward." And this is true in this present world. "Every one that hath," says Christ, "is to make more of the talent that is given to him, whether it be money or diligence, and he shall have more." "He that is a righteous man shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Such an one "shall be as a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." What a sad thing to have laboured in vain! What a sad thing for the Christian to lose the ground he has gained! Just as in the "Pilgrim's Progress," where the traveller Zion-ward is toiling up the hill to reach the City of Life. With many a weary step and many a straining muscle he has reached high upon the hill; but becoming weary or languid, or amusing himself with the landscape around him, or beguiled by the conversation of his fellow-pilgrims, or looking anxiously back at something left behind at the bottom of the mountain, he begins to slip backwards—he slips backwards unawares, step by step, till he finds himself not midway but wholly down at the bottom where he started from. What a sad and bitter thought—"I have lost all! I had just got up high; I have to go through all the mire and dust again! I have to begin again!" "Wherefore the rather, give diligence to make your calling and election sure," and do not lose the things which you have wrought; but rather go on from grace to grace and from strength to strength. (*H. Stowell, M.A.*)

Look to self:—In the text itself we have two general parts considerable. First, the caution propounded. Secondly, the argument whereupon the caution is urged, or the matter wherein to be exercised. We begin with the first, the caution in its general and indefinite proposition, "Look to yourselves." This is that which belongs to all Christians. The ground hereof is this:—First, the danger which they are exposed to, and the assaults which are upon them. Those which are subject to very much hazard, they had need to take very much heed. St. John before said, "that there were many deceivers entered into the world"; adds presently, "Look to yourselves," as a caution very fitly consequent upon that intimation; where there are cheaters and cutpurses in the crowd people have need to look to their pockets. Secondly, as there are assaults upon them, so themselves without better heed are too apt to be overtaken with them. There is not more deceitfulness and malice in Satan and his instruments than there is likewise naturally in our own hearts to yield and comply with them; therefore we had need to look to ourselves. As it is in matter of the body, where people are more apt to take such infection or contagion in them, they conceive it does more concern them to be more heedful and regardful of their health; even so it is here. We are ready ever to comply with every evil suggestion and temptation which is administered unto us; we are like dry tinder to these sparks which are struck upon us, which is the difference betwixt us and Christ. Thirdly, add also hereunto the grievousness of the miscarriage. The Apostle John does in this case with these believers as some physician would do with his patient; who, when he has done all for him that belongs to him and lies in his power, bids him now to beware and take care of his own health and to look to himself, and accordingly it behoves all Christians so to do. And that for this reason especially, forasmuch as they may not always have other helps near unto them. This caution here of the apostle was not a word of negligence, but rather of prudent forecast for them. He had done his part already with them, and now does but provoke them to make good use of what they heard from him and to put those his doctrines into practice. I might here also further seasonably observe, that God will make use of ourselves in our passage to heaven. The second is the ARGUMENT or matter which it is conversant about, which is laid down two manner of ways:—First, in the negative, "That ye love not," &c.; and secondly, in the affirmative, "But that we receive a full reward." We begin with the first, the negative, "That ye love not," &c. Some copies read, "That we love not," &c. We may understand it of either. First, "That ye love not," &c. People have cause to look to it that they do not frustrate the labours of the ministers by losing those doctrines and instructions which are tendered unto them. First, that we may not lose things out of our memory. Secondly, meditation, that is also a good conduce ment hereunto. Thirdly, conference and holy communion. This does imprint

them more (Deut. vi. 7). Lastly, practice and conscientious improvement. There is no such way for us to remember any doctrine as to draw it forth into exercise, which is the truest memory of all. That is the first particular in which we are to take heed of losing, viz., in regard of memory. The second is in regard of judgment. Then we are said to lose any doctrine when we alter our opinion of it, and so let it go from us. Thirdly, in regard of affection. Take heed ye lose not herein neither. Now therefore let us be careful to put this caution in practise; losses are for the most part unacceptable. We see in matters of the world how men do not love to lose anything; if they do, it is very grievous to them. And how much more does it then concern them to avoid it, and shun it all they can in such things as these are, which are of such weighty importance. Like some young scholars that lose more in a breaking up than they get in many weeks' schooling and learning besides. I would not it should be so with you; I warn you of it. There are divers ways of losing in other things, as well as this, which accordingly are now to be avoided by you. First, by fraud and circumvention. Secondly, there is loss also by force and open violence. Thirdly, by mere carelessness and neglect. There is many a jewel which is lost thus for want of due and proportionable care in him that has it. But then further, take it in reference to their own works, "that ye lose not the things which ye have wrought." The apostle, as he would not have them to frustrate his labours towards them, so neither their own labours to themselves. And so it is an exhortation to constancy. First, they lose their labour, and there is a great matter in that. Secondly, they lose that expediteness and facility of doing good, or of resisting evil. Thirdly, take it as to the reward; they are losers of what they have wrought as to this likewise. If a man will watch his house, how much more should he watch his soul? Now further, secondly, take it in the first as it is here in our own textual translation, "That we lose not what we have wrought." First, I say, the heedlessness of people frustrates the labours of their ministers; it makes them lose the things which they have wrought. Now secondly, for what also is expressed, that ministers are justly very tender of the frustrating of their labours. First, the Person they work for, and that is God Himself. The miscarriages of the ministry redound to the dishonour of God. Secondly, the persons they work for, and that is the church and people of God (Eph. iv. 12). "They watch for your souls" (Heb. xiii. 17). They would not lose their work in reference to those they work for. Thirdly, for the work itself, and that in sundry respects. First, the labour of it; it is a painful work, and therefore is it so often in Scripture set forth by such an expression. The more pains that any man takes the less willing is he to lose it. Secondly, the dignity of it; there is somewhat also in that. Men may take pains in a thing of nought. To lose such a work as this is, the work of the ministry, this is no ordinary business, nor so to be accounted. Thirdly, add to this the extent of it, and that which goes along with it, for if we lose our work there is somewhat more lost besides that, as is implied afterwards; and that is of yourselves, "it is unprofitable for you" (Heb. xiii. 17). And the rather upon this added still to it, that it is irrecoverable, for so it is. If the work of the ministry take not there is nothing hereafter to be expected. The second is the affirmative, "But that ye, or we, receive a full reward." Here is another piece of a motive why believers should "look to themselves," not only that they might not lose, but that moreover they might gain and their teachers gain with them. We will take notice of both. First, take it as to themselves, "that ye may receive a full reward." It is true indeed we have other things to move us, even the excellency which is in goodness itself, and that example which we have of it in God and regard to Him, that requires it of us. But yet moreover we may take in this with it, that recompense which it brings in with it in a better world. Secondly, observe this, that perseverance in goodness hath its reward belonging to it (Gal. vi. 9). There is no man serves God for nought who is a free and bountiful pay-master. When we hear of reward we may not dream of merit. But, thirdly, here is the word of amplification, a full reward. First, take it denominatively as a description of heaven and the condition of glory to come, it is a full reward—it is that which will make sufficient recompense. First, a fulness of sufficiency. There is nothing which is in any way desirable but it is to be found in this reward. Take the best things of this life and they have an emptiness; they are not sufficient, there is a great deal wanting in them. Secondly, a fulness of expectation. Whatever can be looked for shall be enjoyed. Thirdly, a fulness of compensation. Here is in this reward that which makes amends for all which has been undergone in reference to it. The wages is not here short of

the work, but infinitely transcendent. This shows the fondness and vanity of those therefore which will deprive themselves of it; seeing it is a full reward, who would then not be partaker of it, and especially lose it for the want of a little care and heedfulness about it? Secondly, it is called so emphatically, as implying that there is a reward which is not full belonging to those which are inconstant, and declining in religion. Now, further, secondly, as they refer to the apostles and other ministers, "that we may receive a full reward." This reward was not temporal, and from them which he did not so much look at; but from God, a reward in heaven. The apostle did hereby imply that these Christians, if they were careless, would be apt to deprive him of this. What is that? namely, of joy and rejoicing. Ministers, when people miscarry under their hands, they will miss of this, though not of their glory. And this the apostle signifies there in that place (Heb. xiii. 17). That we may do with joy and not with grief. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *Self-preservation*:—1. Look to yourselves, that ye lose not those gracious principles which seemed to be planted in your hearts by the Holy Ghost (Heb. ii. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 1; 2 Cor. vi. 1). 2. Look to yourselves, that ye lose not those vivid and vigorous impressions of Divine truth, which marked the early part of your Christian career. 3. Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the spirit of secret prayer, and proper seasons for attending to it. The lifeless performance of this duty is generally the forerunner of open sin or absolute apostasy (Jude 20). 4. Look to yourselves, that ye lose not your taste for domestic duties, and your relish for the public ordinances of the gospel. 5. Look to yourselves that ye lose not the power and practical influence of the gospel upon your hearts and lives. 6. Look to yourselves that ye lose not a good conscience, the favour of God, the affections of His people, the blessings of the gospel, and the eternal salvation of your souls. (*The Christian Herald.*) *Looking after one's own interest*:—This is a glorious subject! Looking after our own interest; looking after Number One! It is a motto most men believe in. Never mind about anybody else, at any rate till your own turn is served. "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." What will God do? Lot was a man who believed in looking after himself. His uncle Abraham and himself were large farmers, their herds pasturing together. The grass and water supply was scarcely sufficient for all, and as a result there were frequent quarrels between their herdmen. What was the result of Lot's self-care? It left him poor indeed; his property was burnt in Sodom; his wife became a pillar of salt upon the plain! Gehazi was another man who believed in looking after his own interest. A lie is soon framed, carried out; Gehazi is enriched, and his spoil safely under lock and key. What then? Judas also firmly believed in looking after Number One. The rich farmer held the same doctrine about self-care. They were his grounds that brought forth so plentifully. Dives quite believed in taking every care of himself. Listen to what Jesus Christ will one day say to men who have done nothing but study their own interest—"I was hungry, ye gave Me no meat," &c. Remember Jesus Christ, our great Example, came not to study His own interest, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. 1. Christian men, look to yourselves. See that ye walk worthy of your high vocation, as becometh sons of God; that ye let your light shine before men; that ye obey Jesus Christ's commandments. 2. Unconverted men, look to yourselves. You have a priceless treasure; your soul. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Your body and its interests, what you call Number One, is really Number Two: the soul is most important. It may be, you have insured your house, and your life, against fire, accident, or death. What have you done for your soul? Look to yourselves. (1) You have tremendous responsibilities. God has given His Son to die for you. Look to yourselves. (2) You are running terrible risk out of Christ. Life is uncertain; with it ends the day of grace. Look to yourselves. (3) Don't expect that some day some extraordinary influence will be brought to bear upon you, and that you will be suddenly anxious for salvation. (*G. B. Foster.*) *Concerning spiritual property*:—Persecution had to a large extent ceased at the time when this Epistle was written, but a far more dangerous form was assumed, viz., the preaching of false doctrines. The difference is that between open violence and stealth. The banditti storm the dwelling, and if the tenant is able to show any resistance he is at liberty to do so; but the thief creeps in silently into the house, and while the inmates sleep peacefully he steals all their valuables. 1. PROTECT THE GOOD WHICH IS IN YOU, "That ye lose not the things which we wrought." The Churches—we seem much more anxious to make converts than to retain them. 1. Remember the services of others. In the mansion you will

see some old pictures of no great artistic value, and others of value but not of a modern style. You say, "These are old, valuable heirlooms of the family." Sacred memories cluster around them. They speak of old times. These old pictures look at you from their elevated stations on the wall and say, "See that ye lose none of the inheritance which your noble ancestors have gained for you." The "elect lady" alone knew the significance of the words "which we have wrought." Did he not use all the persuasion of his soul to lead her and her children to the truth? 2. Exercise, watchfulness, and prayer. Even the valuable old pictures will decay unless they are protected from the ravages of time. Hold the fort of truth, and defend the citadel of faith. Remember that there are enemies ready to despoil you of your precious experience. 3. Guard the entrances. There is danger within as well as without. II. EXPECT THE REWARD WHICH IS BEFORE YOU. There is a present reward in any Christian act. Full reward hereafter. (T. Davies, M.A.) **That we lose not those things which we have wrought.**

—*The wrought work of the Divine Spirit within the soul.*—I. THE WROUGHT WORK OF OUR SPIRITUAL STATE. (1) The wrought work of God. That we are what we are is due to the working of the Eternal Father in all His providential ruling, and of the Divine Son in His special redemptive work in this world: but more particularly to the working of the Holy Spirit in His direct and immediate action on the heart. If there be lines of beauty, tracings of truth on the tablet of our soul, it is because we bear within the imprint of His gentle but mighty hand. (2) The wrought work of the Christian minister. Probably John wrote, "The things which we have wrought." So far as the truth which is held in their minds, and the convictions which stir their conscience, and the principles which rule their life, are due to the fidelity of the minister of Christ, to that extent their spiritual state is the wrought work of the Christian teacher. (3) The wrought work of the soul itself. Paul speaks (Gal. vi. 3) of a man's character as being his "own work." We have thought seriously, felt deeply, prayed earnestly, resolved strenuously, chosen deliberately, wrestled manfully, persisted patiently. Our spiritual condition is the outcome of much expenditure of our own vital energy. II. ITS POSSIBLE EFFACEMENT. Can these lines of heavenly beauty and Divine truth, traced by the finger of God, be so crossed and counter-marked as to present nothing but a mass of senseless hieroglyphs? To this question we give—(1) The answer of a very sensible philosophy. In theory it certainly may be so. The waters wear the stones—not only the lashings of the mighty and furious waves of the Atlantic flinging themselves on the rock, but the nearly noiseless drip of a single drop falling on the slab of stone below. And surely the powerful forces of evil companionship, of frivolous or sceptical literature, of unwise self-indulgence, of excessive pleasure-seeking, acting daily, hourly, on the sensitive responsive spirit, will wear the soul and disfigure it. (2) The answer of a too common experience; in fact it often is so. III. OUR PRACTICAL WISDOM IN REGARD TO IT. We had better (1) own to ourselves how disastrous would be the entire loss of it. What other loss will compare with this? (2) Count the cost of a partial loss of it. If we do not heed there will be those who will fail to attain a "full reward." These may be the ministers who will miss something of the blessedness that would be theirs if their converts were presented complete in Him; or they may be our own spirits, for there will be those who will rule over a few cities that might have ruled over many, who will be saved as by fire instead of having the "abundant entrance." (3) Take the most vigorous measures against spiritual loss. (W. Clarkson, B.A.)

Ver. 9. **Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ.**—*The doctrine of Christ:*—The words "doctrine of Christ" may signify either that doctrine which Christ taught when He was here on earth, or that doctrine of which Christ is the subject—the doctrine which sets forth the truth concerning Him. I believe it is in the latter sense that the phrase is used here. By "doctrine" here we are not to understand what that term commonly means as used in the present day, viz., a dogmatic or speculative affirmation of truth. The original word means simply teaching, and it embraces all kinds and matters of teaching—the assertion of facts, the elucidation of beliefs, as well as the affirmation and proof of dogmatic propositions. The doctrine of or concerning Christ, then, here referred to, is the whole body of truth made known to us by Christ and His apostles concerning Him. Now, you will observe that to this the apostle here assigns a supremely important place. A real religion must have a basis in real

beliefs. As a fountain which is itself poisoned will not send forth waters that are wholesome, as little will beliefs that are false or erroneous conduct to a religion that is true and beneficent. From this it follows that, as Christianity is offered to men as the only true religion, its teachers are shut up to the necessity of requiring the belief of the facts and truths upon which it is founded as the indispensable condition of a man's receiving the benefits of this religion or being recognised as a true professor of it. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." The apostle regards the doctrine of Christ as coming to us under Divine authority, as a command to which we are bound to submit, and consequently he speaks of all departures from the truth thus binding on us as "transgressions." I. The grand fundamental fact of Christianity is THE INCARNATION, the assumption by the Second Person of the Trinity of human nature into personal union with the Divine, the manifestation of God in the flesh of man. This is a great mystery which we cannot comprehend or explain. The fact transcends human reason, and therefore never could have been discovered by human reason, which can no more rise above itself than the eagle can outsoar the atmosphere in which it floats. But, though reason cannot discover this, the history of man's efforts after a religion give ample proof that this is a felt necessity of the human soul. How can the weak and sinful come before the All-perfect? How can the finite enter into relation with the Infinite? How can the weak voice of man be heard across that tremendous gulf which yawns between him, the creature of a day, and the Eternal? Who shall bring God nigh to him? His soul cries out after a Living, a Personal, an Incarnate God. This shows that the fact of an Incarnation is not foreign to our nature; nay, that it is felt by the human consciousness to be essential to religion. And this great want the "doctrine of Christ" alone supplies. God "manifest in the flesh" is the solution of man's sorest difficulty as a religious being, the grand accomplished fact on which he can securely rest in his approaches to God. II. Another fundamental truth of Christianity is the ATONEMENT. That in some sense it is only through Christ that we can come unto God so as to be accepted of Him, is admitted on all hands by those who profess to be Christians. Now, no attentive reader of the New Testament can fail to see that that on which stress is everywhere laid in this respect is Christ's offering Himself as a ransom and sacrifice for men. He has taken our sins upon Him, and by His obedience unto death hath removed the obstacle which our sin placed in the way of our acceptance with the Father. And thus has He made atonement for us. Now, this also meets an acknowledged and widely felt want of man. Everywhere, and in all ages, man is seen acting upon the principle that some satisfaction must be rendered to the Divine justice before man can be accepted by God. Man, conscious of guilt, condemned at the bar of his own conscience, has asked himself the question, "How shall man be just before God?" "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" That it is with something he must appear is a settled point; the only question is, What shall that be? And the only answer he has been able to find to this is that which tradition has handed down from the earliest times, namely, sacrifice—in which the offering up of an animal to the Deity was an acknowledgment that the sin of man deserved death, and a petition that a substitute might be accepted for him. Now, what all men thus feel they want, the Scriptures tell us Christ has supplied. He offered for us a real and all-sufficient atonement when He offered up Himself. He took on Him our sins, He bore them away, made "an end of sins," made "reconciliation for iniquity," and brought in "everlasting righteousness." Man, with his conscious weakness and his deep wants, finds here at length that which meets his wants, satisfies his convictions, and gives peace to his conscience, so that he is filled with a joy which is "unspeakable and full of glory." (IV. L. Alexander, D.D.) "*Whosoever goeth onward*" (R.V.) may be interpreted in two ways—(1) Every one who sets himself up as a leader; (2) Every one who goes on beyond the gospel. The latter is, perhaps, better. These anti-Christian gnostics were advanced thinkers; the gospel was all very well for the unenlightened, but they knew something higher. (Cambridge Bible for Schools.) *The law of self-restraint*:—This ninth verse appears to contain one of the counsels that occurred to the apostle, as he thought on the one hand of youthful impulsiveness and love of novelty, and on the other of the fascinations that are wont to attach to dubious doctrines and to evil deeds. Its real meaning may be seen in the rendering of the Revised Version. St. John wrote, not "whosoever transgresseth" (for he was not thinking of general breaches of the law of God), but specifically "whosoever goeth onward, and abideth not in

the teaching of Christ, hath not God." If that be taken in connection with the preceding verse, where a man is represented as through half-heartedness, losing whatever he has gained, the unexpected but important lesson is obtained, that "to advance over-eagerly and to hang back are alike violations of duty." I. THE FIRST THING TO AVOID IS OVER-EAGERNESS. "Whosoever goeth onward" (at too great a rate, it means, or impelled by a hot fancy that has broken away from every restraint) "hath not God." It is possible to imagine that the phrase might be interpreted in a different way, as denoting that all progress in the statement or application of religious truths is for ever barred, and that the incapacity or the refusal to see in them any other bearings than have been found in the past must be classed amongst the virtues. But with such teaching no sympathy can be found in the Bible. The body of revealed truth is not a dictionary, and when Christ teaches, He teaches free men, providing them not with endless minute rules which they must mechanically follow, but with great principles which they must use their own wits in interpreting and their own responsible skill in applying. The germs of religious truth will be perpetually unfolding themselves, expanding into new conceptions of the glory of God and of the spiritual privileges possible to man; and through all the future, one of the rewards of loyalty to Christ is to be that the loyal will be continually advancing in Christian thought, ever more completely knowing as they are known. To make this or similar paragraphs, therefore, an old man's protest against progress, or an apology for intolerance, is to sin against the entire Scripture. The warning is against needless progress, a progress that is suicidal and unworthy the name, the impulsiveness and the haste that ignore all the restraints of reason. It is more than doubtful whether any Christian can get to know much about God, unless he be stirred by an ambition to know, or can make much progress in personal religion, unless he be taken possession of by the ambition to be made like his Saviour. The mistake is in allowing the ambition to separate itself from Christ, and, as men say, to run away with them, so that no influence from above or from within can withhold them from extravagance, but the force of every reasonable restraint is broken. Of the serious mistakes, in matters of opinion and in matters of practice, to which this over-eagerness leads, the disposition that sweeps onwards under the dominancy of a single idea, and consents neither to look back upon the point from which it started, nor to glance around at the facts with which relations should be maintained, there are instances enough. One man, for instance, is led to no good result by his own investigations into God's existence, and quickly pronounces that all such investigations must prove sterile, and founds an entire system upon the alleged impossibility of attaining any certainty in certain branches of knowledge. II. AT THE OTHER EXTREME THERE IS THE EQUAL, PERHAPS THE MORE COMMON FAULT OF HANGING BACK, AND SO, AS THE APOSTLE TEACHES, GRADUALLY LETTING SLIP AND LOSING EVERY BENEFICENT TRUTH AND EVERY HOLY PRIVILEGE WE HAVE GAINED. It is a fault that goes by many names—half-heartedness, colourlessness, lack of principle, of decision, of earnestness; but there can be no doubt that it is one of the most prevalent defects in the modern Church, tending throughout the Christian world to destroy the force and very vitality of personal religion. The fashion is to hold opinions and views that are as colourless as possible, and carefully to refrain from committing oneself to anything; to remember that every question has "so many sides that life is not long enough for men to examine them all," and that therefore a man should not venture to be positive about anything. Accordingly men compromise with obligation, hesitate in their allegiance to truth, and make a disposition to hang back, and a lack of thoroughness in opinion and in practice, the most prominent feature of their lives. There can be no question as to the effect. The man who hangs back, permitting his convictions to become indefinite, and his sense of duty to die down into silent weakness, must in reason hold himself responsible for so much of the evil in the world as is done, because he provides the opportunity, or at least removes the hindrance. But that is not all. Let a man try to discover the reason why his progress in religion is slow, why he does not throw off evil habits that have disturbed him for years, why his influence for good in his own neighbourhood is so limited and uncertain; and he will generally, though not always, find that the secret of it all is his own half-heartedness, the superficiality of his religion. III. Those being the faults at either extreme against which the apostle warns us, THE CONCLUSION IS OBVIOUS, THAT THE BEST AND MOST PERFECT CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ONE IN WHICH BOTH ARE AVOIDED, AND THE PATH MIDWAY BETWEEN THE TWO IS TRODDEN. The ideal Christian life, according to this old apostle, is one in which the progress of the fancy in regard to religious truth or duty is restrained by

the reins of a sanctified reason, in which all backwardness is for ever prevented by thorough religious earnestness. There is a tendency at times to imagine that such matters are merely a question of temperament; that the vivacious man will be certain to go forward, and the languid man to hang back; and that neither can be held responsible for faults that arise from the peculiarities of their very natures. But that is not the way in which the Bible looks at the matter. To plead personal temperament in excuse for the habit of over-eagerness or of backwardness, is to overlook the grace of God. But it is well to look a little more closely at the reasonableness and advantage of maintaining this intermediate position between the two extremes. That it avoids on the one hand presumptuous positiveness concerning everything, and on the other the flinching that turns religious conviction and obligation into matters for compromise, is in itself a sufficient, but far from the only, commendation. It is also the course that should be adopted, the state of mind that is most defensible and helpful, in relation to the fluctuations of religious opinion and the controversies that periodically shake the kingdom of God. In the department of Christian service similarly, most men will agree that the best human qualifications for doing it well are not over-eagerness, still less backwardness, but steady earnestness or well-controlled zeal. The man who in his work hangs back, never manages to get much done; and the man who is always apt to go a little too far forward, is also always apt to miss his mark, and to awaken in others suspicions of his discretion that seriously weaken his influence. The strongest man is he whose enthusiasm is disciplined by self-control, whose devotion to Christ is whole-hearted and well-nigh incapable of increase, but yet is closely regulated by a sanctified reason, and thus made provident of its resources and unalterable in its purposes. In all associated warfare or service, the perfect heart of devotion is good, but waste and failure follow unless there is also the power to keep rank. But the teaching of the verse applies quite as much to personal religious life as it does to service or to opinions; and what it urges as the condition of swift progress to the highest spiritual attainments, is that the spirit and the life should be, as it were, ringed round with the teaching of Christ, never advancing far forward from the neighbourhood of Him, never drifting far behind, but keeping day by day as closely as possible within the circle which His influence fills. If he be tempted to advance beyond the Saviour, the master-passion of love for Him will hold him back; or if he be tempted to linger behind, the love will draw him on. A more blessed kind of life no man can conceive; and that becomes our kind of life, according as we crush out the disposition to regulate our ways in independence of Christ, and pour our hearts upon Him in continuous trustfulness. (*R. W. Moss.*) *Doctrine and character*.—Some one may say, "Oh, I do not want doctrines, I look at doctrines as so many dry bones." True, we may compare doctrines to bones, but they are like the bones in your body, and they need not be dry. The skeleton is not a live body, it is true, but what would that body be without the skeleton? In the natural world there are living creatures that have no vertebræ, and they consist of a soft gelatinous mass, very yielding and compressible. And in the moral world there are those whose religion is of the same sentimental kind. They are accommodating, because it has no backbone. How different is that religion from the robust Christianity that we see exemplified in the Apostle Paul! He taught that the framework of definite truth or doctrine was essentially the strength and stability of the Christian character. (*E. H. Hopkins, B.A.*) *Error affects conduct*.—As a small mistake in levelling an arrow at the hand makes a great difference at the mark, so a small mistake in the notion of truth makes a wide difference in the practice of the ungodly. (*Ibid.*) *Abide in the doctrine of Christ*.—The text itself consists of two general parts, a negative and an affirmative. We begin with the first, viz., the negative, "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth," &c., which is a censure of all such persons as do withdraw from the doctrine of Christ. First, no knowledge of God without Christ, because it is He that manifests Him (*Job i. 18*). Secondly, no knowledge of God neither out of Christ, because it is He that represents Him: as we cannot look upon the sun directly. So that those who deny the doctrine of Christ, they have not God. First, in point of knowledge. Secondly, they have not God neither in point of worship. God out of Christ is an idol, as to any true adoration of Him, or religious service exhibited to Him. This is true both in regard of the object of worship, as also in regard of the medium. Thirdly, they have not God in point of interest, they have not that relation to God as is desirable for them. They have God indeed in the common relation of a Creator. But they have not God as a God in covenant.

Those that think to come to God upon the terms of nature and common providence they will have little comfort in such approaches; for God considered out of Christ He is a consuming fire. Lastly, they have not God, *i.e.*, they have Him not in point of influence. And that according to all these kind of influences which are to be desired, and those benefits which are of the greatest concernment. As first, of grace and holiness; they have not God to sanctify them and to communicate His Holy Spirit unto them. God is the God of all grace, but it is God in Christ; He is the channel of the grace of God unto us in all the several kinds and particulars of it wherein it is communicated. We must rightly understand this method and order which God has set for the conveying of saving grace unto us. We have not grace from the Spirit immediately but from the Spirit in reference to Christ. Secondly, as not to the influences of grace so neither to the influences of comfort; no true comfort or peace of conscience but from God in Christ; He is our peace, both in the thing itself as also in the discovery and manifestation of it. The spirit of comfort, it is of His sending and comes from Him. He that hath not Christ and His Spirit, he hath not God to comfort him. Thirdly, as to matter of salvation, not God to save him. There is no salvation out of Christ (Acts iv. 12). And thus we have the point in the several explications of it, wherein it holds good unto us, that he that transgresseth, that is, rejects the doctrine of Christ, he hath not God. The use and improvement of this point by way of application: First, it comes home to sundry sorts of persons who are hence concluded in a very sad condition. This is so much the more grievous as it is the less thought of and expected; for these persons which we have now mentioned, they make a full account they have God whatever they have else. At least they have Him not in that way and to that purpose for which they would have Him. They have God to judge them, but they have not God to save them. Therefore we see what cause we have to pity and to bewail such persons as these are. Here is the misery of all unregenerate persons; these come under this censure likewise, who though they should hold this doctrine in judgment, yet deny it in affection and practice; forasmuch as they do not submit to the power and efficacy of it. Therefore in the second place, let us make this use of the point, even to acknowledge Christ and His doctrine and the grace of God which is revealed in it. First, this conveyance of all good to us in the covenant of grace and in the name of Christ, it is the safest and surest dispensation. We are now upon very good terms which we may rest upon. If salvation with the appurtenances of it had been in any other hands besides we had not been so sure of it. Secondly, there is the sweetness of it also; there is a great deal of delightfulness also in it if we were capable of it; to see everything coming to us, strained through the love of God in Christ; it is wonderful pleasing and satisfying, and the heart of a true believer does exceedingly rejoice in it. The second is of unworthy recession in apostasy or departure from it, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ. He that abides not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. First, as to matter of judgment: here is a censure upon declining in this; for any that have formerly embraced Christ and His doctrine to depart from it thus, it is a business of great danger to them and does exclude them from interest in God Himself. But secondly, as this may be extended to matter of judgment, so likewise to matter of practice. A man may in some sort abide in Christ's doctrine so as to give assent and credence to it, and yet not abide in it so as to improve it and to live answerable to it. Therefore this must be taken in likewise together with the other; then do we indeed abide in it when it abides in us and has an influence and efficacy upon us. The second is laid down in the affirmative, "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." The sum of all is this, that he that hath not both, hath neither; and he that hath one, hath both. This having may admit of a threefold interpretation. First, hath them in him, by way of abode and habitation. Secondly, hath them with him, by way of society and communion. Thirdly, hath them for him, by way of assistance and approbation. (*T. Horton, D.D.*)

Vers. 10, 11. Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.—Loyalty to Christ:—The man who comes to undermine men's faith in Christ is on an evil errand. His work is an "evil work." Let no false motives of courtesy or toleration lead you to give any assistance or encouragement to such. Let not your tolerance to men have for its other side indifference to Christ. A tremendous responsibility rests upon us to-day. Christ is the sole remaining hope of the

world. For the sake of our own souls, and all the souls around us, and for all that are coming to be born into this world, let us be faithful. Polycarp, said Dr. Duncan, would have stood a bad chance in an examination by John Owen; but he was a famous man to burn. He was offered his life if he would just say, "Cæsar is Lord," and fling a few grains of incense on the altar. No; life at that price was too dear. He could not afford to live at such a cost. Would he swear, then? Revile Christ by a word? No. "Eighty and six years," said the old man, "have I served Him, and He hath done me no wrong. How, then, can I speak evil of my King?" And then they put him in the fire. He was but a simple, commonplace, pious old man. But he burned well. He has left no system of theology. That was his theology—to burn for Christ, to be faithful unto death. God give us to be equally faithful under different and less arduous circumstances, that at the last we too may "receive the crown of life." (*J. M. Gibbon.*)

No toleration:—1. Intercourse with anti-christian teachers is very injurious to the faith of young Christians. The faith of young Christians is itself young and tender. Any fellow may knock about the babe in the cradle, but he would not lift up his hand against its father. What is very painful in the conduct of the infidels, agnostics, and secularists of the day, is the effort they make to get young men together to their meetings. 2. It also incurs a grave responsibility. "For he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." That is, he is reckoned by others to be in partnership with him. To countenance evil is as bad as to commit it, and to be where evil is done is to countenance it. Let religious teachers often show to the young the perils and responsibilities of mixing up in unchristian and immoral society. (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *The contagion of evil to be avoided*:—When a man is known to suffer from a sadly contagious disease none of his friends will come near the house. There is little need to warn them off: they are all too alarmed to come near. Why is it men are not as much afraid of the contagion of vice? How dare they run risks for themselves and children by allowing evil companions to frequent their house? Sin is as infectious and far more deadly than the smallpox or fever. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.—*Our share in other men's sins*:—There are few more remarkable sayings in Holy Writ than that of our blessed Redeemer, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward." But the principle which pervades this saying of Christ is not limited in its operations; and, if one application of it be encouraging, another may be alarming. May it not be possible to identify yourself with an evil man as well as with a good, so that, though you may not yourself actually commit the evil man's deeds, yet you shall be reckoned with as though you had done the deeds? That the principle admits of this application is but too clearly proved by our text. These words of St. John are, indeed, precisely parallel to what our Saviour says in regard of a prophet. To bid the heretic God speed would be to give the weight of your authority to his heresy. In mercantile phrase, as has been well said, it would be to endorse his false doctrines; and the day of reckoning shall come. But this opens before us a great and solemn subject of discourse. One is disposed at first to hope that it may be merely through some metaphysical subtlety that human beings are represented as so interwoven with each other, that the same actions may be charged on a variety of agents: but metaphysical subtlety there is absolutely none; the apostle speaks of our partaking in other men's evil deeds with the same plainness which he would use if speaking of our obeying any one of the Ten Commandments. Oh, this wonderfully enlarges the power or opportunity of destroying our souls; this amazingly magnifies the dread business of the judgment. I could tremble at being told, "Every man shall bear his own burden"—at hearing, "So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God"; but I do not apprehend all the awfulness of appearing at the tribunal of the Most High till I ponder this assertion of St. John, "He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Now, examine more definitely the modes in which we may have share in other men's sins. We will select two modes: the first is that of giving evil counsel, or diffusing wrong principles; the second is that of setting a bad example. To illustrate the first mode, we will take an extreme case, but which cannot be examined without our discovering a principle which may equally be applied in various lesser instances. The case is that of an author, who, having committed to writing licentious or sceptical thoughts, applies the vast power of the Press to the gaining for them currency through the world. You will hardly require of us to show you that this author participates in the sins of other men. Where-soever his book is, there may he be, undermining the foundations of morality and

religion, poisoning the springs of life, and instigating others to be as sceptical or as debauched as himself. Repentance, for the most part, is utterly unavailing; the author may become altogether a reformed man, being changed from the infidel into the sincere believer, and from the immoral into the righteous; but he may have no power whatsoever of recalling his writings: they have gone forth as upon wings to the farthest ends of the earth. What a perpetuity of evil-doing has thus been acquired by many of the dead! And though you may think that this, however clear an illustration of the partaking in the sins of other men, furnishes but little of practical lesson to yourselves, I would remind you that the author only does that in a higher degree that is done by any one in a lower, who gives bad advice or sanctions wrong principles. The act of printing does but enlarge, so to speak, the sphere of the author's individuality, and cause him to act on a broader surface; but evidently if, in place of printing, he confines himself to speaking, delivering to the comparatively few who are brought within sound of his voice the same sentiments that we suppose scattered by the Press over half a community, why, he will partake of the sins of those few, even as under the other supposition he would of the sins of the whole host of his fellow-men. And if you still further reduce the position of the author, so that in place of blasphemous sentiments you put mere worldly words into his mouth, and without making him a pattern of immorality simply ascribe to him indifference as to religion, it is clear you do not touch the argument upon which participation in other men's sins is established, though you may diminish the likelihood of his making other men to sin, or the enormity of the crimes to which he may be accessory. Do you never let slip an opportunity of reproving vice, of recommending virtue? Do you never, when you have given an opinion on points of difference between men of the world and disciples of Christ—do you never lean to the side of the world, because not honest enough to despise the risk of giving offence? There is not one of you whose actions do not operate on the actions of others—operate, we mean, in the way of example. He would be insignificant who could only destroy his own soul; but you are all, alas! of importance enough to help also to destroy the souls of others; and henceforward we would have you remember that whensoever you act you act for a multitude; eyes are upon you, many or few, according to the position that you occupy; some are either watching to take pattern or waiting for your halting. Be vicious, and viciousness may go down as an heirloom in half a hundred families; be inconsistent, and enmity to the gospel may be propagated over a parish; give occasions of offence, and many may fall; those who are entering in the narrow way may be discouraged, and those who have already entered may be made to stumble. Well, then, if such be the fact—if, through our necessary connection with numbers of our fellow-men, a connection resulting from the circumstances of our nature—if, through the giving evil counsel, which it seems almost impossible to avoid, and through the setting evil example, which must be done in some sense by all but the perfect—if in these ways we become partakers in other men's sins—better fly the world at once; better retire to the desert, where, altogether separated from our kind, we should at least have no guilt to add to our own! Vain thought! Suppose, then, that we flee from active life and bury these powers in solitude, we shall still be chargeable with all the evil which might have been counteracted, had we stood to our posts and made use of our talents. We might have stayed the torrent of vice and ungodliness; we might have turned some sinners from the error of their ways. What, then, have we obtained by flight? Have I striven up to the measure of the ability conferred on me by God to promote the diffusion of sound principles, and to subdue the aboundings of iniquity? You ask, in a sort of terror, for some specific by which to guard against this partaking in the sins of other men. I have but one answer to give. The only way not to partake in other men's sins is not to sin yourselves. The great use which we make of this subject of discourse is the furnishing another motive to you to the walking circumspectly and the living righteously. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 12. Having many things to write unto you.—Christian intercourse:—

I. THE FULNESS OF JOHN'S HEART. His heart, doubtless, was full of what concerned the fruits of his ministry in the Church of Christ; of what he had seen and heard, of the results of his long-continued and laborious exertions for the salvation of men; of his own feelings and prospects in his advanced stage of life, and of his cheering hopes of soon being in a better world, where he would have a sight of Christ. And his heart might be full of those tender emotions which would

express themselves in sacred admonitions and directions, which he designed to give to the pious family whom he was shortly to visit. 1. What are those things which should fill our hearts? We may be afraid, if our hearts are not full of good things, it is not because there is any scantiness in the word or works of God; but because the ground is already preoccupied, or because there is in us too little relish for what is good and profitable. 2. Religion is social and communicative. Selfishness and exclusiveness are as unchristian as they are unamiable. II. JOHN EXPRESSES HIS DEFERENCE TO AND RELIANCE ON THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS INTENDED VISIT. 1. We are, in all things, dependent on God. We may propose, but should ever remember there is one that disposes of us, and of all things, according to His good pleasure. 2. Trusting in God for the fulfilment of our designs is justifiable only on the supposition that such designs are well-pleasing in His sight. III. JOHN, IN THE EXPECTATION OF AN INTERVIEW WITH HIS PIOUS FRIENDS, LOOKED FOR MUTUAL AND AMPLE JOY. 1. Inquire into the nature of that joy which he expected in his visit. We doubt not it was a religious joy. There John expected to witness Christian order and decorum, reciprocal proofs of affection, and lovely demeanour. There he would expect to find that humbleness of mind, that holy walking, that devotedness of heart and life to God, and that active piety which so finely illustrate the gospel. He would also expect to have an interchange of feeling on the sublimest and most interesting of all subjects, relative to the redemption of the world by the Lord Jesus Christ, and to find in the hearts of all in that family a response to what he felt in his own, in reference to the progress then making or made of the gospel in the world by the instrumentality of his fellow apostles; and thus heart would kindle heart, and Christian, holy fellowship would produce joy with which a stranger to such themes could never intermeddle. 2. We see how mistaken many are in their view of religion as incapable of affording joy. This must arise either from their disbelieving the word of God, or because, irrespective of its testimony, they form their judgment from their own inability to feel any pleasure in it. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *Face to face*:—The social feeling is a vital element of our nature, and fit society is indispensable to the perfection of happiness. Indeed it would seem that this is necessary not only for beings constituted and related as we are, but for every intelligent being. There is society among the angels of heaven; there is society in the being of God Himself. Conceive of the creation of one solitary being to occupy the vast physical universe. He finds himself surrounded with the grandeur and the ever-varying beauty of the material creation. 1. This view of the necessity of Christian communion to the perfection of religious joy teaches us that a monkish seclusion from the world is contrary to the whole genius of the gospel. 2. This view of Christian communion suggests the wisdom and the desirableness of those ordinances and arrangements that are designed to facilitate that communion. 3. This view of Christian communion suggests delightful anticipations of the blessedness of heaven. (*J. P. Thompson.*)