

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

III. 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

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

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VER. 1. The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius.—*Some first century Church members:*—It has been said that in the drama of life the scenery shifts and the draperies change, but the plot is the same and the characters the same. This is true; and because of this the most ancient history is in its essentials the story of to-day. Gaius, Diotrophes, and Demetrius are ancient names, but modern characters; dead men, but living spirits. **I. GAIUS, OR THE CHRISTIAN IN COMPLETE ARMOUR.** Of his position in the Church, of his personal history, we know nothing. The light falls on him only for a moment; but in that moment we can see clearly that he was a full-orbed, symmetrical Christian. 1. His soul prospered—*i.e.*, his inner life of prayer and fellowship with the Father was going on so well—the man was making such manifest progress in spiritual life—that St. John could form no higher wish for him than that he might prosper in all things and be in health, as his soul was prospering. 2. But his spirituality did not evaporate in feeling. There was nothing flabby or weak about the man. He was strong in the Lord. "I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and bare witness to thy truth." We do not know all that lies beneath this sentence. Evidently truth had been attacked, and Gaius had stood up in defence. 3. And as he prayed and spoke, so he lived: "even as thou walkest in the truth." The true defenders of the faith, the invincible champions of truth, are all the souls that do the truth. Holiness is an unanswerable argument. 4. He was an active Christian (vers. 5-7). Here we catch just a glimpse of the evangelising activity of the early Church. Error was busy. Many deceivers had gone forth into the world. But truth was busy also. She had taken the field. Christian men had "gone forth" "for the sake of the Name." Gaius probably could not "go forth," but he could help those who did. He could give them a home, could secure for them a favourable hearing, and send them on their way rejoicing. And he did so, thoroughly. He did this, as he did everything else, as unto the Lord. Gaius did this, and so became "a fellow-worker with the truth." People often speak of "the workers" in the Church as if they were a small and easily defined class. But who are the workers? Those who preach, and teach, and visit, and sing, and organise? Yes; but not these only. Those who can only give small gifts from their poverty—those who pray for us in secret, who smile on our efforts, who wish us well, who love us—behold, these too are workers, fellow-workers with the truth! Thank God for quiet people, kind people, hopeful people! What could the "workers" do without the fellow-workers? **II. DIOTROPHES REPRESENTS OFFICIALISM OUT AND OUT.** I am sorry to say that there is little doubt that he was the minister of the Church in which Gaius was a member—a minister in name—in fact, a tyrant, a slanderer, a bad man. 1. "He loveth to have the pre-eminence among them." He did not call it by that name. He called it "principle," or "conscience," or "high sense of duty," for if you want to find the worst things you must not look for them under the words "crime," or "despotism," or "sin," but under "conscience," "duty," "patriotism," and "principle." But fine words notwithstanding, the core of this man's character was love of power and pride of place. 2. "If I come," says the apostle, "I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words." Yes, "if I come," Diotrophes will find that John was not called the son of thunder for nothing. It ought not to be left to St. John to bring Diotrophes to book. The Church ought to have done this. The Church was partly guilty of this tyrant. "I know mother'll

give it me if I scream," said a child. Ay, ay, that is the policy of most agitators. "I believe in screaming" is the one article of Diotrophes' creed in every age. Weak mothers, weak nations, weak Churches alike surrender to the scream. We owe it to Diotrophes to tell him the truth. Whether St. John come or not, slander should be condemned and tyranny opposed. 3. But the real danger to the Church lay, not in this man's despotic action, but in the infectious nature of his tyranny. There is a little Diotrophes in all men—all love to lead; and there was a danger lest this outside Diotrophes should stir up and call out the Diotrophes inside other members—lest opposing him they should still imitate him. Therefore St. John implores even Gaius, "Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good." 4. "He that doeth good is of God: he that doeth evil hath not seen God." Let who will be bad, be you good. Though the very angels fall, do you stand. "By Allah," said Mahomet, when he was tempted, "if they placed the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left to persuade me, yet while God bids me I will go on." Yes! heed not the sun or moon. Hear God. Though even Diotrophes turn tyrant, let Gaius be Gaius still. "A single man with God is the majority." III. DEMETRIUS STANDS FOR THE INSPIRING CHRISTIAN. He was a man whose life was such that John felt he had only to name him in order to inspire Gaius with courage. Yes, we all know names that for us are charged with inspiration. To see them or hear them makes us stronger, braver, better. We need not be rich, nor famous, nor learned in order to inspire men—only to be good, and honest, and loving, and pure. We too, by faith in Christ and by God's grace, may live in such a way that even our names may be to some few souls words of inspiration and means of grace. (J. M. Gibbon.) *The quietness of true religion*:—I. LET US SEE WHETHER, WITHOUT PASSING OVER THE BOUNDS OF HISTORICAL PROBABILITY, WE CAN FILL UP THIS BARE OUTLINE WITH SOME COLOURING OF CIRCUMSTANCE. 1. Three persons of the name Gaius or Caius appear in the New Testament (Acts xix. 29; xx. 4; Rom. xvi. 23; 1 Cor. i. 14). 2. Demetrius is, of course, a name redolent of the worship of Demeter, the Earth-Mother, and of Ephesian surroundings. No reader of the New Testament needs to be reminded of the riot at Ephesus, which is told at such length in Acts xix. The conjecture that the agitator of the turbulent guild of silversmiths who made silver shrines of Diana may have become the Demetrius, the object of St. John's lofty commendation, is by no means improbable. The very words of Demetrius about Paul evince that uneasy sense of the powers of fascination possessed by the apostle which is often the first timid witness of reluctant conviction. II. WE MAY NOW ADVERT TO THE CONTENTS AND GENERAL STYLE OF THIS LETTER. 1. As to its contents. (1) It supplies us with a valuable test of Christian life, in what may be called the Christian instinct of missionary affection, possessed in such full measure by Caius. (2) The Church is beset with different dangers from very different quarters. As the second Epistle warns the Church of peril from speculative ambition, so the third Epistle marks a danger from personal ambition, arrogating to itself undue authority within the Church. (3) This brief Epistle contains one of those apparently mere spiritual truisms, which make St. John the most powerful and comprehensive of all spiritual teachers. He had suggested a warning to Caius, which serves as the link to connect the example of Diotrophes which he has denounced, with that of Demetrius which he is about to commend. "Beloved!" he cries, "imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good." A glorious little "Imitation of Christ," a compression of his own Gospel, the record of the Great Example in three words. 2. The style of the Epistle is certainly that of an old man. It is reserved in language and in doctrine. Religious language should be deep and real, rather than demonstrative. It is not safe to play with sacred names. To pronounce them at random for the purpose of being effective and impressive is to take them in vain. What a wealth of reverential love there is in that—"for the sake of the Name!" This letter says nothing of rapture, or prophecy, of miracle. It lies in the atmosphere of the Church, as we find it even now. It has a word for friendship. It seeks to individualise its benediction. A hush of evening rests upon the note. May such an evening close upon our old age! (Abp. Wm. Alexander.) *Christian character*:—I. THE IDEAL CHRISTIAN. 1. A renewed heart. 2. A loving deportment. II. THE HIGHEST AFFINITY. The Christian character draws to itself—1. Our esteem. 2. Our kindness. 3. Our fellowship. (The Weekly Pulpit.) *The ideal Christian*:—This is not a salutation in the sense of Christian greeting usual at the beginning of the Epistles of Paul and Peter, but a simple address, to point out the person for whom the Epistle was intended. I. THE TRUE CHARACTERISTIC OF A BELIEVER IN JESUS CHRIST—"Beloved." This term is applied

both to the Son of God and to the saints, and frequently used by the apostles. It is a term of endearment, and implies a relationship and an affinity of the highest order. 1. Loved. One with a renewed heart, one of tenderness and sympathy instead of hardness, ill-feeling, and cruelty. 2. Loving. The love of God in his heart was not a stagnant pool, but a running rill. Take the Christian life in its composite character, and it will be seen that love permeates the whole. As to the inner resources of thought and desire, there is in them a sweetness which reveals the well of love in the heart. In the life of Gaius, St. John saw the reflection of the greater love which laid down its life for its friends. 3. Lovable. It is almost unnecessary to state that the object of God's love will have attractions for all pure minds. II. THE RECIPROCAL AFFINITY—"Whom I love in truth." The remembrance of the beloved Gaius awakens the love of the beloved John. 1. Whom I love by the power of truth. The gospel reveals in us the force of love, and in our fellow-Christians the worthy object of that force. The Christian character draws to itself our esteem. 2. Whom I love for the sake of truth. No effect has a greater influence on the Christian heart than the saving influence of the gospel. A more effective spectacle to win the affection of an apostle could not be found. 3. Whom I love in furtherance of truth. Tell the Christian worker that you honour him and love him for his work's sake, and you will strengthen his hands and rejoice his heart. (*T. Davies, M.A.*)

Ver. 2. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.—"*Gaius the beloved*":—I. DEPRIVATION. Gaius was deprived of physical health. John's prayer for him implies that his affliction was severe, that it was not a mere passing ailment. For the present affliction is not "joyous," but "grievous"; and pain is felt as keenly by the sensitive nerves of the pious as by the most abandoned of mankind. And there is an element in affliction that pains the good man that the godless know nothing about. The fact that the state of his bodily health prevents him from carrying out certain purposes for the benefit of his fellow-men is a severe and painful trial to him. The afflicted are not able to meet with their brethren in their public gatherings. This is a serious loss to them. However anxious Gaius might have been to assist in the world's work, the probability is that the state of his health precluded the possibility of his doing so. And yet there was one very important thing he could do—he could endure affliction patiently. That is no little matter. To suffer affliction, showing an example of submission, of meekness and sweetness of temper, is one of the highest and noblest services God has given His truest children to do. II. COMPENSATION. Though his body was afflicted, his soul was in health and prospered. His soul grew strong and flourished on truth. Such men are invaluable blessings to their age; they are the pillars upon whom the moral fabric of their time rests. Their integrity, their transparent honesty, their pure motives, and their faithfulness in all they attempt to do, is what makes the world what it is—a place worth living in. A soul that has some truth has the germs of spiritual health; a soul that is filled with truth is vigorous and will grow apace. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," free from all that hinders the development of the spirit's life. So thoroughly was Gaius possessed of the truth, that he walked in it; it was the potent principle that guided his whole conduct in his relation to men and God. He would not swerve the slightest degree to the right or to the left from its dictates. The vessel that is to arrive at the "desired haven" must not be allowed to run out of the lines of the compass. Gaius "walked in the truth," as the only path that leads to the home on high. The truth as it is in Jesus saves the soul. Farther, Gaius possessed charity. "Brethren and strangers . . . bear witness to thy charity before the Church." In his case, love was not a weak sentiment, an effervescence merely, but a strong and rational passion of the soul. He was not content to love in "word or in tongue" only, he showed his love in kind deeds. He was not a little fragment of human nature, like a diminutive island in mid ocean cut off from the rest of the earth; but a noble part of the great whole of mankind, and a model member of the universal Church of the living God. III. COMPASSION. John felt keenly for Gaius in his affliction. Genuine brotherly sympathy, which is the utterance of a warm and true heart, is like rich and copious showers of rain that fall upon the scorched and chapped earth, and seem to hasten to run into the many crevices to soften the divided parts and to bring them together again that the many-pieced earth might be healed. Observe, John's sympathy in this instance took the form of a prayer; he prayed that Gaius might prosper and

be in health, even as his soul prospered. The measure of physical health he desired for him was the measure of spiritual health which he then enjoyed. If this were the rule for prayer, how poor, and frail, and sickly would the health of the great majority of mankind be! "What is the value of this estate?" said a gentleman to another with whom he was riding, as they passed a fine mansion and through rich fields. "I don't know what it is valued at; I know what it cost its late possessor." "How much?" "His soul." A solemn pause followed this brief answer. The late possessor referred to was the son of a pious man who supported his family by the labour of his hands. The son early obtained a subordinate position in a mercantile establishment in this city. He was then a professor of religion. He continued to maintain a reputable profession until he became a partner in the concern. He then gave increasing attention to business, and less to religion. Just before he died, he said, "My prosperity has been my ruin." Many may wonder why they are kept so poor here; they don't seem to know that spiritual wealth is essential to the wise and safe handling of material riches. (*D. Rhys Jenkins.*)

St. John's prayer for Gaius.—I. PROSPERITY OF SOUL IS THE CHIEF AND MOST VALUABLE PROSPERITY. Sin is the disease of the soul; and when the power of it is subdued, and the principles and habits of holiness implanted and cherished, by the Divine and almighty Physician, then the health of the soul is restored and it becomes prosperous. It is in some measure healthful and prosperous when it is filled with useful knowledge; when it is able to discern those things that differ; and hath a clear understanding of the Divine will, and the various motives by which obedience to it is enforced. But knowledge is only the foundation of religion. Health of soul chiefly consists in piety and righteousness; in an ardent love to God, a high delight in the exercises of devotion; in a sincere faith in Jesus Christ, and a regular and circumspect conversation, founded upon the principles, and conducted by the rules, of His gospel.

II. A PERSON MAY HAVE A PROSPEROUS SOUL, AND YET WANT EXTERNAL PROSPERITY. Their souls are ill lodged; and the tabernacles in which they dwell do not appear to suit the dignity and worth of the inhabitants. This is sometimes owing to disorders conveyed to them from their parents. It is frequently owing to the ill-judged indulgence of their parents. "Many" (as Mr. Baxter observes, who was himself an instance of it) "struggle all their days with pain and sickness, through the folly of their mothers; who breed them up delicately, and deny them nothing which they like and crave, how injurious soever to their health." Sometimes they are made to "possess the iniquities of their youth"; particularly impurity, intemperance, idleness, or ungoverned passions. In many cases the immediate hand of God is to be acknowledged in the weaknesses and languors of our frame. He exerciseth His servants with this painful discipline, to make their hearts better, to quicken their diligence and excite their sympathy and concern for the good of others.

III. WE MAY VERY PROPERLY WISH AND PRAY THAT OUR FRIENDS MAY ENJOY TEMPORAL PROSPERITY, ESPECIALLY HEALTH. Much of the comfort of life depends upon health. Where that is enjoyed, we can discharge those active services which our several relations and connections demand, and can enjoy the bounties of providence with relish and pleasure. If an instrument be out of tune, the most skilful hand can produce no harmony. If the body be disordered by pain and sickness, the soul cannot act by it with ease, freedom, and cheerfulness. It needs great strength and prosperity of soul to behave well, amidst wearisome days and nights, and months of vanity. Therefore it is reasonable and proper that we should pray to that God who raised this curious frame and hath all nature under His control, that we may prosper and be in health. And if we hope for His interposition, it should be our care to avoid everything that would injure the health, and to take proper methods to restore and confirm it, when it is impaired.

IV. IT IS HAPPY FOR OUR FRIENDS WHEN WE CAN WISH THEM TO BE AS PROSPEROUS AND HEALTHFUL AS THEY ARE GOOD. Application: 1. To those who have no prosperity, neither temporal nor spiritual. 2. To those who have temporal, but no spiritual prosperity. 3. To those whose souls prosper, but they want temporal prosperity; who, like Gaius, have sickly constitutions, but healthy souls. The instance in the text shows how unreasonable it is to conclude that your souls do not prosper, because the outward man doth not. (*J. Orton, D.D.*)

Soul prosperity.—I. THE CHARACTER OF GAIUS. 1. The indwelling of the truth of God. He walked in the truth—he was a fellow-helper of the truth—he was beloved for the truth's sake. By the indwelling of God's truth, living principles are implanted in the soul. They are a fountain spring, whence well forth love, benevolence, active well-doing, and the end is eternal life and glory. 2. The

external manifestation of his piety. The truth moulded and shaped his outer life. His daily actions bore its holy impress. His creed was not one thing, and his walk another. As a citizen of the world, and as a member of Christ's Church, his entire conduct was influenced by what he believed and professed. 3. The fidelity that characterised him. He acted as a good steward of God's bounty. 4. The brotherly love he displayed. To this his brethren in the Church, and the strangers that visited the place bore testimony. II. HIS SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY. 1. Pre-eminent soul-prosperity. This is by no means a common condition among the people of God—to be more prosperous in spiritual interests than in other interests. 2. The living embodiment of truth. The indwelling truth came forth in embodied action. If we are rooted and grounded in doctrinal truth by the Holy Spirit, we shall give a living manifestation of that in our practical godliness. 3. Devotional solitude combined with energetic action. The prosperous Christian lives much alone with God. But he has also much to do with society. His field of labour is the world. 4. Largeness of heart. With many self is first and last, all and in all. Spiritual prosperity to such is a thing unknown. 5. Deep humility of soul. It has been well said that a haughty, self-sufficient professor is a doubtful character; and that high minds are like high hills, blasted and barren. We may say, then, that lowly minds are like well-watered, fruitful valleys. III. THE BEARING OF THIS SUBJECT ON OUR CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. The great want of the Church of Christ is soul-prosperity. 2. Individual solicitude is requisite in order to meet that want. 3. The vital spring of spiritual prosperity is found in the presence and mighty operations of the Holy Spirit (Isa. xlv. 3, 4; Ezek. xxxvi. 25–27; xxxvii. 14). (P. Morrison.) *Prosperity and piety*:—We have recorded here one of the most remarkable prayers of which we have any information; for the word translated “I wish,” not only expresses the fact that the thing is desired, and that the person thus desiring would have pleasure in securing it, but it carries the additional idea of so desiring it as to make it a matter of earnest and formal petition. In considering the prayer—I. THE PERSON WHO OFFERS THIS PRAYER—it is the Apostle John. We know from all his writings that he was eminently affectionate. Whilst his heart abounded in affection, he was still most discriminating in his views. Probably there is no portion of the New Testament which contains severer tests of Christian character than are to be found in the three short Epistles of John. They are very spiritual, and they enter very largely into the inward workings of the grace of God upon the heart. He manifested throughout his long and eventful life the greatest solicitude for those who were converted under his ministry. II. THE PERSON FOR WHOM THE PRAYER WAS OFFERED: it is for the well-beloved Gaius. 1. First, his character. It is very excellent, and caused him to be much loved by all lovers of good men. Two ingredients, however, are particularly named as forming his character. These are his piety and his benevolence. With this union of piety towards God and good-will towards men his soul prospered. A plant is said to thrive and prosper when it brings forth fruit, a field when it abounds with precious grain, a human body when it is healthy and vigorous and active. So a soul prospers when it abounds in the love of the truth, in the love of those who hold the truth, and yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness richly, in large measure, and in a corresponding practice. 2. But notice his condition. From the language of the text it is gathered that he was a man of feeble health. The particular Greek word used encourages this idea. Whether it was a permanent weakness of constitution or an occasional fit of illness, we cannot tell, though it is obvious from the prayer of the apostle, that he might be in health, but that he was at that time an invalid. From the prayer that he might prosper, there is reason to suppose that Gaius had suffered in his worldly property, was somewhat reduced in circumstances. Some are of opinion that he suffered from persecution, and that by the violence of wicked men his property was wrenched away from him. There is much plausibility in this supposition. Others, however, think, that by reason of his great liberality to the saints he had actually impoverished himself. This opinion is strengthened by the account we have in the Acts of the Apostles of the liberality of the early Christians. At any rate the situation of this Gaius was such as to call for the prayer of the Apostle John that he might again be prospered. III. THE PRAYER OFFERED IN BEHALF OF GAIUS. It is very short, but it is very comprehensive. It is that in all things he may be prospered, and be in health. Thus we see that it is proper to pray for temporal blessings. Beside this, a special promise is made to the diligent. Yet of all mere temporal blessings, health stands as that most valuable; for without it, we can neither labour for God, nor enjoy the good with which He favours us. But

this prayer, whilst it is concerned about temporal prosperity, contains one peculiarity; it is—that this prosperity and this health may be in proportion to the prosperity of the soul. Oh! what an exaltation this gives to spiritual things above all temporal affairs! Here is the revelation of wisdom—that the spiritual state of the soul is the proper rule of prayer, and that it is the just standard of desire for health and prosperity. This is a rule most sifting in its operation, a rule that tries to the very uttermost the spirit of prayer as well as the confidence of our hearts in God. 1. Now, in reviewing this subject, we learn in the first place, how careful men would be if this rule of praying was their constant, honest practice—if every one in the retirement of the closet should put up this prayer—"O Lord God, grant me this day health of body equal to the health of my soul. O Lord God, grant that I may prosper in my business, exactly as my soul prospers." 2. Secondly, how fearful a thing it is by the loss of piety to convert property from being a means of grace to become a source of danger and ruin! If all Christians would live in the spirit of this prayer, how every interest of religion would prosper! Again, true piety will seek the prosperity of the soul above all things. 3. And now, finally, we learn that the injury of riches is in the motive for which we desire them. If for their own sake we desire them, for the purpose of accumulation, then this is mammon worship. Again, if we desire them for the power, or for the gratification which they afford us, then this is mere selfishness. II, on the other hand, it is to do good, this induces benevolence. (W. Patten, D.D.)

Spiritual health:—I. IT IS A LAW OF LIFE THAT HEALTH IS ESSENTIAL TO PERFECT ENJOYMENT. II. PERFECT SOUL HEALTH IS THE BEST SAFEGUARD AGAINST THE FORCE OF TEMPTATION. It is becoming more and more acknowledged that bodily disease is due not so much to outward causes as to predisposing causes. It arises not so much from the presence of disease germs without, but susceptibility of tissue that provides soil for their ready growth. When the seeds of disease are already in the body, outward causes may soon provoke their development. Is it not so with the soul's life? When the pulse of the soul is feeble and the moral tone low, a man soon succumbs to moral taint. III. PERFECT SOUL HEALTH IS ESSENTIAL TO TRUE SPIRITUAL GROWTH. "Dwarfs are much more common in the spiritual than in the physical sphere." Many Christians remain at the earliest stage of the Christian life. They are ever in religious childhood. IV. THE MEANS TO BE EMPLOYED FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH. It is a *sine qua non* that a healthy Christian breathes pure air. When a diver goes down into the sea he takes full care to be supplied with a sufficient amount of pure air from above. Our daily duties may bring us into surroundings very uncongenial to the religious life. We have no right, however, to involve ourselves in any situation or engage in any pursuit where the atmosphere of prayer cannot reach us. No one expects to nourish and build up a robust physical frame on mere condiments and confectionery. The result would soon become apparent in impoverished blood and feeble pulse. Aye, and men cannot nourish their souls on daily newspapers and exciting novels. An old writer says: "Thou canst not read the Scriptures too much, and what thou readest thou canst not read too well, and what thou readest well thou canst not too well understand, and what thou understandest well thou canst not too well teach, and what thou teachest well thou canst not too well live." Food may be received into the system, but the body is not nourished and strengthened unless its various faculties are brought into suitable exercise. Half the worries and vexations which afflict many Christians would disappear if they were more active for their master, "working with both hands earnestly" for His cause. (J. G. Greaves.)

Spiritual and temporal prosperity:—I. A SUPPOSITION MADE, that the soul of him in regard to whom the wish is expressed is prospering. 1. He knew the truth, and knew it well. Every one who desires to be blessed with soul prosperity must be intimately acquainted with it likewise. "The truth" is the great revelation of the gospel concerning the way of salvation by Christ crucified for sinners. This is the great ocean, to which all other truths are but tributary streams, and from whose bosom all the showers of blessings that fall on the moral wilderness of human life and refresh it, derive their origin. Were this truth unknown, what mysteries would encompass us! What unanswerable questions would start up before us! In what uncertainty would we live, in what fear would we die! 2. Gaius believed the truth, and every one who desires soul prosperity must believe it too. Those who content themselves with a mere speculative acquaintance with Divine truth, resemble those who would sit down to a feast, but leave the food untasted before them. And what a vain thing it is to speak about the truth, to profess it, to argue for it, to recommend it, if all

the while we never recollect that it is our duty to believe it! 3. Gaius walked in the truth,—that is, he lived in a manner that was consistent with the principles of the gospel; and every one who would attain soul prosperity must do so likewise. Now, if we believe this truth, we cannot but walk in it, and love God as our best friend, and we will feel that He is entitled to all the service that we are able to render; for we are not our own, but are bought with the mighty price of the blood of His Son. Again, the truth of the gospel tells us that sin is a most abominable and dangerous thing, and that holiness is a most excellent and becoming thing; and we must walk in this truth by showing that we really believe it, in our avoidance of sin, and our practice of “whatsoever things are just, and honest, and true, and lovely, and of good report.” In the same way we must walk in the truth by showing our faith in every department of revelation, by bringing it into our practice. 4. Gaius loved the truth; and without love to the truth it is impossible to obtain prosperity of soul. If we believe the truth we cannot but love it, because it is so glorious in itself and so suitable to us; and if we walk in the truth, we must love it more and more, as we discover by increasing experience new beauties and excellences. II. NOTICE THE WISH ITSELF: “I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper, and be in health.” 1. The apostle here expresses a wish for the worldly prosperity of Gaius. Affliction, then, is not a blessing in itself; nor is worldly prosperity in itself an evil. What the apostle would have called prosperity, in a worldly point of view, would likely have consisted of the two following particulars: first, such an amount of the good things of this world as will preserve us from the oppressive cares of poverty on the one hand, and those almost equally great, and more dangerous, though less unpleasant ones, which must always accompany inordinate wealth. The second element of prosperity which the good man would desire would probably be a tranquil, easy flow of his affairs, without great difficulties, great successes, or great reverses. And such a prosperity as this is what we may wish for ourselves and for our friends. 2. The apostle expresses a wish for the bodily health of his friend. This is necessary to complete the idea of worldly comfort; for without this, all that rank is able to command or wealth to procure will be little enjoyed. To care for the health of the body is a duty; for God has not made so fine a piece of workmanship to be carelessly destroyed. Man is a compound being, consisting of two parts—soul and body; and if it be a duty to care for the one, it is as certainly a duty to care for the other, though certainly it is a duty of far inferior importance, and one of whose neglect there is much less risk of complaining. III. THE LIMIT APPENDED: “I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” 1. When we wish for our friends’ prosperity and health, the limit “as thy soul prospereth” is necessary for their own good. If we wish for worldly prosperity to a bad man, we wish in general for what will harden his heart, and turn his mind more effectually away from God. But for one whose soul is really prospering, health and prosperity are good things. We may be certain that whatever the wealth or influence of a truly good man, whose religion is prosperous, will enable him to do, he will lend it all to what, in doing good to others, will do good to himself. 2. But if soul prosperity is necessary to render them safe to the individual himself, it is equally necessary to render his health and prosperity a blessing to others. (*W. Dickson.*) *Spiritual prosperity*:—There are two worlds in which every man lives, two distinct yet equally real scenes of existence in which we spend the days and hours of life. To the outward world, with its material objects and interests, no man altogether or exclusively belongs. You have but to close the eye or abstract the thoughts from outer things, and instantly you pass into another region: you become, as it were, the dweller in an inner world—that strange mysterious region of thoughts and feeling and desires, of memory and conscience and will—that microcosm, that little but most real world within every human breast. Corresponding to these two worlds, the external and the internal, there are two lives we all may be said to lead,—the outer life of sense, the inner hidden life and history of the soul. The visible material life is but the scaffolding under which the unseen and eternal life is rearing. With respect to each of us, there has been, from the dawn of our existence, a mental as well as a material history—a life of the soul, a course of inward progress or retrogression, a series of changes for good or evil in the character of that mysterious dweller beneath every breast, more worthy to be chronicled, fraught, would we but believe it, with interest deeper, more momentous far, than the fortunes and vicissitudes of our outward career. In the passage before us, the apostle, as you will perceive at a glance, makes reference to the two courses of human experience of which we have

just spoken—the outward and the inward. The text is simply an expression of affectionate desire for the welfare of one who seems to have been very dear to the writer. It is the friendly greeting of a believer to a brother in Christ. And you perceive that the particular form it takes is, not that merely of a simple wish for the friend's happiness, but of a wish more specifically for his happiness, his prosperity, at once in the inward and the outer life. I. OF WHAT IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE WORLD IS COMMONLY DESIGNATED PROSPERITY, PERHAPS THE TWO MAIN ELEMENTS ARE WEALTH AND POWER. Now there are in the spiritual condition of man elements analogous to these, of which his inward prosperity may be said to consist. 1. There is, it will need very little reflection to perceive, a wealth which may be predicated of the inward as well as of the outward life. Money, property, worldly goods, are not more real possessions than thought, knowledge, wisdom. Nor are the outward comforts and luxuries, the gratifications of sense and appetite that may be procured by the former, more literally a man's own, what belongs to him, what makes him richer, than are warm affections, a fertile imagination, a memory stored with information, and, above all, a heart full of God's grace. The common phraseology of life recognises this fact, when we speak, for instance, of "a richly-furnished mind," a mind "rich in intellectual resources," "a rich vein of thought," "an ample fund of information," and the like. Nor let it be said that this is merely the language of metaphor. Take two men, one in comparatively straitened circumstances, yet possessed of great mental abilities and attainments—the other, overflowing with money, yet narrow-souled and ignorant; you would not hesitate to say which is really the richer of the two. And if this be true of mere intellect, if even secular knowledge constitute a wealth more valuable than any outward possession, surely not less true must the same thought be when applied to that wisdom which maketh us unto salvation. Surely that man is indeed the richest, who bears within his bosom the treasure of a soul at peace with God, and safe for all eternity! For money, property, every worldly possession, is out of the man. It does not come into the soul. It can be separated from him. It is but an accident, not an essential property of his being. But knowledge, faith, spiritual-mindedness, love to Christ, these are a sort of wealth that go into and become transfused through the very essence of the man. Yours, too, is the only unvarying wealth. A soul, on which the image of Christ is impressed, is a thing precious everywhere, and for ever; it has not, like man's wealth, a different value in different countries and at different times; it will pass current everywhere—it is free of the universe. Yours, finally, is the only lasting wealth. The time will come when the richest must abandon his wealth for ever. The only thing you shall be able to keep, is that which you have stored up in the soul itself. That alone will go out with the soul into eternity. 2. The other element, commonly included in the idea of "prosperity," is power. He is universally esteemed a prosperous man in his outward circumstances who is advancing or has risen from comparative lowliness and obscurity to a position of eminence and influence in society. Now, to this also there is a parallel in the inward life. We may be inwardly as well as outwardly powerful. In the little world within the breast there are stations of rank, dominion, authority, to which we may aspire, or from which we may fall. There is a real subjection, degradation, slavery of spirit, to which we may be reduced; there is a real power, freedom, emancipation, to which we may attain. It is not a mere metaphor, for instance, when, in common language, we say that the profligate man is "the slave of his appetites." II. THE REASONS FOR WHICH THIS SOUL-PROSPERITY SHOULD BE REGARDED IN OUR DESIRES AS THE STANDARD OR MEASURE OF OUTWARD PROSPERITY. 1. Can it be doubtful to any one that wealth, power, prosperity, are no blessings where God's grace has not come before them?—that it is not good to be happy if first we are not holy? The rich, gay, happy, outward life, and the dark moral antithesis within! It is good to be gay, where the gaiety is real. But it is not good, it is not seemly, it is, sooth to say, the sorrowfullest thing under heaven, to be gay where there is every reason to be sad. Right pleasant, too, it is to behold the ruddy hue on the cheek, and the bright sparkle in the eye of health. But have you never felt that no sight is so truly melancholy as the unnatural brightness in the eye, or the glow that often gathers on consumption's cheek, the more beautiful as the end draweth near? And yet, sad though these contrasts are, there is something more truly pitiful, there is a more awful, because a moral sadness, in the sight which the minions of outward prosperity, of worldly comfort and happiness, not seldom present to a thoughtful observer's eye. Looking on an irreligious man's life, mindful how rapidly the stream of time is bearing him onward to the unseen, does there not force itself on

the mind a sense of something horribly incongruous in all this gaiety, as were the mirth of men in a sinking ship, or wild shouts of laughter from some crew hurrying onward to the torrent's brink! 2. Outward prosperity is not desirable for a man's own sake, if unaccompanied by inward, because of the bad moral influence which it has on his own character. For an irreligious man, nothing is more to be deprecated than an uninterrupted flow of worldly good. Only in proportion as the dew of God's hidden grace is descending on the heart, can it be safe for a man to be exposed to the hot sun of worldly prosperity; and if that secret element of strength and fertility be not continually supplied, the scorching heat must speedily wither up, in the spiritual soil, every green and beautiful thing. 3. It is not only for a man's own good, but also for the good of others, that he should prosper outwardly only in the measure in which his soul prospereth. For, obviously, wealth, power, influence, all outward advantages, are just so many means of doing good or evil put into a man's hands; and whether such advantages shall be for the benefit or injury of mankind, depends on the inward character of him to whom they are intrusted. Mankind are losers when a selfish man prospers; they are gainers by the prosperity of the generous and liberal-minded. The latter receive the blessings of God's providence as the sun receives light, to brighten and gladden the world, or as the healthy plant the influences of nature, to scatter them abroad in fertility and fragrance again. The former, on the contrary, like an excrescence on the fruit-tree absorbing the moisture that might have gone to produce leaves and fruit, receive any blessing at God's hand only to retain or abuse it; or, like a rank weed, draw in the genial influences of the soil and atmosphere of life only to poison all the air around them. (*J. Caird, D.D.*)

The Christian's New Year's compliment :—This is the New Testament expression of a formula to which we have been accustomed from our youth, and is alike benevolent, seasonable, and beautiful. Such an expression is music to the heart of him who hears it; and it is the expression of a noble and a Christian interest in him who gives it utterance. 1. Let us look, then, at the benevolence of this wish. Christianity is a system of benevolence, nay, not of benevolence only, or of good wishes, but of good deeds. Every line that is written in the gospel is charged with love. 2. In the second place, notice in this wish of the aged John the fact that his benevolent wish goes beyond the year that passeth by; and he wishes him not only prosperity of body, but health and prosperity of soul. He wishes him not simply a happy new year, but a happy eternity. "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." And that wish that looks on man and regards him as the subject simply of this world, is a very imperfect one. It is the least worthy of a Christian. 3. Now notice in the next place the comprehensiveness of this wish. 4. But note again the discriminating character of this wish. "Beloved, I wish that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." In other words, if I translate it into common phraseology, it is—Gaius, I am anxious for your health; I am desirous that you should be a rich man, and a great man, a healthy man and a happy man, but I am desirous still more that your soul may be right in its relationship to God. Such is the wish of John as expressed to Gaius; and nothing can be more reasonable than this. 5. Thus we see in this prayer of John, not only benevolence, but comprehensiveness and discrimination; we see in it also intensity. It is no bare expression—a wish with the lip, that has no counterpart in the heart. In Scripture there is courtesy, but it is the courtesy of Christianity. But what is this prosperity of soul that is spoken of? I am sure you will concur with me when I say that it must be preceded by a state of acceptance with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Not only a change of state, which is justification, but a change of nature, which is regeneration. Having noticed, then, these two as preliminary to the soul's health, let us notice what are some of the signs and features of real health of soul. 1. I would say, first of all, that a growing, deepening sense of unworthiness in the sight of God is one of the best and most unequivocal signs of a state of grace and healthiness of soul. 2. Another sign is a clearer apprehension of the suitableness and sufficiency of Christ as our Saviour. 3. Another sign of this soul health is greater teachableness. 4. Another sign of this spiritual health will be greater delight in hearing the gospel. 5. Another evidence of this soul-prosperity is less bondage to the world. Just as a Christian grows in true spiritual prosperity will he have less care about what men say of him, and more anxiety that God should think well of him. 6. Another sign of this true spiritual prosperity and progress is more entire acquiescence in God's will. The number and the frequency of your waverings is evidence that you are

far from spiritual truth. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *New Year's wishes*:—Life may become a parable, if we will make it so. Our New Year's wishes or our longings and cravings after some earthly good may remind us of those higher blessings without which every living man is poor—those great gifts which are more precious than all the treasures of this world, and yet not beyond the reach of the poor outcast, who wanders over it without a home and without a friend. I. Let me say, first, that when we talk of prosperity, every man, as its first condition, asks that he may be **SAFE AND FREE**. If I cannot sit at ease in my own home, if I dare not sleep without a guard at my chamber-door, if I crouch and watch in my lair, no man in his senses would think of calling me happy and prosperous. A kingdom would be a poor bribe for which to accept a life like that. Now we do but say the simple truth when we declare that the servant of God is the only safe man in the world. Others may have a bold step and a proud look; they may feel secure because they walk with the crowd, and may take the fool's course of living in the present, without care for the future; but there is no escape from the sweeping declarations of Scripture as to our death in sin and our life in Christ, no reversal of the sentence which leaves every impenitent, unsanctified man without hope. II. Let me speak of another thing which enters largely into the common notion of prosperity—**BODILY HEALTH AND EASE**. Our common greetings take this direction. Ailments are a serious kind of drawback to men's happiness. Yet what a plague lieth on men's souls, and few apprehend the half of its malignity and danger! III. Another element of prosperity is success; advancement, I mean, as distinct from mere possession. IV. One more particular I must mention, which most men deem a prime requisite for a prosperous or happy life—**FRIENDS**. (*J. H. Gurney, M.A.*) *The health and prosperity of the soul*:—Every minister is, or ought to be, a physician of souls. He should know how to feel the soul's pulse and to read its spiritual symptoms. He has the experience of his own inner life. He should understand the art of anatomy. He should know the intimate connection of the spiritual with the physical. Is the level of your religious good health at the level of your bodily health? How comfortable, how robust, how active, how capable your body is! but your soul—your real life inside your body—how is it with that? What would be the result of a careful examination this morning of your soul's health? I. Let us examine, first, what may be at this moment **THE SICKNESS OF THE SOUL TO WHICH YOU ARE SUBJECT**, and from which you may now be suffering. It may be that your soul looks better, healthier, than ever it did in your life. But inwardly you are getting weaker and weaker; you do not know it—you scarcely feel it. You think that all is right; that you will be better to-morrow: that's consumption! Or, you have no religious feelings at all; you are neither happy nor unhappy. Your vital power is passing away, but you do not know that it is decreasing—you do not care about it: that is paralysis, creeping paralysis! Or, on the contrary, you are very excited; you talk very much about religion, often very foolishly, very wildly. Your words are extravagant; you cannot restrain yourself; it is all high-flown: that's fever! Or you have run down to the opposite extreme; every feather is a burden, every shadow distresses you. You are miserable. That's inanition or melancholia! It is a heart disease. Or your soul generally seems right. But there is one very sore, bad place, and you cannot get rid of it—it grows: that's ulcer—perhaps cancer! Or, worse still, some immorality is vitiating your soul. An allowed sin is sapping everything that is good: that's poison—poison of the blood! Or everything that is good and true in you is dying—dying slowly, surely. There is no pain now; there is no pain: that's mortification: that's death! II. But now the question is, **WHAT IS THE REMEDY?** What are the secrets of the recovery of the spiritual life to a diseased soul? 1. The first and all-important and sure remedy is to go at once to the Good and Great Physician Himself; He can and He will cure all. 2. Then go and do exactly according to His orders. 3. Next bathe yourself in blood. He will show you the fountain, and Himself will do the washing. 4. Take the medicines which He prescribes. They will, perhaps, be bitter, very bitter: penitence, tears, losses, afflictions, severe self-discipline—it may be amputation! But there will be something very sweet to take away the bitterness and lull all the pain! III. But now let me suppose, that you are "in health," that "your soul prospers," or, as the word is in the original, more literally, that "your soul is in a good way"—**WHAT SHALL YOU DO TO KEEP WELL?** 1. First, keep very near to the Good Physician to whom you owe your recovery, and consult Him very often, and wait for His answer. 2. Then, use His prescription, for He is the Counsellor to the soul, always ready to listen patiently; He knows the exact

treatment your constitution requires, and His remedies are infallible. 3. Then, you must never forget two things: one, the fact that you have a soul, and the other, that your soul is a very delicate thing, easily and immediately affected by all outward things, and has a great tendency to relapses. 4. Fourthly, you must be very careful of the atmosphere in which you live; see that it be a pure atmosphere, free from all impurities! 5. Your soul must never omit its daily exercises: some good work which you have in hand for God, some labour of love. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Soul-health:—I. WE WILL EXAMINE THE WORDS OF THE TEXT. 1. "I wish"; more correctly, "I pray." Prayer is a wish sanctified. Turn your wishes into prayers. 2. "That thou mayest prosper." We may ask for prosperity for our friends; especially if, like Gaius, they serve God and His cause with their substance. 3. "And be in health." This is necessary to the enjoyment of prosperity. What would all else be without it? 4. "Even as thy soul prospereth." We are startled at this wish: the spiritual health of Gaius is made the standard of his outward prosperity! Dare we pray thus for many of our friends? Dare we pray thus for ourselves? What would be the result if such a prayer were answered? II. **WE WILL MENTION THE SYMPTOMS OF ILL-HEALTH.** 1. A low temperature. Lukewarmness is an ill sign. In business, such a man will make but little way; in religion, none at all. 2. A contracted heart. If we do not love the brethren, there is something wrong with us. 3. A failing appetite as to spiritual food. 4. A difficulty in breathing. When prayer is an irksome duty, everything is wrong with us. 5. A general lethargy: unwillingness for holy service, want of heart, &c. 6. An ungovernable craving for unhealthy things. III. **WE WILL SUGGEST MEANS OF RECOVERY.** 1. Seek good food. Study the Word. 2. Breathe freely. Do not restrain prayer. 3. Exercise yourself unto godliness. Labour for God. 4. Return to your native air: breathe the atmosphere of Calvary. 5. Live by the sea. Dwell near to God's all-sufficiency. 6. If these things fail, here is an old prescription: "*Carnis et Sanguinis Christi*." This taken several times a day, in a draught of the tears of repentance, is a sure cure. IV. **WE WILL CONCLUDE WITH AN EXHORTATION.** 1. Brother Christian, is it a small matter to be weak and feeble? Thou needest all thy vigour. Go to Calvary, and recruit thyself. 2. Sinner, thou art dead, but life and health are in Christ! (*C. H. Spurgeon*.)

Soul prosperity:—Whom do you regard as a prosperous man for this world? There are several elements that enter into that condition. The first, we may say, is health. Another is riches. A good name is another. A cultivated taste, well-stored and regulated mind, leisure, and fondness for reading and study, are also indications of prosperity. Now in what respects does soul prosperity answer to these elements of temporal prosperity? It must have them all in order to reach the highest prosperity. First, the soul must be in health. A healthful soul is one all of whose faculties are sound and in harmonious exercise: the eye of the understanding translucent, the muscles of will strong, the nerves of conscience sensitive; all the faculties receptive and digestive of Divine sanative truth. There are riches, too, which the soul may gather and enjoy. There are treasures attainable which are essential to spiritual prosperity. The same term which describes gathering of gold, describes the treasures of the Spirit. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich." It is possible for us to accumulate the "exceeding riches of His grace," the "unsearchable riches of Christ," and then "the riches of His glory." Even "the reproach of Christ is greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." If, then, you would have a prosperous soul you must have a rich soul. A good repute is also necessary to spiritual prosperity, not always in the sight of men, indeed, for the world will speak evil of you were you as holy as Jesus, but in the sight of God. And yet the world, even while it sneers and abuses, is won by a pure life. He has a prosperous soul who deserves the confidence and esteem of his fellow-men for his truthfulness, purity and benevolence, whether the world awards it to him or not. Need I say that a refined taste, cultivated by the study of Divine truth and by communion with the purest hearts and fellowship with the most lovely lives in the Church of God, is an admirable aid to the promotion and preservation of soul health? And, in fine, progress, advancement, success in holy and useful religious industries, is a mark and method of soul prosperity. If you would not call the drone and laggard, who is ever falling backward and eating up his capital and trading only upon his old stock, a prosperous man in any worldly business, how can you call one a prosperous Christian who has no religious enterprise, who satisfies himself with his old experience, and so without progress has nothing but an old stock and a diminished capital to draw upon? Thrift utilises the past, and draws it forward

into the present, and pushes it onward into the future. If we look abroad into the world, we shall find that many have temporal prosperity without spiritual. Their bodies are pampered; their souls are starved. Some have spiritual prosperity without temporal. Many of God's saints are among the poor of this world, with few of the comforts and none of the luxuries which money can buy. Yet they may be such as the Lord loves and guides. Many have neither temporal nor spiritual prosperity. Not all the poor are pure within. A few have both temporal and spiritual prosperity. There are some rich men that are godly. There are more whose circumstances are comfortable, who, above want, and without dread of poverty, enjoy as much of the pleasures of living as their wealthier neighbours. And with this good measure of worldly prosperity they unite the higher enjoyments of peace with God, faith in Jesus Christ, the consolations of the Holy Ghost, and pleasant fellowship with the purest and most refined society of earth. These are they who give power and beauty to the Church, and whose whole existence is benefit and blessing to the world. This is what St. John prayed for Gaius—earthly vigour and resources corresponding to the sincerity of his piety. If your soul health were brought into correlation with your bodily health, how would it be with your soul? The body, in many cases, becoming like the soul, would be transformed from strength and soundness into weakness and sickness. The subject teaches us that there is often a want of harmony between an inward character and our outward circumstances. The rich in this world's goods are often very poor in godly wealth. God's favour they improve in all secular business, and lay up for themselves treasures on earth. God's grace they neglect and ignore, and lay not up within themselves treasures for heaven. There are thus discords in human nature which the gospel is given to harmonise. Oh! do not consent to remain more rich or prosperous in worldly than in spiritual treasures. (*J. L. Burrows, D.D.*)

Gaius, and his soul's prosperity:—Can that be said of us, my brethren, which John here says of his well-beloved friend Gaius? Let us ask ourselves, in God's sight, whether or no our souls have had any true spiritual prosperity this past year. Gaius's soul was prospering. Gaius was in both moral and spiritual prosperity. And John, and all good men, saw that Gaius's soul was in prosperity, and they rejoiced to see it. Gaius prospered in the knowledge of the truth, and in the love of the truth, and in the obedience of the truth. He prospered also in his fidelity to whatever he undertook, both to John, and to the brethren, and to strangers.

1. Has your soul prospered under the preaching of the truth? Has this, or any other pulpit, been of any real assistance and service to your spiritual life this past year? And, if so, in what has your soul's prosperity manifested itself? And if you have experienced no such prosperity, why not?
2. But in these days, you are not independent of the pulpit, indeed, but you are not so wholly dependent on it, and instructed by it, as many men are. You have money to buy books and you have time to read books. A man is known by his books. A man cannot always choose his minister. But he can always choose his books. Now, honestly, do the books about God, and about the soul and God, make you uncomfortable? As a matter of fact, do you ever open, and of your own accord and liking, such a book from one year's end to the other?
3. But I may be a great authority on the best books; I may be a great collector and devourer of devotional books; and yet, all the time, I may be an utterly unspiritual and undevotional man myself. Philo for this twenty years has been collecting and reading all the spiritual books he can hear of. Philo will ride you forty miles in winter to have a conversation about spiritual books, or to see a collection larger than his own. But Philo never thinks how wonderful it is that a man who knows regeneration to be the whole world should yet content himself with books upon the new birth, instead of being born again himself. For all that is changed in Philo is his taste for books. He is no more dead to the world: no more delivered from himself: as unwilling to enter into war with himself, and to deny his appetites, as he was twenty years ago. Yet all is well with Philo: he has no suspicion of himself. Have you been any better of what you have heard about prayer this last year? I tell you you are cutting your own throat if you come and sit and consent to sermon after sermon on secret and spiritual prayer, and still remain the same prayerless and unspiritual man you have all your life been.
4. Socrates, the wisest of the Greeks, was wont to insist that a life without constant cross-examination was no true life at all. "Know thyself," was the holiest and most urgent of the holy texts of his god to Socrates. But a greater than Socrates has preached to us, and on still holier and still more heart-searching texts. How does His dialectic prosper in your souls? To put it in the most elementary and superficial way: Do

you know as much as your one besetting sin, and what it really is? Do you know about yourself what all your friends see in you with such pain and shame? and what all your enemies rejoice over and laugh at? Has Christ's cross-examination taken you down at all among the motives that move you in all you think, and say, and do? Is the holy and spiritual law of God at all within your heart? 5. Once more: Take from among a thousand things that might be set forth as sure tests of soul-prosperity—take the forgiveness of injuries. This is perhaps the very last grace to which even gracious men, and men prospering in grace, ever attain to. Cæsar forgot nothing but injuries. How do you stand in this all-important obedience? 6. Just one more test of your prosperity. The "taming of the tongue," as our Lord's brother calls it. If you are prospering with that great task, then you are well on to being a "perfect man" as James has it. All the roads in the old world led to Rome. And all the prosperities of the soul point to prayer. What a year! and the beginning of what prosperity! it would be to you, if you discovered for yourself, this year, something of the power, and the joy, and the sweetness of secret prayer. (*A. Whyte, D.D.*) *Health* is the foundation of all human activity. A sickly man cannot even think healthily. Men would be surprised if they were able to take a survey, to find how many of the things which have filled the world with feuds and laden with errors, may be traced back to a disordered stomach. Who would go to sea in a leaky vessel? (*K. Braune, D.D.*) *Health the chief thing*:—On one occasion an eminent literary man and a member of the House of Lords were talking with the Duke of Albany when the conversation turned on what gave the best chance of happy life. The literary man said that persons in a middle position who were without ambitions they could not satisfy were in the happiest state. The conversation went on, and one of the speakers said to the Duke that his own position must be a happy one. "You forget," he said, "I am worst off of all. I want the chief thing. It is health—health—health." *The helpfulness of health*:—A mower with a good scythe will do more in one day than another that hath a bad one can do in two; every workman knoweth the benefit of having his tools in order; and every traveller knows the difference between a cheerful and a tired horse. And they that have tried health and sickness know what a help it is in every work of God, to have a healthful body and cheerful spirits, and an alacrity and promptitude to obey the mind. (*R. Baxter.*)

Ver. 3. I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee.—Beautiful is the picture presented in this verse. Here we have brethren engaging in Christian intercourse, ascertaining each other's moral condition, and taking a deep and living interest in all that pertains to the education of the soul in the faith of Christ. This is a fine test of moral manhood. When we find men disposed to give the fullest credit for the growth and sincerity of their brethren in the faith, we may accept such witness as a proof that they themselves are firmly rooted in great principles, and are more and more resembling Him whose name they bear, and whose perfections it is the business of their lives to illustrate. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Gaius*:—We are now to study the character of Gaius, the sincere and generous host of Demetrius, the quiet but sturdy opponent of the intolerance and tyranny of Diotrophes, and the study should be very welcome to us since, if he has not climbed so high as the fervent and zealous Evangelist, still less has he fallen so low as the prating lover of pre-eminence who would not defer even to the apostle himself. With his first touch St. John strikes the ground-note, or the key-note, of the whole music which went to make up the character of the man. Gaius was one who "walked in truth," and so walked in it that men "bore witness to his truth." The Greek word here rendered "truth" might, if the change were worth making, be rendered "reality." But if I say that Gaius was a true man, a genuine man, a real man, whose life was all of one piece, whose daily conduct was the practical outcome and inference from the truths he believed, I may perhaps help you to some conception of the apostle's meaning. Still he implies much more than he says, and we must try to recover his implications also. We may, and must, infer from his stress on the word "truth" that Gaius cared more for deeds than for words; that there was not that unhappy divorce between his professions and his actions, his creed and his conduct, which we may see in Diotrophes and recognise only too clearly in ourselves. He did not look one way and walk another. He did not say one thing and mean another. He did not approve the better, and follow the worse, course. There was no hypocrisy, no insincerity, in him. He, the whole man, was "in the truth." Come what may, no danger, no allurement, will draw

or drive him from his steadfast and habitual round, or make him unfaithful to the faith and service of Christ. And we may also infer that Gaius was not one who would bring the spirit and methods of the world into the Church. Diotrophes might be as selfish, as opinionated, as ambitious, as subtle and scheming, as he was before he had entered the Christian fellowship. But that was not possible to a true man, a genuine Christian, such as Gaius, who really believed the truth as it is in Jesus. Nor, again, could a true man, in the apostle's sense, yield to that still more subtle and fatal temptation by which those are overcome in whom religion degenerates, as it seems to have done in Diotrophes, into mere ecclesiasticism or sectarianism. A too keen and exclusive interest in the outside of the cup and the platter is as dangerous in the Church as it is anywhere else. And the charity of Gaius was as conspicuous as his unworldliness. Not only had he received and entertained strangers, who were also brethren, setting forward Demetrius and other travelling evangelists on their journey; he continued to receive and serve them even when Diotrophes forbade him, and had persuaded the Church to excommunicate those who ventured to receive them. He could do no other, for he walked in truth. Nor was he to be talked out of his loyalty to truth, or threatened out of it. Truth in every form was welcome to him, let who would teach it, let who would prate against it. It was his duty to receive brethren even if they were strangers. A certain genuineness and wholeness, then, a certain staunchness and loyalty, combined with great breadth and tolerance, seems to have been characteristic of the hospitable and kindly Gaius. He was in the truth. He walked in truth. There was a clear accord, a fruitful harmony, between his principles and his practice which gave unity and force to his life. He could be true to truth, come whence it would. He could be true to men, even when they were reviled and thrust out of the Church. Now this large, steadfast, yet gentle loyalty to truth is as essential to a genuine, a real and strong, Christian character now as it was then: a loyalty which can not only stand against the narrow intolerance of a Diotrophes, and sympathise with the disinterested zeal of a Demetrius, but can also bring the large generous truths in which we believe to bear upon our daily life and practice, and constrain us to receive and set forward all who are serving the truth "that we may be fellow-workers with the truth" they teach. Before we can put ourselves even on the modest level of Gaius, we must ask ourselves, "What risks have we run, what sacrifices have we made, what pleasant fellowships have we put in jeopardy, that we might stand up for unpopular truths, or back up the men who were enforcing and defending them? There are men, no doubt, who have a terrible struggle to wage in the sacred precincts of their own soul before they can make religion the ruling inference and power of their lives; and of these, perhaps, we must not expect much public service until the issue of the inward conflict has been decided; though I believe that, even in this inward personal war, they would be greatly aided were they to make it more impersonal, and to care and contend for the salvation of other men instead of simply fighting for their own hand. And there are other men who are so engrossed and exhausted by the labours and cares, the occupations and irritations, of their daily business that they have as much as they can do in bringing the spirit of religion to bear on their daily task, and have neither leisure nor energy left for works of public usefulness. Remember, we are not told that Gaius talked Diotrophes down, or that he made a masterly defence of St. John, or even that he took a prominent part whether in managing the affairs or conducting the services of the Church. All we are told of him is that he showed much sympathy with the strangers whom John had commended to the Church, that his sympathy took very practical forms, and that he exercised it at the risk, and perhaps at the cost, of losing the sympathy of brethren who were not strangers, and with whom he habitually worshipped. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The testimony of others:*—I. FAITH IN POSSESSION. 1. The unconditional acceptance of the truth. 2. The harmony of truth with our moral nature. II. FAITH IN ACTION. 1. Faith in action is a healthful and enlivening exercise of our whole life. 2. Faith in action is a power wielded over others. III. FAITH ON RECORD. The faithful witnesses who gave their evidence in the presence of St. John were samples of others who gave their evidence before the tribunal of the world. 1. It is a record worth making. To write down the deeds, the trials, and the victories of faith is not a waste of either time or materials. 2. It is worth rehearsing. 3. It is worth preserving. Its influence is marvellous. The lamp of another strengthens the light of our own, to make clearer the Christian path. IV. THE REFLEX INFLUENCE OF FAITH. Gaius was the apostle's son in the faith. How the soul of the aged minister was lighted

up as the brethren related to him the glad tidings concerning the soul he had been instrumental in saving. (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *Fame* is like a ship that receives all passengers, like a waggon that entertains all, good and bad. *Bad things* go abroad, and good things go abroad, but here is the difference. 1. *Bad things* go speedily, good slowly; the one flies like eagles, the other creeps like snails. 2. The one are enlarged, the other diminished. 3. The one all hear of, but a few of the others. 4. *Bad things* go without ceasing; men are like flies that are ever insisting upon sores; the report of good things is like a hue and cry that quickly falls down in the country. 5. The one we tell of with delight; we take little pleasure in talking of the other, yet we ought to testify of the one rather than of the other. Let us witness of the virtues wherewith God hath adorned any. It shall redound to his glory, and it shall be a spur to prick on others to the like. (*W. Jones, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.—*The Christian walking in the truth*:—This is little more than a repetition of a declaration made by the apostle in the foregoing epistle. He is addressing there a pious mother, and he congratulates her on the spiritual prosperity of some of her family. Here he is addressing a beloved friend, and he congratulates him on the prosperity of his soul in nearly the same words. I. **TRUTH.** "What is truth?" said Pilate to our Lord with a mixture of incredulity and scorn, as though truth were a thing nowhere to be discovered; and the same question has been asked by the wise men of the earth with the same feelings from Pilate downwards to our day. The real Christian knows where it is to be found, for he has found it. His God has not only made him feel its importance and enkindled in him a desire for it, he has shown him the thing itself, revealed, communicated His truth to him: so that the man has it; has it in his hand whenever he takes up his Bible; has it in his mind and heart, for he has read his Bible, and by God's help has understood and believed it. That is the truth the apostle speaks of in this text. It is the revelation which God has made to us concerning spiritual and eternal things in His holy Word, and more particularly the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, which forms so main a part of that revelation. II. **WALKING IN IT.** The term "walking" in Scripture, when used as it is here, is always expressive, not of an act or two, but of a continued course of acting. To walk in the truth, then, means more than for a man once in his life to discover and embrace the truth; it implies besides this a daily familiarity with it, having it constantly before his mind, and his mind and his life being as constantly influenced and acted on by it. 1. That we hold fast Christ's truth; having had our minds enlightened to discover and opened to receive it, that we retain it in our mind, and this in its pure, simple, unadulterated form. 2. A continued profession of Christ's truth. 3. To live in the habitual practice of it. III. **THIS APOSTLE'S JOY WHEN HE HEARS OF HIS FELLOW-CHRISTIANS THUS WALKING.** He expresses this, you observe, in very strong terms. He does not say that he has no joy equal to this, but he does say that he has none above it: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." And this strong language plainly shows us two things. 1. The loftiness of his own character. This favoured, this honoured apostle, with all his remembrances of the past and all his glowing anticipations of the future, with heaven almost opening upon him, says he gets as much happiness from the holy walk of others as he does from any other source. We know where he learnt this. We see the Master's spirit shining forth again in the disciple. What was self to the blessed Jesus when the good of our lost souls was at stake? 2. The high importance of this holy walking in the truth. Such a man, we are sure, would never have rejoiced in a trifle. (1) It is important, first to ourselves. (a) It is the best test we can have of our belonging to Christ, of the sincerity and reality of our faith in Him. (b) Our enjoyment of the gospel, our spiritual comfort and happiness, depends on it. (c) Our sanctification or holiness depends altogether on the permanency of the place Christ's truth has within us. (2) Our continued walking in the truth is important also to our fellow-men. Every undecided, wavering professor of Christ's gospel among us diffuses a bad influence around him—he does mischief in the world though he may not aim to do it; while every consistent follower of the truth does good in the world, though he may scarcely see it. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The Christian minister's joy*:—I. **TO WALK IN TRUTH** implies—1. Sincerity of principle, honesty of intention, in opposition to all dissimulation or guile. 2. Decided attachment to evangelical doctrine. 3. Habitual regard to personal holiness. 4. Progress in Christian

excellency. II. Why this walking in truth should occasion the joy of CHRISTIAN MINISTERS. 1. In your Christian walk we witness the reality of your personal religion. 2. Walking as Christians secures your personal happiness. 3. When you walk as Christians, we have evidence of ministerial fidelity—that the truth is spoken to you; that the way of truth is marked down and recommended. 4. In your walk as Christians, we observe the fruit of our efforts for your good. 5. When you walk as Christians, we behold the increase of the Redeemer's cause in the world. 6. Walking as Christians, we see in you the partners of the felicity we hope for in a future world. CONCLUSION.—1. If such as “walk in truth” are our joy, it is evident who are our grief—All they who walk not in truth; who “walk in darkness”; who “walk disorderly”; who “walk in the flesh”; who “walk after their own ungodly lusts.” 2. By your walking, not in truth, but in unrighteousness, the cause of God is dishonoured, his enemies triumph, his friends are painfully affected. 3. Let us all look well to ourselves, and take heed to our own spirit and conversation. (T. Kidd.) *Walk in truth*.—I. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY—it was truth; not only truth in the bare sense of the term, but truth in its highest sense, unmistakable truth, infallible truth, the truth without which we cannot be happy neither here nor hereafter. You may be without much knowledge in reference to geology, or astronomy, or botany, you may be without much knowledge of these things, and not suffer much; but in reference to this, if you have it not, you are a fool indeed, and if you have it, you are made wise unto salvation. It is necessary for us while here, and for our well-being hereafter. II. THE MANNER OF THAT MINISTRY. “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” I say that the apostle's ministry was characterised by great earnestness and affection. There is no minister that will ever be useful without it. III. THE JOY AND SATISFACTION OF THE APOSTLE'S MINISTRY. The subject-matter of this joy of the apostle's was to hear that his children walk in truth. 1. To walk in the truth is to maintain evangelical truth. 2. To walk in truth is constantly to keep and to enjoy the truth. It gives us solid peace, it is “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” 3. Once more, when spiritual children walk in truth they are consistent Christians. Walk is not the position of a lazy Christian. (H. Allen, M.A.) *The parent's and pastor's joy*.—I. First, then, one of THE PARENT'S highest joys is his children's walking in truth: he has no greater joy. 1. And here we must begin with the remark that it is a joy peculiar to Christian fathers and mothers. No parents can say from their hearts, “We have no greater joy than to hear that our children walk in truth,” unless they are themselves walking in truth. No wolf prays for its offspring to become a sheep. 2. Let us, then, remark next that the joy mentioned in the text is special in its object. “I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my children walk in truth.” There is the point, their practical religion, their actual exemplification of the power of the gospel upon their lives. This proves that the teaching was well received, that the feeling was not mere excitement, that the profession was not a falsehood or a mistake, but was done in truth. 3. It is a healthful joy, in which we may indulge to the full without the slightest fear, for it is superior in its character to all earthly joys. Now, when our children walk in truth and love to God, it makes us rejoice that another heart is consecrated to His service. We may well rejoice in the salvation and in the sanctification of our sons and daughters, because this is the way in which the kingdom of Christ is to be extended in the world. 4. I will tell you why this is peculiarly the great joy of some Christian parents—it is because they have made it a subject of importunate prayer. That which comes to us by the gate of prayer comes into the house with music and dancing. 5. This joy is quickening in its effect. All who have ever felt it know what an energy it puts into them. Have you some of your children converted while others remain unsaved? Then I charge you, let what the Lord has done for some encourage you concerning the rest. 6. Once more, this high joy of which we have spoken is very solemn in its surroundings, for it involves this alternative—“What if my children should not walk in truth?” Well, that means for us during this life many sorrows, nights of sleeplessness and days of anxiety. II. You may view the text as specifying THE PASTOR'S greatest reward. “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” No minister ought to be at rest unless he sees that his ministry does bring forth fruit, and men and women are born unto God by the preaching of the Word. Those who are the preacher's children are often known to him; they were to John, else he could not have spoken of them as “my children,” and could not have had joy in them as his children. From this I

draw the inference that it is the duty of every one who receives spiritual benefit, and especially conversion, from any of God's servants, to let them know it. Put on Christ publicly in baptism, according to His command: unite yourself with His Church, and commune with the people among whom you have been born unto God. It seems from our text that John was in the habit of hearing about his spiritual children: "I have no greater joy than to hear"—mark that—"than to hear that my children walk in the truth." That implies that, if you make a profession of your faith, people will talk about you. John could not have heard if others had not spoken. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A minister's chief joy*:—I. WHAT IS THE GREAT OBJECT OF A MINISTER'S DESIRE ON BEHALF OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. He longs to behold in them a holy consistency, a high state of heavenly affections, and a careful attention to the duties of morality. 2. In them he expects to find a steadiness that bids defiance to temptation, and cannot be diverted from its purpose, either by the allurements of sense or the terrors of persecution. 3. As a parent wishes to see in his children a gradual advancement towards maturity both in their bodily and intellectual faculties, so does a minister long for his people's progress towards perfection. II. WHENCE IT IS THAT THE ATTAINMENT OF THAT OBJECT FILLS HIM WITH SUCH EXALTED JOY. 1. Because it is by this only that the ends of their ministry are answered. 2. Because by this only can God be glorified. 3. Because without this they can have no hope of ever meeting their people in the realms of bliss. (*Sketches of Sermons.*) *The minister's greater joy*:—I. THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP—"my children." 1. Solicitude. 2. Endearment. II. THE GREATEST POSSIBLE REJOICING. 1. It is the greater joy arising out of the greater subject. Man's salvation is God's greater work. 2. It is the greater joy on account of the greater influence. The converts were exposed to sharp temptations, and subjected to fiery persecutions. 3. It is the greater joy on account of the greater prospect. (*T. Davies, M.A.*)

Vers. 5, 6. **Thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers.**—*Allegiance to the faith*:—In these few words the sum and substance of the Christian life are placed before us. They convey to us that he who was addressed was simply loyal to truth and loyal to duty, whilst this, the loyalty of his being, flowed forth in act from a fountain of the purest love. These, in the Christian, cannot be disjoined. The mere philosopher may present us with a state of loyalty to truth, as truth is found in the regions of science. If he descends into the bowels of the earth, and tries to read the marvellous structure of men's temporal habitation, he is supposed to be loyal to fact or to truth as he finds it. Or, if his business lies on the surface of the world, and he questions the trees of the forests, the flowers of the field, or the grass of the earth, he ever holds his intellect in allegiance, and utters the thing as it is. Or, if rising from the earth, and traversing the starry firmament, he tries to measure, and weigh, and count the number of the stars, he stands the minister of truth, the interpreter of the works and ways of the Omnipotent Creator. All this, so far as it is an attitude of human reason, is right and well. But all this, however effective in giving strength and enlargement to man's intellect, does not achieve the full loyalty to truth commended in the sacred writings. The truth therein revealed contains the knowledge of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. It displays to the human understanding the only pathway leading out of sin into piety, out of misery into happiness, out of death into life. But whilst, with child-like simplicity, the message of the Divine love is to be received into the understanding, with the same simplicity the law of the Divine love is to be received into the heart. The conscience of the genuine Christian is to be ruled by the commandments of Jesus. Our Lord is King in Zion. Alone He legislates, and alone demands the indefeasible allegiance of the conscience of man. It is not pretended that men do not know in any thing right from wrong till they have opened the Bible. Men in all ages, in all lands, have gone into the market of the world attempting to maintain a standard of truth. To this lawgiver, legislating for the conscience and the heart, the disciple of Jesus becomes immediately and uninterruptedly liege. Loyalty to Him who spake as never man spake arises out of confidence in Him who died as never man died. Fidelity to Jesus as our rightful Lord is essentially interwoven with fidelity to Jesus as the Lord our righteousness. And this was the state of Gaius: a Christian doing whatever he did to the brethren, and to strangers, in the faith that so God had taught him, and under the conviction of his conscience that so his Lord had commanded. But this is not all; there is another element still, the ever-living, ever-moving impulse that urges onward the whole. It is love—the end of the

commandment—out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. Over and above the marvellous signature of the kindness and love of God our Saviour written in the blood of the Cross, the Spirit of love proceeding from the Father and the Son comes to enkindle this Divine flame in every follower of Jesus. In every Christian He is the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. No religion found among men, and invented by men, ever pretends to the indwelling of this infinite agent—the moral renovator of the soul. His presence in man is the presence of holy love. In this we behold the living power that moves the heart of the kingdom of God; the life that reanimates every soul loyal to the Messiah, and binds for ever, beneath the perfect bond, the subjects of the eternal King. Such, then, are the three essential elements which form the Christian life and the Christian character—the spirit of allegiance to whatever the Word of God reveals; the spirit of allegiance to whatever the Word of God commands; and lastly, the spirit of love animating and urging onward the whole. What Divine simplicity. (*J. Paterson, D.D.*) **Bring forward on their journey after a godly sort.**—*Noble deeds*.—I. THE STANDARD OF NOBLE DEEDS, “worthily of God.” 1. Gaius was animated by the purest motive. To be charitable is praiseworthy, but to serve God is better. He received not the glory of men. 2. He did the best he could. The question was not whether the deed was worthy of Gaius, but whether it would be acceptable of God. 3. He had the best end in view. It was the glory of God. He treated well the servants for the Master’s sake. II. THE INSPIRATION OF NOBLE DEEDS, “Who bare witness to thy love before the Church.” 1. Deeds worthy to be rehearsed. Christians need not indulge in useless conversation while so much valuable history waits to be told. 2. Deeds worthy of imitation. The life of Gaius may fail us in some particulars; if so, look at the life of Jesus. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*)

Vers. 7, 8. For His name’s sake they went forth.—*Christian missions*.—I. THE MOTIVE, CONDUCT, AND DISINTERESTEDNESS OF MISSIONARIES. 1. Their motive: “for His name’s sake”—for Christ’s service. 2. Their conduct: “they went forth.” With the gospel in his hand and the Saviour in his heart he makes his way through burning deserts and the howling wilderness, braving the rage of climates. 3. Their disinterestedness: “taking nothing” of those to whom they are sent. When an artisan or commercial man quits his native country for foreign lands it is in the hope of making a fortune; or when a navigator undertakes an arduous voyage of discovery, it is with the hope of immortalising his name. Not so the Christian missionary. II. THE POWERFUL AND ENCOURAGING MOTIVES which we have to “be fellow-helpers to the truth” by contributing towards the great work of propagating the gospel. 1. It is the command of our Divine Redeemer: “Go ye into all the world,” &c. 2. Every intelligent and responsible being needs the gospel, which alone can supply all his moral and spiritual wants. III. WHAT IS OUR DUTY UNDER THESE AFFECTING CALLS UPON OUR SYMPATHIES AND BENEVOLENCE? 1. There is a widely-kindling zeal for the diffusion of knowledge, on the one hand, and an evident eagerness to receive instruction on the other. 2. The facilities for propagating the gospel are now greater than ever. IV. THE BLESSED EFFECTS WHICH HAVE ACTUALLY RESULTED TO MANKIND THROUGH THE DIVINE BLESSING ON MISSIONARY EFFORTS. V. THE DISTINGUISHED RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES WITH WHICH WE ARE PRE-EMINENTLY FAVOURED. (*T. H. Horne, B.D.*) *Primitive missionaries*.—I. THE EXAMPLE OF THE PRIMITIVE MISSIONARIES. 1. They were well principled. This appears from their going forth, not only at the command of Jesus Christ, but “for His name’s sake.” 2. They were active amidst scenes of hardship. “They went forth.” II. THE CASE OF PRIVATE CHRISTIANS, THAT IS, WHAT DUTY REQUIRES THEM TO DO ON BEHALF OF MISSIONARIES. 1. We are “fellow-helpers” to the truth when we suggest what is calculated to animate Christian ministers in their sacred career. 2. We are “fellow-helpers to the truth” when we contribute to the pecuniary support of Christian ministers. 3. We are “fellow-helpers to the truth” when we intercede earnestly on behalf of ministers, and of all whom they endeavour to bring to the knowledge of the truth. (*O. A. Jeary.*) *Missionary enterprise*.—I. THE MOTIVE. To feel a strong compassion for perishing souls is a good incentive, but to work for the glory of God is better. 1. The glorious name. Its lustre is on every page of history. 2. The gracious name. “And His name shall be called Jesus.” 3. The enduring name. As long as the sun will shine in the heavens. II. THE ENTERPRISE. They went forth to proclaim this name. 1. An enterprise of self-sacrifice. Every earthly prospect was abandoned. 2. An enterprise of peril. Not only danger arising from natural causes, but from persecution.

It meant possibly death. 3. Consequently an enterprise of faith. III. THE DISCRETION. They accepted no hospitality from those who might have misunderstood their motive. They were careful that nothing should hinder the work. Prosperity as well as work was their aim. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*) *For the name's sake*:—In all the older manuscripts the phrase is, “For the name's sake.” The meaning is the same, but the expression of it is more striking in the general form. I. “FOR THE NAME'S SAKE” IS THE AVAILING PLEA IN ACCEPTABLE PRAYER. God has revealed Himself in Christ. The name is the character; the name of God is the character of God as manifested among men. He has got Himself a glorious name, and our knowledge of that name has been completed, rounded, fulfilled, alone in Christ. To pray in His name, therefore, is to recognise God in Him, in His whole personality, in His whole history, in what He has done and suffered on our behalf. II. “FOR THE NAME'S SAKE” IS IN A PRE-EMINENT DEGREE THE SPRING AND MOTIVE POWER OF HOLY OBEDIENCE. This is the meaning of the text in its own connection. These men went forth in a spirit of self-consecration that asked no questions, that fixed no limits; they went forth to tell the world the news. And they lived upon the news they told. When they had plenty of outward comfort it was hallowed by the “name.” When they had no comfort the gospel was compensation. The gospel would be benefited by their self-denial—that settled the question in a moment. Nor was this a transient impulse pertaining exclusively to the very earliest days. It multiplied itself in great numbers of instances, it continued from age to age. The whole secret of such loyalty, of such endurance, of life so unselfish, so divine, lay in this—“For the name's sake.” Nor let any one say that in this matter we live upon the past, and that we are always speaking of a glory that has faded from among men. Answer ye graves of missionaries on Indian plains! and ye martyrs for Christ lately slain. Ye glorious company of consecrated souls! You and your labours are more to the city, and more precious to the State, than bridges and viaducts, and queenly procession and regal pomp. What essentially is this Christian service? It means the consecration of the redeemed self in wholeness to the glory of Christ and to the service of our fellow-men under Him. The love of Christ has this perfectly unique peculiarity, that it is the love of God and the love of man in one; and when, “for the name's sake,” we give ourselves to God and live to God, then we are swayed by this all-comprehending love. And just as surely as we are so, “we are more than conquerors.” For love is invincible. Of what importance, then, must it be to a Christian to be full of love, full of the love of Christ to him, full of quick answering love to Christ, full of the power of “the name.” (*J. Raleigh, D.D.*) **Fellow-helpers to the truth.**—*Truth helpers*:—I. WE ARE “FELLOW-HELPERS TO THE TRUTH” WHEN WE YIELD OURSELVES TO THE INFLUENCE OF TRUTH. The most powerful agencies only effect their work through co-operation. II. WE ARE “FELLOW-HELPERS TO THE TRUTH” AS WE SHOW ITS POWER IN OUR LIVES. If you want to judge of the electric light you go and see it in operation, and as you see mansions, halls, and streets illuminated, you are impressed with the greatness and utility of the discovery more than you would be by all the writers and lecturers who attempt to describe its merits. So, when you see a man temperate, upright, and benevolent, happy amidst surrounding ills, patient in suffering, gentle under opposition, firm in upholding what is right, you see what education cannot do, what human effort cannot accomplish—what can only be realised and exhibited by those who know and receive the truth. You are impressed, convinced, led to admire and desire the same experience yourselves. III. BY PRAYER WE MAY BE “FELLOW-HELPERS TO THE TRUTH” (2 Cor. i. 11). IV. WE MAY BE, AND OUGHT TO BE, “FELLOW-HELPERS TO THE TRUTH” BY PERSONAL AND PECUNIARY CONTRIBUTIONS. We should be, like Gaius, hospitable and generous. Men are honoured who fight the battles of their country, who make discoveries in science, who improve the arts of civilised life; but I tell you to have lived the truth, to have contributed to the advancement of the truth, will count for more in the eternity of the future than all the wreaths of honour that victors ever won or all the wealth that the millionaire has ever amassed. (*R. Sewell.*) **Fellow-helpers to the truth**:—What distinguishing honour has God put upon His chosen that He not only makes them partakers of His grace, but instruments for communicating that grace to others? Not the intellectual and the learned alone, not the bishop and the priest alone, but the weak and the despised. I. THE PRECIOUS TREASURE CONFIDED TO THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST. “The Truth.” It is the Truth of God. Not merely as all truth may be said to be of God. It is not truth as gathered up from the works of God, it is not truth as wrought out by the efforts of human reason, it is not truth

as discovered by investigating the mysterious page of providence, of which the apostle speaks, but it is the Truth revealed by God Himself. The Truth of God. Because "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The Truth of God: which He has authenticated by incontestable miracles, to which He has given the stamp and character of His own glory. The Truth of God: because, as God hath recorded it, so God conveys it to the believing mind and heart. It is written, "All thy children shall be taught of God." It is the Truth of God that is entrusted to us, and it is the truth touching eternity. Take away this simple word and you take from the world all its moral, spiritual, eternal light. It is, too, the truth unto salvation. It does not merely reveal our origin, our duty, our destiny; it does not merely unfold to us the law that we have transgressed; it does not merely thus reveal to man what will deepen his guilt and darken his doom; but it does all this to prepare the way for the disclosures of that unspeakable work—the redemption of lost mankind through the incarnation, death, and blood of God's own Son. II. WHAT IS THE DUTY OF THOSE TO WHOM GOD HAS CONFIDED SO UNTOLD A TREASURE? what is their duty towards that truth? "We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." And first of all, it is clear, our duty is to "receive the truth in the love of it" for our own souls. What mean we to aid in building the ark if we ourselves do not enter it? But if we "receive the truth in the love of it," it is clear from the whole tendency of the gospel that we shall look upon that truth as a treasure confided to us as stewards, and "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." The truth is evidently not designed for the few, but for the many; not for some one chosen nation, but for the whole world. There is no exclusiveness in the gospel. Then "the truth as it is in Jesus" cannot communicate itself. God has made no provision for the truth to be self-propagated. He hath not ordained that it should be so much spread abroad by the written book as that it should be proclaimed principally by the living voice. It is clear, therefore, that the truth is confided to the Church, that the Church may be "fellow-helper to the truth," aiding it in its glorious career; giving it its chariot in which it may ride on "conquering and to conquer"; supplying, if we may so speak, the gale that is to spread the sails of the vessel, freighted with the "pearl of great price," that it may bear it round the world. III. HOW CAN WE DISCHARGE OURSELVES OF THIS HIGH RESPONSIBILITY? and how can the lowliest amongst us discharge his duty in this high matter? (*H. Stowell, M.A.*) *Fellow-helpers to the truth*:—1. By speaking friendly to the preachers of the truth. Hezekiah spake comfortably to the Levites, which was a cheering of their hearts, as the word importeth. 2. By a private instructing of others, as Priscilla and Aquila did Apollos. Householders that catechise their families are great fellow-helpers to the truth. 3. As they that made apologies for them. 4. By pulling them out of dangers. So they that let down Paul in a basket through the wall of Damascus were fellow-helpers to the truth that Paul preached. 5. By helping them to their maintenance. So did Hezekiah by commanding the people to pay their tithes and offerings to the priests and Levites, whereby they were encouraged in the law of the Lord (2 Chron. xxxi. 4). 6. By ministering temporal things to them, by receiving the preachers of the truth into our houses, by relieving of their necessities, by affording them all the comfort we can, by sending to them if they be in distress. (*W. Jones, D.D.*) *All ought to be fellow-helpers*:—In the old coaching days, before railways were as common as they are now, I observed a notice about the amount of first, second, and third-class fares upon one of these coaches. As the seats all appeared alike, I took a third-class ticket, expecting to be as well off as those with second or first-class tickets, and beside that, I should have the satisfaction of having saved my money. However, at the foot of a steep hill the driver stopped, and shouted in stentorian tones, "First-class passengers keep your seats; second-class passengers get out and walk; third-class passengers push behind." Let us all be third-class passengers, not sitting at ease looking on while others do the work, nor walking off from it, but pushing behind with all our might, and so helping and encouraging the often overworked and overstrained leaders who are bearing the burden and heat of the day. (*F. Clarkson.*)

Vers. 9-11. Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence.—*Diotrephes*:—Besides the light which this brief Epistle casts on the state of the Christian Church toward the close of the first century, it presents us with "the portraits in little" of three remarkable men—Demetrius, Diotrephes, and Gaius. We are to study a man of a very inferior stamp—the vain, irritable, and loquacious Diotrephes, whose

religion seems to have been quite compatible with a slippery morality. What exactly it was at which Diotrephes took offence, whether in the letter of St. John or in the conduct of Demetrius, we are not told; but it is not difficult to offend a man who has an undue sense of his own importance, and whose self-love may be set on fire by any match, however innocently it may be struck. St. John clearly implies that it was some wound to his love of pre-eminence, his determination to stand first and to exact a homage he did not deserve. But whatever the prick which his vanity had received, the character of the man comes out in his wholly disproportionate and extravagant resentment of the offence. In his resentment he sets himself against men far wiser and better than himself; he imperils the peace of the Church; he diminishes its numbers and strength. Nothing less than the excommunication of all who had dared to differ from him, all who had ventured to receive the Evangelists whom he would not receive, and whom he had forbidden them to receive, would satisfy him. But the democratic constitution of the primitive Church would not permit one man, however eminent, to excommunicate those who had offended him, simply because they had offended him. Before that extreme sentence was passed upon them, he must have won over a majority of his and their fellow-members to his side. He must have taken a bypath to his end. And, indeed, a man of inferior gifts and of a spirit less informed by the grace of Christ, who will stand first, will put himself forward and attempt to rule a free Christian congregation, must take this course. He must play on the ignorance, and even on the piety, of those who follow him, must affect a superior wisdom, or a superior orthodoxy. He will not let facts speak for themselves, but sets himself with his glib tongue to lick them out of their natural shape. He cannot suffer learning, wisdom, godliness, experience, to exert their natural and beneficent influence, but must at all risks counterwork that influence and suggest plausible reasons for not yielding to it. How else can he win and maintain a pre-eminence he does not deserve? There is nothing in the Epistle to suggest that Diotrephes held unsound doctrinal views, or that he fell into what are called gross and open sins. Had he been unorthodox, indeed, or flagrantly immoral, he would never have gained that eminence in the Church which he insisted on converting into pre-eminence. All that he is blamed for is the conceit and self-assurance which rendered him impatient of rivalry or resistance, and set him on seeking power rather than usefulness. Any man who will have his own way is only too likely to come to a bad end. Any man who insists on the Church taking his way is only too certain to prove a blind guide, who will lead those who follow him into a ditch, and perhaps leave them in the ditch when he himself scrambles out of it. But you may be asking, "How did Diotrephes induce his fellow-members to follow his lead, since they must, most of them at least, have been good men who were not likely to excommunicate their fellows either for an excess of charity or for wounding his self-conceit? And the answer to that question is suggested by St. John's words: "He receiveth not us"; "prating against us with wicked (or malicious) words." Yet Diotrephes could hardly have openly denied the authority of an apostle so revered and beloved as St. John. No; but he may have questioned it indirectly. He may have dilated on the independence of the Church, of every separate community of believers, on its competence and right to manage its own affairs, to appoint its own agents, to decide on its own course of action, and have asked whether they would suffer, whether it would be right to suffer, any outsider, however honoured and beloved he might be, to govern and control them. He may even have persuaded himself, as well as others, that John had taken a new departure and was giving a new tone to Christian thought and life, and that the Church was in no small danger of being led away from its old standards, and thinking too much of the mercy and too little of the severity of God. If he could not say bluntly, "I mean to stand first in this Church, let who will oppose me," or, "I hate Gaius and his pretensions to advise and rule," or, "I dislike Demetrius, and resent his lack of deference for me," he could at least appeal to the memory and teaching of their venerated founder, and avow his preference of St. Paul's gospel over that of St. John. For we must now remember that we are told two things about Diotrephes. We are told not only that he loved to have the pre-eminence, but also that he was cursed with a voluble tongue, that he would "still be speaking"; for how often does a fluent tongue lead a man whither, in his reasonable moods, he would not go, and betray him into positions which he would not willingly have assumed? Mr. Talkative, as Bunyan calls him, may do, and often does do, quite as much harm as Mr. Illwill. It is his own way he wants, not the best way, not the way which will be most beneficial to others; and if he cannot get it by fair means, he will often

sloop to foul or dubious means, stirring up division and discontent, prating with malicious words against those who oppose him when fair words will no longer serve his turn. And if the itch of speaking is apt to lead on to the prating of idle, and even of malicious, words, the lust of power commonly leads to an abuse of power. "John, or Demetrius, has slighted me. Gaius does not defer to me or my wishes. He has received strange brethren without consulting me, or when he knew that I had forbidden their reception. Nothing, then, shall induce me to receive them. I will move heaven and earth against them, and against all who abet them, be they who they will"—when a man has once reached that point, and Diotrophes seems to have reached it, he is not far from any evil word or any evil work. No punishment is more unwelcome to such an one than that with which John threatens Diotrophes: "I will put him in mind of his words and his works," bring him to book for them in his own presence and in that of the Church. They dislike nothing so much as being compelled to face their own whispers, and to see how they sound in honest and impartial ears, or even in their own ears now that their excitement and irritation have subsided. Diotrophes, then, was a man who was not necessarily, or wholly bad; a man who may have had many good qualities and have done some service to the Church; but his good qualities were blended with, and their good effects vitiated by, an exorbitant self-conceit and loquacity. "Beloved," exclaims St. John, when he had completed his miniature of Diotrophes, "imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God; he that doeth evil hath not seen God." And by this exhortation I do not understand him to imply that Diotrophes was an utterly bad man who had never seen God, never taken the first step toward a participation of the Divine nature, any more than he means that Demetrius, whom he forthwith begins to describe, was a man wholly good in whom no fault could be found. But I do understand him to mean that a vain man, too fond of hearing himself talk, too bent on taking the foremost place, is closing his eyes against the heavenly vision, and may do as much harm as if his intents were bad. The apostle may imply that, as Demetrius was undoubtedly doing a good work, he was a good man; and that Diotrophes, in so far as he opposed and crippled that work, was doing an evil work and took his place among evil men. (*S. Cox, D.D.*)

Diotrophes:—I. I will show you who is not DIOTROPHES. 1. He whose godly walk and conversation secures for him the entire confidence of the brethren, and thus gives him great influence. 2. He whose talents and education necessarily make him a man of influence. 3. Nor he, whose well-known and oft-proved wisdom and prudence make him much sought unto in counsel. 4. These men generally do not seek influence. It is unavoidable. It follows them as their shadow. II. I proceed to show who DIOTROPHES is. 1. Sometimes he is a man who never had his will broken. As a Church member, he expects the household of Christ to give way to him. He is wilful and headstrong, often as unreasonable as a mere animal. 2. Sometimes he is a man of wealth. His riches give him authority in the world; and he takes it for granted they ought to do so in the Church. 3. Sometimes he is a man of some learning and much volubility, who fancies that his capacity ought to give his opinion authority. III. I proceed to set forth DIOTROPHES IN ACTION. If the minister does not take him for counsellor he is his enemy. With every movement does he find fault unless he originated it. IV. In the next place, I remark upon DIOTROPHES' CHARACTER. 1. He is very unlike Christ, who was meek and lowly. 2. He is very disobedient to the word, "Let each esteem other better than himself." 3. He is against that equality which Christ has established in His Church. Practical observations: 1. Diotrophes is most of the time in trouble. Always looking for deference, he is always liable to think it wanting. 2. The Church can take no surer road to trouble than to give way to Diotrophes. 3. Diotrophes will scarce be the friend of the minister. The natural influence of the religious teacher disturbs him. 4. It is best to look for Diotrophes in his own pew. Perhaps we may find him in our own seat. 5. Diotrophes is sometimes married, and his partner may be a true yoke-fellow. (*Christian Treasury.*)

Love of pre-eminence:—It is not Diotrophes alone whose character my text describes—it is human nature generally; it is every man whose heart is unrenewed by grace. 1. A haughty heart, a lofty look, a proud temper, ambition, spirit, vanity—these are, more or less, the characteristic marks of the natural man. No such man is content with the station in which it has pleased Providence to place him. All are for being greater than they are. Each must have his own will executed—his own humour gratified. Things must be done exactly to his taste, and every other person's will and pleasure must give way to his. 2. Whence arises this "love of the pre-eminence"? to what is it to be ascribed? To

an awful ignorance of ourselves. We all entertain naturally a very high opinion of our own characters—a vast notion of our own merits. We cannot really think that we are miserable sinners whilst we are striving which shall be the greatest. 3. Is this love of the pre-eminence consistent with a state of grace? Search the Scriptures for the answer. The Bible indeed is not a levelling book. It does not sweep away distinctions. But as for men of such a spirit as Diotrefes—of a vain, proud, self-exalting spirit—the Bible passes upon them its sentence of condemnation, and gives us everywhere to understand that heaven is shut against them (Matt. xviii. 3; 1 Tim. iii. 5). 4. But why is a love of the pre-eminence so utterly condemned in the Word of God? Wherein does the great guilt of it consist? (1) First, it is utterly unsuitable to our condition as fallen guilty creatures. (2) There is another reason why it is so utterly inconsistent with the character of a Christian to love the pre-eminence. That post of honour is preoccupied. It belongs, not to the Christian, but to the Christian's Lord—not to the saved sinner, but to that sinner's Saviour. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *The true method of eminence*:—Men are not so much mistaken in desiring to advance, as in judging what will be an advance, and what the right method of it. A man proves himself fit to go higher who shows that he is faithful where he is. When workmen are building the foundation of vast structures they must needs labour far below the surface, and in disagreeable conditions. But every course of stone which they lay raises them higher, and, at length, when they reach the surface, they have laid such solid work under them that they need not fear now to carry up their walls, through towering storeys, till they overlook the whole neighbourhood. A man that will not do well in his present place because he longs to be higher is already too high, and should be put lower. *Ambition*:—Unless they can be top-sawyers they will not touch a saw. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us.—Diotrefes rebuked*:—Here St. John sets up a flag of defiance against Diotrefes. We must all pluck up the like courage against the adversaries of the truth. To give wild horses the rein too much is to spoil them and their riders too; to loose the cords of the ship is to drown the ship; to be too remiss in the Church is to overthrow the Church. Lenitives will serve for little sores, but great sores must have drawing plasters, otherwise we do not cure but kill. We must bear our own enemies, but our backs must not be so broad as to bear God's enemies. Then he makes an enumeration of his deeds; they be in number four, like four stairs in a ladder, one higher than another; the lowest stair of all is his prating, the next to that is his not receiving of the brethren; the third is his forbidding of others to do it; the last and greatest of all is his casting of them out of the Church. (*W. Jones, D.D.*) *Censorious men* commonly take up magnifying glasses to look at other persons' imperfections, and diminishing glasses to look at their own enormities. **Not content therewith.**—*Covetousness in sinning*:—There is a kind of covetousness in sinning: a covetous man is not content with that which he hath, though he have the riches of Cressus, yet still he would have more. So he that hath begun to drink of the water of sin, must needs drink more and more. A man that sinneth is like one that is tumbled down from a steep hill, he cannot stay till he come to the bottom unless there be an extraordinary stop by the way; there is no stay in sinning unless God stay us by the hand of His Spirit. Not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, which notwithstanding he ought to do, for in receiving of them he receives Christ (Matt. xxv. 35). Yet not content with that, he forbids them that would, like the dog in the manger that would neither eat provender himself nor suffer the horse to eat it; like the Pharisees that shut up the kingdom of heaven before men, neither go in themselves nor suffer others to enter in; these be vile wretches, neither give to good uses themselves nor suffer others, dissuade others; these are guilty of their own damnation, and of the damnation of others. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 11. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good.—Evil not to be imitated:—Evil is soon imitated, especially in great persons; they are a countenance to it; their actions seem to be laws. Such a great man swears profanely. Why may not I swear too? No; follow not that which is evil in any—no, not in good men. 1. Evil is agreeable to our nature; it is soon followed; a little persuading will serve the turn; therefore we had need to beware of it. 2. There be many instigators to that which is evil, the devil and his instruments to thrust us forward. 3. Evil is common, a weed that grows everywhere; goodness is a flower that grows in few gardens (Matt. vii. 13, 14). 4. Evil, since the fall, is of greatest antiquity. There was a Cain before an Abel; therefore we had need to

watch over ourselves, else we shall follow evil ere we be aware. 5. Whither doth evil lead us? Even to hell, follow her not; let her go alone for all us; yet she hath too many followers, even in the light of the gospel. (*W. Jones, D.D.*) **He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.**—*Godliness*:—Follow the faith of Abraham, the zeal of Phinehas, the sincerity of Nathaniel, the liberality of Zaccheus and Cornelius; listen to the admonition of St. Paul (*Phil. iv. 8*). But let us come to St. John's reason. 1. For goodness. "He that doeth good is of God," not by propagation, but by imitation; he is full of goodness; be you so, too, in some measure. 2. He doeth that which is acceptable to God; he is of His family; he serves and obeys Him, therefore God will reward him for it. On the other side, "he that doeth evil hath not seen God." Why? Then none hath seen Him, for all do evil. The meaning is, that doth accustom himself to do evil. The godly man doeth evil, but it is upon weakness; the wicked do it upon wilfulness; the one accidentally, the other properly and naturally. He that walketh in the dark cannot see; wicked men walk in the darkness of sin and ignorance, therefore they cannot see God. Therefore let us abhor that which is evil; it will blind our eyes, and keep us from seeing of God. (*Ibid.*) *Sin injurious to spiritual sight*:—1. He that doeth evil—willingly doeth it—cannot have seen God in the sense of having seen and felt the claims and the force of His commandments. Diotrephes could not have seen God in the commandments, or he would not have forced his way to the "pre-eminence," withheld kindly hospitalities, or spoken untrusting things of the apostle. 2. He that doeth evil—willingly doeth evil—cannot have "seen God" in the example of His Son. 3. He that doeth evil—willingly doeth evil—cannot have "seen God" in the illuminations of the Divine will through the Holy Ghost. All evil resists His in-workings. Or, to use the figure of our text, all evil blinds us to His presence, and leaves us to grope our way in the darkness of our self-seeking. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*)

Ver. 12. Demetrius hath good report of all men.—*The Christian character will stand every test*:—1. The test of public opinion. All men had a good word for Demetrius. But there are antipathies in the worldly mind; how, then, can we expect an unbiased judgment? We answer that truth must vanquish error as the light does the darkness. Dishonesty can only obtain a temporary triumph over integrity (*1 Pet. ii. 12*). 2. The test of the Word of God. The standard of character is the law of the Lord. We use the Bible for comparison as well as for instruction. It is a mirror in which to see our true condition. 3. The test of Church fellowship. Christians know each other intimately, and as such they know each other's failings; yea, and they know the difficulties which beset a holy life. To have a good word from those who thus know us testifies to the genuineness of our character. 4. The test of the final judgment. (*Ibid.*) *Demetrius*:—An evangelist, possibly a prophet, animated by a most self-sacrificing and disinterested spirit, which sprang from an ardent love for Christ the Saviour of men, Demetrius won for himself a threefold testimony. 1. He won "the witness of all," says St. John, *i.e.*, the witness of all good men, of all who were capable of appreciating goodness. Even those who rejected his message had nothing to allege against the man, save the sublime folly of a perilous and unprofitable enthusiasm; while those who accepted it from him, or had already accepted it from other lips, could not but admire the fineness of his spirit and the fire of his zeal. 2. More, and better still, he won "the testimony of the truth itself." For he who daily sets his life upon the die that he may be true to his convictions, he who, moved by the grace and love of Christ, seeks not his own things, but the things of others; he who devotes himself with burning zeal and all-enduring courage to the service of truth and the salvation of men—to him the truth itself, which has made him what he is, bears witness. Men do not despise ease and a sure provision for their daily wants; they do not daily affront every form of danger and loss, for truths, or beliefs, which have no real, no vital, hold upon them. "They who do such things as these declare plainly"; they "make it manifest" that they are the servants of a truth, which they love more than they love themselves. It is the truth itself which speaks through them, and bears witness to them. 3. Last of all, St. John adds his own testimony to that of the previous witnesses: "We also bear witness." And any man who has devoted himself to the service and spread of a truth which has not met with wide or general recognition will understand the special charm which this testimony would exert on Demetrius. A very noble character, on which, simply by describing it, St. John has pronounced

a very noble eulogium. Let me also remind you that great as Demetrius looks to us—great in his disinterestedness, his devotion, his zeal—he was not a man of any great mark in the primitive Church. It is not some hero of distinction, some honoured and beloved man of spiritual genius, whom I have tried to place before you; but a man of whom we should never have heard but for the prating insubordination of Diotrephes. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *A good name*:—There be two things which we ought all to procure—a good conscience in respect of God, and a good name in regard of men. 1. A good name is sweet and comfortable; it is preferred before the most precious things that men have in greatest estimation (Prov. xxii. 3). 2. It is profitable. A good name maketh the bones fat. A good name maketh a man fat; he eats, he drinks, he sleeps the better for it. 3. It secures a man while he is alive; they that have a bad report for their injurious dealing are maligned; they go, in some sort, in danger of their lives; they that have a good report walk cheerfully and safely. 4. It is a consolation to a man, even on his deathbed; he hath the less, then, to vex and trouble his mind. 5. It leaves a sweet savour after us; when we be dead it is an odoriferous ointment; the house will smell of it a good while after. Therefore let us so live, that we may be well reported of, so far as it is possible of all men. I say, so far as it is possible; for in truth it is impossible; the best of us all must make account to pass through good report and ill report into the kingdom of heaven. (*W. Jones, D.D.*)

Vers. 13, 14. **I trust I shall shortly see thee.**—*The sweetness of Christian fellowship*:—1. Its foundation—peace. This is the bond of the Christian community. It cannot exist without concord. Divisions drive away the Spirit of God, and open the door for envy and malice. 2. Its sacredness—not with ink and pen. It is a hidden desire which can only be expressed in a manner suitable to its own nature. It may take many forms to show itself, but it cannot be fully realised without personal contact. 3. Its well-wishers—the friends greet thee. A sincere desire for the welfare of each other is a strong feature in Christian morals. 4. Its individual regard—greet the brethren by name. Each person received attention irrespective of wealth or position. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*) **Greet the friends by name.**—*The friends*:—The word “friend” does not often occur in the New Testament, being swallowed up in the more endearing one of “brother.” (*J. Wesley.*) *Greet the friends by name*:—The good pastor imitates that Good Shepherd who “callest His sheep by name.” (*C. Wordsworth.*) *True friends scarce*:—The friendship of most men in these days is like some plants in the water, which have broad leaves on the surface of the water, but scarce any root at all; like drums and trumpets and ensigns in a battle, which make a noise and a show, but act nothing; mere friendships in pretence and compliment, that can bow handsomely, and promise emphatically, and speak plausibly, and forget all. (*J. Spencer.*)