

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

He exhorts them not to sin; yet encourages those who may have fallen, by the hope of mercy through Christ, who is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, 1 John 2:1, 1 John 2:2. He who knows God keeps his commandments; and he who professes to abide in Christ ought to walk as Christ walked, 1 John 2:3-6. The old and new commandment, that we should walk in the light, and love the brethren, 1 John 2:7-11. The apostle's description of the different states in the family of God; little children, young men, and fathers; and directions to each, 1 John 2:12-15. A statement of what prevails in the world, 1 John 2:16, 1 John 2:17. Cautions against antichrists, 1 John 2:18-23. Exhortations to persevere in what they had received, and to continue to follow that anointing of the Divine Spirit, by which they could discern all men, and know all things necessary to their salvation, and proper to prepare them for eternal glory, 1 John 2:24-29.

Verse 1

My little children -  $\text{ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν}$   $\text{ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν}$ . My beloved children; the address of an affectionate father to children whom he tenderly loves. The term also refers to the apostle's authority as their spiritual father, and their obligation to obey as his spiritual children.

That ye sin not - This is the language of the whole Scripture; of every dispensation, ordinance, institution, doctrine, and word of God. Sin not - do not run into ruin; live not so as to promote your own misery; be happy, for it is the will of God that ye should be so; therefore he wills that ye should be holy: holiness and happiness are inseparable; sin and misery are equally so.

And if any man sin - If, through ignorance, inexperience, the violence of temptation, unwatchfulness, etc., ye have fallen into sin, and grieved the Spirit of God, do not continue in the sin, nor under the guilt; do not despair of being again restored to the favor of God; your case, it is true, is deeply deplorable, but not desperate; there is still hope, for -

We have an advocate with the Father - We still have him before the throne who died for our offenses, and rose again for our justification; and there he makes intercession for us. He is the righteous; he who suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Do not, therefore, despair, but have immediate recourse to God through him.

Verse 2

And he is the propitiation -  $\text{ἡ ἀνάστασις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ}$   $\text{ἡ ἀνάστασις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ}$ . The atoning sacrifice for our sins. This is the proper sense of the word as used in the Septuagint, where it often occurs; and is the translation of  $\text{אָשָׁם}$  (asham), an oblation for sin, Amos 8:14.  $\text{חַטָּאת}$  (chattath), a sacrifice for sin, Ezekiel 44:27.  $\text{כִּפּוּר}$  (kippur), an atonement, Numbers 5:8. See the note on Romans 3:25, and particularly the note on Luke 18:13. The word is used only here and in 1 John 4:10.

And not for ours only - It is not for us apostles that he has died, nor exclusively for the Jewish people, but  $\text{ἡ ἀνάστασις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ}$   $\text{ἡ ἀνάστασις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ}$ , for the whole world, Gentiles as well as Jews, all the descendants of Adam. The apostle does not say that he died for any select part of the inhabitants of the earth, or for some out of every nation, tribe, or kindred; but for All Mankind; and the attempt to limit this is a violent outrage against God and his word.

For the meaning of the word  $\text{ἡ ἀνάστασις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ}$   $\text{ἡ ἀνάστασις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ}$ , which we here translate advocate, see the note on John 14:16. From these verses we learn that a poor backslider need not despair of again finding mercy; this passage holds out sufficient encouragement for his hope. There is scarcely another such in the Bible, and why? That sinners might not presume on the mercy of God. And why this one? That no backslider might utterly despair. Here, then, is a guard against presumption on the one hand, and despondency on the other.

Verse 3

And hereby we do know that we know him - If we keep the commandments of God, loving him with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves, we have the fullest proof that we have the true saving knowledge of God and his Christ. The Gnostics pretended to much knowledge, but their knowledge left them in possession of all their bad passions and unholy habits; they, therefore, gave no proof that they had known either God or his Son Jesus - nor is any man properly acquainted with God, who is still under the power of his sins.

Verse 4

He that saith, I know him - This is a severe blow against those false teachers, and against all pretenders to

religious knowledge, who live under the power of their sins; and against all Antinomians, and false boasters in the righteousness of Christ as a covering for their personal unholiness. They are all liars, and no truth of God is in them.

#### Verse 5

But whoso keepeth his word - Conscientiously observes his doctrine, the spirit and letter of the religion of Christ.

Is the love of God perfected - The design of God's love in sending Jesus Christ into the world to die for the sin of man  $\text{ἡ ἁμαρτία ἧς ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐστὶν ἁμαρτωλὸς}$ , is accomplished, in that man who receives the doctrine, and applies for the salvation provided for him. This seems to be the meaning of the apostle.

That we are in him - That we have entered into his spirit and views, received his salvation, have been enabled to walk in the light, and have communion with him by the Holy Spirit.

#### Verse 6

Abideth in him - He who not only professes to have known Christ, but also that he has communion with him, and abides in his favor, should prove the truth of his profession by walking as Christ walked; living a life of devotion and obedience to God, and of benevolence and beneficence to his neighbor. Thus Christ walked; and he has left us an example that we should follow his steps.

To be in Christ, 1 John 2:5, is to be converted to the Christian faith, and to have received the remission of sins. To abide in Christ, 1 John 2:6, is to continue in that state of salvation, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### Verse 7

Brethren, I write no new commandment - There seems a contradiction between this and the next verse. But the apostle appears to speak, not so much of any difference in the essence of the precept itself, as in reference to the degrees of light and grace belonging to the Mosaic and Christian dispensations. It was ever the command of God that men should receive his light, walk by that light, and love him and one another. But this commandment was renewed by Christ with much latitude and spirituality of meaning; and also with much additional light to see its extent, and grace to observe it. It may therefore be called the Old commandment, which was from the beginning; and also a New commandment revealed afresh and illustrated by Christ, with the important addition to the meaning of Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye shall love the brethren so as to lay down your lives for each other. See the note on John 13:34.

Instead of  $\text{ἡ ἀγάπη ἧς ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐστὶν ἁμαρτωλὸς}$ , brethren, ABC, thirteen others, with both the Syriac, Erpen's Arabic, Coptic, Sahidic, Armenian, Slavonic, and Vulgate, with several of the fathers, have  $\text{ἡ ἀγάπη ἧς ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐστὶν ἁμαρτωλὸς}$ , beloved. This is without doubt the true reading.

#### Verse 8

Which thing is true in him and in you - It is true that Christ loved the world so well as to lay down his life for it; and it was true in them, in all his faithful followers at that time, who were ready to lay down their lives for the testimony of Jesus. There is a saying in Synopsis Sohar, p. 94, n. 51, that may cast some light on this passage: That way in which the just have walked, although it be Old, yet may be said to be New in the love of the righteous. The love that the righteous bear to God and to each other is a renewal of the commandment.

The darkness is past - The total thick darkness of the heathen world, and the comparative darkness of the Mosaic dispensation, are now passing away; and the pure and superior light of Christianity is now diffusing its beams everywhere. He does not say that the darkness was all gone by, but  $\text{ἡ ἀνέστη ἡ ἀγάπη ἧς ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐστὶν ἁμαρτωλὸς}$ , it is passing away; he does not say that the fullness of the light had appeared, but  $\text{ἡ ἀνέστη ἡ ἀγάπη ἧς ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐστὶν ἁμαρτωλὸς}$ , it is now shining and will shine more and more to the perfect day; for the darkness passes away in proportion as the light shines and increases.

#### Verse 9

He that saith he is in the light - He that professes to be a convert to Christianity, even in the lowest degree; and hateth his brother - not only does not love him, but wills and does him evil, as the Jews did the Gentiles; is in darkness - has received no saving knowledge of the truth; and, whatever he may pretend, is in heathen ignorance, or even worse than heathen ignorance, to the present time, notwithstanding the clear shining of the light of the Gospel.

#### Verse 10

He that loveth his brother - That is, his neighbor, his fellow creature, whether Jew or Gentile, so as to bear him

[illegible]

But he that hateth his brother is in darkness - He is still in his heathen or unconverted state; and walketh in darkness, his conduct being a proof of that state; and knoweth not whither he goeth - having no proper knowledge of God or eternal things; and cannot tell whether he is going to heaven or hell, because that darkness has blinded his eyes - darkened his whole soul, mind, and heart.

I write unto you, little children - ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἁγίου. Beloved children, (see on 1 John 2:1 (note)), those who were probably the apostle's own converts, and members of the Church over which he presided. But it may be applied to young converts in general; those who can call God Abba, Father, by the Holy Spirit: therefore he says of them, that their sins were forgiven them for his name's sake: i.e. on account of Jesus, the Savior, who had died for them, and was now their Mediator at the right hand of God.

I write unto you, fathers - By fathers it is very likely that the apostle means persons who had embraced Christianity on its first promulgation in Judea and in the Lesser Asia, some of them had probably seen Christ in the flesh; for this appears to be what is meant by, Ye have known him from the beginning. These were the elders and eye witnesses, who were of the longest standing in the Church, and well established in the truths of the Gospel, and in Christian experience. But ὁ ἄρχων, ὁ ἀρχὴν, him who is from the beginning, may mean Jesus Christ in the eternity of his nature, see John 1:1, John 1:2; but the sense is the same.

I write unto you, little children - ἡ ἀγαπῆς ἡμῶν, a very different term from that used in the 12th verse, ἡ ἀγαπῆς ἡμῶν, which means beloved children, as we have already seen. This is another class, and their state is differently described: Ye have known the Father. If the apostle does not use these two words indifferently, four states instead of three, are here described: -

- 1.Fathers, ἱεῖς ἡμεῶν ὅσοι ποτε ἐγέννησαν τὸν υἱόν·** those who had been converted at the very commencement of Christianity, and had seen the eternal Word manifested in the flesh.
- 2.Young Men, ἡλικιωταὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ·** youths in the prime of their spiritual life, valiant soldiers, fighting under the banner of Christ, who had confounded Satan in his wiles, and overcome him by the blood of the Lamb.
- 3.Little Children, μαθηταὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ·** disciples of Christ, not of very long standing in the Church, nor of much experience, but who had known the Father; i.e. persons who had been made sons: God had sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, whereby they cried Abba, Father!
- 4.Beloved Children, ἀγαπῆται τοῦ πατρὸς·** the most recent converts, and particularly those among young men and women who, from their youth, simplicity, openheartedness, and affectionate attachment to God and his cause, were peculiarly dear to this aged apostle of Jesus Christ. These are represented as having their sins forgiven them on account of his name, ὁ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ὁ υἱός... ὁ υἱός... , that is, for the sake of Jesus, or on account of his merit or worthiness.

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1. The ἱ, ἡμιότι½ἱῖ , beloved children, or infants, are those who are just born into the heavenly family.

2. The ἱἑἱἱἱἱἱ , little children, are those who are able to walk and speak; they know their heavenly Father, and can call him by that name.

3. The ἱ½ἡμιἱ½ἱῖῖῖῖῖ , young men, are such as are grown up to manâ€™s estate; these perform the most difficult part of the labor, and are called to fight the battles of the Lord.

4. The ἱἑἱἱἱἱἱἱἱἱ , fathers, are those who are at the foundation of the spiritual family, and have known the whole economy of the work of God in themselves and in others. These have the largest stock of spiritual wisdom and religious experience.

All these answer to the component members of a perfect human family.

1. There is the beloved infant dandled on the knees of its parents.

2. There are the little children that can speak a little, run about, answer to their own names, distinguish and call on their father and mother, and are now put under instruction.

3. There are the youths, those who are grown up to manâ€™s estate, are strong to labor, retain the instructions they have received, act upon them, and are occasionally called upon to defend their family, property, and country, against spoilers and oppressors.

4. There are the parents, the father and mother, from whom the family sprang, and who are the governors and directors of the household. To these four classes, in a perfect family, the apostle appears to allude; and we see, considered in this light, with what delicacy and propriety he uses these images.

#### Verse 14

The word of God abideth in you - Ye have not only thoroughly known and digested the Divine doctrine, but your hearts are moulded into it; ye know it to be the truth of God from the power and happiness with which it inspires you, and from the constant abiding testimony of the Spirit of that truth which lives and witnesses wherever that truth lives and predominates.

#### Verse 15

Love not the world - Though these several classes were so well acquainted with Divine things, and had all tasted the powers of the world to come: yet so apt are men to be drawn aside by sensible things, that the Holy Spirit saw it necessary to caution these against the love of the world, the inordinate desire of earthly things. Covetousness is the predominant vice of old age: Ye fathers, love not the world. The things which are in the world, its profits, pleasures, and honors, have the strongest allurements for youth; therefore, ye young men, little children, and babes, love not the things of this world. Let those hearts abide faithful to God who have taken him for their portion.

The love of the Father is not in him - The love of God and the love of earthly things are incompatible. If you give place to the love of the world, the love of God cannot dwell in you; and if you have not his love, you can have no peace, no holiness, no heaven.

#### Verse 16

For all that is in the world - All that it can boast of, all that it can promise, is only sensual, transient gratification, and even this promise it cannot fulfill; so that its warmest votaries can complain loudest of their disappointment.

The lust of the flesh - Sensual and impure desires which seek their gratification in women, strong drink, delicious viands, and the like.

Lust of the eyes - Inordinate desires after finery of every kind, gaudy dress, splendid houses, superb furniture, expensive equipage, trappings, and decorations of all sorts.

Pride of life - Hunting after honors, titles, and pedigrees; boasting of ancestry, family connections, great offices, honorable acquaintance, and the like.

Is not of the Father - Nothing of these inordinate attachments either comes from or leads to God. They are of this world; here they begin, flourish, and end. They deprave the mind, divert it from Divine pursuits, and render

it utterly incapable of spiritual enjoyments.

#### Verse 17

The world passeth away - All these things are continually fading and perishing; and the very state in which they are possessed is changing perpetually, and the earth and its works will be shortly burnt up.

And the lust thereof - The men of this world, their vain pursuits, and delusive pleasures, are passing away in their successive generations, and their very memory perishes; but he that doeth the will of God - that seeks the pleasure, profit, and honor that comes from above, shall abide for ever, always happy through time and eternity, because God, the unchangeable source of felicity, is his portion.

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#### Verse 18

Little children, it is the last time - This place is variously understood. This is the last dispensation of grace and mercy to mankind; the present age is the conclusion of the Jewish state, as the temple and holy city are shortly to be destroyed. But as there are many who suppose that this epistle was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, consequently the words cannot, on that supposition, refer to this. Others think that ἡ ἔσχατος ὥρα should be translated, a most difficult, perilous, and wretched time; a time in which all kinds of vices, heresies, and pollutions shall have their full reign; that time which our Lord predicted, Matthew 7:15, when he said, Beware of false prophets. And Matthew 24:11, Matthew 24:12: Many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many; and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. And Matthew 24:24: There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders. And Matthew 24:25: Behold, I have told you before. Now the apostle may allude to these predictions of our Lord; but all these refer to a time antecedent to the destruction of Jerusalem. I am therefore inclined to think, whatever may be here the precise meaning of the last time, that the epistle before us was written while Jerusalem yet stood. See what is said in the preface on this head.

Antichrist shall come - Who is this ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἁμαρτίας, antichrist? Is he the Emperor Domitian, the Gnostics, Nicolaitans, Nazareans, Cerinthians, Romish pontiffs, etc., etc.! Ans. Any person, thing, doctrine, system of religion, polity, etc., which is opposed to Christ, and to the spirit and spread of his Gospel, is antichrist. We need not look for this imaginary being in any of the above exclusively. Even Protestantism may have its antichrist as well as Popery. Every man who opposes the spirit of the Gospel, and every teacher and writer who endeavors to lower the Gospel standard to the spirit and taste of the world, is a genuine antichrist, no matter where or among whom he is found. The heresies which sprang up in the days of St. John were the antichrist of that time. As there has been a succession of oppositions to Christianity in its spirit and spread through every age since its promulgation in the world, so there has been a succession of antichrists. We may bring this matter much lower; every enemy of Christ, every one who opposes his reign in the world, in others, or in himself, is an antichrist; and consequently every wicked man is an antichrist. But the name has been generally applied to whatever person or thing systematically opposes Christ and his religion.

Many antichrists - Many false prophets, false Messiahs, heretics, and corrupters of the truth.

Whereby we know that it is the last time - That time which our Lord has predicted, and of which he has warned us.

#### Verse 19

They went out from us - These heretics had belonged to our Christian assemblies, they professed Christianity, and do so still; but we apostles did not commission them to preach to you, for they have disgraced the Divine doctrine with the most pernicious opinions; they have given up or explained away its most essential principles; they have mingled the rest with heathenish rites and Jewish glosses. While, therefore, we acknowledge that they once belonged to us, we assert that they are not of us. They are not Christians; we abhor their conduct and their creed. We never sent them to teach.

They were not of us - For a considerable time before they left our assemblies they gave proofs that they had departed from the faith; for if they had been of us - if they had been apostles, and continued in the firm belief of the Christian doctrines, they would not have departed from us to form a sect of themselves.

That they were not all of us - They were not expelled from the Christian Church; they were not sent out by us; but they separated from it and us. None of them had been inspired as we apostles were, though they pretended to a very high teaching; but their separating from us manifested that they were not taught, as we were, by the



Spirit of God. These false teachers probably drew many sincere souls away with them; and to this it is probable the apostle alludes when he says, they were not All of us. Some were; others were not.

#### Verse 20

But ye have an unction - The word ἡ ἁγιασμα signifies not an unction, but an ointment, the very thing itself by which anointing is effected; and so it was properly rendered in our former translations. Probably this is an allusion to the holy anointing oil of the law, and to Psalm 14:7: God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness - he hath given thee the plenitude of the Spirit, which none of thy fellows - none of the prophets, ever received in such abundance. By this it is evident that not only the gifts of the Spirit, but the Holy Spirit himself, is intended. This Spirit dwelt at that time in a peculiar manner in the Church, to teach apostles, teachers, and all the primitive believers, every thing requisite for their salvation; and to make them the instruments of handing down to posterity that glorious system of truth which is contained in the New Testament. As oil was used among the Asiatics for the inauguration of persons into important offices, and this oil was acknowledged to be an emblem of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, without which the duties of those offices could not be discharged; so it is put here for the Spirit himself, who presided in the Church, and from which all gifts and graces flowed. The ἡ ἁγιασμα, chrism or ointment here mentioned is also an allusion to the holy anointing ointment prescribed by God himself, Exodus 30:23-25, which was composed of fine myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, cassia lignea, and olive oil. This was an emblem of the gifts and graces of the Divine Spirit. See the notes on Exodus 30:23-25 (note). And for the reason of this anointing see the note on Exodus 29:7.

Ye know all things - Every truth Of God necessary to your salvation and the salvation of man in general, and have no need of that knowledge of which the Gnostics boast.

But although the above is the sense in which this verse is generally understood, yet there is reason to doubt its accuracy. The adjective ὅτι πάντα, which we translate all things, is most probably in the accusative case singular, having ἄνθρωπον, man, or some such substantive, understood. The verse therefore should be translated: Ye have an ointment from the Holy One, and ye know or discern Every Man. This interpretation appears to be confirmed by ὅτι πάντα ὅσοι ἄνθρωποι in 1 John 2:26, those who are deceiving or misleading you; and in the same sense should ὅτι πάντα ὅσοι ἄνθρωποι, 1 John 2:27, be understood: But as the same anointing teacheth you ὅτι πάντα ὅσοι ἄνθρωποι, not of all things, but of All Men. It is plain, from the whole tenor of the epistle, that St. John is guarding the Christians against seducers and deceivers, who were even then disturbing and striving to corrupt the Church. In consequence of this he desires them to try the spirits whether they were of God, 1 John 4:1. But how were they to try them? Principally by that anointing - that spiritual light and discernment which they had received from God; and also by comparing the doctrine of these men with what they had heard from the beginning. The anointing here mentioned seems to mean the spirit of illumination, or great knowledge and discernment in spiritual things. By this they could readily distinguish the false apostles from the true.

#### Verse 21

I have not written, etc. - It is not because ye are ignorant of these things that I write to you, but because you know them, and can by these judge of the doctrines of those false teachers, and clearly perceive that they are liars; for they contradict the truth which ye have already received, and consequently their doctrine is a lie, and no lie can be of the truth, i.e. consistent with Christianity.

#### Verse 22

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? - Here we see some of the false doctrines which were then propagated in the world. There were certain persons who, while they acknowledged Jesus to be a Divine teacher, denied him to be the Christ, i.e. the Messiah.

He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son, - He is antichrist who denies the supernatural and miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, who denies Jesus to be the Son of God, and who denies God to be the Father of the Lord Jesus; thus he denies the Father and the Son. The Jews in general, and the Gnostics in particular, denied the miraculous conception of Jesus; with both he was accounted no more than a common man, the son of Joseph and Mary. But the Gnostics held that a Divine person, Aeon, or angelical being, dwelt in him; but all things else relative to his miraculous generation and Divinity they rejected. These were antichrists, who denied Jesus to be the Christ.

#### Verse 23

Whosoever denieth the Son - He who denies Jesus to be the Son of God, and consequently the Christ or Messiah, he hath not the Father - he can have no birth from above, he cannot be enrolled among the children of God, because none can be a child of God but by faith in Christ Jesus.

He that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also - This clause is printed by our translators in Italics to show

it to be of doubtful authority, as it was probably wanting in the chief of those MSS. which they consulted, as it was in Coverdale's Bible, printed 1535; Tindall's Text, printed 1548; and in all the early printed editions (which I have seen) previously to 1566; the Bible of Richard Cardmarden, printed in English at Rouen, where this clause is inserted in a different letter between brackets. But that the clause is genuine, and should be restored to the text without any mark of spuriousness, as I have done in the text of this work, is evident from the authorities by which it is supported. It is found in ABC, and in between twenty and thirty others of the best authority; as also in both the Syriac, Erpen's Arabic, Coptic, Sahidic, Armenian, and Vulgate. It is also quoted as a part of the text by Origen, Meletius, Athanasius, both the Cyrils, Theophylact, Vigilius of Tapsum, Pelagius, Cerealis, Cassian; and in substance by Euthalius, Epiphanius, Cyprian, Hilary, Faustinus, Lucifer of Cagliari, Augustine, and Bede. It is wanting in the Arabic, in the Polyglot, in a MSS. in the Harleian library, and in some few others. It is doubtless genuine, and Griesbach has with propriety restored it to the text, from which it never should have been separated.

### Verse 24

Let that therefore abide in you - Continue in the doctrines concerning the incarnation, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of the Lord Jesus, which you have heard preached from the beginning by us his apostles.

**Ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father - Ye who are preachers shall not only be acknowledged as ministers of the Church of Christ, but be genuine children of God, by faith in the Son of his love; and ye all, thus continuing, shall have fellowship with the Father and with the Son.**

### Verse 25

**This is the promise - God has promised eternal life to all who believe on Christ Jesus. So they who receive his doctrine, and continue in communion with the Father and the Son, shall have this eternal life.**

### Verse 26

**These things have I written - Either meaning the whole epistle, or what is contained in the preceding verses, from the beginning of the 18th to the end of the 25th.**

**Them that seduce you - ἱ ἐκείνοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι οἱ ἀποστατοὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς πόλεως τῆς σαββατονίας. That is, the deceivers that were among them, and who were labouring to pervert the followers of Christ.**

### Verse 27

**But the anointing which ye have received - That ointment, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, mentioned 1 John 2:20 (note).**

Ye need not that any man teach you - The Gnostics, who pretended to the highest illumination, could bring no proof that they were divinely taught, nor had they any thing in their teaching worthy the acceptance of the meanest Christian; therefore they had no need of that, nor of any other teaching but that which the same anointing teacheth, the same Spirit from whom they had already received the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. Whatever that taught, they needed; and whatever those taught whose teaching was according to this Spirit, they needed. St. John does not say that those who had once received the teaching of the Divine Spirit had no farther need of the ministry of the Gospel; no, but he says they had no need of such teaching as their false teachers proposed to them; nor of any other teaching that was different from that anointing, i.e. the teaching of the Spirit of God. No man, howsoever holy, wise, or pure, can ever be in such a state as to have no need of the Gospel ministry: they who think so give the highest proof that they have never yet learned of Christ or his Spirit.

**And is truth - Because it is the Spirit of truth John 16:13.**

**And is no lie - It has nothing like the fables of the Gnostics. It can neither deceive, nor be deceived.**

### Verse 28

And now, little children - ἡ ἀγαπῆται ἡμῶν, Beloved children, abide in him - in Christ Jesus. Let his word and spirit continually abide in you, and have communion with the Father and the Son.

**That when he shall appear - To judge the world, we may have confidence, in the power of his arm, freedom of speech, liberty of access, boldness, from a conviction that our cause is good, and that we have had proper ground for exultation; and not be ashamed - confounded, when it appears that those who were brought to Christ Jesus, have apostatized, and are no longer found in the congregation of the saints, and consequently are not our**

crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Abide in him, that this may not be the case.

#### Verse 29

If ye know that he is righteous - That God is a holy God, ye know also, that every one who doeth righteousness - who lives a holy life, following the commandments of God, is born of him, Begotten of him - is made a partaker of the Divine nature, without which he could neither have a holy heart, nor live a holy life.

This verse properly belongs to the following chapter, and should not be separated from it. The subject is the same, and does not stand in any strict relation to that with which the 28th verse concludes.

The titles bestowed on Christians in the New Testament have been misunderstood by many. What belongs, strictly speaking, to the Pure and Holy, is often applied to those who, though bound by their Profession to be such, were very far from it. This has been strongly denied by writers who should have known better. Dr. Taylor has handled this point well in his Key to the Apostolic Writings, from which I have given a copious extract in my preface to the Epistle to the Romans, from the conviction that the subject had been most dangerously misapprehended; and that several of the worst heresies which disgrace religion had sprung from this misapprehension. With some, Dr. Taylor's being an Arian was sufficient to invalidate any testimony he might offer; but it is no discovery of Dr. Taylor; it is what every attentive, unprejudiced reader finds on reading the Old Testament in connection with the New. Perhaps the testimony of a judicious Calvinist may be better received, not that this truth needs the testimony of either, because it everywhere speaks for itself, but because those who have too little grace, sense, and candour to search for themselves, may be pleased that Dr. Macknight saves them the trouble.

After having remarked that the words born of him,  $\hat{\imath}\mu\hat{\imath}^{\frac{3}{4}}\hat{\imath}\pm\hat{\imath}\dots\hat{\imath}\hat{\imath}\dots\hat{\imath}\hat{\imath}\mu\hat{\imath}^{\frac{1}{2}}\hat{\imath}^{\frac{1}{2}}\hat{\imath}\hat{\imath}\dots\hat{\imath}\pm\hat{\imath}^1$ , should be translated hath been Begotten of him, which is the literal signification of the word, from  $\hat{\imath}\hat{\imath}\mu\hat{\imath}^{\frac{1}{2}}\hat{\imath}^{\frac{1}{2}}\hat{\imath}\pm\hat{\imath}^{\frac{1}{2}}\%$ , genero, gigno, I beget, (Born of God being nowhere found in the Scripture), he goes on to say: -

â€œTo understand the import of the high titles which in the New Testament are given to the disciples of Christ, viz.: the begotten of God, as here; children of God, as in the next chapter; heirs of God, Romans 8:17; elect of God - adopted of God - saints - a royal priesthood - a holy nation - a peculiar people, 1 Peter 2:9; the following observations may be of use.

â€œ1. These high titles were anciently given to the Israelites as a nation, because they were separated from mankind to be God's visible Church, for the purpose of preserving the knowledge and worship of him in the world, as the only true God.

â€œThis appears from God's own words, Exodus 19:3-6, etc.: Tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. Deuteronomy 14:1-2, etc.: Ye are the children of the Lord your God - for thou art a holy people to the Lord thy God. In particular, the title of God's Son, even his first-born, was given to the whole Israelitish nation by God himself, Exodus 4:22, chiefly because they were the descendants of Isaac, who was supernaturally begotten by Abraham, through the power which accompanied the promise, Genesis 18:10: Lo, Sarah shall have a son. So St. Paul informs us, Romans 9:7: Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; (namely of God); but in Isaac shall a seed be to thee - the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of promise are counted for the seed. The apostle's meaning is, that Ishmael and his posterity, whom Abraham procreated by his own natural strength, being children of the flesh, were not children of God; that is, they were not made the visible Church and people of God. But Isaac and his descendants, whom Abraham procreated through the strength which accompanied the promise, being more properly procreated by God than by Abraham, were the children of God, i.e. were made the visible Church and people of God, because, by their supernatural generation and title to inherit Canaan, they were a fit image to represent the catholic invisible Church of God, consisting of believers of all ages and nations, who, being regenerated by the Spirit of God, are the true children of God, and heirs of the heavenly country of which Canaan was a type.

â€œ2. As the promise, Lo, Sarah shall have a son, which was given to Abraham when he was a hundred years old, and Sarah was ninety, implied that that son was to be supernaturally procreated; so the promise given to Abraham, Genesis 17:5, A father of many nations have I constituted thee, implied that the many nations of believers who, by this promise, were given to Abraham for a seed, were to be generated by the operation of the Spirit of God, producing in them faith and obedience, similar to those for which Abraham was constituted the father of all believers. This higher generation, by which believers have the moral image of God communicated to them, is well described, John 1:12: As many as received him, to them gave he power to be called the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name;  $\hat{\imath}\hat{\imath}\hat{\imath}^{\frac{1}{4}}\pm\hat{\imath}\hat{\imath}^{\frac{1}{2}}\hat{\imath}^{\frac{1}{2}}\hat{\imath}\hat{\imath}\hat{\imath}\pm\hat{\imath}^{\frac{1}{2}}$ , who were Begotten, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. That is: Men become the true sons of God, not by their being naturally descended from this or that father, nor by their being called the sons of God by men like themselves, but by God's bestowing on them that high appellation on account of their faith and holiness,â€œ



(which were produced in them by their regeneration through the Spirit of God.)

â€œ3.If the Israelites, of whom the ancient visible Church and people of God were composed, were all called the sons of God because Isaac, from whom they were descended, was supernaturally begotten by the power of God; certainly the believers of all ages and nations, of whom the visible Church is composed, may with much greater propriety be called the sons of God, since they are begotten of God, and possess his moral nature.

â€œ4.Thus it appears that the high titles above mentioned, namely, the sons of God, the children of God, the elect of God, the adoption of sons, the election, saints, holy nation, royal priesthood, peculiar people, were anciently given to the Israelites As a Nation, merely on account of their being the visible Church and people of God, without any regard to the personal character of the individuals of whom that nation was composed. It appears, also, that under the Gospel the same high titles were bestowed on whole Churches, merely on account of their profession of Christianity, without any regard to the personal character of the individuals who composed these Churches. But these high titles, with some others of greater importance, such as the begotten of God, the heirs of God, the adoption, were given in an appropriated sense to individuals likewise, on account of their faith and holiness. When given to whole Churches, these titles imported nothing more than that the society to which they were given was a Church of Christ, (i.e. professed Christianity), and that the individuals of which that society was composed were entitled to all the privileges belonging to the visible Church of God. But when appropriated to individuals, these titles implied that the persons to whom they were given were really partakers of the nature of God; and that they were the objects of his paternal love, and heirs of his glory.

â€œWherefore, in reading the Scriptures, by attending to the different foundations of these titles, and by considering whether they are applied to Churches or individuals, we shall easily understand their true import. Thus, when St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Knowing, brethren, beloved of God, your election, he could not mean their election to eternal life, since many of them were living disorderly, 2 Thessalonians 3:11, but their election to be the visible Church of God under the Gospel; whereas, when John, in the verse before us, says, Every one who doeth righteousness hath been begotten of God, by restricting the title to a specific character he teaches us that the persons of whom he speaks are the sons of God in the highest sense, and heirs of eternal glory.â€• How forcible are right words! See also the introduction to the Epistle to the Romans.