

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO 1 JOHN 2

In this chapter the apostle comforts the saints under a sense of sin; urges them to an observance of the commandments of God, in imitation of Christ, particularly to the new commandment of brotherly love, and gives his reasons for it; dehorts them from the love of the world, and the things of it; cautions them against false teachers and antichrists, and exhorts them to abide in Christ, and persevere in the faith of him. He first declares that the end of his writing was to prevent their sinning; but supposing any should fall into sin through infirmity, he comforts them with the consideration of the advocacy of Christ, and of his being the propitiation for the sins both of Jews and Gentiles, ([1 John 2:1,2](#)), and whereas some persons might boast of their knowledge of Christ, and neglect his commands, he observes, that the keeping of them is the best evidence of true knowledge, and of the sincerity of their love to God, and of their being in Christ; and that such who show no regard to them are liars, and the truth is not in them; and such that profess to be in Christ and abide in him, ought to walk as they have him for an example, ([1 John 2:3-6](#)), and instances in a particular commandment, to love one another, which on different accounts is called an old and a new commandment, and which has been verified both in Christ and his people; for which a reason is given in the latter, the darkness being past, and the true light shining, ([1 John 2:7,8](#)), upon which some propositions are founded, as that he that professes to be in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness to this very moment; and that he that loves his brother is evidently in the light, nor will he easily give or take offence; and that he that hates his brother is not only in darkness, but walks in it, being blinded by it, and so knows not whither he is going, ([1 John 2:9-11](#)), and this commandment of love the apostle writes to the saints, as distinguished into the several classes of fathers, young men, and children; and urges it on them from the consideration of the blessings of grace peculiar to them; as ancient knowledge to fathers, strength and victory to young men, knowledge of the Father, and remission of sins, to children, ([1 John 2:12-14](#)), and then he dissuades from the love of worldly things, seeing the love of them is not consistent with the love of

God; and seeing the things that are in it are vain and sinful, and are not of God, but of the world; and since the world and its lust pass away, when he that does the will of God abides for ever, (~~1~~ John 2:15-17), he next observes unto them, that there were many antichrists in the world; which was an evidence of its being the last time; and these he describes as schismatics and apostates from the Christian churches, (~~1~~ John 2:18,19), but as for the saints he writes to, they were of another character, they were truly Christians, having an anointing from the Holy One, by which they knew all things; nor did the apostle write to them as ignorant, but as knowing persons, and able to distinguish between truth and error, (~~1~~ John 2:20,21), and then he goes on with his description of antichristian liars, showing that they were such who denied Jesus to be the Messiah, and the relation that is between the Father and the Son, (~~1~~ John 2:22,23), and closes the chapter with an exhortation to perseverance in the doctrine of Christ; since it was what they had heard from the beginning, and since by so doing they would continue in the Father and in the Son, and besides had the promise of eternal life, (~~1~~ John 2:24,25), and indeed this was the main thing in view in writing to them concerning seducers, to preserve them from them, though indeed this was in a great measure needless, since the anointing they had received abode in them; and taught them all things, and according as they regarded its teaching they would abide in Christ, (~~1~~ John 2:26,27), to which he exhorts them from the consideration of that boldness and confidence it would give them at his appearance, who they must know is righteous, and so that everyone that doth righteousness is born of him, (~~1~~ John 2:28,29).

Ver. 1. *My little children*, &c.] The apostle may address the saints under this character, on account of their regeneration by the Spirit and grace of God, in which they were as newborn babes; and on account of his being the instrument of their conversion, and so was their spiritual father, and therefore calls them his own children; and he might the rather use such a way of speaking, because of his advanced age, being now in his old age, and John the elder in age as well as in office; as well as to show his paternal affection for them, and care of them, and that what he had wrote, or should write, was not from any disrespect, but from pure love to them; and it might serve to put them in mind of their weakness in faith, in knowledge, and spiritual strength, that they might not entertain high notions of themselves, as if they were perfect and without infirmities; and it is easy to observe, that this is one of Christ's expressions, (~~John~~ 13:33),

from whose lips the apostle took it, whose words and phrases he greatly delighted in, as he seems to do in this, by his frequent use of it; (see ~~GRS~~ 1 John 2:18,28 3:7,18 4:4 5:21).

These things write I unto you; concerning the purity and holiness of God, who is light itself; concerning fellowship with him, which no one that lives in sin can have; concerning pardon and cleansing from sin by the blood of Christ, and concerning sin being in them, and they not without it. The Ethiopic version reads, “we write”, as in (~~GRS~~ 1 John 1:4);

that ye sin not; not that he thought they could be entirely without it, either without the being of it, or the commission of it, in thought, word, or deed, for this would be to suppose that which is contrary to his own words, in (~~GRS~~ 1 John 1:8,10); but he suggests that the end of his writing on these subjects was, that they might not live in sin, and indulge themselves in a vicious course of living, give up themselves to it, and walk in it, and work it with all greediness: and nothing could be more suitably adapted to such an end than the consideration of the holiness of God, who calls by his grace; and of the necessity of light and grace and holiness in men to communion with him; and of the pardoning grace of God and cleansing blood of Christ, which, when savingly applied, sets men against sin, and makes them zealous of good works; and of the indwelling of sin in the saints, which puts them upon their guard against it:

and if any man sin; as every man does, even everyone that is in the light, and walks in it, and has fellowship with God; everyone that believes in Christ, and is justified through his righteousness, and pardoned by his blood; everyone of the little children; for the apostle is not speaking of mankind in general who sin, for Christ is not an advocate for all that sin, but of these in particular; hence the Arabic version renders it, “if any of you sin”; and this, with the following, he says not to encourage in sin, but to comfort under a sense of it:

we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; Christ is an advocate, not for just or righteous persons, for as he came not to call these to repentance, nor to die for them, so such have no need of an advocate, nor is he one for them; but as he came to call sinners, and to save them, and died for them, the just for the unjust, so he is an advocate, and makes intercession for transgressors; and not for all men, though they have all sinned; not for the world, or those so called in distinction from the persons given him by his Father, for these he prays not; but for all the elect,

and whatsoever charges are brought against them he answers to them, and for them; and for all that believe in him, be they weak or strong, even for the apostles as well as others; for they were not without sin, were men of like passions as others, and carried about with them a body of sin, and had their daily infirmities, and so needed an advocate as others; and hence John says, “we have an advocate”, &c. but then Christ is not an advocate for sin, though for sinners; he does not vindicate the commission of sin, or plead for the performance of it; he is no patron of iniquity; nor does he deny that his clients have sinned, or affirm that their actions are not sins; he allows in court all their sins, with all their aggravated circumstances; nor does he go about to excuse or extenuate them; but he is an advocate for the non-imputation of them, and for the application of pardon to them: he pleads in their favour, that these sins have been laid upon him, and he has bore them; that his blood has been shed for the remission of them, and that he has made full satisfaction for them; and therefore in justice they ought not to be laid to their charge; but that the forgiveness of them should be applied unto them, for the relief and comfort of their burdened and distressed consciences: and for this he is an advocate for his poor sinning people “with the Father”; who being the first Person, and the Son the advocate, and the Spirit sustaining a like character, is only mentioned; and he being God against whom sin is committed, and to whom the satisfaction is made; and the rather, as he is the Father of Christ, and of those for whom he is an advocate; seeing it may be concluded that his pleadings will be with success, since he is not only related to him, and has an interest in him himself, but the persons also, whose patron he is, are related to him, and have a share in his paternal affection and care: moreover, this phrase, as it expresses the distinct personality of Christ from the Father, so his being with him in heaven at his right hand, and nearness to him; where he discharges this office of his, partly by appearing in person for his people in the presence of God; and partly by carrying in and presenting their confessions of sin, and their prayers for the fresh discoveries and applications of pardoning grace, which he offers up to his Father with the sweet incense of his mediation; and chiefly by pleading the virtue of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, which are carried within the vail, and are always in sight, and call aloud for peace and pardon; as also by answering and removing the charges and accusations of the court adversary, the accuser of the brethren, the devil; as well as by the declarations of his will, demanding in point of justice, in consideration of his sufferings and death, that such and such blessings be bestowed upon his

people, as pardon, righteousness, grace, and supplies of grace, and at last glory; and by applying these benefits to their souls as a “comforter”, which the word here used also signifies, and is so rendered, (^{<5146>}John 14:16,26 15:26 16:7); and by the Arabic version here. Now the saints have but one advocate, and that is enough for them; the apostle does not say we have advocates, but “an advocate”; not angels, nor saints departed, but Jesus Christ only, who is the one Mediator between God and man, (^{<5115>}1 Timothy 2:5): and he is a continual one, he ever lives to make intercession; his blood is always speaking, and he always pleading; and therefore it is said “we have”, not we have had, or we shall have an advocate and he is a prevalent one, he is always heard, he thoroughly pleads the cause he undertakes, and ever carries it; which is owing to the dignity of his person, his interest with his Father, and the virtue and value of his sacrifice: and he every way fit for such a work, for he is “righteous”; not only in his natures, both divine and human, but in his office, as Mediator, which he faithfully and righteously performs; he is a very proper person to plead for guilty persons, which he could not do if he himself was guilty; but he is so holy and righteous that nothing can be objected to him by God; and it need not be doubted by men that he will act the faithful part to them, and righteously serve them and their cause; and it is moreover his righteousness which he has wrought out, and is imputed to them, that carries the cause for them; and therefore this character of Christ fitly added, as is also the following. The Jews^{f9} have adopted the word in the text into their language, but have applied it to a different purpose, to alms deeds, repentance, and good works. Much more agreeably Philo the Jew^{f10} speaks of the son of perfect virtue, *παρακλητω*, “as an advocate” for the forgiveness of sins, and for a supply of everlasting good things.

Ver. 2. *And he is the propitiation for our sins*, &c.] For the sins of us who now believe, and are Jews:

and not for ours only; but for the sins of Old Testament saints, and of those who shall hereafter believe in Christ, and of the Gentiles also, signified in the next clause:

but also for [the sins] of the whole world; the Syriac version renders it, “not for us only, but also for the whole world”; that is, not for the Jews only, for John was a Jew, and so were those he wrote unto, but for the Gentiles also. Nothing is more common in Jewish writings than to call the Gentiles *aml e* “the world”; and *μl wħ l k*, “the whole world”; and *MI wħ*

twmwa, “the nations of the world”^{f11}; (see Gill on “John 12:19”); and the word “world” is so used in Scripture; (see John 3:16 4:42 Romans 11:12,15); and stands opposed to a notion the Jews have of the Gentiles, that hrpk Nhl Nya, “there is no propitiation for them”^{f12}: and it is easy to observe, that when this phrase is not used of the Gentiles, it is to be understood in a limited and restrained sense; as when they say^{f13},

“it happened to a certain high priest, that when he went out of the sanctuary, aml [yl wk, “the whole world” went after him;”

which could only design the people in the temple. And elsewhere^{f14} it is said,

“aml [yl wk, “the “whole world” has left the Misna, and gone after the “Gemara;”

which at most can only intend the Jews; and indeed only a majority of their doctors, who were conversant with these writings: and in another place^{f15},

“aml [yl wk, “the whole world” fell on their faces, but Raf did not fall on his face;”

where it means no more than the congregation. Once more, it is said^{f16}, when

“R. Simeon ben Gamaliel entered (the synagogue), aml [yl wk, “the whole world” stood up before him;”

that is, the people in the synagogue: to which may be added^{f17},

“when a great man makes a mourning, aml [yl wk, “the whole world” come to honour him;”

i.e. a great number of persons attend the funeral pomp: and so these phrases, ygyl p al aml øl wk, “the whole world” is not divided, or does not dissent^{f18}; yrbcaml øl wk, “the whole world” are of opinion^{f19}, are frequently met with in the Talmud, by which, an agreement among the Rabbins, in certain points, is designed; yea, sometimes the phrase, “all the men of the world”^{f20}, only intend the inhabitants of a city where a synagogue was, and, at most, only the Jews: and so this phrase, “all the world”, or “the whole world”, in Scripture, unless when it signifies the whole universe, or the habitable earth, is always used in a limited sense,

either for the Roman empire, or the churches of Christ in the world, or believers, or the present inhabitants of the world, or a part of them only, (^{f21}Luke 2:1 ^{f22}Romans 1:8 3:19 ^{f23}Colossians 1:6 ^{f24}Revelation 3:10 12:9 13:3); and so it is in this epistle, (^{f25}1 John 5:19); where the whole world lying in wickedness is manifestly distinguished from the saints, who are of God, and belong not to the world; and therefore cannot be understood of all the individuals in the world; and the like distinction is in this text itself, for “the sins of the whole world” are opposed to “our sins”, the sins of the apostle and others to whom he joins himself; who therefore belonged not to, nor were a part of the whole world, for whose sins Christ is a propitiation as for theirs: so that this passage cannot furnish out any argument for universal redemption; for besides these things, it may be further observed, that for whose sins Christ is a propitiation, their sins are atoned for and pardoned, and their persons justified from all sin, and so shall certainly be glorified, which is not true of the whole world, and every man and woman in it; moreover, Christ is a propitiation through faith in his blood, the benefit of his propitiatory sacrifice is only received and enjoyed through faith; so that in the event it appears that Christ is a propitiation only for believers, a character which does not agree with all mankind; add to this, that for whom Christ is a propitiation he is also an advocate, (^{f26}1 John 2:1); but he is not an advocate for every individual person in the world; yea, there is a world he will not pray for (^{f27}John 17:9), and consequently is not a propitiation for them. Once more, the design of the apostle in these words is to comfort his “little children” with the advocacy and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, who might fall into sin through weakness and inadvertency; but what comfort would it yield to a distressed mind, to be told that Christ was a propitiation not only for the sins of the apostles and other saints, but for the sins of every individual in the world, even of these that are in hell? Would it not be natural for persons in such circumstances to argue rather against, than for themselves, and conclude that seeing persons might be damned notwithstanding the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, that this might, and would be their case. In what sense Christ is a propitiation, (see Gill on “^{f28}Romans 3:25”). The Jews have no notion of the Messiah as a propitiation or atonement; sometimes they say ^{f21}repentance atones for all sin; sometimes the death of the righteous ^{f22}; sometimes incense ^{f23}; sometimes the priests' garments ^{f24}; sometimes it is the day of atonement ^{f25}; and indeed they are in the utmost puzzle about atonement; and they even confess in their prayers ^{f26}, that they have now neither altar nor priest to atone for them; (see Gill on “^{f29}1 John 4:10”).

Ver. 3. *And hereby we do know that we know him*, &c.] Either the Father, with whom Christ is an advocate; not as the God of nature, and by the light of it, nor as the lawgiver and Judge of the whole earth, and by the law of Moses; but as the God of all grace, as a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, as the Father of Christ, and as in him by the Gospel; and this not in a mere notional and speculative way, but with love and affection; not with fear and trembling, as devils know him, nor in theory, as formal professors and hypocrites, but with a knowledge, joined with hearty love of him, and cheerful obedience to him: or else Christ, the advocate and propitiation for sin; and him also, not with a mere notional knowledge of his person and offices, which carnal men and devils themselves have of him, but with that which is spiritual, special, and saving, being from the Spirit and grace of God; and regards Christ as a Saviour, as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, and an advocate with God the Father; and by which he is approved as such, to the rejection of all other savours, sacrifices, and advocates; and is trusted, confided, and believed in as such, and affectionately loved, and that above all others, in sincerity and truth; and is readily obeyed in his word and ordinances; for where there is true knowledge of Christ, there is faith in him; and where there is faith in him, there is love to him, for faith works by love; and where there is love to him, there will be an observance of his commands; and this is here made the evidence of the true knowledge of him: for it follows,

if we keep his commandments; not the commandments of men, for the keeping of them arises from ignorance of God, and is a proof of it; nor the commandments of the ceremonial law, which are abolished, particularly circumcision, which is opposed to the keeping of the commandments of God, (~~4079~~1 Corinthians 7:19); but either those of the moral law, and which are more particularly the commandments of God the Father; the observance of which, though it cannot be with perfection, yet being in faith, and from love to God, and with a view to his glory, is an evidence of the true knowledge of him and of his will: or else those commandments, which are more especially the commandments of Christ Jesus; such as the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, which are peculiar to the Gospel dispensation; and which being kept as they were delivered by Christ, and in his name and strength, and to his glory, without depending on them for life and salvation, is an argument and proof of the right knowledge of him; and particularly his new commandment of loving one another may be chiefly designed, that being what the apostle has greatly in

view throughout this epistle; now let it be observed, that keeping of the commands of God, or Christ, is not the knowledge of either of them itself, for much may be done in an external way, yet neither God nor Christ be spiritually and savingly known; nor is it the cause of such knowledge, for that is owing to the Spirit and grace of God; but is an effect or consequence of spiritual knowledge, and so an evidence of it; hereby is not the knowledge itself, but the knowledge of that knowledge, that is, that it is true and genuine.

Ver. 4. *He that saith I know him, &c.*] God or Christ, as the Gnostics did, who pretended to great, even perfect, knowledge of divine things:

and keepeth not his commandments; which the above persons had no regard to, and as many who profess great light and knowledge in our days show no concern for:

is a liar; he contradicts what he says, and gives the lie to it; for though in words he professes to know God, in works he denies him, and which betrays his ignorance of him:

and the truth is not in him; there is no true knowledge of God and Christ in him; nor is the truth of the Gospel in his heart, however it may be in his head; nor is the truth of grace in him, for each of these lead persons to obedience. The Ethiopic version renders it, “the truth of God is not with him”; (see Gill on “⁶¹¹⁸1 John 1:8”).

Ver. 5. *But whoso keepeth his word, &c.*] Either the word of the Gospel, and the truths of it, who receives it in love, cordially embraces and retains it, and will by no means part with it, but holds it fast, and stands fast in it; or the precepts and ordinances of the word, who loves these, and esteems them above fine gold, and concerning all things to be right, and observes them as they should be:

in him verily is the love of God perfected: not the love wherewith God loves him, for that is perfect in himself, and admits of no degrees, and cannot be more or less in his heart, and is entirely independent of the obedience of men, or any works of theirs; it is true indeed the manifestations of this love to the saints are imperfect, and may be more and greater, and greater manifestations of love are promised to such that love Christ, and keep his commandments, (⁶¹²¹John 14:21,23); but here it is to be understood not actively, but passively, of the love wherewith God is loved by his people; and intends not the absolute perfection of it in them, in

whom it often waxes cold, and is left, or the fervour of it abated, but the sincerity and reality of it; for by keeping the word of God, both his truths and his ordinances, it is clearly seen that their love to him is without dissimulation, and is not in tongue only, but in deed and in truth: now it is not the keeping of the word of God that causes this love, or makes it perfect or sincere, for it is a fruit of the Spirit, and is owing to the grace of God; but love, on the other hand, is the cause of keeping of the word; and the latter being a consequent and an effect of the former, is the evidence of it, of the truth and sincerity of it:

hereby know we that we are in him: in Christ, not merely nominally, or by profession, as all that name the name of Christ, and are in a Gospel church state, may be said to be; but really, first secretly, through the love of Christ, the election of God, and the covenant of grace, and then openly, in conversion and the effectual calling, through believing in Christ, when the saints appear to be in him as branches in the vine; and which is known by their fruits, as here, by keeping the word, and doing the commandments of Christ, which do not put a man into Christ, but only show that he is there; for a man's being in Christ is owing to the grace of God; this is the first thing done in grace, (^{<411>}1 Corinthians 1:30).

Ver. 6. *He that saith he abideth in him*, &c.] As all do that are in him; once in Christ, and always in Christ; they are set as a seal on his arm and heart, which can never be removed; they are in his arms, and can never be plucked from thence; and are members of him, and can never be disunited from him: or dwelleth in him, as in (^{<416>}John 6:56); that is, by faith; who under a sense of sin and danger have fled to Christ, as to a strong tower and place of defence, where they dwell safely, peaceably, pleasantly, and comfortably, enjoying whatever is necessary for them. The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “he that saith I am in him”; loved by him, chosen in him, united to him, a member of his, and have communion with him:

ought himself also to walk even as he walked; as Christ walked, lived, and acted, so ought he; that is, to imitate him and follow him, as he has him for an example; not in his miraculous works in raising the dead, healing the sick, and walking upon the waters, &c. which were wrought as proofs of his deity and of his Messiahship, and not intended for imitation; nor in his mediatorial performances, as in his propitiatory sacrifice and advocacy; but in the exercise of grace, and duties of religion as a man, and in a private way; and may chiefly regard walking in love, as he walked, (see

~~¶~~Ephesians 5:2); and is what is in the following verses insisted on, namely, the new commandment of love to the brethren; which should be to all as his was, and, like his, constant and lasting; and, when the case requires, should be shown by laying down life for them. The “as” is not a note of equality, but of likeness; for it cannot be thought that saints should walk in that degree of perfection, in humility, patience, love, and in the exercise of every other grace, and in the discharge of duty, as Christ did; only that they should copy after him, and make his obedience and life the rule of theirs.

Ver. 7. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, &c.*] Some understand this of faith, which this apostle calls a commandment, (~~¶~~1 John 3:23); but it rather intends the commandment of love, especially to the brethren, of which the apostle says the same things as here in his second epistle, (~~¶~~1 John 2:5,6); and this sense agrees both with what goes before and follows after, and is a considerable branch of the commandments of Christ to be kept, and of walking as he walked; and the word “brethren”, prefixed to this account, may direct to, and strengthen this sense, though the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions read, “beloved”; and so the Alexandrian copy, and others: and this commandment is said to be not a new one,

but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning; it being in its original a part of the eternal law of truth, founded upon the unalterable nature and eternal will of God, who is love itself, and requires it in all his creatures; being what was written on Adam's heart in a state of innocence, and a branch of the divine image stamped upon him; and is what was delivered in the law of Moses, for love to God and men is the sum and substance of that; and was taught by Christ and his apostles from the beginning of the Gospel dispensation; and was what these saints had been acquainted with, and influentially instructed in from their first conversion, being taught of God in regeneration to love one another; so that this was no novel doctrine, no upstart notion, no new law, but of the greatest and most venerable antiquity, and therefore to be regarded in the most respectful manner.

The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning; or this ancient law of love is contained in, and enforced by that word or doctrine which was delivered from the beginning of time; and which these saints had heard of, concerning the seed of the woman's

bruising the serpent's head, which includes the work of redemption and salvation by Christ, atonement by his sacrifice, forgiveness of sin through his blood, and justification by his righteousness, than which nothing can more powerfully engage to love God, and Christ, and one another; and which is also strongly encouraged by the word of God and Gospel of Christ, which they had heard, and had a spiritual and saving knowledge of, from the time they were effectually called by the grace of God: the phrase, "from the beginning", is left out in the Alexandrian copy, and others, and in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions; it is omitted in both clauses of the text in the latter.

Ver. 8. *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, &c.*] Which is the same with the former, considered in different respects. The command of brotherly love is a new one; that is, it is an excellent one, as a new name is an excellent name, and a new song is an excellent one; it is renewed by Christ under the Gospel dispensation; it is newly explained by him, and purged from the false glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees; (see ^{<105B>}Matthew 5:43,44); and enforced by him with a new argument, and by a new example of his own, even his own love to his people; and which is observed by them in a new manner, they being made new creatures; and this law being anew written in their hearts, under the renewing work of the Spirit of God, as a branch of the new covenant of grace; (see ^{<103B>}John 13:34). The Jews ^{f27} expect **hvdj hrwt**, "a new law" to be given them by the bands of the Messiah; and a new one he has given, even the new commandment of love, and which is the fulfilling of the law.

Which things is true in him, and in you. The Alexandrian copy reads, "in us"; the sense is either, it is true "in itself", as the phrase will bear to be rendered, and it is verified in you, or in us, to be a new commandment; or it is true in Christ, it is yea and amen in him; it has its full completion in him, who is the fulfilling end of the law, as well as it has been faithfully delivered, truly explained, and warmly and affectionately recommended and urged by him; and he is the great pattern and exemplar of it: and the love which this new commandment requires is really and truly in the saints, implanted in them in regeneration, is a fruit of the Spirit, and which faith works by, and will always continue in them; and should be in its actings like Christ's, true, sincere, cordial, affectionate, constant, and universal: and some think the word **εστι**, or **εστω**, "is", or "let it be", is wanting in the last clause, and may be read, "which thing is true in him, and is", or "let it be in you": that is, as love to the brethren is true and sincere in Christ, so

it is, or should be in you; it should be without dissimulation, and so it was, as the reason following shows:

because the darkness is past, or is “passing”; meaning either the darkness of the ceremonial law, which lay in dark types and shadows, and in cloudy sacrifices, and mystical representations of things, and was a shadow of good things to come; and its shadows were now fleeing away apace, in fact as well as in right; and so the Alexandrian copy reads, “because the shadow is passing away”; the night of Jewish darkness was far spent, and the Gospel day was not only broke, but it was, or near noonday, which brought the light of faith, and the heat of love with it: or else the darkness of sin and ignorance, of a state of nature, and of the kingdom of Satan, in which the people of God are before conversion; which then passes away gradually, by little and little, for it is not removed at once, or wholly gone; for though the saints are at once removed out of a state of darkness, and from the kingdom of darkness, and the power of it, yet they are not wholly free from the darkness of sin and ignorance, they still see but through a glass darkly: and the words are better rendered, the darkness passes”, or “is passing away”, and not is past”, or “has passed away”; for as yet it is not entirely gone;

and the true light now shineth; either the Gospel, which is a light, and a true and substantial one, in distinction from the dim light of nature, or the shadowy law of Moses; and which now, under the present dispensation, shines out in a most glorious manner, as the sun in its full strength; and so the Ethiopic version renders it, “the light of truth”; the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation: or Jesus Christ, who is so called, (~~GOOD~~ John 1:9); in distinction from typical lights, as the “Urim” on the high priest's breastplate, the candlestick in the tabernacle and temple, and the pillar of fire by night, which guided the Israelites through the wilderness; and in opposition to all false lights, to the Scribes and Pharisees, to false Christs and false prophets, which are so many “ignes fatui”; but Christ is the sun of righteousness that is risen in our “horizon”, and the true light which shines out in a most illustrious manner: or the light of grace is here intended, that light which the Spirit of God illuminates with in conversion; in which a man sees sin in its true colours, and has a spiritual and saving sight of Christ, of pardon, peace, life, righteousness, and salvation by him; which is no other than the light of faith, by which an enlightened person sees the Son, looks to him, and has an evidence of the unseen glories of another world. Now this is a true light, things are seen by the believer in a right light, both his

own sins, and the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; this is a shining one, which cannot but be observed by himself, and shines more and more to the perfect day; and it now shines as it did not before, in a state of nature, and continues to shine, and ever will: this light will never be put out, and is the cause of brotherly love, being truly in the saints, and of the continuance of it; before this light shines, men live in malice, but when it comes and shines, as they walk in light, they walk in love.

Ver. 9. *He that saith he is in the light*, &c.] Is in Christ the light, or has the true knowledge of the light of the Gospel, or is illuminated by the Spirit of God; for persons may profess to be enlightened ones, and not be so: wherefore the apostle does not say, he that is in the light, but he that says he is,

and hateth his brother; who is so either by creation, as all men are brethren, having one Father, that has made them, and brought them up; or by regeneration, being born of God the Father, and in the same family and household of faith; and so regards such who are in a spiritual relation, whom to hate internally, or not to love, is inconsistent with being in the light, or having faith, which is always naturally and necessarily accompanied with the heat of love; for as light and heat, so faith and love go together: wherefore, let a man's profession of light be what it will, if love to his brother is wanting, he

is in darkness even until now; he is in a state of nature and unregeneracy, which is a state of darkness and ignorance; he is under the power of darkness, and in the kingdom of Satan; who is the ruler of the darkness of this world; he ever was so from his birth; he never was called nor delivered out of it, but is still in it to this moment, and so remains. This seems to be very much levelled against the Jews, who make hatred of the brother in some cases lawful: for they say ^{f28},

“if one man observes sin in another, and reproves him for it, and he does not receive his reproof, *wtwançl rtwm*, “it is lawful to hate him”;

(see Gill on “⁴⁰⁵⁸Matthew 5:43”).

Ver. 10. *He that loveth his brother*, &c.] As such, and because he is his brother in Christ, and that cordially and sincerely, without hypocrisy and

dissimulation, and by love serves him, both in things temporal and spiritual, and so observes the new, and yet old commandment,

abideth in the light: it is a plain case, that such a man is in the light of grace, and continues in it; for though it is not his love to the brethren which is the cause of his light, of his being and continuing in it, for that is owing to the spirit of light and knowledge, but on the contrary, light is the cause of his love; yet it is an evidence of it, that by which it is known, as the cause is known by the effect; (see ~~EBB~~ John 3:14);

and there is none occasion of stumbling in him, or “there is no scandal” or “offence in him”; he gives no offence to his brother, or at least, as much as in him lies, he takes care that he gives none; he avoids, as much as can be, putting a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way, by the use of things indifferent, or by any other action; nor will he easily take offence at what is said or done unto him, for charity or love is not easily provoked, it suffers long, and bears all things; (see ~~EBB~~ 1 Corinthians 13:4,5,7); nor does he so much and so frequently transgress the laws of God, and particularly those which regard his neighbour or his brother, and so easily fall into the snares of Satan, because he is in the light, and walks in the light, and sees his way, and what lies in his way, and, so shuns and avoids occasion of stumbling and falling. There is not in him that wrath, and malice, and envy, which lead on to the commission of other sins; for love works no ill, but fulfils the law, and will not suffer him to commit adultery, to kill, to steal, or bear false witness against his neighbour, friend, and brother; (see ~~EBB~~ Romans 13:9,10); and such an one enjoys great peace, tranquillity, and happiness; he has much comfort in himself, and pleasure in the saints, and delight in their company; he walks inoffensively, and in an harmless manner, without hurting himself, or any other, (~~EBB~~ Psalm 119:165).

Ver. 11. *But he that hateth his brother is in darkness*, &c.] As is before expressed in (~~EBB~~ 1 John 2:9), to which is added,

and walketh in darkness; he goes on in it, and takes delight in it, as dangerous and uncomfortable as it is:

and knoweth not whither he goeth; he cannot discern between good and evil; he puts darkness for light, and light for darkness; he sees not what is before him, nor what stumblingblocks lie in the way; he is not aware of the snares, pits, and traps he is in danger of falling into; nor does he know and

consider what these paths of darkness, of sin, and ignorance, and infidelity, lead unto, even unto utter darkness, where is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth: and the reason is,

because that darkness hath blinded his eyes; either Satan, the god of this world, who blinds the minds of them that believe not, and who is darkness itself, and the cause of darkness in himself and in others, and one of whose names this was with the Jews ^{f29}; (see Gill on “~~423~~ Luke 22:53”); or that natural darkness which sin has brought upon the understanding, and has blinded the eyes of it, called the blindness of the heart, (~~408~~ Ephesians 4:18), so that a man under the power of it is ignorant of himself, and knows not that he is blind and miserable; is a stranger to the way of peace, and life by Christ, and knows not what he is about, and where he is, or whither he is going, and what his end will be.

Ver. 12. *I write unto you, little children*, &c.] By whom the apostle means in common all the saints he writes to, whom he afterwards distributes into fathers, young men, and little children; for the same word is used here as in (~~611~~ 1 John 2:1); and a different one from that which is rendered little children in (~~613~~ 1 John 2:13); and besides, the following blessing of pardon of sin is common to all the children of God of different ages: now what the apostle says he writes unto them, intends not the epistle in general, but the new commandment of love in particular; and which he urges and enforces on them all, for this reason,

because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake; these little children had been sinners by nature and practice, and were not now without sin, but they shared in the blessing of the forgiveness of it; which arises from the abundant mercy and rich grace of God, and proceeds on the blood and sacrifice of Christ; and therefore is said to be “for his name's sake”; not for the sake of any merits in men, any services or works of theirs, but for the sake of Christ, his blood, sacrifice and satisfaction; and it reaches to all sins, original and actual, secret and open, past, present, and to come; and here intends the application of it by the Spirit of God, and the reception of it by faith: and which, as it is a reason and argument encouraging love to God, who freely and fully forgives, and to Christ, whose blood was shed for the remission of sin, so to their brethren and fellow Christians; who are equally sharers in the same blessing, and when they should love, because they are loved of God and Christ; and whom they should forgive, because God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven them. It may be, they may be called

here “little children”, with a view to their interest in this blessing of grace. So the Jews say ^{f30}, that Saul was called

““the son of one year in his reign”; (~~0931~~1 Samuel 13:1); because all his iniquities were forgiven him, **qwnyt**k “as a sucking child” of a year old.”

Ver. 13. *I write unto you, fathers, &c.*] Not merely in age, though they might be men in years who are here intended, or only with respect to their long standing in the church, which might be the case; though persons may be in years, and of a long standing in the church, and yet be children in knowledge and experience: but here it designs such, who, in comparison of others, were perfect, and were spiritual, and judged all things; had a well informed and established judgment in divine things, and were, in understanding, men, fathers, and not babes in Christ; so the Jews used to call their men of wisdom, and knowledge, and understanding, **twba**, “Abot”, “fathers”. Hence there is a whole treatise in the Misna called Pirke Abot, which contains the apophthegms, wise sayings, and sentences of their fathers, or wise men. Now the apostle writes the new commandment of love, and urges it on these, for this reason,

because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning; either God the Father, who is from everlasting to everlasting, the Ancient of days, the eternal I AM, whom to know is life eternal; whose everlasting love to them, whose covenant of grace with his Son for them, before the world was, and the ancient transactions, and settlements of his grace on their account, they were acquainted with: or Jesus Christ, the Logos or Word, which was from the beginning, who existed from all eternity, as a divine person, as the Son of God, co-eternal with the Father; as the eternal choice made in him, and the everlasting covenant with him show; and who in his office capacity, as Mediator, was set up from everlasting; and who, with respect to the virtue of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, was from the beginning of the world, and was the same yesterday, today, and for ever; it being by his blood that all the patriarchs, from the beginning of time, were pardoned, and by his righteousness they were justified, and by his grace they were saved; all which, respecting the antiquity of Christ's person, office, and grace, was known to these fathers: they knew him, so as to approve of him, trust in him, and appropriate him to themselves, and which obliged them to the new commandment of love, not only to God and Christ, but to one another; and the reason here given, engaging to it, is

exceeding suitable to their character, it being what fathers and aged men delight in, even ancient things, to call them to remembrance, to talk of them as things well known unto them; but nothing is more ancient than what is here instanced in, and nothing so honourable and profitable to know as this, or to be gloried in; and therefore the argument from hence to love those that belong to him, who is the everlasting Father, is very strong and forcible.

I write unto you, young men; who are warm and zealous for God, for his cause and interest, for the glory of a Redeemer, for his truths and ordinances; and are lively in the exercise of grace, and fervent in the discharge of duty; and are active, diligent, and industrious, always abounding in the work of the Lord; and are strong and robust, able to go alone, to walk by faith, being strong in it, and in the grace that is in Christ, and do not need the staff that old age does, nor the hand to lead and teach to go, as children do: to these the apostle writes the new commandment of love, for this reason,

because ye have overcome the wicked one; Satan, who is eminently so, being the first that was, and the worst that is so; for he is wickedness itself, he is wholly, entirely, immutably, and unalterably wicked; and his whole work and employment is in wickedness. Now these young men had overcome him, not only in Christ their head, who has spoiled him, destroyed him, and led him captive in triumph, in whom they were more than conquerors; but in themselves, through the power of divine grace, holding up, and making use of the shield of faith against him, whereby they quenched his fiery darts, and got the victory over him: and this is also said in perfect agreement with the character of young men, who are apt to glory in their strength, and are fond of getting the advantage, or a victory over others; and which is used to teach such as are so in a spiritual sense, not to glory in their strength, but in the Lord; and to love him whom they know, and whose lovingkindness is exercised towards them, and in Christ; and to love him through whom they get the victory, and to bear the infirmities of weaker saints, to whom they should be strongly affected.

I write unto you, little children; or babes in Christ, such as were newborn babes, just born again, not able to go alone, or walk by faith, but were dandled on the knee, and lay at the breasts of divine consolation: could speak but stammeringly, and not plain, it being as much as they could do to

say “Abba”, Father. To these the apostle writes, and urges the new commandment of love, for this reason,

because ye have known the Father: the Father of Christ, and him, as their Father in Christ, under the witnessings of the spirit of adoption; so as, in some good measure, to hope and believe he was their Father, and to love, honour, and obey him as such, to apply to him for whatever they stood in need of, and always to put themselves under his care and protection: and a consideration of this their relation to him, and interest in him, is a strong and prevailing argument why they should not only love him, their Father, and Christ, who is begotten of him, but also all the saints, who are the children of this their Father, and their brethren; and very aptly does the apostle mention their knowledge of the Father as suitable to their age and character, it being one of the first and most necessary things for a child to know.

Ver. 14. *I have written unto you, fathers*, &c.] This, with the reason annexed to it, is repeated, to raise the attention of the aged servants of Christ, and to quicken them to a discharge of their duty, who are apt to abate in their zeal, to grow lukewarm and indifferent, to cleave to the world, and to the things of it, which they are cautioned against in (¶1215-1 John 2:15). The whole of this, with the reason,

because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning, is left out in the Vulgate Latin version, and Complutensian edition.

I have written unto you, young men; this repetition to them, with some additions, is also made, to stir them up the more to love the saints, who are too apt to be carried away with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, warned against in (¶1216-1 John 2:16);

because ye are strong; not naturally, for sin has sadly weakened human nature, so that a man, by the strength of nature, can do nothing that is spiritually good: nor in themselves, though regenerated, but in Christ, in whom are righteousness and strength; without whom they can do nothing, though they can do all things through him strengthening them; and so are strong in the exercise of grace on him, and in the performance of every duty, being strengthened by him with strength in their souls:

and the word of God abideth in you; either Christ the Logos, the essential Word of God, who might be said to be in them, and abide in them, because his grace was implanted in their hearts, called Christ, formed there, and

because he dwelt in their hearts by faith, and lived in them; and hence they had their strength, or came to be so strong as they were, and also overcame Satan, because he that was in them was greater than he that is in the world: or else the Gospel is meant, which cometh not in word only, but in power, has a place in the heart, and works effectually, and dwells richly there; and this is a means of spiritual strength against sin and temptation, and to perform duty, and to stand fast in the truth against the errors and heresies of men and is that piece of spiritual armour, the sword of the Spirit, by which Satan is often foiled, and overcome: hence it follows,

and ye have overcome the wicked one; (see Gill on “^{אֲנִי}1 John 2:13”).

Ver. 15. *Love not the world,* &c.] The habitable earth, the world in which men live; this is not to be loved by saints, as if it was their habitation, where they are always to be, and so loath to remove from it, seeing they are but sojourners, and pilgrims, and strangers here; this is not their rest, nor dwellingplace, their continuing city, or proper country, that is heaven. Nor should they love the men of the world, who are as they came into it, are of it, and mind the things of it, and lie in wickedness, and are wicked men; for though these are to be loved, as men, as fellow creatures, and their good, both spiritual and temporal, is to be sought, and good is to be done to them, as much as lies in our power, both with respect to soul and body; yet their company is not to be chosen, and preferred to the saints, but to be shunned and avoided, as disagreeable and dangerous; their evil conversation, and wicked communications, are not to be loved, but abhorred, and their works of darkness are to be reprov'd; nor are their ways to be imitated, and their customs followed, or their manners to be conformed unto:

neither the things [that are] in the world; good men that are in the world, though they are not of the world, are to be loved; and the kingdom of Christ, though it is not of the world, yet it is in the world, and is to be regarded and promoted to the uttermost; and there are the natural and civil things of the world, called this world's goods, which may be loved within due bounds, and used in a proper manner, though they are not to be loved inordinately and abused. This is the character of worldly men; so the Jews call such, *hzh ןל װא יבחה*, “such that love world”^{f31}. Near relations and friends in the world, and the blessings of life, may be loved and enjoyed in their way, but not above God and Christ, or so as to take up satisfaction and contentment in them, to make idols of them, and put trust and

confidence in them, and prefer them to spiritual and heavenly things, and be so taken with them, as to be unconcerned for, and careless about the other; but the evil things of the world, or at least the evil use of them, and affection for them, are here intended, as appears from the following verse. Now it is chiefly with respect to the fathers, and young men, that this exhortation is given; and the repetition of what is said to them before is made, to introduce this; which is exceeding suitable to their age and characters. Old men are apt to be covetous, and love the world and worldly things, just when they are going out of it, and about to leave them; and young men are apt to be carried away with lust, vanity, ambition, and pride: and therefore, from each of these, the apostle dissuades, from the following arguments,

if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; that is, “the love of God”, as the Alexandrian copy and the Ethiopic version read; who is the Father of Christ, and of all the elect in him; and who is indeed, by creation, the Father of all men, the Father of spirits, of the souls of men, and of angels, and the Father of mercies and of lights, and by the love of him is meant, either the love with which he loves his people, and which being shed abroad in the heart, attracts the soul to himself, and causes it to love him above the world, and all things in it; and such an one esteems of it, and an interest in it, more than life, and all the enjoyments of it, and is by it loosened to the world, and sets light by it, and can part with all good things in it, and suffer all evil things cheerfully, under the constraints and influence of this love; so that it is a clear case, that when the affections of men are set upon the world, and they are glued to the things of it, their hearts are not warmed with a sense of the love of God, or, that is not sensibly in them, or shed abroad in their hearts: or else by the love of God is meant love to God, which is inconsistent with the love of the world, or with such an inordinate love of mammon, as to serve it; for a man may as soon serve two masters, as serve God and mammon, which he can never do truly, faithfully, and affectionately; and which also is not consistent with friendship with the men of the world, or a conversation and fellowship with them in things that are evil, whether superstition or profaneness; (see ~~4021~~ Matthew 6:24 ~~3004~~ James 4:4).

Ver. 16. *For all that [is] in the world, &c.*] This is the sum of the evil things in the world; or these following are the objects of sin in the world, or about which wicked men are conversant; even such as are carnal or grateful to the flesh, visible to the eye, and belong to this vain life, or serve

to fill with pride and vanity; or these are the main things, which men that love the world most highly value and esteem:

the lust of the flesh; by which is meant, not lust in general, or concupiscence, the corruption of nature, which is the fountain of all sin, or indwelling sin, the flesh, or that corrupt principle which lusts against the Spirit; nor the various lusts of the flesh, fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, and which are many, and are also called worldly lusts; but some particular one, “a lust of the body”, as the Syriac version reads; either the lust of uncleanness, which includes all unchaste desires, thoughts, words, and actions, fornication, adultery, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts; and which make up a considerable part of the all that is in the world: or else intemperance in eating and drinking, gluttony and drunkenness, excess of wine, surfeitings, rioting, and revellings, and all the sensual pleasures of life, by which the carnal mind, and the lusts of it, are gratified; whereby the soul is destroyed, the body is dishonoured, and a wound, dishonour, and reproach brought on the character, not to be removed; for which reasons the world, and the things of it, are not to be loved: the next follows,

the lust of the eyes: after unlawful objects, and may design unchaste and lascivious looks, eyes full of adultery, and whereby adultery is committed; (see ^{<4183>}Matthew 5:28); but then this falls in with the other, unless that be confined to intemperance; rather then this may intend a sinful curiosity of seeing vain sights, and shows, with which the eye of man is never satisfied, (^{<2108>}Ecclesiastes 1:8); and against which the psalmist prays, (^{<4337>}Psalm 119:37), or rather the sin of covetousness is here designed, the objects of which are visible things, as gold, silver, houses, lands, and possessions, with which riches the eyes of men are never satisfied, and which sin is drawn forth and cherished by the eyes; and indeed a covetous man has little more satisfaction than the beholding his substance with his eyes, and in which he takes much sinful pleasure; (see ^{<2108>}Ecclesiastes 4:8 5:11); and what a poor vain empty thing is this! therefore, love not the world, since this is a principal thing in it: as is also

the pride of life; by which seems to be meant, ambition of honour, of chief places and high titles, as in the Scribes and Pharisees, (^{<4126>}Matthew 23:6,7), or of grand living, for the word signifies not so much life as living; living in a sumptuous, gay, luxurious, and pompous manner, in rich diet, costly apparel, having fine seats, palaces, and stately buildings, and

numerous attendance; all which is but vanity and vexation of spirit; (see ~~200~~ Ecclesiastes 2:1,3-8,11). The Syriac and Arabic versions read, “the pride of the age”; and every age has some peculiar things in which the pride of it appears. Now neither of these

is of the Father; of God the Father, as the Ethiopic version reads; the things which are desired and lusted after are of God, but not the lust itself; God is not the author of sin, nor is it agreeable to his will:

but is of the world; of the men of it, and agreeable to their carnal minds; and is a reason why things of the world are not to be loved by the saints, who are not of it, but chosen and called out of it; and besides, all these things are mean, base, vile, and contemptible, and unworthy of their love and affection.

Ver. 17. *And the world passeth away*, &c.] Not the matter and substance, but the fashion, form, and scheme of it, (~~403~~ 1 Corinthians 7:31); kingdoms, cities, towns, houses, families, estates, and possessions, are continually changing, and casting into different hands, and different forms; the men of the world, the inhabitants of it, are continually removing; one generation goes, and another comes, new faces are continually appearing; the riches and honours of the world are fading, perishing, and transitory things; everything is upon the flux, nothing is permanent; which is another argument why the world, and the things of it, are not to be loved:

and the lust thereof; also passes away; and objects of lust are fading and fleeting, as beauty, and riches, and honours; these are continually taking away from men, or men are taken away from them, and will not be hereafter; and even the pleasure of lust itself passes away as soon as enjoyed; the pleasures of sin are but for a season, and a very short one; and are indeed but imaginary, and leave a real bitterness and sorrow behind them, and at length bring a man to ruin and destruction:

but he that doeth the will of God; not perfectly as contained in the law, which is the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God; for no man can do that in such a manner, though a regenerate man desires to do it, even as it is done in heaven, and serves the law of God with his mind, and under the influence of the Spirit of God; and does walk in his statutes, and keeps his judgments from a principle of love, in faith, and without mercenary views and sinister ends, without depending on what he does for life and salvation; and such an one may be said to be a doer of the will of God:

though rather here it intends such an one as believes in Christ, as the propitiation for his sins, and as his advocate with the Father, and who, makes Christ his pattern and example, and walks as he walked; and particularly observes the new commandment of love, loves God, and Christ, and his fellow Christians, and not the world, and the things of it: and such a man is happy, for he

abideth for ever; in the love of God, which will never depart from him, nor shall he be separated from that; and in the hands and arms of Christ, out of which none can pluck him; and in the family and household of God, where he, as a son, abides for ever, and shall never be cast out; and in a state of justification, and shall never enter into condemnation; and in a state of grace and holiness, from whence he shall never fall totally and finally; and in heaven with Christ to all eternity: the reason of this his abiding is not his doing the will of God, which is only descriptive of him manifestatively, and not the cause of his perpetuity and immovableness; but his eternal election of God, which stands sure, not on the foot of works, but of him that calleth; and the covenant of grace in which he is interested, and which is immovable, sure, firm, and inviolable; and the foundation Jesus Christ, on which he is built; and the principle of grace in him, which always remains, and is connected with eternal life.

Ver. 18. *Little children, it is the last time*, &c.] Or hour; not of the Jewish civil and church state, for that had been at an end for some time; this epistle was written some years after the destruction of Jerusalem; nor the last hour of the Gospel dispensation, or world to come, for this was but the first age of that; and much less the last hour of time, or of the present world itself, for that has been many hundreds of years since; but the last hour of the apostolic age. All the apostles were now dead, John was the last of them; perilous times were now coming on, impostors and heretics were rising apace, against which the apostle cautions his little children; and so still he writes to them, agreeably to their age and character, who, being such, were most likely to be imposed upon by those who lie in wait to deceive.

And as ye have heard that antichrist shall come; or “is coming”; and begins to show himself in the false teachers and deceivers, who were his forerunners; and this they had heard and understood, either from the words of Christ in (^{<RB>}John 5:43); or from the account the Apostle Paul gave to the Thessalonians concerning him, (^{<SB>}2 Thessalonians 2:3,4,7-10); or rather it may be from what, the apostle had said to the elders of the church

at Ephesus, where the Apostle John now was, when he met them at Miletus, (^{<411B>}Acts 20:29,30),

even now there are many antichrists. The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “false Christs”; but such are not intended here, that set up for Messiahs, whom Christ foretold should arise before the destruction of Jerusalem, (^{<412B>}Matthew 24:24); for that was now over, and those false Christs had arisen and were gone: if this sense could be admitted, Bar Cocab, in Adrian's time, bids fair to be the false Christ, or Messiah, in the preceding clause, as the same versions there read; but such as were adversaries of Christ, as the Arabic version renders it, are meant, who set themselves against Christ, and were opposers of his person, incarnation, and office; who either denied that he was the Christ, or that he was come in the flesh, the truth of his incarnation, or his proper deity, or real humanity, such as Ebion, Cerinthus, and others. The apostle might well say there were many, since in his time were the followers of Simon Magus, the Menandrians, Saturnilians, Basilidians, Nicolaites, Gnostics, Carpocratians, Cerinthians, Ebionites, and Nazarenes, as reckoned up by Epiphanius. And hence we learn, that antichrist is not one single individual, but many; antichrist in the former clause is explained by antichrists in this; (see ^{<412>}1 John 2:22 4:1,3 2 John 7); and though the popes of Rome are, by way of eminence, the antichrist that should come, and which those deceivers were the forerunners of, and paved the way for; yet they are not the only antichrists, there were others before them, and there are many now besides them.

Whereby we know that it is the last time; the pure apostolic age was now going off, with the doctrines, discipline, and worship of it, which was easy to be discerned by the multitude of antichrists which now appeared; and it may well be thought to be the last time, or near the end of things with us, since almost every heresy is revived among us.

Ver. 19. *They went out from us, &c.]* Which intends not the persons that went down from Judea to Antioch, (^{<415B>}Acts 15:1,24), who preached destructive doctrines to the Gentiles, which the apostles and the church of Judea disowned and censured; by which it appeared, that all the preachers of these doctrines were not of them, and of the same mind with them: for this sense makes these antichrists to be only preachers; whereas, though many of them might be such, yet not all; for whoever, in a private capacity denied the Father and the Son, or that Christ was come in the flesh, was

antichrist; and to these private believers are opposed in (~~612~~1 John 2:20); and it also makes the “us” to be the apostles, whereas they were all dead but John; and these antichrists were men that had risen up then in the last time, and therefore could not, with propriety, be said to go out from the apostles; besides, whenever the apostle uses this pronoun “us”, he includes with himself all true believers, and may more especially here intend the churches of Asia; or rather the members of the church at Ephesus, where he was; nor is it likely he should have in view the church of Judea, and a case in which that was concerned near forty years ago: moreover, such a sense makes the going out to be merely local and corporeal, and which is in itself not criminal; the persons that went from Judea to Antioch were not blamable for going thither, nor for going out from the apostles thither, but for troubling the disciples with words, to the subverting of their souls; nor was a corporeal departure from the apostles any evidence of not being of the same mind with them; for they often departed one from other, yet continued of the same mind, and in the same faith: but the sense is, that there were some persons in the Apostle John's time, who had made a profession of religion, were members of the church, and some of them perhaps preachers, and yet they departed from the faith, and dropped their profession of it, and withdrew themselves from the church, or churches to which they belonged, and set up separate assemblies of their own:

but they were not of us: they were of the church, and of the same mind with it, at least in profession, antecedent to their going out; for had they not been in communion with the church, they could not be properly said to go out of it; and if they had not been of the same mind and faith in profession, they could not be said to depart from it; but they were not truly regenerated by the grace of God, and so apparently were not of the number, of God's elect: notwithstanding their profession and communion with the church, they were of the world, and not of God; they were not true believers; they had not that anointing which abides, and from which persons are truly denominated Christians, or anointed ones:

for if they had been of us, they would [no doubt] have continued with us; in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the fellowship of the church, as true believers do: if their hearts had been right with God, they would have remained steadfast to him, his Gospel, truths, and ordinances, and faithful with his saints; for such who are truly regenerate are born of an incorruptible seed, and those that have received the anointing which makes them truly Christians, that abides, as does every true grace, faith, hope, and

love; and such who are truly God's elect cannot possibly fall into such errors and heresies as these did, and be finally deceived, as they were:

but [they went out]; “they went out from us”, so the Syriac version reads; *that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us*; the word “all” is left out in the Syriac version. The defection and apostasy of these persons were permitted by God, that it might appear they had never received the grace of God in truth; and their going out was in such a manner, that it was a certain argument that they were not of the elect; since they became antichrists, denied the deity or sonship of Christ, or that he was come in the flesh, or that he was the Christ, and therefore are said to be of the world, and not of God, (^{<1022>}1 John 2:22 4:1,3-6), so that this passage furnishes out no argument against the saints' perseverance, which is confirmed in (^{<1021>}1 John 2:20).

Ver. 20. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One*, &c.] Meaning the Spirit, and his graces, with which Christ, the head, is anointed without measure, and his members in measure; from whence he is called Christ, and they Christians. These were really the Lord's anointed ones; they were true believers; were the wise virgins who had oil in their vessels with their lamps, which would never go out. The grace of the Spirit is called a chrism, or an ointment, or an anointing, in allusion to the anointing oil under the law; (see Gill on “^{<1018>}Matthew 25:3”); of which anointing oil the Jews say ^{f32}, that it continues all of it, *awbl dyt [I*, “to time to come”, (i.e. to the times of the Messiah,) as it is said, (^{<1018>}Exodus 30:31). Now this these saints had, “from the Holy One”; or that Holy One; meaning, not the Holy Spirit of God, though it is true that this anointing, or these graces, were from him; he is the author of them, and may truly be said to anoint with them; nor the Father, who is holy in his nature, and in his works, and is the God of all grace, and is said to anoint the saints too, (^{<1021>}2 Corinthians 1:21), but rather the Lord Jesus Christ, who is holy, both as God and man, and from whose fulness all grace is had. This oil, or ointment, was first poured on him without measure, and from him it descends to all the members of his mystical body, as the ointment poured on Aaron's head descended to his beard, and to the skirts of his garments; (see ^{<1022>}1 John 2:27);

and ye know all things; for this anointing is a teaching one; it makes persons of quick understanding; it enlightens their understandings,

refreshes their memories, and strengthens all the powers and faculties of the soul; it leads into the knowledge of all spiritual things, into all the mysteries of grace, and truths of the Gospel, into all things necessary for salvation; for these words are not to be taken in the largest sense, in which they are only applicable to the omniscient God, but to be restrained to the subject matter treated of, and to those things chiefly in which the antichrists and deceivers cited; and regard not a perfect knowledge, for those that know most of these things, under the influence of this unction, know but in part. The Syriac version reads, “all men”, and so refers to that discerning of spirits, of the Spirit of truth, from the spirit of error; a gift which was bestowed on many in the primitive times, by which they could distinguish hypocrites from true believers, and antichrists and deceivers from the faithful ministers of the word. One of Stephens's copies reads, “and ye all know”.

Ver. 21. *I have not written unto you, &c.*] Either this epistle, or rather what particularly here regards those apostates from the truth, in order to shun them and not be deceived by them: the apostle here obviates an objection that he saw might be made upon what he last said, that they knew all things; and, if so, why then did he write the things he did, since they knew them before? to which he answers, that he did not write to them as to ignorant, but as to knowing persons:

because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it: the Father, who is the God of truth; Christ, who is truth itself; and the Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth; and the Gospel, which is the word of truth; and the Scriptures, which are the Scriptures of truth, and from whence truth is to be fetched, and by them to be confirmed and defended; and which, if they had not known, it would have been to no purpose for him to have written to them about the antichrists that were come into the world; and though they did know the truth, it was very proper to put them in remembrance of it, and to establish them in it, against these deceivers, which supposes former knowledge of it:

and that no lie is of the truth; either springs from it, or is according to it, but just the reverse. The apostle has respect to the errors and heresies of the above apostates, which were flagrant contradictions to the Gospel, and as distant from it as a lie is to truth; and of such lies, and of those liars, he speaks in the next verses. The Arabic version reads, “and that every liar is not of the truth”.

Ver. 22. *Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? &c.]*

Or that very Christ, and true Messiah, who was spoken of by all the prophets, since the beginning of the world, and so much, and so long desired by the Old Testament saints: he that denies that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of the prophets, is not indeed the only liar in the world, but he is the greatest of liars; this is a consummate lie, being opposed to a glaring truth, to a fact clear and indisputable; and which rests not merely on the testimony of Jesus, who is truth itself, and who, in express words, more than once, declared and asserted himself to be the Christ; but all the characters of the Messiah, everything that is said of him in the Prophets, meet in Jesus, and the miracles which were done by him are flagrant proofs and undeniable evidences of his being the Christ of God; and all the apostles believed, and were sure that he was Christ, the Son of the living God: to which may be added the testimony of John, who was sent, and came to bear witness of him, and did; and who was a prophet, and a man of great probity and integrity. But there was a greater witness than he; even God himself, by a voice from heaven, bore a testimony to him; and angels, at his incarnation, declared him to be the Saviour, which is Christ the Lord; yea, the devil himself, who is a liar, and the father of lies in other things, knew and owned Jesus to be the Christ; so that those that deny him are the worst of liars, even worse than the devil himself. This may have regard not only to the Jews, that deny Jesus to be the Messiah, but chiefly to such who went by the name of Christians; who denied either his proper deity, or real humanity, as Ebion and Cerinthus, which was denying him to be the God-man, the Mediator, and Messiah; and is true of all such that deny him in any of his offices, or in things relating to them, as his Gospel, and any of the peculiar doctrines of it, delivered by him, and so deny his prophetic office; or any of his ordinances, institutions, and appointments, as lawgiver in his house, and King of saints, and so deny him in his kingly office; or reject him as the alone Saviour, joining their own works with him, in the business of salvation, and oppose his sacrifice and satisfaction, and despise his imputed righteousness, and so deny him in his priestly office. Now these are some of the liars, and these some of the doctrinal lies, which are not of the truth, as in (~~1~~ John 2:21).

He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son: that denies the Father of Christ to be the Creator of the world, but asserts that it was made by angels, as some ancient heretics did; or that the Father of Christ is not the God of the Old Testament, as Marcion; or that denies that God is the

Father of Christ, and that Christ is the Son of God; who will not allow that there is any such relation in nature between them; who affirm that Christ is only the Son of God by adoption, or because of his love to him, or because of his incarnation and resurrection from the dead; or that he is not his true and proper Son, only in a figurative and metaphorical sense; that he is not the natural and eternally begotten Son of God, only by office, and as Mediator, and that God is only his Father, as having installed him into an office; or he that denies that these two are distinct from each other, but affirms that Father is the Son, and the Son is the Father, and so confounds them both, and, by confounding both, denies that there are either Father or Son; and all such persons are antichrists, or opposers of Christ.

Ver. 23. *Whosoever denieth the Son,* &c.] Jesus Christ to be the true, proper, natural, essential, and eternal Son of God:

the same hath not the Father; or does not hold the Father; or “believe the Father”, as the Syriac version renders it; for there cannot be a father without a son; and he that honours not the Son, by owning him as such, honours not the Father; whatever reflects dishonour on the Son, reflects dishonour on the Father. If Christ is not truly and properly the Son of God, the Father is not truly and properly the Father of Christ; if Christ is only a Son in a figurative and metaphorical sense, the Father is only a Father in a figurative and metaphorical sense; if Christ is a Son only by office, then the Father is a Father only by office, which is monstrously stupid. Such an one does not hold the true doctrine of the Father, and does not appear to have true faith in him, true love unto him, or real interest in him, only by profession:

[but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also]: this clause is left out in many copies, and stands as a supplement in our version; but is in the Alexandrian copy, in four of Beza's manuscripts, and in some others; and in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions; and confirms and illustrates what is before said; for as he that denies the sonship of Christ cannot hold the paternity of God, so he that owns the sonship of Christ, the second Person, maintains the paternity of the first; for these two are correlates, and mutually put, or take away each other: no mention is made of the Spirit, because, as yet, no controversy had risen concerning him.

Ver. 24. *Let that therefore abide in you,* &c.] Meaning the word of God, (¹John 2:14); the Gospel of Christ, which there was reason to believe had a place in their hearts, and which they had embraced and professed;

and therefore the apostle exhorts them to perseverance in it; and particularly not to let go the doctrine concerning the Father and the Son, and this their relation to each other, which is the foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the distinct personality of Father, Son, and Spirit; the contrary to which leaves the three without either name, or distinction from each other: the arguments to enforce this exhortation follow,

which ye have heard from the beginning; they had heard it not externally only, but internally; they had hearkened to it, and from the heart obeyed it; they had mixed it with faith, and received the love of it; they had heard it from the apostles of Christ, who were eye and ear witnesses of the word; and this they had heard at the first preaching of the Gospel to them, at the first of their conversion: the apostles of Christ began their ministry with the sonship of Christ, and greatly insisted on it, in it, and required a profession of it before baptism, and which was made in order to it; and these believers had been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, as standing in such a relation to each other; (see ~~400~~ Acts 9:20 8:37 ~~400~~ Matthew 28:19); and therefore ought not to relinquish this truth, and receive a new and upstart notion: and for further encouragement to continue in it, it is added,

if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father; as those that are once in either always will; what is here said is not either the cause or condition of men being in the Father, and in the Son, or of their continuance in them, but is descriptive of the persons that are in them, and is an open and manifest evidence of their being and continuance in them. Such are in union with Christ, and at times enjoy sensible communion with him, and shall never be finally and totally removed from it; they are in the love of Christ, from whence there is no separations, and in the arms and hands of Christ, out of which none can pluck them; and they abide by him in the exercise of faith and love, and cleave unto him with full purpose of heart, and will hold on and out, professing his name to the end: and they are, and abide in the love of God the Father, which is from everlasting to everlasting; and in the covenant of his grace, which is sure and inviolable; and in the participation of all the blessings and promises of it, among which, the following one, eternal life, is a principal one.

Ver. 25. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, &c.*] Either God the Father, who is that God that cannot lie, who in the covenant of his grace, before the world began, made this promise unto his people,

[even] eternal life; which promise, with all others, was put into the hands of Christ, where, with them, it is yea and amen; and also the thing itself promised, where it is hid, and lies safe and secure: or the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has promised it in the Gospel; for this is the sum of the Gospel declaration, that whoever believes in him shall have everlasting life; and this lies in the knowledge of the Father, and of the Son, and in the enjoyment of them, and conformity to them; wherefore the doctrine respecting them ought to be retained, and firmly adhered to.

Ver. 26. *These [things] have I written unto you, &c.]* The little children, who were most likely to be imposed upon by antichrists and deceivers:

concerning them that seduce you. The Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions render it, “for them that seduce you”; not that they were actually seduced and carried away with the error of the wicked; for though God’s elect may be staggered and waver, and be tossed to and fro by false teachers, and their doctrines, yet they cannot be totally and finally deceived: but the sense is, these men endeavoured to seduce them: they lay in wait to deceive, and attempted to deceive them, by walking in craftiness, and handling the word of God deceitfully; and therefore that they might be known, and so shunned and avoided, the apostle points them out, and shows who they are; that they are such who deny that Jesus is the Christ, and do not own neither the Father nor the Son; in doing which he acted the part of a tender Father, a faithful shepherd, and a careful monitor.

Ver. 27. *But the anointing which ye have received of him, &c.]* The Spirit, and the grace of the Spirit, which they had received out of the fulness of grace which is in Christ; and is compared to oil or ointment; (see Gill on “~~1~~1 John 2:20”); for Christ, the anointed, is the fountain of it all, and it is had from him in a way of giving and receiving. So the second “Sephira”, or number in the Jews’ Cabalistic tree, which is wisdom, has for one of its surnames, the fountain of the oil of unction ^{f33} this

abideth in you; the Syriac and Arabic versions render it, “if it abideth”, which spoils the text, for the words are not conditional, but affirmative: grace is an internal thing, it is oil in the vessel of the heart, and where it once is, it abides; as does every grace of the Spirit, as faith, hope, love, and every other: grace can never be taken away; God will not take it away, where he has once bestowed it, and men and devils cannot; it can never be lost as to the principle and being of it; it is an incorruptible seed, and a living principle, which can never be destroyed, notwithstanding all the

corruptions in a man's hart, the pollutions of the world, and the temptations of Satan:

and ye need not that any man teach you; not that they were perfect in knowledge, for no man is absolutely, only comparatively so, in this life; or that they needed not, and were above and exempt from the instructions of Christ's faithful servants; for John himself taught them, and to teach and instruct them was the end of his writing this epistle to them; but the sense is either that they needed not the teachings of these men before mentioned, the antichrists, liars, and seducers, being better taught, and having an unction by which they knew all things; or they needed not to be taught as if they were babes in Christ, as unskilful in the word of righteousness, but so as to increase in spiritual knowledge, and go on to perfection, and be established in the present truths, at least so as to be put in remembrance of them; or rather they needed not, nor were they to regard any mere human revelation and doctrine, for the whole Gospel was come by Jesus Christ, and no other is to be expected or received by men, nor any doctrine but what is according to the revelation of Christ; wherefore saints under the Gospel dispensation are taught of God by his Spirit, according to the word of truth, and by the ministry of it, and have no need of learning every man from his neighbour, or from his brother, any separate revelation; so that this passage does not militate against the external ministry of the Gospel, or human teachings according to that perfect rule and declaration of the whole mind and will of God by Christ under the Gospel dispensation:

but as the same anointing. The Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions read, "his anointing"; that is, God's or Christ's; and so the Syriac version renders it, "that unction which is of God"; meaning the same as before: the Ethiopic version renders it, his Spirit, which, though not a true version, is no improper or impertinent sense of the phrase: and this

teacheth you of all things; truths and doctrines necessary to salvation, as in (¹²²1 John 2:20);

and is truth, and is no lie; or true and not a liar; which is a just character of the spirit of truth, in opposition to the spirit of error; and holds good of the grace of the Spirit, which is truth in the inward parts, and is genuine and sincere:

and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him; in Christ, from whom they received this anointing, (see Gill on "¹²³1 John 2:24"); or in the

anointing itself, in the grace of the Spirit, in which they stood. Some versions read in the imperative, abide in him, or it, as in (~~1~~1 John 2:28).

Ver. 28. *And now, little children, abide in him,* &c.] The apostle having finished his separate instructions exhortations to the fathers, young men and children, returns to the whole body of the saints in general, whom he addresses, as in (~~1~~1 John 2:1,12); under the name of little children; (see Gill on "~~1~~1 John 2:1"); and whom he exhorts to abide in Christ, that is, in the exercise of faith on him, of hope in him, and love to him; and to hold to him the head, and to hold fast his word and Gospel, and abide by his truth and ordinances, and adhere to his cause and interest, and not to be moved away on any consideration; to which the following encouragement is given:

that when he shall appear; that is, Christ, who is now hid, and out of the sight of bodily eyes, is in heaven, at the right hand of God; but ere long he will appear a second time, and not only to those that look for him, but even every eye shall see him; and his appearance will be a glorious one, and his saints shall appear in glory with him, and shall be like him, and see him as he is:

we may have confidence; boldness or freedom, as now at the throne of grace, so then at the throne of judgment; where the saints will stand with courage and intrepidity, when the wicked will flee to the rocks and mountains, being filled with amazement, terror, and trembling:

and not be ashamed before him at his coming; they will not be put to shame by him; nor will they be ashamed of their confidence, faith, hope, and expectation; their hope will not make them ashamed, for they will now enjoy what they hoped for; and, notwithstanding all their sins and infirmities, they will not be ashamed, for they will have on the wedding garment, the righteousness of Christ, and will stand before the throne without fault, spot, or blemish; nor will Christ be ashamed of them who have not been ashamed of him and his words, but have confessed him, and have been faithful unto death, and have cleaved to him and his cause with full purpose of heart to the end. Some think ministers of the Gospel are here meant, who, when those that are under their care abide faithful, and persevere to the end, will give up their account with joy; and will have what they have expressed confidence in, and will have their expectations answered, and not disappointed, by having such souls as their joy and crown of rejoicing.

Ver. 29. *If ye know that he is righteous,* &c.] That is, Christ, who is righteous as God in his nature and in his works; and as man in his obedience, life, and conversation; and as Mediator, in faithfully discharging the work he undertook; and is the author of an everlasting righteousness, which is imputed by God, revealed in the Gospel, and received by faith; all which they knew, for this is not said as doubting, but rather as taking it for granted that they did know it; “if”, or “seeing ye know”, &c. then it follows;

ye know, or “know ye”; ye may assure yourselves,

that everyone that doeth righteousness; not merely works of righteousness, especially in order to justify him before God; for such an one is so far from being born of God, or born again, that he is manifestly in a state of nature, and of opposition to, and enmity against God; he is not subject to him, he does not submit to the righteousness of God, but goes about to establish his own and betrays his ignorance and want grace; but it intends such an one who with the heart believes unto righteousness, and lays hold by faith, and lives upon the righteousness of Christ for justification; and who performs, good, works in faith, and from a principle of love, not to obtain a justifying righteousness, but because he is justified by the righteousness of Christ: and: such an one

is born of him; either of God, or rather, of Christ; being regenerated by his Spirit, having his, grace implanted in him, as appears by his faith in his righteousness and by his works of righteousness, as fruits of faith; and having his image stamped on him, and he himself formed in him, and so made like unto him; by all which it is evident he is one of his spiritual seed and offspring. The Syriac version reads, “is of him”; belongs to him, is one of his; and this makes way for what is said of adoption in the following chapter and which should begin here.