

The First Epistle General Of John

The Argument

After that John had sufficiently declared, how that our whole salvation doeth consist only in Christ, lest that any man should thereby take a boldness to sin, he sheweth that no man can believe in Christ, unless he doeth endeavor himself to keep his commandments, which thing being done, he exhorteth them to beware of false prophets, whom he calleth Antichrists, and to try the spirits. Last of all he doeth earnestly exhort them unto brotherly love, and to beware of deceivers.

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1 John 1

1 He testifieth that he bringeth the eternal word, wherein is life, 5 and light. 9 God will be merciful unto the faithful, if groaning under the burden of their sins, they learn to flee unto his mercy.

1 That (1) which was (*) from the beginning, which we have (a) (♣) heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the (b) Word (♣) of life,

(1) He beginneth with the description of the person of Christ, whom he maketh one and not two; and him both God from everlasting (for he was with the Father from the beginning, and is that eternal life) and also made true man, whom John himself and his companions, both heard and beheld, and handled.

(*) That is, Christ God eternal.

(a) I heard him speak, I saw him myself with mine eyes, I handled with mine hands him that is very God, being made very man, and not I alone, but others also that were with me.

(♣) That is, Christ being man.

(b) That same everlasting Word, by whom all things are made, and in whom only there is life.

(♣) Which giveth life and had it in himself, John 1:4 .

2 (For the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and (c) shew unto you the eternal life, which was (*) with the Father, and was made manifest unto us.)

(c) Being sent by him; and that doctrine is rightly said to be shewed, for no man could so much as have thought of it, if it had not been thus shewed.

(*) Before all beginning.

3 That, *I say*, which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, (2) that ye may also (*) have fellowship with us, and that our fellowship also may be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

(2) The use of this doctrine is this, that all of us being coupled and joined together with Christ by faith, might become the sons of God; in which only consisteth all true happiness.

(*) The effect of the Gospel is, that we all being joined together in Christ by faith, should be the sons of God.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

5 (3) This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God (*) is (♣) light, and in him is no darkness.

(3) Now he entereth into a question, whereby we may understand that we are joined together with Christ, to wit, if we are governed by his light, which is perceived by the ordering of our life. And thus he reasoneth, God is in himself most pure light, therefore he agreeth with them, which are lightsome, but with them which are darkness he hath no fellowship.

(*) John 8:12 .

(♣) The fruits of our faith must declare whether we be joined in God or not; for God being the very purity and light will not have fellowship with them which lie in sin and darkness.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in (*) darkness, we lie, and do not truly;

(*) In an evil conscience, and without the fear of God.

7 But if we walk in the (d) light as he is in the light, we have fellowship (♣) one with another, (4) and the (*) blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

(d) God is said to be light by his own nature, and to be in light, that is to say, in that everlasting infinite blessedness; and we are said to walk in light, in that the beams of that light do shine unto us in the world.

(♣) That is, Christ with us and we with ourselves.

(4) A digression or going from the matter he is in hand with to the remission of sins; for this our sanctification which walk in the light, is a testimony of our joining and knitting together, with Christ; but because this our light is very dark, we must needs obtain another benefit in Christ, to wit, that our sins may be forgiven us being sprinkled with his blood; and this in conclusion is the prop and stay of our salvation.

(*) Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 1:5 .

8 (5) (*) If we say that we have no sin, we (e) deceive ourselves, and (f) truth is not in us.

(5) There is none but needeth this benefit, because there is none that is not a sinner.

(*) 1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Proverbs 20:9 .

(e) This place doeth fully refute that perfectness, and works of supererogation which the Papists dream of.

(f) So then John speaketh not thus for modesty's sake, as some say, but because it is so indeed.

9 (6) If we (*) acknowledge our sins, he is (g) faithful and just, to (h) forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(6) Therefore the beginning of salvation is to acknowledge our wickedness, and to require pardon of him, who freely forgiveth all sins, because he hath promised so to do, and he is faithful and just.

(*) If we be not ashamed, earnestly and openly to acknowledge ourselves before God to be sinners.

(g) So then our salvation hangeth upon the free promise of God, who because he is faithful and just, will perform that which he hath promised.

(h) Where are then our merits? For this is our true felicity.

10 (7) If we say we have not sinned, we make him (i) a liar, and his (k) (*) word is not in us.

(7) A rehearsal of the former sentence wherein he condemned all of sin without exception; in so much that if any man persuade himself otherwise, he doeth as much as in him lieth, make the word of God himself vain and to no purpose, yea he maketh God a liar, for to what end either in times past needed sacrifices or now Christ and the Gospel, if we be not sinners?

(i) They do not only deceive themselves but are blasphemous against God.

(k) His doctrine shall have no place in us, that is, in our hearts.

(*) Or, doctrine.

1 John 2

1 He declareth that Christ is our mediator and advocate, 3 and sheweth that the knowledge of God consisteth in holiness of life, 12 which appertaineth to all sorts, 14 that depend on Christ alone; 15 Then having exhorted them to condemn the world, 18 he giveth warning that Antichrist be avoided, 24 and that the known truth be stood upon.

1 My (1) little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an (a) (*) Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Just.

(1) It followeth not hereof that we must give our wicked nature bridle, or sin so much the more freely, because our sins are cleansed away by the blood of Christ, but we must rather so much the more diligently resist sin, and yet we must not despair because of our weakness, for we have an Advocate and a purger, Christ Jesus the Just, and therefore acceptable unto his Father.

(a) In that be nameth Christ, he shutteth forth all others.

(*) Christ is our only Advocate and atonement; for the office of intercession and redemption are joined together.

2 And he is the (b) reconciliation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *the sins* of (*) the (c) whole world.

(b) Reconciliation and intercession go together, to give us to understand that he is both advocate and high Priest.

(*) That is, of them which have embraced the Gospel by faith in all ages, degrees, and places; for there is no salvation without Christ.

(c) For men of all sorts, of all ages, and all places, so that this benefit belongeth not to the Jews only, of whom he speaketh, as appeareth in 1 John 2:7; but also to other nations.

3 (2) And hereby we are sure that we (d) (*) know him, (e) if we keep his commandments.

(2) He returneth to the testimony of our conjunction with God, to wit, to sanctification, declaring what it is to walk in the light, to wit, to keep God's commandments, whereby it followeth that holiness doeth not consist in those things which men have devised, neither in a vain profession of the Gospel.

(d) This must be understood of such a knowledge, as has faith with it, and not of a common knowledge.

(*) That is, by faith and so obey him; for knowledge cannot be without obedience.

(e) For the tree is known by the fruit.

4 (3) He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

(3) Holiness, that is, a life ordered according to the prescript of God's commandments, how weak soever they be, is of necessity joined with faith, that is, with the true knowledge of the Father in the Son.

5 (4) But he that keepeth his word, in him is (*) the (f) love of God perfect indeed; hereby we know that we are in (g) him.

(4) He that keepeth God's commandments loveth God indeed. He that loveth God, is in God, or is joined together with God. Therefore he that keeps his commandments, is in him.
(*) Whereby he loveth God; so that to love God is to obey his word.
(f) Wherewith we love God.
(g) He meaneth our conjunction with Christ.

6 (5) He that saith he remaineth in him, ought even so to walk as he hath walked.

(5) He that is one with Christ, must needs live his life, that is, must walk in his steps.

7 (6) Brethren, I write no new (*) commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye have had from the (♣) beginning; the (♣) old commandment is the word, which ye have heard from the beginning.

(6) The Apostle going about to expound the commandment of charity towards another, telleth first, that when he urgeth holiness bringeth no new trade of life (as they used to do who devise traditions one after another) but putteth them in mind of the same Law which God gave in the beginning, to wit, by Moses, at the time that God began to give Laws to his people.
(*) Or, doctrine.
(♣) When the Law was given.
(♣) Love thy neighbor as thyself, is the old commandment taught in the Law; but when Christ saith, So love one another as I have loved you, he giveth a new commandment only as touching the former, but not as touching the nature or substance of the precept.

8 (7) Again, a new commandment I write unto you, that (h) which is true in him, and also in you, for the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

(7) He addeth that the doctrine indeed is old, but it is now after a sort new both in respect of Christ, and also of us; in whom he through the Gospel, engraveth his Law effectually, not in tables of stone, but in our minds.
(h) Which thing (to wit, that the doctrine is new of which I write unto you) is true in him and in you.

9 (8) He that saith that he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness, until this time.

(8) Now he cometh to the second Table, that is, to charity towards another, and denieth that, that man hath true light in him, or is indeed regenerate and the son of God, which hateth his brother; and such a one wandereth miserably in darkness, brag he of never so great knowledge of God, for that wittingly and willingly, he casteth himself headlong into hell.

10 (*) He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of evil in him.

(*) 1 John 3:14 .

11 But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

12 (9) (*) Little children, (i) I write unto you, because your sins are forgiven you for (♣) his (k) Name's sake.

(9) He returneth again from sanctification to remission of sins, because that free reconciliation in Christ is the ground of our salvation, whereupon afterwards sanctification must be built as upon a foundation.

(*) He nameth all the faithful, children, as he being their spiritual father, attributing to old men knowledge of great things, to young men strength, to children obedience and reverence to their governors.

(i) Therefore I write unto you, because you are of their number whom God hath reconciled to himself.

(♣) For Christ's sake.

(k) For his own sake; and in that he nameth Christ, he shutteth out all others, whether they be in heaven or earth.

13 (10) I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. (11) I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the (*) wicked one. (12) I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

(10) He sheweth that this doctrine agreeth to all ages, and first of all speaking to old men, he sheweth that Christ and his doctrine are passing ancient, and therefore they be delighted with old things, nothing ought to be more acceptable unto them.

(11) He adviseth young men, if they be desirous to shew their strength, that they have a most glorious combat set here before them, to wit, Satan the worst enemy, who must be overcome; willing them to be as sure of the victory as if they had already gotten it.

(*) Or, the devil.

(12) Finally, he sheweth to children, that the true Father, from whom they have to look for all good things, is set forth unto them in the Gospel.

14 (13) I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the (*) wicked one.

(13) He addeth afterward in like order, as many exhortations; as if he should say, Remember, your Fathers, as I wrote even now, that the everlasting Son of God is revealed to us. Remember ye young men, that that strength whereby I said that you put Satan to flight, is given you by the word of God, which dwelleth in you.

(*) Or, the devil.

15 (14) Love not the (l) (♣) world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the (*) world, the (m) love of the Father is not in him.

(14) The world which is full of wicked desires, lusts or pleasures, and pride, is utterly hated of our heavenly Father. Therefore the Father and the world cannot be loved together; and this admonition is very necessary for green and flourishing youth.

(l) He speaketh of the world, as it agreeth not with the will of God, for otherwise God is said to love the world with an infinite love, John 3:16; that is to say, those whom he chose out of the world.

(♣) As it is adversary to God.

(*) Lamentations 4:4 .

(m) Wherewith the Father is loved.

16 For all that is in the world, (as the lust of the (*) flesh, the (♣) lust of the eyes, and the (♠) pride of life) is not of the Father, but is of the world.

(*) To live in pleasure.

(♣) Wantonness.

(♠) Ambition and pride.

17 (15) And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that fulfilleth the will of God abideth forever.

(15) He sheweth how much better it is to obey the Father's will, than the lusts of the world, by both their natures and unlike event.

18 (16) (n) Little children, (17) it is the last time, (18) and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

(16) Now he turneth himself to little children, which notwithstanding are well instructed in the sum of religion, and willeth them by divers reasons to shake off slothfulness, which is too familiar with that age.

(n) He useth this word (little) not because he speaketh to children, but to allure them the more by using such sweet words.

(17) First, because the last time is at hand, so that the matter suffereth no delay.

(18) Secondly because Antichrists, that is, such as fall from God, are already come, even as they heard that they should come. And it was very requisite to warn that unheedy and weariless age of that danger.

19 (19) (*) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, (o) they should have continued with us. (20) But *this cometh to pass*, that it might appear, that they are not all of us.

(19) A digression against certain offences and stumbling blocks, whereat that rude age especially might stumble and be shaken. Therefore that they should not be terrified with the soul falling back of certain, first he maketh plain unto them that although such as fall from God and his religion, had place in the Church, yet they were never of the Church; because the Church is the company of the elect which cannot perish, and therefore cannot fall from Christ.

(*) Which seemed to have been of our number, because for a time they occupied a place in the Church.

(o) So then the elect can never fall from grace.

(20) Secondly, he sheweth that these things fall out to the profit of the Church, that hypocrites may be plainly known.

20 (21) But ye have an (p) (*) ointment from the (q) Holy one, and ye know all things.

(21) Thirdly, he comforteth them to make them stand fast, in so much as they are anointed by the holy Ghost with the true knowledge of salvation.

(p) The grace of the holy Ghost, and this is a borrowed kind of speech taken from the anointing used in the Law.

(*) The grace of the holy Ghost.

(q) From Christ who is peculiarly called Holy.

21 (22) I (*) have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

(22) The taking away of an objection. He wrote not these things as to men which are ignorant in religion, but rather as to them which do well know the truth, yet so far forth that they are able to discern truth from falsehood.

(*) In this Epistle which I now write unto you.

22 (23) Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is (r) the (*) Christ? The same is the Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.

(23) He sheweth now plainly the false doctrine of the Antichrist's, to wit, that either they fight against the person of Christ, or his office, or both together and at once. And they that do so in vain boast and brag of God, for that in denying the Son, the Father also is denied.

(r) Is the true Messiah.

(*) He is that taketh away or diminisheth either of the nature's in Christ, or he that confoundeth or separateth them, else he that putteth not difference between the person of the Son, and also he that believeth not, to have remission of sins by his only sacrifice, denieth Christ to be the true Messiah.

23 (s) Whosoever denieth the Son, the same (♣) hath not the Father. (*)

(s) They then are deceived themselves, and also do deceive others, which say that the Turks and other infidels worship the same God that we do.

(♣) Then the infidels worship not the true God.

(*) But he that confesseth the Son, hath also the Father.

24 (24) Let therefore abide in you that same which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning, shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

(24) The whole preaching of the Prophets and Apostles is contrary to that doctrine; therefore it is utterly to be cast away, and this wholly to be holden and kept, which leadeth us to seek eternal life in the free promise, that is to say, in Christ alone, who is given to us of the Father.

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

26 (25) These things have I written unto you, concerning them that deceive you.

(25) The same Spirit which endueth the elect with the knowledge of the truth and sanctifieth them, giveth them therewithal the gift of perseverance, to continue to the end.

27 But the (t) anointing which ye received of him, dwelleth in you, and ye (u) need not that any man teach you; but as the same (x) (*) anointing teacheth you of all things, and it is true and is not lying, and as it taught you, ye shall abide (♣) in him.

(t) The Spirit which you have received of Christ, and which hath led you into all truth.

(u) You are not ignorant of these things, and therefore I teach them not as things that were never heard of, but call them to your remembrance as things which you do know.

(x) He commendeth both the doctrine which they had embraced, and also highly praiseth their faith and the diligence of such as taught them, yet so, that he taketh nothing from the honor due to the holy Ghost.

(*) Christ communicateth himself unto you and teacheth you by the holy Ghost and his ministers.

(♣) Or, in Christ.

28 (26) And now, (*) little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may be bold, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

(26) The conclusion both of the whole exhortation, and also of the former treatise.

(*) By this name he meaneth the whole Church of Christ in general.

29 (27) If ye know that he is righteous, know ye that he which doeth righteously, is born of him.

(27) A passing over to the treatise following, which tendeth to the same purpose, but yet is more ample, and handleth the same matter after another order, for before he taught us to go up from the effects to the cause, and in this that followeth, he goeth down from the causes to the effects. And this is the sum of the argument: God is the fountain of all righteousness, and therefore they that give themselves to righteousness, are known to be born of him, because they resemble God the Father.

1 John 3

1 Setting down the inestimable glory of this that we are God's sons, 7 he sheweth newness of life must be testified by good works, whereof charity is a manifest token. 19 Of faith, 22 and praising unto God.

1 Behold, (1) (a) what love the Father hath given to us, that we should be (b) (*) called the sons of God. (2) For this cause the world knoweth you not, because it knoweth not him.

(1) He beginneth to declare this agreement between the Father and the Son, at the highest cause, to wit, at that free love of God towards us, wherewith he so loveth us, that he also adopteth us to be his children.
(a) What a gift of how great love.
(b) That we should be the sons of God, and so that all the world may perceive we are so.
(*) Being made the sons of God in Christ, he sheweth what qualities we must have to be discerned from bastards.
(2) Before he declareth this adoption, he saith two things: the one, that this so great a dignity is not to be esteemed according to the judgment of the flesh, because it is unknown to the world, for the world knoweth not God the Father himself.

2 (3) Dearly beloved, now are we the sons of God, but yet it is not made manifest what we shall be, and we know that when (*) he shall be made manifest, we shall be (c) (♣) like him, for we shall see him (d) as he is.

(3) The other: This dignity is not fully made manifest to us ourselves, much less to strangers, but we are sure of the accomplishment of it, in so much that we shall be like to the Son of God himself, and shall enjoy his sight indeed, such as he is now, but yet notwithstanding his is deferred until his next coming.
(*) That is, Christ.
(c) Like, but not equal.
(♣) As the members and head are which make one perfect body.
(d) For now we see as in a glass, 1 Corinthians 13:12 .

3 (4) And every man that hath this hope in him purgeth himself, even (e) as he is pure.

(4) Now he describeth this adoption (the glory whereof as yet consisteth in hope) by the effect, to wit, because that whosoever is made the Son of God, endeavoreth to resemble the Father in purity.
(e) This word signifieth a likeness, but not in equality.

4 (5) Whosoever (f) (*) committeth sin, transgresseth also the Law; for (g) sin is the transgression of the Law.

(5) The rule of this purity can from no whence else be taken but from the Law of God, the transgression whereof is that which is called sin.
(f) Giveth not give himself to pureness.
(*) That is, in whom sin doeth reign, so that he seeketh not to be sanctified.
(g) A short definition of sin.

5 (6) And ye know that he was made manifest, that he might (*) take away our sins, and in him is no sin.

(6) An argument taken from the material cause of our salvation: Christ in himself is most pure, and he came to take away our sins, by sanctifying us with the holy Ghost. Therefore, whosoever is truly partaker of Christ, doeth not give himself to sin, and on the contrariwise, he that giveth himself to sin knoweth not Christ.
(*) Psalm 53:6; 1 Peter 2:22-24 .

6 Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not; whosoever (h) sinneth, hath not seen him, neither hath known him.

(h) He is said to sin, that giveth not himself to pureness, and in him sin reigneth: but sin is said to dwell in the faithful, and not to reign in them.

7 (7) Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness, is righteous, as he is righteous.

(7) Another argument of things coupled together: He that liveth justly, is just, and resembleth Christ that is just, and by that is known to be the Son of God.

8 (8) He that (*) committeth sin, is of the (i) devil; for the devil (k) sinneth from the (l) (♣) beginning. For this purpose was made manifest the Son of God, that he might loose the works of the devil.

(8) An argument taken of contraries: the devil is the author of sin, and therefore he is of the devil, or is ruled by the inspiration of the devil that serveth sin; and if he be the devil's son, then is he not God's son; for the devil and God are so contrary the one to another, that even the Son of God was sent to destroy the works of the devil. Therefore on the contrary side, whosoever resisteth sin, is the Son of God, being born again of his Spirit as of new seed, in so much that of necessity he is now delivered from the slavery of sin.
(*) John 8:44 .
(i) Resembleth the devil, as the child doeth the father, and is governed by his Spirit.
(k) He saith not sinned but sinneth, for he did nothing else but sin.
(l) From the very beginning of the world.
(♣) As appeared by Adam.

9 Whosoever is born of God sinneth not, for his (m) seed remaineth in him, neither can he (*) sin, because he is born of God.

(m) The holy Ghost is so called of the effect he worketh, because by his virtue and mighty working, as it were by seed, we are made new men.

(*) He cannot be under the power of sin because the Spirit of God correcteth his evil and corrupt affections.

10 (9) In this are the children of God known, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, (10) neither he that (*) loveth not his brother.

(9) The conclusion, by a wicked life they are known which are governed by the spirit of the Devil, and by a pure life, which are God's children.

(10) He beginneth to commend charity towards the brethren, as another mark of the Sons of God.

(*) He descendeth from the first table of the commandments to the second.

11 (11) For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that (*) we should love one another;

(11) The first reason, taken of the authority of God, which giveth the commandment.

(*) John 13:34; John 15:12 .

12 (12) Not as (*) (n) Cain *which* was of the wicked one, and slew his brother. (13) And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's good.

(12) An amplification, taken of the contrary example of Cain which slew his brother.

(*) Genesis 4:8 .

(n) He bringeth forth a very fit and very old example, wherein we may behold both the nature of the sons of God, and of the sons of the devil, and what state and condition remaineth for us in this world; and what shall be the end of both at length.

(13) A short digression: Let us not marvel that we are hated of the world for doing our duty, for such was the condition of Abel who was a just person; and who would not rather be like him than Cain?

13 Marvel not, my brethren, though the world hate you.

14 (14) We know that we are translated from death unto life, because we (o) (♣) love the brethren. (*) He that loveth not *his* brother, abideth in death.

(14) The second reason: Because charity is a testimony that we are translated from death to life; and therefore hatred towards the brethren is a testimony of death, and whosoever nourished it, doeth as it were foster death in his bosom.

(o) Love is a token that we are translated from death to life, for as much as by the effects the cause is known.

(♣) This love is the special fruit of our faith and a certain sign of our regeneration.

(*) 1 John 2:10; Leviticus 19:17 .

15 (15) Whosoever hateth his brother, is a manslayer; and ye know that no manslayer hath eternal life abiding in him.

(15) A confirmation: Whosoever is a murderer, is in eternal death; who so hateth his brother, is a murderer, therefore he is in death. And thereupon followeth the contrary. He that loveth his brother, hath passed to life, for indeed we are born dead.

16 (*) (16) Hereby have we perceived love, that he laid down his life for us; therefore we ought also to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

(*) John 15:13; Ephesians 5:2 .

(16) Now he sheweth how far Christian charity extendeth, even so far, that according to the example of Christ, every man forget himself, to provide for and help his brethren.

17 (*) (17) And whosoever hath this (p) world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and (q) shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

(*) Luke 3:11 .

(17) He reasoneth by comparisons: For if we are bound even to give our life for our neighbors, how much more are we bound to help our brothers' necessity with our goods and substance?

(p) Wherewith this life is sustained.

(q) Openeth not his heart to him, nor helpeth him willingly and cheerfully.

18 (18) My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue *only*, but in (*) deed and in truth.

(18) Christian charity standeth not in words, but in deed, and proceedeth from a sincere affection.

(*) Which is not the cause, wherefore we are the sons of God, but a most certain sign.

19 (19) For thereby we know that we are of the truth, (20) and shall before him assure our hearts.

(19) He commends charity, by a triple effect; for first of all, by it we know that we are indeed the sons of God, as he sheweth before.

(20) Therefore it cometh that we have a quiet conscience, as on the contrary side he that thinketh that he hath God for a judge, because he is guilty to himself, either he is never or else very rare quiet, for God hath a far quicker sight then we, and judgeth more severely.

20 For (r) if our (*) heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

(r) If an evil conscience convinceth us, much more ought the judgments of God contemn us, who knoweth our hearts better than we ourselves do.

(*) If our conscience being guilty of anything, be able to condemn us, much more the judgment of God which knoweth our hearts better than we ourselves, is able to condemn us.

21 (21) Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we boldness toward God.

(21) A third effect also riseth out of the former, that in these miseries we are sure to be heard, because we are the sons of God, as we understand by the grace of sanctification which is proper to the elect.

22 (*) (22) And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.

(*) Matthew 21:22; John 15:7; John 16:23; 1 John 5:14 .

(22) The conclusion: That faith in Christ, and love one towards another, are things joined together, and therefore the outward testimonies of sanctification must and do answer that inward testimony of the Spirit given unto us.

23 (*) This is then his commandment, That we believe in the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave commandment.

(*) John 6:29; John 17:3 .

24 (*) For he that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, *even* by the (s) Spirit which he hath given us.

(*) John 13:34; John 15:10 .

(s) He meaneth the Spirit of sanctification, whereby we are born anew, and live unto God.

1 John 4

1 Having spoken somewhat touching the trying of spirits; 4 For some speak after the world, 5 and some after God. 7 He returneth to charity, 11-19 and by the example of God he exhorteth to brotherly love.

1 Dearly (1) beloved, believe not every (a) spirit, but try the (*) spirits whether they are of God, for many false prophets are gone out into the world.

(1) Taking occasion by the name of the Spirit, lest love and charity should be separated from the worship of God, which chiefly dependeth of his true knowledge, he returneth to that which he spake in the second Chapter touching the taking heed of Antichrists. And he will have us here take heed of two things, the one is, that seeing there be many false prophets, we do not lightly give credit to every man; the other is, that because many men teach false things, we should not therefore believe any. We must then observe a mean, that we may be able to discern the Spirit of God, which are altogether to be followed from impure spirits which are to be eschewed.

(a) This is spoken by the figure Metonymy, and it is as if he had said, Believe not every one that saith that he hath a gift of the holy Ghost to do the office of a Prophet.

(*) Them which boast that they have the Spirit to preach or prophesy.

2 (2) Hereby shall ye know the Spirit of God, (b) Every spirit that confesseth that (c) Jesus (*) Christ is come in the (d) flesh is of God.

(2) He giveth a certain and perpetual rule to know the doctrine of Antichrist by, to wit, if either the divine or human nature of Christ, or the true uniting of them together be denied; or if the least jot that may be, be derogate from his office who is our only King, Prophet, and everlasting high Priest.

(b) He speaketh simply of the doctrine, and not of the person.

(c) The true Messiah.

(*) Who being very God came from his Father and took upon him our flesh. He that confesseth or preacheth this truly, hath the Spirit of God, else not.

(d) Is true man.

3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God; but this is the *spirit* of Antichrist, of whom ye have heard, how that he should come, and (*) now already he is in the world.

(*) He began to build the mystery of iniquity.

4 (3) Little children, ye are of God, and have overcome them; for greater is he that is in you, than (*) he that is in the world.

(3) He comforteth the elect with a most sure hope of victory; but yet so, that he teacheth them that they fight not with their own virtue, but with the virtue and power of God.

(*) Satan the prince of the world.

5 (4) They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

(4) He bringeth a reason, why the world receiveth these teachers more willingly than the true, to wit, because they breathe out nothing but that which is worldly; which is another note also to know the doctrine of Antichrist by.

6 (5) We are of God, (*) he that knoweth God, (♣) heareth us; he that is not of God heareth us not. Hereby know we the (e) Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

(5) He testifieth unto them that his doctrine and the doctrine of his fellows, is the assured word of God, which of necessity we have boldly to set against all the mouths of the whole world, and thereby discern the truth from falsehood.

(*) John 8:47 .

(♣) With pure affection and obedience.

(e) True Prophets against whom are set false prophets, that is, such as err themselves, and lead others into error.

7 (6) Beloved, let us love one another, (7) for love cometh of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

(6) He returneth to the commending of brotherly love and charity.

(7) The first reason: Because it is a very divine thing; and therefore very meet for the sons of God, so that whosoever is void of it, cannot be said to know God aright.

8 He that loveth not, knoweth not God, (8) for God is (f) love.

(8) A confirmation: For it is the nature of God to love men, whereof we have a most manifest proof above all other, in that of his only free and infinite good will towards us his enemies, he delivered unto death, not a common man, but that his own Son, yea, his only begotten Son, to the end that we being reconciled through his blood, might be partakers of his everlasting glory.

(f) In that he called God, Love, he saith more than if he had said that he loveth us infinitely.

9 (*) (♣) Herein was the love of God made manifest amongst us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

(*) John 3:16 .

(♣) Truth it is, that God hath declared his love in many other things, but herein hath passed all other.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* a (*) reconciliation for our sins.

(*) By his only death.

11 (9) Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

(9) Another reason by comparison: if God so loved us, shall not we his children love one another?

12 (*) (10) No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is (g) perfect in us.

(*) John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16 .

(10) A third reason: Because God is invisible, therefore by this effect of his Spirit, to wit, by charity, he is understood, yea, and to be not out of us, but joined with us, and in us, in whom he is so effectually working.

(g) Is surely in us, indeed and in truth.

13 Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 (11) And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world.

(11) He underlayeth this charity with another foundation, to wit, faith in Jesus, which joineth us indeed with him, even as charity witnesseth that we are joined with him. Furthermore he testifieth of Christ, as who had seen him with his eyes.

15 Whosoever (h) confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, in him dwelleth God, and he in God.

(h) With such a confession as cometh from true faith and is accompanied with love, so that there be an agreement of all things.

16 And we have known, and believed the love that God hath (*) (♣) in us. (12) God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

(*) Or, toward us.

(♣) By inspiring it into us.

(12) A fourth reason: God is the fountain and wellspring of charity, yea, charity itself; therefore whosoever abides in it, hath God with him.

17 (13) Herein is the love perfect in us, that we should have boldness in the day of judgment; for (i) as he is, even so are we in this world.

(13) Again (as a little before) he commendeth love, for that seeing that by our agreement with God in this thing, we have a certain testimony of our adoption, it cometh thereby to pass by, that without fear we look for that latter day of judgment, so that trembling and torment of conscience is cast out by

this love.

(i) This signifieth all likeness, not equality.

18 There is no (k) (*) fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, for fear hath painfulness, and he that feareth, is not perfect in love.

(k) If we understand by love, that we are in God, and God in us, that we are sons, and that we know God, and that everlasting life is in us; he concludeth aright that we may well gather peace and quietness thereby.

(*) Such as should trouble the conscience.

19 (14) We love him, because he loved us first.

(14) Lest any man should think that the peace of conscience proceedeth from our love as from the cause, he goeth back to the fountain, to wit, to the free love, wherewith which God loveth us although we deserved and do deserve his wrath. And hereof springeth another double charity, which both are tokens and witnesses of that first, to wit, that, wherewith we love God who loved us first, and then for his sake our neighbors also.

20 (15) If any man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar; (16) for (*) how can he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, love God whom he hath not seen?

(15) As he shewed that the love of our neighbor cannot be separate from the love wherewith God loveth us, because this last engendereth the other; so he denieth that the other kind of love wherewith we love God, can be separate from the love of our neighbor; whereof which it followeth, that they lie impudently which say they worship God, and yet regard not their neighbor.

(16) The first reason taken of comparison, why we cannot hate our neighbor and love God, to wit, because that he that cannot love his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?

(*) For God presenteth himself to us in them, which bear his image.

21 (*) (17) And this commandment have we of him, that he that loveth God, should love his brother also.

(*) John 13:34; John 15:12 .

(17) A second reason, why God cannot be hated and our neighbor loved, because this selfsame Lawmaker commanded both to love him and our neighbor.

1 John 5

1 He sheweth that brotherly love and faith are things inseparable; 10 And that there is no faith towards God, but by believing in Christ; 16 and also that our prayers be available for our brethren.

1 Whosoever (1) believeth that Jesus is the (a) Christ, is (*) born of God, and every one that loveth him, which begat, loveth (b) him also which is begotten of him.

(1) He goeth on forward in the same argument, shewing how both those loves come unto us from the love wherewith God loveth us, to wit, by Jesus our Mediator laid hold on by faith, in whom we are made the children of God, and do loveth the Father of whom we are so begotten, and also our brethren which are begotten with us.

(a) Is the true Messiah.

(*) Is regenerated by the virtue of his Spirit.

(b) By one he meaneth all the faithful.

2 (2) In this we know that we love the children of God, when we love (*) God, and keep his (c) commandments.

(2) The love of our neighbor doeth so hang upon the love wherewith we love God, that this last must needs go before the first; whereof it followeth, that that is not to be called love, when men agree together to do evil, neither that, when as in loving our neighbors, we respect not God's commandments.

(*) The love of God must go before, or else we cannot love aright.

(c) There is no love where there is no true doctrine.

3 (3) For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; (4) and his (*) commandments are not (d) (♣) burdensome.

(3) The reason: for to love God, is to keep his commandments, which being so, and seeing that both the loves are commanded of one and the selfsame lawmaker, (as he taught before) it followeth also that we do not love our neighbor, when we break God's commandments.

(4) Because experience teacheth us that there is no ability in our flesh, neither yet will to perform God's commandments, therefore lest the Apostle should seem, by so often putting them in mind of the keeping of the commandments of God, to require things that are impossible, he pronounceth that the commandments of God are not in such sort grievous or burdensome, that we can be oppressed with the burden of them.

(*) Matthew 11:30 .

(d) To them that are regenerate, that is to say, born anew, who are led by the Spirit of God, and are through grace delivered from the curse of the Law.

(♣) They are easy to the sons of God, which are led with his Spirit; for they delight therein.

4 (5) For all that is born of God, overcometh the world; (6) and this is the victory that (e) hath overcome the world, *even* our (f) faith.

(5) A reason: Because by regeneration we have gotten strength to overcome the world, that is to say, whatsoever striveth against the commandments of God.

(6) He declareth what that strength is, to wit, Faith.

(e) He useth the time that is past to give us to understand, that although we be in the battle, yet undoubtedly we shall be conquerors, and are most certain of the victory.

(f) Which is the instrumental cause, and as a means and hand whereby we lay hold on him who indeed doeth perform this, that is, hath and doeth overcome the world, *even* Christ Jesus.

5 (*) (7) Who is it that overcometh the world, but he which believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

(*) 1 Corinthians 15:57 .

(7) Moreover he declareth two things, the one, what true faith is, to wit, that which resteth upon Jesus Christ the Son of God alone; whereupon followeth the other, to wit, that this strength is not proper to faith, but by faith as an instrument is drawn from Jesus Christ the Son of God.

6 (8) This is that Jesus Christ that came by (*) water (♣) and blood; (9) not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the (g) (♣) Spirit that beareth witness, for the Spirit is (♦) truth.

(8) He proveth the excellency of Christ, in whom only all things are given us by six witnesses, three heavenly, and three earthly, which wholly and fully agree together. The heavenly witnesses are: the Father who sent the Son, the Word itself which became flesh, and the holy Ghost. The earthly witnesses are water, (that is, our sanctification) blood, (that is, our justification) the Spirit, (that is, acknowledge of God the Father in Christ by faith through the testimony of the holy Ghost.)

(*) That is, regeneration.

(♣) The water and blood that came out of his side, declare that we have our sins washed by him, and he hath made full sanctification for the same.

(9) He warneth us not to separate water from blood, (that is, sanctification from justification, or righteousness, begun from righteousness imputed) for we stand not upon sanctification, but so far forth as it is a witness of Christ's righteousness imputed unto us; and although this imputation of Christ's righteousness be never separated from sanctification, yet it is only the matter of our salvation.

(g) Our spirit, which is the third witness, testifieth that the holy Ghost is truth, that is to say, that that is true which he telleth us, to wit, that we are the sons of God.

(♣) Our mind inspired by the holy Ghost.

(♦) Which testifieth to our hearts, that we be the children of God.

7 For there are three, which bear record in heaven, the Father, the (h) Word, and the holy Ghost; and these three are (i) one.

(h) Look at John 8:13-14 .

(i) Agree in one.

8 And there are three, which bear record in the earth, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood; and these three agree in one.

9 (10) If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for (k) this is the witness of God, which he testified of his Son.

(10) He sheweth by an Argument of comparison, of what great weight the heavenly testimony is, that the Father hath given of the Son, unto whom agreeth both the Son himself and the holy Ghost.

(k) I conclude this aright; for that testimony which I said is given in heaven, cometh from God, who so setteth forth his Son.

10 (*) (11) He that believeth in the Son of God, hath the witness (♣) in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believed not the record, that God witnessed of his Son.

(*) John 3:16 .

(11) He proveth the sureness of the earthly witness by every man's conscience, having that testimony in itself, which conscience he saith cannot be deceived, because it consenteth the heavenly testimony, which the Father giveth of the Son; For otherwise the Father must needs be a liar, if the conscience, which accordeth and ascendeth to the Father, should lie.

(♣) Of God.

11 (12) And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

(12) Now at length he sheweth what this testimony is, that is confirmed with so many witnesses; to wit, that life or everlasting felicity, is the mere and only gift of God, which is in the Son, and proceedeth from him into us, which by faith are joined with him, so that without him, life is nowhere to be found.

12 He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.

13 (13) These things have I written unto you, that believe in the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe in the Name of the Son of God.

(13) The conclusion of the Epistle wherein he sheweth first of all, that even they which already believe, do stand indeed of this doctrine, to the end that they may grow more and more in faith, that is to say, to the end that they may be daily more and more certified of their salvation in Christ through faith.

14 (14) And this is the assurance that we have in him, (*) that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.

(14) Because we do not yet in effect obtain that which we hope for, the Apostle joineth invocation or prayer with faith, which he will have to proceed from faith, and moreover to be conceived in such sort, that nothing be asked but that which is agreeable to the will of God; and such prayers cannot be vain.

(*) Matthew 7:7; Matthew 21:22; 1 John 3:22 .

15 And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions, that we have desired of him.

16 (15) If any man see his brother sin a sin that is not unto death, let him (l) ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not (♣) unto death. (*) There is a sin (♣) unto death, I say not that thou shouldest pray for it.

(15) We have to make prayers not only for ourselves, but also for our brethren which do sin, that their sins be not unto them; and yet he accepteth that sin, which is never forgiven, or the sin against the holy Ghost, that is to say, a universal and willful falling away from the known truth of the Gospel.

(l) This is as much as if he said, Let him desire the Lord to forgive him, and he will forgive him being so desired.

(♣) Although every sin be to death, yet God through his mercy pardoneth his in his Son Christ.

(*) Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:29 .

(♣) As their's is whom God doeth so forsake that they fall into utter despair.

17 (16) All unrighteousness is sin, but there is a sin not unto death.

(16) The taking away of an objection: Indeed all iniquity is comprehended under the name of sin, but yet we must not despair therefore, because every sin is not deadly, and without hope of remedy.

18 (17) We know that whosoever is born of God, (*) sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God (♣) keepeth himself, and the (♠) wicked one (♢) toucheth him not.

(17) A reason why not all, nay rather why no sin is mortal to some: to wit, because they be born of God, that is to say, made the sons of God in Christ, and being endued with his Spirit, they do not serve sin, neither are deadly wounded of Satan.

(*) Giveth not himself so over to sin, that he forgetteth God.

(♣) Taketh heed that he sin not.

(♠) That is, Satan.

(♢) With a mortal wound.

19 (18) We know that we are of God, and the whole world (*) lieth in wickedness.

(18) Every man must particularly apply to himself the general promises, that we may certainly persuade ourselves, that whereas all the world is by nature lost, we are freely made the sons of God, by the sending of Jesus Christ his Son unto us, of whom we are lightened with the knowledge of the true God, and everlasting life.

(*) That is, all men generally, as of themselves lie as it were buried in evil.

20 But we know that the Son of God is (*) come, and hath given us a mind to know him, which is true; and we are in him that is true, *that is*, in his Son Jesus Christ. This same is the very (m) (♣) God, and eternal life.

(*) Luke 24:45 .

(m) The divinity of Christ is most plainly proved by this passage.

(♣) Christ very God.

21 (19) Little children, keep yourselves from (*) idols, Amen.

(19) He expresseth a plain precept of taking heed of idols; which he setteth against the only true God, that with this seal as it were he might seal up all the former doctrine.

(*) Meaning from every form and fashion of thing which is set up for any destruction to worship God.