

THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

II. JOHN.

Exposition
BY REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.,
MASTER OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DURHAM.

Homiletics
BY REV. C. CLEMANCE, B.A., D.D.

Homilies by Various Authors.
REV. W. JONES. REV. R. FINLAYSON, B.A.

NEW EDITION.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
LONDON AND NEW YORK

1907

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

EXPOSITION.

THIS letter is not rightly called "general." It is not addressed to the whole Church, but either to some particular Christian community, or (more probably) to an individual. The letter has an address and greeting, as is the case with most of the Catholic Epistles and the Epistles of St. Paul. This address occupies the first three verses.

Vers. 1—4.—1. INTRODUCTION. *Address and occasion.*

Ver. 1.—*The elder.* Not an unlikely appellation to have been given to the last surviving apostle. Other apostles had been called elders; their successors also were called elders; but St. John was "*the elder.*" That there was a second John at Ephesus, who was known as "*the elder,*" to distinguish him from the apostle and evangelist, is a theory of Eusebius, based upon a doubtful interpretation of an awkwardly worded passage in Papias. But it is by no means certain that any such person ever existed. Irenæus, who had read Papias, and been intimate with Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, seems to know nothing of any such person. Even if he existed, there is little reason for attributing this Epistle to him; it is too like the First Epistle to be by a different author. *Unto the elect lady.* This rendering of ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ should be retained: ἐκλεκτῇ cannot be a proper name, on account of ver. 13; κυρία need not be one. We commit ourselves to nothing that is disputable if we render κυρία "*lady;*" whereas if we render it "*Kyria*" it is open to any one to object that perhaps the lady's name was not Kyria, and that perhaps she is not an individual at all, but a Church. She is elect, as being chosen out of the dominion of the evil one (1 John v. 19) into the Christian family. She is thus reminded at the outset of the relationship between them; she is a member of that elect com-

pany of believers of which he is the elder. It is futile to ask who this lady is. There have been various conjectures, some of them absurd; but we know no more than the letter itself tells us. Evidently the lady and her children were not among the great ones of the earth; they have made no name in the world. And herein lies one of the chief lessons of the Epistle. Those mentioned in it were ordinary people, such as any Church in any generation might produce. But because they were faithful, and endeavoured to live up to their calling, the apostle loved them, and all true Christians loved them, and he dared to assure them that "*grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father*" should be their portion. Any Christian minister may give the same assurance to faithful Christians, however humble and inconspicuous, still. They may win no place in the history of the world that is passing away; but they have a place in the heart of him who abideth for ever. Note the characteristic repetition of the characteristic word "*truth,*" which occurs five times in the first four verses. All words respecting truth and bearing witness to it are characteristic of St. John. In two of the five cases "*truth*" has the article; "*all they that know the truth; for the truth's sake which abideth in us.*" It is not impossible that "*the truth*" here means him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Christ is the Revelation of Divine truth to man. All who know him love all faithful Christians for his sake. To the apostle truth was not a mere notion, "*or a set of notions, however large and accurate; it was no theory about God, but God himself, and God manifest in the flesh in order that we might know him and partake his life.*"

Ver. 3.—*In truth and love.* Love, as we have seen in the First Epistle, is another of the words which is characteristic of St.

John, "the apostle of love;" it also occurs repeatedly in this short letter. Truth and love are noble and natural companions. They must not be severed on earth any more than in heaven. In the Godhead the two are essentially united: "God is Light" and "God is Love." In human society they ought to be united: truth without love becomes cold, stern, and even cruel; love without truth becomes unstable and capricious.

Ver. 4.—I rejoice greatly that I have found (certain) of thy children walking in truth. The Revised Version is certainly right in rendering *εὑρηκα* "I have found" rather than "I found;" and it is probably right in rendering *ἐχαρην* "I rejoice" rather than "I rejoiced." It looks like the idiomatic "epistolary aorist," of which we have had probable instances in 1 John ii. 21 and 26. In this idiom the point of view of the recipient of the letter is taken instead of that of the writer. In Latin the imperfect is used in a similar way—*scribebam, dabamus*; and sometimes the perfect, *scripsi, misi*, and the like (comp. Acts xxiii. 30; Phil. ii. 25, 28; Philem. 11, 19, 21. See Moulton's *Winer*, p. 347). We are probably to understand this verse as a gentle intimation on the part of the elder that he has reason to know that certain others of her children are *not* walking in truth. Through the elect lady's too indiscriminate hospitality, some of her children have been seduced by the deceivers who have come to her bringing other doctrine than that of Christ.

Vers. 5—11.—2. MAIN DIVISION. *Exhortation*. Having thus stated what has led to his writing, the apostle passes on to the central portion of the letter (vers. 5—11), which consists of three exhortations: to love and obedience (vers. 5, 6); against false doctrine (vers. 7—9); against false charity (vers. 10, 11). The transition to this practical part of the Epistle is indicated by the opening particles, "And now."

Ver. 5.—I beseech thee, lady. The verb has, perhaps, a tinge of peremptoriness about it (*ἐρωτάω*): "This is a request which I have a right to make." Respecting the "new commandment" and "from the beginning," see notes on 1 John ii. 7. We may reasonably suppose that St. John is here reminding her of the contents of his First Epistle. The parallels between this Epistle and the First are so numerous and so close, that we can scarcely doubt that some of them are consciously made. There are at least *eight* such in these thirteen verses, as may be seen from the margin of a good reference Bible.

Ver. 6.—And this is love; i.e. the love which the commandment enjoins consists in this—active and unremitting obedience. Just as in the sphere of thought truth must be combined with love (see on ver. 3), so in the sphere of emotion love must be combined with obedience. Warm feelings, whether towards God or towards man, are worse than valueless if they are not united, on the one hand with obedience, on the other with truth. This was the elect lady's danger; in the exuberance of her charity she was forgetting her obligations to the truth and the commandment.

Ver. 7.—For. These are no mere generalities, and it is not without reason that these facts are insisted upon. The dangers which they suggest are not imaginary. Mischief has already been done by neglecting them. "Deceiver" (*πλῆστος*) here means "seducer," one who causes others to go astray. The cognate verb (*πλανᾷν*) is frequent in St. John, especially in the Revelation (ii. 20; xii. 9; xiii. 14; xix. 20; xx. 3, 8, 10), and commonly indicates seduction into grave error (comp. 1 John i. 8; ii. 26; iii. 7). The true reading (*ἐξηλθόν*) gives "are gone forth," not "are entered" (*εἰσῆλθόν*). We cannot be sure that "are gone forth" refers to their leaving the true Church; although 1 John ii. 18 inclines us to think so: it may mean no more than that they have gone abroad spreading their erroneous tenets. Just as "love not" in 1 John iii. 10, 14, 15 and iv. 20 is equivalent to "hate," so "confess not" here is equivalent to "deny." These seducers deny "Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh," or (as the Greek may possibly mean) they deny "Jesus as Christ coming in the flesh." The present participle (*ἐρχόμενον*) seems to indicate exactly the position of some of the Gnostic teachers. The Jew denied that the Incarnation *had* taken place—the Messiah had not yet come. The Gnostic denied that the Incarnation *could* take place: no such Person as the Christ coming in the flesh was possible; that the Infinite should become finite, that the Divine Word should become flesh, was inconceivable. The teacher who brings such doctrine as this "is the deceiver and the antichrist" about whom the elder's children had been so frequently warned. In the strong language which St. John here and elsewhere (1 John ii. 22, 26; iv. 1) uses respecting those who deny or pervert the truth, we hear the voice of the "son of thunder," ever jealous about whatever touched the honour of his Lord. Such hatred of error was the outcome of a firm grasp, and profound love, of the truth. It is easy to imitate and to exceed such strength of language; but let us beware of doing so without having first attained to an

equal comprehension of the truth, and an equal affection for it. The strong words of the apostle are the expression of a glowing conviction. Our strong words are too often the expression of a heated temper; and a man who loses his temper in argument cares more about himself than about the truth. Let us remember the noble words of St. Augustine to the heretics of his own day: "Let those rage against you who know not with what toil truth is found, and how difficult it is to avoid errors; who know not with how much difficulty the eye of the inner man is made whole; who know not with what sighs and groans it is made possible, in however small a degree, to comprehend God."

Ver. 8.—The authorities vary much as to the persons of the three verbs, "lose," "have wrought," "receive;" some reading "we," and some "ye," in each case. The best reading seems to be, "That *ye* lose not the things which *we* have wrought, but that *ye* receive a full reward;" i.e. beware of allowing our work in you to be undone to your grievous loss. Through not seeing the meaning of the passage, some scribes changed "ye" into "we," and others changed "we" into "ye," thus making all three verbs in the same person. There is a similar case in John ix. 4, where the true reading seems to be, "We must work the works of him that sent *me*;" but in order to produce uniformity some scribes altered "we" into "I," while others turned "me" into "us." The next verse explains the nature of the "full reward" which the lady and some of her children are in danger of losing,—it is nothing less than God himself.

Ver. 9.—For *whosoever transgresseth* (*ἄς δὲ παραβαίνων*) we must substitute *whosoever advanceth* (*ἄς δὲ προάγων*): both external and internal evidence are strongly in favour of this correction. "Whosoever advanceth" probably means *whosoever* goes beyond revealed truth and professes to teach something more profound. Gnostic teachers professed to have advanced a long way beyond the simple facts and simple moral teaching of the gospel; they "knew the depths;" they had "things ineffable, secret, higher than the heavens," to disclose; and these secret things were often not merely incompatible with Scripture, but a complete reversal of it. But it is possible that *ἄς δὲ προάγων* may mean no more than "every one who takes the lead," i.e. chooses a line for himself, which in matters of doctrine means creating a heresy.

Ver. 10.—If any one cometh unto you. As in 1 John v. 9, the Greek construction (indicative with *εἰ*, not conjunctive with *ἐάν*) shows that the case is stated as a fact, and not as a mere supposition. "If people of

this kind come—and it is well known that they do—do not receive them or give them a welcome." It is of the utmost importance to remember that St. John is here giving a rule for a special case, not laying down a general principle. His words give no sanction to the view that no hospitality is to be shown to heretics, still less to the monstrous mediæval doctrine that no faith need be kept with them. The apostle is giving directions to a particular Christian household during a particular crisis in the history of the Christian faith. It by no means follows that he would have given the same directions to every household during that crisis, or to any household under totally different circumstances. We may well believe that he would not have followed them himself, but would have endeavoured "to convince the gainsayers." His charity towards them would not have been misunderstood, and his faith would not have been in danger of being subverted. It was otherwise with her and her children, as experience had proved. And before we take this verse as a rule for our own guidance, we must consider the difference, which may well constitute an essential difference, between a time in which those who confessed Jesus Christ coming in the flesh were a despised and persecuted handful, and one in which some courage is required to avow that one denies him.

Ver. 11.—To give countenance and sanction to false doctrine is to share in the responsibility for all the harm which such false doctrine does. With which solemn warning the main portion of the Epistle ends.

Vers. 12, 13.—3. THE CONCLUSION OF THE EPISTLE. It is in their openings and conclusions, and especially in the latter, that the Second and Third Epistles have so strong a resemblance that we are almost compelled to assign them not merely to the same author, but to the same period in the author's life. St. John had a tenacious memory, as his writings prove; but we may doubt whether so trivial a matter as the mode of beginning and ending a short letter would have remained for years together in his mind. We may reasonably conclude from their similarity that these two Epistles are separated from one another by only a short interval of time.

Ver. 12.—Having many things to write. This remark is almost conclusive against the supposition that the Second Epistle was sent as a companion-letter to the First. The hypothesis has little or nothing to support it. I would not (do so) by means of paper and

ink. It is astonishing that any one should suppose that intercourse on paper is here opposed to *spiritual* intercourse: obviously it is opposed to *conversation*. The elder just writes what is of urgent importance to prevent fatal mistakes during the present time, and leaves everything else until he can talk matters over with her. *Χάρις* is mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament, but is found in the Septuagint (Jer. xxxvi. 23); it probably means "papyrus." *Μέλαν* occurs in the parallel passage 3 John 13, and in 2 Cor. iii. 3; it was commonly made of lampblack or other soot, and hence the name. But I hope to come unto you; literally, *I hope to come to be (γενέσθαι) at your house*. *Πρὸς ὑμᾶς* is here very much the same as the French *chez vous*. So also *πρὸς ἡμᾶς*, Matt. xiii. 56 (comp. 1 Cor. xvi. 7; Gal i. 18; 1 Thess. iii. 4; Philem. 13). "Face to face" (*σὺμα πρὸς σὺμα*) is exactly the French *bouche à bouche*. The phrase occurs only here and 3 John 14 in the New Testament. In 1 Cor. xiii. 12 we have *πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον*; but there the emphatic thing is that the two should *see* one another. Here the special point is that they should *converse* with one another: and this is more clearly expressed by "mouth to mouth" than by "face to face." For the phrase, "that your joy may be fulfilled," see note on 1 John i.

4, to which passage the apostle may here be consciously referring. That was ever one main purpose of his teaching—the perfecting of Christian joy.

Ver. 13.—The children of thine elect sister salute thee. Why the change from "you" (*πρὸς ὑμᾶς*) in ver. 12 to "thee" (*σε*) here, if the letter is addressed to a community? The change is very intelligible if "you" means "thee and thy family," and "thee" means "thee in particular." The elect sister herself sends no greeting, because she does not live, as these children of hers do, near the apostle; perhaps she is dead. This message to the elect lady from her sister's children is, perhaps, intended as a delicate intimation that they know why the elder is writing, and join in his affectionate warning. "The last sentences of this letter to the elect lady remind us that it is what it professes to be—a letter to a friend; that the friendship was the more natural and human because it was grounded on the truth; and that other ladies also elect were, like this one, not nuns, but mothers" (Maurice). The concluding "Amen" at the end of this Epistle, as at the end of most of the Epistles, is spurious. Galatians, and perhaps 2 Peter, seem to be the only instances in which the "Amen" is genuine.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*An apostolic pastoral to a Christian family.* This Epistle is written by the Apostle John to a Christian family. He, like the Apostle Peter had done before him (1 Pet. v. 1), styles himself a presbyter. His First Epistle was written to a Church or to the Churches. In this, the Second Epistle, we have a priceless fragment of early Christian history, showing us the relation which subsisted between the apostle and a Christian family, and also to how large an extent the new Christian faith was in some instances moulding family life, by leavening it with the truth of God. It is to us surprising to find how many difficulties have seemed to gather round the question—Was the Epistle written to a society or to an individual? The former conclusion was drawn by some owing to the form of address being the second person plural; the latter, owing to the phrase, "to the elect lady."¹ We do not adopt either hypothesis, but regard the phrase, "to the elect lady and her children," as a sufficient indication that the letter was written to a Christian family. With this supposition *every* phrase in the letter harmonizes. We do not know, indeed, the name of the surviving head of the family; but so many particulars concerning the family may be gathered from the letter, that we can retain, after studying it, a fairly clear and distinct impression of Christian family life in the first century. There are several features about it, which one by one may be suggestive of much instruction.

I. IT WAS A FAMILY WHERE "THE TRUTH" WAS RECEIVED AND EMBODIED. (Vers. 1, 2.) What the apostle meant by "the truth" none can doubt who know his writings. Nor can any one who has enthroned the Saviour in his heart as the Son of God and the King of men, have any misgiving as to whether he has the truth or no. To him, the life he has in Jesus, and the love of him and from him which are shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, forbid him going any further in search of the truth.

¹ The reasons given by Canon Westcott, *et al.*, against taking *Κύρις* to be a proper name are, in our judgment, decisive.

He has found it in Christ. It is the "pearl of great price." And where the truth is received in, and is leavening a family with its blessed influence, there is a home on which the eye of the Christian pastor can look with a loving gladness.

II. OVER THIS FAMILY THE APOSTLE HELD THE OFFICE OF PRESBYTER. (Ver. 1.) "It is easy to see why St. John would choose such a title, which, while it described an official position, suggested also a fatherly relation" (Westcott, *in loc.*). It was to the office of presbyter that the pastoral care belonged (Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. v. 2) of feeding and tending the flock. Apostles, indeed, were more than presbyters, overseers, and pastors, inasmuch as they sustained larger relations to the whole Church. But this did not annul the relation they bore to the several families in their charge. There is no spiritual bond more sacred than that of the Christian pastor, provided he does not mar the holy influence he is bound to exert, by pretending to an authority with which God's Word does not invest him.

III. TO THIS FAMILY THE APOSTLE IS DRAWN BY STRONG AND WARM ATTACHMENT. (Vers. 2, 3.) The truth which he had taught and they received knit them together in one. And seeing they were one in Christ, united in him to one common God and Father, there is a warm and glowing forth-pouring of benediction from the aged teacher. John was no cold, heartless official. He once had a strong, fiery, despotic spirit in him. But that has long ago been toned down by Divine grace, and now from him as the elder, just such outbreathings of benevolence are expressed as one Christian might utter for another. "Grace, mercy, and peace be with you," etc.

IV. THIS FAMILY APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN BEHEFT OF ITS EARTHLY HEAD, AND TO BE SCATTERED ABROAD. "The elect lady and her children"—no mention is made of the husband and father. The probability is that he was no longer on earth. The surviving head—the widow—had probably been "elected" among the number of widows (1 Tim. v. 9), or else chosen as a deaconess (Rom. xvi. 1); and, having sustained her position with honour in the Church, was widely known and loved (ver. 1). Her children were not all at home. The apostle, in his wanderings among the Churches, appears to have met some of them, and "found of them" (*εὑρηκα*), to his great joy, "walking in the truth." There is no greater joy on earth, whether to parents or pastors, than to find the children of their care staunch to the true and the right. If in the home they have been baptized and trained for God, they are "beloved for the fathers' sakes," and will be surrounded with a special care when far out in the world. The children cannot always be under the home roof. If the grace of God be in them, they are safe everywhere.

V. THEY ALL NEEDED, HOWEVER, TO BEWARE OF SURROUNDING PERILS. (Vers. 6-9.) 1. There were abroad, deceivers, teachers of false doctrine, such as those of whom he had warned the Churches. There were "advance" men even in those early days (*πᾶς ὁ προδύων*). But then, as now, the people who "go forward" too rapidly, let that which is most worth keeping drop as they go! These abode not in the doctrine of Christ. 2. If the false teachers should succeed in decoying away any of this family, it would be a serious loss to them (ver. 8, Revised Version).¹ 3. Consequently, they needed to be exceedingly wary and watchful. The danger was not only outward, but inward. "Look to yourselves, that ye lose not," etc.

VI. THE HOUSE WAS TO BE RESERVED AND PRESERVED FOR THE TRUTH ALONE. (Vers. 10, 11.) Much needless difficulty has been raised over the apparent exclusiveness of these words, as if no one that did not believe in Christ was to be admitted to the house.² But the reference plainly is to any one who wishes to come into the house to teach another doctrine, and to draw away the mother and the children from allegiance to their Lord. What would be any Christian mother's duty in such a case? Plainly, to forbid, and that peremptorily, any attempts to tamper with her faith or that of her children. And how could she honestly wish such a teacher "God-speed"? To do so would be to have fellowship in his errors (*κοινωνεῖ*). No. Every Christian parent is bound to lay down as the law of the house—"This home is for Christ. The children are for Christ and for the truth, and I will not imperil their souls, nor lend a hand to the propagation of error, by letting the germs thereof be planted here!"

¹ See Revisers' Greek Testament.

² The Apostle Paul most helpfully defines the limit of a similar restriction in 1 Cor. v. 9-11.

NOTE. 1. It is to the laity (to use a common term) that the teachers and preachers of the truth must look to be its conservers, upholders, and defenders. Christian homes are to be its nurseries, in which the weeds of error are not allowed to grow. There are quite enough perils ready to meet the children—from inward corruption and outward temptation, without their being exposed to the additional perils of finding seed-plots of heresy allowed in the home. 2. This Epistle is of great value as showing us, through the teaching of an inspired apostle, that Christian parents are expected to train their children in the faith which they themselves believe, and to put and keep a holy guard around them, that their young minds may not be harassed by the seductions of any antichristian deceiver. Let every parent say, “My home is for Christ, and for Christ alone!”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*An exemplary Christian greeting.* “The elder unto the elect lady and her children,” etc. This address and salutation presents to us three chief topics for consideration.

I. A LADY OF SAINTLY CHARACTER AND DISTINGUISHED PRIVILEGE. “The elder unto the elect lady and her children,” etc. 1. *A saintly character.* This lady is designated “elect,” as chosen out of the unchristian world and called “into the sanctified company of the Church of God” (cf. John xv. 19; 2 Tim. ii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 1; ii. 9). We may also infer that she was eminent for her piety from the fact that she was loved by the writer, and by all them that knew the truth (ver. 1). 2. *A distinguished privilege.* Unto this “elect lady” was this letter written by an apostle; and in the providence of God this letter is incorporated into the sacred Scriptures and preserved for the instruction and edification of the Christian world in all ages. Christianity has done more for woman than all other systems whether social or religious. It represents her neither as the serf nor as the toy of man, but as his companion. “She is thy companion.” “There is neither male nor female;” both “are one in Christ Jesus.” Our Lord honoured women. We see this in his treatment of Martha and Mary of Bethany; Mary Magdalene, to whom he first appeared after the resurrection; and even the poor and sadly erring woman of Samaria. Other women are distinguished in the New Testament. The three Maries at the cross, the women at the sepulchre, Lydia, Dorcas, Priscilla, *et al.* It is worthy of note that the children of “the elect lady” are mentioned in this address. “Unto the elect lady and her children.” In Christian and in friendly correspondence it is well to remember the children for their encouragement in what is good, and for their caution as to what is evil.

II. A DECLARATION OF EXALTED CHRISTIAN AFFECTION. “Whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth; for the truth’s sake which dwelleth in us, and it shall be with us for ever.” 1. *Love of genuine character.* “Whom I love in truth.” The attachment of the apostle to this lady and her children was sincere. He loved them not merely in word, or “with the tongue, but in deed and truth” (1 John iii. 18). 2. *Love in the highest sphere.* “Whom I love in truth. “He loved her,” says Ebrard, “with that love which was a love in truth. His love was such as approved itself in perfect truth and truthfulness of conduct: thus it was not blind to the faults and sins of the object beloved; it did not spare from a false delicacy and sense of propriety; but it had its existence in the sphere of truth, that is, of the being true. . . . Truth accordingly designates here, not truth in the objective sense (revealed truth), but truth as the subjective Christian-moral characteristic of the spirit and temper and being.” 3. *Love for the worthiest reason.* “For the truth’s sake which abideth in us, and shall be with us for ever.” Truth is in the Christian intellectually; in his mind—he holds the truth. It is in him sympathetically; in his heart—he loves the truth. It is in him authoritatively; in his soul—he lives the truth. Truth becomes, as it were, incorporated into his being, and his eternal portion. “It shall be with us for ever.” It was because of the truth which was in the apostle and also in “the elect lady” that he loved her. “The apostle and the other Christians loved this lady, not so much for her honour, as her holiness; not so much for her bounty, as her serious Christianity.” “St. John loved the lady for the truth’s sake, but how many in our

days love the truth for the lady's sake!—I mean for sinister ends and by-respects. It is a blessed thing when religion, and the grace of God shining in the lives of Christians, is the special loadstone of our love and affection towards them" (Burkitt).

III. AN EXPRESSION OF A CONFIDENT WISH THAT OTHERS MAY ENJOY THE RICHEST BLESSINGS. "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace from God the Father," etc. 1. *The blessings desired.* (1) "Grace" is the free and unmerited favour of God towards man, manifested especially in his redemptive relations to us. Grace is the fountain whence all blessings flow to us. Here I take it as "meaning every Christian grace and virtue, which the Spirit of God imparts to the followers of Christ; Divine favour in the most extensive sense, but specially in the sense of spiritual blessings." (2) "Mercy" is pity or compassion for the sinful and wretched. The word is sometimes used to express the benefits which result from compassion. Mercy is exercised towards those who deserve punishment or need succour. It is the manifestation of grace towards the guilty and miserable. The forgiveness of sins is a mercy. Inasmuch as St. John wishes mercy for "the elect lady," we infer that they "who are already rich in grace have need of continual forgiveness." (3) "Peace," like the Hebrew *shalom*, means every kind of good and blessing. "Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1). This implies forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God. Peace as denoting the absence of anxiety, fear, etc. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you," etc. (John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; Phil. iv. 6, 7). Peace also with our fellow-men and in our own souls. What a fine example is this of Christian well-wishing! Let us imitate it. Mark the confidence with which this wish is expressed. Literally, "there shall be with us grace, mercy, peace," etc. It is "a wish expressed by a confident assertion of its fulfilment." 2. *The Persons from whom these blessings are desired.* (1) "From God the Father." He is the Father (a) of all men, as created by him and in his image. Even since the fall of man he in some respects resembles his Creator; he is still possessed of reason, conscience, volition (cf. Acts xvii. 28, 29). He is the Father (b) especially of all true Christians, because they are renewed into moral resemblance to him (Col. iii. 10). They have been "begotten again," and are his children by a second birth. They also possess the filial spirit (Rom. viii. 15). God the Father is the great original Source of all good. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above," etc. (Jas. i. 17). (2) "And from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father." Alford, "This solemn title is used for the more complete setting forth of the union of Jesus with the Father in the essence of the Godhead." He is "such a Son as none else can be." "This is my beloved Son," etc. (Matt. iii. 17). "The Only Begotten of the Father . . . the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father" (John i. 14—18). Jesus Christ is the channel of communication between God and man. He is the medium through which these blessings are bestowed upon man. Nay, more, as being the only begotten Son of the Father, united with the Father in the essence of the Godhead, he is the Author and Communicator of these blessings. 3. *The condition necessary to the enjoyment of these blessings.* "In truth and love." We are not certain as to the exact interpretation of these words. Alford, "Truth and love are the conditional elements in which the grace, mercy, and peace are to be received and enjoyed." These blessings will not be granted unto us unless we are true and loving. Or we may take the clause thus: the grace, mercy, and peace are to be manifested in truth and love; they are to promote truth and love in us.—W. J.

Ver. 4.—*The rejoicing of the good in the exemplification of the godly life.* "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth," etc.

I. THE RULE OF THE GODLY LIFE. "Walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father." The rule of the true Christian life is the revealed will of God. The authoritative command proceeds from the Divine Father. He is the great Source of law. Man in a state of sin is prone to regard law as proceeding from an arbitrary, tyrannical power. But the law and government of God are paternal (cf. Matt. xxi. 28—31). The rule of a well-ordered family is, perhaps, the highest illustration of the rule of Heaven in this world. God speaketh as a Father to his rebellious children when he saith, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not." If the voice seem unfatherly and stern, it is because they who hear it dislike and disregard his authority. If to others it seem firm, authoritative, yet fatherly, it is because they are differently related to him by

their character and conduct. In both cases it is the voice of a Father, all-wise, gracious, supremely authoritative. His will is the rule of the godly life.

II. THE EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE GODLY LIFE. "Walking in truth." "Walking" is a term used to denote the life and conduct. "Walking in truth" is living in accordance with the truth which was specially believed by Christians. It implies that the children of the elect lady eschewed Gnosticism and other errors; that they held the truth concerning the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that they embodied the truth in their conduct—their life was Christ-like. How practical a thing Christianity is! The grace and the calling of God are not simply to Christian profession, but to Christian practice—to a holy life. We are to show our faith by our works; and by our works our faith is to be perfected (cf. Jas. ii. 18, 21). It is "walking in truth" that calls forth apostolic commendation.

III. THE REJOICING OF THE GOOD IN THE EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE GODLY LIFE IN OTHERS. "I rejoiced greatly that I have found of thy children walking in truth." Let us endeavour to discover the reasons of this rejoicing. 1. *The good rejoice to find any persons "walking in truth,"* because such a walk indicates an increase of goodness in the world; an increase of the results of goodness, e.g. peace, joy, beneficent influence, etc.; and an increase of glory to God. 2. The good rejoice the more to find the young "walking in truth." Our hope for the future cannot be separated from those who at present are young. From their ranks must arise the Christian preachers, the teachers in schools and colleges, the authors and editors of our literature, the framers and administrators of our laws, of a few years hence. How important that the young should exemplify the godly life! 3. The good rejoice still more to find the children of pious parents "walking in truth." They rise up to tread in the footsteps of their godly parents, to fill their places and carry on their beneficent works when they are no longer able to do so themselves. In them we see the rich reward of loving Christian nurture, and fervent, persevering prayer. 4. The good rejoice still more to find the children of their beloved friends "walking in truth." So it was with St. John in the case before us. Friendship gives a common interest. What is dear to my friend is dear to me for my friend's sake. Thus Mephibosheth was dear to David for the sake of his father Jonathan, David's friend (2 Sam. ix.). 5. The good rejoice still more to find persons "walking in truth" when the accomplishment of this is the object of their life. The apostle lived to bear witness of Christ, and to lead men to him as their Saviour and Lord. When he found persons exemplifying Christianity in their life, the joy of knowing that his own and others' labours were not in vain would be his. He who is most deeply interested in the cause of Christ realizes the greatest gladness in its progress.

IV. THE LIMITATION IN THE EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE GODLY LIFE. "I have found certain of thy children walking in truth" (Revised Version); or, "some of your children," etc. The apostle does not assert that, while some of the children of the elect lady were "walking in truth," others were not doing so. His expression may mean simply that he only knew that some of them were living a true Christian life. But it certainly seems to imply that all of them were not "walking in truth." Perhaps some had been led away from Christian truth by the errors of that age, or they might have been living in wickedness. It is not an infrequent thing amongst the children of saintly parents to find one or more sad sinners. When the family is large it is seldom that the rejoicing because of its piety is complete and unalloyed. Too often the song of gladness because of those who are in Christ grows tremulous with grief because of the wayward and wicked son or daughter. But may we not hope that at last, in the great and blessed home of the heavenly Father, all the children of Christian parents will be safely gathered? That it may be so let us heartily work and earnestly pray.—W. J.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Mutual love.* "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee," etc. Having expressed his joy that certain of the children of the elect lady were "walking in truth," the apostle exhorts to the exercise of mutual love. Truth and love must be combined in Christian character and conduct. Where truth dwells without love, the character is likely to be or to become cold, rigid, and harsh. Where love dwells without truth, the character becomes effeminate, self-indulgent, and unreliable. Neither is truth in itself complete without love, nor love

without truth. The combination of both is needful to the completeness of either in Christian character. Notice—

I. **THE OBLIGATION OF MUTUAL LOVE.** It is commanded by God. "A commandment . . . that we love one another. . . . This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it," *i.e.* in love. 1. *The nature of this love.* In the original of the New Testament there are two words both of which are translated "love" in our Authorized Version. "The distinction seems to be that *ἀγαπᾶν* is more used of that reverential love, grounded on high graces of character, which is borne towards God and man by the child of God; whereas *φιλεῖν* expresses more the personal love of human affection" (Alford). The apostle here uses the word with the higher meaning. The affection of which he writes differs from matrimonial, parental, filial, and friendly love. It cannot be exercised towards the wicked. It has reference chiefly to the character of the person loved. Its exercise involves respect and esteem. 2. *The obligatoriness of this love.* It is a sacred "commandment that we love one another" (cf. John xiii. 34; xv. 12; 1 John iii. 10-18). It is a moral duty to reverence goodness, to admire beauty of character, to love in this high sense those who are spiritually excellent. It is ill with a man when he fails to esteem uprightness and honour in man, to venerate consistent piety, and to love genuine godliness. Such a man is on the road to perdition. Mark the fact that this obligation was not new. "Not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning," etc. Some understand "from the beginning" to mean from the creation of humanity. "As to the matter of it (mutual holy love) it is as old as natural, Jewish, or Christian religion." "It is as old as Moses, yea, as old as Adam, being a part of the law of nature written in Adam's heart." Others interpret, "from the beginning of their faith in Jesus Christ," or "from the time of their conversion to Christianity." In a sense the former view is true, but the latter seems to us to be the meaning of St. John in this place. From the commencement of their Christian life they were under the most sacred obligations to obey this command. And yet it is a new commandment, "inasmuch as it ever assumes new freshness as the Christian life unfolds, as the old darkness is more and more cleared away, and the true light shineth." It is new also because it should "be always fresh in the memories, and found in the practice, of Christ's disciples to the end of the world." 3. *The earnestness with which the apostle requests this love.* "I beseech thee, lady," etc. Such an entreaty from the sainted apostle would carry more force than an earnest exhortation or an authoritative command. It is said that, in his extreme age, when he was unable to walk to the place where the Christians met together, St. John caused himself to be borne thither, that he might address the assembly; and his address was only this—"Little children, love one another." And when he was asked why he always spoke the same thing and nothing else, he replied, "That it was the command of the Lord, and that if this only were done, enough was done." The story is perfectly in keeping with our text, "I beseech thee, lady . . . that we love one another." And St. Paul wrote, "Love is the fulfilling of the Law."

II. **THE MANIFESTATION OF THIS LOVE.** "And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it." The love for the exercise of which St. John prays, may be described as walking according to God's commandments; and the one commandment in which all others is summed up is this—"that ye should walk in it," *i.e.* in love. Love is to be manifested by obedience to the Divine will. 1. *Obedience is the product of love.* The obedience which springs from servile fear or from considerations of self-interest is not true. It is mechanical, not hearty. It is utterly lacking of loyalty, and cannot be acceptable to God. To be true, obedience must be free and cordial; it is the product of love. Love makes obedience easy, and duty delightful. 2. *Obedience is the evidence of love.* The genuine evidence of affection is not profession, but obedience; not words, but deeds. "If ye love me," said our Lord, "ye will keep my commandments." The mutual love which St. John entreats "is not an effeminate, self-seeking, self-complacent love to our neighbour, but a love which manifests itself in the steady discharge of every obligation." "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John

v. 2, 3). "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me," etc. (John xiv. 21).

CONCLUSION. 1. *Let us endeavour to become worthy of this exalted Christian love.* By the help of Divine grace let us seek to develop characters worthy of the esteem and affection of the good. 2. *Let us live in the exercise of this love.* Said our Lord, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."—W. J.

Ver. 7.—*The exhibition and condemnation of heretics.* "For many deceivers are entered into the world," etc. Our text is set forth as a reason for the exhortation of vers. 5 and 6. "Walk in love—in that love whose condition is truth, because many deceivers are gone forth denying the truth." Notice—

I. THE HERESY HERE MENTIONED. The denial of the great truth of the incarnation of the Son of God. "They confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh." There were persons who held that the humanity of the Lord Jesus was not real, but apparitional; that the Son of God assumed only the appearance of humanity. And there was the heresy of Cerinthus, that the *Æon* Christ came into the flesh—"entered into the man Jesus at his baptism, and remained with him until the commencement of his sufferings; but Cerinthus denied that Jesus Christ came *in the flesh*." The sacred Scriptures, assert the reality and completeness of our Lord's humanity; that "he took a body of flesh, and his whole humanity both of soul and body shared in the sinless infirmities which belong to our common nature" (Liddon. Cf. Heb. ii. 14-18). His body passed through the real experiences of a human body, performed its duties, endured its sufferings, etc. The heresy which St. John is exposing arose in the Church. "Many deceivers are gone forth into the world," *i.e.* from the Church, as in 1 John ii. 19. We are not in danger from error in this form at present, but in the opposite form, even the denial of the Godhead of our Lord. It is not now the fact of his humanity, but the fact of his Deity, that is called into question. Both are essential to a true Christology.

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE HERETICS. "This is the deceiver and the antichrist." The "this" points to these heretics as a class. Here are two of their characteristics. 1. *Their injuriousness to men.* They were "deceivers," "makers to wander" from the truth in faith, and (as a consequence) from the truth in practice. The influence of the misbeliever tends to corrupt the faith of others, and thus to impoverish and enfeeble their lives. 2. *Their hostility to Christ.* They were "antichrist," *i.e.* against Christ. "The antichristian principle was then," says Alford, "as it is now, and will be in every age, working, realizing, and concentrating itself from time to time, in evil men and evil books and evil days, but awaiting its final development and consummation in the antichrist who shall personally appear before the coming of the Lord." These deceivers corrupted Christian doctrine and practice; they troubled the Church; they were opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. THE REASON WHY THE APOSTLE ATTACHED SO MUCH IMPORTANCE TO THIS MATTER. Why does St. John write so earnestly upon this question? Why does he use such strong language in respect to these heretics? Because of the great importance of the truth which they denied. The manhood of the Saviour is one of the essential facts of Christian teaching and life. The denial of the reality of his manhood: 1. *Invalidates his atonement and redemption*; for it makes his sufferings fictitious, and his death an illusion. 2. *Nullifies his mediation.* The mediator must be in contact with those between whom he mediates, and by his manhood Jesus Christ places himself in contact with us men; but if his humanity be only apparent, he is not in any real contact with us, and he cannot be a Mediator for us. 3. *Deprives his example of all its force and reality.* If our Lord did not truly share our human nature, his life cannot be exemplary to us. 4. *Does away with his sympathy with us.* Sympathy is fellow-feeling—feeling-together; and if Christ Jesus has not participated in our humanity, how much soever he may feel for us, he cannot feel with us. "If Christ be not truly man, the chasm which parted earth and heaven has not been bridged over. God, as before the Incarnation, is still awful, remote, inaccessible."

Beware, brethren, of any departure from the essential truths of Christianity, especially from the truths which relate to the Person and work of our blessed Lord.—W. J.

Ver. 8.—*A summons to self-guardianship.* “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things,” etc. What is the first business of the Christian in relation to error? To oppose it? To denounce it? To expose it? Some at once rush to attack it, even before they are well acquainted with its character and tendency and power: an unwise and presumptuous course. Others examine error that they may understand it thoroughly, and then combat it successfully: this is sometimes perilous. When a contagious disease is prevalent, the prudent man shuns the habitations into which it has entered (unless duty summon him to them), and endeavours to maintain his own health and vigour. And when error, with its moral contagion, is abroad, the wise man will at once guard himself against it. Even when we are certain that certain opinions are false, and that the errors relate to a fundamental question or questions, the prudent course for the great majority of true believers is to look to their own faith and life, and leave it to the few competent champions of truth to expose and overthrow the error. Basing our remarks on the Revised Version of our text, let us notice—

I. THE DANGER TO BE GUARDED AGAINST. “That ye lose not the things which we have wrought.” Whether the genuine reading is “we have wrought” or “ye have wrought” is uncertain. But adopting the former, the “we have wrought” signifies the work of the apostle and other Christian ministers, “through which those who were addressed had been brought to conversion, and furthered in their Christian course to the present time; and by ‘the things which we have wrought’ we are to understand that stage of salvation to which, through those labours, the elect lady and her children had attained” (Ebrard). The text is a warning to the true Christian against loss. It somewhat corresponds with the words of the glorified Lord in Rev. ii. 25 and iii. 11. What we have of Christian attainment—of sound doctrine, of spiritual life, of holy conduct, and of faithful labour for Christ—we must hold fast, that none should cause us to lose it, and so deprive us of our reward. The loss of which St. John wrote was one of which there was danger from errors of faith. And in his view, if faith lost its purity, Christian love would be imperilled and injured, and the whole tone and power of Christian life impaired. In our own day the peril of being led astray from truth is very great. We do not say that we are to rest satisfied with what we know, as though we had grasped all truth; or that we are to condemn an opinion as false because it is opposed to certain opinions of ours; or that we are to sit in judgment upon those who differ from us. That is the part of the bigot, not of the intelligent and devout Christian. But beware lest any one lead you from your faith in the great essential verities of Christianity revealed in the sacred Scriptures. As to the great facts of the incarnation, the atonement, and the resurrection of our Lord, “look to yourselves that” your faith in these be not shaken. As to the *mode* of these facts we may lawfully differ; but as to the *facts* themselves, he who believes in the Bible as the Word of God can admit neither doubt nor question. If there be loss in our faith, that loss will ere long manifest itself in our life. If belief be corrupted, the practice also will become corrupt. Injury to our religious convictions will soon show itself in the deterioration of our general actions. And even if faith be not corrupted, if it be only weakened, that weakened faith will result in a less intense love to God, in less hearty obedience to him, in less faithful service, and in a less brilliant crown in heaven. “Look to yourselves,” then, that ye lose nothing of your true faith, your holy love, your fervent zeal, etc.

II. THE OBJECT TO BE ATTAINED. “That ye receive a full reward.” This exhortation implies that the rewards of heaven will correspond with the acquisitions made in Christian character, and the work accomplished for our Lord upon earth. 1. *These rewards will be in proportion with our acquisitions in Divine grace.* This is inevitable; for glory is the flower of which grace is the bud. The measure of grace must determine the measure of glory. Our fitness or capacity for reward must necessarily have much to do in determining the measure of our reward. 2. *These rewards will also be in proportion with our true work for our Lord Jesus Christ.* The sacred Scriptures do not teach the meritoriousness of good works, but they clearly teach that faithful service will be rewarded by God, and that there will be a proportion between the service and the reward, as the following portions show: Dan. xii. 3; Matt. x. 41, 42; xxv. 21, 23, 34-40; Luke vi. 23; xix. 16-19; John iv. 36; 1 Cor. iii. 14. But the rewards of fidelity and of service in Christ’s Name must be attributed, not to the merit of the servants, but to the grace of the great Master. That we get any reward at all is owing

to the favour of our God. But the grace of God is opposed neither to those laws of the human mind which point towards this diversity in the degree of the rewards of the faithful, nor to that Divine righteousness which points in the same direction. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work," etc. (Heb. vi. 10). The extent and quality of personal faith, character, and service are the measures of personal glory and reward. Therefore let us aim at the highest in personal character, and the best in personal service; let us labour that we may "receive a full reward."

III. THE MEANS TO BE EMPLOYED. "Look to yourselves," etc. Be on your guard, that you are not led astray from the true faith of Christ by these deceivers; diligently use the means, so "that ye lose not the things which we have wrought," etc. 1. *Guard against error in your religious faith.* The things that we really and heartily believe are of the utmost importance to us. Avoid, on the one hand, bigotry, and on the other, laxity of religious belief. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Let no one tamper with your faith in the grand verities of Christianity. 2. *Seek to know more of Christian truth.* "Search the Scriptures." By so doing you will become established in the true faith; and if in anything your faith be erroneous or defective, by bringing it to the touchstone of the Word of God you will discover the error or defect. 3. *Maintain your spiritual vitality.* In seasons of prevalent disease persons whose physical vitality is low are most likely to fall victims to it. So a low state of piety renders a man an easy prey to error. One of the most effective safeguards against the corruption of our faith is a healthy, vigorous, spiritual life. 4. *The most effective way of looking to ourselves is looking earnestly to Christ.* That will secure our safety, our progress, and our full reward. Some set out in Christian life and service with fervent zeal, and work earnestly for a time, and then grow lukewarm, and decline into almost useless servants. Great will be their loss, and eternal. Let it not be so with us. Let us be covetous of a rich reward, and ambitious of a splendid crown, and diligent both in the pursuit of holiness and of duties of the Divine Master's service, that at last we may have a triumphal "entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—W. J.

Ver. 9.—*Man's true relation to the doctrine of Christ.* "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ," etc. In our remarks we shall follow the Revised Version, which is sustained by the authority of all the oldest manuscripts. The text presents for our consideration—

I. THE SUPREME TEACHER OF THE DIVINE. Our Lord is here represented as the supreme and infallible Teacher of men in the things of God. "The doctrine of Christ" we understand as meaning the truth which Christ himself taught. And from the connection it seems in this place to refer especially to his teaching concerning the Divine Being and his relations with men. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." Concerning God, and his attitude and relation to us, our Lord is the supreme Teacher. 1. *As regards his words.* "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Take some of his declarations. "God is a Spirit," etc. (John iv. 24). The parable of the prodigal son is a wonderfully beautiful representation of the attitude of the Father towards his rebellious children, also towards his penitent children. His conversation with Nicodemus sets forth with great clearness and force the infinite love of God in the gift of his Son, and the way of salvation for man. The sermon on the mount is a most luminous exposition of the will of the Father towards men. 2. *As regards his life.* The life of the Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." "Jesus saith, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me," etc. (John xiv. 6—10). "Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him."

II. MAN'S TRUE RELATION TO THE SUPREME TEACHING OF THE DIVINE. He must abide in it. There is danger of his renouncing it. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ," etc. "Goeth onward," or "taketh the lead," is a somewhat difficult expression. It may mean, "every one who would set up for a

teacher" (Alford), as in John x. 4, "He goeth before them," etc. Ebrard explains it thus: "'He who in such a sense goes forward in knowledge as not to abide in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.' It is undeniable that reference is here made to the pretensions of the Gnostics, who always represented their doctrine as a constant progression in knowledge. There is a progress which forsakes the first principles which have been established; and such a progress is apostasy. In all true progression of knowledge there must ever be a firm adherence to the unchangeable root or foundation of knowledge." Men may renounce truth for error. "If any among you do err from the truth." Men may fail to abide in the true doctrine by reason of (1) a curious and speculative mental disposition. Some will not recognize the fact that "secret things belong unto the Lord." They are presumptuous in their intellectual inquiries and investigations. They forget that it is "the meek whom he will guide in judgment," etc. (Ps. xxv. 9). "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and understanding," etc. (Matt. xi. 25). Again, men may fail to abide in the true doctrine by reason of (2) loss of spiritual health. If a man become a backslider in heart, his strongest guarantee for steadfastness in the faith is gone. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," etc. When the heart is not right with God, man is easily led away from truth into error. We are required to abide in the true teaching. We are to be rooted and grounded in it; to grow up in it, etc. The sad consequence of failure in this respect should arouse us to maintain our steadfastness in the doctrine of Christ. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God;" i.e. he has no fellowship with God, he is not a partaker of his nature, he does not possess him as his Portion.

III. THE BLESSED CONSEQUENCE OF MAINTAINING THIS TRUE RELATION TO THE SUPREME TEACHING OF THE DIVINE. "He that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." How are we to understand this? He has them: 1. *By true acquaintance with them.* "We have the mind of Christ." We know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. We have the author himself, in an important sense, when we have grasped his opinions, principles, arguments, sympathies; so we have the Father and the Son by our acquaintance with the Divine teaching. 2. *By supreme sympathy with them.* "God is Love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him." "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." By mutual love we possess each other. By mutual love we "have both the Father and the Son." 3. *By covenant relation with them.* "God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" "The Lord is my Portion, saith my soul;" "My Lord and my God."

Let us give all diligence to abide in the teaching of Christ, that this most glorious and blessed possession may be ours, even "the Father and the Son."—W. J.

Vers. 10, 11.—*How to treat heretics.* "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine," etc. Our subject divides itself into two branches.

I. THE EXHORTATION OF THE APOSTLE. "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting." Notice: 1. *What the exhortation implies.* (1) That the elect lady was accustomed to entertain Christian ministers (cf. 3 John 5, 6). We have a beautiful illustration of similar hospitality in 2 Kings iv. 8—13. From that time to this very many godly persons have obtained for themselves a good report by entertaining faithful ministers of religion. In so doing they have often been richly blessed; and a gracious reward is promised unto them (Matt. x. 40—42). (2) That there were ministers of false teaching abroad who were likely to call upon this lady. "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching;" i.e. "the teaching of Christ" (ver. 9). Alford points out that the use of "the indicative after *ei* shows that the case supposed actually existed; that such persons were sure to come to" her. The teachers of error were at work, etc. 2. *What the exhortation enjoins.* "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting." We have already considered (in dealing with ver. 8) what is a Christian's first duty in relation to false doctrines and their propagators. What is his subsequent duty? To refute such doctrines? To denounce such teachers? To oppose them? Or, to persecute them? The New Testament nowhere sanctions persecution in any form. And opposition should

be left to the few who have the ability to conduct it successfully. The wise course for the great majority of those who hold the truth is, first, to look to themselves (ver. 8), and next, to withhold all help and encouragement from the false teachers. St. John enjoins: (1) That we do not aid the teachers of false doctrine by our hospitality. "Receive him not into your house." The apostle is not giving directions concerning the case of an ordinary traveller seeking hospitality; but of an active agent in the propagation of error, and error as to a fact of vital importance. "Let not your house be made a base of operations against Christ." (2) That we do not aid the teachers of false doctrine by wishing them success. "Give him no greeting." Do not bid him "God-speed." Do not countenance him and his errors in any way or in any degree. "God will be no Patron of falsehood, seduction, and sin." And in this respect his people should imitate him. In our age, in some quarters, there is a great demand for liberality in the treatment of men who differ from us on religious questions. And so far as matters of opinion and of the interpretation of the Scriptures are concerned, the demand is a just one. But it is altogether different when it is a question of the acceptance or rejection of *facts*, or a *fact*, as in the case before us. The question was—Had Jesus Christ come in the flesh, or not? (ver. 7). In such a case the course marked out by St. John in this letter (vers. 8, 10, 11) is the only one for a Christian. How severely he characterizes the heretics (ver. 7)! How sternly St. Paul writes of teachers of error (Gal. i. 7-9)! They knew that a true faith is the necessary root of Christian fruitfulness and beauty. True faith is essential to spiritual life, holy love, and hearty obedience.

II. THE REASON BY WHICH THE EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED. "For he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." To countenance a teacher of error, to wish him "God-speed," is to approve his evil works and to share his guilt. Says Matthew Henry, "We may be sharers in the iniquities of others. How judicious and how cautious should the Christian be! There are many ways of sharing the guilt of other people's transgressions; it may be done by culpable silence, indolence, unconcernedness, private contribution, public countenance and assistance, inward approbation, open apology and defence." Let us take heed that we be not "partakers of other men's sins."

In matters of opinion let us cultivate the widest liberality; in matters of fact, uncompromising firmness. "In things essential, unity; in things doubtful, liberty; in all things, charity."—W. J.

Vers. 12, 13.—*Communications, written and oral.* "Having many things to write unto you," etc. This is the conclusion of the letter; and it suggests several topics for meditation.

I. THE EXCELLENCE OF WRITING AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION. St. John speaks of writing "with paper and ink." Paper as we now have it was not invented until long after the date of this Epistle. In our text "paper" means a kind of leaf made from the Egyptian papyrus plant. The ink was made of soot and water, with gum added to thicken it and make it lasting. The pen was made of a reed, and was probably split. 1. *How excellent is writing when speech is unattainable!* It was well that, when St. John could not visit the elect lady, he was able to communicate with her "with paper and ink." How refreshing it is to get letters from those who are dear to us but distant from us! When a son has left the parental roof, and feels desolate in a large city, how he is cheered by a letter from home! And how eagerly do parents, who are deeply solicitous for the safety and prosperity of their absent child, look for the accustomed letter! How much more so if they are in different countries, separated by the wide ocean! 2. *How excellent is writing when permanence is desired!* The spoken word passes away so quickly. The written word may be preserved. Here is this little letter, nearly two thousand years old, supplying us with themes for profitable meditation to-day. The Bible is the grandest witness of the excellence and value of writing.

II. THE GREATER EXCELLENCE OF SPEECH "FACE TO FACE" AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION. 1. *Speech is more quick and easy than writing.* This is the idea of the apostle here. "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write them with paper and ink," etc. The number of his communications led him to prefer the more expeditious method of communication. The swiftest pen travels too slowly for the utterance of the full heart. The most rapid writer, unless he employ shorthand, falls

far behind the fluent speaker. 2. *Speech is more expressive than writing.* The effect of our words depends not only upon what is said, but also upon how it is said. You cannot write or print tones or cadences of the voice, glances of the eye, or aspects of the features. When the eloquent John Elias was entreated to allow some of his sermons to be printed, he replied, "You cannot print fire." And Dr. Raleigh says, "There is much in a sermon which cannot be published. If it is true, it is 'a building of God' for the time 'not made with hands,' and neither hands nor pens can preserve it. 'The grace of the fashion of it perisheth,' or survives only in the memory and the life of the hearer. The elastic obedient words seem cool and hardened on the printed page." This is also true of conversation. In this respect the pen and the printing-press can never even approach the pulpit in power for present impression.

III. THE DELIGHT OF FRIENDLY CONVERSE AND COMMUNION. "I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be fulfilled." How delightful is the fellowship of kindred minds! For this at least three things are essential. 1. *Mutual interests.* Good conversation is impossible apart from this. How much more impossible is communion! 2. *Mutual sympathies.* Where fellow-feeling is absent, social intercourse can never be pleasant. 3. *Mutual confidence.* Without thorough trust in each other, conversation cannot be free, communion cannot be true and hearty. But where these things are found, how delightful is social intercourse! One of the purest and fullest joys we have in this world is that of really congenial society. It will be a source of rich enjoyment in heaven. Heaven is a great and blessed society.

IV. THE PROPRIETY OF FRIENDLY GREETINGS. "The children of thine elect sister salute thee." Although St. John had many things to communicate which he deferred until he saw the elect lady, he did not omit the greetings of her sister's children. Concerning such salutations the spirit of Christianity authorizes two remarks. 1. *Unless kind greetings are true, they should not be tendered.* We fear that there is much formality and unreality in many of the salutations of our age. 2. *When kind greetings are sent by us we should be careful to communicate them.* True and gentle hearts may be pained, and warm affections may be chilled, by our neglecting so to do.—W. J.

Vers. 1-3.—*Salutation:* I. INTRODUCTION. 1. *Address.* "The elder unto the elect lady and her children." The writer of this Epistle was known as "the elder;" it clearly bears the Johannine mark. The principal receiver was "the elect lady." Some think that "a Church" is intended; but a mystical interpretation is not to be resorted to when a plain interpretation is tenable and beautiful. The lady was "elect," as "chosen out of the profane world into the sanctified company of the Church of God." She found a sphere of usefulness in receiving into her "house" the Christian teachers; her temptation was to be *indiscriminate* in her receiving; therefore the "elder," meantime, "with paper and ink," puts her on her guard. Her children are associated with her: they were advanced enough to understand the shibboleth of the Incarnation. *Amplification.* (1) *The lady and her children objects of love.* "Whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth." They were loved, not with a love bestowed on friends and foes of the truth alike, but with a love which took its restriction of object and whole characterization from the truth. They were loved, not by John only, but also by them that *knew the truth*—especially the truth of the Incarnation, as being the highest revelation of God. They were *universally* loved by these; wherever there were Christians, they were thought of with kindly feelings. (2) *Explanation of their being loved.* "For the truth's sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever." What claim has the truth on us? Wandering up and down in the world, it is due to the truth that we give it *admittance* to our hearts. It is also due to the truth that we *retain* it as that deprived of which we are made poor indeed. It is further due to the truth that we allow it to be the *transforming* power in our characters. It is especially due to the truth that we let our *convictions of it be clearly known*. It is due to the truth that we *help* its extension. It is, finally, due to the truth that we *love all its friends*. The lady and her children had given facilities for spreading the truth; therefore it was that they were loved. The truth is said to *abide* in us. We are the house, and the truth (greater than us) is the *occupant*. How cheerless a deserted house—windows closed against the light of day, darkness, coldness, deadness reigning within! So is it when the soul shuts out the truth, is not lighted

and warmed by thoughts of God's love. It is different when a house is occupied. There are signs of life, there is a feeling of warmth. And so it is with the soul when it is lighted up with God's truth and warmed with the influences of his Spirit. The truth is also said, very confidently, to be *with us for ever*. It is to be thought of not merely as occupant, but as *companion*. As the psalmist had the testimonies as his counsellors, so we enjoy the society, the enlivening presence, of the truth. It is a companionship which will never be broken up. In heaven there will be greater openness of nature to the truth—a keener insight, a more tender sensibility, a readier memory, a richer suggestiveness, a livelier imagination in the service of the truth. The truth shall be with us for ever in *ever fuller revelation*. The truth is so great that it will require a finite mind a whole eternity to think it out. The companionship of which we are never to be deprived is a companionship that admits of no monotony, that ever opens up new elements of enjoyment. 2. *Salutation*. (1) *The three words of salutation*. "Grace, mercy, peace, shall be with us." While John passes from a wish into assurance, and includes himself in the salutation, he uses the three Pauline words. What we need for ourselves and others is to be dealt with, not according to our deserts, but according to the freeness and richness of *grace*. This will be manifested in *merciful* visitations suited to our need. And the result will be *peace* within, and even peace from without so far as it is salutary. (2) *Source looked to in salutation*. "From God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father." It is to God that we look for blessing, first in his absolute Fatherhood, and then in his Fatherhood as historically manifested in his Son. Laying hold on what God absolutely is, and then on what he has explicitly shown himself to be, there is no limit to what we may expect of blessing. (3) *How the blessing is realized in us*. "In truth and love." These are the two words which give character to the Epistle. If we are blessed by God we must have love; but love must be no vague sentiment, temporary ebullition—it must be called forth, sustained, tempered by truth. Religious people who are orthodox, but have a want of warmth, are unattractive enough, and are apt to produce revulsion against the truth. Religious people, again, who abound in feeling, but have not clear perceptions of truth, are apt to be imprudent, and thus to bring religion into contempt.

II. MAIN PORTION. 1. *Counsel*. (1) *Foundation*. "I rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father." It is quite Pauline thus to begin with words of praise. The accurate translation is, "I rejoiced greatly that I have found of thy children." The joy is referred to its initial moment: the ground of it still continues. The lady and her children were *all* loved by John; but, in bestowing praise, he is careful not to go beyond his position of observation. He had come into contact with some of her children, whose walk was according to his mind. It was characterized by truth; and that was as God wished it to be. It was so appointed for the household by the great Father. What greater joy can there be for a mother than to be told of this one and that one of her children walking according to Divine rule? (2) *Nature*. *The old commandment*. "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another." It is "in the exercise of the full privilege of Christian fellowship" that he beseeches. He makes his appeal more direct by designating her as in ver. 1. In language very similar to 1 John ii. 7, he points to familiarity with the commandment. With great delicacy he includes himself in the reference of the commandment. He was doing what Christian love demanded toward her in counselling and warning her; she must do what Christian love demanded toward him in attending to his counsel and warning. *The summary of the commandments*. "And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it." The first statement closely resembles what is found in 1 John v. 3. If we love (without distinction of object here), we shall endeavour to walk after the Divine commandments. Those commandments (separate expressions of the Divine will) are summarized in one, viz. walking in love with one another, to which, as a familiar commandment, the lady and her children are directed. 2. *Warning*. (1) *Foundation in the number of false teachers*. "For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist." There is a transition here from love to truth. The false teachers

are styled "deceivers," by which we are to understand that they were not only aside from the truth in their teaching, but that they practised the art of deception in teaching what resembled Christianity while not actually Christianity. It would have been more honest to have openly denounced Christianity; but there would have been less chance of success, as they would never have been able to ingratiate themselves with the friends of Christianity. These deceivers were numerous, and they were everywhere (having "gone forth into the world"); as the lady there was an entertainer of the Christian teachers, there was every likelihood of some of them coming her way, and falsely representing themselves to be Christian teachers. How were they to be known? Here we come upon the design of the Epistle. They were to be known (in accordance with the leading thought of the First Epistle) by their confessing not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. She was to put to them the shibboleth of the Incarnation. Did they recognize in their teaching, plainly, without mystification, not merely the past but the present coming in the flesh of Jesus Christ? Was that flesh of his a manifestation of a union formed between his Divine nature and human nature, which still remains and operates as a great fact? He who could not give satisfaction on that point was to be set down as personally the representative of the deceiver (who has designs on Christians) and the antichrist (whose task is to thwart Christ). (2) *Danger to be feared from the false teachers.* "Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward. Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." A good work had been wrought by John and his associates on the lady and her children, in their Christian faith, love, enlightenment, activity. There was a reward corresponding to the work. If they looked to themselves (as to their being influenced), the reward would be obtained in full. If they did not look to themselves, the reward would be lost. The reward was not to be expected under the influence of a teacher of the advanced school. He is here happily described as going beyond and not abiding in the teaching of Christ. He went beyond what Christ taught, with the penalty attached, that there was the absence of God from his teaching. The reward was only to be expected under the influence of a true Christian teacher. He really progressed, but only in the way of opening up what Christ taught, with the blessing attached that he had the Father and the Son in his teaching, i.e. Divine love in its most tender manifestation in the Incarnation. Having both the Father and the Son in his teaching, this became the *reward* of them that looked to themselves in hearing. (3) *Course to be followed with the false teachers.* "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." As many false teachers were going forth into the world, John assumes the coming of one of them to their door. If he came as *destitute*, it would not be undutiful on their part to relieve him. But he would come bringing teaching, not, however, the true teaching of the Incarnation. This being the case, they were not to receive him into their house (extend to him hospitality); they were not to give him the greeting preliminary to this; they were not to be thus friendly to him in his capacity as teacher—claiming falsely to be a Christian teacher. That would be friendship on an entirely wrong footing. Among those who actually possess Christian faith and Christian knowledge, how many are there who, under the influence of a secret vanity, think they must play a magnanimous part, and exhibit at once the firmness of their faith and the largeness of their charity, and therefore do not seek to avoid personal intercourse with even notorious enemies of the Christian faith? They are so firmly grounded that they can venture on this without fear of being perverted! They stand so spiritually high, and their views are so broad and free, that there is no danger for themselves, but much advantage to those with whom they hold this fellowship! But this is a soul-imperilling delusion. A Christian man should have to do with these deniers of Christ only for the one sole end of their conversion; as soon as he sees that his great object is spurned, he has nothing more to do with them. Any compromise, which would let them think in their own way, and nevertheless continue personal intimate fellowship, is altogether of evil; it is a denial of the Lord, who will not have his light put under a bushel. The ground on which John condemns fraternizing with the open enemies or false friends of Christianity is this, that he that giveth any of them greeting partaketh in his evil works. A false teacher comes to our door

(literally or figuratively); we give him friendly greeting and receive him into our house; he remains a time with us, and, when leaving, we bid him "God-speed." Are we not thereby making ourselves partakers in his evil works? We are giving him excellent facilities for doing bad work on ourselves and on the members of our homes; and we are sending him forth with the influence of our name (so far as that goes), thus opening doors for more perverting work.

III. CONCLUSION. 1. *Reason for brevity.* "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write them with paper and ink; but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be fulfilled." His end of cautioning the lady and her children has been served. The burden of the Lord is on his mind as he thinks of their circumstances and needs—messages from the Lord to them. These he does not put down in writing, using *paper and ink*; he hopes to pay a visit to them, when he will have the advantage of speaking face to face. Hearing from his lips the messages at present reserved, their joy will then be fulfilled. 2. *Salutation.* "The children of thine elect sister salute thee." The "elect sister" was not with the apostle, to send her salutation. Her children (of whom we are to think well) send their salutations to the "elect lady." They must have been cognizant of the fact of the letter being sent, and also of its purport. It is pleasant to find the children in two homes so sympathetic with their mothers and with the apostle on the great matters of life.—R. F.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.



THEME	PAGE	THEME	PAGE
An Apostolic Pastoral to a Christian Family	4	A Summons to Self-Guardianship ...	11
An Exemplary Christian Greeting ...	6	Man's True Relation to the Doctrine of Christ	12
The Rejoicing of the Good in the Exemplification of the Godly Life ...	7	How to treat Heretics	13
Mutual Love	8	Communications, Written and Oral ...	14
The Exhibition and Condemnation of Heretics	10	Salutation	15