must go back to the theme of the whole  
section of the Epistle, in ch. ii, 29: “If  
God is righteous, then every one that doeth  
righteousness, is born of Him.” Hitherto  
the positive side of this position has been  
illustrated : the inseparability of birth-from-God

and likeness-to-God. Now, the  
Apostle comes to treat its negative side: the  
incompatibility of sin with birth-from-God.  
And this he deals with essentially and in  
the ideal, as always. The whole is in the  
closest connexion with the foregoing, and is  
developed step by step with the minutest  
precision, as will be seen in the exegesis.

**4.**] In this verse we have verse 3 taken  
ap from the opposite side. There, God’s  
essential purity formed a law, according  
to which the child of God having hope of  
ultimate complete likeness to Him, purifies  
himself. Here we have it declared that  
the sinner goes counter to [this and all  
other] law: indeed the two terms, sin  
and lawlessness, are synonymous and  
convertible. **Every one that committeth sin,**

**also committeth transgression-of-law: and sin** (abstract and in  
general) **is transgression-of-law** (abstract  
and in general. The assertion amounts  
to the identification of the terms, and the  
**is** amounts to “is equivalent to.”

This being so, *what is it exactly that  
our verse asserts* respecting these two  
things, sin, and transgression-of-law ?  
First and obviously, no appropriation must  
be made, in this verse and throughout this  
passage, of the word **sin** to *one kind* of sin,  
whether it be mortal sin as distinguished  
from venial [so the Roman-Catholic expositors],

or notorious and unrepented  
sins, or sins against brotherly love [as  
Luther, and Augustine]. The assertions are  
all perfectly general, and regard, in the  
true root and ideal, every sin whatever.  
Every sin whatever then is a transgression  
of God’s law : as indeed its very name in  
Greek implies: *to sin* being to *miss a  
mark*, and the mark being that will of  
God which is the *law* and *aim* to him  
who “doeth the will of God,” ch. ii. 17).

**5.**] *Additional argument* for the incompatibility

of sin with the life of God’s  
children: that He, Christ, in and by  
whom we have this adoption (John i. 12),  
and by being in whose likeness alone we  
can be perfectly like God, was manifested  
to take away all sins, being Himself sinless.

**And ye know** (the Apostle assumes  
it as known by those who had an anointing  
from the Holy One and knew all things  
ch. ii. 20) **that He** (now clearly Christ,  
from the context, which [see above on  
ver. 3] can alone decide the reference in  
each case) **was manifested** (viz. by His  
appearing in the flesh, and all that He  
openly and visibly did and taught in it,  
or may be known, by the Spirit, to have  
done and taught) **in order that He may**[might] **take away** (in the original, “take  
away by one act and entirely.” The  
meaning, *“take away,”* and not *“bear,”*  
is necessitated here by the context. Sin  
is altogether alien from Christ. He became incarnate

that He might blot it  
out: He has no stain of it on Himself,  
If we render the word *“bear,”* this  
coherence is lost. Of course this fact is  
in the background, that He took them  
away by bearing them Himself: but it  
is not brought out, only the antagonism  
between Him and sin. See, on the word,  
the note on John i. 29) **sins** (*all* sins, not  
merely certain sins. The object of His  
manifestation is stated not only categorically,

but definitively. Compare the  
striking parallel, Heb. ix. 26): **and in  
Him sin is not** (as His work, in being  
manifested, was, altogether to take away sin,  
so likewise is He himself free from all spot  
of sin. On the perversions and misunderstandings

of this verse by the rationalists,  
and by Calvin, see in my Greek Test.).

**6.**] The connexion see above. **Every  
one that abideth in Him** (this expression  
is not to be weakened down by any rationalistic

interpretation a*s believing in  
Christ*, or *being joined in love to Christ.*This a man might be to an earthly friend :  
but could not be said to *abide in him*.  
See the sense expanded in the note on  
ch. ii. 24. Nothing short of personal