in St. John’s repetitions, a new feature is  
brought in, which the following verses  
take up and further treat: viz. *that the  
devil is the source of such practices of sin.*

**7.**] **Little children, let no one  
deceive you** (it does not seem that any  
particular false teacher is here in St. John’s  
views but he alludes to all who would sever  
ethical likeness to God from the Christian  
life): **he that doeth righteousness** (the  
righteousness spoken of is but one, and  
God’s: the righteousness which is  
is righteous, even as He (here apparently,

God, notwithstanding the apparent

parallel of “*Jesus Christ* **the  
righteous**” in ch, ii, 2: for we are by  
this saying, as by that in ver. 3,—where  
see note,—referred back to the great  
Source of our spiritual birth, ch. ii. 29,  
and our likeness to Him insisted on) **is  
righteous.**

This verse has absolutely nothing to do  
with the sense which the Roman-Catholic  
expositors have endeavoured to extract  
from it, that good works make us  
righteous before God. This is altogether  
to invert the proposition of the Apostle,  
who is reasoning, not from the fact of  
doing good works to the conclusion that  
a man is righteous, but from the hypothesis

of a man’s being a child of God,  
born of Him and like Him, to the necessity

of his purifying himself and doing  
righteousness. And in doing this, he  
ascribes the *doing righteousness* to its  
source, and the *doing sin* to its source :  
the one man is of God, the other is of the  
devil. As Luther well says, “ Good works  
of piety do not make a good pious man,  
but a good pious man does good pious  
works. ... Fruits grow from the tree, not  
the tree from fruits.”

**8.**] *Contrast to ver.7*. He that doeth  
sin is of the devil (notice first “*he that*  
**doeth** [not, as the A. V. most unfortunately,  
‘committeth”) sin,” as indicative not  
s0 much of individual acts as of a state,  
corresponding to *“he that doeth righteousness.”*

And then the words, is of the  
**devil**, must not be rationalized away, as  
is done by those who deny the personal  
existence of the devil. It is the distinct  
opposite correlative of “is of God” [ver.  
10, &c.], and implies a personal root and  
agency, just as much as that other does.  
But again, it does not imply any physical

dualism on the part of the Apostle,  
“The devil made no one, begat no one,  
created no one,” says Augustine here;  
“but he who imitates the devil, as if born  
of him, becomes a son of the devil, by  
imitation, not by birth. All sinners are  
born of the devil, in so far as they are  
sinners. Adam was made by God: but  
when he consented to the devil, he was  
born of the devil, and begat all such  
as he himself was.” But be it observed,  
that we have here no such expression as  
*“hath been begotten of the devil,”* but  
only, *is* of the devil. In the case of the children of God, there is a definite time, known  
to Him, when they passed from death unto  
life [ch. ii. 29; iii, 14; v. 11; John i. 12;  
iii. 3 ff.; v. 24, &c.]: from which their  
new life unto God dates: but there is no  
such point in the life of those who are the  
children of the devil; no regeneration from  
beneath corresponding to that from above :  
the natural life of men is not changed hy  
seed of the devil as it is by seed of God.  
Rather may we say, that in those who are  
of the devil this latter change has never  
taken place. Since sin has come to reign  
in the world by man’s sin, our natural  
birth, which is properly and essentially a  
birth from God, a creation by the eternal  
Word, has become a birth from the devil:  
so that it is, as Bengel expresses it, “a,  
corruption, not a generation:” and there  
is no trace of a physical dualism in St. John’s  
doctrine: nay, the idea is at once precluded  
by the fact, that according to the Apostle  
[John i. 12] those who are children of God  
have become so from having been children  
of the devil): **because the devil sinneth  
from the beginning** (‘sinned in the beginning, and

has never ceased to sin  
since.’ But the question meets us, what  
is **from the beginning?** Bede and others  
understand it of the beginning of all creation.

Many Commentators, to avoid all  
chance of dualism, make it mean not from  
the time of his creation, but from that of  
his fall, understanding it of the beginning  
*of our world*. But again, others suppose  
the term to mark the beginning of the  
devil’s own apostacy : so Bengel, &c. And  
lastly, others again take it to mean,  
“from the time when any began to sin.”  
And this seems, when we compare John  
viii. 44, to be the true interpretation. He  
has ever been the depositary, as it were,