sin to the violation of brotherly love. The  
Apostle is speaking not only of the ideal,  
but of the real state of those born of God:  
drawing the strongest possible contrast  
between the life of God and the life of sin,  
as excluding one another absolutely. And  
there is no contradiction between what is  
here said and ch. i. 8, 9; nay, rather that  
passage shews, by the strong desire to he  
cleansed from all sin, which it assumes,  
the same incompatibility as is here insisted  
on), **because he hath been begotten of  
God** (almost all the expositors, from the  
first times until now, make this **because**  
more or less represent *in as far as, or as  
long as*. It is true, the Apostle does not  
say, *“he cannot sin because he* **was born**  
*of God:”* this would testify to a past  
fact, once for all occurring, without any  
reference to its present permanence: but  
he has said because he is [**hath been and  
continues**] **born**,—because he *has abiding  
in him* that his birth from God. So that  
the above-cited explanation, though falling  
far short of the real meaning, has at least  
a feeling after the truth of the Apostle’s  
assertion in it. The abiding force of this  
divine generation in a man, excludes sin:  
where sin enters, that force does not  
abide: the *having been born* is in danger  
of becoming a mere fact in the past, instead   
of a fact in the present: a lost life,  
instead of a living life. And so all such  
passages as this, instead of testifying, as  
Calvin would have this one do, to the  
doctrine of final perseverance of the regenerate,   
do in fact bear witness to the  
very opposite: viz., that, as the Church  
of England teaches, we need God’s special  
grace every day to keep us in the state  
of salvation, from which every act and  
thought of sin puts us in peril of falling  
away.

Before leaving this important  
passage, I must quote Düsterdieck’s concluding   
remarks. “The difference between  
the older and more modern expositors lies  
in this, that the former are more anxious  
to moderate the details of the Apostle’s  
sentiment, and to tone down his assertion.  
to the actual life of Christians, while the  
moderns recognize the full precision of the  
text as it stands, but then remind us that  
the ideal truth of the principle announced  
by St. John continually, so to speak, floats  
above the actual life of believers as their  
role and aim, and that, in so far, the  
Apostle’s saying finds in such actual life  
only a relative fulfilment. None however  
of all the expositors, who in any way has  
recognized the ideal character of St. John’s  
view, has overlooked the fact, that even in  
the actual life of all that are born of God  
there is something which in fall verity  
answers to the ideal words, ‘they cannot  
sin,’ The children of God, in whom the  
divine seed of their eternal life abides,  
have, in reality, a holy privilege,—they  
sin not, and they cannot sin, just in proportion   
as the new divine life, unconditionally   
opposed to all sin, and manifesting   
itself in godlike righteousness, is  
present and abides in them. Expositors  
of all theological tendencies, in all times,  
point to this, that the new life of believers,  
veritably begotten by regeneration from  
God, is simply incompatible with sin;—  
the life which essentially alienates the  
spirit from all sin, fills it with an irreconcilable   
hate against every sin, and  
urges it to an unceasing conflict against  
all unrighteousness. Luther excellently  
says, that a child of God in this conflict  
receives indeed wounds daily, but never  
throws away his arms or makes peace with  
his deadly foe. Sin is ever active, but no  
longer dominant: the normal direction of  
life’s energies in the believer is against sin,  
is an absence of sin, a no-will-to-sin and a  
no-power-to-sin. He that is born of God  
has become, from being a servant of sin, a  
servant of righteousness : according to the  
divine seed remaining in him, or, as St.  
Paul says, according to the inner man  
[Rom. vii. 15 ff.], he will, and he can  
work only that which is like God,—  
righteousness, though the flesh, not yet  
fully mortified, rebels and sins: so that  
even in and by the power of the new life  
sin must be ever confessed, forgiveness  
received [ch. i. 8 ff.], the temptation of  
the evil one avoided and overcome [v. 18],  
and self-purification and sanctification carried  
on”).

**10.**] *The continuation of  
the former argument:* with the insertion,  
in the latter half, of the new particular  
which is to form the argument of the next  
section. But this latter half belongs not  
only to that next section, but to this as  
well: its assertion *“whosoever doeth not  
righteousness, &c.,”* is requisite for the  
g out fully of the assertion, *“In  
this, &c.”* which at the same time looks  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3812