section, ch. iv. 1–6, which is parenthetical,   
of the discerning of true and false  
spirits, and after which the main subject  
of brotherly love is resumed again. **And  
in this we** (all the children of God; not,  
as the Roman-Catholic expositors, the  
Apostles, or the apostolic church, only)  
**know that He abideth in us, from** (or **by**  
—*out of* the fact) **the Spirit which He  
gave us** (not, *hath given*, as A.V. The  
*giving* here took place at a certain time,  
by a definite act, viz. on the day of  
Pentecost, when the Father bestowed the  
Holy Spirit on the Church. And this word  
**gave** is one sign that the whole is to be  
referred to the Father: seeing that our  
Lord says, *“I will pray the Father; and***He shall give** *you another Comforter, the  
Spirit of Truth,”* John xiv, 16, This  
indwelling Spirit of God is to the child of  
God the spring and source of his spiritual  
life, the sure token of his sonship, Rom.  
14, 15, Gal. iv. 6, and of his union  
with God in Christ).

**CHAP. IV. 1–6.**] *Warning against, and  
criteria whereby to distinguish, false teaching.*   
This passage takes up again, with reference   
to this portion of the Epistle, the  
similar warning given in the former portion,   
ch. ii, 18 ff. It is intimately connected   
with what has immediately preceded.   
By brotherly love we are to know  
that we are of the truth, iii. 19,—and the  
token that He abideth in us is to be the  
Spirit which He gave us. This Spirit, the  
Spirit of Truth, it becomes then all-important   
for us to be able to distinguish,  
and not to be led astray by any false  
spirits pretending to his character and  
office. Such false spirits there are, which  
are not of God, but of the world,  
which make up that spirit of antichrist, of  
which prophecy had already spoken.

**1.**] **Beloved** (so ver. 7, and ch. iii. 2, 21,  
marking a transition to a subject on which  
the Apostle affectionately bespeaks their  
earnest attention), **believe not every spirit**(this expression, as also, *“the spirits,”* indicating   
plurality of spirits, we to be  
explained by the fact that both the  
Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error  
speak by the spirits of men who are their  
organs. So we have, in reference to prophecy,   
1 Cor. xiv. 32, *“The spirits of  
prophets are subject to prophets.”* By the  
nature of the testimony of the human  
spirits, we shall know whether they are of  
God or not; whether they are organs of  
the *spirit of truth*, or of the *spirit of error*.  
It will be observed that this interpretation.  
of *“every spirit,”* and the Apostle’s way  
of speaking, rest on the assumption of  
there being One Spirit of Truth, from  
God, and one spirit of error, from the  
world; as opposed to all rationalizing interpretations,   
and also to all figurative  
understanding of the word. It is not  
the men themselves, but their spirits as  
the vehicles of God’s Spirit or the spirit  
of antichrist, that are in question), but  
try the spirits (this *trying* is enjoined not  
on *the church by her prelates*, as the  
Roman-Catholic expositors, but on all  
believers, as even some of them reluctantly  
admit: and the test is one of plain matter  
of fact, of which any one can be judge.  
The Church by her rulers is the authoritative   
assertor of the result of this *trial* in  
the shape of official adoption or rejection,  
but only as moved by her component  
faithful members, according to whose  
sense those her formularies are drawn, of  
which her authorities are the exponents)  
**whether they are of God** (bear the character   
of an origin from Him): **because**  
(ground for the necessity of this trial)  
**many false-prophets** (called “many anti-christs,”   
ch. ii, 18: prophets, not as  
foretelling future things, but as the mouthpieces   
of the spirit which inspires them.  
Compare 2 Pet. ii. 1, where the New Test.  
false teachers are called *“false teachers,”*  
and compared to the Old Test. “false  
prophets”) **are gone forth** (viz, from him  
who sent them: even as Jesus Himself is  
said, John viii. 42, xiii, 8, xvi. 27, 28,  
to have *come forth* from God. Or we  
may take it as in ch, ii. 19, *went out from*