they know the True One, and in Him have  
eternal life. These maxims are introduced  
with a thrice-repeated **we knew**, the expression   
of full persuasion and free confidence.   
They form a triumphant repetition   
of and anticipation of the attainment  
of the purpose expressed in ver. 13, *“that  
ye may know that ye have eternal life.”*

**18.**] **We know that every one who is  
born of God, sinneth not** (see on ch. iii. 9,  
from which place our words are almost  
repeated. As explained there and in our  
summary of these verses, there is no real  
inconsistency with what has been just said.  
And that there is none, the second member  
of the verse shews): **but he that hath been  
born of God** (literally, he that **was born** of  
God. The perfect tense expresses more the  
enduring abidance of his heavenly birth,  
and fits better the *habitual* meaning of the  
words **sinneth not**: the mere past tense  
calling attention to the historical fact of his  
having been born of God, fits better the fact  
that the wicked one toucheth him not, that  
divine birth having severed his connexion  
with the prince of this world and of evil),  
**it keepeth him** (“*it,*” viz. the divine birth,  
pointed at in the words **born of God**. It  
is this, and not the fact of his own watchfulness,   
which preserves him from the  
touch of the wicked one: as in ch. iii. 9,  
where the same is imported by “*his seed  
abideth in him.*” The rationalistic Commentators   
insist on the reading, “*he keepeth   
himself,*” as shewing, as Socinus, “that  
he himself does and contributes something:”   
and the orthodox Commentators  
have but a lame apology to offer. Düsterdieck   
compares “*purifieth himself,*”  
ch. iii. 3. But the reference there is wholly  
different—viz. to a gradual and earnest  
striving after an ideal model; whereas here  
the **keeping** must be, by the very nature  
of the case, so far complete, that the wicked  
one cannot approach: and whose self-guarding   
can ensure this even for a day?  
Compare John xvii. 15, *“that thou shouldest   
keep them from the evil,”* which is decisive),   
**and the wicked one** (Satan) **doth not  
touch him** (of course the words must  
not be understood as saying that he is not  
tried with *temptation* by the evil one: but  
imply that, as the Prince of this world had  
nothing in our blessed Lord, even so on  
His faithful ones who live by His life, the  
Tempter has no point d’appui, by virtue  
of that their birth, by which they are as  
He is, “The malignant one approaches  
them,” says Bengel, “*as a fly the candle*,  
—but hurts them not, nor even touches  
them”).

**19.**] *Application* of that which is said  
ver. 18, to the Apostle and his readers: and  
that, in entire separation from the wicked  
one, the ruling spirit of this present world.  
**We know** (see summary above) **that we**  
(not emphatic. It is not the object now  
to bring out a contrast, but to reassert solemnly   
these great axioms of the Christian  
life) **are of God** (i.e. born of God: identifying   
us with those spoken of ver. 18), **and  
the whole world lieth in the wicked one**  
(this second member of the sentence does  
not depend on the preceding *that*, but like  
those of vv. 18, 20, is an independent proposition.   
**the wicked one**, not “*wickedness,*”   
as A. V.: the neuter sense can  
hardly stand after ch. ii, 13, 14, iii. 8, 10,  
14 compared: iv. 4: John xvii. 14 f, and  
above all after the preceding verse here.  
In this unusual term, **lieth in**, the idea *in  
the power of*, and the local idea, seen to  
be combined. *The wicked one* is as it were  
the inclusive abiding-place and representative   
of all his, as, in the expressions “*in the  
Lord,*” “*in Christ,*” “ *in Christ Jesus,*”  
“*we are in the true One,*” ver. 20, tho  
Lord is of His, And while we are *from*  
*God*, implying a birth and a proceeding  
forth and a change of state, the *world*, all  
the rest of mankind, *lieth in the wicked  
one*, remains where it was, in, and in the  
power of, *the wicked one.* Some Commentators   
have been anxious to avoid  
inconsistency with such passages as ch. ii. 2, iv.  
14, and would therefore give **the world** a  
different meaning here. But there is no  
inconsistency whatever. Had not Christ  
become a propitiation for the sins of the  
whole world, were He not the Saviour of  
the whole world, none could ever come out  
of the world and believe on Him; but as it