INTRODUCTION. ] 1 JOHN. [cx. xrx,   
   
 Introduction have required independent treatment, have in this case   
 been already discussed by implication under other heads. Still it will   
 be well to devote a few paragraphs to the separate consideration of   
 these.   
 2. The style of the Epistle has been often truly described as apho-   
 ristie and repetitive. And in this is shewn the characteristic peculiarity   
 of St. John’s mode of thought. The connexion of sentence with   
 sentence is slightly, if at all, pointed out. It depends, so to speak, on   
 roots struck in at the bottom of the stream, hidden from the casual   
 observer, to whom the aphorisms appear unconnected, and idly floating   
 on the surface. Liicke well describes this style as indicating a contem-   
 plative spirit, which is ever given to pass from the particular to the   
 general, from differences to the unity which underlies them, from the   
 outer to the inner side of Christian life. Thus the Writer is ever work-   
 ing upon certain fundamental themes and axioms, to which he willingly   
 returns again and again, sometimes unfolding and applying them, some-   
 times repeating and concentrating them; so that we have side by side   
 the simplest and clearest, and the most condensed and difficult sayings :   
 the reader who seeks merely for edification is attracted by the one, and   
 the “scribe learned in the Scriptures” is satisfied, and his understanding   
 surpassed and deepened by the other.   
 3. The logical connexion is not as in the Epistles of St. Paul,   
 indicated by the whole superficial aspect of the writing, nor does it bear   
 onward the thoughts till the conclusion is reached. The logie of   
 St. John moves, as Diisterdieck has expressed it, rather in eireles than   
 straight onward. The same thought is repeated as seen from different   
 sides: is transformed into cognate thoughts, and thus put into new   
 lights, is unfolded into assertion and negation, and the negation again   
 closed up by the repeated assertion (ch. i. 6 f., 8 f, ii. 9 f, &e.). Thus   
 there arise numerous smaller groups of ideas, all, so to speak, revolving   
 round some central point, all regarding some principal theme; all   
 serving it, and circumseribed by the same bounding line. ‘Thus the   
 Writer is ever close to his main subject, and is able to be ever reiterating   
 it withont any unnatural foreing of his context: the train of thought is   
 ever reverting back to its central point.   
 4, Now if we regard the actual process of the Epistle with reference   
 to these characteristics, we find that there is one great main idea or   
 theme, which binds together the whole and gives character to its con-   
 tents and aim; viz, that fellowship with God the Father and our Lord   
 Jesus Christ, in which our joy is complete; in other words, that right   
 faith in the Sou of God manifest in the flesh, in which we overcome the   
 world, in which we have confidence in God, and eternal life.   
 5. This idea, which pervades the whole Epistle, is set forth in two   
 great circles of thought, which have been already described as the two   
 290