

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 338 – December 4th – 1 John 4:1-21

Works frequently referenced in these notes on John's Epistles

Marshall, I Howard	<i>The Epistles of John</i> , The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1978
Smalley, Stephen S	<i>1, 2, 3 John</i> , Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 51, Word Books, Dallas, 1984
Stott, John R.W.	<i>Epistles of John</i> , Tyndale Commentary, IVF, London, 1964
Westcott, B.F	<i>The Epistles of St John</i> , MacMillan & Co, Cambridge & London, 1886

Verse 1-6

Having mentioned the Spirit, John now goes on to distinguish the Spirit of God from false spirits. This was probably necessary in the light of false teachers who claimed spiritual inspiration. Smalley comments, "Evidently both groups in the community, orthodox and heretical, were ready to claim 'spiritual inspiration' in support of their respective positions. The writer is therefore anxious to establish the means for discriminating between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (cf. v 6b), a concern no doubt increased by the presence of heretical schismatics around his church. He does this in 4:1-6 by highlighting an essential criterion of faith. Already John has mentioned righteousness (2:29; 3:10) and love (3:14; cf. 4:8) as moral tests for recognizing the genuine believer. Now he applies the theological test: a right confession of Jesus (vv 2-3; cf. 3:23). By this means those who claimed to be 'prophets' (v 1) could be authenticated, and the faith of any who professed allegiance to Christ could be established (v 6)."

Verse 1

Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε, ἀλλὰ δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα εἰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, ὅτι πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφήται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

ἀγαπητος η ον see 3:2

"There are many spiritual powers active among men ... All such spirits are partial revelations of the one spirit of evil which become (so to speak) embodied in men." Westcott.

δοκιμάζω test, examine, prove, discern

Cf. 1 Cor 12:1-3; 14:29-31; 1 Thess 5:20f. The injunction assumes a gift of discernment possessed, at least in measure, by all Christians.

ψευδοπροφητης ου m false prophet

"through whom false spirits speak, as the Spirit speaks through true prophets (2 Peter 1:21; 2:1)." Westcott.

ἐξεληλύθασιν Verb, perf act indic, 3 pl
ἐξέρχομαι

"The words evidently refer to external circumstances vividly present to St John's mind. They point, as it appears, to the great outbreak of the Gentile pseudo-Christianity which is vaguely spoken of as Gnosticism, the endeavour to separate the 'ideas' of the Faith from the facts of the historic Redemption." Westcott. Cf. 2:18-19.

Verse 2

ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκετε τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ· πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν,

ὁμολογεω confess, declare

"The test of the presence of the Divine Spirit is the confession of the Incarnation, or, more exactly, of the Incarnate Saviour... The Incarnate Saviour is the pledge of the complete redemption and perfection of man, of the restoration of 'the body' to its proper place as the perfect organ of the spirit. Hence the Divine Spirit must bear witness to Him." Westcott. Cf. 2 John 7, also 1 Jn 5:6.

σαρξ σαρκος f flesh, human nature
ἐληλυθότα Perfect active participle, m acc s
ἐρχομαι

"The construction of these words is not quite clear. Three ways of taking them are possible. (i) The direct object may be Ἰησοῦν and χριστον ἐν σ. ἐλ. a secondary predicate: 'confesseth Jesus as Christ and a Christ come in the flesh'; (ii) The direct object may be Ἰησοῦν Χριστον and ἐν σ. ἐλ. a secondary predicate: 'confesseth Jesus Christ, Him who is known by this full name, as come in the flesh.' (iii) The whole phrase may form a compound direct object: 'confesseth Him, whose nature and work is described by the phrase, 'Jesus Christ come in the flesh'.' The corresponding clause in v.3 Ἰησοῦν which gives the person and not any statement about the person as the object of confession is in favour of the last view." Westcott.

Smalley writes, "Here is the heart of the orthodox acknowledgment about Jesus (cf. 2:23); and by setting out this test John guards against *two* possible heretical opinions about Jesus: that he was only divine *or* merely human. The author also shows that the truly Christian confession is one which ultimately involves a person (faith in Jesus, the incarnate Christ), and not a doctrine concerning that person (faith in the Incarnation)." And Marshall comments, "John's test is not an infallible one. Jesus himself had to protest against people who called him 'Lord' and yet did not do what he said (Mt 7:21-23; Lk 6:46). Mere confession with the mouth is not necessarily a guide to belief of the heart. John's test is accordingly relevant to a particular situation in which it was possible to regard certain people as inspired by the spirit of evil because of their faulty confession. In other circumstances a different form of words may be the test point. Ultimately, however, the whole of the Epistle furnishes the characteristics of genuine Christianity: faith, love, and righteousness are all relevant to the question, and concentration on any of them to the exclusion of the others is bound to be misleading."

Verse 3

καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν· καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου, ὃ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη.

In place of μὴ ὁμολογεῖ a few MSS have the interesting reading λύει, meaning in context 'annul Jesus.' Marshall comments, "While this rendering has not found its way into the English versions of the New Testament ... it has found favour among commentators. Nevertheless, it is probably due to a gloss or marginal comment by a scribe who was trying to bring out the precise way in which Jesus was denied."

"The substance of the confession which has been given in detail in the former verse is gathered up in the single human name of the Lord. To 'confess Jesus,' which in the connexion can only mean to confess 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Cor 12:3; Rom 10:9), is to recognise divine sovereignty in One Who is truly man, or, in other words, to recognise the union of the divine and human in one Person, a truth which finds its only adequate expression in the fact of the Incarnation." Westcott.

ἀντιχριστος ου m see 2:18

Cf. 2:18-19, 22. John is "condemning those heretical beliefs, within and beyond his community, which amount to a determined and antichristian rebellion against God (v 3b)." Smalley.

ἀκηκόατε Verb, perf act indic, 2 pl ἄκουω ἤδη adv now, already

Verse 4

ὁμοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστε, τέκνια, καὶ νενικήκατε αὐτούς, ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ ἐν ὑμῖν ἢ ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ·

τέκνιον ου n see 3:18

νικᾶω conquer, overcome

Cf. 2:13. Smalley comments, "The perfect tense, νενικήκατε, suggests not only a decisive victory already accomplished, but also one which has continuing effects in the present." These believers are on the winning side.

μείζων ου greater, greatest ἢ or, than

The Christian possesses the Spirit of the Living God and this possession is the guarantee of victory. God himself shall have the last word. Indeed, in a definitive sense that victory has already been accomplished in Christ and it is this reality of which the Spirit is the seal.

Verse 5

αὐτοὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου εἰσὶν· διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου λαλοῦσιν καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν ἀκούει.

λαλεω speak, talk

The character of their speech and the character of their hearers are determined by their own character. Cf. John 15:19a and contrast 7:7; 15:18.

Verse 6

ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν· ὁ γινώσκων τὸν θεὸν ἀκούει ἡμῶν, ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἀκούει ἡμῶν. ἐκ τούτου γινώσκουμεν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης.

Westcott says that the transition from ὑμεῖς to ἡμεῖς indicates that this verse is not speaking of the Christian generally but of "those whose work it is to unfold the divine message." He continues, "The world listens to those who express its own thoughts; the Christian listens to those who teach him more of God." Smalley, however, thinks that the ἡμεῖς is simply John's way of referring to himself and his readers. Cf. John 10:4, 16, 27; also 8:47a; 18:37b.

Westcott suggests that the present participle γινώσκων "describes a knowledge apprehended as progressive and not complete."

ἀληθεια ας f truth, reality

πλανη ης f error, deceit, deception

In context, the bold assertion with which this verse concludes refers to the apostolic testimony: if a person possesses the Spirit of truth they show a readiness to listen to the apostolic teaching (cf. Acts 2:42). The same is demonstrated today by an eagerness to submit to and learn from the word of God. Marshall comments, "Hence it is by their response to the preaching of the church that it is possible to discern those who are directed by the Spirit of truth, i.e. the Holy Spirit, and the spirit of error."

Verse 4:7-5:4

Smalley divides this section as follows:
vv 7-10, The source of love;
vv 11-16, The inspiration of love;
vv 17-20, The practice of love;
4:21-5:4, The command of love.

Verse 7

Ἀγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ γινώσκει τὸν θεόν.

ἀγαπητος η ον see 3:2

The form of address, ἀγαπητοί, reflects the subject.

"John begins his appeal for love, as a demand which is laid upon every believer who seeks to live as a true child of God, by reminding his readers of the dominical command to 'love one another' (see John 13:34–35; 15:12, 17)."

Smalley.

ἀλλήλων οἱς οὖς one another

ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν "Love comes from God. It has its origin in God and belongs to the divine sphere." Marshall.

γεγέννηται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γενναω bear; pass be born

"He that loveth derives his spiritual being from God, and of necessity therefore is in sympathy with Him, and knows Him, that is, recognises every revelation which shews more of Him (v.6)." Westcott.

Marshall adds, "To be sure, the statement is open to misunderstanding. One might conclude that anybody who shows love is a child of God, regardless of whether he actually believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This misunderstanding can only arise, however, if we take this statement and wrench it out of its context in the letter. John makes it plain enough elsewhere that the true child of God *both* believes *and* loves (3:23)."

Verse 8

ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν θεόν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν.

ἔγνω Verb, aor act indic, 3 s γινώσκω

Westcott suggests that the aorist means that this person did not know God "when he made profession of knowing Him. His acknowledgement of God (as at Baptism) was based on no true recognition of His nature."

θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν The claim is that *all* that God does he does out of love – he is completely loving.

Smalley comments, "To assert comprehensively that 'God is love' does not ignore or exclude the other attributes of his being to which the Bible as a whole bears witness; notably his justice and his truth (cf. Ps 89:14; Deut 32:4; Rom 3:21–26; John 17:17). God's judgment (his wrath), for example, is just as much a reality as his love (cf. Isa 54:8; Rev 6:12–17). But theologically these cannot be opposed to each other. Such characteristics of God as his justice and his truth must ultimately be *related* to his essential nature as love, and may in the end be perceived in terms of his loving nature (see further, Stott, 160–61). Such teaching belongs, indeed, to 1 John itself, where we read of God's holiness (1:5), justice (1:9) and truth (5:20)."
'Love' does not define God: God defines love.

Verse 9

ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι' αὐτοῦ.

ἐφανερώθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s φανερω
reveal, make known, make evident

"In the retrospect of His completed work on earth the Lord says: ἐφανερώσα σου το ὄνομα (John 17:6), that is 'the Father's name,' the revelation of love." Westcott.

"*in us*: not simply 'towards us' as the objects to whom the love was directed, but 'in us,' in us believers, as the medium in which it was revealed and in which it was effective... The Christian shares the life of Christ, and so becomes himself a secondary sign of God's love... The manifestation of the love of God *to* man becomes a living power as a manifestation of His love *in* man." Westcott. Smalley similarly writes, "The sense of ἐν ἡμῖν, in part, is thus that the love of God disclosed by Jesus indwells the Church, and creates the basis for a mutual and ongoing relationship of love between the Godhead and the Christian."

μονογενῆς εἰς only, unique

Cf. Jn 3:16.

ἀπέσταλκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s
ἀποστελλω send

ζωω live

δι' αὐτοῦ he is the cause and source of our life. The verb ζήσωμεν 'that we might live' stresses the *activity*, and not solely the status.

Verse 10

ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήκαμεν τὸν θεόν, ἀλλ' ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἰλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν.

ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη "There can be no explanation or definition of true love which does not start from God's love." Marshall.

ἠγαπήκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl ἀγαπαω

Smalley writes, "In place of ἠγαπήκαμεν ('we have loved'), which is read by B, most witnesses have the verb in the aorist: ἠγαπήσαμεν ('we loved'). The difference in form and meaning is slight; but, despite the weight of evidence on the other side, the reading of B is probably correct and certainly appropriate to the context. John is saying in v 10 that love is primarily known through God's historical act of revelation in Christ (he "sent" his Son, ἠγάπησεν, aorist), rather than through man's continuing love (ἠγαπήκαμεν, perfect) for God."

ἰλασμος ου m means by which sins are forgiven

Cf. 2:2.

ἀμαρτια ας f sin

Some find it difficult to reconcile the picture of a loving God with that the demand for propitiation. James Denny (*The Death of Christ*) writes, "So far from finding any kind of contrast between love and propitiation, the apostle can convey no idea of love to anyone except by pointing to the propitiation – love is what is manifested there: and he can give no account of the propitiation but by saying, 'Behold what manner of love.' For him, to say 'God is love' is exactly the same as to say, 'God has in his Son made atonement for the sin of the world.' If the propitiatory death of Jesus is eliminated from the love of God, it might be unfair to say that the love of God is robbed of all meaning, but it is certainly robbed of its apostolic meaning. It has no longer that meaning which goes deeper than sin, sorrow, and death, and which recreates life in the adoring joy, wonder, and purity of the first Epistle of John."

Verse 11

ἀγαπητοί, εἰ οὕτως ὁ θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφειλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν.

οὕτως thus, in this way

Cf. the use of οὕτως in John 3:16.

ὀφειλω see 3:16

"The love which God has not only shewn but given to us (v.1) becomes a constraining motive for action." Westcott.

Verse 12

θεὸν οὐδεὶς πώποτε τεθέαται· ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν τετελειωμένη ἐστίν.

οὐδεὶς οὐδεὶς οὐδεν no one, nothing
 πωποτε adv ever, at any time
 τεθέαται Verb, perf midd/pass dep indic, 3 s
 θεαομαι see

Cf. Jn 1:18. John may be writing against the background of false teachers who claimed to have had a direct vision of God.

μενω remain, stay, abide
 τετελειωμένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s
 τελειω make perfect, complete

"It is through man that 'the love of God' finds its fulfilment on earth." Westcott.
 Marshall understands this phrase to mean, "When we love others, God's love for us has reached its full effect in creating the same kind of love as his in us."

Both this verse and John 1:18 indicate how God makes himself known. No-one has ever seen God, but God has revealed himself in his Son (Jn 1:18, cf. Jn 1:14). Here John's argument is taken a step further. No-one has ever seen God, but his character is revealed in the love his children have one for another (cf. v.9 above). Smalley comments, "Jesus, by his love, reveals the Father's love; and in the same way the members of the Johannine community, by their mutual love, manifest to others the love of the God who dwells within them."

Verses 13-16

Smalley writes, "John has already appealed for right belief (4:1–6) and mutual loving (vv 7–12) from his readers. In vv 13–16 the ideas of faith and love are related to the life of the Christian in terms of affirmation, rather than exhortation. We can *know* that we live in God, and God in us, as we share in the gift of the Spirit (v 13), acknowledge the work of God in Jesus Christ (vv 14–15), and dwell in love (v 16). Here are the grounds (not the conditions) of spiritual assurance."

Verse 13

Ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκωμεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ μένομεν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν.

Cf. 3:24.

δέδωκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s διδομι

Smalley comments, "The genitive ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ (literally, 'out of his Spirit') is partitive (cf. Matt 25:28; John 1:16; 6:11; and contrast 3:24b). This is to say, Christians receive from God a share (only) in the Spirit who fills the whole Church... The presence of the Spirit is demonstrated by the confession of true belief (vv. 14,15). But ἐν τούτῳ can also look back to vv 7–12, and especially v 12. 'We know that God lives in us, and we in him, because we possess the spirit of love which flows from him'... As we live in God through the Spirit (cf. John 3:5, 8), and he in us, we are called and enabled to love (vv 12, 16) and to believe (v 15)."

Verse 14

καὶ ἡμεῖς τεθεάμεθα καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν ὅτι ὁ πατὴρ ἀπέσταλκεν τὸν υἱὸν σωτῆρα τοῦ κόσμου.

Stott notes that in vv 13 and 14, taken together, there is a reference to all three persons of the Trinity. The *Father* has sent his *Son* into the world as Saviour, and we can bear witness to this fact (v 14). But God has also sent the *Spirit* to be with the Church as a witness to the truth of the Father's love and indwelling (v 13).

τεθεάμεθα Verb, perf midd/pass dep indic, 1 pl θεαομαι see
 μαρτυρεω bear witness, testify

Cf. 1:2. Westcott suggests that this affirmation is not exclusive to the apostles but that this "vision and witness remains an abiding endowment of the living Body", i.e. the church. Marshall also takes this view.

ἀπέσταλκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s
 ἀποστελλω send

"The testimony is borne not simply to the historical fact (v.10, ἀπεστελεν), but (as in v.9) to the permanence of Christ's mission. Of this believers have direct knowledge." Westcott.

σωτηρ ηρος m saviour

Cf. John 4:42.

Verse 15

ὃς ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστίν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ θεῷ.

ὃς ἐάν whoever
 ὁμολογεω confess, declare

Cf. 2:23. "The fact that the writer returns in this v to the thought of orthodox 'confession' (see 4:2–3), suggests that he still has in mind the need to resist the heterodox members of his community." Smalley.

Verse 16a

καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχει ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν.
Ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν, καὶ ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ θεῷ μένει καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει.

ἐγνώκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl γινώσκω πιστεῦω believe (in), have faith (in)

Smalley writes, "The verbs 'know' and 'trust' (ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν), the second of which reinforces the first, are both in the perfect tense, denoting an action in the past which has continuing effects in the present. John asserts that true believers can be sure of the reality of God's love, and rely on it, because they have personally experienced it."

ἐν ἡμῖν "It is clear from the context that the love here spoken of is the love which God has and shews towards man. But St John adds a second thought to that of God's love towards man (εἰς ἡμᾶς). The love of God becomes a power in the Christian Body (ἐν ἡμῖν). Believers are the sphere in which it operates and makes itself felt in the world (2 Cor. 4:10f.). Comp. v.9." Westcott (so, similarly, Marshall and Smalley).

μένω remain, stay, abide

Marshall writes, "Stott rightly notes that living in love is the proof or result of living in God: it is not by loving that we come into fellowship with God, but as a result of our fellowship with him we live in love."

And Dodd comments, "The expression 'to remain in love' is suggestive rather than exact. It is not clear whether the meaning is 'to continue to live as the objects of God's love,' or 'to continue to love God,' or 'to continue to love our brothers.' It is in fact impossible, according to the teaching of both this epistle and of the Fourth Gospel, to make a clear separation between these three modes or manifestations of love. The energy of love discharges itself along lines which form a triangle, whose points are God, self and neighbour: but the source of all love is God, of whom alone it can be said that He *is* love. Whether we love God or our neighbour, it is God's love that is at work in us – assuming, that is, that our love is authentic ἀγάπη which is exemplified in God's gift of His Son, and in Christ's sacrifice for us all."

Verse 17

ἐν τούτῳ τετελείωται ἡ ἀγάπη μεθ' ἡμῶν, ἵνα παρρησίαν ἔχωμεν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως, ὅτι καθὼς ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ.

Westcott argues that the 'in this' refers to what precedes. "The fellowship of man with God and of God with man carries with it the consummation of love. *In this* – in this double communion – *love hath been perfected* already on the divine side; and it is God's will that men should make its blessings their own."

τετελείωται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s τελέω complete, finish, fulfill

"The unique form of expression appears to have been chosen in place of the simple 'hath been perfected in us' in order to place the perfection clearly in the realised fellowship of God and man. Love is not simply perfected in man (ἐν ἡμῖν) by an act of divine power, but in fulfilling this issue God works with man (μεθ' ἡμῶν)." Westcott.

παρρησία, ας f boldness, assurance

"To abide in God is to share the character of Christ under the conditions of earth. The sense of spiritual harmony with Him which this abiding brings necessarily inspires boldness in the believer; and it is the purpose of God that it should do so." Westcott.

κρίσις, εως f judgement

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο that (one), he, she, it

"The ground of confidence is present likeness to Christ." Westcott.

Marshall comments, "We probably have here another example of that portrayal of the 'eschatological reality' of the Christian life which we found particularly in 3:6, 9; John is stating the characteristic which ought to be found in every true Christian, namely that he is like Jesus, but this is not incompatible with his urging his readers to let the ideal become a reality. Were it not so, our grounds for confidence might seem very slender and fitful."

Smalley thinks that the Epistle may here reflect the teaching of the farewell discourse of the Gospel, particularly Jn 15:9-10 but also 14:10-11, 20; 17:21-23, 26. He concludes, "On such a theological basis John may be implying here that the relationship of believers to God in the world can and should reflect that of Jesus to God (as it was on earth, and as it still *is* in heaven: this includes the Son's own 'confidence' before God; cf. 2:1)."

Verse 18

φόβος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ, ἀλλ' ἡ τελεία ἀγάπη ἔξω βάλλει τὸν φόβον, ὅτι ὁ φόβος κόλασιν ἔχει, ὁ δὲ φοβούμενος οὐ τετελείωται ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ.

φοβος, ου m fear

Smalley comments, "The term φόβος ('fear') is used in the NT to denote reverence for God (Rom 3:18; 2 Cor 7:1; cf. Acts 9:31; 2 Cor 5:11; Eph 5:21); although some biblical texts imply that this 'reverence' may include an element of 'fear and trembling' (e.g. Ps 119:120; Phil 2:12). In the present context φόβος means servile, self-regarding fear (as in Rom 8:15; cf. John 19:38; 20:19). Such 'fear' has no part with love; so that the Christian who lives in God's love can anticipate the judgment day confidently, and not with terror. Human relationships provide a parallel. Two people who love each other are to that extent unafraid of each other; all the more, therefore, 'to live within the love of God is freedom from ultimate fear' (Dodd...). Sin leads to fear, but love to confidence."

τελειος, α, ον complete, perfect, mature

"The thought is of love which is complete in all its parts, which has reached its complete development (Hebr. 5:14)." Westcott.

ἔξω adv. out, outside, away
βαλλω throw, throw down

Real love "flings fear out of doors." Law.

κολασις, εως f punishment; κ. ἔχω have to do with punishment

Westcott thinks that the punishment spoken of is a suffering which stems from a sense of disharmony with God and that this suffering is a form of discipline, "a divine punishment which has a salutary office: Hebr. 12:11." Smalley argues that fear "anticipates and makes real the future pain it contemplates." I.e. it causes present pain but has also an eye to the future judgment (cf. v. 17).

φοβεομαι fear, be afraid (of)
τετελείωται see v.17

"This consummation of the believer is presented in two complementary forms. He is himself the sphere in which love finds its perfection; and love is the sphere in which he finds his perfection. Love is perfected in him (2:5): and he is perfected in love." Westcott.

Verse 19

ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν, ὅτι αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς.

ἀγαπαω love, show love for

Both love for God and love of one another. The two are inseparable.

In place of the absolute ἀγαπῶμεν, which appears in A B Vg^{ww} eth^{pp}, et al., κVg^{cl} syr^{p,hel} cop^{bo} arm (eth^{ro}), et al. read ἀγαπῶμεν τὸν θεόν, and K Ψ Augustine 1/4, et al. have ἀγαπῶμεν αὐτόν. As in 3:16; 4:10 and 17, however, these are certain to be later additions which attempt to give precision to John's thought. In so doing they run counter to the meaning of the passage, since this treats 'love' in its absolute sense.

πρωτος, η, ον first

"Our love is the light kindled by the love of God." Westcott.

Marshall comments, "It is, therefore, good for us constantly to renew our knowledge of God's love as we read of it in the Bible, as we hear it proclaimed in the worship of the church, and as we consider the ways in which our whole life has been moulded by experiences of God's love and care for us."

Verse 20

ἐάν τις εἴπῃ ὅτι Ἀγαπῶ τὸν θεόν, καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῇ, ψεύστης ἐστίν· ὁ γὰρ μὴ ἀγαπᾷ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ὃν ἑώρακεν, τὸν θεὸν ὃν οὐχ ἑώρακεν οὐ δύναται ἀγαπᾶν.

τις, τι acc τινά, τι gen τινός dat τινί anyone, anything, a certain

μισεω hate, despise, be indifferent to
ψευστης, ου m liar

Cf. 2:4. "The claim to the knowledge of God without obedience, and the claim to the love of God without action, involve not only the denial of what is known to be true (ψευδεσθαι), but falseness of character." Westcott.

"The vital, practical test of our love for God is to be found in our love for others." Smalley. John is clearly writing against the false claims of the heretical members and ex-members of the fellowship.

ὁραω see

Smalley writes, "For οὐ δύναται ἀγαπᾶν ('he cannot love'), which is attested by κB Ψ, et al., some witnesses (including A K L) read πῶς δύναται ἀγαπᾶν ('how can he love?'). The statement ('he cannot love') is solemn and impressive, and suits John's predilection for absolute phraseology (Westcott, 162; Brooke, 126). However, the question in the variant ('how can he love?') introduces a new thought to this v, in a typically Johannine manner ('for the person who does not love his brother no way of loving God remains'). So Brooke, 126–27. Thus the alternative text need not be dismissed as completely unlikely. (UBS GNT gives it a 'B' rating, indicating some degree of doubt.)"

Verse 21

καὶ ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν ἔχομεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ἵνα
ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν
αὐτοῦ.

ἐντολή, ης f command, instruction

Cf. Jn 13:34. The two loves are inseparable.