

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 334 – November 30th – 1 John 1:1-10

Introduction to John's First Epistle

Relationship between the Johannine Writings

Most authors regard the three Johannine Epistles as stemming from a single author, though some ancient and modern authors have suggested that 2 and 3 John are not from the same hand as the Gospel and first Epistle. There is no certainty over the chronological ordering of the three letters – their ordering in the New Testament being by length. Marshall treats 2 and 3 John before 1 John.

Westcott draws attention to the many parallels between 1 John and the Gospel of John, in particular:

1 John 1:2,3 ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερωθῇ, καὶ ἑωράκαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν ... ὁ ἑωράκαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπαγγέλλομεν καὶ ὑμῖν	John 3:11 ὁ ἑωράκαμεν μαρτυροῦμεν
1 John 1:4 ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν ἥ πεπληρωμένη.	John 16:24 αἰτεῖτε καὶ λήμψεσθε, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν ἥ πεπληρωμένη.
1 John 2:11 ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ... ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ, καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει	John 12:35 ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει.
1 John 2:14 ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει	John 5:38 τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν ὑμῖν μένοντα,
1 John 2:17 ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.	John 8:35 ὁ νιὸς μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.
1 John 3:5 ἀμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν.	John 8:46 τίς ἔξ ύμῶν ἐλέγχει με περὶ ἀμαρτίας;
1 John 3:8 ἀπ· ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἀμαρτάνει.	John 8:44 ἐκεῖνος ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἦν ἀπ· ἀρχῆς,
1 John 3:13 μὴ θαυμάζετε, ἀδελφοί, εἰ μισεῖ ύμᾶς ὁ κόσμος.	John 15:18 Εἰ ὁ κόσμος ύμᾶς μισεῖ, γινωσκετε ὅτι ἐμὲ πρῶτον ύμῶν μεμίστηκεν.
1 John 3:14 οἴδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωήν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς·	John 5:24 ὁ τὸν λόγον μου ἀκούων ... μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωήν.
1 John 3:16 ἐκεῖνος ύπερ ὑμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν·	John 10:15 τὴν ψυχὴν μου τίθημι ύπερ τῶν προβάτων.
1 John 3:22 ὁ ἐὰν αἰτῶμεν λαμβάνομεν ... ὅτι ... τὰ ἀρεστὰ ἐνωπιον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦμεν.	John 8:29 οὐκ ἀφῆκέν με μόνον, ὅτι ἐγώ τὰ ἀρεστὰ αὐτῷ ποιῶ πάντοτε.
1 John 3:23 αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα ... ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἔδωκεν ἐντολὴν ἡμῖν.	John 13:34 ἐντολὴν καὶνὴν δίδωμι ύμῖν, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους· καθὼς ἤγάπησα ύμᾶς ἵνα
1 John 4:6 ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν· ὁ γινωσκων τὸν θεὸν ἀκούει ύμῶν, ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἀκούει ύμῶν.	John 8:47 ὁ ὧν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκούει· διὰ τοῦτο ύμεῖς οὐκ ἀκούετε, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστε.
1 John 4:15 ὃς ἐὰν ὄμοιογήσῃ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ νιὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ θεῷ.	John 6:56 ὁ τρωγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἷμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει κάγω ἐν αὐτῷ.

1 John 4:16 ἐγνωκαμεν και πεπιστεύκαμεν	John 6:69 πεπιστεύκαμεν και ἐγνωκαμεν
1 John 4:16 ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ θεῷ μένει	John 15:10 ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολάς μου τηρήσητε, μενεῖτε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ μου,
1 John 5:4 αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ νίκη ἡ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον, ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν. τίς δέ ἐστιν ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον	John 16:33 Θαρσεῖτε, ἐγώ νενίκηκα τὸν κόσμον.
1 John 5:9 ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων ἐστίν, ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅτι μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ τοῦ νιόν αὐτοῦ.	John 5:32 ἄλλος ἐστὶν ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ ἐμοῦ, καὶ οἶδα ὅτι ἀληθῆς ἐστιν ἡ μαρτυρία ἣν μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ.
1 John 5:20 δέδωκεν ἡμῖν διάνοιαν ἵνα γινωσκωμεν τὸν ἀληθινόν· καὶ ἐσμὲν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ νιῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ ἡ αἰώνιος.	John 17:3 αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ, ἵνα γινωσκωσιν σὲ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.

Smalley also draws attention particularly to parallels between 1 John and the *Farewell Discourse* of John 13-17. Westcott suggests that this close relationship with the Fourth Gospel argues for common authorship; he says that both were written by the Apostle John.

Fewer scholars today defend a common authorship of the Gospel and Epistles. Marshall, however, having surveyed the various arguments for disparate authorship concludes, "These considerations show that there is little reason to attribute the outlook found in 1 John to an author of different outlook from that of the main body of the Gospel. It is, therefore, possible that both works come from the same author. In any case, however, the Gospel and Epistles stand so close together in terms of theological outlook that they must at least have been written by authors who stood very close to each other... On the whole it is improbable that the author of the Epistles also composed Revelation"

Smalley, on the other hand, writes, "The relationship between the writing of these letters and the composition of the Fourth Gospel is complex. But it is not unreasonable to suppose that the inspiration behind the tradition and distinctive theology of the Fourth Gospel came from John the apostle, the beloved disciple, himself; that some followers of John published the final version of his Gospel at Ephesus after his death (around A.D. 85); and that these Christians were not directly involved in the production of 1, 2, and 3 John."

The Situation prompting this Letter

Westcott points out that 1 John is not really a letter: it lacks opening salutation and closing subscription. He considers it to be more of a pastoral address.

John writes to a church disturbed by false teachers. By the time John writes they seem to have left the church (2:19) but still have contacts with members causing them to question whether they could truly regard themselves as Christians. John writes to provide "a careful statement of the apostolic understanding of Christianity for the benefit of his friends so that they might see where it was distorted by the seceders and confirm their own understanding of it and their place in the company of God's people." (Marshall).

The false teachers were forerunners of those who developed the Gnostic sects of the second century, though it would be anachronistic to call them Gnostics.

"It seems likely that the claims which John denies at the beginning of the Epistle represent those of the false teachers. They were people who claimed to have fellowship with God and to be sinless (1:6, 8, 10). They said that they knew God (2:4). Very possibly they believed that God was light and said that they lived in the light (2:9). What lies beyond any doubt is that they held unorthodox views about Jesus. They did not believe that Jesus was the Christ or the Son of God (2:22; 5:1, 5); they denied that Jesus had come in the flesh (4:2; cf. 2 Jn. 7)..."

They did not accept the validity of any commands given by Jesus (2:4)... [though] there is no evidence that they lived in a conspicuously immoral manner." (Marshall).

Marshall comments that a "view which no longer finds favour is that two or three different heresies were being confronted by John." Nevertheless, this is the view held by Smalley who argues that the church to which the letter was written there were Jews who had, with difficulty, accepted Jesus as Messiah but who denied his deity and gave an exalted place to the Jewish law. Other Hellenistic Christians had adopted proto-gnostic views and found it difficult to accept the full humanity of Jesus. Both groups used elements from the Gospel of John to their own ends. The writer of the epistle treads a fine line between the two extremes in asserting the reality of the Incarnation, Jesus God come in the flesh.

Marshall argues that, "there is considerable difference of opinion regarding the identity of John's opponents. Links can be found with Paul's opponents at Corinth, with Cerinthus, and with Ignatius's opponents. It seems most likely that the opponents were Christians who felt that they had moved beyond the elementary stages of orthodox theology to a new position which called orthodox affirmations into question. They were like men kicking away the ladder on which they had climbed to the heights and leaving themselves without any visible means of support. Relying on their belief that they were inspired by the Spirit and claiming a direct knowledge of God, they thought that they no longer needed Jesus or his teaching. Under the influence of Docetism they argued against a real incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus, and probably adopted a view like that of Cerinthus or Basilides, that the Christ or Son of God inhabited Jesus only for a temporary period."

Emphases of this letter

- Faith is linked with orthodoxy – particularly a right view of Christ.
- Faith cannot be separated from love.
- Faith expresses itself in righteousness, obedience and avoidance of sin.
- Faith is linked with assurance.

Smalley writes, "The purpose of 1 John may therefore be summarized as *primarily* an appeal to the faithful: to strengthen the faith and resolve of true believers in the Johannine community by encouraging them to maintain the apostolic gospel. To this end the writer appeals to his readers to adopt a proper estimate of the person of Jesus, and to act with Christian morality. As believers, that is to say, John exhorts his readers to live in the light as children of God (the paramount and complementary themes in the two main divisions of 1 John, 1:5–2:29 and 3:1–5:13). Belief *and* behaviour, christology *and* ethics, are together a consistent concern of the writer; and his insistence on the practice of Christian love and unity, as derived from the love of God (e.g. 1:3; 4:19), flows directly from the evident stresses and divisions within the Johannine circle..."

"A *secondary* intention behind the composition of 1 John may be regarded as a refutation and correction of the inadequate views (both christological and ethical) which were being espoused by other, heretically disposed members in the Johannine community, of a Jewish or non-Jewish background. For such adherents, John's balanced teaching about Christian belief and behaviour was entirely appropriate, and provided its own appeal. It was no doubt aimed, in particular, at the prevention of further error and secession, and thus at the preservation of unity in the church."

Marshall concludes, "Such teaching is clearly vital for the church and the world today. Despite all the differences between the first century and ours it may be urged that the fundamental similarities make it possible to apply Johannine teaching to our situation without much difficulty. The church today needs to learn the lessons that faith must rest on God's revelation of himself in his Son, Jesus Christ, that faith and love cannot be separated from one

another, that Christians are called to a life of perfect love, and that they can enjoy assurance and certainty in their knowledge of God."

The Greek of 1 John

Westcott considers that the text of 1 John does not present many difficult problems, having been "exposed to far fewer disturbing influences than ... the Gospels."

Of the three Epistles of John Marshall writes, "Their Greek is the easiest to read in the whole of the New Testament. The total vocabulary of the New Testament is 5437 words; the number of different words used in 1-3 John is merely 303, and the majority of these are common words. To read a text with such a small vocabulary is a light undertaking. The general style and syntax of the Epistles is also simple and straightforward, and there are not many tricky passages to retard the beginner. Students who have not yet worked their way fully through an elementary Greek grammar can cut their teeth on these Epistles, and will have the rewarding experience of finding that they can actually read the New Testament itself without too much difficulty."

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

1 John 1:1-4

"This writing begins without any of the formal features characteristic of a letter, such as are found in 2 John and 3 John. Since the conclusion also lacks any typical features of a letter, we must conclude that the writing is not so much a letter as a written sermon or address." Marshall.

The first four verses form one long and complex sentence. The delay in coming to the main verb, 'we proclaim' places the emphasis on the nature of the object which is proclaimed rather than the activity of proclaiming it. Smalley writes, "In our view, the key to understanding these vv of the preface, and indeed 1 John in its entirety, lies in the suggestion that the believers in question were in danger of succumbing to heterodox tendencies; they were leaning in the direction of a christology which was either too strong or too weak in character."

1 John 1:1

"Ο ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ὁ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὁ ἐώρακαμεν τοῖς ὄφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὁ ἐθεασάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν, περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς –

There are close parallels with the beginning of John's Gospel, cf. John 1:9,14. Marshall comments, "If the readers were familiar with the Gospel of John and with the book of Genesis, it is highly likely that they would recognise the echo of John 1:1, which in its turn echoes Genesis 1:1. If so, they would equate 'that which was from the beginning' with the 'Word' which was with God from the beginning."

There is some debate among commentators as to whether John's subject in this verse is the person, Jesus Christ, or whether it is the gospel message. The reference to seeing and touching suggests the former while proclaiming suggests the latter. In fact the echo of John 1:1 points us to the fact that we do not need to choose between the two. John is speaking of Revelation which has been made concrete in, and which now has its focus in, the person of Jesus Christ. "Our writer here wants to emphasise that the Christian message is identical with Jesus; it took personal form in a person who could be heard, seen, and even touched." Marshall.

Smalley writes, "In a typically Johannine manner, the writer speaks of the Christian revelation as a unique conjunction of the timeless and the historical."

ἀρχὴ, ης f beginning
ἀκηκόαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl ἀκούω

"It embraces the whole divine preparation for the Advent provided by the teaching of the Lawgiver and Prophets (comp. Heb 1:1) fulfilled at last by Christ." Westcott.

όραω see, observe
θεαομαι see, look at, observe

"Generally the first two verbs (*heard, seen*) expresses the fact, and the second two (*beheld, handled*) the definitive investigation by the observer." Westcott.

χειρ, χειρος f hand
ψηλαφωσ touch, feel

Westcott thinks that this refers particularly to the resurrection appearances (cf. Lk 24:39). Hence there is both "succession of time in the sequence of the clauses" and also "a climax of personal experience."

Smalley writes, "The use of the first person plural ('we') in the verbs which appear in the middle four clauses of this verse may indicate the presence of eyewitnesses (cf. Stott, 61–63; Marshall, 106–107). Equally, here and in the preface generally, 'we' may be interpreted to mean the Church in solidarity with eyewitnesses (so Dodd, 9–16). Without excluding the possibility that eyewitnesses were associated with John's testimony, and were thus able to support it, the writer is more likely to be taking the 'mantle of orthodoxy' (Houlden, 53), and speaking for *all* those, including members of the Johannine community, who were champions of the apostolic gospel. Against the heretics in his community who were espousing false or inadequate views of the person of Jesus (he was not fully God, or he was not really a human being...), John is recalling his readers to the fundamentals of the Christian faith (in terms of christology, Jesus is both divine *and* human), and identifying himself with those who believe as he does ('we have really witnessed the historical origins of the apostolic message of life in Christ'). Cf. John 21:24."

ζωὴ, ης f life

"Hence *the word of life* is the whole message from God to man, which tells of life, or, perhaps, out of which life springs, which beginning to be spoken by the prophets, was at last fully proclaimed by one who was His Son (Heb 1:1,2)." Westcott. The message is not just *about* Jesus, it *is* Jesus. Marshall writes, "The 'Word of life' can mean the message which conveys this life to men or which tells them about it (Acts 5:20; Phil 2:16). The phrase would then be a description of the Christian message preached by the writer and his colleagues. But if we glance back at John 1:4 we find that 'in him [sc. the Word] was life,' and in John 11:25; 14:6 Jesus says that he is life. Here, therefore, Jesus himself may be meant as the Word who is the source and substance of eternal life. Probably the phrase is again deliberately ambiguous, although the writer is perhaps thinking more of the Christian message."

1 John 1:2

καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἐωράκαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἡτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν –

This verse is parenthetical (so UBS punctuation, Westcott, Marshall, Smalley etc.), verse 3 taking up the themes of verse 1.

ἐφανερώθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s
φανεροω make known, reveal

Corresponding to 'The Word became flesh' of John 1.

"The word [φανεροω] is used of the revelation of the Lord at His first coming (3:5,8; John 1:31; cf. 4:9; John 7:4; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 9:26); of His revelation after the Resurrection (John 21:14,1; Mark 16:12,14); and of the future revelation (2:28; cf. 1 Peter 5:4; Col 3:4). In all these ways the Word Incarnate and glorified is made known as 'the Life'." Westcott.

μαρτυρεω bear witness, testify, affirm

Cf. John 21:24

ἀπαγγελλω announce, proclaim

"The three verbs give in due sequence the ideas of personal experience, responsible affirmation, authoritative announcement, which are combined in the apostolic message." Westcott. Smalley goes further in writing that the verbs, "express in order the three ideas of experience, attestation and evangelism which form part of any genuine and lasting response to the gospel."

αἰώνιος, ον eternal, everlasting
ὅστις, ἡτις, ὁ τι who, which

Cf. Jn 1:2.

1 John 1:3

ὅς ἐωράκαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπαγγέλλομεν
καὶ ὑμῖν, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ'
ἡμῶν· καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ
πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ νίοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ
Χριστοῦ·

κοινωνία, αἷς f fellowship, sharing in,
participation

Smalley writes, "Fellowship' (κοινωνία) is a richly significant theological term. The Gr. word literally means 'joint ownership,' or 'partnership.' In the NT this 'mutual sharing' may refer to participation in either material goods, as when Christians in Macedonia and Achaia 'raised a common fund' (κοινωνίᾳ τινὶ ποιήσασθαι) for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem (Rom 15:26); or in spiritual benefits, as when Paul speaks of 'sharing' (being συγκοινωνός) in the blessings of the gospel (1 Cor 9:23), or enjoying – in the words of 'the Grace' – the 'fellowship of the Spirit' (2 Cor 13:14; cf. also Rom 15:27)." On the meaning of this term, see also, Peter J. Leithart, *Against Christianity*, pp 25-27.

Life is manifested in fellowship: the life of God in the fellowship of the Trinity, the life of the people of God in their fellowship with each other (cf. Acts 2:42) *and with God himself*. This fellowship is shared life. Smalley comments, "The particular 'sharing' of Christians, who relate to each other as branches to the true Vine (John 15:1–6), derives from a common faith in Jesus: 'we are in him who is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 5:20). Christian fellowship is not the sentimental and superficial attachment of a random collection of individuals, but the profoundly mutual relationship of those who remain 'in Christ,' and therefore belong to each other (cf. 3:23–24)." Cf. Jn. 17:21.

ἡμετερος, α, ον our

1 John 1:4

καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ὑμεῖς ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾖ πεπληρωμένη.

ταῦτα probably refers to the letter as a whole.

γραφω write

"The plural (γραφομεν) which belongs to the form of the apostolic message stands in contrast with the personal address (γραφω) which immediately follows in 2:1." Westcott.

Instead of ἡμεῖς (read by \aleph A^{*} B, et al.), some MSS (including A^c C K) have ὑμῖν. This variation may be discounted, since it probably represents a subsequent desire on the part of a scribe to supply a missing personal object for the verb γράφομεν. As it stands, however, the phrase ταῦτα γράφομεν ὑμεῖς is deliberately emphatic.

χαρα, αἷς f joy, gladness, cause of joy

"Some witnesses (AC² vid K, et al.) read ὑμῶν ('your [joy]') instead of ἡμῶν ('our [joy]'), which is the version of \aleph B Ψ, et al. The variant (ὑμῶν) is well-attested, and versions of this variation occur in other texts of 1 John (cf. 2:25). The reading ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν ('your joy') may also have been influenced by the Gr. of John 15:11 and 16:24. The words ἡμῶν and ὑμῶν are written almost identically in the original, and it is easy to see how the confusion may have arisen. Both readings make sense in the context ... but the writer's identification with his readers in terms of 'fellowship' suggests that a mutual 'joy' (ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν, 'our joy') is in view at this point also." Smalley.

ἦ Verb, pres subj, 3s εἰμι
πεπληρωμένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s
πληρωο fill, make full

Cf. John 15:11. Marshall writes, "He has the heart of a pastor which cannot be completely happy so long as some of those for whom he feels responsible are not experiencing the full blessing of the gospel."

Smalley adds, "An eschatological dimension may also belong to the desire for 'complete' joy mentioned in this... 'Fullness of joy' is a familiar idea in the Johannine literature (cf. John 3:29; 4:36; 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; see also 2 John 12), where it is regularly associated with the notion of fellowship with God or with other believers. And since 'perfect' fellowship is impossible outside heaven (as perhaps the 'resolved' perfect passive πεπληρωμένη, literally, 'completed,' indicates; cf. John 16:24), the thought in this verse probably looks beyond this life to the 'eternal life' (v 2) of heaven, when 'consummated fellowship will bring completed joy' (Stott, 66). In this case John's preface has, in four verses, brought us from eternity (v 1) to eternity (v 4)."

Postscript

These verses present us with a Biblical model of spirituality which contrasts both with mysticism and rationalism – it is rooted in the historical reality of God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ.

Marshall comments, "John's prologue highlights two dangers which still confront the church. The one is the assumption that Christian fellowship is possible other than on the basis of common belief in Christ... The other danger is the assumption that it is possible to have a true relationship with God while rejecting Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life."

1 John 1:5

Καὶ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπὸ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἔστιν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμίᾳ.

ἀγγελια, ας f message, news

This word occurs elsewhere in the NT only at 3:11. The uncommon noun has led to a few MSS reading ἐπαγγελία, which is clearly secondary.

ἀκηκόαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl ἀκουω
ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπὸ αὐτοῦ underlines the reality of the Incarnation. Jesus has revealed the character of God.

ἀναγγελω tell, report, proclaim, preach

Means to bring a message to someone, cf. 1 Peter 1:12. The verb here echoes the earlier use of ἀπαγγέλλομεν in vv. 2 and 3.

φως, φωτος n light

Compare 'God is spirit' John 4:24, and 'God is love' 4:8,16. God is light in himself and his self-revelation in Christ is light to humankind or to the world, cf. John 1:4f.,9, 8:12; 9:5, see also Matt 5:14.

Smalley writes, "In the OT 'light' is used in an intellectual sense to symbolize truth (where 'darkness' is error), and in a moral sense to represent righteousness (where 'darkness' is evil). So, for example, Ps 119:130; Isa 5:20; Mic 7:8b; see also Ps 27:1. (In the NT cf. Rom 13:11–14; 2 Pet 1:19.) ... See further the association between Jesus and light in the Fourth Gospel (he is the carrier of divine illumination), and the contrast between 'light' (symbolizing life) and 'darkness' which characterizes its teaching (John 1:4; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35–36 and 11:9–10; in the last text a moral element emerges, while in the other passages the stress is on light as the revelation of truth). "The declaration, 'God is light' (ὁ θεός φῶς ἔστιν), is a penetrating description of the being and nature of God: it means that he is absolute in his glory (the physical connotation of light), in his truth (the intellectual) and in his holiness (the moral)."

σκοτία, ας f darkness

οὐδεις, οὐδεμία, οὐδεν no one, nothing

καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμίᾳ "Living in darkness is incompatible with fellowship with God." Marshall.

Marshall thinks that this now becomes the foundation for John's response to slogans used by the false teachers:

1. We have fellowship with him, v. 6.
2. We are without sin, v. 8.
3. We have not sinned, v. 10.

"In each case, the writer's reply is to compare the statement with the actual way of life of persons who made it and hence to show that the claims were false. Then he goes on to indicate in each case how people who wished to have fellowship with God could really have it."

1 John 1:6

ἐὰν εἴπωμεν δὲτοι κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ σκοτει περιπατῶμεν, ψευδόμεθα καὶ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

εἴπωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl λεγω

John unites himself with those he addresses.

κοινωνια, ας f see v.3.

περιπατεω walk, live

"The compatibility of indifference to moral action with the possession of true faith has been maintained by enthusiasts in all times of religious excitement." Westcott.

'Walking', used of the general pattern of life and conduct, is common in Paul and John.

ψευδομαι lie, speak untruth

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

"Truth is not only in thought and word, but also in action." Westcott. Smalley similarly writes, "There is a strong emphasis in 1 John on 'lying,' as the opposite of 'doing the truth' (cf. 2:4; 4:20)."

1 John 1:7

ἐὰν δὲ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν ως αὐτός ἔστιν ἐν τῷ φωτί, κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ νιοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀμαρτίας.

"The present tense of the verb, περιπατῶμεν (literally, 'we are walking'), denotes a continuous attitude of mind (for the verb and its use here cf. the comment on 'living in darkness,' v 6). 'Living in the light' thus implies a 'conscious and sustained endeavour to live a life in conformity with the revelation of God.' (Brooke, 15)." Smalley.

ἀλληλων, οις, ους reciprocal pronoun one another

Some MSS, including A*, read μετ· αὐτοῦ rather than μετ· ἀλλήλων.

Smalley comments, "Perhaps the secessionists had claimed to have a relationship with God while at the same time neglecting to love their fellow-Christians."

αἷμα, ατος f blood

καθαρίζω cleanse, make clean, purify
ἀμαρτια, ας f sin

"'Walking in the light' brings two main results in regard to our relation to men and to God. We realise fellowship with one another, and in the vision of God's holiness we become conscious of our own sin. That fellowship is the pledge of a divine fellowship: that consciousness calls out the application of the virtue of Christ's life given for us and to us." Westcott.

Smalley comments, "The term αἷμα ('blood') is a symbol for the crucifixion of Christ, and its background is to be located in Jewish sacrifice... above all against the specific background of the cultic observances on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16; but cf. also the Passover story and ritual, Exod 12)."

1 John 1:8

ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἀμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν, ἔσυτοὺς πλανῶμεν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.

John's opponents probably claimed that they did not need cleansing from sin since they were sinless.

ἔσυτος, ἔσυτη, ἔσυτον him/herself, itself
πλανᾶω lead astray, mislead, deceive

To walk in the light is not the same as being sinless.

1 John 1:9

ἐὰν ὄμολογῶμεν τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πιστός ἔστιν καὶ δίκαιος ἵνα ἀφῇ ἡμῖν τὰς ἀμαρτίας καὶ καθαρίσῃ ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας.

As in verse 7, John now presents the balancing remedy to the condition he has just outlined.

όμολογεω confess, declare

Though having the form of a conditional statement, the force is that of a command (so Marshall, Smalley).

πιστος, η, ον faithful, trustworthy

We can be certain of God's response – he is not fickle and unpredictable. He will be faithful to his promises to forgive, e.g. Mic 7:18-20.

δίκαιος, α, ον righteous, just

Cf. Rom 3:26.

ἀφῇ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s ἀφιημι cancel, forgive

καθαρίσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s καθαρίζω
ἀδικια, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin

"The blessing connected with the confession of sins is twofold. It includes (i) the remission of sins, the remission of the consequences which they entail, and (ii) the cleansing of the sinner from the moral imperfection which separates him from God: 1 Cor 6:9; Luke 13:27." Westcott.

1 John 1:10

ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν, ψεύστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτὸν καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.

ἡμαρτήκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl

ἀμαρτανω sin, commit sin

ψευστης, ου m liar

"Revelation is directed in the first instance to making clear the position of man towards God. Such an office St Paul assigns to the Law particularly. And generally all the communications of God to men presuppose that the normal relations between earth and heaven have been interrupted. To deny this is not only to question God's truth in one particular point, but to question it altogether; to say not only 'He lieth' in the specific declaration, but 'He is a liar' in His whole dealing with mankind. Comp 5:10." Westcott. Smalley similarly writes, "The claim to be without sin suggests falsehood on God's part; it 'makes him out to be a liar.' The universality of human sin is a common biblical doctrine (cf. Ps 14:3; Isa 53:6; John 2:24–25; Rom 3:22–24); and so also is the theme of the mercy of God, who forgives the sinner (Jer 31:34; Eph 4:32...). Thus, to deny the fact of sin in one's own life is to deny the holy and forgiving nature of God; it is to impute falsehood to him, and to challenge his own verdict on man's guilt as a sinner (see John 16:8–9; Rom 8:1f...)".

The phrase καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν may be deliberately ambiguous, alluding (cf. 1:1) to The λόγος.

1 John 2:1

Τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ ἀμάρτητε. καὶ ἐάν τις ἀμάρτῃ, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον,

τεκνιον, ου n little child, child

A tender form of address.

γραφω write

ἀμάρτητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl ἀμαρτανω

Smalley writes, "John's teaching in the preceding vv (1:6–10), with its emphasis on purification and forgiveness, may have been interpreted as an encouragement to be sinful: both by the secessionists, who regarded sin as unimportant anyway (cf. vv 8, 10), and even by some orthodox members of the Johannine community (cf. Rom 6:1). So the writer seizes this chance to call upon all his followers to repudiate sin entirely. John is not suggesting by this the possibility of a completely sinless existence; rather, he is pleading for a renunciation of the disposition toward sinfulness which issues in specific acts of wrongdoing. The use of the aorist subjunctive, *ἴνα μὴ ἀμάρτητε*, 'in order that you may not sin,' supports this interpretation, since it refers to 'definite acts of sin rather than the habitual state' (Brooke, 23). In other words, John wishes his readers to recognize the fact and seriousness of sin, and also to 'walk in the light' by living, so far as is possible, blamelessly."

παρακλητος, ου m Helper, Intercessor

Cf. John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7.

One aspect of the Advocate's office was foreshadowed by the entrance of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (Heb 9:11f.,24; 7:25).

On the intercession of Christ cf. Isa 53:12; Matt 10:32; Lk 22:32; 23:34; Jn 17:11; Rom 8:34. Marshall writes, "We have nothing that we can plead before God to gain forgiveness for our sins, but Jesus acts as our advocate and enters his plea for us."

δικαιος focusses on Christ's perfect humanity which gives efficacy to his advocacy. Cf. 1 Peter 3:18.

The term, however, is used in the OT in connection with sacrifices, hence the NIV 'atoning sacrifice'. Smalley writes, "The setting of this language is sacrificial; and to that extent the appearance of *ἱλασμός* in this verse recapitulates and expands the reference to the 'blood' (*αἷμα*) of Jesus, which purifies us from every sin, referred to in 1:7b." On the meaning, see particularly the two chapters on 'Propitiation' (chs 5 & 6) in Leon Morris's *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*.

ἀμαρτία, ας f sin

ἡμετερος, α, ον our

μονον adv only, alone

ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, complete, entire

The focus here is not on universal atonement but on the largeness of God's saving purpose. Cf. Jn 3:16-17; 4:42.

1 John 2:3

Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτὸν, ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν.

The phrase 'in this' is characteristic of 1 John, cf. 2:5; 3:24; 4:13; 5:2; 3:16; 3:19; 4:2.

γινώσκομεν Here is a test which distinguishes true knowledge of Christ from empty words. Here is how we can be sure of knowing him.

ἐγνώκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl
γινώσκω

Note the perfect = 'we have come to know him' "Knowledge of a person involves sympathy (3:1); and in this particular case involves striving after conformity with Him who is known." Westcott.

" 'Knowledge' of God in the biblical sense is not intellectual and speculative, but experimental and dynamic." Smalley.

1 John 2:2

καὶ αὐτὸς ἡλασμός ἔστιν περὶ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου.

John now describes the *basis* for his advocacy.

ἱλασμος, ου m means by which sins are forgiven

Smalley comments, "The term *ἱλασμός* occurs in the NT only here and at 4:10; although cognate words are used elsewhere: *ἱλάσκεσθαι* 'to propitiate' or 'to forgive' (cf. Luke 18:13; Heb 2:17); *ἱλαστήριον* 'propitiation' or 'expiation' (Rom 3:25; Heb 9:5); and *ἱλεως*, 'propitious' or 'forgiving' (Matt 16:22; Heb 8:12). Exact translation in the case of each of these terms is difficult because of the theological and attendant semantic problems involved."

John presents an answer to the gnostic tendencies of the false teachers. Smalley writes, "Apparently the majority of the secessionists had been attracted by gnosticizing tendencies in some form (see on 1:6). The background to this group, like that of Gnosticism itself, may have been either Greek or Jewish (cf. Col 2:8, 16). But the predominant character of Christians who would have been drawn to such speculative religious thinking in first century Asia Minor is likely to have been Hellenistic, and therefore (in this case) docetic. The error of these people was twofold. Theologically they were pursuing intellectual 'knowledge' for its own sake; and ethically they regarded sin as unimportant. (Gnosticism in any form is seldom concerned with moral behavior; redemption for the gnostic involves a release from ignorance, not sin.) In both respects, the theological and the ethical, John's teaching provides an orthodox counter."

ἐντολῇ, ης f command, order, instruction
τηρεω keep, observe, maintain

The present tense suggests habitual obedience. Obedience is not the *condition* of knowing God but is rather *characteristic* of the knowledge of God. Cf. 2 John 4-6.

1 John 2:4

ὁ λέγων ὅτι Ἐγνώκα αὐτὸν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν ψεύστης ἔστιν, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν.

This is the first of three claims John examines, cf. vv. 6, 9. Each claim is linked with a test. On this verse, cf. John 17:3 and Matt 7:21.

ἔγνωκα Verb, perf act ind, 1 s γνωσκό^ω
ψεύστης, ου m see 1:10
ἀληθεία, ας f truth, reality

"The truth is said to be in a man as an active principle within him regulating his thoughts and judgements (1:8; John 8:44; comp John 8:32); and again a man is said to be in the truth, as a sphere in which he moves (2 John 4; 3 John 3,4; John 8:44; comp John 17:17)." Westcott.

1 John 2:5

ὅς δ' ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἔσμεν.

ἀληθῶς adv truly, in truth

"The phrase, which occurs in the Epistle first here and henceforth throughout it, is ambiguous and may mean, according as the genitive is taken *subj.* or *obj.*, either (i) the love which God shews [the undoubted meaning in 4:9], or (ii) the love of which God is the object [the probable meaning in 2:15 and 5:3]. It may also mean more generally (iii) the love which is characteristic of God whether it is shewn by God or by man through His help. Generally the genitive after ἀγάπῃ in the NT is *subj.*, and defines those who feel or shew love..."

"It appears therefore most probable that the fundamental idea of 'the love of God' in St John is 'the love which God has made known, and which answers to his nature'. This love communicated to man is effective in him towards the brethren and towards God Himself. But however it may be manifested the essential conception that it is a love divine in its origin and character is not lost. Comp. John 15:9f." Westcott.

Marshall argues that in the context of obedience the primary thought is love *for* God. Love for God finds its proper end in glad obedience.

Smalley thinks that a sharp distinction should not be drawn between the objective and subjective senses. He writes, " 'Love' in John defines the nature and activity of God (4:8–9; cf. John 3:16), describes the way in which men turn to him (4:16; cf. John 14:21), and – being grounded in God's own love – should determine the (loving) relationship of believers to each other (4:21; cf. John 13:34). The verb τελείω (literally, 'to perfect') here (ἡ ἀγάπῃ τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται, 'God's love has really reached fulfillment') may have been selected by John deliberately, to balance speculative gnostic claims to 'perfection' with a reference to Christian *certainties*. The perfect passive τετελείωται ('has reached fulfillment') has the force of a present tense: in other words, the process of fulfillment has already begun. For the use of τελείω in John, to mean (ongoing) fulfillment rather than (static) termination, see 4:12, 17–18 (note the adjective τέλειος, 'complete,' in 4:18; also John 4:34; 5:36; 17:4; 23 (19:30). Cf. further Matt 5:48 (using τέλειος)."

τετελείωται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s τελεω^ω
complete, finish, fulfill

1 John 2:6

ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένει ὄφείλει καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιεπάτησεν καὶ αὐτὸς περιπατεῖν.

"The sign of union with God is found in the imitation of Christ." Westcott.

μενω remain, stay, abide

Cf. John 15:4ff. The verb "presupposes an intimate and committed relationship with him [God], through Jesus, which is both permanent and continuous." Smalley.

όφειλω owe, ought, must, be obligated
ἐκείνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that (one)
'even as he', i.e. Christ.

περιπατεω walk, walk about, live

Cf. 1:6.

ούτως thus, in this way

Some MSS (including C) include ούτως.
Because of its resemblance to αὐτός the word may have been dropped (as by A B Vg, et al); but the probability is that it was introduced later, perhaps to balance καθὼς.
"The pattern of Christ, as set before us in the New Testament, is in every case a pattern of humiliation, suffering, sacrifice. Comp Matt 11:29; John 13:15; Rom 15:2f.; Eph 5:1ff.; Phil 2:5ff.; 1 Pet 2:21; Heb 12:2." Westcott.
Marshall comments, "John can assume that his readers were familiar with the picture of one who 'went about doing good' (Acts 10:38), although he gives no concrete description of the life of Jesus in his Epistle."

1 John 2:7

Ἄγαπητοι, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, ὁ ἔστιν ἀληθὲς ἐν ἀντῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἥδη φαίνει.
ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved

Some MSS, followed by TR, read ἀδελφοί rather than ἀγαπητοί. Smalley comments, "The address ἀγαπητοί arises naturally from the context here; and it is characteristic of John's style (he uses ἀδελφοί only at 3:13)." He adds, "The fact that Paul also uses this expression (cf. Rom 12:19; 2 Cor 7:1) indicates that it was apparently a common form of homiletical address in early Christianity."

ἐντολη, ης f see v3

καινος, η, ον new

Cf. Jn 13:34. The commandment to love.

γραφω write

παλαιος, α, ον old, former

εἴχετε Verb, imperf act indic, 2 pl ἔχω

ἀρχη, ης f see 1:1

Westcott thinks that 'old' here means a commandment that *these believers* have heard from the beginning – from their first hearing of the gospel. He sums up the contrast with the following verse thus: "The commandment, which is the rule of the Christian Life, is as old as the first message of the Gospel and yet as new as the latest realisation of its power. It lies included in what we first hear, and is illuminated by the growing experience of life." However, it may be better to understand it of a command of God which has been there from the beginning of his revelation but which is now revealed in a new way in Christ. The thought is then similar to that in the opening verses of the letter.

After ἡκουόσατε a number of MSS add ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς, clearly in imitation of the phrase earlier in the verse.

1 John 2:8

πάλιν ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, ὁ ἔστιν ἀληθὲς ἐν ἀντῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἥδη φαίνει.

παλιν again, once more
ἀληθης, ες true, truthful, genuine

ὅτι ἔστιν ἀληθὲς – 'this is realised'. That commandment has been realised or made concrete in the life of Christ himself and is being realized in the life of the Christians to whom John wrote. Marshall comments, "It remains new in that it remains true and is continually being realised and actualised in the life of Jesus and his followers in the new age."

Some few MSS read ἐν ήμιν in place of ἐν ὑμῖν.

σκοτια, ας f darkness

παραγω pass by, pass on; pass. (and sometimes active) pass away, disappear

φως, φωτος n light

ἀληθινος, η, ον real, genuine, true

ἥδη adv now, already

φανω shine, give light

Cf. Jn 1:5,9; 8:12; 12:35-36. "Before the Incarnation 'the Word,' 'the true Light' was ever 'coming into the world.' Now by the mission of the Holy Spirit, sent in His name, He was shining with a steady beam. The darkness had not eclipsed it. In the Christian Society, seen in the midst of the world, there was an evident manifestation of the light defining the lines of Christian conduct." Westcott.

Marshall comments, "The newness of the commandment lies in the fact that it is being fulfilled in a way that had not happened previously. To put it differently, the darkness of the old age, in which men did not love in this sort of way, is disappearing, and the light of the new age, in which Christian love is shown, is already shining." This is τὸ ἀληθινὸν – the real thing.

1 John 2:9

οἱ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἔστιν ἔως ἅρτι.

Smalley comments, "The believer who 'exists (εἶναι, 'to be,' constantly) in the light' shares the life of God in Christ; he must also meet the daily challenge, as well as the opportunity, to develop in Christian character and (loving) conduct (cf. v 10; also John 11:9–10, and the description of the believer as 'the light of the world' in Matt 5:14; note further Eph 5:8; Phil 2:15)."

μισεω̄ hate, despise, be indifferent to

The sense here is 'fails to love'. John leaves no room for middle ground.

ἀδελφὸν = fellow Christian – "those who are united together in Christ to God as their Father (Jn 20:17; 21:23)." Westcott.

ἔως conj until, while

ἅρτι now, at the present

1 John 2:10

οἱ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει, καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν.

ἀγαπαω̄ love, show love for

μενω̄ remain, stay, abide

Not a momentary state but a general and continuing mode of life.

σκάνδαλον, οὐ n that which causes sin/ offence, obstacle

Westcott says, "It is at first sight doubtful whether the occasion of *stumbling* is that which may be in the way of others or in the way of the believer himself. A man may cause others to fall through want of love or he may by the same defect create difficulties in his own path." Westcott suggests that the ambiguity is deliberate and that both senses may be included. Smalley also thinks that both meaning may be encompassed in John's words.

Marshall thinks the sense is that nothing will make him (the one loving his brother) to stumble. "The person who loves his brother is not going to succumb to temptation because he has his principles right and will not be deflected from them by the attractions of a self-centred existence; he recognises temptation for what it is and says 'No' to it." Thus the last phrase is parallel to remaining in the light – he sees clearly where he is going, cf. John 11:9.

1 John 2:11

οἱ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἔστιν καὶ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ, καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία ἐτύφλωσεν τοὺς ὄφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ.

περιπατεω̄ walk, walk about, live

"Lack of love implies lack of God." Smalley.

οιδᾱ know, understand

Such a person has lost his way.

ποῦ interrogative adverb where
ὑπαγω̄ go

"On the other hand that which was true of Christ (John 8:12; 13:3) is true also of the believer (comp. John 14:4,5). He knows what is the end of life." Westcott.

τυφλοω̄ blind, make blind

1 John 2:12-17

Some argue that these verses form an isolated section. Smalley, however, writes, "The passage 2:12–17 is thus closely connected with the thought of 2:1–11 by means of the repeated formula γράφω ὑμῖν. Furthermore, in vv 12–14, terms and ideas are used which also serve to link this passage with the earlier part of 1 John (for v 12 see 1:9 as well as 2:1; for v 13 see 1:1 and 2:3; for v 13c see 2:3; for v 14a, b see 1:1 and 2:3; for v 14c see 1:8, 10).

"Apart from the literary links between 2:12–17 and the preceding sections of this document, there exists a unity in terms of general theological content. Thus the statements in vv 12–14, describing the spiritual condition of John's readers, recapitulate the teaching already given. (They also introduce new ideas which will be developed later in 1 John; note the thought of 'conquest' in vv 13–14, and cf. 4:4; 5:4–5.) But in addition these vv, with their carefully structured and emphatic form, show that what is true of the orthodox Christian was *not* true of the false claimants around John's church. The heterodox thought that they were in the light, whereas in fact they were existing in darkness (v 11). By contrast, it could be said of the genuine believers in the Johannine community that they truly shared God's forgiveness, knew God personally, and were victorious over evil."

1 John 2:12

Γράφω ὑμῖν, τεκνία, ὅτι ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἄμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ·

γράφω see v.7

τεκνίου, οὐ n see v.1

The parallel with 2:1 (cf. 2:7) suggests that here John is addressing *all* of his readers rather than a particular class.

ὅτι could mean 'because' (so Westcott and Bultmann) or 'that' – a declarative sense (so Schnackenburg). Smalley writes, "These two senses of ὅτι, the causal and the declarative, are therefore both relevant to the context of 2:12–14. Furthermore, they are not mutually exclusive; and ὅτι may indeed have been used by John here (once again) with a consciously double meaning. He is writing to remind his readers about the nature of their Christian heritage (declarative). But, more than this, he is exhorting them to live responsibly in the light; and he is able to do so because certain facts are true in their experience (causal). If a choice between the two meanings of ὅτι has to be made, we incline to the causal ('because'), since the declarative by itself ('that') seems altogether too 'obvious' at this point in 1 John. But almost certainly both meanings are present, with perhaps an emphasis on the causal interpretation."

ἀφέωνται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 pl ἀφίημι
cancel, forgive

Cf. 1:9.

ἄμαρτια, αἱ f sin
ὄνομα, τοῖς n name

Smalley writes, "From a biblical standpoint forgiveness of sin is not only (and, indeed, not primarily) dependent on man's confession. God's grace is fundamental to the covenant relationship between God and man. In NT terms forgiveness is explicitly related to the 'name' of Jesus, through whom God's salvific work has become actualized (Matt 1:21; Acts 4:12; 10:43; cf. Titus 2:14)."

The 'name' of Jesus sums up all that is known of him, all of his authority and power. Cf. Matt 10:22; 24:9; Jn 15:21; Rev 2:3; Acts 4:30; 10:43; 1 Cor 1:10; 1 Jn 3:23; 5:13; Jn 20:31.

1 John 2:13

γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς γράφω ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.

Of the titles, 'children ... fathers ... young men' Smalley writes, "The variety of possible interpretations we have surveyed, combined with the literary character of this passage, indicates that we should perhaps avoid making exclusive decisions about the meaning of the terms τεκνία (παιδία), πατέρες and νεανίσκοι. Knowing the Johannine mentality as we do, it is quite possible that our author is at this point being deliberately ambivalent. Almost certainly he is referring to his whole church when he calls his readers 'children,' but within that group he is in one sense recollecting and addressing the young and old in physical age ...; while in another sense he is referring to the spiritual privileges of Christian youth and maturity which should belong to all believers... In either case he is pointing out the riches of orthodox faith belonging to the 'fathers' and 'young men' of his church, in stark contrast to the heresies which were being propagated by the other two groups within the Johannine community: those with too high a view of the nature of Jesus, and those with an inadequate understanding of his fully divine person." The 'fathers' are therefore probably those older in years, more mature in the faith, and perhaps those looked to as leaders in the church.

ἐγνώκατε Verb, perf act indic, 2 pl γινώσκω
ἀρχη, ης f see 1:1

"Some commentators believe that God the Father, the 'Ancient of Days,' is meant (cf. Dodd, 38; Stott, 97; Bruce, 58); but most accept that the reference is probably to the Word of God, 'brought near to us in the Person of Christ Jesus' (Westcott, 60; cf. also Brooke, 45; Bultmann, 32). It is true that τὸν ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς is a theologically accurate description of both God the Father and the Christ of God; but the primary allusion is fairly certain to be a christological one. (a) The phrase 'who has existed from the beginning' would have no particular significance in this context as a description of God; none of John's readers, presumably, doubted the eternity of the Father. On the other hand, several of his readers were evidently denying that the pre-existent Logos of God had become incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth... (b) Furthermore in v 14b, when the clause ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς ('because you have known him who has existed from the beginning') is used again, it follows an explicit reference to knowing the Father in v 14a: 'I have written to you, little children, because you have known the Father' (ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα). If τὸν ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς means God the Father here, then we are left with a pointless repetition." Smalley.

νεανισκος, ου m young man
νικων conquer, overcome

"The image, based on John 16:33, is characteristic of the Apocalypse (2:7ff.; 12:11; 21:7) and of this Epistle: v.14; 4:4." Westcott. Smalley writes, "The idea of conquering evil is introduced for the first time in 1 John at this point. Here it leads into an appeal to resist worldliness (vv 15-17; cf. 5:4-5). But the next time victory is mentioned in this letter (at 4:4), the thought of resisting false *teaching* is included (καὶ νεικήκατε αὐτούς, 'you have defeated them'; that is, 'you have successfully resisted those who were propagating heretical doctrines'); and it is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that John was also anticipating this theme in the present verse. All wrong must be conquered by the genuine Christian believer, including wrong thinking and theology!"

πονηρος, a, ov evil, wicked

τὸν πονηρόν is replaced in § 95 by the impersonal τὸ πονηρόν.

"The personal aspect of the Christian conflict on its spiritual side is naturally brought out now. Darkness has its prince: John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11." Westcott.

"The characteristic of 'fathers' is knowledge, the fruit of experience (ἐγνώκατε): that of 'young men,' victory, the prize of strength. St John bases his appeal to each class on that which they have severally gained." Westcott.

1 John 2:14

ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, παιδία, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα:
ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπὸ^a
ἀρχῆς: ᔝγραψα ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι ισχυροί
ἐστε καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει καὶ
νεικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.

The change here to the aorist Westcott suggests to be a change of perspective, John is now looking at his letter as if already complete – an epistolatory aorist. It may reflect a break in writing the letter followed by later resumption.

The TR follows some minor witnesses in reading γράφω.

παιδίον, ου n child

Again, addressed to all Christians. Westcott suggests that τεκνια (v.12) suggests kinship while παιδία subordination. This corresponds with knowing the Father's love and submitting to him.

Westcott suggests that the lack of development in the way John refers to the 'fathers' is because "The knowledge of Christ as the Word, active from the beginning of Creation, includes all that we need to know."

ισχυρος, a, ov strong, mighty, powerful

B and cop^{sa} omit τοῦ θεοῦ from the phrase ὁ
λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ

μενω remain, stay, abide

Marshall writes, "Reception of God's word is a source of spiritual strength which goes beyond the force of mere teaching. If we are right in seeing a reference to the Father and the Son in the two earlier statements in the verse, we may well be tempted to associate the power of the Word of God with the Spirit (Eph 6:17) in an implicit reference to the three Persons of the Trinity. It is by this personal, subjective power that the objective victory of Jesus over the evil one becomes a reality for believers. Here is the basis for the important command which is to follow."

1 John 2:15-17

Smalley writes, "In vv 12–14 John has been describing, in very positive terms, the spiritual character of the true believer, as opposed to the heretic who falsely claims to have faith in God through Christ. Now, in vv 15–17, he turns from the Church to the world, and directly exhorts all his members to reject worldliness, as a condition of 'living in the light'."

1 John 2:15

Μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. εάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ὄγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ.

ἀγαπῶ love, show love for

In the writings of John, the 'world' generally signifies the world in its rebellion against God.

μηδε negative particle nor, and not, neither

τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ = the things which preoccupy this present age.

'love of the Father' "expresses primarily the love of 'the children' of God to God; but this love answers to and springs out of the love shewn to them by 'the Father' whom 'they know' (v.14.)" Westcott.

Love for the world and love for the Father are mutually exclusive (cf. Matt 6:24; James 4:4). Who or what is the object of our affections?

1 John 2:16

ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὄφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρός, ἀλλὰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἔστιν.

ἐπιθυμία, ας f desire, lust, passion
σαρξ, σαρκὸς f flesh

ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς 'sinful desire' refers to fallen nature in general.

ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὄφθαλμῶν 'a craving for what is seen,' that is to say, "every variety of gratification of which sight is the instrument." Law.

ἀλαζονεία, ας f pride, arrogance
βίος, ου m life, living, possessions

Marshall and Smalley argue that "The first example of 'worldliness' is a general one; and ... the following two instances ('a craving for what is seen,' and 'pride in one's life style') are to be regarded as further definitions of what is here described as 'sinful desire'."

1 John 2:17

καὶ ὁ κόσμος παράγεται καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία αὐτοῦ, ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰώνα.

παράγω pass by, pass away, disappear

Marshall comments, "Now comes the climax to John's appeal. It is foolish to desire the world because the world and its desires are passing away. John has already reminded his readers that the era of darkness is coming to an end (2:8), and Paul also stated that 'this world in its present form is passing away' (1 Cor 7:31). The coming of the light is the sign of the new era and the end of the old." Cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Rev 21:4.

θελημα, ατος n will, wish, desire

The contrast is between a passing world and the abiding believer. Cf. Heb 12:27.

1 John 2:18ff

The spiritual warfare between the forces of Christ and of the prince of darkness is not a simple warfare between the church and the world: that warfare is to be found even within and among those claiming to be the people of God.

Smalley argues strongly (contra Marshall) that this section continues the themes of the preceding section.

1 John 2:18

Παιδία, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἔστιν, καὶ καθὼς ἡκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν· ὅθεν γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἔστιν.

παιδιον, ου n see v.14

The relationship implied is that of a fatherly teacher to pupils who are childlike in their understanding, and in need of instruction.

ἐσχατος, η, ον adj last, final
ὥρα, ας f hour, period of time

The last period of time before the consummation of the purposes of God in the perfect establishment of his kingly reign. It is a period marked by conflict.

Smalley notes, "The eschatological associations belonging to the term ὥρα, 'hour', are familiar to us from John's Gospel: e.g. John 2:4; 4:23; 16:2; cf. also Luke 22:53. Nevertheless, the exact phrase ἐσχάτη ὥρα occurs in the NT only here."

ἀντίχριστος, ου m Antichrist (of one who claims to be Christ or is opposed to Christ)

Some witnesses introduce ὁ before ἀντίχριστος.

Westcott says that they had heard warnings that the last days would be marked by apostasy and false teaching (Mk 13:16ff; Matt 24:5,24; Acts 20:30; 1 Tim 4:1-3) and even that such false teaching would find its focus in a particular adversary to Christ (2 Thess 2:3). The use of the term 'antichrist' without an article shows it had "become current as a technical (proper) name."

Smalley comments, "The popular expectation of antichrist, marking the arrival of the end-time (ἡκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, 'you heard that antichrist is to come') has been realized, in John's view, by the 'appearance' of 'many antichrists'... Clearly John regards the heretical secessionists from his community as 'antichrists'; and he sees the erroneous christology of these professed believers (whose character has been in view since 1:5) as both dangerous for the life and unity of the church (cf. v 19), and a mark of the arrival of the end-time."

And Marshall writes, "It seems ... that he regarded the false teachers of his day as being possessed by the spirit of the antichrist, whose coming still lay in the future."

γεγόναστι Verb, perf act indic, 3 pl γνωμαι
όθεν from where, therefore, for which
reason

1 John 2:19

ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν· εἰ
γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ὃν μεθ'
ἡμῶν· ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν
πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν.

ἐξῆλθαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl ἐξερχομαι
"Till the moment of separation they were
undistinguishable from the rest of the Christian
society." Westcott.

μεμενήκεισαν Verb, pluperf act indic, 3 pl
μενω

φανερωθῶσιν Verb, aor pass subj, 3 pl
φανεροω reveal, make known, make
evident

"For this ellipse see John 1:8; 9:3; 13:18;
14:31; 15:25. The departure of these false
teachers after a temporary sojourn in the
Christian society was brought about that they
might be shewn in their true character, and so
seen to be not of it." Westcott.

Westcott argues that the construction means
that 'they are not at all of us', rather than, 'they
are not all of us'. Smalley favours 'none of
them belonged to us.'

1 John 2:20

καὶ ὑμεῖς χρῖσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀγίου καὶ
οἴδατε πάντες·

Note the emphatic contrast, καὶ ὑμεῖς 'and as
for you...' The force of the καὶ here is
adversative. John moves from the marks of the
false 'Christians' to the marks of the true
believer (vv. 20-23).

Smalley comments, "In the passage which
begins here (vv 20-28) there is an emphasis on
three leading ideas: χρῖσμα ('consecration'), ὁ
ἵκενσατε ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς ('what you heard from the
beginning') and μένειν ('to abide'). Together
these three motifs highlight the concept of
God's indwelling word, in a context which
deals with the eschatological benefits of the
new covenant. Such a stress has already been
anticipated in the forceful section 2:12-14."

χρῖσμα, τος n anointing

"The readers of the Epistle had the power of
discerning the real character of 'Antichrists.'
'Christians' are themselves in a true sense
'Christs', anointed ones, consecrated to God as
'prophets', 'priests', and 'kings' (1 Peter 2:5 (9);
Apoc 1:6; 5:10; 20:6); and in virtue of that
consecration endowed with the corresponding
blessings." Westcott.

Smalley comments, "A play on words is
apparent in this passage. Central to the
apostolic preaching is the confession of Jesus
as 'Christ' (χριστός, the anointed one). Those
who deny this are his opponents (ἀντίχριστοι,
'antichrists,' v 18); whereas the faithful have
received a divine 'anointing' (χρῖσμα)."

ἄγιος, α, ον holy

I.e. they have received the gift of the Holy
Spirit from Christ, the Holy One of God. By
this gift they have Christ and remain in Christ
(cf. John 14:16).

οἶδα know, understand

There are variant readings here. παντες (read
by Σ B P Ψ etc.) means 'you all know', whereas
παντα (read by A C K Byz Lect etc.) means
'you know all things'. UBS cautiously favour
παντες. This is followed by Smalley though
Marshall prefers 'all of you know the truth'.

On the theme of knowledge, cf. John 16:13.

1 John 2:21

οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἀληθειαν,
ἀλλ' ὅτι οἴδατε αὐτήν, καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ
τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν.

γραφω write

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

ψεῦδος, ους n lie, untruth, that which is
false/imitation

"The object of the apostle in writing was not to communicate fresh knowledge, but to bring into active and decisive use the knowledge which his readers already possessed."
Westcott.

1 John 2:22

τίς ἐστιν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἐστιν ὁ χριστός; οὐτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν νιόν.

ψεύστης, οὐ m liar
ἀρνεομαι deny, disown, renounce

Cf. 4:2f. "A common 'Gnostic' theory was that 'the aeon Christ' descended upon the man Jesus at His Baptism, and left Him before the Passion. Those who held such a doctrine denied that 'Jesus was the Christ'; and in so denying, denied the union of the divine and the human in one Person. This heresy then St John signalises here, the direct contradiction to the fundamental truth which he proclaimed, *the Word became flesh.*" Westcott.

Marshall comments, "For John the height of heresy is to deny that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and Saviour. To reduce Jesus to the status of a mere man, or to allow no more than a temporary indwelling of some divine power in him is to strike at the root of Christianity. Modern thinkers may have more refined ways of stating similar denials of the reality of the incarnation. It may be doubted whether they are any more immune to John's perception that they take the heart out of Christianity."

The meaning of the phrase ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν νιόν is explained in the verse that follows.

1 John 2:23

πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν νιὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει· ὁ ὄμολογῶν τὸν νιὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει.

"If the heretics thought that they could 'have' God without believing in Jesus, they were completely mistaken. It is only through the Son that we know that God is Father, and it only through the Son and his propitiatory death that we can have access to God as Father."
Marshall.

The second half of v 23 (ὁ ὄμολογῶν τὸν νιὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει) appears in the best MSS (¶ A, B C, et. al.), but is omitted in later texts (K L et al.). Such an omission was presumably the result of homoeoteleuton, as the scribe's eye traveled from the first τὸν πατέρα ἔχει to the second, and left out everything in between.
όμολογεω confess, declare

To confess and know the Son is to know the Father also (Jn 14:7ff.).

1 John 2:24

ὑμεῖς δὲ ἡκούσατε ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω· ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνῃ ὁ ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς ἡκούσατε, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ νίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε.

ὑμεῖς 'as for you...'

Cf also 1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3f.; Tit 1:9; 2 Pet 3:2; Jude 17,20 for similar emphasis on holding to the apostolic message.

Westcott writes, "The Gospel is described both as a medium in which the believer lives (John 8:31), and as a quickening spirit which dwells in him (Col 3:16; 2 John 2)."

Again, there are echoes of 1:1-4. The word of life, which became flesh in Christ, now animates the Christian.

1 John 2:25

καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἣν αὐτὸς ἐπηγγείλατο ἡμῖν, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον.

ἐπαγγελία, ας f promise

ἡν αὐτὸς 'which He himself'

ἐπηγγείλατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s
ἐπαγγελλομαι promise

Some MSS (including B) read ὑμῖν in place of ἡμῖν.

ζωη, ης f life
αἰώνιος, ον eternal, everlasting

Marshall comments, "There is something to be said for the view that John is explaining that the experience of remaining in the Son and the Father is, precisely, eternal life – available here and now. This would fit in with the teaching of the Gospel where eternal life is a blessing which commences to be enjoyed in this present life (Jn 3:36; 6:40, 47); it also fits in with the definition of eternal life in John 17:3 as knowing the Father and the Son. Naturally the future dimension (cf. 2:17) is not lacking on this interpretation."

1 John 2:26

Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν περὶ τῶν πλανώντων ὑμᾶς.

ἔγραψα ὑμῖν refers back to vv 18-25.

πλανω lead astray, mislead, deceive

Present tense = those actively engaged in seeking to lead you astray. Smalley, however, writes, "The present participle *πλανώντων* ('leading you astray') is conative in force. The heretics were *intent* upon leading others astray; they were *trying* to do this. But evidently the danger is present, continuing and real. Not only were the heretics attempting to win others to their heterodox views about Jesus; obviously (in view of the incipient schism alluded to in v 19, and given the increasing disintegration of the Johannine church to which 2 and 3 John bear witness) they were being successful in their efforts."

1 John 2:27

καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ χρῆσμα ὁ ἐλάβετε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ μένει ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ οὐ χρείαν ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκῃ ὑμᾶς· ἀλλ' ὡς τὸ αὐτοῦ χρῆσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων, καὶ ἀληθές ἔστιν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ψεῦδος, καὶ καθὼς ἐδίδαξεν ὑμᾶς, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ.

καὶ ὑμεῖς 'but as for you,' again in contrast with the false teachers.

χρῆσμα, τος n see v.20
ἐλάβετε Verb, aor act indic, 2 pl λαμβάνω

Cf. v. 20 for χρῆσμα. Smalley writes, "Word and Spirit complement each other. The proclamation of the gospel is an objective exercise (cf. 1:1–3, 5); whereas the 'consecration' of the Spirit is received directly from him, 'from the holy one' (vv 20, 27). Such a balance, between the objective truth of the preached gospel and its subjective interpretation in the Spirit, must be maintained in any attempt to 'keep the faith.' Cf. the similar balance in 2:7 and 14 between 'hearing the message' (ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε, 'the message which you heard') and God's word 'dwelling' in the believer (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει, 'God's word dwells in you')."

χρεια, ας f need

"The outpouring of the Spirit, the characteristic of the last days (Jer 31:34; Joel 2:28; Heb 8:11; Acts 2:17ff.), gave to each one who received it a sure criterion of truth. Christians needed not fresh teaching even from the apostles, still less from those who professed to guide them into new 'depths'." Westcott.

διδάσκω teach

The statement is to be understood corporately – not that each individual Christian is self-sufficient, but that the Christian community possesses sufficient resource in Word and Spirit.

Smalley comments, "As many commentators point out, this absolute declaration about the dispensability of earthly teachers appears in the course of a document which is heavily didactic! ... Teaching was obviously an important spiritual gift and form of ministry in the early Church (cf. Acts 5:28; Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28–29; Eph 4:11). Yet the teachers themselves needed to be taught by the chrism of the Spirit, and their teaching had to be 'tested' for its truth (cf. 4:1, 5; 2 John 9–10...). The claim that the true Christian has no need of any further teaching may include a deliberately antignostic thrust.... It may be aimed precisely at those within the Johannine church whose gnostic inclinations had led them to suppose that they knew the truth about everything (cf. v 27b). In answer to this John may be saying that, on the contrary, it is the 'consecrated' Christian (the genuine initiate!) who has no need of (basic?) spiritual instruction. He is already 'set apart' for God's truth."

ἀληθῆς, ες true, truthful, honest, genuine

The Spirit bestowed is the Spirit of truth (Jn 14:17).

ψεῦδος, ους n see v.21

The implication of the false teachers was that the Gospel message preached by the apostles was a lie. Though Smalley interprets καὶ ἀληθές ἔστιν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ψεῦδος as 'and it is real, not an illusion' – of the anointing they have as the genuine article as opposed to the pretended knowledge of the 'gnostics'.

Smalley writes, "The invitation to 'abide' in Jesus clearly harks back to the farewell discourse of John's Gospel (John 15:4–7); and the very words μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί ('remain in me') may well have been used as a catchword by heretical as well as orthodox adherents around and within the Johannine community (see the comment on 2:6). It would thus be natural for the writer to remind his readers of the true implications of this command. To 'abide' or 'dwell' in Jesus, as he instructed his disciples, is only possible when there is a genuine relationship with God through Christ (cf. vv 22–24); and this is guaranteed and confirmed by the indwelling knowledge of the truth imparted through the anointing Spirit."

1 John 2:28

Καὶ νῦν, τεκνία, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ, ἵνα ἐὰν φανερωθῇ σχῶμεν παρρησίαν καὶ μὴ αἰσχυνθῶμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

τεκνιον, ου n little child, child

ἐν αὐτῷ = in Christ

φανερωθῆται Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s φανεροῶ
see v.19

σχῶμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl ἔχω
παρρησία, ας f boldness, assurance

Cf. 3:21; 4:17; 5:14 also Heb 3:6; 10:19;
Philemon 8. Cf. the lines from Charles Wesley,
*Bold I approach the eternal throne, and claim
the crown through Christ my own.*

αἰσχυνθῶμεν Verb, aor pass subj, 1 pl
αἰσχυνομαῖται be (made) ashamed

Cf. Mark 8:38 // Luke 9:26.

It is *possible* to understand the subject of these verbs to be John and the other apostles, cf. 1 Thess 2:19f; Phil 4:1. But it is more natural to understand that John simply identifies himself with believers generally, cf. 2 Thess 1:7-9.

παρουσία, ας f coming, arrival, presence

Of παρουσία Marshall writes, "This word was used for the visit of a ruler to some part of his dominions, an occasion for celebrating and rejoicing... It is this kind of atmosphere which is conveyed by this word. It conceives of the return of Jesus to this world in visible splendour, like a monarch."

1 John 2:29

ἐὰν εἰδῆτε ὅτι δίκαιος ἐστιν, γινώσκετε ὅτι πᾶς
ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἐξ ἀυτοῦ γεγέννηται.

Verse 29 is transitional: it "looks backward to vv 18–28 as well as forward to 3:1–4:6." Smalley. The theme of new birth introduced here features prominently in the rest of the epistle, cf. 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; cf. John 1:12–13; 3:3–8.

εἰδῆτε Verb, perf/pres act subj, 2 pl οἶδα
δίκαιος, α, ov righteous, just

δίκαιος the thought moves from judgment (v. 28) to the character of the judge – and from abiding in him to its outward evidence.

ὁ ποιῶν – present continuous, "who realises in action little by little the righteousness which corresponds with the Divine Nature."
Westcott.

δικαιοσύνη, ης f righteousness

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

Is the reference in this verse to God (the Father) or to Christ? Continuity with v.28 (and the parallel with v.1) would suggest that it is Christ who is spoken of as the righteous one, but it seems strange to refer to believers as being born of Christ. It may be best to understand the thought to move from Christ to God. "When St John thinks of God in relation to men he never thinks of Him apart from Christ (comp 5:20). Again he never thinks of Christ in his human nature without adding the thought of His divine nature. Thus a rapid transition is possible from the one aspect of the Lord's divine-human Person to the other. Here the passage is from 'Christ' to 'God'." (Westcott). Hence the thought is that those who do what is righteous are born of God and are like his Son.

"The presence of righteous action is the sure sign of the reality of the divine birth... It must be further observed that righteousness is not the condition but the consequence of Sonship." Westcott.

1 John 3:1 ff.

Smalley writes, "The second major division of 1 John begins at this point... In the second division of this document (3:1–5:13) John concentrates on the developing spiritual life of his followers, rather than sustaining his attack on the heretics, some of whom have already seceded from his church (2:19). The latter, however, are still in view (cf. 3:4, 7; 4:1–6)."

1 John 3:1

ἴδετε ποταπὴν ἀγάπην δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ πατήρ
ἴνα τέκνα θεοῦ κληθῶμεν, καὶ ἐσμέν. διὰ
τοῦτο ὁ κόσμος οὐ γινώσκει ἡμᾶς ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνω
αὐτὸν.

Marshall comments, "From the thought of the new birth ... John's thought moves to the great love shown by God, as a result of which we have become his children. The train of thought has an interesting parallel with John 3 where the conversation with Nicodemus about the new birth from above through which alone men can enter the kingdom of God is followed by the magnificent declaration of the divine love which sent God's only Son so that we might have eternal life."

ἴδετε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl ὄραω see

The word introduces a sense of excitement.

ποταπος, η, ov of what sort, what kind

Here, 'how lavish'.

δέδωκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s διδῷμι

Smalley writes, "The phrase ἀγάπην δέδωκεν (unique in the NT) suggests – in combination with ποταπήν – the extent of God's love, which has graciously been 'showered' on believers as their 'inalienable possession'."

κληθόμεν Verb, aor pass subj, 1 pl καλεω

καὶ ἐσμεν = 'and such we are.' Several later witnesses, including TR and followed by AV, omit these words.

ἔγνω Verb, aor act indic, 3 s γινωσκω

The world does not comprehend the Christian because it does not know God.

1 John 3:2

ἀγαπητοί, νῦν τέκνα θεοῦ ἐσμεν, καὶ οὐπώ
ἐφανερώθη τί ἐσόμεθα. οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἔὰν
φανερώθῃ ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα, ὅτι ὄψόμεθα
αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν.

ἀγαπητος, η, ov beloved

"The Christian has now, even in the present life, that which carries with it potentially infinite blessings, but the manifestation of his sonship is hindered by the circumstances in which he is placed. He will not be anything essentially different hereafter, but he will be what he is now essentially more completely, though in ways wholly beyond our power of imagination." Westcott.

οὐπώ not yet

ἐφανερώθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s
φανερωω see 2:19

ἐσομεθα Verb, fut indic, 1 pl εἰμι

οἶδα know, understand

φανερώθῃ see 2:28

When he appears in all the glory of his risen and reigning power.

ὅμοιος, α, ov like, of the same kind as

Cf. Phil 3:20,21.

ὄψόμεθα Verb, fut midd dep indic, 1 pl ὄρωω
see

Cf. 2 Cor 3:18.

Smalley comments, "The thought which is voiced here with such vividness and simplicity has deeply influenced the tradition, and especially the mystical tradition, of the Christian Church (see further Underhill, *Mystic Way*, 257). As Dodd (71) says, John's 'serene certainty that we shall see our Lord and be like Him, is the model for all our thinking about the life to come.' But, as the next verse immediately reminds us, such a vision of heaven cannot be detached from Christian experience and responsibility here on earth."

1 John 3:3

καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην ἐπ' αὐτῷ
ἀγνίζει ἑαυτὸν καθὼς ἐκεῖνος ἀγνός ἐστιν.

πᾶς ὁ ἔχων lays stress on the personal responsibility of every believer who is a true child of God.

ἐλπις, ιδος f hope, ground of hope

ἐπ· αὐτῷ could mean 'in himself' or 'in God'

ἀγνίζω purify, cleanse

ἑαυτος, έαυτη, έαυτον him/herself, itself

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο that (one), he, she, it

ἀγνος, η, ov pure, holy

"He who looks forward to becoming like God hereafter must strive after His likeness now:

Matt 5:8; Gal 5:5." Westcott.

1 John 3:4-9

Smalley comments, "John now pursues the connection between Christ and the Christian, as the means for living properly within God's family, by dwelling first on the need to renounce sin (vv 4–9; cf. the reference to 'purity' in v 3). There is 'nothing sinful' in Jesus (v 5), and we are to avoid the constant practice of sin (vv 6, 9). We can do this because he 'appeared in order to abolish sins,' and to 'destroy the devil's works' (vv 5, 8). On the positive side, the Christian is to 'practice righteousness' in a way that echoes the activity of God in Christ (v 7). Both the renunciation of sin and right conduct are marks of divine sonship."

1 John 3:4

Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν
ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐστίν ἡ ἀνομία.

ἀμαρτια, ας f sin

ἀνομια, ας f wickedness, lawlessness, sin

"Sin and lawlessness are convertible terms.

Sin is not an arbitrary conception. It is the assertion of a selfish will against a paramount authority." Westcott.

The believers to whom John is writing were being told that sin could be regarded as a matter of indifference. John tells them that it is rebellion against God.

For 'lawlessness' cf. 2 Thess 2:3, 7. To commit sin is to place oneself on the side of the devil and the antichrist and to stand in opposition to Christ.

1 John 3:5

καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐφανερώθη ἵνα τὰς
ἀμαρτίας ἄρῃ, καὶ ἀμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἐστιν.

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο that (one), he, she, it

ἐφανερώθη see 2:28; 3:2

Some MSS (e.g. Χ C K L Vg, followed by NIV) add ἡμῶν after τὰς ἀμαρτίας. The addition appears to be secondary.

ἀρη Verb, aor act subj, 3 s αἴρω take, take away

Cf. John 1:29; Heb 10:4. "As Westcott (103) says, the thought is not simply that of the self-sacrifice of Jesus, but of the *opposition* to sin which he expressed on the cross. He came to 'abolish' sins, and not only to 'bear' them (cf. 1 Pet 2:24)." Smalley. Cf. the parallel phrase in v.8. Sin opposes Christ's work and his person.

1 John 3:6

πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει· πᾶς ὁ ἀμαρτάνων οὐχ ἔώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν.

ἀμαρτάνω sin, commit sin

Cf. 1:6. "It describes a character, 'a prevailing habit' and not primarily an act." Westcott. Cf. Tit 3:11; Heb 10:26. Most commentators understand the present tense as continuous in force, i.e. 'does not make a habit of sinning' (NIV, 'does not keep on sinning'). Marshall, however, prefers to understand the phrase as both an expression of what the Christian is called to be, shall be and therefore now ought to be: he argues that the language is eschatological. John, like Paul, is calling Christians to 'be what they are.'

Schnackenburg adds to this discussion a useful reminder that the eschatological tension between the 'is now' and the 'not yet,' typical of John's theology of salvation, is probably relevant at this point.

It may also be added that the intensity of John's language is shaped by the false claims of his opponents. Smalley expresses this view as follows, "Those who belong to God do right, and do not sin; while those who are children of the devil act wrongly (cf. vv 7–8, 10). The polarity is understandably exaggerated in such a context."

ὁραω see

ἔγνωκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s γινωσκω

1 John 3:7

τεκνία, μηδεὶς πλανάτω ὑμᾶς· ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιος ἐστιν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιος ἐστιν·

τεκνιον, ου n little child, child

μηδεῖς, μηδεμια, μηδεν no one, nothing
πλαναω lead astray, mislead, deceive

John underlines and repeats the point. His comment 'let no one deceive you' is obviously directed against the heretical secessionists who were causing division in the church (cf. 2:19).

δικαιοισυνη, ης f righteousness

δικαιος, α, ον righteous

"Righteousness is the sign of divine sonship (2:29). The 'doing righteousness' reveals the character and does not create it. The man who is righteous is recognised by his actions." Westcott. Cf. Matt 7:16 // Luke 6:44.

1 John 3:8

ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν, ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἀμαρτάνει. εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερώθη ὁ νιός τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου.

διαβολος, ου m the devil

Cf. 2:16; Jn 8:44

ἀρχη, ης f beginning

"The force of the argument lies in the recognition of the state of things at the first dawn of human history. From the very beginning we see a power in action hostile to God. Between these two, as between light and darkness, there can be no middle term. He who does not belong to one belongs to the other... It will be noticed that as St Paul traces back sin to the act of the typical representative of mankind, Adam (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22), so St John traces it back yet further to a spiritual origin." Westcott.

λύσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s λυω loose, untie, set aside

"'The works of the devil' are represented as having a certain consistency, and coherence. They shew a kind of solid front. But Christ by His coming has revealed them in their complete unsubstantiality. He has 'undone' the seeming bonds by which they were held together." Westcott.

Marshall thinks that the term also alludes to the devil's enslavement of mankind.

1 John 3:9

πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, καὶ οὐ δύναται ἀμαρτάνειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται.

"John concludes this section by reminding his readers that the true child of God is (like the Father himself) opposed to sin. Whereas the determined sinner (the heretic in John's church, perhaps, as opposed to the orthodox Christian) belongs to the devil (v 8), the spiritually reborn believer, being a member of God's family, cannot as a settled policy act lawlessly (cf. v 4). In other words, we reproduce in our lives a 'family' likeness, depending upon our spiritual parentage; and those who are 'born of God' do not sin (cf. vv 7, 8, 10)." Smalley.

γεγεννημένος Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom s
γενναω bear; pass be born

"The exact form is important. The perfect (ό γεγεννημένος) marks not only the single act (*aor.* ἐγεννηθησαν John 1:13; 5:18) but the continuous presence of its efficacy." Westcott.

σπέρμα, τος n seed

"The principle of life which He has given continues to be the ruling principle of the believer's growth. God gives, as it were, of Himself to the Christian. He does not only work upon him and leave him..."

"The instrument by which this vital element is conveyed is the 'word': James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; Luke 8:12,15." Westcott.

Marshall and Smalley argue that the 'seed' is both the word and the Spirit.

δύναμαι can, be able to, be capable of

The presence of God and the presence of sin are incompatible. Smalley cites the new covenant promises of Jer 31:33-34 and Ezek 36:25-27 and concludes, "Against such a background, with which John would have been familiar, we may now understand σπέρμα to mean the word of God which is received in faith by the Christian, and which (through the inward activity of the Spirit) leads to rebirth, and the experience of increasing holiness by living in Jesus."

γεγέννηται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γενναω

1 John 3:10

Smalley argues that v. 10 forms the beginning of a new section (3:10-24 – though he acknowledges it as a bridge verse) whereas Marshall thinks the verse concludes the present section.

1 John 3:10

ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἔστιν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ διαβόλου· πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ.

φανερος, α, ον known, evident, plain, visible

It is possible to determine who are the children of God and the children of the devil by how they live. John writes to encourage the faithful and make clear to them the parentage of the false teachers.

ἀγαπαω love, show love for

"Righteousness involves the fulfilment of all law, of relations to God and to man, both personally and socially. The love of Christian for Christian, resting on the sense of a divine fellowship (1:3) carries forward to its loftiest embodiment the righteousness which man can reach." Westcott.

Smalley writes, "The last phrase in this v clarifies what has been said in v 10a (and, indeed, in the last section), as well as leading into the theme of obedience (= love) which dominates the present passage. The connecting particle καὶ thus carries the sense of 'that is,' or 'namely'."

1 John 3:11

Οὐτὶ αὕτη ἔστιν ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἤκουσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους·

"John now introduces the basis for the statement which he made in v 10. Mutual love is the content of the good news heard from the very beginning ... Therefore the true child of God must not only renounce sin (3:4–9), but also demonstrate his divine origin by obeying the command to love." Smalley.

ἀγγελια ας f message, news; command

Some MSS read ἐπαγγελία rather than ἀγγελία (found in NT only here and at 1:5). This is clearly the result of careless copying with a more common word replacing a less familiar one.

ἵκουσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς i.e. from the start of their hearing of the gospel – it has been central to the message they heard.

ἀλληλων οις ους reciprocal pronoun one another

Cf. John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17. This is firstly a demand to love within the community of the people of God – but it is not to stop there. Like the love of God it is to be shown also to those not yet drawn to him.

1 John 3:12

οὐ καθὼς Κάιν ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν καὶ ἐσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ· καὶ χάριν τίνος ἐσφαξεν αὐτόν; ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν, τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια.

πονηρος α ον evil, bad, wicked

'the case is not with us as it was with Cain; he was of the evil one...'

σφαζω slaughter, put to death

χαριν prep with gen for the sake of, because of

δικαιος α ον righteous, just

From the beginning there was enmity between those who are children of God (the righteous) and those who are of the evil one. Smalley comments, "The contrast between Cain's attitude and that of his brother provides John with a paradigm, as we discover from the passage which follows (vv 13–18). For the disobedient hatred of Cain is regarded as typical of the world (v 13), while Abel's righteousness (it is suggested) should characterize the loving community of the Christian Church (v 14). More than that, John probably finds in the behavior of the two brothers prototypes of the heretical and orthodox groups within his own congregation."

1 John 3:13

μὴ θαυμάζετε, ἀδελφοί, εἰ μισεῖ ύμᾶς ὁ κόσμος.

καὶ is omitted by some MSS. Metzger writes concerning the UBS Text, "It is difficult to decide whether καὶ was added by copyists in order to provide a closer connection with what goes before; or whether, because of the preceding word (δίκαια), copyists accidentally omitted καὶ."

θαυμαζω wonder, be amazed

Cf. John 5:28.

μισεω hate, despise

Cf. 4:11; 5:9; John 15:18. Smalley thinks that the present tense μισεῖ suggests "that John is here describing a present fact, not a future possibility."

1 John 3:14

ἡμεῖς οἴδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωήν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς· ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ.

The reverse of vv. 12-13 is now expressed.

οἶδα know

μεταβεβήκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl

μεταβανω leave, move, cross over

θανατος ou m death

ζωη ης f life

"Death and life are regarded as two spheres in which men move." Westcott. Smalley writes that they, "represent the alternative spiritual dominions to which man may give his allegiance." Cf. John 5:24.

Some MSS (N Vg, et al) add ἡμῶν after τοὺς ἀδελφούς. This appears to be a secondary expansion.

Smalley comments, "The present tense of the verb ἀγαπῶμεν ('we love') indicates that the need for brotherly love, as a mark of those who belong to God's family and are his children, is constant."

Some texts (C K Ψ et al) add τὸν ἀδελφὸν to μὴ ἀγαπῶν while some include also αὐτοῦ after ἀδελφὸν. These appear to be natural expansions.

μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ "It is not said that he dies. Death is his natural state." Westcott.

1 John 3:15

πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἔστιν, καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι πᾶς ἀνθρωποκτόνος οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐν αὐτῷ μένουσαν.

"There are Cain's in the new family." Westcott.
ἀνθρωποκτόνος ou m murderer

Marshall writes, "John takes up the thought implied in Matthew 5:21f. and states quite bluntly that hatred is tantamount to murder. Hatred is the wish that the other person was not there; it is the refusal to recognise his rights as a person, the longing that he might be dead. We may not like to put the point quite so frankly, but it is good that the real character of hatred should be so unambiguously displayed, so as to warn us against it. If I hate somebody, I am no different from a murderer in my attitude toward him."

Cf. Jn 8:44 where the word is used of the devil.
αἰώνιος ov eternal, everlasting

1 John 3:16

ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν· καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι.

ἐγνώκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl γνωσκω

The perfect suggests that the reference is to a particular historical event.

ἐκεῖνος η ο that (one), he, she, it

ψυχη ης f self, life, 'soul'

ἔθηκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s τιθημι place, set

'lay down', cf. Jn 10:11,15,17ff.; 13:37ff.; 15:13.

ὀφείλω owe, ought, must, be obligated

The present tense suggests a continuing obligation.

θεῖναι Verb, aor act infin τιθημι

"The cross is an example to copy, and not simply a revelation of love to admire." Smalley.

1 John 3:17

ὅς δ' ἂν ἔχῃ τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ θεωρῇ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ χρείαν ἔχοντα καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, πῶς ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἐν αὐτῷ;

The obligation to love is not something vague and theoretical but is expressed in practical and down-to-earth ways.

οἵς ἀν whoever

βίος οὐκ εἰ life, living, possessions

"The phrase includes all the endowments which make up our earthly riches, wealth, station, intellect." Westcott.

θεωρεῖ see, observe, notice

χρεία αἰς f need, want

κλείσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s κλειώ shut, shut up, lock

σπλαγχνον οὐκ εἴ affections, heart

Cf. Ps 77:9 (76:10 LXX).

ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ "It is not certain whether John means 'God's love channelled through us,' or 'our love for God,' or (as is most probable) 'the type of love shown by God'." Marshall.

1 John 3:18

Τεκνία, μή ἀγαπᾶμεν λόγῳ μηδὲ τῇ γλώσσῃ ἀλλὰ ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ.

τεκνίον οὐκ εἴ little child, child

μηδὲ negative particle nor, and not, neither

γλώσσα ἡς f tongue, language, speech

ἀληθεία αἰς f truth, reality

For the contrast between lip-service and action in the life of the believer cf. Matt 7:21; Jas 1:22–25; 2:14–17.

1 John 3:19-24

Marshall writes, "This passage can be regarded as the conclusion to the preceding part of the letter and also as a bridge to the remaining part. Its main purpose is to give assurance to the readers, on the basis of which they may have confidence to approach God in prayer. Yet, although John emphasises that our assurance ultimately depends on God himself, nevertheless he insists that we must continue to keep his commands to believe in Jesus and to love one another. When we do this, the Spirit inwardly assures us of our spiritual position. The passage is a difficult one to follow, since it relates the divine and human aspects of assurance in a paradoxical fashion."

Smalley similarly writes, "The general sense of vv 19–24 is clear enough, even if the Greek expression occasionally presents problems. Six points are made: (a) the practice of love is a guarantee of Christian sonship; (b) so is God's knowledge of the believer; (c) a clear conscience enables the Christian to enjoy a confident spiritual relationship with God; (d) faith and love are the summary of God's commands; (e) obedience to those demands is the basis for living in God through Christ; (f) the gift of the Spirit assures the Christian of God's presence in his daily life."

1 John 3:19

ἐν τούτῳ γνωσόμεθα ὅτι ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐσμέν, καὶ ἐμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πείσομεν τὴν καρδίαν ἡμῶν

Verses 19 and 20 can be understood properly only if they are read together.

The case for inclusion or omission of an opening καὶ is similar to that in v. 13.

The 'in this' looks back to what John has just said in vv. 16-18. "*In this*, the consciousness of active and sincere love of the brethren, resting upon and moulded by the love of Christ." Westcott.

γνωσόμεθα Verb, fut midd indic, 1 pl γινωσκω

The future tense points forward to some future time of crisis of confidence or of faith – 'Can I be sure I am his?'

ἐμπροσθεν prep + gen before, in front of πείσομεν Verb, fut act indic, 1 pl πειθω persuade, convince, assure

"The many conflicting interpretations of this passage spring out of the different translations of (i) the verb πείσομεν, and (ii) the double conjunction or relative ὅτι (οἱ τι)." Westcott. Smalley thinks that the second ὅτι should be regarded as the neuter of the relative pronoun ὅστις ('who/which') and directly associated with the following εἴαν. The meaning then becomes '(in) whatever (matters)' (so Westcott), or, as in RSV, NIV, 'whenever'. Westcott says that πείσομεν may be either 'persuade' or 'assure'. Smalley favours the sense, 'satisfy' or 'set at ease' (cf. Matt 28:14). He writes, "John is saying that loving behaviour is a means of being reassured in the searching presence of God."

1 John 3:20

ὅτι ἐὰν καταγινώσκῃ ἡμῶν ἡ καρδία, ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς τῆς καρδίας ἡμῶν καὶ γινώσκει πάντα.

ὅτι ἐὰν Westcott understands this to mean 'wherinsoever,' Smalley as 'whenever.'

καταγινώσκω condemn

The internal judgment of conscience. cf. Gal 2:11.

The exegetical difficulties involved in this verse caused the second ὅτι (read by Σ B C K L, et al.), to be omitted by A Vg, et al. But precisely because of its difficulty the inclusion of ὅτι is obviously original.

μείζον ov greater, greatest

"The meaning of the whole passage will be: The sense within us of a sincere love for the brethren, which is the sign of God's presence with us, will enable us to stay the accusations of our conscience, whatever they may be, because God, who gives us the love, and so blesses us with His fellowship, is greater than our heart; and He, having perfect knowledge, forgives all on which the heart sadly dwells." Westcott. Cf. Paul's statement in 1 Cor 4:3-5. The thought of vv 19-20 will reappear in vv 22b-24.

1 John 3:21

ἀγαπητοί, ἐὰν ἡ καρδία μὴ καταγινώσκῃ ἡμῶν, παρρησίαν ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεόν,
ἀγαπητος η ov beloved

The great majority of MSS include ἡμῶν after καρδία but there are significant omissions (A B Ψ 33 436 et al).

"It does not imply a claim to sinlessness, nor yet an insensitivity to the heinousness of sin, but the action of a lively faith which retains a real sense of fellowship with God, and this carries with it confidence and peace."

Westcott.

Marshall writes, "If we can set our hearts at rest by remembering that God is greater than our hearts and knows everything, then our hearts will no longer condemn us, and we shall be able to approach God with boldness."

παρρησία ας f boldness, assurance

"The thought here is of the boldness with which the son appears before the Father, and not that with which the accused appears before the Judge." Westcott.

Smalley comments, "The child of God, who walks in the light and obeys the love command (cf. 1:7; 2:6, 10), has the privilege of 'bold speech' in the presence of God. But he also possesses the certainty that God hears and answers prayer (v 22)."

1 John 3:22

καὶ ὁ ἐὰν αἰτᾶμεν λαμβάνομεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ὅτι τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηροῦμεν καὶ τὰ ἀρεστὰ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦμεν.

αἰτεῖ ask, request

Cf. John 14:14; 16:23, also 15:16.

ἐντολὴ ης f command, order
τηρεῖ keep, observe

"The answer to prayer is given not as a reward for meritorious action, but because the prayer itself rightly understood coincides with God's will (comp. John 8:29; 11:42). The sole object of the believer is to do thoroughly the part which has been assigned to him: his petitions are directed to this end and so are necessarily granted. Comp John 15:7." Westcott.

ἀρεστος η ov pleasing

Marshall writes, "John's purpose is to encourage us to enter fully into the filial relationship in which God delights to hear and answer the requests of his children. The more fully we enter into that relationship, the more will our asking be in accordance with his will." Again, cf. John 15:7.

1 John 3:23

καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα πιστεύσωμεν τῷ ὄντι ματὶ τοῦ νιοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἔδωκεν ἐντολὴν ἡμῖν.

The *one* command is then described as having two facets, but they remain facets of the one command.

πιστεύω believe (in), have faith (in)

Cf. Jn 6:29. This is the first occurrence of πιστεύω in this letter (99 occurrences in John's Gospel), though it will now occur again in 4:1, 16; 5:1, 5, 10, 13.

For the aorist subjunctive ἵνα πιστεύσωμεν (B K L, et al), some MSS (e.g. Σ A C) substitute the present subjunctive, ἵνα πιστεύωμεν, which has virtually the same meaning. Either reading makes sense in the context, but the aorist is perhaps original.

ὄνομα τος n name

To 'believe in the name' suggests a meaning close to ὁμολογεῖν in 2:23 (cf. 4:2-3, 15). It "implies a confession of his character and authority ... as truly Son of God and Messiah." Smalley.

ἀλληλων οις ους see v.11

Cf. 4:7,11,12; 2 Jn 5; Jn 13:34; 15:12,17.

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διδῷμι

Smalley concludes, "John has thus provided his readers with what Maurice (214) calls two 'counter-signs,' to distinguish the true child of God from the offspring of the devil (cf. v 10): right belief (in Jesus as both man and God), and right behaviour (expressed in terms of obedience; in particular, and following the example of Jesus mentioned in v 16, obedience to the love command). In this way a distinction is clearly drawn yet again between orthodox and heterodox members within or around the Johannine community."

1 John 3:24

καὶ ὁ τηρῶν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτῷ· καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι μένει ἐν ἡμῖν, ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος οὓς ἡμῖν ᔓδωκεν.

Cf. Jn 15, also the prophetic promise in Ezek 37:27 and its ultimate fulfilment in Rev 21:3. Smalley comments, "The point which John is making in the first part of this verse, that obedience and reciprocal indwelling (between God and the believer) are inextricably associated, has been anticipated to some extent in earlier parts of this letter (cf. 2:5, 24, 27-29; 3:6, 9, 10, 18-19; and, for the notion of 'obedient reciprocity' with reference to the Father-Son relationship, see John 10:37-38; 12:48-49; 14:10-11)."

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διδῷμι

Westcott links the 'in this' to the first half of the verse, writing, "The love which the Christian feels and which is the spring of his obedience, assures him of God's fellowship with him. In other words, God has given him of His Spirit."

Smalley says that this is an unlikely meaning. He argues (as does Marshall) that the reference here is to the internal witness of the Spirit without explaining precisely how that is manifest. Smalley writes, "Like Paul, John here regards the witness of the Spirit as a source of confidence, when this is required (Rom 8:14-16; cf. 1 John 3:19-20)."

1 John 4:1-6

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)."

1 John 4:1

Ἄγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε, ἀλλὰ δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα εἰ ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔστιν, ὅτι πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

ἀγαπητος η ου 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.

ψευδοπροφῆτης 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
ἐξερχομαι

"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.

1 John 4:2

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

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
ἔρχομαι

"The construction of these words is not quite clear. Three ways of taking them are possible.
(i) The direct object may be Ἰησοῦν and χριστὸν ἐν σ. ἐλ. a secondary predicate: 'confesseth Jesus as Christ and a Christ come in the flesh'; (ii) The direct object may be Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν 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."

1 John 4:3

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

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 ἀκουω
ἡδη adv now, already

1 John 4:4

ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔστε, τεκνία, καὶ νενικήκατε αὐτούς, ὅτι μείζων ἔστιν ὁ ἐν ὑμῖν ἡ ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ·

τεκνίον οὐ ποτέ see 3:18
νικάω 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 over 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.

1 John 4:5

αὐτοὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου εἰσίν· 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.

1 John 4:6

ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔσμεν· ὁ γινώσκων τὸν θεὸν ἀκούει ἡμῶν, ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἀκούει ἡμῶν. ἐκ τούτου γινώσκομεν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης.

Westcott says that the transition from ὡμεῖς 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."

ἀληθεία αἷς f truth, reality
πλανη̄ ηἷς 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."

1 John 4:4:7-5:4

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.

1 John 4:7

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

ἀγαπητος η ου see 3:2

The form of address, αγαπητοί, 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.

ἀλληλων οις ους one another

ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔστιν "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)."

1 John 4:8

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

ἔγνω Verb, aor act indic, 3 s γινωσκω

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 ἔστιν 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.

1 John 4:9

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

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

"In the retrospect of His completed work on earth the Lord says: ἐφανερώσα σου τὸ 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

ζω 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.

1 John 4:10

ἐν τούτῳ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἡγαπήκαμεν τὸν θεόν, ἀλλ' ὅτι αὐτὸς ἡγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν νιὸν αὐτοῦ ἰλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν.

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

ἡγαπήκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl ἀγαπαω

Smalley writes, "In place of ἡγαπήκαμεν ('we have loved'), which is read by B, most witnesses have the verb in the aorist: ἡγαπήσαμεν ('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, ἡγάπησεν, aorist), rather than through man's continuing love (ἡγαπήκαμεν, perfect) for God."

ἱλασμος 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."

1 John 4:11

ἀγαπητοί, εἰ οὕτως ὁ θεὸς ἡγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ
ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν.
οὕτως thus, in this way

Cf. the use of οὕτως in John 3:16.

ὁφειλω̄ see 3:16

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

1 John 4:12

Θεὸν οὐδεὶς πώποτε τεθέαται· εὰν ἀγαπῶμεν
ἀλλήλους, ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη
αὐτοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν τετελειωμένη ἔστιν.

οὐδεὶς οὐδὲμια οὐδὲν 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.

μενω̄ remain, stay, abide

τετελειωμένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s
τελειω̄ 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."

1 John 4:13-16

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."

1 John 4:13

Ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν 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 διδωμι

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)."

1 John 4:14

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

μαρτυρεω̄ 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
ἀποστελλω̄ send

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

Westcott.

σωτῆρ ιησος m saviour

Cf. John 4:42.

1 John 4:15

ὅς ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἔστιν ὁ νιὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ θεῷ.

ὅς ἐὰν **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.

1 John 4:16

καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχει ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν.

Ο θεὸς ἀγάπη ἔστιν, καὶ ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ θεῷ μένει καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει.

ἐγνώκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl γνωσκω πιστευω **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 ἡμας*). 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).

μενω **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."

1 John 4:17

ἐν τούτῳ τετελείωται ἡ ἀγάπη μεθ' ἡμῶν, ἵνα παρρησίαν ἔχωμεν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως, ὅτι καθὼς ἐκεῖνός ἔστιν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἔσμεν 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 τελεω **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.

παρρησια, 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.

κρισις, εως f **judgement**
ἐκεινος, 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)."

1 John 4:18

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)
τετελειωται 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.

1 John 4:19

ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν, ὅτι αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἡγάπησεν ἡμᾶς.

ἀγαπω 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.hcl} 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."

1 John 4:20

ἐάν τις εἴπῃ ὅτι Αγαπῶ τὸν θεόν, καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῇ, ψεύστης ἔστιν· ὁ γὰρ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ὃν ἐώρακεν, τὸν θεὸν δὲ οὐχ ἐώρακεν 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.

όραω see

Smalley writes, "For οὐ δύναται ἀγαπᾶν ('he cannot love'), which is attested by *κΑ Κ Λ 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.)"

1 John 4:21

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.

1 John 5:1

Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ χριστὸς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγένηται, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν γεννήσαντα ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν γεγενημένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ.

γεγένηται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γεννάω
be father of, bear; pass be born

The perfect tense indicates the present state of the believer. Marshall comments, "Faith is thus a sign of the new birth, just as love (4:7) and doing what is right (2:29; 3:9f.) are also indications that a person has been born of God." And Smalley comments, "The regenerate Christian (past) must constantly live out (present) his faith in Jesus as Messiah, and also give his sustained allegiance to the love command."

γεννήσαντα Verb, aor act ptc, m acc s
γεννάω

καὶ is included by *κΑ Κ Π Βγ^{cl} cop^{bo}*, et al., but omitted by *Β Ψ Βγ^{ww} cop^{sa}*, et al.. There is no certainty about the original reading from the MS evidence; but in this context the addition of an intensive enclitic ('also loves') is entirely appropriate.

γεγενημένον Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc & n nom/acc s γεννάω

Augustine thought that the reference here is to Christ, but this does not fit the context. It is possible that the meaning is that 'Anyone who loves *his own* parent should also love other children of his parents.'

1 John 5:2

ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅταν τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ποιῶμεν.

Marshall argues that the train of thought in this verse demands that ἀγαπῶμεν here be understood as 'we *ought* to love.' Smalley disagrees – see below.

τεκνον, ου n child
όταν when, whenever
ἐντολῇ, ης f see 4:21

Love for one another is one of the central commands of God. "The one commandment of God (ἡ ἐντολῇ) is that we believe the Name of His Son and love one another." Westcott. Smalley cites Westcott and says, "'We know that we love God's children when we love God.' John is then saying once more that love of others (including God's offspring) is grounded in the love of God (see 4:8, 16, 19...). The two loves are inseparable (4:12); we are to love others in God, and God in others. Moreover, when we love God truly we shall want to obey his orders, which are in any case summed up in the command to love other people (3:11; 4:7, 21). Thus we can recognize that we love God's children properly by loving God himself obediently."

Some MSS, including *κ Λ Ρ TR*, read τηρῶμεν in place of ποιῶμεν. This would seem to reflect an attempt to conform the text to the more normal phrase. The expression τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ποιῶμεν occurs nowhere else in the NT.

Westcott suggests that the use of ποιεω suggests the active and positive 'energy of obedience'.

1 John 5:3

αὕτη γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἀγάπῃ τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν, καὶ αἱ ἐντολαὶ αὐτοῦ βαρεῖται οὐκ εἰστίν,

τηρεω keep, observe

"A continuous and watchful endeavour to observe them." Westcott.

βαρυς, εια, υ heavy, hard, difficult

Cf. Matt 11:30; 23:4. Smalley comments, "When John claims that God's commands are not 'burdensome' (βαρεῖαι), he means that they are not oppressive, so as to crush the freedom and spontaneity of love (he will show *why* they are not thus oppressive in v 4)."

1 John 5:4

ὅτι πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ νικᾷ τὸν κόσμον. καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ νίκη ἡ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον, ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν·

ὅτι "The fact that the divine commandments are not a burden is not established by a consideration of their character. In themselves they are difficult (Acts 14:22; John 16:33). To love the brethren is not a light thing. But with the commandment comes also the power of fulfilment. Natural taste, feeling, judgement may check spiritual sympathy; but every faculty and power which is quickened by God is essentially stronger than 'the world' and realises its victory at once." Westcott.

γεγεννημένον see v.2

νικᾷ Verb, pres act indic, 3 s νικάω
conquer, overcome

"A struggle which is present and continuous... Under the title 'the world' St John gathers up the sum of all the limited, transitory powers opposed to God which make obedience difficult." Westcott.

νικη, ης f victory

Occurs here only in the New Testament.

νικήσασα Verb, aor act ptc, f nom s νικάω
πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

Faith forms a vital link with Christ who has gained this victory. Marshall comments, "The fact that we hold the true faith from our hearts is the means whereby the power of the new world operates in us and enables us to overcome the world. It is striking that John says that we *have* overcome the world.

Perhaps he is thinking of the completed victory of Jesus (Jn 16:33) which repeats itself in the life of the Christian."

1 John 5:5

τίς δέ ἐστιν ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον εἰ μὴ ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ νιὸς τοῦ θεοῦ;

To the words τίς ἐστιν, read by A L Vg et al., some mss (including ^κB K P ^{hcl}syr) add δέ. Such a particle is likely to have been dropped from the text, rather than added to it; but equally the connection between v 5 and its predecessor is not so close that an enclitic becomes indispensable. The measure of doubt surrounding the origin of δέ is reflected in the UBS text, where it is enclosed in square brackets.

Verse 5 forms a bridge between vv 1-4 and the verses that follow.

Smalley comments, "The shift from confessing Jesus as 'Christ' (5:1), to accepting him as 'Son of God' in this verse, is paralleled at 2:22–23. It may be that for John both titles indicated the exalted status of Jesus, with little basic difference in meaning between them. As Son of God and Messiah, Jesus is intimately related to the Father (cf. John 13:3). However, the title 'Son of God' is perhaps especially appropriate in the present context because John is thinking of 'the power of God revealed in his Son, Jesus' (Marshall...). God's Son shares God's power, which is greater than that of the devil (cf. 4:4). Thus the believer can draw on the resources which are in God, through his Son, in order to 'conquer the world'; and in this way the temptation to adopt a worldly attitude, and to be allied with worldly desires (cf. 2:17), can be overcome. Right belief leads to right behaviour (cf. 5:1–4)."

1 John 5:6

Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἔλθων δι' ὑδατος καὶ αἵματος, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός· οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὑδατι μόνον ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ ὑδατι καὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι· καὶ τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ μαρτυροῦν, ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια.

ἔλθων Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s ἐρχομαι
ὑδωρ, υδατος n water

Instead of καὶ αἵματος, which is read by B K L Ψ Vg ^rsyr, et al., a number of mss (including 43 241 Ambrose) have καὶ πνεύματος. Other witnesses add καὶ πνεύματος to the text, either before the word αἵματος (e.g. P 81 88 arm [eth]) or after it (e.g. ^κA ^{hcl}syr ^{sa,bo}cop). Some authorities (including 39 61) fill out the addition by appending ἀγίον to πνεύματος. These additions were probably introduced by copyists who recalled John 3:5 where Jesus speaks of birth 'from water and the Spirit'.

Suggests Jesus' baptism and his death, though Westcott sees in this a reference also to the water and the blood which John records as issuing from Jesus' side on the cross (Jn 19:34). Blood symbolises his life given as a sacrifice for others. Water symbolises the spiritual life (Jn 3:5; 4:14; 7:38).

μονον adv only, alone

Marshall comments, "The reason why John emphasised these two events in the life of Jesus is seen in the second part of the verse where he stresses that Jesus did not come by water only but by water and blood. If we read, as it were, between the lines, it is not hard to guess that John's opponents accepted that Jesus Christ came by water but not by blood. We have already seen who these opponents were (see 2 Jn 7; 1 Jn 2:22 ...). They were people who held that the heavenly Christ descended upon Jesus at his baptism but withdrew from him before his death, so that it was only the earthly Jesus who died and not the heavenly Christ. Over against this heresy John emphasised that it was Jesus Christ – not simply a human Jesus – who experienced both baptism and crucifixion."

Smalley comments, "Historically Jesus 'came' into his power and authority by the 'water' of his baptism, at which point he was declared to be God's Son (Mark 1:11; John 1:34); and he 'came' into his power and authority in an even more ultimate sense by the 'blood' of his cross, a moment which the fourth evangelist describes as the 'glorification' of Christ (John 17:1). Cf. 4:2."

μαρτυρεω bear witness, testify
ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

Marshall comments, "Since he refers to the Spirit's activity in the present tense, the most obvious interpretation is that the Spirit presently testifies to us, in our inward hearts or through the preaching of the Word, that the baptism and death of Jesus point to his being the Christ and Son of God."

Smalley adds, "As in vv 7–9, the theology of v 6 is fully trinitarian. John speaks of Jesus, God's Son, who came (from God) by water and blood, and to whom the Spirit bears witness."

1 John 5:7

ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες,

τρεῖς, τρια gen τριῶν dat τρισιν three

The present tense suggests a continuing witness.

1 John 5:8

τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὄδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσιν.

"The Spirit is the sign of the glory of the Risen Christ; John 7:39; 16:7; Acts 2:32f. Thus the Spirit, with the Water and the Blood, completes the witness to the Incarnation as a Fact no less than as an open source of blessing." Westcott.

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἐνος, μιας, ἐνος one

Marshall comments, "The implication of this last remark is that their witness stands or falls together; a person cannot claim that he is accepting the witness of the Spirit if he rejects the witness of the water and the blood to the character of Jesus."

Both Marshall and Smalley argue that 'water and blood' refer, as in v. 6, to Jesus' baptism and death – not, as some argue, to the sacraments. Smalley writes, "The basic subject in this part of 1 John is the need to keep faith in the revelation of God centered historically in Jesus (see the comment on v 6). The witness to this is provided above all by the Spirit who descended on Jesus at his baptism (John 1:32), and whom he gave to his disciples when, after his glorification on the cross (John 19:30; cf. 7:39), he empowered them for their mission (John 20:22 cf. 15:26–27). In each case the testimony of the Spirit himself is fundamental, and this is why he is called *first* as a witness here."

1 John 5:7-8 Textual Note

The short reading reproduced above is supported by the vast majority of mss., including the Byzantine. A longer reading is to be found in the Textus Receptus which appears to have been incorporated from the Latin versions, namely:

ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λογος, καὶ τὸ ἀγιον πνεῦμα· καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὄδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσιν.

This longer reading is clearly an addition to the original text and may have arisen by a marginal scribal note having subsequently been incorporated into the text.

1 John 5:9

εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαμβάνομεν, ή μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων ἔστιν, ὅτι αὕτη ἔστιν ή μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ τοῦ νιοῦ αὐτοῦ.

μαρτυρία, ας f testimony, witness

Even in the human arena the testimony of three witnesses should be accepted. Cf. John 5:36-37.

μείζων, οὐ greater

The perfect tense suggests a historical testimony – the testimony of God at Jesus' baptism and concerning his death.

1 John 5:10

ο πιστεύων εἰς τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἔχει τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἐν αὐτῷ· οὐ μὴ πιστεύων τῷ θεῷ ψεύστην πεποίηκεν αὐτόν, ὅτι οὐ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν μεμαρτύρηκεν ὁ θεὸς περὶ τοῦ νιοῦ αὐτοῦ.

έαυτος, έαυτη, έαυτον him/herself, itself

"That which for others is external is for the believer experimental. The witness of the Spirit and water and blood becomes an inner conviction of the life and cleansing and redemption." Westcott.

"To believe in the Son of God is to accept and keep God's testimony." Marshall. Smalley adds, "The inward witness of God's Spirit shows the Christian that he was right to believe in Jesus; and this 'internal testimony' (of the Spirit) balances and complements the external and historical witness of the 'water and blood,' the baptism and death of Jesus, which marked the limits of his earthly ministry (vv 6-8). Christian believing is subjective in character, but its origins are ultimately objective."

ψευστης, οὐ m liar

Cf. 1:10; 2:4, 22; 4:20

1 John 5:11

καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία, ὅτι ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔδωκεν ὁ θεὸς ἡμῖν, καὶ αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τῷ νιῷ αὐτοῦ ἐστιν.

ζωη, ης f life

αἰώνιος, οὐ eternal, everlasting

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διδωμι

"The reference is to the historic facts by which this life was communicated to humanity." Westcott.

1 John 5:12

οἱ ἔχοντες τὸν νιὸν ἔχει τὴν ζωὴν· οὐ μὴ ἔχοντες τὸν νιὸν θεοῦ τὴν ζωὴν οὐκ ἔχει.

Cf. Jn. 3:16-18; 14:6. Smalley comments, "So absolutely is eternal life available to the believer in and through Jesus, the Christ and Son of God, as John has claimed in v 11, that to possess the Son is to have 'life' in its completeness. The reverse is equally true... As in vv 11 and 13 John's theology includes an exclusive note. It is *only* through Jesus Christ that God's life may be shared by believers... A practical call to decision is also implicit. Life-giving faith is possible, and therefore it should be exercised and maintained!"

1 John 5:13

Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ἵνα εἰδῆτε ὅτι ζωὴν ἔχετε αἰώνιον, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ νιοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ.

Commences the epilogue. Cf. John 20:31.

γραφω write

Cf. 1:3,4.

After ὑμῖν, TR, following K L P et al. and most minuscules, reads τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ νιοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα εἰδῆτε ὅτι ζωὴν ἔχετε αἰώνιον, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύητε εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ νιοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. It is possible that the longer reading (as in TR) was original, and that it was subsequently contracted in order to avoid the repetition of τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ... ἵνα πιστεύητε. But it is much more likely that the extended variant is secondary. It probably represents an attempt to straighten out the slightly awkward order of the clauses in this verse, together with a scribal assimilation to the statement in John 20:31.

εἰδῆτε Verb, perf/pres act subj, 2 pl οἰδα

Cf 2:29; 3:14. Eternal life may be possessed without having assurance of such possession.

ὄνομα, τος n name

Cf. 3:23. An afterthought, describing the character of those addressed.

John's primary purpose in writing was "not to persuade unbelievers of the truth of the Christian faith but rather to strengthen Christian believers who might be tempted to doubt the reality of their Christian experience and to give up their faith in Jesus." Marshall. The subject of the following verses is therefore confidence.

1 John 5:14

καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ παρρησία ἣν ἔχομεν πρὸς αὐτόν, ὅτι ἐάν τι αἰτώμεθα κατὰ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ἀκούει ἡμῶν.

"One important result of the believer's assurance of eternal life is that he can have confidence and boldness in relation to God. In particular this applies to the situation of making requests to God in prayer." Marshall.

παρρησία, αἱ f boldness, assurance

Cf. 2:28 and Heb 4:16.

αἰτεῖον ask, request

θέλημα, αὐτος n will, wish, desire

Cf. 1 Pet 4:19; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:5,11 and Jn 15:7. Marshall comments, "It is as we freely yield ourselves to God that he is able to accomplish his will through us and our prayers. In a very real sense, therefore, the accomplishment of God's will in the world does depend on our prayers. Through prayer we make ourselves instruments of God's will, and at the same time, in a manner that lies beyond human comprehension, he is able to act powerfully to answer our prayers. When we learn to want what God wants, we have the joy of receiving his answers to our petitions."

1 John 5:15

καὶ ἐὰν ὅιδαμεν ὅτι ἀκούει ἡμῶν ὁ ἐὰν αἰτώμεθα, οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἔχομεν τὰ αιτήματα ἡ τήκαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.

αἰτημα, τος n request, demand

Cf. Phil 4:6; Lk 23:24.

ἡτήκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl αἰτεῖον

Cf. Mk 11:24.

1 John 5:16

ἐάν τις ἤδη τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἀμαρτάνοντα ἀμαρτίαν μὴ πρὸς θάνατον, αἰτήσει, καὶ δώσει αὐτῷ ζωήν, τοῖς ἀμαρτάνουσιν μὴ πρὸς θάνατον. ἔστιν ἀμαρτία πρὸς θάνατον· οὐ περὶ ἐκείνης λέγω ἵνα ἐρωτήσῃ.

"That boldness of access to God, which finds expression in prayer, finds its most characteristic expression in intercessory prayer." Westcott.

ἤδη Verb, aor act subj, 3 s ὄραω see

ἀμαρτανω sin, commit sin

ἀμαρτία, αἱ f sin

θάνατος, οὐ m death

All sin causes separation from God and tends to death. The sin which is *unto death* may be the sin of utter rejection of Christ. John does not say that we may not pray for such a person, but such prayer is not dealt with here nor is it prayer to which this promise may be attached.

So, for instance, Smalley, following Marshall, writes, "On the basis of the teaching in 1 John itself ... we may argue ... that 'sin leading to death' alludes to such wrongdoing as is incompatible with walking in the light and living as a child of God. Against such behaviour John has been warning his readers throughout this letter, by showing them the conditions for a truly Christian existence: renunciation of sin, obedience to the love command, rejection of worldliness, and maintenance of the faith. A deliberate refusal to fulfill those conditions leads to the very opposite of light and life; it must end in darkness and death. Those who choose such a path are committing an unpardonable sin (cf. Mark 3:28–29 = Matt 12:31–32 = Luke 12:10); and by their basic denial of Jesus, and their lack of love, they are risking God's denial of them (2:22–23; 3:10–15; cf. Mark 8:38 par.). Deliberate sin of this kind leads inevitably to apostasy, a removal from the Church which is evidence of the presence and spirit of antichrist (cf. 2:18–19; 4:2–5).

"Sin which does *not* lead to death, on the other hand, is still possible for believers. They may genuinely have faith in God through Christ, and seek to love their fellow men and women; but they may also find that on occasions the battle is too strong, and that they yield to temptation. Such error is not a deliberate turning away from God, but the kind of inadvertent wrongdoing to which John refers elsewhere in his letter, and for which God's grace has made provision (2:1–2; 4:10)."

ἔκεινος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that (one)

ἐρωτήσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s ἐρωταω

ask, request

1 John 5:17

πᾶσα ἀδικία ἀμαρτία ἐστίν, καὶ ἔστιν ἀμαρτία οὐ πρὸς θάνατον.

ἀδικία, αἱ f wrongdoing, evil, sin

Cf. 3:4.

1 John 5:18

Οἴδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγενημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει, ἀλλ' ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ αὐτὸν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς οὐχ ἄπτεται αὐτοῦ.

Marshall comments, "He takes up his keyword from verse 13: 'I write these things to you ... so that you may know.' In a series of three affirmations he declares the content of this Christian knowledge which should characterise his readers. It may be significant that the Greek word which he uses expresses a state of knowledge rather than the action of coming to know something. John is declaring what he and his fellow Christians know for certain, and his readers ought to be able to include themselves in the number of those whose Christian faith is a matter of certainty and assurance."

γεγενημένος see v.1

The perfect participle suggests the abiding results of regeneration.

"While St John states this without reserve he yet recognises 'the brother' – brother as son of the one Father – 'sinning a sin not unto death' (v.16). The paradox remains unsolved."

Westcott.

Marshall, referring back to 3:6 and 9, comments, "We saw that it describes the eschatological reality which should characterise the life of the child of God. It is, therefore, all the more significant that John's affirmation follows directly upon his warning about the need to pray for brothers who fall into sin... His statement that the child of God does not sin is at once a promise and a demand."

τηρεω keep, observe, maintain

Here the reference must be to Christ, the one born of God who keeps the believer. Marshall comments, "He will face satanic attacks and temptations, but he is defended by One who is stronger than Satan." Cf. John 17:12; also vv 11,15; Rev 3:10. Note also 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24. Smalley comments, "Sin is a present and serious reality for all believers; but through Christ it may be overcome."

Of the αὐτόν in τηρεῖ αὐτόν Smalley writes, "If ὁ γεννηθεὶς is taken as a reference to Jesus, the reading αὐτόν ('him'), supported by A* B 330 614 it^r Vg syr^{hel} cop^{bo}, et al., is to be preferred. Copyists who understood ὁ γεννηθεὶς as referring to the Christian naturally adopted the reflexive ἑαυτόν ('himself'), as in ΚΑ^c K P Ψ 33 81 1739, et al. The MS testimony is weighty on both sides; but John's use elsewhere of ὁ γεγενημένος (never ὁ γεννηθεὶς) for the believer (cf. 3:9; v 18a; see also John 3:6) probably means that, quite apart from other evidence, αὐτόν is likely to be original. Furthermore, the use of the reflexive ('himself') appears to demand some explanation of that from which the Christian 'keeps' himself (as in 2 Cor 11:9; James 1:27)."

πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked
ἀπτω midd. take hold of

1 John 5:19

οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται.

ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, complete, entire

Westcott compares the word order, ὅλος ὁ κόσμος in 2:2 and suggests that the meaning here is, "the world, the organisation of society as alien from and opposed to God, is wholly, in all its parts and elements, placed in the domain of..." The two thoughts of the world, and of the entirety of it, are given separately. The same form occurs Matt 16:26 and parallels."

Westcott.

κειμαι lie, be laid; be exist

κεῖται suggests helpless passivity.

Smalley comments, "Although the whole world lies at the moment in the power of the evil one, victory over the world and its evil is at hand (5:4–5), since Jesus is himself the offering for the sins of the whole world (2:2)."

1 John 5:20

οἴδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ νίδος τοῦ θεοῦ ἥκει, καὶ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν διάνοιαν ἵνα γινώσκωμεν τὸν ἀληθινόν· καὶ ἐσμέν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ νίδῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεός καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος.

How can a world lying under the power of the evil one be redeemed? John gives us the answer by reminding us that Jesus, God's Son, has come into the world.

ἥκω come, have come, be present

After τι ὁ νιὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἤκει several Latin authorities (including Vg^{mss} Julianus of Toledo) add *et carnem induit nostri causa et passus est et resurrexit a mortuis; adsumpsit nos* ('[The Son of God has come] and was clothed with flesh for our sake, and suffered, and rose again from the dead; he adopted us....'). But this is clearly a doctrinal expansion; and it has no support from Greek witnesses.

δέδωκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s διδῷμι διανοιᾱ mind, thought, understanding ἀληθινός, η, ov real, genuine, true

After τὸν ἀληθινόν a number of later witnesses added θεόν.

Smalley comments, "To make his non-gnostic position clear in the present context, moreover, the writer goes on to say that true believers are given insight "to know *him* who is the truth" (rather than simply "the truth"). The object of spiritual knowledge is personal, not abstract... The knowledge of God as the real God, to which the OT writers refer (e.g. 1 Sam 3:7; Jer 24:7; 31:34), is fully realized and revealed in Jesus Christ, to whom in the NT the adjective ἀληθινός is also attributed (John 15:1; Rev 3:7; cf. also 2:8b; John 1:9; 4:23; Rev 3:14)."

καὶ ἐσμὲν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ νιῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ cf. 5:11. Smalley comments, "We are in God and share fellowship with him inasmuch as, or because, we are in Christ... Jesus mediates both the knowledge of God and the possibility of intimate spiritual communion with him."

οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος "Here, as in the Gospel (Jn 1:1; 20:28; cf. 1:18 NIV mg.), John declares that Jesus is the true God." Marshall.

Smalley, however, writes, "The most natural way of construing οὗτος in v 20 ... is to take it as a reference to God: the God whom we recognize as genuine through the insight given us by his Son, and with whom we are in fellowship through Jesus Christ. *This* is the real God.' It is precisely through knowing him, as the Gospel (17:3) maintains, that eternal life itself becomes a reality."

1 John 5:21

Τεκνία, φυλάξατε ἑαυτὰ ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων.

τεκνιον, ου n little child, child

φυλάξατε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl

φυλασσω̄ keep, guard, defend

Cf. Jude 21

εἰδωλον, ου n idol

From false devotion – from anything which occupies the place due to God alone. "John urges his readers to have nothing to do with false ideas of God and the sins that go with them." Marshall. Smalley paraphrases it, "Avoid the sham, John warns, and keep to the genuine (of which I have spoken)!" Cf. Ezek 14:4 for a similar use of 'idols'.

Some texts (among them K L P 81 614) include the word ἀμήν at the end of the verse. This was a common liturgical addition.

Introduction to John's Second and Third Epistles

For introduction to 2 and 3 John see also the introductory notes on 1 John which address some issues common to all three letters.

The Place of 2 and 3 John in the NT Canon

Eusebius reckoned the second and third epistles of John among 'the controverted books' in the same rank as the epistles of James, Jude and 2 Peter. He says that they are 'well known and recognised by most'. However, they were not contained in the Peshitto Syriac Version nor are they accepted by the Syriac church.

Westcott considers that these letters probably had a limited circulation.

The form of 2 and 3 John

Smalley writes, "2 and 3 John are the shortest letters in the NT, shorter even than Philemon and Jude, which also consist of one chapter. Both Johannine letters are of roughly equal length, containing 245 and 219 words respectively."

Marshall comments, "Unlike 1 John, 2 and 3 John fall into the category of personal letters. Each of them is the length of an ordinary private letter of the time which could be written on a standard-sized piece of papyrus (about 25 cm. by 20 cm.), and each of them has the typical 'form' of a letter with a more or less stereotyped introduction and conclusion."

Relationship with 1 John

Smalley writes, "In terms of subject matter 2 John is closer than 3 John to 1 John. The theological ideas of 2 John resemble those of 1 John very closely; so that, for example, the four conditions set out in 1 John for walking in the light and living as God's children are echoed in 2 John (renunciation of sin, cf. vv 10–11; obedience to the love command, cf. vv 5–6; rejection of worldliness, cf. v 7; maintenance of the faith, cf. vv 1–2, 4, 9). Only in vv 10–11 is a new theme introduced."

Marshall comments, "2 John appears to have been written to the same Christian community as 1 John but at an earlier date (since the false teachers evidently still had access to the church in 2 John, but had seceded from it in 1 John 2:19), or else it was written to a different church." On the other hand, Dodd points out, the ideas set out briefly in 2 John need the prior and fuller exposition which they receive in 1 John if they are to be properly understood. Smalley concludes, "A theory which thus understands 2 John as part of a community history, beginning in the Fourth Gospel and ending in 3 John, is not only logical. It also accords with the early history of the Johannine letters, in which the order 1–2–3 never seems to have been in any real doubt."

Situation Addressed in these Letters

Marshall writes, "Although 2 John is apparently written to an individual, the 'chosen lady' (2 Jn. 1), it is probable that it is in fact a way of personifying a community. By contrast 3 John is written to a specific person, Gaius, and it deals with ecclesiastical rather than theological problems. Its background appears to lie in the growth of a new type of church organisation. At first the various churches were to a considerable extent under the guidance and leadership of apostles and evangelists (like Paul, Timothy, and Titus) who travelled from place to place and maintained a general supervision over the churches placed under their care. In this type of situation the role and authority of the local leaders whom they appointed was correspondingly restricted. But as time passed and the churches increased in number, a new situation began to arise. The apostles and their colleagues were growing old, or had actually died. There was no universal system of succession, and it was natural that local churches should begin to develop a more powerful leadership of their own. At the same time there was a tendency toward the

concentration of leadership. In the early days church leaders constituted a group of elders or of bishops and deacons. Now this 'team ministry' was giving way to the idea of one man as the bishop who occupied a position of leadership over the other church officials. It looks as though Diotrephes was trying to encourage this process in his own church – naturally with himself as the appointed leader. He was seeking autonomy for his own church by trying to get rid of the influence of John and John's emissaries, and he was claiming authority for himself within the church. It does not necessarily follow that Diotrephes had already become the authorised leader in his own church, but simply that he was desirous of this position. We have not yet reached the stage of development reflected in the Epistles of Ignatius, where each local church has its own bishop, elders and deacons."

Authorship

Westcott writes that "there is nothing in the use of the title ὁ πρεσβυτέρος, 'the elder' by the writer of the Epistles inconsistent with belief that he was the Apostle John." Furthermore, "Internal evidence amply confirms the general tenor of external authority. The second Epistle bears the closest resemblance in language and thought to the first. The third epistle has the closest affinity to the second, though from its subject it is less like the first in general form. Nevertheless it offers many striking parallels to constructions and language of St John: v.3 ἐν ἀληθείᾳ; 4 μειζοτεραν τοντων... ινα...; 6, 12 μαρτυρειν τινι; 11 ἐκ του θεου ἔστιν... οὐχ ἐωρακεν τον θεον; 12 οἰδας ὅτι ἡ μαρτ. ἡ. ἀληθης ἔστιν."

Marshall, however, writes, "More probably we should think of the elder as holding a position analogous to that of Timothy or Titus, as portrayed in the Pastoral Epistles, men charged to maintain oversight over a group of churches." Marshall follows von Campenhausen in suggesting that 'the elder,' in opposing Diotrephes, was relying on the force and authority of 'the truth' (i.e. the Gospel proclaimed by the apostles and handed on to the church) rather than relying on any formal or institutional authority he possessed over the churches.

2 John 1

Ο πρεσβύτερος ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς, οὓς ἔγω ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καὶ οὐκ ἔγω μόνος ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐγνωκότες τὴν ἀλήθειαν,

πρεσβύτερος, α, ov elder, old man/woman

A title which "while it describes official position, suggested also a fatherly relation." Westcott.

Smalley comments, "When he calls himself 'the presbyter' ... the writer could be indicating that he was a venerated old man in the community, or (more likely) that he was an 'elder' in a local church. But the authority which he assumes over his readers (in both 2 and 3 John, as in 1 John), and the intimate knowledge of the addressees which he presupposes, suggests that he was 'more than a local pastor' (G. W. Barker...). The influence which he seems to have exercised implies that his position was similar to that of a modern 'bishop' or 'superintendent' ... and that he had responsibility for the (Johannine) churches in his area (of Ephesus)."

ἐκλεκτός, η, ov chosen
κυρια, ας f lady

Various suggestions have been made concerning the phrase ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ

- i) The letter is addressed to a lady named Electa;
- ii) The letter is addressed to a Christian woman named Kyria;
- iii) Both are proper names, the letter is addressed to Electa Kyria;
- iv) It is addressed to a particular church, the church being referred to as a chosen lady, a bride of Christ, and the church members being referred to as her children. No other example is known of such a form of address.

Westcott says that the problem is insoluble, "But the general tenor of the letter favours the opinion that it was sent to a community and not to one believer." Cf. v.13.

Marshall suggests that it is "a metaphorical way of saying 'the church and its members'."

Smalley concludes, "The Johannine community as a whole seems to have included several house churches (in Ephesus). The recipients of 2 John belonged to the same group as that for which 1 John was written (cf. v 7; and 1 John 2:18–19). But they formed a distinct unit on their own; and evidently the addressee of 3 John was the leader of another such unit."

τεκνον, ου n child
ἀγαπαω love
ἀληθεια, ας f truth

"The writer, at the very outset, places himself over against the heretics, who have no love for the truth (cf. vv 10–11; also 3 John 4)... The presbyter is saying that he loves his readers in a way that accords with the truth of the Christian gospel." Smalley.

μονος, η, ov adj only, alone
ἐγνωκτεις Verb, perf act ptc, m nom pl
γνωσκω

Marshall adds, "The fact that the elder is writing to a church rather than an individual family is confirmed by his further assertion that his love is shared by all who know the truth."

2 John 2

διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μένουσαν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ
μεθ' ἡμῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα:

μενω remain, stay, abide

Marshall comments, "The truth is something which has come to stay in members of the church, and it exercises an inner dynamic on them to love."

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s ειμι
αἰώνιος m age, world order, eternity

Cf. 1 Jn 2:17.

2 John 3

ἔσται μεθ' ἡμῶν χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ
πατρός, καὶ παρὰ Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ νίου τοῦ
πατρός, ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ.

Marshall comments, "After naming the writer and recipients, the customary opening of a Greek letter included some form of greeting. Just as the former element was often developed to indicate the Christian status of the persons involved, so too the greeting took on a Christian form. We can trace this new type of greeting especially in the letters of Paul, and it may be that he was largely responsible for developing it."

ἔσται the blessing is also a promise – a word of assurance.

χαρις, ιτος f grace

ἔλεος, ους n mercy, compassion
εἰρήνη, ης f peace

Cf. 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2. "The succession 'grace, mercy, peace' marks the order from the first motion of God to the final satisfaction of man... In regard to the divine action 'grace' points to the absolute freedom of God's love in relation to man's helplessness to win it; and 'mercy' to His tenderness towards man's misery." Westcott.

παρα preposition with gen from

Before Ιησοῦ, supported by good representatives of the Alexandrian and Western text-types (including A B 81 1739 Vg cop^{sa}), a number of witnesses (such as ΙK L P most minuscules syr^{hel} cop^{bo} arm) have κυρίου. Since copyists are likely to have added rather than deleted a title of Jesus, the shorter text is to be preferred. So Metzger.

The expression Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ νίου τοῦ πατρός is unique. "The present title emphasizes the special relationship of Jesus to the Father (and not only to the believer), which is characteristic of the theology of the Johannine letters as a whole." Smalley.

ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ prepare the way for the central theme of the letter in vv. 4-11, which is concerned with living in truth and love.

2 John 4

Ἐχάρην λιαν ὅτι εὕρηκα ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου
περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς ἐντολὴν
ἔλαβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρός.

"Ancient letters, like their modern counterparts, often began with an expression of joy on the part of the writer for good news concerning his readers." Marshall.

ἐχάρην Verb, 2nd aor pass dep indic, 1 s
χαιρω rejoice, be glad

λιαν adv exceedingly, greatly

εὕρηκα Verb, perf act indic, 1 s εύρισκω

find, discover

"The words appear to refer to an experience of the writer in some other place than that to which the 'Lady' belonged." Westcott.
ἐκ τῶν τέκνων "may carry the implication that other members of the church were not living as they should [so Smalley]... But ... it is more likely that the elder is thinking of the personal contact which he has had with some members of the church. Presumably they had visited him, and were now returning home with this letter of greeting." Marshall.

περιπατεω walk, walk about, live

Cf. 1 John 1:6; also 2:6, 11; 3 John 3-4. The present participle stresses habitual commitment.

ἐντολη, ης f command, order, instruction
ελάβομεν Verb, aor act indic, 1 pl λαμβανω

Smalley comments, "The presbyter ascribes the 'command' (to live in truth and love) to the Father, rather than directly to Jesus (cf. John 13:34; 15:12, 17), because he is the ultimate source of the message declared by Jesus (John 7:16-17) and his disciples (1 John 1:5)."

2 John 5

καὶ νῦν ἐρωτῶ σε, κυρίᾳ, οὐχ ὡς ἐντολὴν
καινὴν γράφων σοι ἀλλὰ ἣν εἴχομεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς,
ἴνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους.

ἐρωταω ask, request

The force is 'I plead with you...'

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

σε, κυρίᾳ John addresses the church as a whole.

καινος, η, ον new

γραφω write

εἴχομεν Verb, imperf act indic, 1 pl ἔχω
ἀρχη, ης f beginning

Cf. 1 Jn 2:7-8; Jn 13:34.

ἀλληλων, οις, ους one another

"His request is personal and urgent, especially since the schismatic heretics in his own congregation, who lacked both truth and love, are no doubt still in view... The elder asks his readers to practice something with which all three persons of the Trinity are concerned. For love comes from the Father (1 John 4:7), it is manifested by the Son (3:16), and it is made available by the life-giving Spirit (4:13-16)." Smalley.

2 John 6

καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἵνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ· αὕτη ἡ ἐντολὴ ἐστιν,
καθὼς ἡκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ
περιπατήτε.

"The complete identification of the life of love with the fulfilment of all the commandments of God is characteristic of St John: 1 John 5:2,3." Westcott. Cf. also Romans 13:8-10 of which Marshall writes, "If Paul's point is to show that all the commands issue out of love and can be regarded as expressions of love, the elder's point is to show that love must issue in various detailed types of action in accordance with God's commandments.... The relevance of the elder's point is obvious in the modern situation where we are sometimes told: 'All you need is love.' Such advice is meaningless if the nature of love is not defined and unfolded. Love expresses itself in following the divine guidelines. At the same time, merely to keep the commands out of a sense of duty or constraint or fear of punishment is not true love. Love means obedience from the heart and true concern for the good of others."

Smalley comments, "The injunction to live in obedience to the demand for love (and truth), as a basic spiritual requirement from the Christian believer, would have been entirely appropriate to a community like John's which was disintegrating in the face of heresies within and secessionist attacks from outside." So v. 7.

2 John 7

ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ
μὴ ὄμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον
ἐν σαρκὶ· οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ
ἀντίχριστος.

πλανος, ον deceitful; ὁ π. deceiver

One who leads astray

ἐξῆλθον Westcott suggests that this indicates a particular crisis when a number of people left the church to take up their own anti-Christian mission. Smalley comments, "This announcement marks a decisive stage in the break-up of John's community, and indicates that a particular brand of heresy was gaining the upper hand."

Marshall comments, "There were no doubt various small groups of people calling themselves Christians at the time, and there were no denominational organisations gathering them all together. It would be quite possible for 'Christians' who held different views of the faith from their colleagues to set up their own groups. Consequently, when travelling preachers came around it may have been difficult to know whether they shared the same understanding of the faith... Here the elder proposes a clear test by which the church to which he is writing may test the orthodoxy of any suspect preachers."

ὁμολογεω confess, declare
σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body,
human nature

"The thought centres upon the present perfection of the Lord's Manhood which *is* still, and is to be manifested, and not upon the past fact of His coming, 1 John 4:2 (ἐληλυθοντα): 1 John 5:6 (ο ἐλθων)." Westcott.

Marshall comments, "The present continuous tense used is surprising when compared with 1 John 4:2: 'Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.' We might have expected a simple past tense, 'Jesus Christ came in the flesh' (cf. 1 Jn 5:6), as a confession of the historical reality of the incarnation in a point of past time. It seems unlikely, therefore, that the false teachers simply denied the reality of the incarnation. The use of the present and perfect tenses becomes significant if the point is that Jesus Christ has come *and still exists* 'in the flesh.' We know that some Gnostic thinkers taught that a heavenly power (the Christ) came upon Jesus at his baptism in the form of the Spirit, but that it departed from him again before the crucifixion, so that there was no lasting union of the divine Christ with the human Jesus, and hence no real, lasting incarnation. The elder's formulation of the orthodox faith in Jesus Christ seems to be designed to exclude such interpretations of the person of Jesus. For him it was axiomatic that there had been a true incarnation, that the Word had become flesh and remained flesh. It is a point that receives much stress in 1 John (2:18-27; 4:1-6; 5:5-8)."

ἀντιχριστος, ου m Antichrist (of one who claims to be Christ or is opposed to Christ)

Cf. 1 Jn 2:18. "He means that such a person is the deceiver *par excellence*, since his denial cuts at the very root of Christian belief. Indeed, he has made himself the opponent of Jesus." Marshall.

"On the basis of the situation described in this verse, the presbyter proceeds to a double exhortation: do not be deceived, he says (vv 8, 9); and do not encourage deceivers (vv 10, 11)." Smalley.

2 John 8

βλέπετε έαυτούς, ίνα μὴ ἀπολέσητε ἡ ειργασάμεθα, ὅλλα μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβητε.

βλεπω see, look, beware of
έαυτος, έαυτη, έαυτον him/herself, itself
ἀπολέσητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl ἀπολλυμι
destroy, kill, lose

ειργασάμεθα Verb, aor midd dep indic, 1 pl
έργαζομαι work

There are number of variants that seek to harmonise ἀπολέσητε ... ειργασάμεθα either by making both first person plural or both second person plural. The reading given above is well supported.

ειργασάμεθα refers to the preaching and pastoral ministry of the elder and others.

μισθος, ου m pay, wages, reward

πληρης, ες full, complete

ἀπολάβητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl
ἀπολαμβανω receive back

"The Christian life leads in the end to a reward, and failure to persevere in the truth (and in right conduct) can lead to loss of what God has promised to his people." Marshall.

Smalley adds, "It is quite possible that the heretical 'deceivers' were using the presbyter's very phrases for their own purposes... They too might have urged their disciples not to 'lose' what had been accomplished; and those with gnostic inclinations may well have encouraged their followers to aim at the perfection (the 'reward in full') which was reserved for the elect. Against such deception the elder exhorts his readers to maintain the gospel faith of Jesus, and to live the complete life of truth and love (v 4)."

2 John 9

πᾶς ὁ προάγων καὶ μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει· ο μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ, οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν νιὸν ἔχει.

προαγω go before or ahead of

Marshall comments on προάγων, "Perhaps this is a sarcastic reference to the way in which these false teachers themselves proudly claimed to be offering 'advanced' teaching; the elder claims that they have 'advanced' beyond the boundaries of true Christian belief." He continues by warning against any contemporary teaching which goes beyond the definitive Scriptural revelation. The demand is to 'remain' in the received teaching.

διδαχὴ, η̄ς f teaching

The Textus Receptus, following K L P cop^{bo} eth, et al., adds τοῦ χριστοῦ after τῇ διδαχῇ, while some versions and patristic witnesses (including syr^{ph} Lucifer) have διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ. These are secondary attempts to relate this clause to the preceding one, which has ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ χριστοῦ. The shorter reading (so A B Ψ Vg syrhcl cop^{sa}, et al.) is well supported and to be preferred.

Westcott thinks that the sense is 'the doctrine which Christ brought in his own person' rather than 'the doctrine concerning Christ.'

Marshall, however, comments, "The 'teaching of Christ' is the tradition about Christ taught by the elder himself and handed down by authoritative tradition in the church."

θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει Smalley comments, "The so-called 'advanced' person not only loses his 'reward' (v 8); he also loses God himself. See 1 John 2:23 ('no one who disowns the Son possesses the Father'). To 'have' (ἔχει), or 'possess,' God denotes the experience of an intimate relationship and fellowship with him."

οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν νιὸν ἔχει. Marshall writes, "It is impossible to separate the Father from the Son in Christian experience: you cannot have fellowship with the one without having it with the other. But, if so, it also follows positively that those who accept the teaching have spiritual fellowship with both the Father and the Son."

2 John 10

εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ταύτην τὴν διδαχὴν οὐ φέρει, μὴ λαμβάνετε αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν καὶ χαίρετεν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε·

John is speaking not of the casual visit of a stranger but a visit by "self-appointed, itinerant teachers and preachers of heresy. These people, presumably, had seceded from the Johannine community; and they were now seeking to win over further adherents to their false views." Smalley.

φέρω bring, carry, bear
οἰκία, ας f house, home

Smalley comments, "The 'house' (οἰκίαν) to which access by the heretics is to be denied may refer to the dwelling of an individual member of the Johannine church. But more probably it denotes the 'house' in which one section of that community met for worship (a 'house church'). So Stott, 214. For such 'house' meetings in the NT see Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 2. John is not therefore forbidding private hospitality, but rather an official welcome into the congregation, with the widespread opportunities which would then be available for the heretics to promote their cause."

χαίρω rejoice, be glad; imperat (and infin)
used as a greeting

2 John 11

οἱ λέγων γὰρ αὐτῷ χαίρειν κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς.

Smalley comments, "This v belongs with v 10, and must be interpreted in the light of what the elder has just said. In v 10 he has spoken of the need to resist the peddlers of doctrinal error who, in their travels, seek a platform from which to spread their false ideas about the person of Jesus."

κοινωνεῖ share, take part
πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

Marshall comments, "To welcome them was to express solidarity with them; even if one professed to reject their views, hospitality was a way of sharing in their work, and those who helped them in this way were in danger of coming under the same condemnation as the false teachers themselves."

2 John 12

Πολλὰ ἔχων ὑμῖν γράφειν οὐκ ἐβουλήθην διὰ χάρτου καὶ μέλανος, ἀλλὰ ἐλπίζω γενέσθαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλῆσαι, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν πεπληρωμένη ἥ.

Cf. 3 Jn 13-15.

ἐβουλήθην Verb, aor pass dep indic, 1 s
βουλομαι want, desire, wish

"The aorist regards the letter as complete: the decision is made." Westcott. An 'epistolatory' aorist.

χαρτῆς, ου m paper, papyrus
μελας, αινα, αν gen ανος, αινης, ανος black;

το μ. ink

ἐλπίζω hope

στομα, τος n mouth

I.e. 'face to face'

λαλεω speak, talk

χαρα, ας f joy

πεπληρωμένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s
πληρω fill, make full

The reading ἡμῶν (אK L P Ψ syr^{ph hcl}, et al.) is well supported, and accords with John's habit of identifying himself with his readers, especially when speaking of the gospel blessings which they share (as in 1 John 1:4). The variant ὑμῶν is also well attested (A B 33 81 1739 Vg cop^{bo}); but it probably results from scribal assimilation to the second persons earlier in the sentence.

ἢ Verb, pres subj, 3s εἰμι

2 John 13

Ἄσπαζεταί σε τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφῆς σου τῆς ἐκλεκτῆς.

ἀσπαζομαι greet

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

τεκνον, οὐ n child
 ἀδελφη, ης f sister
 ἐκλεκτος, η, ov chosen

Tends to support the corporate view adopted in v.1. "Finally, the elder conveys greetings to the church from its sister church with which he himself was associated." Marshall. Contrast the greetings in 3 John. Smalley adds, "The fact that the writer of 2 John speaks with an air of authority to a congregation other than his own possibly suggests that he had general responsibility for all the Johannine churches in his area."

As with the ending of 1 John, so here, many MSS add ἀμήν. There are also a number of other secondary expansions.

The Third Epistle of John

3 John 1

Ο πρεσβύτερος Γαϊω τῷ ἀγαπητῷ, ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.

πρεσβύτερος, α, ov see 2 John 1

"The name 'Gaius' (Caius) occurs Acts 19:29 (a 'Macedonian'); 20:4 ('of Derbe'); 1 Cor 1:14 (a Corinthian). There is nothing to identify this Gaius with any one of these." Westcott.

ἀγαπητος, η, ov beloved

Cf. 2 Jn 1. The phrase ἐν ἀληθείᾳ probably means 'in the truth'. "In other words, the presbyter is claiming that he is a fellow-believer with Gaius in the truth of God which has been made known by Jesus... The truth, moreover, is the essential sphere of reality in which mutual love (vv 1–2) exists." Smalley.

3 John 2

Ἀγαπητέ, περὶ πάντων εὔχομαί σε εὐόδοῦσθαι καὶ ὑγιαίνειν, καθὼς εὐόδοῦταί σου ἡ ψυχή.

Westcott says that περὶ πάντων is to be understood as 'in all things' rather than 'above all things'.

εὔχομαι pray, wish, long

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

εὐόδοῦσθαι Verb, pres pass infin εὐόδοομαι have things go well (for oneself)

Cf. 1 Cor 16:2; Rom 1:10.

ὑγιαίνω be sound, be in good health
 ψυχη, ης f self, inmost being, 'soul'

Here the sense is 'soul' as opposed to body. "The conclusion of v 2 expresses the elder's hope that the spiritual progress of Gaius will be matched by his physical health and well-being." Smalley.

3 John 3

ἐχάρην γάρ λίαν ἐρχομένων ἀδελφῶν καὶ μαρτυρούντων σου τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς σὺ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖς.

ἐχάρην see 2 John 4

Several witnesses omit γάρ, probably because later copyists could not see any clear connection between this verse and the previous. The verse, however, supplies the reason for the elder's confidence of Gaius' spiritual progress.

λιαν see 2 John 4

ἐρχομενων suggests more than one occasion.

Smalley comments, "The word 'brothers' (also in vv 5 and 10) may contain technical overtones, and refer to Christian (ministerial) workers... However, ἀδελφός ('brother') is normally used by NT writers in the context of Christian believers in general (e.g. 1 Thess 1:4; 2:1, 14, 17). Thus John is probably speaking of itinerant members of the Johannine community who acted as missionaries. It is not impossible that they were members of the presbyter's own congregation, who had visited the church to which Gaius belonged, in view of its problems (vv 9–11), to plead for love and truth (see also v 7). While their information about Diotrephes would necessarily be unpleasant, they would have come back to the presbyter with an encouragingly positive report on the character of Gaius... In the case of Gaius, adherence to the truth of Christ was practically expressed in terms of loving hospitality (vv 5–6)."

μαρτυρεω bear witness, testify

'They witnessed to your truth, even how you walk in the truth' The present tense suggests continuous action.

"The emphatic pronoun (*σύ*) suggests a contrast with others as (for example) Diotrephes." Westcott.

περιπατεω walk, live

3 John 4

μειζότεραν τούτων οὐκ ἔχω χαράν, ἵνα ἀκούω τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ περιπατοῦντα.
μειζων, ον and μειζοτερος, α, ον greater
χαρα, ας f see 2 Jn 12

Westcott prefers the reading χαριν (B etc.) saying that it means 'I have no greater token of the divine favour than this ...' Metzger writes, "Although the reading χάριν may seem to be intrinsically superior ... the Committee considered it to be a transcriptional modification and preferred the more Johannine χαράν, which is strongly supported."

ἐμος, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj my, mine
τεκνον, ον n child

May suggest that Gaius had been converted through the elder's ministry, cf. 1 Cor 4:14; Gal 4:19; Phil 2:22.

3 John 5

Ἀγαπητέ, πιστὸν ποιεῖς ὁ ἐὰν ἐργάσῃ εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοῦτο ξένους,

πιστος, η, ον faithful, trustworthy

"The phrase is commonly interpreted: 'thou doest a faithful work,' a work which answers to thy faith... No parallel is quoted in support of such a sense of *πιστος*. The more natural rendering is rather 'thou makest sure'; that is, such an act will not be lost, will not fail of its due issue and reward (Apoc. 21:5). This sense falls in well with the context (comp. Apoc.14:13), and explains the use of the two verbs, *ποιειν*, ἐργάζεσθαι, which are combined also in Col. 3:23." Westcott.

This view receives little contemporary support. Marshall thinks that the phrase *πιστὸν ποιεῖς* simply means 'you are faithful'. Smalley translates it 'you are acting loyally', adding, "The natural sense is that the loyalty of Gaius to the truth was constantly (*ποιεῖς* is in the present) demonstrated in loving service... Gaius was thus seen to be in fellowship with all those who knew and lived in the truth (cf. 2 John 1), in marked contrast to the character of Diotrephes (vv 9–10)."

ο ἐαν whatever

ἐργάσῃ Verb, aor midd dep subj, 2 s

ἐργαζομαι work, do, perform

ξενος, η, ον strange, foreign; ο ξ, stranger, foreigner

I.e. Christians previously unknown to him. Cf. Heb 13:1-2.

3 John 6

οι ἐμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐνώπιον ἐκκλησίας, οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ·

μαρτυρεω see v.3

ἐνώπιον prep with gen before, in the presence of, in front of
ἐκκλησια, ας f congregation, church

"Those who in one particular case experienced the habitual hospitality of Gaius bore open testimony to his character in a public assembly of the church where the writer was, gathered together, as it may seem, to receive their report: comp Acts 14:26ff." Westcott.

καλως adv well

"Those who had before found help from Gaius now again required it for a special work. The future implies a wish which, it is assumed, will at once be fulfilled. Comp. Rom 6:14." Westcott.

προπέμψας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s

προπεμπω send on one's way, help on one's way

Cf. Acts 21:1-3.

ἀξιως adv (from ἀξιος) worthily

"Worthily of their dedication to the service of God." Westcott. Marshall comments, "While Christian missionaries needed to beware of the temptation to make a good thing out of their work, and churches had to beware of being taken in by charlatans, it was perhaps more important to remind the churches not to treat the missionaries like beggars and so bring discredit on the name of the God to whom they were looking for their support."

3 John 7

ὑπέρ γάρ τοῦ ὄνόματος ἐξῆλθον μηδὲν λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἔθνικῶν.

ὄνομα, τος n name

Used absolutely, cf. Acts 5:41.

μηδεῖς, μηδεμια, μηδὲν no one, nothing
ἔθνικος, η, ον pagan, heathen, Gentile

They had refused to accept hospitality from those who were unconverted, i.e. those to whom they ministered (c.f. 1 Cor 9:11f.).
They looked to the churches for support (cf. 2 Cor 6:1).

3 John 8

ἵμεῖς οὖν ὁφείλομεν ὑπολαμβάνειν τοὺς τοιούτους, ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.

ὁφειλω owe, ought, must

ὑπολαμβάνω support

τοιούτος, αὐτη, ουτον correlative pronoun and adjective such, of such kind

συνεργος, ου m fellow-worker

"The phrase is ambiguous. The fellowship may be either with the teachers: 'that we may be fellow-workers with them in support of the truth'; or with the truth, the substance of their teaching: 'that we may help the truth which is effective through them'." Westcott.

Smalley prefers the latter and argues that the phrase *ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ* means 'so that we may prove ourselves to be fellow-workers in the cause of the truth' – *ἵνα ... γινώμεθα* means '(that) we may prove to be' rather than '(that) we may be', cf. John 15:8 '*showing yourselves to be my disciples.*'

Smalley adds, "The admonition to support Christian ministers 'in the cause of the truth' is not incompatible with a 'tent-making ministry' (Acts 18:1–4). So Paul was ready to receive his living from the gospel (1 Cor 9:14); but he also tried not to be a 'burden to anyone' while he preached the gospel of God to them (1 Thess 2:9)."

3 John 9

Ἐγραψά τι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· ἀλλ' ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς.

A well-attested reading, supported by ^{s*} A (B) 048 1241 1739 (^{sa,bo}) is ἐγραψά τι ('I wrote/I have written something'). This best explains the variants ἐγραψα ἂν ('I would have written,' as read by ^s33 81 Vg, et al.), which was introduced to prevent the suggestion that an apostolic letter had been lost, and ἐγραψά (omitting τι; so C K L P Ψ most minuscules, followed by TR), which indicates an attempt on the part of copyists to avoid the depreciation of apostolic authority.

ἐκκλησια, ας f see v.6
φιλοπρωτευω desire to lead or to be first

"It is of interest to compare the two sources of failure noticed in the two Epistles, προαγειν (2 John 9) and φιλοπρωτευειν, the undue claims to intellectual progress and to personal authority. There is nothing to indicate that Diotrephes held false opinions: his ambition only is blamed." Westcott.

Marshall comments, "It was a danger that had arisen in Jesus' own lifetime, and the Gospels contain warnings against love of position which were especially relevant for such a situation as this (Mt 23:5-12; cf. 24:20-28)."

ἐπιδεχομαι receive, welcome; pay attention to, recognize

By the use of ἡμᾶς John removes the issue from the sphere of the personal.

Marshall comments, "This must mean that Diotrephes was refusing to accept whatever was said in the letter, and possibly also that when the letter came into his hands he did his best to suppress it. The letter must have contained some commendation of the travelling preachers." Marshall says that the letter may have been 2 John, but more probably has been lost. Smalley suggests that the letter was 1 John.

3 John 10

διὰ τοῦτο, ἐὰν ἔλθω, ὑπομνήσω αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιεῖ, λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς, καὶ μὴ ἀρκούμενος ἐπὶ τούτοις οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐπιδέχεται τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοὺς βουλομένους κωλύει καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει.

ἔλθω Verb, aor act subj, 1 s ἐρχομαι
ὑπομνήσω Verb, fut act indic, 1 s
ὑπομνησκω remind

The sense here is 'take up the issue...!'

πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked
φλυαρεω slander, accuse

The word means literally 'babbling' or 'talking nonsense' and is used here to emphasise the emptiness of the accusations made by Diotrephes.

ἀρκεω be enough, be sufficient; pass. be content, be satisfied

οὐτε not, nor, neither

ἐπιδεχομαι see v.9

βουλομαι want, desire, wish, intend, plan

κωλυω hinder, prevent, forbid

ἐκβαλλω throw out, expel, cast out

Smalley comments, "The verb ἐκβάλλει, in the present tense again (literally, 'he throws out'), need not imply formal excommunication from the Church, as this became known later. Cf. Matt 18:17; Luke 6:22; John 9:34–35; 1 Cor 5:2. On the other hand, it seems as if Diotrephes had already arrogated to himself the task of 'expulsion,' and was actually driving people out of the congregation (as he had refused to welcome the brothers) rather than merely desiring to do so."

3 John 11

Ἀγαπητέ, μὴ μιμοῦ τὸ κακὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν.
οἱ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἔκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔστιν· οἱ κακοποιῶν
οὐχ ἔώρακεν τὸν θεόν.

ἀγαπητος, η, ov see v.1

μιμεομαι imitate, follow another's example

κακος, η, ov evil, bad, wrong

ἀγαθος, η, ov good, useful, fitting

ἀγαθοποιεω do good

κακοποιεω do evil, do wrong

The implication is that Diotrephes is one such κακοποιον.

όραω see, observe

"It is likely that here, as elsewhere, St John points to men who professed to have deeper insight into truth and disparaged the importance of virtuous action." Westcott.
Cf. 1 Jn 3:9; John 14:9.

3 John 12

Δημητρίῳ μεμαρτύρηται ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ ὑπὸ
αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας· καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ
μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ οἶδας ὅτι ή μαρτυρία ἡμῶν
ἀληθής ἔστιν.

Westcott thinks it probable that Demetrius was the bearer of the letter, a suggestion which Marshall says is 'virtually certain'. Here, in contrast with Diotrephes, is an example to copy.

μεμαρτύρηται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s
μαρτυρεω bear witness, testify

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

οιδα know

μαρτυρια, ας f testimony, witness

ἀληθης, ες true, truthful, honest, genuine

A threefold witness: *by all* – i.e. by all those who knew him, particularly the church; *by the truth* – i.e. the character of his life displayed the reality of the gospel; *by us* – i.e. by the apostle and his circle.

3 John 13

Πολλὰ εἶχον γράψαι σοι, ἀλλ’ οὐ θέλω διὰ
μέλανος καὶ καλάμου σοι γράφειν·

This verse (and the next) are similar to 2 John 12.

θελω wish, will

μελας, αινα, αν see 2 Jn 12

καλαμιος, ου m reed, pen

3 John 14

ἐλπίζω δὲ εὐθέως σε ιδεῖν, καὶ στόμα πρὸς
στόμα λαλήσομεν.

ἐλπιζω hope

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

εὐθεως here bears the sense 'shortly', 'soon'

ιδειν Verb, aor act infin ὄραω see

στομα, τος n see 2 Jn 12

3 John 15

Εἰρήνη σοι. ἀσπάζονται σε οἱ φίλοι. ἀσπάζου
τοὺς φίλους κατ' ὄνομα.

ειρηνη, ης f peace

ἀσπαζομαι greet

φιλος, ου m and φιλη, ης f friend

ὄνομα, τος n name, person

Several later witnesses add at the end the common liturgical ἀμήν.

Postscript to 3 John

Smalley concludes his commentary on John's letters as follows, "It has been our thesis throughout this commentary that the letters of John, together with the Fourth Gospel, record and reflect the spiritual history of the Johannine community itself... The fourth evangelist's appeal to his circle for a balanced christology met with a limited response, for heterodoxy (of more than one kind) persisted. This led to secessionist moves, as we know from 1 John, and the withdrawal from the community of some of its members (headed, perhaps, by those with a docetic understanding of the person of Jesus), as 2 John indicates. By the time 3 John was written further problems had arisen, and the initial situation had been turned on its head. For the Johannine Christians who were loyal to the Christian truth as they had received it were now being excluded from the church (v 9) by Diotrephes in association with his supporters (v 10). The views of this latter group were disturbingly independent, and called into question its basic allegiance to the gospel truth. 'Heterodoxy,' that is to say, now threatened the very survival of 'orthodoxy.' Furthermore, dangers of this theological as well as practical nature signalled the gradual disintegration of the Johannine community, and possibly heralded its final dissolution..."

"Thus neither the Gospel nor the letters of John solved immediately the problems of the Johannine churches in their own day. But both contain theological, ethical and practical truths which are fundamental to the Christian position in every age: that Jesus is one with God as well as one with us; that love and righteousness are indispensable to the believer who seeks as a child of God to walk in the light; and that unity, however flexible, is a demand laid upon the whole Church at all times."