

John's Literary Productions



Events Leading to the Writing of John's Literary Productions Gospel: Epistles, Revelation Written Near the End of the 1st Century A.D. During Intense Christian Persecution

The First Epistle General of JOHN INTRODUCTION

1. Title. In the earliest Greek manuscripts the title of this epistle is simply *Iōannou A*, literally, "Of John, I," that is, the First (Epistle) of John. There is no way of knowing whether this was the first pastoral epistle John ever wrote, but it is the first of those that have been preserved by the Christian church.

2. Authorship. In none of the NT epistles credited to John does the author identify himself. Nevertheless, there is so great a similarity between the first epistle and the Gospel of John that most scholars accept the common authorship of the two works. If we hold that the Fourth Gospel was written by the beloved disciple (John 21:20–24), identified as the apostle John, a son of Zebedee (see Vol. V, pp. 179–181, 891, 892), we have valid grounds for holding that he is also the author of the first epistle bearing the name John. A similar relationship links the first epistle with the second and the second with the third.

Some of the notable similarities in phraseology between this epistle and the Gospel are as follows:

The Epistle

The Gospel

“That your joy may be full” (1:4).	“That your joy may be full” (16:24).
“We have an advocate” (2:1).	“Give you another Comforter [Advocate]” (14:16).
“We know him, if we keep his command- ments” (2:3).	“If ye love me, keep my commandments” (14:15).
“A new commandment I write unto you” (2:8).	“A new commandment I give unto you” (13:34).
“The true light now shineth” (2:8).	“The true Light, which lighteth” (1:9).
“Knoweth not whither he goeth” (2:11).	“Knoweth not whither he goeth” (12:35).
“Abideth for ever” (2:17).	“Abideth [for] ever” (8:35).
“Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (2:23).	“He that hateth me hateth my Father also” (15:23).
“The same anointing teacheth you of all things” (2:27).	“He shall teach you all things” (14:26).
“That we should love one another” (3:11).	“That ye love one another” (15:12).
“We have passed from death unto life” (3:14).	“Is passed from death unto life” (5:24).
“Do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (3:22).	“I do always those things that please him” (8:29).
“The spirit of truth” (4:6).	“The Spirit of truth” (14:17).
“God sent his only begotten Son” (4:9).	“He gave his only begotten Son” (3:16).
“This life is in his Son” (5:11).	“In him was life” (1:4).

In Greek the parallelisms in wording and construction are often more impressive than in English, but the above list gives the English reader a fair sample of the similarities.

In addition to near parallels in wording there are many other readily perceived similarities between the epistle and the Gospel. Both begin abruptly, without any formal epistolary introduction, one with “That which was from the beginning ... the Word of life,” the other with “In the beginning was the Word.” There is a close resemblance in style, in vocabulary, word order, use of prepositions, grammatical construction, the pairing of opposites, such as dark and light, death and life, hate and love, which is a distinctly Johannine characteristic. Though the difference in purpose and length of the two books permits great divergence, the subject matter of the two is so similar that the epistle may serve as a summary for the dominant themes in the Gospel.

Differences between the two writings must not be ignored, but may be accounted for on various grounds, such as differing objectives, dates of composition, the advancing age of a common author, and natural differences that exist in any works known to have come from the same pen. The epistle appears to have been written spontaneously as a pastoral letter, whereas the Gospel gives evidence of having come from long and profound meditation on the incarnation of the Word of God. To express the same observation in a different way, the objective of the epistle is limited while that of the Gospel is broad. Nevertheless, a common thread runs through both works and may be sensed by even the untrained reader.

However, scholarly opinion is still divided on the question of authorship. Some of the unwillingness to accept the apostle John as the author of the epistle may be due to subconscious wishful doubting. The conservative Christian may rightly declare that he has adequate ground for holding that John the beloved disciple is the writer of this epistle.

For a recent discussion of the problem see A. P. Salom, "Some Aspects of the Grammatical Style of 1 John," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXIV, Part II, June, 1955.

3. Historical Setting. Since the epistle contains no specific reference to the author, to the people to whom the letter is addressed, to the place from which it was written, or to the time of its writing, conclusions relating to its historical setting must be inferred from internal evidence. Such evidence needs to be closely linked with the accepted conclusions concerning the authorship and date of the Fourth Gospel. Since this commentary favors the common Johannine authorship of the Gospel and the epistle, the main question concerns priority—which was written first, the Gospel or the epistle? No definite conclusion is possible, and scholarly opinion has been ranged on both sides. But it can hardly be denied that the epistle presupposes and draws on a background of such Christian knowledge as is contained in John's Gospel. If this point be given decisive weight, then it appears that the epistle was written later than the Gospel, and may be thought of as a postscript to it. Alternatively, it will be readily acknowledged that before ever committing his memories and profound meditations to writing, the apostle would have thought of, and have taught to his flock, much of the contents of his Gospel. Thus it is possible for the epistle to have preceded the writing of the Gospel. From these and other more technical considerations, it appears that it is impossible from internal evidence to come to any firm conclusion as to the relative dating of the two works.

It is clear, however, that the epistle was written by an elderly man who could rightly address his converts as "little children" (chs. 2:1, 12, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). The destination of the letter is not stated, but it is obviously addressed to a known group of Christians with whom the revered author was personally acquainted. No conclusive reason has yet been advanced for rejecting the widely held tradition that it was written by John in his old age to believers Ephesus, or at least in Asia Minor, where he had ministered. The date of writing is probably during the first half of the nineties of the 1st century A.D. (see Vol. V, p. 892; Vol. VI, pp. 35, 36).

Evidence as to the existence of the epistle occurs very early in the 2d century. Polycarp, who is reputed to have known personally several of the apostles, has words that closely echo 1 John 4:3 (*The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians* vii, c. A.D. 115); and Eusebius states that Papias (c. A.D. 150) "used testimonies from the first [former] epistle of John" (*Ecclesiastical History* iii. 24). Irenaeus (c. A.D. 200) identifies several verses

that he quotes as coming from the first and second epistles of John (Irenaeus *Against Heresies* iii. 16. 5, 8), and the Muratorian Fragment c. A.D. 170; see Vol. V, p. 127) not only includes the first and second epistles in its canon but ascribes them to the apostle John. The first epistle thus has early and reliable attestation, and its place in the canon is firmly fixed.

4. Theme. The primary purpose of the epistle is pastoral. John writes lovingly to his spiritual children that they may be better able to live the Christian life. The keynote of the letter is love. The setting is a simple, yet profoundly spiritual, exhortation. God is love (ch. 4:8); love is of God (v. 7); God loved us and sent His Son; therefore we ought also to love one another (vs. 10, 11). But these lofty themes are portrayed against a background of opposition that gives the epistle a polemical as well as a pastoral aim.

It is clear that heresies had troubled the church, and that false teachers from within had tried to subvert the faith (ch. 2:18, 19). Although they had left the church, their influence lingered and threatened continued damage. John writes to counteract this danger, to establish the members' grip on the essentials of Christian doctrine, and to make the truth so attractive that Christ's followers will not be led into error.

The basic heresy against which John is contending has been identified as a sort of proto-Gnosticism, which taught false *gnōsis*, that is, false knowledge (see Vol. V, pp. 892, 893; Vol. VI, pp. 54–58). From the emphases given in the epistle it appears that opposition came from two main forms of Gnosticism, Docetism and Cerinthianism, both of which set forth heresy concerning the nature of Christ. Docetism denied the reality of the incarnation and taught that Christ only *appeared* to have a human body (see Vol. V, pp. 912, 913; Vol. VI, p. 58). The second heresy derived from one of John's contemporaries, Cerinthus, who, after training in Egypt, taught in Asia Minor, and propagated Judaizing teachings. He held that Jesus was the natural-born son of Joseph and Mary, and that Christ entered the body of Jesus at His baptism and withdrew prior to the crucifixion (see Vol. VI, pp. 36, 57). The originators and supporters of these heresies are graphically described by John as "antichrists" (chs. 2:18, 22; 4:3) and "false prophets" (ch. 4:1). To combat these errors he stresses the reality of Christ's visible human nature during the incarnation (ch. 1:1–3), that He did come in the flesh (ch. 4:2), and that believers may enjoy this true knowledge (ch. 5:20) as opposed to the false *gnōsis*.

These early controversies have significance for modern times, when the divinity of Christ is so widely questioned. A study of this epistle will direct the reader's of the incarnation, and will confront him with an exalted vision of the Son of God, who was sent to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

5. Outline.

- I. Introduction, 1:1–4.
 - A. Declaration of personal acquaintance with Christ, the Word of life, 1:1–3a.
 - B. Purpose in writing the epistle, 1:3b–4.
 - 1. To foster fellowship with Christians, God, and Christ, 1:3b.
 - 2. To bring fullness of joy, 1:4.
- II. The Requirements for Fellowship With God and Man, 1:5–10.
 - A. Walk in the light, 1:5–7.
 - B. Confession of sin, 1:8–10.
- III. Exhortation to Sinless Living, 2:1–28.

- A. Christ the advocate, the propitiation for sin, 2:1, 2.
- B. Walking as He walked, 2:3–6.
- C. The new commandment, 2:7–11.
- D. Personal appeals to spiritual children, 2:12–28.
 - 1. Reasons for writing, 2:12–14.
 - 2. Love not the world, 2:15–17.
 - 3. Beware of antichrists and their heresies, 2:18–26.
 - 4. Abide in Christ to prepare for His coming, 2:27, 28.
- IV. Sons of God Contrasted With Children of the Devil, 2:29 to 3:24.
 - A. The righteousness of God's sons, 2:29 to 3:7.
 - B. He who sins is of the devil, 3:8, 9.
 - C. He who loves not his brother is of the devil, 3:10–18.
 - D. God assures His children of salvation, 3:19–24.
- V. Truth, Love, and Faith Are Essential to Fellowship, 4:1 to 5:12.
 - A. The spirit of truth and the spirit of error, 4:1–6.
 - B. Love is of God, for God is love, 4:7–21.
 - C. Faith brings victory and life, 5:1–12.
- VI. Conclusion, 5:13–21.
 - A. Restatement of aim, 5:13.
 - B. Admonition to sinlessness, 5:14–17.
 - C. Final encouragement to know God and His Son, 5:18–21.

CHAPTER 1

1 *He describeth the person of Christ, in whom we have eternal life, by a communion with God: 5 to which we must adjoin holiness of life, to testify the truth of that our communion and profession of faith, as also to assure us of the forgiveness of our sins by Christ's death.*

1. *That which was.* This opening phrase of the epistle is capable of two interpretations because of the fact that the pronoun translated “that which” (*ho*) is neuter and may refer either to: (1) the testimony concerning the revelation of the Word of life, or to (2) the Word of life (Christ) Himself. Johannine usage makes the second interpretation the more likely (cf. John 4:22; 6:37, where neuter pronouns refer to persons). For comment on the verb “was” (*ēn*) see on John 1:1.

From the beginning. John begins his Gospel with the words “*In the beginning,*” but his first epistle with, “*from the beginning.*” The difference is significant. In the Gospel he is stressing that the Word was *already* existent at the time of “the beginning”; here he is content to establish that the Word has been existing from the time of “the beginning.” The Gospel looks at the beginning and before; the epistle looks at the beginning and after. A more limited interpretation is also possible by referring the phrase to the beginning of the Christian Era (cf. on ch. 2:7), but comparison with John 1:1–3 gives little support to such a limitation here. For a discussion of “beginning” see on John 1:1.

Which we have heard. In asserting that he is about to write concerning the One whom he and his associates have actually heard, John contests the claims of those who deny the reality of the incarnation. Thus he establishes the grounds of his authority and of his appeal to the readers. Who can doubt that there must have been precious memories in his mind as he thought of the beloved voice to which he had so earnestly listened, long

ago, in Palestine! The “we” in these opening verses may be interpreted editorially, or as a reference to John and his associates (cf. on ch. 4:6). The use of the perfect tense, “have heard,” suggests that the memories still linger with him.

Which we have seen. The above comment on “which we have heard” applies here also. The verb here translated “have seen” (*horaō*) signifies the physical act of seeing with the eyes. That there may be no doubt as to the reality of his experience the writer adds the unequivocal words, “with our eyes.” He thus leaves no room for doubt that he actually saw “the Word.”

Have looked upon. Gr. *theaomai*, “to view attentively,” “to behold,” the same verb that is translated “beheld” in John 1:14, where the subject matter is the same—the beholding of the incarnate Word. Here, however, the form of the verb indicates completed action, instead of past action whose results continue into the present, as in John 1:14. It is natural to interpret these words and those that follow as a reference to the apostles’ having witnessed the historical scenes of Christ’s earthly life.

Have handled. Gr. *psēlaphaō*, “to grope,” “to feel after,” “to examine closely,” “to handle,” from *psaō*, “to touch” (see on Acts 17:27). The same verb occurs in Luke 24:39 (see comment there), where Jesus invited Thomas to handle Him. John may refer particularly to this and possibly other similar events. It would be hard to conceive of any clearer way of stating that the writer and his group had personal acquaintance with the Word made flesh, and thus of refuting the various heresies concerning the unreality of Christ’s earthly existence (see pp. 625, 626).

Of the Word. Rather, “concerning the Word.” The apostle does not claim to deal with all aspects of the Word, but his epistle declares (v. 3) truths based upon personal experience (vs. 1–3) with the Word. For comment on “the Word” (*ho logos*) see on John 1:1. The use of “Word” (*logos*) as referring to Jesus Christ is peculiar to the Fourth Gospel (John 1:1, 14), this epistle (chs. 1:1; 5:7), and the Apocalypse (Rev. 19:13), and supports the view that they have a common authorship.

Of life. Literally, “of the life.” This phrase may be explained as the Word that concerns life, or the Word that gives life, both interpretations being valid descriptions of the Saviour.

2. For the life. Rather, “and the life.” The word “life” in v. 1 provides a basis for the further discussion of “life” in v. 2, which is parenthetical, being a digression from the main current of thought. The sentence construction of vs. 1–3 is complicated, the completion of the thought being in suspense until v. 3, where the writer gathers up his argument into a comprehensive conclusion. “The life” refers primarily to that aspect of Christ’s being which was revealed in His incarnation, not to His eternal pre-existence.

Was manifested. Gr. *phaneroō*, “to make known,” “to make visible,” “to make manifest,” “to show.” John makes frequent use of *phaneroō* (nine times in the Gospel and six times in the epistle). This manifestation of life corresponds to “the Word was made flesh” in John 1:14, and refers to the incarnation viewed by the dwellers on earth who beheld its glory.

Several of John's favorite words appear in vs. 1–3, although the KJV sometimes obscures the identity of the original word. *Archē*, “beginning,” appears 23 times in his writings; *zōē*, “life,” 64 times; *martureō*, “to bear witness,” 47 times.

We have seen. The apostle had not only seen and heard “concerning” the Word of life (v. 1) but had also perceived its significance as “life” (see on John 1:4).

Bear witness. John was not content with having beheld Christ; he was also impelled to “bear witness” to what he had seen (cf. on Acts 1:8).

Shew. Gr. *apaggellō*, “to bring tidings,” “to proclaim,” “to declare.” The same word is translated “declare” in v. 3.

That eternal life. The association of “life” with “eternal” occurs 23 times in John's writings. He thinks in terms of eternity, and stresses the eternal nature of his beloved Lord and of the life he anticipates sharing with Him (see on John 3:16).

With the Father. Gr. *pros ton patera* (see comment on “with God,” in John 1:1). The word *pros*, “with,” expresses the nearness of the Word to the Father and at the same time makes clear His separate personality. Although John has not yet mentioned the Son by name, his use of the title “Father” implies the Sonship of the Word and prepares the way for the open identification of the Word as Jesus Christ in 1 John 1:3.

Manifested unto us. The writer is filled with awe at the realization of the privilege granted to him of seeing the One who had been with the Father from eternity. The splendor of the revelation never grows dim in John's mind. Rather, it remains in the center of his spiritual vision (cf. John 1:14, 18).

3. *That which we have seen.* A rhetorical repetition (vs. 1, 2) for emphasis and by way of recapitulating all that has previously been said. The importance of this stress on the writer's personal knowledge of Jesus can hardly be exaggerated in the light of the epistle's opposition to early forms of Gnosticism (see on pp. 625, 626).

Declare. See above under “shew” (v. 2).

Fellowship. Gr. *koinōnia* (see on Acts 2:42). The word implies mutual sharing, whether the partnership be equal, as among brethren, or unequal, as between God and ourselves (cf. Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 8:4; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 2:1; etc.). In this instance the apostle wishes his readers to share the same spiritual blessings that he enjoys through a knowledge of the Father and the Son. That others may share in this partnership is one of the main objectives of the epistle. The word “fellowship” strikes one of the keynotes of the first chapter. He who truly knows Christ will always want others to share in that blessed companionship. “No sooner does one come to Christ, than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus” (SC 78). Those who thus work for others will participate in answering the Saviour's prayer, “that they may be one, even as we [the Father and the Son] are one” (John 17:22).

Our fellowship. Literally, “the fellowship, the [one that is] ours,” that is, our kind of fellowship, the fellowship that exists between John and the Godhead. The Christian becomes a connecting link between heaven and earth. With one hand he lays hold on his knowledge of God through Christ, and with the other he takes hold of those who know not God, thus providing a living link between the Father and His wayward children.

His Son Jesus Christ. Here John identifies the Word with Christ. The double title, “Jesus Christ,” shows that John is considering the human and the divine aspects of the

Son's life (see on Matt. 1:1; Phil. 2:5; cf. on 1 John 3:23). Fellowship with the Father is possible only through the Son, who is uniquely qualified to reveal God to men (cf. on John 1:18).

4. *These things.* That is, the content of the epistle, including what has already been written in vs. 1–3, and what the author intends to write in the remainder of the letter.

Unto you. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for omission of this phrase and for reading in its place an emphatic form of the subject of the verb in the Greek. The resultant reading would be “and these things *we* write.”

Your. Important textual evidence may be cited for the reading “our.” But the context favors the reading of the KJV, since it is more likely that John writes to bring joy to his readers than to himself.

Joy. The natural result of fellowship with Christ (see on Rom. 14:17).

Full. Or, “fulfilled.” Jesus had expressed the same reason for speaking “these things” to His disciples (John 15:11), and the beloved disciples may well be echoing the words of his Master. The fulfillment of joy is a frequent theme in John's writings (John 3:29; 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; 2 John 12). The Christian religion is a happy one (see on John 15:11).

Thus ends the brief introduction to the epistle. John, who has personally known Christ, desires to share his knowledge with his readers in order that they may enjoy the same fellowship he is already enjoying with the Father and the Son. In the course of expressing this loving desire, he asserts the divinity, the eternity, and the incarnation—and consequent humanity—of the Son. This wondrous knowledge he conveys in simple but emphatic language so that readers, in his own day and in ours, may have no doubt concerning the foundation of the Christian faith and the nature and work of Jesus Christ. In this way he effectively answers Gnostic teaching without even mentioning the heresy.

5. *Heard of him.* Rather, “heard from him,” that is, from God, or possibly, from Christ. John wishes to make clear that he did not invent or discover the message he is about to convey to his readers, but had received it from the Lord, whether directly from Christ or by revelation.

Declare. Gr. *anaggellō*, “to announce,” “to make known,” “to disclose,” a different word from that used in vs. 2 and 3 (*apaggellō*) for “shew” and “declare.” *Anaggellō* suggests bringing the tidings *up to* or *back to* the receiver, whereas *apaggellō* emphasizes the source of the news, that is, *from* whom it comes.

God is light. The absence of the article in Greek before the word for “light” specifies “light” as one aspect, or quality, of God's nature (cf. on ch. 4:8). Compare light as an attribute of Christ in John 1:7–9.

In the Bible, light is closely associated with Deity. When the Lord set His hand to creation, light was the first element to be brought into existence (Gen. 1:3). Divine manifestations are usually accompanied by ineffable glory (Ex. 19:16–18; Deut. 33:2; Isa. 33:14; Hab. 3:3–5; Heb. 12:29; etc.). God is described as “everlasting light” (Isa. 60:19, 20) and as dwelling “in the light which no man can approach unto” (1 Tim. 6:16). These physical manifestations are symbolic of the moral purity and perfect holiness that distinguish God's character (see comment on “glory” [*doxa*], John 1:14; Rom. 3:23; 1 Cor. 11:7).

One of the most notable qualities of light is its power to dispel darkness. On the highest plane, the spiritual, God exhibits this quality in a superlative degree—the darkness of sin cannot exist in His sight (Hab. 1:13).

In him is no darkness at all. Literally, “darkness in him is not, not one [darkness].” The double negative emphatically denies the presence of any element of darkness in God’s nature. It is typical of John to make a categorical statement such as “God is light,” and then to reinforce it with a denial of the opposite (cf. vs. 6, 8; ch. 2:4; John 1:3, 20; 10:28). There is an immediate reason for John’s emphatic declaration. Gnostic theory held that good and evil were necessary counterparts of each other, and that both sprang from the same divine source—God. If, however, God is utterly and entirely “light,” without the slightest admixture of darkness, then Gnosticism (see Vol. VI, p. 55) was teaching something contrary to God’s nature and must be rejected by those who accept the apostle’s words.

In John’s writings “darkness” (*skotos* or *skotia*) is the antithesis of “light,” even as in Paul’s epistles sin is the antithesis of righteousness (Rom. 6:18, 19) and “flesh,” of “Spirit” (ch. 8:1). See John 12:35, 46; see on John 1:5; 8:12.

6. *If we say.* To win a hearing with those who need his counsel the apostle softens some of his implied rebukes by making them hypothetical (cf. vs. 8, 10; etc.) and by including himself in the statement. He was doubtless aware that many claimed fellowship with the Father but were walking contrary to His will. Yet he uses gentle language in the hope of not antagonizing his readers.

Have fellowship. See on v. 3. The claim to fellowship with God must be demonstrated by its practical results. There will be a two-sided life—thought and action, prayer and work (MH 512). To practice the presence of God is to be conscious at all times of His nearness through His Holy Spirit. Every thought, every word, every act, reflects consciousness of His loving presence and His all-seeing eye. We have come to love Him. We know that He has always loved us, and we are grateful for His care (Ps. 139:1–12; Jer. 31:3). As naturally as a child confidently slips his hand into that of his father at the approach of danger, and keeps it there even when the danger is past, so the child of God walks with his heavenly Father. Such is true “fellowship with him.”

Walk. Gr. *peripateō* (see on Eph. 2:2; Phil. 3:17).

Darkness. Gr. *skotos* (see on v. 5). Nothing can flourish in darkness except certain low forms of life that tend to make the darkness more repulsive. Decay progresses rapidly in the absence of life-giving light. Eyes that have grown accustomed to darkness lose their ability to respond to light. Even so with the soul—the darkness of sin prevents spiritual growth, and the continual sin destroys spiritual sight. Yet so wedded are men to sin that they seek darkness in order that they may sin more effectively (John 3:19, 20).

We lie. John highlights the hypocrisy of those who profess to follow the way of light but voluntarily walk in darkness. Since God is light (v. 5), all who fellowship with Him must also walk in the light. Hence, any who claim fellowship with the Father and yet walk in darkness must be lying. Their claims to communion with God prove at least a measure of acquaintance with light, but the darkness that surrounds them reveals that they are either kept from the light by ignorance or have deliberately shut themselves away from it.

Do not the truth. Another illustration of John's habit of following a positive statement, "we lie," with its negative counterpart, "do not the truth" (see on v. 5). The idea of "doing truth" is peculiar to John in the NT (see on John 3:21; cf. on ch. 8:32). For "truth" (*alētheia*) see on John 1:14. In addition to lying with their lips those who "walk in darkness" also fail to carry out the truth in their conduct. Sin first finds expression as a thought in the mind, but the thought is generally translated into a deed. When the activities of everyday life begin to deny the profession made by church attendance, separation from fellowship with God is evident. When religion ceases to be a seven-day matter, God is being shut out of the life, and darkness is closing in.

7. But if we walk. The clause may be paraphrased, "If, on the other hand, instead of walking in darkness, we walk ..." John does not leave his flock in despair but turns to the positive aspects of the Christian life, thereby to encourage them and express his confidence in them.

He is in the light. God is constantly surrounded by light that radiates from Himself. The best that Christians can do is to walk in the rays of light that emanate from God. As a traveler will follow the light of a guide along a dark and unknown road, so the child of God will follow light from the Lord along the road of life (2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:8; cf. on Prov. 4:18).

One with another. If we walk in the light we walk with God, from whom the light shines, and have fellowship not only with Him but also with all others who are following the Lord. Serving the same God, believing the same truths, following the same instructions on the pathway of life, we cannot fail to walk in unity. The slightest sign of ill will between us and our brethren should make us review our own conduct, to be sure that we are not veering away from the lighted path of life (cf. on ch. 4:20).

And the blood. The last clause of the verse is by no means an afterthought, for the experience here described is closely connected with walking "in the light." Recognizing that even those who fellowship with God will continue to need cleansing from sin, John assures the Christian that God has already anticipated this need and provided for it. For the significance of "blood" in cleansing from sin see on Rom. 3:25; 5:9; cf. on John 6:53.

Jesus Christ. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of "Christ." But because in his epistles John often uses the expression "Jesus Christ" or speaks of Jesus as "the Christ" or "the Son of God" (chs. 4:15; 5:1, 5), many prefer to retain the word Christ. In his Gospel the apostle often speaks of Jesus, the incarnate Word, but here he is thinking particularly of the divine-human Saviour, Jesus Christ. For the title Jesus Christ see on Matt. 1:1.

His Son. This further identification of Jesus emphasizes the magnitude of the sacrifice that provided the cleansing blood—it came from the Son of God. For a discussion of the Sonship of Christ see on Luke 1:35.

Cleanseth. Gr. *katharizō*, "to make clean," "to cleanse," used in the Gospels for "cleansing" a leper (Matt. 8:2; Luke 4:27; etc.), and elsewhere for cleansing from sin or from the guilt of sin (2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 9:14; etc.). The cleansing to which John here refers is not that which occurs with first repentance and confession, at the beginning of the Christian walk, and which precedes the fellowship. The cleansing here spoken of continues throughout the earthly life, and is part of the process of sanctification (see on Rom. 6:19; 1 Thess. 4:3). None but Christ has ever lived a sinless life (see on John 8:46;

1 Peter 2:22); so men continually need Christ's blood to cleanse them from their sins (see on 1 John 2:1, 2).

The writer includes himself among those who need this cleansing. Those who walk nearest to God will, in the glory of His light, be most conscious of their own sinfulness (ch. 1:8, 10; AA 561, 562; GC 469–473).

All sin. Rather, “every sin,” that is, every type and manifestation of sin. For comment on “sin” see on ch. 3:4.

8. If we say. See on v. 6.

We have no sin. John does not state whether there were some who made a public claim to perfection or whether the words were spoken only in the heart, but he is aware of the existence of the claim and shows its danger. His use of the present tense shows that these self-reliant ones were claiming a present and continuing righteousness to which they had not, in fact, attained. They did not deny having sinned in the past, but now said, literally, “Sin we are not having.” In this respect they form a contrast to the genuinely righteous, who acknowledge their sinfulness and need for cleansing (v. 7). Christ alone could claim to be without sin (see on v. 7). For comment on “sin” see on ch. 3:4.

We deceive ourselves. See on Matt. 18:12. Since we are deceiving ourselves, we cannot blame anyone else. Since a claim to be without sin is an exaltation of self, a resuscitation of the old man, an act of pride and therefore of sin, it is a self-contradictory claim that is made only by one who is self-deceived. Unwilling to admit its own sinfulness, the deceitful human heart invents countless ways to protest its innocence. Only the penetrating power of the Word of God can reveal the true state of the heart, and then, only when the mind is willing to receive the revelation (Jer. 17:9; Heb. 4:12).

Truth is not in us. See on v. 6. The writer again follows a positive statement with its opposite in the negative (cf. vs. 5, 6). He who deliberately rejects right and accepts an untruth, especially an untruth that makes him feel superior to others and independent of the Saviour, can never be sure that he will ever again be willing or able to discern the difference between right and wrong (cf. on Matt. 12:31). Unless there is an early return to the former humble walk in the rays of the revealing light of truth, such a soul has turned aside into a path that can end only in condemnation and death. However penetrating may be the knowledge of other aspects of truth, an error here will render all other knowledge useless.

9. Confess. Gr. *homologeō*, “to say the same thing [as another],” “to admit the truth of an accusation” (see on Rom. 10:9), from *homos*, “one and the same,” and *legō*, “to say.”

Our sins. Gr. *hamartiai* (see on ch. 3:4). John's words show an awareness that sincere Christians do, at times, fall into sin (cf. on ch. 2:1). It is also clear that he is speaking of specific acts of sin, and not of sin as an evil principle in the life. Accordingly, confession should be more specific than the mere admission of sinfulness. The recognition of the precise nature of a sin and an understanding of the factors that led to its commission are essential to confession and to building up strength to resist a similar temptation when it recurs (5T 639). Unwillingness to be specific may reveal an absence of true repentance and the lack of a real desire for all that forgiveness implies (see SC 41). For discussion of the close relation between confession and repentance see on Eze. 18:30; see 5T 640.

The context shows that the writer expects the confession to be made to God, for God alone “is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Hence, no human intermediary, no priest, is needed to pronounce us free of sin. We come to God, not only because He alone can “cleanse,” but because we have sinned against Him. This is true of all sin. If the sin is also against some person, then confession should be made to that person as well as to God (5T 645, 646; DA 811). The extent of the confession should be measured by the extent of the damage done by our evil deed (cf. on Prov. 28:13).

He is faithful. The only element of uncertainty in the process of confession and forgiveness lies with the sinner. The Lord is sure to forgive if man will truly confess. Faithfulness is one of the Lord’s outstanding qualities (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 10:23). Here, John stresses God’s fidelity with respect to forgiveness (cf. on Ex. 34:6, 7; Micah 7:19).

How often peace is forfeited by those who doubt God’s faithfulness! Satan does his utmost to break down our faith in the Lord’s solicitous interest in us as individual (MB 115). Satan is a content for us to believe that God cares for many or most of His people, if he can only lead us to doubt His care for us personally. We need constantly to remind ourselves of the divine power that will keep us from falling (Jude 24), and when we do fall as a result of failing to use that power, we should come, repentant, to the throne of mercy for grace and pardon (cf. Heb. 4:16; 1 John 2:1).

Just. Gr. *dikaïos*, “just,” or “righteous” (see on Matt. 1:19). God is a just judge, and His justice is most apparent in contrast with “all our unrighteousness [*adikia*].” Fortunately for us His justice is tempered with mercy.

Forgive. Gr. *aphiēmi*, used in the NT with a variety of meanings—“to send away,” “to dismiss,” “to leave,” “to forgive.” When the verb is used in conjunction with “sin,” however, it is uniformly translated “to forgive” (see on Matt. 6:12; 26:28). It is in the realm of forgiveness that God’s faithfulness and justice find their complete expression. For a discussion of forgiveness see on 2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 32:1; Acts 3:19.

Us our sins. That is, the particular sins that have been confessed. The Lord is ready to forgive the repentant sinner, though He cannot forgive these sins in the sense of overlooking them. Confessed sins are borne by the Lamb of God (John 1:29). The gracious love of God accepts the repentant sinner, the confessed sin is taken away from him, and the sinner stands before the Lord covered with the perfect life of Christ (Col. 3:3, 9, 10; COL 311, 312). The sin has gone, and the sinner stands a new man in Christ Jesus.

And to cleanse. Or, “even to cleanse.” The phrase “to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” may be understood either as in apposition to, and hence explanatory of, the phrase “to forgive us our sins,” or as setting forth a process distinct from, and following that of, forgiveness. Both ideas are valid when applied to practical Christian living. All sin defiles, and when the sinner is forgiven he is cleansed from those sins for which he has received forgiveness. When confessing his great sin David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Ps. 51:10). However, the Lord purposes to cleanse the repentant sinner from *all* unrighteousness. He requires moral perfection of His children (see on Matt. 5:48) and has made provision whereby every sin may be successfully resisted and overcome (see on Rom. 8:1–4). As long as there is life there will be new

victories to gain and new excellences to reach. This day-by-day cleansing from sin and growth in grace is termed sanctification (see on Rom. 6:19). The initial step whereby the sinner turns from his sin and accepts Christ is called justification (see on Rom. 5:1). It is possible to see these two processes in the words of John, but whether the apostles had such a close analysis of these steps in salvation in mind is open to question. It is more likely that he was thinking of the cleansing that accompanies forgiveness, though his words may be more widely applied.

From all unrighteousness. This comprehensive statement makes clear the thoroughness with which God is prepared to remove unrighteousness from those who have confessed and been forgiven their sins. But the sinner himself must cooperate with God by forsaking sin. If the scriptural plan is followed, the cleansing will be complete.

It requires careful watching unto prayer to prevent the old habits of thought and action from coming to life again (Rom. 6:11–13; 1 Cor. 9:27). The action of the will is decisive, but the will is weak and vacillating until Christ has cleansed and strengthened it. The deceitful heart often has a hidden longing for its old ways and proposes many an excuse to justify continued indulgence. Constant awareness of this danger and a daily renewal of purpose are necessary to sinlessness (SC 52), for Heaven can do nothing for a man until he accepts the grace and power of Christ for the eradication of every sinful desire and tendency in his life. See on 1 John 3:6–10; Jude 24.

10. We have not sinned. This is the third and most specific spurious claim to holiness (see vs. 6, 8). Verse 6 records the false claim to fellowship with God while walking in darkness. This is an easy claim to make but often a hard one to refute. Verse 8 states the claim to a sinless heart, which again would be hard to prove or disprove. Here, however, John implies that some claim not to have committed any sinful acts. But such a claim is untrue, for all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Inasmuch as the epistle is addressed to Christians, who, presumably, would have been aware of sin, John clearly refers to conduct after conversion.

Make him a liar. The consequence of the claim to sinlessness is set forth according to the pattern followed in vs. 6, 8, where the results are expressed both positively and negatively, but here more serious terms are used. A false claim to fellowship makes us liars (v. 6), a claim to have no sin means that we are leading ourselves astray (v. 8), but a claim not to have sinned makes God a liar. Not that any man's assumption can affect the divine perfection, but if the claim were true it would contradict the plain declarations of God's Word.

His word. The reference is not to Christ, the living Word, but to the written or spoken word of God as the vehicle through which His truth (v. 8) is conveyed. This Word is truth (John 17:17), and cannot dwell in those who are contradicting its plain statements. If men will not accept the witness of God, if they deny the validity of His description of their condition, they are shutting out His Word, and can no longer have it abiding in their hearts.

The inspired Word is God's ordained means of revealing to a man his true condition and of saving him from being deluded into thinking himself sinless. Every Christian, therefore, should be a diligent student of the Word. The truths of the Bible should be committed to memory, and the mind thus fortified with the life-giving Word. Its precious promises will provide support in times of trial and difficulty, and its instruction in righteousness will lead us to the Saviour and prepare us to receive His holy character (2

Tim. 3:16, 17). With the Word of God thus hidden in our hearts we will no longer willfully sin against Him (Ps. 119:11), but there will still be no claim to complete sanctification (cf. GC 618, 619).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 AA 555; DA 340; PK 223; SL 70; 6T 90
1–3AA 568; MH 461; 8T 321
1–77T 286
2 AA 544; COL 43; CT 435; DA 250; Ed 84
3 AA 555; DA 340; PK 223; SL 70; 6T 90
5 Ev 284; GC 476; 1T 405; WM 79
5–73T 528
6–8SL 69
7 AH 207; CT 156; GC 74; GW 161; MB 115; MH 90; PK 320; TM 211, 517; 1T 409; 3T 361, 436, 464, 476; 4T 625; 5T 254; 8T 193; 9T 24
8 LS 84; SL 7, 51
8–10AA 562
9 9AA 552, 566; COL 158; DA 266, 806; MB 116; MH 123, 182, 229; SC 41; TM 147; 5T 641; WM 152

CHATER 2

- 1 *He comforteth them against the sins of infirmity. 3 Rightly to know God is to keep his commandments, 9 to love our brethren. 15 and not to love the world. 18 We must beware of seducers: 20 from whose deceits the godly are safe, preserved by perseverance in faith, and holiness of life.*

1. Little children. Gr. *teknia* (see on John 13:33), a diminutive form of *tekna*, “children” (see on Rom. 8:14). It might be rendered “dear children,” for the diminutive is used to express endearment rather than size or age. In the NT only the Saviour and His beloved disciple used this word (John 13:33; 1 John 2:12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), apart from its possible use by Paul in Gal. 4:19. The tenderness of this expression may imply that he was addressing his own converts.

The aged apostle could appropriately call even fathers “little children” (1 John 2:12–14). He regarded all Christians as members of one great family whose Father is God (cf. Eph. 3:14, 15) but in which there were many human fathers and sons. This does not indicate, however, that John accepted the title of “father.” Christ had enjoined His disciples not to call one another by any name that would signify control over a man’s conscience or over what he is to believe (Matt. 23:7–9; cf. DA 613).

These things. The reference may be to the preceding chapter or to the contents of the whole epistle. Either view would seem to satisfy the writer’s intention.

Write I. In ch. 1:4 John writes in the plural, but here he is being still more intimate and limits the reference to himself, even as he addresses his readers, “my little children.”

Sin not. The Greek tense shows that John is here speaking of specific acts of sin (cf. on ch. 3:9). John would have his readers avoid committing even a single act of sin. There is no real break in thought between chs. 1 and 2, both of which encourage Christians to appropriate divine power to live above sin. However, in ch. 1:10 John has warned against claiming freedom from sin. Does he mean by this that he expects men to be content to go on sinning? Certainly not! Complete freedom from sin is the goal set before God’s children, and every provision has been made for them to reach it (see on ch. 3:6).

If any man sin. That is, commit a definite act of sin. Although the Christian's goal is sinlessness. John here acknowledges the possibility of the sincere Christian's committing a sin (cf. on ch. 1:7–9). He does this, not to condone sin, but to introduce One who can save him from sin into which he may have fallen.

We have. John again includes himself with his readers, perhaps to emphasize that Christ has become the advocate for all Christians.

Advocate. Gr. *paraklētos* (see on John 14:16). *Paraklētos* is used in the NT only by John. In the Gospel the word refers to the Holy Spirit; here, by John's own identification it refers to the Son in His work of salvation. It is clear, then, that the writer sees both the Son and the Spirit as performing the office of *paraklētos*. The translation "mediator," or "intercessor," would here seem preferable to "advocate."

With the Father. "With" is here a translation of *pros*, the same Greek word that is used in ch. 1:2 and John 1:1, 2. It indicates the intimate association between the Advocate and the Fathers—the Mediator stands in God's very presence, on equal terms with Him (see on John 1:1; Heb. 7:25).

Jesus Christ. See on Matt. 1:1; Phil. 2:5.

The righteous. Gr. *dikaïos* (see on Matt. 1:19). It is because He is still righteous after having been tempted in all points like as we are (Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 7:26) that Christ is fitted to be our High Priest and Advocate. Had He sinned He could not have stood before the Father; had He not experienced temptation He could not have been our true representative. The Gnostics claimed that every being harbors light and darkness in varying proportions, and concluded from this that sin had a small place even in the Saviour's character. But this false teaching is here stoutly refuted by the apostle.

2. Propitiation. Gr. *hilasmos*, "expiation," from *hilaskomai*, "to be merciful" (Luke 18:13), "to make reconciliation for" (Heb. 2:17). See on Rom. 3:25. In pagan usage a "propitiation" was a gift or sacrifice intended to appease the wrath of a god and to render him friendly or forgiving. But our God has no need to be appeased or to be reconciled to us, for He loves men even while they are sinners (Rom. 5:8; Rev. 13:8). It is we who stand in need of to being reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). The Greek construction here emphasizes that Christ is *Himself* the propitiation as well as the propitiatory. He is both priest and victim.

For our sins. Or, "concerning our sins," the sphere in which "propitiation" operates. If there were no sin, there would be no need for propitiation, but John acknowledges that even Christians have sinned and offers the assurance that "Jesus Christ the righteous" has taken care of that sin by His expiatory death. He offers His own blood for the removal of our sins (John 1:29; Heb. 9:25, 26; DA 652).

The whole world. The preceding words, "the sins of," are supplied. The complete clause may be translated, "but also concerning the whole world." Some have interpreted this as referring to the sum total of sin in the world. However, the addition of the supplied words makes the statement accord with the scriptural teaching that Christ died to bear away the sins of the whole world (see John 1:29; Heb. 2:9; 2 Peter 3:9). The sins of every man, woman, and child were placed upon the Saviour. However, this does not mean universal salvation, for the Bible is explicit that salvation is ours only as we individually accept the offered salvation.

3. Hereby. Gr. *en toutō*, literally, “in this,” pointing forward to the qualification made in the second half of the verse, “if we keep his commandments” (cf. v. 5; ch. 3:16, 19; etc.). In his Gospel, John frequently uses a similar phrase “through this” (*dia touto*) to refer back to what has gone before and to carry the argument a step further (John 5:16, 18; John 8:47; etc.). But in this epistle *en toutō* generally refers to what follows (cf. on ch. 4:9).

We do know that we know. The Greek verbs are of different tenses. To convey the distinction between these tenses the clause may be rendered, “We are knowing that we have come to know and still know.” John frequently uses the verb “to know” (John 14:7; 17:3, 25; 1 John 2:4, 5, 13; 3:1; 4:2) in connection with “God” to denote, not merely a knowledge of Him, but a personal acquaintance with Him (cf. on John 17:3). This experience is an effective barrier against the inroads of the heretical Gnostic teachings concerning Christ already referred to (see pp. 625, 626).

Him. That is, Christ, the Advocate (v. 1), the Propitiation (v. 2). A life conformed to the will of God is the only sure evidence that a person knows God. Throughout this epistle, John continues to contradict the Gnostic claim that knowledge alone is of value and that conduct is of no particular importance in determining a man’s standing with God. The apostles declare that it is not hearers of the Word who are justified, but doers thereof (Rom. 2:13; James 1:22, 23). Pious claims must be balanced by moral conduct.

Keep his commandments. The verb translated “keep” (*tēreō*) expresses the idea of observing, or keeping close watch. Here it entails an inner purpose that results in conforming our acts with the will of God as expressed in His “commandments.” For comment on “commandments” (*entolai*) see on Matt. 19:17; John 14:15. John uses the phrase “keep my commandments” and its equivalent “keep my words,” or similar phrases, many times in his writings (John 14:15, 23; 1 John 3:22, 24; 5:2; 2 John 6; Rev. 3:10; 12:17).

4. He that saith. Compare on ch. 1:6. It is probable that there were those who, influenced by such heresies as Docetism (see p. 625), actually claimed to know Christ while disregarding His commandments. It is to such persons that John obliquely refers to avoid naming them or specifically including his readers among their number (cf. ch. 2:6, 9). There was no excuse for these deceptive teachings in the church, for Christ had emphatically declared that he who is willing to receive truth will have it revealed to him (see on John 7:17), and that those who truly love Him will keep His commandments (see on ch. 14:15).

Is a liar. Such a person’s character, as well as his profession, is false; by these he proves that “the truth is not in him” (cf. on ch. 1:6, 8). Note again the use of both the positive and negative expressions (cf. ch. 1:5, 6, 8, 10).

5. Whoso keepeth. The apostle is not content to leave his readers with the negative picture, but immediately paints the positive aspect, to encourage the faithful.

In him verily. Rather, “truly in him,” with the word for “truly” in the emphatic position in the Greek, to point the contrast to the false claims mentioned in v. 4.

Love of God. This may be love for God on the part of man, or God’s love as bestowed upon man. In this epistle John uses the phrase in both senses but appears to refer chiefly to God’s love for man (ch. 4:9; cf. chs. 3:1, 16, 17; 4:14, 16; but see chs.

2:15; 5:3). “Love is of God” (ch. 4:7). All true love comes from God, and he who is motivated to keep the Lord’s commands does so by virtue of love that is derived from God. For comment on “love” (*agapē*) see on Matt. 5:43, 44; 1 Cor. 13:1.

Perfected. Gr. *teleioō*, “to bring to an end,” “to complete,” “to perfect.” Instead of “is ... perfected” we should read “has been perfected.” For the adjective *teleios* see on Matt. 5:48.

Hereby. See on v. 3. In the present instance “hereby” may refer to the keeping of God’s word Word (v. 5), or to walking as Christ walked (v. 6). Both states give evidence of being in Christ.

In him. That is, in Christ. For comment on this phrase, which occurs frequently in the NT, see on 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:1; cf. on John 15:4; Gal. 2:20.

6. He that saith. See on v. 4. Here reference is to all who profess Christ, whether in sincerity or otherwise.

Abideth. Gr. *menō*, “to tarry,” “to continue to be present,” “to remain,” “to abide.” John makes frequent use of *menō*—41 times in his Gospel and 26 times in his epistles. In his writings it often has a mystic sense to indicate the union that exists between God and Christ (John 14:10) and the similar union that should exist between Christ and the believer (John 15:4–10; 1 John 2:24, 28; 3:6, 24). The phrase “abide in him” is John’s equivalent of Paul’s “to be in Christ” (see above under “in him,” v. 5). Although the phrase has a mystical meaning, it is also intensely practical and concerns the everyday life of the Christian.

Ought. Gr. *opheilō*, “to owe,” with reference to debts (Matt. 18:28; etc.); “to be under obligation” to do something (John 13:14). John uses it four times in his epistles (here and in 1 John 3:16; 4:11; 3 John 8). In Biblical usage *opheilō* conveys a strong sense of moral obligation.

To walk. Gr. *peripateō* (see on Eph. 2:2), used commonly in the NT with reference to Christian conduct (cf. on 1 Thess. 2:12).

Even as he walked. In His earthly life Jesus left a perfect example for all men to follow. The Christian needs to be thoroughly acquainted with that sinless life in order to copy it and apply its principles to conditions under which he himself must live. John insists that he who claims to abide in Christ should give daily evidence that he is emulating his Saviour. The life that he is emulating his Saviour. The life must tally with the profession (SC 58, 59).

7. Brethren. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “beloved.” Here it would be fitting for John, by way of introducing a section dealing with love for the brethren (vs. 7–11), to address his readers by either term of endearment, “brethren” or “beloved.”

New. Gr. *kainos*, “new” in quality rather than age. Here it may be rendered “new kind of.” In the next clause the word used for “old” (*palaios*) refers to age, to the “commandment” that was given long ago. Here John disclaims any intention of giving his readers a new kind of “commandment” because the old is adequate. The context (vs. 9–11) indicates that the “commandment” spoken of is love toward one’s brother (see on John 13:34).

From the beginning. Probably, from the beginning of the readers' Christian experience, though some suggest that it refers to the giving of this "commandment" by Christ, or even earlier at Sinai (see on Matt. 22:39, 40).

Word. Gr. *logos*, here, "a body of teaching," "a message." John refers to earlier instruction as a result of which the "brethren" had embraced the Christian faith.

8. Again. This verse provides an explanation of the preceding verse.

New commandment. The "old" commandment was sufficient, had man but heeded its counsel. But men so obscured the true purpose of the law that they altogether lost sight of its spiritual quality. In His teachings, most particularly in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ removed the accretions of the ages and revealed the original luster of "the ... commandment" (see on Matt. 5:22). So bright and meaningful did the instruction appear that it could appropriately be described by John as a "new" commandment (see on John 13:34).

Which thing. That is, the "new commandment."

In him and in you. The repetition of the preposition suggests that there is a difference between the way this statement is true in Christ and in the believer. In Christ, the commandment needed no renewal; for it was an expression of His character. In us, the commandment must be put to work to transform our characters, in order that they may be "true." This is accomplished when we love one another as Christ has loved us.

Darkness. See on John 1:5.

Is past. Gr. *paragō*, "to go by," "to go away," in the form here used, "is passing away." In v. 17 *paragō* describes the transitory nature of the sinful world. The present tense—"is passing away," "is shining"—shows that John realized that the darkness would not be immediately dispelled. The conquest of darkness by the "true light" would be gradual, but certain. This darkness is the ignorance, voluntary or otherwise, that prevents men from seeing the true nature of God's Word.

The true light. That is, the revelation of God through Jesus Christ (see on John 1:4–9).

Now shineth. Literally, "already is shining." Since the incarnation true light had been shining on the sin-darkened world and men had less excuse than before for dwelling in darkness. The coming of Jesus placed a new responsibility, as well as a new blessing, upon men.

9. He that saith. See on v. 4. John again appears to refer to heretical teachings, such as those of the Gnostics. He has already contrasted light with darkness chs. 1:5–7; 2:8 and truth with falsehood chs. 1:8–10; 2:4. Now he deals similarly with love and hate (ch. 2:9–11).

In the light. The state of those who are truly "in the light" is implied in ch. 1:5–7 (see comment there).

Hateth. Nothing is said about the degree of hatred. It can exist as a state of passive "nonloving," as an active dislike, or as a malignant hate that seeks to harm its object. The slightest trace of hatred is sufficient to show that the God of love does not have full sway in the heart (Matt. 5:21, 22; MB 55–58).

Brother. Except when specifying family relationship, the word "brother" in the writings of John usually refers to a member of the Christian church. Though hatred of

anyone would mean that a man is in darkness, John is particularly concerned with Christian relationships.

Darkness. See on ch. 1:5. He who claims spiritual enlightenment yet harbors hatred for a fellow believer clearly demonstrates that he is dwelling in spiritual darkness even “until now,” that is, at the very moment he makes the false claim.

10. He that loveth. God is love (ch. 4:8), God is light (ch. 1:5), and he who keeps on loving his brother despite circumstances that might produce hatred, must be living a life with God, and therefore dwelling in His light.

Occasion of stumbling. Gr. *skandalon* (see on Matt. 5:29; 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:23).

In him. Or, “in it.” The Greek may be taken either way. “In him” would refer to the man who loves his brother, whereas “in it” would refer to “the light” (cf. John 11:9, 10). Comparison with 1 John 2:11 may imply the latter. If so, v. 10 would constitute the first member of an antithesis (light causes no one to stumble), and v. 11 the second (darkness blinds the eyes).

11. He that hateth. Such a man is a complete contrast to the loving one (v. 10). Instead of abiding, or dwelling, in God’s life-giving light he dwells in spiritual darkness.

Walketh. See on v. 6. The act of hating his brother has affected other areas of the man’s life to the extent that his life is altogether dark.

Whither he goeth. The complete expression is a quotation from Christ’s own words (John 12:35). It would be strange if the beloved disciple did not echo some of his Master’s sayings. The hater doubtless thinks he knows where he is going, but he is deluded. He is unaware of his ultimate destination. Were he aware of it he would probably change his manner of life. See Prov. 14:12.

Darkness hath blinded. Blindness has already occurred. Light is essential to sight, and he who rejects light loses the ability to see. The idea that the rejection of light leads to spiritual blindness is also found in the OT (cf. Ps. 82:5; Eccl. 2:14; Isa. 6:10). On the other hand, the man who chooses to dwell in light receives further illumination and guidance (Prov. 4:18, 19).

No metaphor can adequately picture the condition of those who hate their brethren. The blind man dwells in darkness and knows he is blind, but those whom Satan has blinded think they see when they do not. They see themselves as superior beings walking an enlightened road to a delectable end (see on Gen. 3:6).

12. I write. From general considerations (chs. 1:4 to 2:11) the apostle turns to specific problems (ch. 2:12 and on). First, however, he lists his reasons for writing, naming particular groups. Four times he says, “I write” (vs. 12, 13), and twice “I have written” (v. 14). The significance of the difference in tense has been much discussed. Some think that by “have written” John refers to his Gospel. But there is no conclusive evidence that the Gospel had been written prior to the epistle (see pp. 624, 625). Others see in it reference to a previous epistle, now lost. Others suggest that John is only varying his language to avoid monotonous repetition. But he, more than other NT writers, is unafraid of apparent monotony where he deems it an effective literary device, and his variations are rarely without significance. Accordingly, others suggest that by the present tense John refers to what he is about to write, and by the past, to what he has already written.

Little children. Gr. *teknia* (see on v. 1). That the word embraces all faithful church members, old as well as young, is clear from the remainder of the verse. Messages to specific age groups appear in vs. 13, 14.

Because. Gr. *hoti*, “that,” or “because.” Some favor “that,” thinking that John means to remind his readers *that* their sins are forgiven. While such a rendering is possible here, it is not acceptable in vs. 13, 14, where *hoti* again occurs.

Are forgiven. That is, “have been forgiven.” The Greek tense indicates the continuing result of a past act of forgiveness. See on ch. 1:9.

His name’s sake. Or, “because of His [Christ’s] name,” “on account of His name,” “for the sake of His name” (see on Ps. 31:3; Acts 3:6, 16; cf. on Acts 4:12). The Father forgives the sin of the repentant sinner because of Christ’s “name,” that is, by virtue of His character and work. Because the forgiving power of the Saviour’s name was personally known to John’s readers, the apostle feels free to discuss deep spiritual truths with them. Forgiveness had opened a new world before them, and he proposes to help them explore it.

13. I write. See on v. 12.

Fathers. This is an unusual form of NT address. In the OT the term frequently refers to ancestors (Gen. 15:15; 31:3; etc.) and is so used in the NT (Acts 3:13, 22, 25; etc.). “Fathers” may also be the elders, or leaders, of the people (Acts 7:2; 22:1). Here it appears that John is addressing the older men, whether literal fathers or not, in contrast with the following group, “young men.” The “fathers” may have been long in the Christian way, in addition to being advanced in years, and would thus have attained to spiritual maturity.

Because. See on v. 12.

Have known. Gr. *ginōskō* (see on v. 3). It is unlikely that any of John’s readers knew Christ personally, in the flesh, but all were privileged to cultivate a real spiritual acquaintance with Him. It is our privilege to enjoy the same inner conviction of fellowship with the Saviour (cf. on Phil. 3:10). All Christians should be able to testify with Paul, “I know whom I have believed” (2 Tim. 1:12).

Him that is from. Comparison with ch. 1:1–3 confirms that John is here speaking of the Son. At the end of the verse he attributes a knowledge of the Father to all believers.

Young men. John divides his readers into two groups, “fathers” and “young men.” Whoever is not in the first will be in the second.

Overcome. Gr. *nikaō*, “to conquer.” Of the 28 times *nikaō* is used in the NT, 6 occur in this epistle and 18 in other writings of John. The thought of Christian victory occupies a prominent part in the apostle’s thinking. The Greek indicates that the believers had conquered in the past and were enjoying the fruits of their victory.

The wicked one. That is, the devil (cf. on John 17:15). The victory that the believers had gained was not only over their own wrong desires and wayward habits, but also over the malignant hatred and skillful temptations of the adversary himself (cf. on Matt. 4:1). In this age of increased knowledge and boastful skepticism few realize the power of the evil one and his myriad helpers. Men like to feel that they are masters of their own destiny, and forget that ever since Adam sinned all men have been slaves of the evil one. The only escape from such bondage is by the use of the one personal power that remains to men—the power to choose another Master and to yield their weak wills to Him. Christ will then release them from the devil’s thralldom and will control them for good (Rom. 6:13–23).

I write. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “I have written.”

Little children. Gr. *paidia*, a term that does not convey the same note of affection as *teknia* (see on v. 1), but stresses, instead, the idea of subordination and dependence, and implies a need of guidance. Like *teknia*, it doubtless includes all the believers, old and young (see on v. 12).

The Father. That is, God. In v. 12 the apostle had credited the believers with knowledge of sins forgiven; here he attributes to them a personal knowledge of the true God. John stresses this knowledge in his epistles and in his Gospel, realizing that it is essential to eternal life (see on John 17:3).

14. Have written. See on v. 12.

Fathers. Compare v. 13. The intimate knowledge of the Saviour that comes from long experience is the most important thing John can attribute to them. Those who have known God must also have known the Son, through whom alone God can be known (see on John 1:18).

Ye are strong. John expands his address to the young men. In v. 13 he records their victory over the devil. Now he reveals the enabling factor in that conquest (cf. Eph. 6:10–18).

Word of God. At first glance it might be thought that John here refers to the incarnate Word (cf. on John 1:1–3; 1 John 1:1–3). But it seems clear that he is here thinking of the written Word, the Holy Scriptures, which can “abide,” or be hidden, in the heart (John 15:7; Ps. 119:11).

The Word of God in the heart both inspires and equips the soldier of the cross to fight the good fight (see on Eph. 6:17). It reveals the fallen state of man, the craft and malice of Satan, the saving power of Christ exerted through the Holy Spirit, the high standard men are to reach through devotion to it, and the glorious reward of the overcomer. The Saviour Himself used the written Word in His struggle with the tempter (Matt. 4:1–11). Fighting man’s battle as a man, the Saviour had no keener weapon than the words which the Holy Spirit had inspired for just such occasions (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). It is only as Christians follow Christ’s example, filling their memory with God’s precious Word and following its counsel, that they can gain the victory over self and sin.

Overcome. As with the fathers, John repeats his reason for commendation (cf. v. 13).

15. Love not. Having given his reason for writing to them and for expecting them to heed his counsel, John proceeds to warn the younger men of the things they must avoid. He does so in a direct, unequivocal manner, using the present imperative of the verb “to love” (*agapaō*; see on Matt. 5:43; John 21:15). His word of warning may be rendered “stop loving,” or “do not continue to love.”

World. Gr. *kosmos*, the “world,” considered as an orderly arrangement of things or people (see on Matt. 4:8; John 1:9). In the NT *kosmos* often represents the ungodly multitude, alien and hostile to God, or worldly affairs that lead away from God. John uses *kosmos* more than 100 times in his writings, and more than any other NT author. In most instances he conveys a picture of the world as being alien and hostile to God and in opposition to His kingdom. This usage may reflect concern for false teachings that later developed into Gnosticism, with its dualism, its belief in the struggle between darkness and light, between matter and spirit, between the Demiurge and the true God (see Vol. VI, pp. 54–57).

Accordingly, when John bids his readers, “Love not the world,” he is not thinking of the earth as it came from the hand of the Creator, but of earthly elements, animate and inanimate, that Satan has marshaled in rebellion against God. John knows how attractive these can appear, and bids Christians to beware of them and to resist their seductive power. Hatred for the world of sin will not prevent the Christian from trying to help the sinner; rather it will enable him the more effectively to love the victim of sin. God Himself is our example in this respect (John 3:16).

The things. That is, the separate parts that together compose the *kosmos*. Things that have no good use must be avoided entirely, and many things good in themselves may come between man and God. Houses and lands, clothing and furniture, relatives and friends, are worth-while possessions. But when any of these is made a center of attention, to the detriment of spiritual life, it takes the place of God and becomes an idol (see on Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26). To be sure, self is always what actually comes between a man and his God.

If any man. Again the apostle makes a conditional statement when he must have known many who had given the love of the world a place in their hearts (cf. on ch. 1:6). Those who allow their affections to dwell on interests that are opposed to God do not truly love Him. The Christian cannot serve, or love, both God and mammon (see on Matt. 6:24).

Love of the Father. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “love of God.” If the better-attested KJV reading be retained, this is the only instance where the words “love of the Father” occur in the Bible. The phrase refers to the believer’s affection for his heavenly Father, not to the Father’s love for His earthly children (see on v. 5; cf. on Rom. 5:5; 2 Thess. 3:5). Even when we permit the love of the world to enter our hearts God still loves us, for He loved us before we ever thought of repenting and serving Him at all (Rom. 5:8).

16. For. Or, “because” (cf. on v. 12). John now states the reason for the categorical statements of v. 15.

Lust. Gr. *epithumia*, “desire,” “craving,” “longing” (see on Matt. 5:28; John 8:44; Rom. 7:7).

Flesh. The sensuous nature of man in which “dwelleth no good thing” and which lusteth to evil (Rom. 7:18; cf. Rom. 8:1). The lust of the flesh is the craving of the flesh for indulgence in evil.

John does not speak of the body, which the Gnostics later claimed to be intrinsically evil. The NT writers regard the human body as having a capacity for both good and evil, and thus subject to the redemption purchased by Christ (Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:15; Phil. 1:20; 3:21). The expression “lust of the flesh” includes all strong desires for indulgence contrary to the will of God. The apostle was not accusing his readers of heinous sin, but warning them of the inherent enmity that exists between God and all forms of sin. He trusted that the warning would serve to save them from sin’s snares.

Lust of the eyes. If “lust of the flesh” applies particularly to sins arising from the body, “lust of the eyes” may be understood to refer to mental pleasure stimulated through sight. Much of the sinful pleasure of the world is experienced through the eyes (see on Matt. 5:27, 28). Many who would hasten to disclaim any intention of indulging in open sin themselves are eager to read about sin, to study it in a picture, or to watch it depicted upon a screen. Here the words of 1 Cor. 10:12 apply: “Let him that thinketh he standeth

take heed lest he fall” (cf. on Gen. 3:6). John may have been thinking of spectacles of brutalizing sports in the Roman arena, where men fought each other or wild animals to the death. Those spectacles aroused the same morbid curiosity that sadistic sports do today.

Pride. Gr. *alazoneia*, “vainglory,” “boasting,” “display” (cf. on James 4:16).

Life. Gr. *bios*, here, “manner of life” (see on Rom. 6:4). The expression “pride of life” implies a materialistic satisfaction with worldly goods, a state of mind that substitutes the material for the spiritual. All, in varying degrees, are prone to such pride and need to guard against it. Some take undue pride in their work, others in their possessions, their own beauty, or their children.

Of the Father. Literally, “out of the Father.” Neither the lust nor the pride of which John has just spoken proceeds from the Father. Both undesirable qualities originated with Satan (cf. John 8:44).

Of the world. Hence, at enmity with God (see on v. 15).

17. The world. See on v. 15. Here the term apparently refers to principles that oppose God and that produce the lusts discussed in v. 16.

Passeth away. Or, “is passing away” (see on v. 8). John reminds his readers that the questionable objects of men’s love are transitory. Many of them may now appear permanent and important, but they will all come to an end. Accordingly, what is to be gained by coveting them and pinning the affections upon them?

He that doeth. See on Matt. 7:21. The doer of God’s will applies God’s revealed will to his own daily life, in contrast with the man who ignores God and prefers the enticing ways of the world.

Abideth. Gr. *menō* (see on v. 6).

For ever. Gr. *eis ton aiōna* (see on Matt. 13:39; Rev. 14:11). The apostle stresses the contrast between the transitory life of the lover of the world and the abiding experience of the doer of God’s will. Death may overtake the faithful Christian, but he has the assurance of eternal life and may thus be said to abide “for ever” (see on John 10:28; 11:26).

He who loves the world loves what is temporary, what has become so fully identified with death and sin that it must perish with them. With the passing of the world and its sinfulness the lover of sin also passes away, but he who sets his affections on the eternal God and on His everlasting kingdom and its ever-living principles of righteousness will abide forever.

18. Little children. Gr. *paidia* (see on v. 13; cf. on v. 1).

The last time. Literally, “a last hour.” Absence of the definite article in the Greek often stresses quality and may, as here, indicate the uniqueness of an event. John is speaking of the one and only “last hour.”

Mention of this final hour follows naturally the thought of v. 17. Consideration of the transitory nature of “the world ... and the lust thereof” brings the reader face to face with thoughts of the end of earthly things, with the arrival of the “last hour,” and with the appearing of the Saviour (v. 28; cf. ch. 3:2).

The implication of the apostle’s words needs to be studied against the circumstances in which they were given. The writer had lived with Jesus, had heard of His return from

His own lips. Now old, he was living amid the political and social turmoils of the Roman world, and it was natural that his mind should be filled with the hope of personally seeing his Lord's return. He wished to share that hope with others. All other events were of secondary importance, compared with the prospect of that longed-for reunion. Compare John 14:1–3; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

It should be remembered that the chief concern of the Bible writers was spiritual rather than chronological, that they sought to prepare their readers to meet Jesus, not to provide them chronological data on the last days (cf. on Acts 1:6, 7). John's message had the immediate value of encouraging his fellow Christians to live in anticipation of Christ's soon return. It stimulated them to live, as all Christians should, as if each day were their last. The solemn pronouncement, "It is the last time," would also stir the believers to more fervent witness, by which Christ's advent would be hastened. See Additional Note on Rom. 13; see on Matt. 24:34; Rom. 13:11; 2 Peter 3:12; Rev. 1:1.

Ye have heard. That is, either from John or from other accredited Christian teachers. The believers had been well instructed concerning last-day events (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3).

Antichrist. Literally, "the antichrist." Important textual evidence may also be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the article. The word "antichrist" is a transliteration of the Greek *antichristos*, a name formed from *anti*, "against," or "instead of," and *christos*, "Christ." The word may therefore mean one who opposes Christ, or one who claims to take the place of Christ, or one who combines both these functions. The title vice-Christ, or vicegerent of Christ, would convey a similar idea when used of one who falsely claims to be vested with Christ's authority.

The name "antichrist" is used in the NT only by the apostle John (here, and in 1 John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7), but he gives no definite clue for identifying any specific person, persons, or organization. He assumes that his readers are already acquainted with "antichrist," that they expect his coming, and that they believe his appearing indicates the nearness of the last days. John doubtless thought of such heresies as the contemporary Docetic and Cerinthian forms of Gnosticism (see Vols. VI, pp. 54–58; VII, pp. 625, 626; see on 1 John 2:22; 2 John 7).

It is well to remember that the original "antichrist" is Satan, who has opposed Christ through various human agencies. Long ages before man was created Satan sought to displace Christ (see on Isa. 14:12–14; Eze. 28:12, 13), and ever since has inspired all opposition to God and His Son Jesus Christ (cf. on 2 Thess. 2:8, 9).

Shall come. Literally, "cometh," or "is about to come" (cf. on John 14:3). The form of the verb stresses the certainty of an event that was still future when the believers first heard about it. John goes on to explain that the prophecy concerning the coming of "antichrist" is in process of fulfillment as he writes.

Are there. Literally, "have come to be," or "have arisen."

Many antichrists. The plural indicates that John did not have any one particular manifestation in mind, but classed all heretical opponents of truth as "antichrists." Although Christianity was yet in its infancy, various false teachings had already gained ground and were making inroads on the young church (see Vol. VI, pp. 52–59).

Whereby we know. Lamentable though apostasy be, John sees it as a sign of the approaching end and warns his readers accordingly.

19. They went out from us. Or, "they departed from us." The defection of the false teachers of v. 18 had already taken place. His readers did not need to be told the

circumstances of the apostasy, with which they were doubtless familiar. Whether the antichrists and their followers voluntarily withdrew from the church or whether they were excommunicated is not known. It is clear, however, that these false teachers had originally professed Christianity.

Were not of us. They had not experienced genuine repentance and at heart never truly belonged to the church. Doubtless, however, they had convinced themselves that their false teachings concerning the nature of Christ were true.

Continued. Gr. *menō*, “to abide,” a word John often uses (see on v. 6). Had the departed members truly belonged to the church they would have remained with it and shared in its spirit. Their departure proved the weakness of their connection with Christ and the church.

Made manifest. While the false teachers remained within the church it was not easy for the faithful to discern their true character. But when they left the church their heresy was revealed, and it became evident that they had never truly belonged to Christ.

They were not all of us. Rather, “they all were not of us.” The Greek makes clear that, at heart, none of the apostates ever really belonged to the church. On the basis of John’s declaration here some have concluded that these apostates had been predestined to be lost and that no true Christian can fall from grace. However, John warns his readers against the dangers that beset the Christian’s pathway (vs. 15–17) in view of the possibility that some who belonged to Christ might be led astray thereby. If they depart from the church, it is by virtue of their own choice (see on John 10:28), not some irrevocable divine decree. Concerning Bible predestination see on John 3:17–21; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4–6; cf. 1 Peter 1:2.

20. An unction. Gr. *chrisma*, “an anointing,” from *chriō*, “to anoint” (see on Matt. 1:1). The use of *chrisma* may have been suggested by the use of *antichristos* in v. 18. Compare on Matt. 3:11; Luke 24:49.

Holy One. The OT speaks of God as the Holy One of Israel (Ps. 71:22; Isa. 1:4; etc.); the NT specifically applies the title to Christ (Mark 1:24; Acts 3:14; see on John 6:69). John knew that the Holy Spirit was given by the Father through the mediation of the Son (John 14:16, 26), and the reference here may therefore be either to the Father or to the Son.

Ye know all things. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “ye all know.” According to this reading John does not say that the Christian possesses all knowledge, but that *all* Christians have knowledge. However, the original reading is well supported and need not be taken to imply that the Christian possesses all knowledge, but simply that the Christian possesses all knowledge essential for his salvation. In the OT the anointing had been restricted to priests, rulers, and prophets (Ex. 29:7; 1 Sam. 9:16; 1 Kings 19:16), but under the new covenant all believers are anointed and all receive the divinely imparted knowledge that guides to life eternal (see on John 14:26; 16:13).

21. I have not written. Tactfully, the apostle does not address his readers as if they need instruction, but appeals to them in terms of the knowledge they already possess (cf. on vs. 12–14).

Ye know it. That is, ye know the truth. The true Christian has no need to fear opponents’ claims to superior knowledge. His continued anointing by the Holy Spirit

imparts to him the knowledge essential to salvation and the ability to use that knowledge skillfully in the cause of truth.

No lie. The clause reads literally, “every lie out of the truth is not,” that is, every trace of untruth comes from a different source than that from which truth issues. Truth comes from Christ; lies, of every kind, can eventually be traced back to Satan, the father of lies (see on John 8:44).

22. Who is a liar? Rather, “Who is the liar?” that is, who is the great liar?

He that denieth. John has already warned of the presence of false teachers (vs. 18–21), and now proceeds to identify their doctrine. The Greek implies habitual denial.

Jesus is the Christ. See on Matt. 1:1; Phil. 2:5. John sets forth as primary the belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world (see on Luke 1:35; John 1:14; see Additional Note on John 1). He who denies this has denied the central historical fact of redemption and has thereby made his own salvation impossible (see on Acts 4:12). There can be no more destructive perversion of Christianity than a denial of the deity of Jesus. Docetism, and later Gnosticism and other heresies, grossly distorted the truth concerning Christ’s nature (see Vol. V, pp. 892, 893; Vol. VI, pp. 54–58), and it is to such denials that John primarily refers. For him, a present truth was full acceptance of Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, as he eloquently urges in his Gospel (John 1:1–3, 14) and in this epistle (here, and in chs. 4:1–3, 15; 5:1, 5). The same glorious truth needs emphatic proclamation today, together with messages designed especially for our own time (see on Rev. 14:6–12).

He is antichrist. Literally, “This is the antichrist.” See on v. 18. Here John plainly identifies the antichrist of whom he writes as any supposedly Christian teacher who denies the Father and the Son.

Denieth the Father. So close is union between the Father and the Son that it is impossible to weaken the position of the Son without thereby undermining respect for the Father (see on John 10:30). This the false teachers were doing. Those who refuse to accept the revelation of God in Christ misunderstand the nature and purposes of the Father also (see on John 1:18; 14:6, 9; 2 Cor. 5:19; cf. Matt. 10:32, 33).

23. Hath not the Father. Those who attacked Christ’s position may have felt that in so doing they in no way detracted from the Father. The apostle emphasizes their error by stating that such teachers do not possess the close communion with God they thought they enjoyed, and their profession would prove vain (cf. on 1 John 4:3; cf. Matt. 10:33).

Acknowledgeth. Or, “confesseth.” The last half of the verse appears in italics because this statement does not appear in the Greek text from which the KJV was translated. However, textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the inclusion of the statement. The construction harmonizes with the apostle’s literary device of clinching an argument with a negative or positive affirmation of his preceding statement, as the case may be.

24. Let that. Literally the complete sentence reads, “As for you, what you have heard from the beginning in you let it abide.” In this way John contrasts the antichrist with the faithful Christian.

Abide. Gr. *meno* (see on v. 6), rendered “remain” and “continue” later in the verse. Its Johannine force is more apparent if “abide” is used in each case, thus conveying the thought of “dwell.”

From the beginning. See on v. 7. John adjures his readers to retain the faith that had been delivered to them by the apostles or their associates. The writer assures them that if

they do this they will continue to enjoy what the antichrists have forfeited, constant fellowship with the Son and the Father. This counsel is valid for the Christian today (cf. on Rev. 2:4).

25. *This is the promise.* For a similar construction see ch. 1:5. The assurance of the promise is given first, and the promise itself is stated later. The “he” who promised is Christ, through whom all God’s promises are made and fulfilled (2 Cor. 1:20). Some of the promises concerning eternal life are found in the Gospels (Matt. 5:1–12; John 3:15–17; 6:47; etc.).

Eternal life. (See on ch. 1:2).

26. *These things.* That is, the counsel contained in vs. 18–25, where the writer warns against antichrists.

Seduce. Gr. *planaō*, “to lead astray” (cf. on 1 John 1:8; see on Matt. 18:12). The Greek construction makes it possible to translate the last half of the sentence, “those who are trying to lead you astray.” There is no evidence that the false teachers succeeded in leading John’s intended readers astray.

27. *Anointing.* Gr. *chrisma* (see on v. 20, where the same word is translated “unction”). The entire clause reads literally, “but as for you, the anointing which you have received,” emphasizing the contrast between the spiritual equipment of the believer and the wiles of the antichrist (as in vs. 20, 24). The apostle, following his customary method of encouraging his flock, reminds them of their privileges and tactfully assumes that they will prove themselves worthy of their spiritual heritage (cf. vs. 5, 12–14, 20, 24).

Of him. That is, of Christ. In this epistle the pronouns “he” and “him” generally refer to the Son.

Abideth. Gr. *menō* (see on v. 6). John expects the Holy Spirit to *dwell* in the heart of the Christian, and thus to be the controlling influence in his life.

Ye need not. The original gift of the Holy Spirit and His continual presence in the heart ensure progress in spiritual understanding (John 14:26; 16:13). The believer is not then wholly dependent on human instruction, nor is he at the mercy of the false teachers. However, he is not to rely on direct guidance from the Holy Spirit, to the exclusion of all else, or John would not be writing this epistle.

Same anointing. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “His anointing” (cf. on v. 20).

Is truth. Rather, “is true,” referring to the anointing with the Holy Spirit. The original instruction, given to the believer prior to baptism, when in a special way he received the Holy Spirit, is ever true. Nothing given later by the Holy Spirit will conflict with the basic teachings on which Christian faith is built. The Lord may have more light for us, but new light will confirm the old landmarks. It is by their attitude toward new light that the devotion of the people of God to truth and their possession of Christ’s anointing is revealed (GW 297–300).

Is no lie. Again John buttresses a positive statement by a denial of the opposite. There is no admixture of error in the revelations made by the Holy Spirit.

It. That is, Christ’s anointing.

Hath taught. We are anointed with the Holy Spirit, which teaches us “all things” (John 14:26).

Shall abide. Rather, “abide,” either as an imperative, “abide ye,” or as a statement, “ye abide.”

In him. That is, in Christ (see v. 28). The Greek construction of the second half of v. 27 is obscure. The apostle seems to be asserting that those who remain faithful to the Spirit’s instruction continue in intimate fellowship with Christ.

28. And now. These words mark the conclusion of the first part of the epistle and do not have any particular reference to the time when John was writing. Reaching the climax of his reasoning, John solemnly exhorts his readers on the basis of what he has written in vs. 18–27.

Little children. Gr. *teknia* (see on v. 1).

Abide in him. That is, in Christ. This is direct counsel to take the action recommended in v. 27, in view of the anticipated return of Jesus (see on v. 18). Only those who abide in Christ will be prepared to meet Him at His coming (cf. Matt. 24:13; John 15:6).

When he shall appear. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, “if he shall be manifested.” No uncertainty is implied, however (compare the clauses, “if I be lifted up” and “if I go and prepare a place for you” in John 12:32; 14:3). Rather, the words imply strong assurance. Elsewhere John stresses the reality of Christ’s return (see 1 John 3:2; cf. John 14:1–3; 21:22; Rev. 1:7; 22:12, 20), but recognizes the uncertainty of the time of Christ’s appearing (cf. on Matt. 24:36–44).

Confidence. Gr. *parrēsia*, originally, “freedom of speech,” hence, “boldness” (see on Acts 4:13), used by John 13 of the 31 times it occurs in the NT. The picture is of one who, having consistently abided in Christ, has no fear of meeting Him at His coming. Those who spend this life with their Lord will welcome Him at His coming (cf. Isa. 25:9). Repentant sinners will greet Him, not with the boldness of self-confidence, but with the quiet assurance that they are children of God.

Ashamed. Again John emphasizes his meaning by restating it negatively (cf. chs. 1:5, 6, 8; 2:4, 27; etc.). In so doing he sets forth the attitude of those who have not prepared to meet their Lord. They will be filled with shame as they face the prospect of meeting Him whom they have despised and rejected. They will be ashamed of their treatment of the Redeemer and of their own sinful record. They will realize that the blame for their loss of eternal life is all their own (cf. on Rev. 6:15–17). But those who abide in Christ may look forward with joy to His coming.

Coming. Gr. *parousia* (see on Matt. 24:3), used only here by John, but often in the writings of Paul (1 Cor. 15:23; Phil. 1:26; 1 Thess. 2:19; etc.), Matthew (Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39), James (James 5:7, 8), and Peter (2 Peter 1:16; 3:4, 12).

29. If ye know. The “if” does not imply doubt or uncertainty, but is John’s characteristic way of impressing truth on his readers’ hearts. The first word translated “know” in this verse is *oída*, which refers to intuitive knowledge. The second, *ginōskō*, refers to knowledge gained by experience (see on 1 John 1:3; Rom. 3:19). In this way the apostle connects the believer’s theoretical knowledge with his practical knowledge as the basis for an appeal to righteous living.

He. Opinion is divided as to whether John here refers to Christ or to the Father. Some, reasoning that the closing phrase “born of him” can refer only to the Father, because John speaks only of the believer’s being “born of God” (chs. 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18),

claim that the apostle here speaks of the Father. Certainly none will dispute the righteousness of God, and ultimately all who are redeemed have been born of Him (John 1:13). But it is also certain that John has hitherto been speaking of the Son (1 John 2:25, 27, 28), and it is unlikely that he would make such a sudden, unannounced change from the Son to the Father. Christ is righteous, and it is through His power, in cooperation with the Spirit, that the Christian is reborn. Thus it may be that the primary reference is still to the Son.

Righteous. Gr. *dikaïos* (see on Matt. 1:19; 1 John 1:1).

Righteousness. See on Matt. 5:6. He who is consistently righteous in thought, word, attitude, and deed demonstrates that he is born of God, the One from whom every good thing comes (Matt. 7:20; James 1:17). If such a man continues to permit God to work in him, he will be accorded further instruction until he walks in the full light of Heaven (Prov. 4:18; John 7:17; DA 238; GC 528). However, some are, momentarily, able to present a false appearance of righteousness, which is inspired by self-love (Matt. 6:1–18; 1 Cor. 13:3; 3T 336; SC 18, 28, 29).

Born of him. See on John 1:12, 13; 3:3–8.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 CH 374; FE 273; GC 416, 482; MB 104; MH 228; MYP 97; PK 589; SC 64; IT 544; 2T 319, 591; 4T 530; 5T 316; 6T 364
- 1, 2 AA 552
- 2 FE 456; TM 220
- 3 COL 313; DA 396, 409; MB 147; SC 61
- 3–5 COL 144
- 4 MB 146; PP 73; SC 60; SL 65; 2T 457
- 4, 5 AA 563; GC 472
- 5, 6 1T 286
- 6 AA 339, 559; COL 60; DA 409, 504; PP 372; SC 61; SL 81; 1T 531, 543; 2T 32, 73, 156, 318; 3T 538; 4T 79; 6T 117
- 7 MB 48
- 8–11 AA 549
- 9 3T 60
- 11 MB 92
- 14 CSW 30; CT 535; FE 191; ML 5; MYP 24; 5T 584
- 14–17 1T 498
- 15 PP 458; 1T 151, 169, 199, 478, 530, 537, 551; 2T 59, 197, 393, 492; 3T 385, 477, 522; 4T 47, 617; 5T 277, 456
- 15, 16 COL 55; MB 95; ML 71; 1T 551
- 15–17 1T 284; 2T 196
- 16 CD 166; ChS 35; GC 475; 1T 531; 2T 279, 280, 294, 304, 456; 3T 83; 5T 52
- 17 MB 100; ML 258
- 22, 23 PP 686
- 24 TM 169

CHAPTER 3

¹ *He declareth the singular love of God towards us, in making us his sons: 3 who therefore ought obediently to keep his commandments, 11 as also brotherly to love one another.*

1. Behold. In ch. 2:29 the apostle has introduced the thought of being born of God. He realizes that such birth is due to the operation of divine love. This leads him to consider that love and the type of conduct it should produce in the believer. He now bids his readers to share such thoughts by contemplating the matchless love of the Father.

What manner. Gr. *potapos*, an interrogative that originally meant “from what country?” but which came to mean “what sort?” “what quality?” and often implied admiring amazement (cf. Matt. 8:27; Mark 13:1; Luke 1:29). John is lost in wonder as he contemplates the measureless height and depth of divine love.

Love. Gr. *agapē* (see on 1 Cor. 13:1; cf. on Matt. 5:43, 44), a word that is used only 9 times in the four Gospels but more than 100 times in the remainder of the NT. John uses *agapē* and the related verb *agapaō*, “to love,” no less than 46 times in this epistle. He is so captivated by the magnitude of divine affection that the theme fills his heart, as it should fill the hearts of all Christians.

Father. The use of the family title naturally precedes mention of the “sons of God.”

Hath bestowed. Gr. *didōmi*, “to give.” The use of the perfect tense emphasizes the fact that the act of giving is completed but its results continue. Nothing can alter the fact that God has bestowed His love upon mankind and in general and upon His spiritual children in particular. Men may respond to that love or they may spurn it, but God, for His part, has irrevocably poured it out upon His creation.

Called. While this verb may not refer to the divine call in its Pauline sense (Rom. 8:28–30), it is clear reference to God’s gracious act in taking sinners into His family and calling them His children.

Sons of God. Rather, “children of God” (see on John 1:12). Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the addition of the clause, “and we are.” The additional words, in harmony with John’s style (cf. 1 John 1:2), underline the reality of the sonship, which exists not only in the mind of God but in the lives of the believers.

Therefore. Literally, “through this,” or “because of this,” referring back to the sonship, which provides the reason why the world does not recognize the Christian, as well as looking forward to the statement that the world knew not God.

World. Here meaning those who oppose God (see on ch. 2:15).

Knoweth. Gr. *ginōskō* (see on ch. 2:29). The clause may be paraphrased, “the world does not recognize us because it never had personal acquaintance with God.” Worldlings have refused to become acquainted with the Father, and it is natural that they should fail, or be unwilling, to recognize those whom God calls His children. The more God’s children reflect His character, the more they will arouse the anger of those who have rejected His love. Although worldlings have every reason to love Christians, because of

¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Jn 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

their kind and upright lives, Christians are not to be surprised if they are hated instead (cf. Matt. 5:10–12; 10:16–18).

2. Beloved. An appropriate form of address, since John is dealing with love. He freely uses the term in the remainder of the epistle (v. 21; ch. 4:1, 7, 11).

Now. It is now, while we are still imperfect, still falling into sin, still not fully molded into the likeness of our Father, that we are said to be “children of God” (see on Matt. 5:48). This is possible and true because we have been accepted in the Beloved and are regarded as being already in heaven through our Representative (Eph. 1:5–7; 2:4–6). His righteousness has been accepted in place of our sinfulness (PP 431), and we stand before the Father so completely clothed with Christ that we ourselves are not seen (COL 311, 312).

Not yet. Such a change lies still in the future (cf. on 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; Phil. 3:20, 21).

Appear. The clause reads literally, “it is not yet made manifest” (cf. on ch. 2:28). The apostle shows that he regards ultimate perfection of character and body as certain.

When he shall appear. Or, “when it shall be manifested.” The Greek may be rendered either way. Both renderings are acceptable, theologically, for both refer to the same time. Compare on ch. 2:28.

Like him. This points to the fulfillment of God’s plan for fallen man—restoration to the divine image. Man was made in the image of God (see on Gen. 1:26), but sin ruined that likeness. It is God’s design to restore that similitude by giving to man victory over sin and over every temptation (see on Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10; see DA 37, 38, 391, 827; COL 194). The restoration will be completed at the second advent (1 Cor. 15:51–53; Phil. 3:20, 21).

For we shall see. Or, “because we shall see.” When Jesus was on earth, only the spiritually enlightened perceived His divinity (Matt. 16:17). The same spiritual condition must exist in those who look on Christ in the last day.

As he is. Or, “even as he is.” Those who saw Jesus of Nazareth did not see the Son of God as He really is, for His divine glory was veiled by His humanity (DA 43). But when Christ comes the second time, He will appear in His glory (Matt. 25:31), and those who look upon Him then will behold His true splendor.

3. Hath this hope. The writer refers, not to those who vaguely hope for the Saviour’s appearing, but to the believer who firmly holds to a clearly defined expectation of Christ’s return.

In him. Or, “upon him,” that is, on Christ. John is writing of the hope that is centered on Jesus, and is not primarily thinking of the hope as existing in the one who hopes.

Purifieth. Gr. *hagnizō*, “to cleanse from defilement,” “to purify.” The word is applied to both ceremonial and moral cleansing (John 11:55; Acts 21:24, 26; 24:18; James 4:8; 1 Peter 1:22). Sinful man cannot cleanse himself; he is sold under sin and utterly dependent upon the Saviour for purity (Jer. 17:9; John 3:3; 15:4, 5; Rom. 8:7). Nevertheless, there is some work that man, with divine aid, must do for himself (see on Phil. 2:12, 13). This work demands diligent watching and prayer (Eph. 6:13–18; Col. 4:2; Rev. 3:3). The central struggle is to maintain faith in the victory that Christ has gained for us, and to live believing that His grace is sufficient to give us the mastery over every besetment (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 4:13; SC 47, 48; MH 159). By his statement concerning purification John refutes the Gnostic claim that the Christian hope could be held without reference to one’s morality. All who genuinely long to see Christ will strive for purity of life.

Even as he is pure. The Christian is to strive for the standard of purity that Christ attained (cf. on Phil. 3:8–15). He gained the victory over every besetment (see on John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22), and made it possible for all men to live similarly victorious lives (see on Matt. 1:21; Rom. 7:24, 25; 8:1, 2; 1 John 1:9).

4. *Whosoever.* John states the opposite case with enough variation to make it add to, as well as confirm, his previous statement: all having the hope purify themselves; all doing the sin, do also lawlessness.

Sin. Gr. *hamartia*, “a failing to hit the mark,” “a wrong deed,” “a sin,” from *hamartanō*, “to miss the mark,” “to err,” “to do wrong,” “to go wrong,” “to sin,” and is a word used in the Bible for the act of wandering from the law of God, of violating moral law. Specifically, *hamartia* is a violation of divinely given moral law. The word can also refer to the principle and power that causes one to commit sin (see on Rom. 5:12), but here John is obviously referring to the evil deed itself.

The Greek reads literally, “the sin.” It does not appear, however, that John is referring to any particular sin, neither does the context identify “the sin,” but the use of the definite article suggests that the writer is speaking of all types of sin as one sin, the sin that causes separation between God and man (cf. Isa. 59:2).

Transgresseth also the law. Literally, “also the lawlessness doeth.” The KJV reading is a rather free rendering of the Greek. “Lawlessness” is the translation of the Gr. *anomia* (“lack of conformity with law,” “lawlessness”) derived from *a-*, “without,” and *nomos*, “law” (see on Matt. 7:23; Rom. 6:19; 2 Thess. 2:3, 7). By linking *anomia* with *hamartia* the apostle emphasizes the close connection between sin and lawlessness. With his customary clarity he makes this doubly clear by restating the fact in the phrase that follows.

For sin is the transgression of the law. Literally, “and the sin is the lawlessness.” The use of the article with each noun makes them interchangeable: all sin is lawlessness, and all lawlessness is sin. In his usual simple and penetrating way John lays bare the true character of sin. He states that sin is disregard of the law, that is, the law of God. For definitions of “law” see on Prov. 3:1; Matt. 5:17; Rom 2:12; 3:19. God formulated laws to guide men, to enable them to enjoy life fully, to save them from evil, and to preserve them for good (see on Ex. 20:1).

The law of God is a transcript of the character of God. Jesus came to reveal to men the character of His Father. He is therefore the law amplified and demonstrated. If men wish to order their lives in harmony with the law of God, they must look to Jesus and copy His life. The law may be briefly summarized in the following words, “be like God,” or “be like Jesus.” The transformation of men’s characters after the divine similitude is the great purpose of the plan of salvation. The law reveals the character of God and of Christ; the plan of salvation provides enabling grace for the attainment of every virtue.

5. *Ye know.* Again John appeals to his readers’ knowledge of the plan of salvation (cf. ch. 2:12–14, 20, 27).

Manifested. Gr. *phaneroō*, “to reveal,” “to make known”; in the passive, “to become visible,” “to become known,” “to be revealed.” In v. 2 ch. 2:28 and in *phaneroō* is used for Christ’s second coming, but here applied to the incarnation.

Take away. Gr. *airō* (see on John 1:29). The apostle here refers to the main purpose of Christ's coming, the salvation of men from sin (see on Matt. 1:21). That purpose may be regarded as being fulfilled either by (1) Christ's bearing away sin in an expiatory sense, or by (2) His destroying sin. Both interpretations are valid, since He does the first in order to be able to accomplish the second. In so doing, the Saviour takes away the lawlessness of which sin is an expression, and saves man from transgressing the law of God. However, Christ will take away the sin only of those who wish to be free from sin.

It is well to note, in the setting in which John makes the statement, that Christ was manifested to take away sin, not to take away law. The Gnostics wished to believe that the restraints, in the form of law, were removed in their case; but John knows that Christ retained the law while removing the transgression of the law (cf. on Matt. 5:17–19; Rom. 3:31).

Our sins. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of "our." Such omission does not affect the basic meaning of John's words, but the inclusion of "our" adds personal force to the message, and shows that the apostle is not speaking of in general, but of the Christian's sin in particular.

In him is no sin. Literally, "sin in him is not." In Christ there is neither the principle of sin nor the act of sin. John uses the present tense to emphasize that sin has *never* had any part in Christ's life, either on earth or in heaven. Jesus was tempted, but temptation in itself does not defile. A man is defiled only when he yields to temptation. Our Saviour was aware of the temptations that pressed upon Him from every side (Heb. 4:15), but never for a moment did He allow His thought to go against the will of His Father. Sin constantly surrounded Him, it oppressed Him throughout His earthly life; yet it found no response in Him (John 14:30). He remained unstained by sin. The Sinless One was *made* sin for us (see on 2 Cor. 5:21). He was accounted a transgressor (Isa. 53:12) and treated as the vilest sinner, but through no sin of His own.

6. Whosoever abideth. Another of John's comprehensive statements (cf. chs. 2:23; 3:4, 9, 15; 1 John 4:15; 5:1). The word "abideth" may suggest an active willingness to remain in union with Christ. The form of the verb in Greek implies continuity—whosoever continues to abide.

Sinneth not. Or, "does not continue to sin," or "does not habitually sin," as the form of the Greek verb implies. The apostle is here speaking of habitual sin, not of occasional mistakes which every Christian is prone to make (see on ch. 2:1). John knows that Christians are inveigled into sin (ch. 1:8, 10), but he also knows the remedy for such failures (chs. 1:9; 2:1). Here he is speaking of the ideal state that is attainable by one who habitually abides in the protecting presence of the sinless Saviour.

Whosoever sinneth. That is, whosoever habitually sins (see above on "whosoever abideth"). John refers to the one who habitually sins, the one who continues to practice sin.

Hath not seen. The one who continues to sin demonstrates that he has not retained his original vision of Christ.

Know him. See on ch. 2:3.

7. Little children. See on ch. 2:1.

Deceive. Gr. *planaō*, "to lead astray" (see on Matt. 18:12). Gnostics had been trying to lead John's readers astray (see p. 625), especially in respect to the need for

righteousness in the life of the Christian. Gnosticism led to indifference to sin, and held standards that were far below those outlined by John in the previous verse (ch. 3:6).

Doeth righteousness. See on ch. 2:29.

He is righteous. Here the reference is unmistakably to Christ (cf. on ch. 2:29). Christ is the source of our righteousness (see on Jer. 23:6; Rom. 3:22; Phil. 3:9), and he who consistently abides in Christ will possess a character similar to His.

8. Committeth sin. See on v. 4.

Of the devil. That is, he is a child of the devil and does the will of the devil (cf. John 8:44).

From the beginning. This phrase may refer either to (1) the beginning of the devil's opposition to God, that is, from the beginning of his sin, since when he has been continually sinning, or (2) the time when he beguiled Adam and Eve into sin, that is, from the beginning of human sin, since which time he has been constantly sinning and leading others into sin. See on ch. 1:1

For this purpose. The purpose is part of God's "eternal purpose" (see on Eph. 3:11).

Son of God. Although this is the first use of this title in the epistle, John has previously acknowledge Christ's Sonship (chs. 1:3, 7; 2:22–24) and continues to do so (chs. 3:23; 4:9, 10, 14), and in chs. 4:15; 5:5, 10, 13, 20 makes many further references to the "Son of God." For discussion on the divine Sonship of Christ see on Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:35; John 1:1, 14; see Additional Note on John 1.

Manifested. Gr. *phaneroō* (see on v. 5). The reference here is clearly to the incarnation, and implies the pre-existence of Christ as the eternal Son of God (see on Micah 5:2; John 1:1–3; see Vol. V, p. 917). But John is not here concerned with establishing the nature of Christ: he is bent on explaining the purpose that led God's Son to be "made flesh."

Destroy. Gr. *luō*, "to loose," "to release," "to dissolve," hence, "to break up," "to destroy." Compare the use of *luō* in Matt. 5:19; John 2:19; 5:18; 7:23; etc.

Works of the devil. These "works" include all the evil Satan has ever wrought in the world and in God's creation, but the particular reference here may be to the sins that the devil has fostered in men's lives. Christ came to release men from bondage to sin (see on Matt. 1:21), and thus to undo the work of the evil one.

9. Whosoever. Again the apostle uses this comprehensive term (cf. on John 3:16; 1 John 3:4, 6). What he says applies to all who are "born of God."

Born of God. See on ch. 2:29. But here, unlike ch. 2:29, there is no doubt that the writer is speaking of being born of the Father. John is the only NT author to speak of our being "begotten," or "born of God" (John 1:13; 1 John 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). The form of the Greek verb shows that he is referring to those who have been born of God and continue to be His children. He thus includes every Christian who has not returned to the world and thus denied the Lord who redeemed him.

Doth not commit sin. That is, he does not continue to sin, or he does not habitually sin (see on v. 6; the form of the Greek verb here is the same as it is there). The apostle thus characterizes those who have been born of God. They have experienced the new birth, their natures and changed, and they resemble their heavenly Father (see on John 3:3–5; 1 John 3:1). They hate the sin they used to love, and love the virtue they used to despise (see on Rom. 6:2, 6; 7:14, 15). Such people do not continue slaves to their old

sins, they do not habitually commit their old mistakes. Divine power has given them the victory over those weaknesses, and is ready to aid them in overcoming other faults of which they may not previously have been aware.

His seed. That is, God's seed, "the divine principle of life" (Vincent), which, implanted in a sinner, brings the new man to birth and produces the Christian. This divine "seed" abides in the truly converted man, ensures him spiritual energy, and enables him successfully to resist sin. John thus gives God the credit for the Christian's sinlessness. *Because* the divine power operates in his soul, the Christian does not continue to sin.

Cannot sin. Or, "is not able to go on sinning," or "is not able to go on habitually sinning." This does not mean that the Christian is incapable of committing a wrong act. If he were unable to sin, there would be no virtue in his being without sin, and there would be no true development of character. John has already implied that he will make occasional mistakes (see on ch. 2:1). The passage means that, having been born of God, and having God's life-giving power dwelling in him, he cannot continue his old pattern of habitual sin. He now follows the sinless ideals that have been implanted in his soul by the new birth.

10. In this. With this verse John begins another section of his epistle (vs. 10–18). He makes this transition smoothly by speaking of the "children of God," that is, those who are born of God, those with whom he has already dealt in chs. 2:29 to 3:9. He now shows that children of God will love one another, whereas those who belong to the devil will feel hatred toward their brethren.

Children of God. John is here referring to those who have been "born of God" (see on v. 9; cf. on John 1:12).

Are manifest. That is, to men, for God does not need to be informed concerning the character of His own children, and He is aware of those who do not belong to Him.

Children of the devil. See on v. 8.

Doeth not righteousness. Here John states the negative of the truth given earlier—"every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (see on ch. 2:29). If the positive is true, the negative is also. There is no neutral ground in conduct: he who is not doing righteousness is to that extent doing evil, and thereby demonstrating that he is not "of God" (literally, "out of God"), but is drawing his motivation from the devil.

Loveth not. The Gnostic teachers (see p. 625) believed themselves to be the elect, but did not extend brotherly love to their fellows. John now shows that the true Christian cannot do otherwise than love his brother.

11. This is the message. See on ch. 1:5, where the writer enunciates his first message, which deals with the nature of God. Now he turns to the nature of the Christian and teaches that it should be based on love. He has already broached this subject in ch. 2:7–11, but here restates it in still more definite terms.

From the beginning. Compare on ch. 2:7. The phrase may here refer to the beginning of the readers' Christian experience or to the beginning of the preaching of the gospel.

Love one another. This is the message that John is conveying to his readers. It is also the "new commandment" given by Christ to His followers (see on John 13:34, 35). Its importance is beyond question, and the church should place it in the forefront of its standards, so that each member may realize that one of his first Christian duties is to cultivate and express a sincere practical love for his brethren.

12. Cain. This is the only direct reference in this epistle to an OT incident. John sets forth Cain as the supreme example of lack of brotherly love. It may be noticed that the historicity of Cain's murder of Abel is not called in question: the apostle accepts the Genesis narrative as genuine and analyzes the causes of Cain's deed (see on Gen. 4:8–15).

Of that wicked one. Cain proved himself to be a child of the devil, even as a Christian may prove himself to be a child of God (cf. on v. 10).

Slew. Gr. *sphazō*, “to slaughter,” “to butcher,” “to slay.” The word occurs in the NT only here and in the Revelation (chs. 5:6; 6:4; etc.).

Wherefore? Literally, “on account of what?” With this question John stimulates his readers to examine the motivation behind Cain's murder of Abel and introduces an explanation for the world's hatred of the Christian (v. 13).

Works were evil. In these words we have an inspired commentary on the scene depicted in Gen. 4:1–15. John looks under the surface of events and sees the real cause for Cain's hatred and jealousy of Abel in the contrast between the “works,” or actions, of the two brothers (cf. on Heb. 11:4). Actions, resulting from men's thoughts, serve as an indication of character, and it would appear that Cain revealed his true nature before the crowning act of murder. There was no fault in Abel that excused or explained the horrible deed. Abel's humble obedience to God aroused his brother's jealous hatred. Abel's only offense was righteousness. Cain's conscience condemned his own way of life, and he saw himself faced with the choice of acknowledging his sin or destroying Abel, who made him so aware of his own sinfulness (PP 74). So also did the leaders of the Jews drive themselves into condemning Jesus to die.

13. Marvel not. In view of the continuous record of the hatred of the wicked for the righteous, John's readers had no cause for surprise at any hatred they experienced at the hands of their contemporaries.

My brethren. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of “my.” John is possibly emphasizing the community of suffering that he shares with his readers by reason of the world's persecution.

World. See on ch. 2:15.

Hate. See on John 15:18–25.

14. We know. In keeping with the community of interest suggested in v. 13, John includes himself with his readers, and continues to do so (cf. vs. 16, 18, 19, etc.). Christians have an inner knowledge that is denied to the worldling, which knowledge can both fortify them and guide them in consistent godly conduct. The nature of that knowledge is explained in the clause that follows.

Have passed. Gr. *metabainō*, “to pass over [from one place to another],” “to remove,” “to depart.” The form of the Greek verb shows that John is referring to those who had passed over to a new experience and have remained in their new sphere, as immigrants permanently settled in the country of their choice.

From death unto life. Literally, “out of the death into the life.” The presence of the definite articles before “death” and “life” indicates these two states as exclusive realms, in one or the other of which all men find themselves. By nature all men are citizens of the kingdom of death (Eph. 2:1–3), but the Christian, as a result of his Master's gift, has passed into the realm of eternal life (1 John 5:11, 12; see on ch. 3:2).

Love the brethren. While the phrase “love one another” is fairly frequent in the NT (John 13:34; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11; etc.), “love the brethren” occurs only here, and may be given a wide interpretation. Those who have passed from death unto life do not restrict their affections to their own immediate circle of acquaintance, but extend their love to all fellow believers (cf. on 1 Peter 2:17). By so doing they prove that they have left the world of death and have entered into the realm of everlasting life. They have already begun to exercise the virtues that will be eternally theirs, those virtues that are foundational to the kingdom of heaven. How important it is that the Christian practice the art of loving his brethren, that he may be in harmony with the principles of the kingdom for which he is preparing.

Loveth not. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words “his brother,” leaving the more general statement, “he that loveth not, continues to abide in the death.” This includes, of course, those who do not love their brethren. Absence of love indicates that one is still dead in sin. The clause is an example of the apostle’s customary restatement in the negative of what he has already said positively (cf. on ch. 1:5). If the demonstration of brotherly love proves the possession of eternal life, lack of that love proves that the individual has not yet passed “unto life” but remains in the original “death” from which others have been rescued.

15. Whosoever. Compare on v. 9. John is so sure of the rightness of his analysis that he can employ this all-inclusive term, knowing that it is categorically true.

Hateth. Comparison with v. 14 shows that “hateth” is synonymous with “loveth not.” Absence of love marks the presence of hate. In God’s eyes there is evidently no neutral ground.

Murderer. Gr. *anthrōpoktonos*, literally, “man-killer.” The word occurs in the NT only here and in John 8:44. John strikingly points out the end result of hatred. There are other ways of killing a man than by physical violence that takes his life. Slander can so dishearten him as to prevent him from fully developing his innate abilities, and thus is destroyed part of the life he might have led. The very consciousness of being disliked by church members of good reputation is enough to quench the ardor of some and may even cause them to lose their faith in Christ, and thus destroy their spiritual lives.

Ye know. The writer here appeals to his readers’ instinctive knowledge. No great theological insight was needed to know that a murderer was no suitable candidate for eternal life. If scriptural proof were needed, the Saviour had made it clear that murder originated with the devil (John 8:44), and Paul had written that those who were guilty of murder would not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21). This does not mean that murder and hatred are sins for which there is no forgiveness, but that we cannot enter into life while continuing to cherish such sins. We can be washed from all sin (see on 1 John 1:9).

Abiding in him. Eternal life abides in us whenever Christ is dwelling within. Christ cannot dwell in the heart that is filled with hate, and “he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (ch. 5:11, 12).

16. Hereby perceive we. Literally, “in this we have known” (cf. on chs. 2:3; 3:10). Although a knowledge of the love of God comes with special force at conversion, the Christian’s understanding of that love continues to grow deeper with the passing years.

The love of God. Literally, “the love,” there being here no words for “of God” in the Greek. There is no need for further description of “the love,” since Christ’s sacrifice has revealed the divine source of all genuine love.

Laid down. See John 10:11, 17, 18.

Life. Gr. *psuchē* (see on Matt. 10:28).

For us. He, the acknowledged King of the universe, on behalf of miserable sinners, laid down His own inestimably precious life. Through eternity God’s act of giving His son (John 3:16) will continue to teach us more and more of the depths of infinite love (MH 466).

We. The pronoun is emphatic in the Greek.

Ought. Gr. *opheilō* (see on ch. 2:6). We who have been redeemed by the Saviour’s sacrifice have a moral obligation to be ready to follow His example even to laying down our lives.

For the brethren. Or, “on behalf of the brethren.” John is encouraging his readers to foster love that will make the supreme sacrifice when necessary (John 13:37; 15:13). Christ had gone much further: those for whom He died were not then “brethren,” but enemies (see on Rom. 5:8).

17. But. John turns from dying for the brethren to the lesser sacrifices that are more frequently demanded of us by the needs of our fellow believers.

This world’s good. Literally, “the living [or, ”livelihood“] of the world.” The word translated “good” (*bios*; see on ch. 2:16) denotes the means of subsistence—necessities rather than luxuries. That they belong to the world does not mean that they are evil, but that they are connected with this world only.

Seeth. Gr. *theōreō*, “to be a spectator,” “to observe,” “to perceive.” Compare the use of the word in Mark 15:40; Luke 23:35. What the selfish brother does or refuses to do is the result of deliberation and not of thoughtlessness. He has enough to supply his own needs, and is well aware that his fellow believer possesses little or nothing.

Bowels. See on 2 Cor. 6:12; Phil. 1:8. The bowels, along with the heart, were regarded as the seat of the deepest emotions. The phrase would be better rendered today, “closes his heart.”

From him. The picture is of a deliberate turning of the back upon a needy brother.

How? How can it possibly be said that the love of God abides in one who is selfishly indifferent to the needs of another? If love is absent, Christ is absent. Thus the professed Christian does not have eternal life.

18. Little children. Gr. *teknia* (see on ch. 2:1).

Let us not love. It is possible to give a continuous sense to this phrase—“let us not go on loving”—as if John’s readers were actually loving in word only and needed to stop such mockery. But it is more likely that the apostle is making a simple exhortation to his brethren to practice true love and to avoid the hypocritical attitude implied in v. 17.

In word. There is no harm in loving in word. If the object of the affection has no need of more active help, love expressed by well-chosen words is laudable. But John is discouraging love that limits itself to words when helpful deeds are needed. Compare James 2:15, 16.

In deed and in truth. There are those who do kind deeds without feeling real affection for those whom they are helping. They may be acting only from a sense of duty or a desire to gain the praise of men. Therefore John stresses the need for genuine love. Our loving deeds should be inspired by a genuine affection for others, particularly for those in need.

19. And hereby we know. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of “and,” thus bringing the verse into harmony with John’s usual construction (cf. on v. 16). Textual evidence also favors the reading “we shall know.” Unlike the similar constructions in vs. 10, 16; ch. 2:3, this “hereby” appears to refer back to the preceding verse (v. 18), and the writer implies that when the precept there enunciated is practiced, we shall gain that conviction of which he speaks. When we love in deed and truth, we receive an assurance of the reality of our conversion. Thus our own fruits inform us as to the genuineness of our profession even as the lives of others witness to their sincerity (Matt. 7:16–20).

Of the truth. Compare the reference to “truth” in v. 18. Those who love in deed and truth are children of truth.

Assure. Gr. *peithō*, here, either “to persuade” or “to set at ease.” The conviction that we are born of God gives a confidence that sets the heart at rest and enables us to come to God in spite of our sinfulness.

Our hearts. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “our heart,” as in v. 20. The use of the singular in Greek is idiomatic. Here, the heart may be taken for the conscience (cf. on Matt. 5:8).

Before him. That is, before God, or in the presence of God. It is comparatively easy to reassure one’s own heart when the examination is conducted in the light of human standards; but it is another matter to stand in the presence of God and still have a tranquil heart. Yet John assures us it can be done. The nearer we come to God, the more conscious we become of our own imperfections and the more need we have to recite the many reasons why we must trust in our Saviour’s merits (see ch. 2:1, 2). Thus because we love the brethren in deed and in truth, we know that we are of the truth, and because we are of the truth, we may stand fearlessly before our heavenly Father.

20. For if. Commentators have found difficulty in establishing the connection between vs. 19 and 20, and in explaining the meaning of v. 20. What appears to be the meaning is revealed in this paraphrase of vs. 19, 20: “By genuinely loving our brother we may know that we are children of the truth, or of God. This knowledge will enable us to stand confidently in the presence of God, for even though our heart condemns us, since we are still sinners, we know that God is greater than our heart, His knowledge and understanding far surpass our own, and He is able to perceive our sincerity and to allow for the mistakes into which we fall.”

Condemn. Unnecessary self-condemnation has marred many a Christian’s experience. Many depend on their own moral judgments to determine their spiritual condition, and fail to realize that their feelings are unsatisfactory criteria for deciding the state of their spiritual health. John is comforting his readers by turning their minds away from morbid concentration on their own weaknesses to an uplifting contemplation of the height and depth of God’s understanding love.

God is greater. The realization of God’s omniscience may have two effects: it may strike terror to the guilty heart, or it may bring comfort to the contrite sinner. Throughout

this chapter the writer is bent on encouraging his readers (vs. 1–3, 5, 9, 11, 16, 18), and it is reasonable to suppose that he has the same positive purpose here. To the genuine Christian the thought of God's omniscience can be reassuring.

21. Beloved. See on v. 2.

Condemn us not. It is well to remember that these words were addressed to those who had been instructed "from the beginning" (ch. 2:7), whose sins had been forgiven (ch. 2:12), who had known the Father (ch. 2:13), and had been accepted as children of God (ch. 3:1, 2). What would be vain self-confidence on the part of less mature Christians might, on the part of John's readers, be no more than a recognition of God's redemptive mercy toward them.

Confidence. Gr. *parrēsia* (see on ch. 2:28). The context (ch. 3:23) shows that the primary reference is to our approach to God in prayer; but the apostle may also have in mind our attitude before the Judge of all the earth. In respect to prayer there is nothing of presumption in the confident believer's petitions. We can open our hearts to God in prayer as we open them to a tried and trusted friend (SC 93).

Toward God. As a child of God, the redeemed sinner may have the same free access to the presence of the Father as the Saviour enjoyed (John 16:23).

22. And whatsoever. In v. 21 John has established the initial conditions upon which v. 22 will be fulfilled. He who prays needs a clear conscience, with consequent freedom in approaching God, before making his requests. John then declares that the believer fulfills two other conditions: (1) keeps God's commandments; (2) does those things that please God. When the Christian has complied with these requirements, he may claim the fulfillment of the apostle's assurance in this verse. For fuller discussion of the conditions for answered prayer see on Matt. 7:7; Luke 11:9; John 14:13; 15:16.

We ask. John's readers were doubtless well versed in the Christian technique of prayer, and would know how to ask in Christ's name (see on John 14:13).

We receive. Every prayer that fulfills the conditions here laid down is answered instantly. Apparent delay may arise from several causes: (1) The answer to the petition may be a No, in which case no tangible reply may be received. We may have asked for the wrong thing, and divine wisdom sees that it would not be best to grant the request. Thus was Paul left with the thorn still in his flesh after three earnest prayers for deliverance (see on 2 Cor. 12:7–9). (2) The answer may be, "Wait," because we are not yet ready to receive that for which we have asked, or because circumstances are not yet favorable for the reply. Thus Daniel was forced to wait while opposition was overcome before he could be told the future (Dan. 10:12–14). But in such cases the decision has been made and action has immediately begun to ensure that the eventual response to our prayer will come at the right time. Sometimes the response is an immediate Yes. This occurs in all requests for spiritual help. When we ask for power over sin, for pardon, for a clean heart, for wisdom, we are to believe that our prayers have been answered, and thank the Lord for His reply. Then we must act in the knowledge that we have the power we requested (see on James 1:5, 6; Ed 258).

Of him. That is, from God.

Keep his commandments. Sin, which is a disregard of God's commandments (see on v. 4), builds a barrier between a man and his God (see on Isa. 59:1, 2), prevents his prayers from ascending to heaven, and unfits him to receive answers that God may be waiting to give. Obedience to the will of God, which is revealed in His commandments,

is vitally related to the matter of answered prayer. This obedience is made possible through the divine power promised to the child of God.

And do. The second additional condition. We are to do more than keep God's commandments, or to avoid transgressing the law. We must consciously keep on doing those things that are pleasing to God. We must live an active Christian life, remembering the command to be "perfect, even as [y]our Father which is in heaven is perfect" (see on Matt. 5:48; Phil. 3:12–15).

Pleasing. The Christian will always want to do those things that God pronounces to be good or fitting, and will refrain from doing those things that God sees to be harmful. This was one of the guiding rules in the Saviour's life (John 8:29). When the same rule is observed in ours, we may expect more positive answers to our prayers.

23. This is his commandment. John now defines, in part, "his commandments" (v. 22), and uses the singular because his definition deals with the one all-embracing law of belief and love (see on Matt. 22:36–40).

Believe on the name. For comment on this phrase see on John 1:7, 12; Acts 3:16; 10:43. This is the first use in this epistle of the verb "to believe," but the Greek verb occurs 9 times hereafter, and plays a large part in John's subsequent message. It is used 90 times in his Gospel.

His Son Jesus Christ. For comment on the divine Sonship of Jesus see on Luke 1:35; for the title "Jesus Christ" see on Matt. 1:1; Phil. 2:5. Paul uses the same composite title in Rom. 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:9. Here John is condensing the essence of Christian doctrine into very brief compass (cf. on 1 John 1:3; 5:20), that his readers might grasp the most necessary elements of Christian belief. To believe on the person described in the wonderful name is to acknowledge Jesus' divinity, His humanity, His victory over sin and death, and to recognize the possibility of our gaining the same victory by the same means that He Himself employed and has made available to us.

Love one another. With John, as with his Master, God's requirements are summed up in the law of love (see on v. 11). Love is the active complement to belief on the name of Jesus. With faith must go works (James 2:17).

As. Or, "even as." Throughout the closing verses of this chapter John is consciously modeling his thoughts on his Lord's instruction (see on John 13:34–35). It is necessary that we love one another in the very way in which Christ told us to love (Matt. 22:39). When the apostles expanded the instructions of the Saviour they gave further details of how we should love one another: with a pure heart fervently, in a spirit of kindness, in honor preferring one another, tenderheartedly, forgiving one another as we have been forgiven (Rom. 12:10; Eph. 4:32; 1 Peter 1:22).

24. His commandments. That is, God's commandments (see on ch. 2:3). If we keep God's commandments, we have confidence toward God, we receive whatsoever we may ask (ch. 3:22) and, as a further consequence, we have close fellowship with God.

Dwelleth in him. He who keeps the commandments of God has the privilege of making his home with God. Using a different figure, Amos asks, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). No one can be at home with God while living contrary to His expressed will, but he who is willing to do the will of God can permanently make his home with the Almighty.

He in him. The indwelling is always mutual (see John 15:4, 5). He who wishes to dwell with God may be sure that God has ever wanted to dwell with him. But man must show he is in harmony with the Lord by willingly keeping His commandments.

And hereby. Literally, “and in this,” referring forward to the gift of the Spirit mentioned at the end of the verse. The presence of the Spirit in the Christian’s life is a proof that God is dwelling in him, for it is through the Spirit that God abides in a man (Rom. 8:9, 11, 14–16; 1 Cor. 3:16). An almost identical thought is expressed in 1 John 4:13.

By the Spirit. Nowhere in his epistles or in the Revelation does the apostle use the term “Holy Spirit,” although he clearly speaks of the third person of the Godhead.

Which. Or, “whom” (see on Rom. 8:16).

Hath given. Rather, “gave,” since John is here referring to the time when the believers first received the Holy Spirit. That the Father gives the Spirit is made clear in John 14:16, although the Son cooperates in sending the third person of the heavenly trio (cf. John 16:7).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 AA 334; COL 191; CT 338; Ev 503; FE 179, 198, 481; MH 425; ML 289; SC 15; SL 17, 75; TM 81; 1T 284; 4T 124, 296, 461, 563; 5T 316, 439, 739, 744; 8T 289
- 1, 2 AA 545; LS 233; TM 440; 4T 292
- 1–3Ed 87
- 2 DA 113; Ed 309; MB 104; PK 702; PP 64; 4T 16, 365, 461; 5T 467; 9T 285
- 2, 3 CT 429; MYP 47; 1T 705; 4T 294, 357; 5T 85, 410, 431
- 2–5FE 385
- 3 AA 559; EW 108; GW 366; SC 58; 1T 566; 4T 360
- 4 CH 40; CT 169; Ev 372; GC 467, 472, 493; MB 48; SL 76; SR 49; 4T 13, 251; 6T 54
- 4, 5 COL 311; ML 311
- 4–6AA 555
- 4–8SL 68
- 5, 6 AA 563
- 5–7SC 61
- 6 GC 472
- 8 DA 270; 4T 623
- 9 5T 220
- 9–24TM 94
- 10 3T 59
- 11 AA 549; DA 551
- 12 PP 74
- 13 ML 69; PP 559
- 14 AA 571; SC 59
- 14–16AA 549
- 15 MB 56; PP 308
- 16 AA 547; DA 551; 3T 538
- 17 1T 176
- 17–222T 161
- 18 AA 551; 1T 316, 690; 2T 88, 441, 654, 686; 3T 237
- 22 DA 668; EW 73

CHAPTER 4

1 John *He warneth them not to believe all teachers, who boast of the Spirit, but to try them by the rules of the catholick faith: 7 and by many reasons exhorteth to brotherly love.*

1. Beloved. Compare on ch. 3:2.

Believe not. Or, “stop believing,” as the Greek may be rendered. Thus rendered, the implication is that many were giving heed to various spirits.

Spirit. The apostle bids his hearers to be critical rather than credulous, and not to accept every spiritual activity as coming from God. From this it would appear that they had come under the ministry of men who claimed divine authority for teachings that were really false. The apostle, as a good pastor, warns his flock against specious deception. The nature of the deception is revealed in v. 3.

Try. Gr. *dokimazō* (see on Rom. 2:18; Phil. 1:10; and for the related word *dokimē* see on Rom. 5:4; 2 Cor. 9:13). God does not expect the Christian to be gullible; indeed, He bestows on the church the gift of distinguishing between true and false spirits (see on 1 Cor. 12:10). The messages of teachers who make the claim of being accredited by God should be tested by the Word of God. The Bereans gladly listened to Paul, but they studied the Scriptures to see whether he had been teaching truth (see on Acts 17:11). Paul advised his other converts to do similarly (see on 1 Thess. 5:21). It is the duty of each believer to apply to everything that he reads and hears the test of the inspired writings of prophets and apostles. Only so can the church resist the encroachments of false doctrine; only so can each believer have his faith based upon God and not men (1 Peter 3:15).

Of God. Literally, “out of God” (cf. ch. 3:10), that is, proceeding from God.

Because. John clearly states the reason for his counsel, and appeals to facts with which his readers are well acquainted.

False prophets. See on Matt. 24:11, 24–26; cf. on ch. 7:15. Here John is obviously referring to false teachers who may be identified with, or at least associated with, the antichrists mentioned in ch. 2:18–22, and the false apostles of Rev. 2:2.

Are gone out. Or, “have gone out,” though the influence of their going still makes itself felt. It would also appear that the writer is using the verb “to go out” in a different sense from that employed in ch. 2:19 (see comment there), where apostasy is implied. Here he is merely stating the fact of the appearing of false prophets. For other NT evidence that false prophets were active during John’s day see Acts 13:6; Rev. 2:2.

World. Gr. *kosmos* (see on ch. 2:15), here meaning the world as an orderly arrangement of things or people. There does not appear to be the same contrast drawn between the church and the world as in ch. 2:15–17, for the false teachers were operating within as well as without the church.

2. Hereby. Literally, “in this,” referring forward to the test that is outlined later in the verse (cf. on ch. 2:3).

Know ye. The Greek may be translated either as an imperative, “know,” or as an indicative, “ye know.” Johannine usage favors the second rendering, as in chs. 2:3, 5; 3:16; etc. The apostle is appealing to the believers’ knowledge rather than urging them to gain that knowledge.

Spirit of God. This is the only occurrence of this title in John’s writings. The identical Greek form (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14; 3:16) is rare in the NT. John expects Christians

experimentally to identify the Spirit that comes from God. No claim to divine origin or authority is to be accepted for any teaching without its first being tested. The Scriptures provide a reliable standard by which to test all claims, for every divinely inspired message will harmonize with what the Lord has already revealed (see on 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

Every spirit. John's words are all-inclusive—he is ready to acknowledge “every spirit” that fulfills the conditions.

Confesseth. Gr. *homologeō* (see on ch. 1:9; cf. on Matt. 10:32). Here, *homologeō* seems to carry a twofold meaning: (1) to acknowledge the truth of the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God; (2) to reveal in the life the effect of believing this doctrine. The fullest interpretation calls for more than verbal agreement with a teaching: it demands the Christ-filled life.

Jesus Christ. See on Matt. 1:1; Phil. 2:5; 1 John 2:22; 3:23.

Is come. Rather, “has come.” The verb implies that Christ existed before he became a man. From His former state He has come to earth. The form of the Greek verb may be understood as signifying that the Saviour did not temporarily come in the flesh and then leave it, but that He still retains the human as well as the divine nature, and is thus a *human* representative in heaven, though also a divine one, for He is a member of the Godhead (see on John 1:14; see Vol. V, pp. 917, 918).

In the flesh. Some of those who denied the humanity of Christ, claimed that the Word came upon the man Jesus at baptism, and left Him before crucifixion, but John refutes this.

At every stage in world history there has been a present truth to be emphasized, but that present truth has varied through the ages. The Jews who were converted after Pentecost needed to accept Jesus as the expected Messiah in order to become Christians, for the point at issue was the deity of Christ. A little later the Gnostics denied, not the divinity, but the humanity of the Saviour. They were prepared to believe that the gods manifest themselves to men in various ways, but denied that “the Word was made flesh” (see pp. 625, 626). Thus John's emphasis on the incarnation had peculiar significance for the days in which the apostle lived.

But the truth he enunciates needs emphasis at all times, and never more than in our own day. The fact that the Son of God became man in order to save men must be clearly taught in these times when men more than ever attempt to explain away the miraculous (see on Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:35). We need to be personally conscious of the incarnation, to remind ourselves that the God who made that miracle possible is well able to perform any miracle that is needed for our salvation. Our acceptance of His plans and our adherence to His guidance can be a confession of our belief that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” Such a witness cannot be borne without divine aid, for “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. 12:3).

Is of God. Literally, “out of God is” (see on v. 1). He who confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh demonstrates the divine origin of the spirit that works in him.

3. Confesseth not. John now gives a negative test for discerning between the true and false teachers. He sees only two classes—those who confess Christ not.

Jesus Christ. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of “Christ” and of the phrase “is come in the flesh.” The clause then reads, “every spirit that confesseth not Jesus,” and places an emphasis upon the confession of a person rather than

of a creed. The textual variants make no significant change in the meaning of the passage, for both renderings refer to the teachers who fail to glorify the divine-human Jesus.

Is not of God. See on vs. 1, 2. There is no neutral ground in the great controversy. Those who hear proclaimed the message of the divinity and humanity of Christ, and who deliberately reject and oppose the teaching of the incarnation, belong to the evil one and are under his control, no matter how free they may feel themselves to be (see on Matt. 12:30; 1 John 3:10).

This. That is, the failure to confess Jesus.

That spirit. The word “spirit” is justifiably supplied in the KJV, since in the Greek construction the neuter pronoun *to*, translated “that,” refers to the neuter noun *pneuma*, “spirit.” The word “spirit” may here be interpreted as either (1) the spirit that dwells in antichrist does not confess Jesus, or (2) the nonconfession of Jesus is a typical characteristic of antichrist. Perhaps both meanings are intended.

Antichrist. See on ch. 2:18–23.

Ye have heard. The apostle reminds his readers that they have already been instructed on much of what he is saying (cf. on ch. 2:18).

It should come. Literally, “it is coming,” the same form as appears in ch. 2:18. The clause that follows shows that John is emphasizing the present sense of the verb to remind the believer that the prophecy concerning antichrist was even then, already, being fulfilled.

4. Ye. In the Greek this is emphatic, underlining the contrast between the believers to whom John is writing and the false teachers of whom he has just been speaking (v. 3). The battle lines are already drawn. John’s readers are on the side of Christ, whereas those who are not actively supporting the right are on the side of the enemy even though they may not have openly taken their stand under his black banner.

Of God. See on chs. 3:9, 10; 4:1, 2.

Little children. See on ch. 2:1.

Overcome. Gr. *nikaō* (see on ch. 2:13). When writing to young men in ch. 2:13, 14, John recognizes that they “have overcome the wicked one.” Here he refers to the defeat of the false prophets by the believers. He does not specifically state how they had gained the victory, but connects it with their being “of God.” Their intimate relationship with the Father enabled them to reject the doctrines of false teachers. They had already received the divine anointing which gave them true knowledge (ch. 2:20, 27) and now had obviously used that unction in their fight against falsehood. Similar victories are possible for all God’s children.

Greater is he. Here the apostle reveals the inner reason for the Christian’s victory. God abides in the believer (chs. 2:14; 3:24) and makes him potentially stronger than any adversary. We need constantly to remind ourselves of this fact, and to act in the spiritual confidence that the experience brings to its possessor.

He that is in the world. That is, the devil (cf. on John 12:31; 16:33; PK 175, 513; GC 530.). One would expect John to say “in them,” that is, in the false teachers, rather than “in the world”; but he uses the wider term because the spirit of these false prophets is the same selfish spirit of Satan that controls the world. By so stating the more general truth, he makes still clearer the contrast between the illimitable power of God and the limited resources of the author of falsehood.

5. They. This pronoun is emphatic in the Greek. Compare the emphasis on the pronoun “ye” in v. 4 (see comment there). The reference is to the false prophets through whose deceitful teachings Satan seeks to gain control of the Christian church.

Are of the world. Literally, “are out of the world.” Compare the contrasting phrase “of God,” literally, “out of God” (vs. 1, 2). Although the false teachers claim to speak for God and to have a message for the church, the source of their inspiration is Satan and their manner of working is typical of the ruler of the fallen world.

Speak they of the world. Literally, “out of the world they speak”; not that they speak *about* the world, but the source of their inspiration is the world. Because they themselves are a part of the world, and have been brought up in actual enmity toward God, they cannot but speak “out of the world.” Only when they are completely born again and belong to the family of God rather than the family of the world can they be expected to speak in any other way.

Heareth them. Naturally enough, the world readily listens to those who are one with it, and finds the words of the false prophets very much to its taste. To hear philosophies expounded that conform to and support one’s own thinking is generally gratifying.

6. We. That is, the apostles or their associates, in contrast with the “ye” (v. 4) and “they” (v. 5). The pronoun is emphatic as are “ye” and “they” in vs. 4, 5. Having already said that the believers are “of God” (v. 4), he is making no exaggerated claim when he applies the same description to himself and his colleagues.

He that knoweth God. This description corresponds to “he that is of God,” but emphasizes the aspect of a personal acquaintance with God.

Heareth us. There is natural harmony between the teachers who “are of God” and those who know God. The listeners will eagerly hear the instruction that comes from those who already have intimate acquaintance with the Father. In reminding his readers of this truth, John is also recording a test of the genuineness of Christian profession—those who know God will attentively hear His true messengers.

Is not of God. See on v. 3.

Heareth not us. If a man has resisted the convicting power of the Spirit, he is unlikely to listen to a servant of God. If the resistance is conscious and determined, such people will often not even allow God’s servant to talk to them, but will repulse them as they have repelled the Spirit. Hence, there is little that can be directly done for them (see on 1 Cor. 2:14). But there are many who have been deceived into resisting truth without knowing the seriousness of what they were doing. The sophistries of Satan have so clouded their judgment that the truth of God seems an idle tale. For them much can be done. The demonstration of the results of Christian beliefs in the lives of those who are “of God” will often arouse an interest. Especially does the quiet confidence of the truly converted appeal to those who realize the hopelessness of the future outlined by the world’s wisest men.

Hereby. Literally, “out of this.” It appears preferable to refer this “hereby” to the contents of v. 6 rather than apply it to vs. 4–6, although the stated test may be applied in the wider context without distorting John’s meaning. The nature of the spirit that controls a man may be discerned by the way he reacts to the teachings of God’s accredited servants.

Know we. This may refer to the apostolic teachers (see above under “we”) or to the readers, or to both groups.

Spirit of truth. Many believe this refers to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God (cf. v. 2; cf. on John 14:17), since John in this chapter is dealing with the opposing spirits (vs. 1–3). The Holy Spirit is the source of the believers’ impulse to seek truth. It is by comparison with the truths they have already been taught by that Spirit that believers can recognize the right. The sheep recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd in the words of those whom the Shepherd has sent to them (John 10:27).

Others believe that “spirit of truth” refers more generally to the inward attitude motivating those who preach the truth (cf. on Rom. 8:15).

Spirit. If the phrase “spirit of error” be taken as the antithesis of “spirit of truth,” then the “spirit of error” may be regarded as the spirit of Satan, or the spirit of antichrist, or the attitude of those propagating error (cf. on Rom. 8:15).

Error. Gr. *planē*, “wandering” (see on Matt. 18:12). It is possible to err through ignorance, but the spirit of error is deliberately seeking to make men wander from the path of truth.

7. *Beloved.* John introduces another phase of his subject (cf. v. 1). The transition from a discussion of the discernment of spirits to the need for love may seem abrupt, yet in reality it is not so, for the apostle is continuing to discuss the characteristics of those who are “of God” (v. 2). The ability to detect false teachers is necessary for those who are born of God, but John now shows that love is no less essential. As the confession or denial of the reality of the incarnation is the key test in the realm of belief (vs. 2, 3), so the presence or absence of genuine love is the test of the moral quality of one who professes to be of God, for the Spirit of God and the spirit of hate cannot coexist in the same heart.

Let us. John is here addressing all believers, and is not limiting his appeal to the teachers, the “we” of v. 6.

Love one another. See on ch. 3:11. The relationship between “beloved” and “love one another” is arresting. The force of the construction may be conveyed by the rendering, “loved ones, love another.” Those whom John is addressing are themselves beloved by their ministers, and in turn are asked to reciprocate the love they receive and to share it with others.

How can we love those to whom we are not naturally drawn? Those whom we should love do not always appear lovable, and it is easy to turn from such and to lavish our affection on those who are compatible with us. But God and Christ have left us examples of universal love (see on Matt. 5:43–45; John 3:16; Rom. 5:8), and they will give their followers grace to love all men, even the apparently unlovable. Prayer for the one whom we do not love will bring the love of God into our hearts, and will arouse an interest in our brother’s welfare. As we learn more about him knowledge will quicken into understanding, understanding into sympathy, and sympathy into love. Thus we may learn to love another even when to do so seems most difficult. For the type of love here enjoined see on Matt. 5:43, 44.

Love is of God. Literally, “love is out of God.” This is the reason advanced by John in support of his appeal for brotherly love. All true love is derived from God, who is the only source of love. All who are “out of” God (see on v. 2) will, by reason of their divine origin, display the love that comes from their Father.

Every one. Or, “whosoever” (cf. on ch. 3:6).

Loveth. Or, “continues to love.” John is not here suggesting that the act of love produces the new birth, for that would be like expecting the fruit to produce the tree that bore it, and would be contrary to the teachings on the new birth as recorded by the apostle (see on John 3:3–5). He is rather saying that all who keep on loving show that they have been born again.

Is born of God. Or, “has been born of God.” See on chs. 2:29; 3:9. Only those who have been born of God can really *love* in the Christian sense of the term.

Knoweth God. Compare on ch. 2:3, 4.

8. Loveth not. Another of John’s negative forms of a previous positive statement (cf. on ch. 1:5, 6; etc.). The Christian who claims to know God, yet does not love his brethren, is living a lie (cf. chs. 2:4, 9; 3:6).

Knoweth not. Rather, “did not know,” that is, did not come to know, or, never came to know, God. It is impossible to come to a knowledge of God without beginning to love our fellows (see on ch. 3:10, 11). John might have said that he who does not love has not been born of God, but he chooses to stress the fact that such a man has not even known God, and thereby covers the issue of his not having been born from above.

God is love. The Greek construction does not make “God” and “love” identical as the English translation may appear to do. Rather love is set forth as an essential quality or attribute of God. The decisive proof that a man that “loveth not” lacks a knowledge of God is contained in the phrase “God is love.” He who does not love proves that he is not personally acquainted with the basic quality in God’s nature. In his simple but sublime statement John reaches the zenith of Christian belief. To the heathen, if there is a supreme deity He is a far-off being with little interest in His worshipers, whereas many malignant spirits are close at hand. So they ignore the God of heaven and seek to placate the devils. In certain Eastern religions, God is an all-pervading mind indifferent to human needs, and hope is centered upon man’s becoming a nothingness in universal nonbeing. The nominal Christian all too often sees God as an angry tyrant who needs to be placated by prayers and penances or the pleadings of His son.

The ancient Jews sometimes mistakenly thought of God as a tribal deity who favored only His own people, and they thought of Him as possessing magnified forms of their own selfish ambitions and cruelties. The best among them found God revealed in the Holy Writings, but often they failed to gain a true understanding of the divine nature. When the Son of God came to earth, men could see that God is love.

That God is love is a revelation, for men could never have discovered the fact for themselves. The revelation is of supreme importance to man’s welfare. That God is a spirit (John 4:24) is important, but it tells nothing about the possibility of our enjoying happy relations with such a being. That “God is light” (1 John 1:5) is intellectually satisfying, but the thought of an all-pure, all-seeing God may bring fear rather than comfort, for in the light of what we are, what good can such a God find in us? But when we learn that God is love, fear is replaced by trust, and we confidently place ourselves in the hands of our heavenly Father, knowing that He careth for us (1 Peter 5:7).

That God *is* love also implies that there is no time when He has not been or will not be love. His nature never changes (see on James 1:17); love has been His dominant quality in the past and will continue to be in the future. We may prove that for ourselves, for as Charles Wesley says, when speaking of his relationship to God: “Through all

eternity to prove Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love” (*The Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, p. 332).

The statement that God is love is of infinite value in understanding the plan of salvation. Only Love would give free will to His creatures and run the risk of incurring the suffering that sin has brought to the Godhead and the angels as well as to fallen men. Only Love would be interested in gaining the cheerful voluntary service of those who were free to go their own way. And when sin came, only Love could have the patience and the will to devise a plan that would enable the universe to come to a full understanding of the basic facts in the great controversy between good and evil, and thus ensure against any further uprising of self-seeking and hate. In the warfare against sin, God, being truly love, can use only truth and love, whereas Satan employs cunning lies and cruel force. Only Love could inspire the plan that would permit the Son first to redeem the human race from the guilt and power of sin by His earthly life, death, and resurrection, and then to become the Head of a new and sinless race (cf. on v. 9). By His very nature God was impelled to devise and carry out this amazing plan (John 3:16).

9. In this. The phrase refers to what follows, not to what goes before.

Was manifested. Compare on ch. 1:2, where John tells us that eternal life was manifested in Christ, and on ch. 3:5, where the same verb is used for the incarnation.

Love of God. That is, God’s love, as the context shows.

Toward us. Rather, “in us,” or “among us” (RSV).

Sent. Literally, “hath sent.” The form of the Greek verb presents the act of sending as in the past, but with its effects remaining. Significantly, the results of the sending are permanent for Christ—He remains one of us (see on John 1:14; see Vol. V, pp. 917, 918; 1126–1131). The sending was not that of a father ordering a son to undertake a difficult mission, for Christ’s sacrifice was voluntary (see on John 10:17, 18; see DA 22, 23). He gladly undertook to become man and to die for sinners (see Ps. 40:8; Phil. 2:5–8; Rev. 13:8; PP 63; DA 23).

Only begotten. Gr. *monogenēs* (see on John 1:14). *Monogenēs* as applied to the Son occurs only in John’s writings, and thus supports the view that the Gospel and the epistle have a common authorship (see p. 623).

Into the world. God’s Son did not attempt to save man from a distance. He came into man’s own environment, though still retaining His connection with heaven (see on John 1:9, 10). He was in the world, but He was never “of the world,” just as we must not be “of the world” (John 17:14; 1 John 4:4, 5).

Might live. This is the great purpose for which God sent His Son into the world (cf. on John 3:16; 10:10). In his Gospel, John usually employs the phrase “to have life” rather than the verb “to live,” as here, but the variation in phraseology involves no difference in meaning.

Through him. All life is derived from Christ (see on John 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:3). Nothing has life apart from Christ. But, in a special sense, the Christian lives “through him,” for the only life that has permanent value, eternal life, is gained only through Jesus (cf. on John 10:10; 1 John 5:11, 12).

10. Herein. Literally, “in this” (see on v. 9). The phrase refers to what follows.

Love. The loftiness of John’s concept of love can hardly be exaggerated. He sees love as the highest of all principles, he sees that God Himself is love (v. 8). Therefore when

the apostle comes to give an example of love, by way of definition, he turns to the highest possible illustration, the immeasurable love of God for man.

Not that we loved. The pronoun is emphatic in the Greek, and stands in contrast with the word translated “he,” which is also emphatic. John is not denying that his readers ever loved God, but is stressing the inadequacy of human love to illustrate his high concept of love. The love of man for God need cause no wonder, for it is a natural response to the amazing affection that the Lord has poured upon the human race (see v. 19).

He loved us. The “he” is emphatic (see above under “not that we loved”). The marvel of divine love lies in the fact that God initiated the loving deed. There was no higher influence to persuade Him to love mankind: the urge came entirely from within Himself. Consideration of those on whom the love was bestowed makes the love all the more surprising, for the human race have nothing to recommend them to divine benevolence other than their dire need. Yet, from another point of view, God’s great act should cause no surprise, for John has already explained that God is love (v. 8), and one who knows God’s nature would expect Him to manifest His supreme quality in dealing with man’s rebelliousness (cf. on Rom. 5:8).

Sent his Son. See on v. 9. The form of the Greek verb here used signifies the completed act of sending, in contrast with that employed in v. 9, which refers to the act and its continuing results.

The propitiation. Gr. *hilasmos* (see on ch. 2:2). There is no article in the Greek.

For our sins. Literally, “concerning our sins” (see on ch. 2:2).

11. Beloved. This is the last occurrence of this term of endearment in this epistle. The term is here used to introduce an important statement. Compare the use of the term in chs. 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7.

If God so loved. Compare John 3:16. John is not expressing any doubt that God loved us, but is drawing attention to the infinite extent of His love and the manner in which it was displayed, for the purpose of encouraging his readers to emulate the divine example.

We. The pronoun is emphatic in the Greek (cf. on v. 10).

Ought. Gr. *opheilō* (see on ch. 2:6).

Love one another. See on ch. 3:11. We, who are aware of the magnitude of God’s matchless love for us, are obligated to emulate that love in relation to our fellows. Since God so loved us, unworthy as we are, should not we love our brother, unworthy though he may seem to us? To refuse to love our brother, who is no worse in the Lord’s eyes than we, is to put ourselves in the position of the ungrateful debtor who had been forgiven a large debt which he could never have paid, yet went out and attacked a fellow servant who owed but a small sum (see on Matt. 18:23–35). It is a mutual love to which we are called, and shared love increases steadily as each brother seeks to aid the other. The nearer we come to preferring one another in honor (Rom. 12:10), to laying down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16), the more like God we become and the more like His is our love. As the people of God near the close of probation, remarkable changes will take place. Their hearts will be knit one with the other in a love that is like that of God for us, and they will stand foursquare and fearless before their foes (TM 186, 187).

12. No man hath seen God. Compare on John 1:18. In the Greek the word for God appears without the article, as in John 1:18, which fact indicates that John is thinking of the nature and character of Deity rather than of His personality. The word for “seen” is

different in the two passages. In the Gospel, John uses *horaō*, a general word for seeing; in the epistle he uses *theaomai*, “to view attentively,” “to contemplate” (see on 1 John 1:1).

If we love. In the Gospel, John explains that only the Son could reveal the Father, because He alone among men had ever seen Deity. Here the apostle tells us that although we cannot behold God, by exercising brotherly love we can have the invisible God dwelling in our hearts.

Dwelleth. Gr. *menō* (see on ch. 2:6). In the heart that truly loves, God has a permanent home—and what better way can there be to gain a personal knowledge of the Lord than by having Him as a permanent guest in our hearts? The desire for a physical sight of Deity assumes a secondary place when the Lord actually dwells with the believer.

His love. That is, the love of God. This may refer either to the love of man for God or the love of God for man (see on ch. 2:5). Commentators are divided as to the meaning here (see below under “perfected”).

Perfected. See on ch. 2:5. The complete clause, “his love is perfected in us,” is open to more than one interpretation. It may be taken as meaning (1) the operation of God’s redemptive love is perfectly demonstrated in the transformed life of the believer, or (2) the same love that God showed to man is exemplified in the lives of those who love their brethren, or (3) our love for God is perfected as we love our brethren.

This is the second of the two perfectings discussed by John. The first occurs in ch. 2:5, and refers to those who keep Christ’s word.

13. Hereby. Or, “in this.”

Know we. John has given us a sign by which we can recognize that God is working in us, namely, “if we love one another.” Now he turns to a further sign that will give the assurance that we have a permanent home in Him and that He has made us temples fit for His indwelling. As we see this sign working in our lives, we shall continuously be made aware, by experience, that the invisible God dwells within us by His Spirit.

We dwell in him. See on ch. 2:28.

Because he hath given. The complete clause reads literally, “because out of His Spirit He has given to us.” Compare on ch. 3:24, where the same sign is discussed. That which determines whether we shall receive the Spirit and whether the Spirit and whether the Spirit will be able to use us, is our surrender to His guidance. Our Saviour permitted Himself to be guided by the Spirit in all that He did (see on Matt. 3:16; 4:1; Luke 4:18), so He could say that He neither spoke nor acted of Himself, but by the Father through the Holy Spirit John 5:19, 30; 14:10. Thus it could be said that He received the Holy Spirit without measure (see on John 3:34). As the Father gave the Spirit to empower the Son during His life on earth, so God will give of the Spirit to us. But we have a part to play—we must be willing to receive the Holy Spirit, we must be responsive to His control. Unless that willingness is present in us, God’s gift will be in vain. The Christians to whom John was writing had already opened their hearts to receive God’s gift, and were continuing to experience the blessings that come with the Spirit’s presence. If we follow their example, we may be sure of enjoying what they enjoyed.

14. We. That is, the apostolic group (cf. on v. 6), those who had personally seen the One whom the Father sent. The pronoun is emphatic in the Greek.

Have seen. Gr. *theaomai*, “to view attentively,” “to gaze upon,” “to contemplate” (see on v. 12). Compare on ch. 1:1, where the verb is translated “to look upon.” The form of the Greek verb indicates the abiding results of the past action. The apostles never forgot the revelation of God that they had witnessed in Jesus Christ. Although they, in common with other men, had never seen God (v. 12), they had seen His Son, and that sufficed.

Do testify. Or, “are bearing witness” (cf. on ch. 1:2). In so doing, John and his fellow preachers were fulfilling their Master’s command (Acts 1:8). The Christian church was largely built upon the testimony of the disciples who had studied the nature of God as revealed in the life of the Saviour, and had compared Christ’s life with the OT prophecies of the Messiah. In the early church there were many who had been converted by the Saviour’s own work; others accepted the faith through the witness at Pentecost; countless more believed because of the apostles’ subsequent testimony; but a still larger number, including ourselves, have been dependent upon the written witness as contained in the NT.

The Father sent. Literally, “the Father has sent.” The form of the Greek verb is the same as in v. 9 (see comment there).

To be the Saviour. The words “to be the” are supplied, and the clause may rightly read, “the Father sent the Son, a Saviour of the world.” Jesus did not become the Saviour by being sent, but was the Saviour before as well as after the incarnation. In spite of all that John has to say about Christ’s redemptive work, the word “Saviour” occurs only in one other place in his writings (John 4:42), and there is also qualified by the words “of the world.” For the significance of “Saviour” see on Matt. 1:21.

Of the world. That is, of the people in the world, although Christ’s work will ultimately include the renovation of the earth (Rev. 21:1, 5). The Saviour’s death made possible the salvation of every member of every nation (John 3:16, 17; 12:32). The result of His sacrifice is not limited to the Christian Era. Christ is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8; cf. Gen. 3:15; 4:3, 4; 22:13; Num. 21:9). Christ is the Saviour of all who will be redeemed, no matter the age in which they may happen to have lived.

15. Whosoever. See on John 3:16; 1 John 3:4, 6; Rev. 22:17.

Shall confess. Or “confesses.” See on v. 2.

Jesus. John uses the human name of the Saviour, doubtless because he wishes to emphasize the recognition of Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God (see on chs. 1:3; 3:23).

Son of God. See on Luke 1:35; John 1:14.

God dwelleth. Not only are we “of God” (v. 2) when we confess the Saviour, but God abides in our hearts and we abide in Him. Thus the confession of Jesus by the believer constitutes a further test by which he may know that God dwells in him (cf. vs. 12, 13; ch. 2:5), and he in God.

A connection between vs. 14 and 15 lies in the fact that the believer’s confession of the divine Sonship of Jesus is dependent upon the witness of the apostles to that which they had beheld in the earthly life of Christ. We have never seen Christ, except with the eye of faith in the pages of Holy Writ, yet our personal testimony to His divinity, based on the reality of our own communion with God, will usually do more to win others to share the same joy than the most skillful presentation of doctrinal reasons. Of course, our lives must conform to our high profession if they are to have any value for others, but the

very constancy of our fellowship with the Father will guarantee that Christ will always be seen in us (Gal. 2:20).

The type of communion possible has been demonstrated by our Lord. He was *always* in close communion with God. He constantly surrendered His will to that of the Father and consciously sought to do His will (see on Ps. 40:8). With us this experience is intermittent, for few have learned to stay surrendered for any length of time. We are likely to take our lives out of the hands of the Saviour and to break the link that binds us to the Father.

Satan is well aware of the tremendous value to man of this direct communion with heavenly beings, and he has worked hard to rob us of the privilege that he long ago forfeited (Rev. 12:7–10). But we must be aware of his sophistries and resist his efforts to separate us from God. Since confession of the Lord Jesus Christ is a sign of the mutual indwelling of God and man, the breaking of that communion is a denial of the Saviour. And when we deny Him we cease to enjoy His services as our Advocate (Matt. 10:32, 33).

16. And we. This may refer to those who are mentioned in v. 14, that is, the apostolic group who, in contrast with the universal “whosoever” (v. 15), have already been confirmed Christians for many years. Because of this established experience the testimony of the group merits consideration and respect.

Have known and believed. The form of the verbs thus translated indicates that John and his associates not only had known and believed but were continuing to do so. There is need for belief as well as for knowledge; both are essential in Christian experience.

We must know God before we can believe in Him. We must learn of the plan of salvation before we can trust our eternal lives to it. Moreover, both the knowledge and the belief may be progressively deeper. When we believe what we have learned, we are ready to learn more and believe in that, too. Thus neither is ever complete. We shall continue to learn more and believe more, and never shall we fully fathom the profound depths of the love of God to man.

Hath to us. Rather, “has in us.” The form of the Greek verb emphasizes the continuity of God’s love for His children. The preposition “in” indicates that we are the sphere in which the love of God is revealed. A consecrated Christian is the most persuasive exhibit of the fruitage of God’s love; the love of God, having operated in him, has transformed a sinner into a saint. Such miracle-working love cannot but be acknowledged by the one in whom it has operated and by those who observe its transforming power. Thus God’s love comes to be known and believed through the lives of His faithful children.

God is love. See on v. 8. Here the identification is linked with a positive statement, whereas in v. 8 it follows a negative declaration. That God is love has been the constant background of John’s reasoning, and has conditioned his frequent categorical statements.

Dwelleth in love. Whenever we maintain ourselves in the atmosphere of love, it follows that we must be maintaining ourselves in the presence of God. Because we dwell in love, we dwell in God, who is love (v. 8).

To abide continually in the realm of love toward God and men, in the face of contrary influences, calls for spiritual stamina that can be sustained only by constant communion with the Lord. On the difficulty of ever maintaining the needful fellowship between us and God see on v. 15.

God in him. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “God dwelleth in him.” All who have tasted the joys of this mutual indwelling with the God of love know that the reward is well worth the effort. Satan knows it too, and is clever enough not to attempt a direct denial of its value. Instead, he paints many lesser good things in glowing colors and leads us to center our thoughts upon them, even if only for a brief moment. Once he can thus divert our attention from God, he often succeeds in leading the mind along to harmful thoughts of self and others. Before we know it or even realize our danger, we are harboring thoughts of resentment, with the result that love and God have both been driven from our hearts. It is an old technique, but it is still all too successful!

Our best defense is a deliberate and constant centering of the mind upon the blessings we have enjoyed at the hand of God (Ps. 63:6; 139:17, 18). The memory of what God has done for us, of what fellowship with Him has meant, is also strengthened when we tell others of our joys. Such testimonies encourage our brethren and strengthen our determination to maintain the connection between ourselves and Heaven (Mal. 3:16; MH 100).

17. Herein. This may refer back to v. 16 or forward to the clause “that we may have boldness.” Both interpretations are possible, but John’s style in this epistle favors the forward reference.

Our love. Literally, “the love with us.” This may be taken to refer to God’s love for us and our love for God, both of which may be said to come to perfection *with us*, that is, in our transformed lives. If “herein” refers back to v. 16, this interpretation of “with us” readily fits the thought of dwelling in love; if “herein” be referred forward, then John’s meaning may be that, in our case, love is perfected when we confidently face the day of judgment.

Make perfect. Gr. *teleioō* (see on ch. 2:5).

That we may have. This points to one of the great objectives on which love has set its eyes. The love of God for man and the love of man for God have as a common purpose the preparation of man to face the day of judgment with confidence. Since the standard of judgment is the law (James 2:12), and since love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10), the perfecting of our love is an essential process.

Boldness. Gr. *parrēsia* (see on ch. 2:28).

The day of judgment. Literally, “the day of the judgment.” This is the only place where the full phrase with both articles is found in the NT. The effect of the articles is to emphasize both that it is a definite day or time and that there is one great judgment in which all cases are considered and decided. The two phases of the work of judgment (see on Rev. 14:7; 20:11–15) do not come under consideration here. John is expecting to appear before the judgment seat of Christ (cf. on 2 Cor. 5:10), and is preparing his readers also to be ready for that awful hour. See on Acts 17:31; 2 Peter 2:9.

Because. This points to the ultimate reason for the Christian’s confidence when confronted by the thought of the day of judgment. He can be confident *because* he is like Christ.

He. Gr. *ekeinos*, “that [one].” When applied to persons this pronoun uniformly refers to Christ in this epistle (chs. 2:6; 3:3, 5, 7, 16), and is clearly so intended here, although the immediate context would suggest a reference to God the Father. The thought of Christ

comes to John's mind doubtless because of Christ's work in connection with the judgment (see on John 5:22, 27; Rom. 2:16).

So are we. John has already stressed the Christian's likeness to the Saviour (see on ch. 3:1–3), and he now again emphasizes the resemblance to bring assurance to his judgment-bound readers. Those who are truly like the Judge need not fear the judgment. The believer's ground for confidence is not his own imperfect attainments, but the faultless character and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ his Saviour (see on Phil. 3:9; Titus 3:5; etc.).

World. Gr. *kosmos* (see on ch. 2:15). Although John's thought has reached to the day of judgment, he is primarily concerned with the Christian's conduct in this present world. He, as firmly as any NT writer, refuses to postpone Christlikeness to an indefinite future, but insists on the possibility of its being a present reality (see on ch. 3:2, 9). Here he declares that, even as Jesus is eternally righteous in His environment, so we are to be righteous in our present surroundings. The expression "in this world" implies the temporary nature of our sojourn here, but suggests that we are to be Christ's representatives while we live on earth. Notice, however, that this description of our being like Christ in the world is conditional upon our dwelling in love and in God (v. 16). It is love that links us to the Master and makes us like Him (chs. 2:7–10; 3:10–18). Some have felt that this description cannot be applied to individual members of the church, since none continually makes his home in the realm of selfless love. They claim that the description can be true only of the church as a whole. But until all the members abide in love, the church cannot as a whole be like Christ in the world. It is the individual who is indwelt and guided, and through individuals the Lord upbuilds His church on earth (Eph. 2:19–22).

18. There is no fear. John is here referring to craven fear (see on Rom. 8:15) and not to the desirable "fear of the Lord" that all believers possess (see on Acts 9:31; 2 Cor. 5:11; 7:1). Fear is the opposite of "boldness" (1 John 4:17), and will have no place in the mind of the Christian. As A. E. Brooke says in commenting on this verse, "Fear, which is essentially self-centered, has no place in love, which in its perfection involves completely self-surrender. The two cannot exist side by side" (*The International Critical Commentary, The Johannine Epistles*, pp. 124, 125).

But perfect love. Or, "on the other hand, the perfect love." The word "love" occurring three times in this verse is in each case literally, "the love." The apostle is speaking of Christian love that has already been perfected (v. 17).

Casteth out. Perfect love, which centers on God, cannot tolerate slavish fear, and does not need to, for "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (see on Rom. 8:31–39). He who truly loves has no fear of God and has no need to fear the machinations of men (Matt. 10:28; Heb. 13:6).

Torment. Gr. *kolasis*, "correction," "punishment," "penalty." Fear, arising from a wrongly spent life, brings its own immediate punishment, apart from any penalty that the future may hold in store (cf. on Heb. 10:26, 27).

He that feareth. Rather, "but he that feareth," or "and he that feareth." The reference is to ungodly fear, and not to the reverential awe felt by the true worshiper for his Creator.

Is not made perfect. Since there is no fear in love, one who fears demonstrates that he is not yet made perfect in respect to the high form of love of which the apostle is

speaking. Fortunately, development is possible. As we learn to know the Lord we begin to love Him, and our fear changes from a haunting dread of a powerful and avenging God to a “clean” (Ps. 19:9) fear that does not wish to disappoint a friend. The more we grow in love, the less we fear. When our love is perfectly developed and freed from all trace of self, we shall be without craven fear of God or man. We shall not fear God because we know that He is love. We shall not fear man because we know that our loving Friend will allow nothing to come upon us that will not be for our ultimate good, and that He will be with us whenever our path leads through trial or danger (Isa. 43:1–7; Rom. 8:28; Ed 255).

19. Him. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of “him.” The clause then reads, “we love,” a wider and perhaps more significant statement than “we love him.” To love one who already loves us is not unusual; but John is claiming that the love of God for us has resulted not only in our reciprocal love for God, which is natural, but also in a universally loving attitude on our part. We are continually loving, not only God, but all creatures, because of the superlative love of God that we have experienced in our own lives.

First. God is the originator of all good (James 1:17), and no man exercises any fine quality that did not come from the Lord. If God had not first loved us, we would not be capable of love. We would have been abandoned in sin and would have produced hate instead of affection. John never ceases to marvel at the primacy of his heavenly Father’s love, and wants to make his readers equally aware of its wonder (cf. Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:18–19).

20. If a man say. John now returns to the hypothetical statement with which he softens implied rebukes (see on ch. 1:6). He may also be referring to the false teachers (cf. on ch. 2:4).

I love God. It is easy to make such a verbal claim, but the apostle shows that it is no less easy to test the truth of the claim. Verbal profession is natural and necessary (cf. Rom. 10:9), but it is not sufficient. It needs to be corroborated by the professor’s attitude toward his fellow men. An examination of the quality of a man’s love for his brethren will reveal much concerning the genuineness of his love for God.

Hateth his brother. John clearly shows what he means by “hate” when he equates it with “loveth not” in the second half of the verse. Elsewhere in the Bible, hatred often implies no more than preferring oneself above another, or loving another less than one should (see on Luke 14:26).

A liar. John gives a plain test by which we can know whether we love God. If we fail in the test, but still claim to have passed it, we are indeed deliberate liars (see on ch. 2:4).

Loveth not. This is here equivalent to hating, which is the active form of not loving (see on ch. 3:14, 15).

Hath seen. The finite human mind finds it much easier to love the seen rather than the unseen.

How can he? Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, “he cannot love.” He who does not experience the lesser affection of loving his brother cannot hope to reach the higher attainment of loving an invisible God. Conversely, he who loves his brother is helping himself to love God; he is exercising the attribute that is supremely characteristic of God (ch. 4:8). This is not to say that love for man is first in importance, or even first in time. Without the indwelling God, who is love, we cannot love our brother, and it is more important to love God than to love a brother. But John reasons that we cannot have the

greater without the lesser, nor the lesser without the greater. We love both God and man, but our love is more easily tested by our attitude to men than by our attitude to God.

Hath not seen. See on v. 12.

21. This commandment. The writer has just shown that he who does not love his brother cannot love God (v. 20). He now expresses his thought positively (cf. ch. 1:5, 6; etc.) by referring to a specific commandment. Although Scripture does not contain any command in the form quoted, it is probable that John is referring to Christ's definition of the first and second commandments (Mark 12:29–31), which is drawn from Deut. 6:4, 5 and Lev. 19:18. He could also have drawn on his own memory of the Saviour's instruction (John 13:35; 15:12, 17).

From him. In its immediate context this phrase would seem to refer to God, but in this epistle John often reverts to the Son in this manner (see on ch. 2:27).

John's recourse to the authority of a specific command from Christ may be compared with that of Paul in his counsel to the Corinthians regarding certain problems affecting the marriage state. In one instance he says, "I speak this by permission," and in another, "I command, yet not I, but the Lord" (see on 1 Cor. 7:6, 10).

Love his brother. The apostle has shown that hatred for one's brother and love for God are incompatible (v. 20). Here he emphasizes that love for man is actually a fulfillment of the divine command on the part of those who already love God.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 GC vii
- 3 4T 80
- 4, 5 TM 271; 1T 285
- 5 5T 189
- 7 DA 139, 638, 816; Ev 466; MB 28; ML 179; SC 59; 2T 551; 5T 85
- 7, 8 2T 135; 8T 137
- 7–11AA 548; 8T 242
- 8 COL 211, 316; FE 429; MB 77; PP 33; SC 10; TM 265; 5T 315; 6T 283
- 8–13TM 94
- 10 AA 334; CT 268; DA 49; FE 283; TM 245, 456; 7T 31
- 11 COL 245; MH 460; SL 54; 8T 320
- 12 DA 505; ML 173; 5T 85; 8T 137
- 16 AA 560; DA 816; FE 281, 283; MB 18, 42, 105, 115; ML 257; MYP 363; 3T 528
- 17 1T 287, 531
- 17, 18 AA 552
- 19 AA 551; COL 384; MB 22; SC 59
- 20 DA 505; SL 54
- 20, 21 3T 60
- 21 3T 466

CHAPTER 5

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Jn 3:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

1 *He that God loveth his children, and keepeth his commandments: 3 which to the faithful are light, and not grievous. 9 Jesus is the Son of God, able to save us, 14 and to hear our prayers, which we make for ourselves, and for others.*

1. Whosoever. See on ch. 3:4, 6.

Believeth. Verses 1–12 deal with the faith that brings victory and eternal life. “Believe” has so far been used only three times in the epistle (chs. 3:23; 4:1, 16), but it now occupies a key position in the writer’s thought and occurs seven times in this chapter (here, and in vs. 5, 10, 13). In contrast, the word “love,” which has appeared as a noun or a verb over 40 times, occurs for the last time in v. 3.

The Christ. That is, the Anointed One, or Messiah (see on Matt. 1:1). To believe that the man Jesus of Nazareth is also the Messiah is to accept the plan of salvation (see on 1 John 3:23; 4:2, 15). A denial of Jesus’ divinity is one of the marks of heresy (see on ch. 2:22).

Is born of God. Rather, “has been born of God.” See on chs. 2:29; 3:9.

Every one. Or, “whosoever,” as in the beginning of the verse. John assumes that those who are begotten of God will love God, and states that they will also love all the other members of the family into which they have been begotten.

Him also that is begotten. Or, “him who has been begotten,” that is, a fellow Christian who has been born of the same heavenly Father and is therefore a member of the same family as the believer.

2. By this. The reference is to what follows.

We know. See on ch. 2:3, 29. We have been told how we may know that we love God (ch. 4:20, 21), and now John tells us how to discover whether we do or do not love the children of God, who are our brothers.

Children. Gr. *tekna* (see on John 1:12; Rom. 8:14, 16).

When we love God. John clearly teaches that love for God is basic in the Christian’s experience. He who loves God may be sure of also loving his brethren. It is therefore of paramount importance for the believer to cultivate a genuine love for his Maker: it will prove an inexhaustible fount from which all other desirable qualities will ceaselessly flow. It will also control his other affections, keeping them pure and well proportioned, contributing to the development of symmetrical Christian character.

Keep his commandments. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “do his commandments.” The variation makes little difference to the writer’s ultimate meaning. See on v. 3.

3. For this. These words introduce the reason for the previous statement (v. 2). John may have felt that he had not made clear the close connection between loving God and obeying Him, so he reinforces his linking of love for God and obedience to His commandments by showing that one implies and necessitates the other. For further discussion on the connection between love and commandment keeping see on Matt. 22:37–39; Rom. 13:8, 9. He states this very clearly in his Gospel by recording Christ’s own teaching on the subject (see on John 14:15, 21, 23, 15:10).

Love of God. There is sometimes a question as to whether “the love of God” stands for our love to Him or His love for us (see on chs. 2:5, 15; 3:16, 17; 4:9), but this time there is no doubt that the apostle is speaking of our love for God (ch. 5:2).

His commandments. See on chs. 2:3; 3:4. God’s commandments can be expressed in various ways—as loving God with all the heart and one’s neighbor as oneself (Luke

10:27), or believing on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and loving one's brethren (1 John 3:23), or keeping the Ten Commandments. After all, the Ten Commandments are but the expansion of the two precepts, love to God and love to man (Matt. 19:17–19; 22:36–40; Rom. 13:8–10).

Grievous. Gr. *bareis*, “heavy,” “burdensome,” “difficult to fulfill.” Compare the use of the word in Matt. 23:4, 23; Acts 20:29, 25:7. To the Christian the commandments of God are not burdensome, for obedience is the result of love. Those who love God find joy in fulfilling His requests and in following His counsel, and God Himself provides the power to observe His law (1 Cor. 10:13; Phil. 2:13).

4. For. Literally, “because.” John is about to give a further reason why the requirements of God are not a wearying and exhausting load. To the unaided human soul they are impossible to fulfill (Rom. 8:7), but to the born-again Christian (John 3:3) all things are possible (Mark 11:22–24; Phil. 4:13). He partakes of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and draws on the same resources that sustained Christ in His earthly life (TM 386; DA 123).

Whatsoever. John may have used this term rather than “whosoever,” to stress the comprehensive nature of the truth he is uttering (cf. John 3:6). Every right principle comes from God and is capable of overcoming worldly principles that come from Satan.

Born of God. See on ch. 3:9.

Overcometh. Gr. *nikaō* (see on ch. 2:13). The form of the verb in the Greek shows that victory in the new life may be continuous. Whenever the newly born Christian resists the tempter in the strength of Heaven, the adversary is defeated (James 4:7).

World. Gr. *kosmos* (see on ch. 2:15).

Victory. Gr. *nikē*, “means for winning a victory,” “victory,” from *nikaō*, “to conquer” (see above under “overcometh”). *Nikē* occurs only here in the NT, but was common in classical Greek and was the name given to the Greek goddess of victory.

Overcometh. Gr. *nikaō* (see on ch. 2:13). In the Greek there is an interesting play on the words *nikē* and *nikaō*, which may be rendered “this is the conquest that conquered the world.” The form of the verb would seem to refer to the time when the believers made their break with the world, since the apostle is speaking of their faith. There may also be an ultimate reference to the one great victory that enables Christians to conquer the world—Christ's own victory over the devil—but that is not John's primary thought in this verse.

Faith. Gr. *pistis* (see on Heb. 11:1). This is the only occurrence of this word in John's Gospel or epistles. How can “our faith” enable us to overcome the world? John provides the answer in v. 5, where he implies that the faith to which he is referring is that which accepts Jesus as the Son of God. Such a faith appropriates the Saviour's victory over the world and duplicates it in the life of the believer. It does not stop at mental assent but leads to positive action. Like the paralytic who was commanded to rise, we attempt what seems impossible (John 5:5–9). As our will chooses to rise from the thralldom of sin, the life-giving power of God comes into every moral fiber and enables us to accomplish what we by faith have willed. Were we to lie back and wait for the Lord to lift us up from sin,

nothing would happen. Our faith must lay hold of His promises, and must desire, choose, and will to act upon them before that strength can aid us.

5. *That overcometh.* Or, “the one who keeps on conquering.” The Greek denotes continual, repeated victory over evil. Faith increases with use. The more we trust the promises of God, the stronger our confidence becomes, and the more faith we gain for further progress.

Believeth that Jesus. Again John states the central truth of the Christian church as the test of a genuine, victorious Christian life (see on chs. 2:22, 23; 3:23; 4:1–3).

6. *This.* Or, “this one,” that is, Jesus, to whom John has referred in v. 5.

He that came. A reference to the historical fact of the incarnation. In the Gospels the verb “to come” is significantly used in connection with Christ’s incarnation (Matt. 5:17; 9:13; 10:34; 11:3; Luke 7:19; John 1:11; 3:2, 31; 7:27, 28; etc.).

By water and blood. The primary application of these words is readily perceived when it is borne in mind that John is speaking of the incarnation. Jesus came “by water,” that is, by His baptism, and by “blood,” that is, by His crucifixion. These two events were landmarks in His sacrificial ministry, and identified Him as the redeeming Son of God. Those who believe in His divinity cannot ignore either of these happenings.

Some have seen in John’s words a reference to the Christian sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. But the use of the past tense, “came,” and the obvious fact that the apostle is referring to the incarnation, precludes such an interpretation. Furthermore, “blood” is never elsewhere used for the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

It is possible that, in penning the words “by water and blood,” John would think of the incident on the cross, which he alone records (John 19:34), when “blood and water” came out of the Saviour’s pierced side. Indeed, it would be strange if an eyewitness to that moving event did not recall the scene, but it still cannot be said that Jesus then “came by water and blood.” The primary meaning of John’s simple words must be that his Master’s Messianic coming was publicly attested, at the beginning by His baptism, and at the close by the shedding of His blood on the cross.

Jesus Christ. For the meaning of the name see on Matt. 1:1; Phil. 2:5.

Not by water only. Some of those who were troubling the church accepted the baptism of Jesus, believing it marked the time when divinity entered humanity, but denied the death of God’s Son, believing that divinity and humanity were separated before the death on the cross (see pp. 625, 626). Therefore John emphasizes the importance of both the water *and* the blood for a correct understanding of the divinity of Jesus Christ (cf. Vol. V, p. 917).

And it is the Spirit. Throughout the history of the world it has been one of the chief tasks of the Holy Spirit to bear witness to the plan of salvation and to the Saviour. Once men had been shut off by sin from direct communication with God, the Holy Spirit became the controller of the inspired human messengers and made sure that the divine messages were delivered and recorded in a way that would ensure the accomplishment of their purpose (2 Peter 1:21). The main objective of all prophecy is to lead men to Christ as the Redeemer. By inditing and guiding prophecy, the Holy Spirit gives most effective witness to the Saviour, and merits the title “Spirit of Christ” (see on John 14:17, 26; 1 Peter 1:11).

The Spirit is truth. Literally, “the Spirit is the truth.” The Spirit’s testimony may be received with complete confidence, for all of His witness is true, and the sum total of His

revelation is the truth. Therefore, when the Spirit testifies that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, His witness is final—there can be no greater.

7. For there are three. Hebrew practice, based on Deut. 17:6; 19:15; etc., demanded consistent testimony from two or three witnesses before action was taken in certain legal disputes. John is here citing three witnesses in support of the divinity of his Master (1 John 5:5, 6, 8), thus assuring his readers of the reliability of his statement.

Bear record. Gr. *martureō*, “to witness,” “to testify.” *Martureō* is translated “to bear witness” (v. 6) and “to testify” (v. 9). The Greek implies that the witness is being borne continuously.

In heaven. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of the passage “in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth.” The resultant reading of vs. 7, 8 is as follows: “For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.” The passage as given in the KJV is in no Greek MS earlier than the 15th and 16th centuries. The disputed words found their way into the KJV by way of the Greek text of Erasmus (see Vol. V, p. 141). It is said that Erasmus offered to include the disputed words in his Greek Testament if he were shown even one Greek MS that contained them. A library in Dublin produced such a MS (known as 34), and Erasmus included the passage in his text. It is now believed that the later editions of the Vulgate acquired the passage by the mistake of a scribe who included an exegetical marginal comment in the Bible text that he was copying. The disputed words have been widely used in support of the doctrine of the Trinity, but, in view of such overwhelming evidence against their authenticity, their support is valueless and should not be used. In spite of their appearance in the Vulgate *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* freely admits regarding these words: “It is now generally held that this passage, called the *Comma Johanneum*, is a gloss that crept into the text of the Old Latin and Vulgate at an early date, but found its way into the Greek text only in the 15th and 16th centuries” (Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1951, p. 1186).

8. The Spirit. The apostle now recapitulates his testimony, but places the Spirit at the head of the list. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove bore testimony to John that the one he had baptized was the divinely appointed Messiah, and God Himself proclaimed His Son’s praise (Matt. 3:16, 17). When Christ shed His blood upon the cross, His noble bearing and quiet dignity, aided by the ominous darkness and the earthquake, impressed onlookers with His deity (Matt. 27:45–54). Thus the Spirit operated with the events represented by the water and the blood (see on 1 John 5:6) to affirm that Jesus was the Son of God.

These three agree in one. Literally, “the three are for the one thing,” that is, the three witnesses have the same objective in view—to testify to Christ’s divinity, that men might believe on Him and be saved. It was for this selfsame purpose that John wrote his Gospel (John 20:31).

9. If we receive. John is pointing out that men accept the testimony of their fellows when it fulfills the required legal conditions. Why then should they not accept even more reliable witness—that which comes from God? Yet there were those who would rather believe men than God. They were listening to the theories and sophistries of the Gnostics (see p. 625). Many of the people who refused to follow Jesus were soon following various false messiahs who offered them victory over the hated Roman power!

The witness of God is greater. God's witness is superior, not only because it comes from One who never lies, but because it comes from the only One who is fully qualified to testify concerning the Sonship of Jesus, that is, the Father. No man can consistently claim to believe in God without also believing in His Son.

Which he hath testified. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "that" rather than "which," making of the following words the reason for the superiority of God's witness. That God has testified concerning the Sonship of Jesus should be sufficient witness to convince men, who often accept less reliable testimony from their fellow men. John refers to God's acknowledgment of His Son during Christ's earthly life, and His continued testimony to the intimate relationship that eternally exists between the Father and the Son.

10. He that believeth. That is, the one who is continually believing Christ to be the Son of God. One who has a fluctuating, transitory conviction cannot claim or invalidate this promise.

On. Gr. *eis*, "unto," "into." John uses this particular preposition with the word for "believe" more frequently than all the other NT writers together. Such belief is a personal approach to Christ in firm reliance upon the truth of God's testimony, and a consequent trust in the Saviour's redemptive work (cf. on John 1:12).

In himself. He who actively believes on Jesus will have an inner witness to the validity of that belief. He will *know*, by personal experience, that Jesus is all that the Scriptures claim Him to be. Such belief is not easily overthrown: it is capable of withstanding the worst attacks the enemy can bring.

At the same time it should be remembered that it is dangerous to trust solely on inner feelings as to our relationship with God. While there will often be times when we feel confident of our fellowship with the Lord, there will also be days of doubt. It is in such times that the Lord has promised to be especially near to His children (Isa. 43:2). We should therefore hold to our connections with God even when feelings dictate otherwise. The Christian life should be based upon principle rather than feeling (1T 167). As faith grows stronger, the witness within our hearts grows stronger, too (1 John 3:24).

Believeth not God. One might have expected John to say, "believeth not on the Son of God," as the negative of his preceding statement, but the apostle goes deeper, since he knows that refusal to accept the Father's witness concerning His Son is a refusal to believe God (cf. ch. 2:22, 23). In his penetrating way John has analyzed the ultimate nature of all disbelief—it rejects even the Father.

Hath made him a liar. Not that man can make God lie, but he makes Him out to be a liar by affirming that what God has witnessed is not true.

Because he believeth not. Literally, "because he hath not believed." A clear restatement of the specific form of disbelief of which the rejectors of Christ's divinity are guilty. John thus lays bare the ultimate nature of all disbelief.

Record. Gr. *marturia*, "witness." Compare the verb *martureō*, "to witness" (see below under "gave").

Gave. Gr. *martureō*, "to witness," "to bear witness." *Martureō* and *marturia* occur 10 times in the genuine text (see on v. 7) of vs. 6–11. The form of the Greek verb indicates that the reference is to God's past witness, the effect of which is still continuing.

11. And this is the record. The witness consists in the divine gift of eternal life through the person of God's Son, Jesus Christ. That gift is the most effective of all witnesses to the verity of God.

Hath given. Rather, "gave," with reference either to the historic act of the incarnation, with associated events, or to conversion, when the believer receives the gift of eternal life (see on John 3:16).

Eternal life. See on John 3:16; cf. on 1 John 1:2.

This life. A further part of the witness borne by God—He has given us eternal life in the person of His Son, who is "the life" (John 14:6). See on John 1:4.

12. Hath the Son. To have the Son means so to believe on Him that He becomes to us all that His name implies: a Saviour, a Lord, One anointed to be our King (see on John 1:12; 5:24). It means to have Christ dwelling in the heart as the supremely honored Guest (see on Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Rev. 3:20).

Hath life. Literally, "hath the life," that is, the eternal life referred to in v. 11. This life begins with the Christian's new birth, and is continued in the world to come (see on John 8:51; 10:10). Those who cultivate the friendship of Jesus come to share in His character. In this way, having the Son guarantees having the life that never ends.

Hath not. Since the Father chose to make eternal life available only through His Son (John 1:4; 3:16; 17:2), it follows that those who reject the Son reject the only source of true life. It will be noted that in the negative statement John adds to Christ's title, and describes Him not only as "the Son" but as "the Son of God," thus emphasizing the ultimate source of the life that the Son bestows—it comes from God (see on John 5:26).

13. These things. The reference is either to the contents of all the epistle up to this point or to the contents of ch. 5:1–12. The remainder of the verse is strongly reminiscent of John's similar declaration of purpose in John 20:31.

Have I written. Or, "I wrote." The words are retrospective as the apostle looks back on his epistle and recalls the purpose for which he writes to the believers. By restating that purpose he again impresses it upon the minds of his readers.

That believe. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) placing the clause, "that believe on the name of the Son of God," after "that ye may know that ye have eternal life." However, the clause still defines "you."

That ye may know. This is the specific purpose for which John wrote the preceding section of his letter (vs. 1–12), but it may also be applied to the entire epistle. The Greek suggests that the knowledge here referred to is intuitive and absolute, and implies full conviction. It would appear that the faith of John's readers was in danger of weakening, and he was endeavoring to bring it up to full strength. This complements the initial design of the epistle, which is outlined in ch. 1:3, 4.

And that ye may believe. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words and of the remainder of this verse. A similar thought appears earlier in the verse.

14. Confidence. Gr. *parrēsia* (see on ch. 2:28), here perhaps cogently used in its primary sense of "freedom of speech" (see on ch. 3:21). John's thoughts concerning the possession of eternal life and belief on the Son of God suggest to him the confidence that the believer may have in approaching the Son, and thus the subject of prayer is introduced.

In him. Rather, "toward him" (see on ch. 3:21).

If we ask any thing. This introduces the “confidence” of which John has just spoken. Although the Lord knows all our needs before we express them, He wishes His children to make those needs known to Him in their own language. The assurance is very broad, being qualified only by the next phrase.

According to his will. That is, the Son’s will. Only the condition that our petitions are in harmony with His will is here mentioned. Elsewhere, other qualifications are set forth—asking in Christ’s name (John 14:13; 16:23), agreement among brethren (Matt. 18:19), belief (Mark 11:24), observance of His commandments (1 John 3:22).

Our omniscient, benevolent Lord knows what is for our good and disposes His grace and power for the promotion of our happiness and salvation (see on 1 Thess. 4:3). We do not desire to be saved any more ardently than Christ desires to save us. His will is bent on our redemption much more firmly than is our own (Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:5). Therefore we may be sure that if we offer any petition regarding our salvation, the Saviour will be more than ready to hear us—He will be waiting to fulfill that request. This assurance holds true for the smaller as well as the greater matters of daily life. He who numbers the hairs of our head is not indifferent about the lesser details of the lives of those for whom He died (Matt. 10:29–31).

He heareth us. Compare John 9:31; 11:41, 42. We may be sure that every sincere prayer is heard in heaven, and will be answered, either by a positive or a negative reply (see on 1 John 3:22).

15. If we know. John bases his assurance on the believer’s knowledge of the Lord. An understanding of the divine character will bring confidence in the Lord’s judgment and in the benevolence of His intentions (cf. Jer. 29:11). He who knows God will have no nagging doubts as to the rightness of His ways but will calmly trust, knowing that His work is perfect (see on Rom. 8:28). The knowledge that our Lord is a prayer-hearing God will assure us that He will grant every right petition that is offered Him.

Whatsoever we ask. This sweeping statement has already been qualified by the phrase “according to his will” (v. 14).

The petitions. That is, the answer to the petitions. A careful reading of John’s words suggests that he is not giving a blanket assurance about answers to a Christian’s prayers so much as he is encouraging the Christian to discover the Lord’s will and to frame his petitions in harmony with the divine design, in the sure knowledge that God-approved prayers will receive the best possible answer.

16. If any man. Compare chs. 1:6; 2:1; 4:20. John uses a hypothetical case to present an important lesson. Here the reference is obviously to a Christian man who has a healthy awareness of sin.

His brother. This limits John’s lesson to the Christian community: he is speaking of concern for a fellow believer.

Sin a sin. Literally, “sinning a sin,” that is, actually in the act of sin.

Not unto death. That John is making a distinction between forms of sin appears undeniable, for, a little later in this same verse, he speaks of “a sin unto death.” But the context must be kept in mind. In vs. 14, 15 he has given the assurance that the believer’s prayers will be answered; here he is applying the promise to a specific type of prayer—that on another’s behalf—and is explaining under what circumstances it can be effective. In so doing he discusses two classes of sins—those in which there is hope for the sinner and those in which there is no hope. In the first class, prayer may be an effective aid to

redemption; in the second, as John later explains, there is no guarantee that prayer will be efficacious. It is generally held that the sin unto death is the unpardonable sin (see on Matt. 12:31, 32). Hence, a sin not unto death is any other form of sin in which an erring brother engages.

He shall ask. He shall ask of Christ, that is, he shall pray for the erring brother. The clause may be taken either as an injunction to pray or as a statement of the natural reaction of the earnest believer when confronted by another's delinquency. How much happier the church would be if, instead of discussing a brother's weakness, we were to pray *for* him, and, if possible, *with* him. Such intercessory activity will fit us for the delicate task of speaking to the sinner and pointing him to the Saviour. Such conversation will serve to build up the church, whereas critical gossip will break it down.

He shall give him life. It is difficult to determine to whom the pronouns in this clause refer. The sequence of thought suggests that the apostle is still speaking of the Christian who prays for an erring brother and thereby is instrumental in bestowing life upon the sinner. But it is also possible that John has abruptly changed his subject and is saying: Christ shall give the praying Christian life to pass on to those sinners who have not finally hardened their hearts. The difference is only one of interpretation, for the operation is the same in either case. The Christian has no power apart from the Saviour; so, in the end, it is Christ who gives the life, though the intercessory prayer may have been the instrument through which that life has been granted. However, such "life" is granted only if there is sincere repentance on the part of the sinner.

For them. Or, "to them." The writer has passed from the particular case to the general, and speaks of all who "sin not unto death."

There is a sin unto death. Or, "there is sin unto death." Since John does not define *one* particular sin as resulting inevitably in death, it is probable that he is here referring to a *type* of sin that will certainly produce death. If he had known of one specific sin that would leave a man without hope of salvation, he might have been expected to identify it, so that all might beware of falling into irrevocable condemnation. While it is true that all sin, if persisted in, will lead to death (Eze. 18:4, 24; James 1:15), there is a difference in the degree to which any particular act of sin will bring a man near to death. The sins committed by those who are genuinely anxious to serve God, but who suffer from a weak will and strong habits, are very different from those sins that are deliberately committed in brazen and willful defiance of God. It is more the attitude and the motive that determine the difference, than the act of sin itself. In this sense, there are distinctions in sins. The minor error, quickly repented of and forgiven, is a sin not unto death. The grievous sin, fallen into suddenly through failure to maintain spiritual power, is still not a sin unto death, if followed by genuine repentance; but refusal to repent makes ultimate death certain. The distinction is clearly illustrated in the experiences of Saul and David. The first sinned, and did not repent; the second grievously sinned, but earnestly repented. Saul died, without hope of enjoying eternal life; David was forgiven and assured a place in God's kingdom (see PP 634, 679, 723–726).

For discussion on the unpardonable sin see on Matt. 12:13, 32.

I do not say. John does not *command* us to pray, neither does he say that we should not, but he hesitates to guarantee answers to prayer for those who have deliberately turned away from God. There is a difference between prayer for ourselves and prayer in behalf of others. When our own will is on the side of God, we can ask in accordance with

His will and *know* that we shall receive an answer to our prayers. But when there is a third person concerned, we must remember that he, too, has a will. If he refuses to repent, all our prayers and all the work that God might do and might lead us to do, will not force the will. In refusing to force man to remain good, God also relinquished the power to force a sinner to repent.

This does not mean that we should not continue to pray for those who have drifted from the way of righteousness, or who have never surrendered to the Saviour. It does not mean that there will not be many remarkable conversions as a sequel to long and earnest praying by faithful hearts. But John is showing that there is no use praying for forgiveness for a sinner so long as he refuses to repent of his sin. Yet, while there are any grounds for hope, we should continue to pray, for we cannot tell with certainty when a man has gone too far.

17. Unrighteousness. Gr. *adikia* (see on Rom. 1:18, 29). Compare the definition “sin is lawlessness” (see on 1 John 3:4). Any unholy act belongs to the realm of sin, as surely as does the most obvious heinous crime. John states this fact in order to reveal the wide range that lies before the intercessor who pleads on another’s behalf.

There is a sin. John repeats his former statement (cf. v. 16), doubtless to encourage his readers to persevere in their prayers for others (see on v. 16).

18. We know. The beloved disciple now gives his closing message in words that seek to impart the serene certainty that fills his own soul. Three times he uses the phrase “we know” (here and in vs. 19, 20), apparently referring to himself and his readers, who also possess the knowledge of which he speaks.

Whosoever is born of God. See on ch. 3:9.

Sinneth not. See on ch. 3:9.

He that is begotten of God. Rather, “he that was begotten of God” (see following comment).

Keepeth himself. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “keepeth him,” in which case the complete clause will read: “He that was begotten of God [that is, Christ] keepeth him [that is, the believer].” This reading does more than make a statement, it gives a reassuring promise—Christ will guard the born-again believer from all evil.

If the reading of the KJV is retained, John is stating the Christian’s attitude in a sinful world—he guards the avenues of his soul and does not permit sin to enter.

That wicked one. Literally, “the wicked” (see on ch. 2:13).

Toucheth. Gr. *haptomai*, “to fasten oneself to,” “to lay hold of.” The verb implies more force than is usually associated with “to touch.” The assurance is given that he who is born of God will not be seized by the devil but will keep himself, or be kept by Christ, the Begotten of God (cf. John 6:39; 10:28; 17:12).

19. Know. John refers to the inner conviction that all true believers will possess.

Of God. Literally, “out of God” (cf. on chs. 3:10; 4:1). Not only have we been born of God; we are continuing as members of His family. Such knowledge will keep us in the heavenward way; it will inspire us to maintain unblemished the family name that we now bear.

World. Gr. *kosmos* (see on ch. 2:15).

Wickedness. Literally, “the wicked,” possibly meaning “the wicked one” (cf. on ch. 2:13). If so, John is pointing out the contrast between the children of God and the children of the world. The first belong entirely to the Lord; the second lie, as it were, in the lap of the evil one, the devil (cf. on ch. 2:15–17).

20. We know. He who has been born again knows that Christ came and accomplished the work of redemption, for he has personally experienced forgiveness of sin and the power of the indwelling presence of the Saviour to keep him from sin.

The Son of God. The title “Son” applied to Jesus occurs 11 times in vs. 5–20.

Is come. Gr. *hēkō*, “to have come,” “to have arrived.” The historical facts of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God are the central truths around which the Christian’s faith is built.

An understanding. Gr. *dianoia* (see on 1 Peter 1:13). The word here refers to the faculty of understanding, the mind. Christ has opened to the believer inexhaustible treasures of divine knowledge. We should ever be eager to explore those treasures and improve our knowledge of them.

That we may. The apostle makes clear the basic purpose in Christ’s coming and His work with mankind—to reveal “him that is true,” so that men may know Him as He really is (cf. John 1:18; 17:3).

Know him that is true. Literally, “know the true [one],” or “know the genuine [one],” that is, God the Father (cf. John 7:28; 17:3; 1 Thess. 1:9), whom the Son came to reveal to men, and who can be truly known only through the Son (see on John 1:18; 14:9). By such a description of the Father, John turns his readers’ minds from the falsity of Gnosticism (see pp. 625, 626) to the truth of the genuine Christian faith.

In him that is true. Obviously God the Father, as the pronoun “his” suggests.

This is the true God. It is possible to apply these words to Jesus Christ, but their most probable application is to the Father, since it is He of whom John has been immediately speaking in the preceding phrases. But as elsewhere, so here, there is no need to distinguish sharply between the Father and the Son, since they are one in nature, character, and purpose.

Eternal life. See on John 5:26.

21. Little children. See on ch. 2:1.

Keep. Gr. *phulassō*, “to guard,” “to keep watch.” The Saviour cares for His children (cf. on v. 18), but here the apostle is emphasizing the believer’s own responsibility to guard his soul. If he fails to do this, Christ’s watchcare will be in vain (see on 1 Cor. 16:13).

Idols. Rather, “the idols,” that is, all false images, material and mental, that would prevent the believer from worshiping the true God.

Amen. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 SL 82
- 3 GC 436, 468; PP 154; SC 60; SL 81
- 4 CH 592; CT 182; GC 477; GW 259; LS 226; MB 12, 144; ML 325; MM 218; PP 513; 2T 140; 4T 279, 346; 7T 169
- 10 AA 512; SC 112; SR 319
- 11, 12 COL 259; DA 388

12 DA 530
14 MH 230; TM 484; 2T 149
14, 15 AA 552; COL 148; DA 266; MH 70; PK 157
20 TM 199
3

³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Jn 5:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.