

# **THE TEST OF TRUE LOVE**

**A VERSE BY VERSE EXPOSITION  
OF**

## **The Epistles of John**

**SETTING FORTH THE PRINCIPLE  
OF  
DIVINE LOVE**

- **IN THE ECCLESIA (1st John)**
- **IN THE HOME (2nd John)**
- **BY INDIVIDUALS (3rd John)**

*By H. P. Mansfield.*

LOGOS PUBLICATIONS, WEST BEACH POST OFFICE,  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA, 5024

CLYDE PRESS, 608-10 High Street, Thornbury, Victoria, 3071, Australia



# Contents

---

Foreword .....	4
Character Sketch .....	5
Introduction .....	9
Analysis of John's First Epistle .....	14
The Epistle as an Appendix to the Gospel .....	16
Verse by Verse Exposition —	
Introduction .....	20
God is Light .....	23
God is Love .....	42
God is Life .....	58
<b>THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN</b> .....	66
Analysis .....	67
Verse by Verse Exposition —	
Introduction .....	68
Exposition .....	69
Exhortation .....	70
Application .....	71
Information .....	72
<b>THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN</b> .....	74
Analysis .....	74
Verse by Verse Exposition —	
Gaius: The Sincere, Dedicated, Loveable .....	75
Diotrephes: The Domineering, Self-Assertive, Arrogant .....	77
Demetrius: Of Good Repute to All .....	79
Last Words from John .....	79
<b>THEME STUDIES</b>	
Sin .....	22
The Believers .....	41
Light; Love; The New Begettal .....	65
God; Jesus Christ; Action Required; Fellowship .....	73
The World .....	78

## Foreword

*The present volume is one in a series of Verse by Verse studies of books of the Bible, which are designed to set forth comprehensive expositions with a minimum of comment.*

*By this treatment, the expressions of the individual writers are not drowned in a flood of exposition, but are allowed to dominate throughout to the exclusion of mere words of explanation or of opinion.*

*We first provide some comments on the writer himself, the circumstances which caused him to pen the words he did, and then set forth an analysis of the whole book. It is suggested, in regard to the epistles now before us, that if they are thoughtfully read through without break, with the various analyses before the reader, the complete scope of their various messages will be grasped, and a sound basis will be laid for the study of the individual verses. This blend of telescopic and microscopic study will reveal the mind of the Apostle with greater force, and enable the reader to better grasp the power of his words.*

*We earnestly recommend, that the Reader use these notes to mark up his Bible, so that he will always have for himself a commentary on the Epistles every time he reads them. In order to do this effectively, he must make the ideas set forth in our treatise his own, and improve on them as he is able. This can best be done by carefully considering our suggested explanations, and by recording any conclusions reached in a notebook, before entering them in the Bible. Then, when that has been done, reduce the comments to the absolute minimum of words, and later mark them up in the Epistle. Learn to be selective, and to meditate upon the thoughts suggested, to "ruminate" upon them, as the Law demanded of the Israelites. Later, when they have been firmed in the mind, mark them in the Bible.*

*Remember: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Prov. 25:2).*

*In his Epistle, John set out to destroy the influence of false doctrines which were gaining ground at the time. Those erroneous theories are not in evidence today in the same form as they were then, and it may be imagined that John's words have lost some of their power in consequence. But that is not so. In countering the false doctrines of his day, the Apostle laid down principles that are applicable in every age. Therefore, though the Epistles were designed primarily for specific circumstances as they existed then, they have a compelling message for today; and because of that, the Spirit saw fit to preserve them for posterity.*

— H. P. MANSFIELD. (December 1968).

## Character Sketch

John was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the younger brother of James. His name signifies *Yahweh Has Been Gracious*, which is an appropriate name for the one of whom it is recorded that he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20).

He was a native of Bethsaida in Galilee, the son of Godly parents. His father, Zebedee was a fisherman, owning his own vessels, and prosperous enough to hire servants. From Luke 5:10, it seems as though he was in partnership with Peter and Andrew.

The family seemed to have been on a high social standing, for it was on terms of intimacy with the high priest (John 18:16), and owned property, not only in Galilee, but also, apparently, in Judea (John 19:27).

Although Zebedee was not called to follow the Lord himself, he did not restrain his sons from doing so (Matt. 4:21-22). He remained home, probably to manage the business in their absence, encouraging them in the spiritual activities upon which they had entered. In that, he was doubtless influenced by the zeal of Salome his wife, who ministered to the Lord of their substance, sometimes, with other women, accompanying him in his travels (Luke 8:2-3; Matt. 20:20; 27:56). From Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1; John 19:25, it appears that Salome, the mother of John, was sister to Mary, the mother of the Lord, in which case, John was first cousin to Jesus.

John was called to become a "fisher of men" whilst he was plying his trade at the nets (Matt. 4:19). He rose to eminence among the Apostles, being one of the select triumvirate, Christ's inner council of three, who were given special privileges, and were permitted to view special manifestations of power and glory. Thus with Peter and James, the other two, John was selected to view the resurrection of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37), the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1), to hear the Olivet prophecy (Mark 13:5), and to be with the Lord in the intimacy of the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33).

John had the tremendous privilege of being called "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20). He was treated with greater familiarity by Christ than were the other Apostles. He sat next to him at the Last Supper, reclining with his head lovingly resting on the Lord (John 13:23-25), and in that position whispered to him a request for him to reveal who it was who would betray him. He was later entrusted with the care of the Lord's mother (John 19:26), and took her unto his own home, probably somewhere adjacent to Jerusalem. At that moment of sadness, apart from the Lord himself, Mary received

greater consideration from her nephew than she did from her own sons and daughters.

John wrote the Gospel, the three epistles bearing his name, and on being banished to Patmos, received the final vision of glory known as the Revelation.

His contact with Christ produced in him a great change of character, moulding him into a loving and considerate shepherd of the flock, whose anxious care was for their welfare.

He was evidently a man of tremendous natural energy, and because of this, and his outspoken zeal, he received the title of Son of Boanerges, or of Thunder (Mark 3:17). His intolerance, and the fierce, possessive jealousy that he showed for the Lord whom he loved so dearly, reached its apex on the occasion when Jesus was slighted by the Samaritans. He deeply resented this, and in his excess of zeal, he called upon the Lord to command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them (Luke 9:54). He also, at that stage, manifested overweening ambition, and with James, selfishly sought special privileges of personal glory greater than the other Apostles, for which he was rebuked (Mark 10:35-37). But with all this, he was a man of deep affection, and he manifested an intense love and loyalty for the Lord (John 13:23), and a natural sympathy for others.

Qualities of John's character were revealed at the trial of Jesus. He showed himself to be thoughtful, for he came to the aid of Peter, who, not having access to the high priest's court, remained outside until John used his influence to obtain entrance for him (John 18:15-16). He manifested strength of character, and independence of action, for whereas Peter, at that stage, was somewhat in doubt of the Lord, and being ashamed at the possibility of being classed among his disciples, remained to mingle among the soldiers, John boldly "went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest" where he could see into the Audience Chamber, without regard to the opinion of others. He was the first of the Apostles to believe Mary Magdalene's account of the empty tomb (John 20:2), though, at that stage, he did not understand its full significance (John 20:7-8).

His natural exuberance, and perhaps the greater physical energy of his more youthful years, enabled him to out-distance Peter as they ran together to the sepulchre of the Lord (John 20:3-5), and his loving thoughtfulness was shown by the deference he paid the older man, in that he respectfully stood aside to allow him to enter first (John 20:6-8).

The early failings and virtues of John's character were tempered or improved by his contact with Christ, as gradually the divine example and teaching of the Master took possession

of his heart. This is reflected in his writings. The high spiritual style manifested therein, the lofty themes to which he addressed himself, reveal his mental maturity and his personal spiritual development. He never forgot the example of gentle patience manifested by the Lord towards the disciples, but learned to reflect it in his own dealings with his brethren. One particular incident stands out clearly in his Epistles. It concerns the defection of Judas. Once he had left the company in the upper room, the Lord had addressed the remaining disciples in a term of endearment: "Little children . . ." (John 13:33). It is an expression used nowhere else in the Gospel accounts, but here,\* but it is one that John constantly used in his epistle (1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). Moreover John used it at a time when the spirit of Judas had again been manifested within the brotherhood, for he wrote; "They went out from us, but they were not of us . . ." (1 John 2:19).

In his epistles, it is obvious that the Son of Thunder now recognised the greater need of quietly developing love in his brethren, than that of vindicating self. The early ambition to succeed in spite of the other Apostles, is replaced by a desire to help others to share God and Christ with himself, through that fellowship that exists by walking in the way of divine Light, Love and Life.

Thus the influence of Christ mellowed and perfected the character of John. He lost that self-asserting vigor, and short-sighted aggressiveness that once characterised him. His writings exhibit him as a gentle, patient man of great strength of will, of tremendous energy, and of abounding humility.

This latter quality is revealed in both his Gospel and the Epistles. In the former, he refers to "the disciple whom Jesus loved," but does not name him, though the evidence is conclusive that John is the one referred to. In his Epistles, he does not assert the authority of his Apostleship, as Paul was forced to do, under different circumstances. Yet though he was humble, he was not weak. His early vigor remained, and was expressed through forthright language and action, but now it was disciplined and controlled. He thus warned Diotrefes who "loved the pre-eminence," that when they met he would have cause to regret his unrighteous deeds, and his prating, malicious tongue (3 John 9). But with great understanding and insight as to what Jesus required, he reserved his strictures and actions for those deserving of the thunder he was still capable of uttering.

#### **HIS WORK IN EPHESUS**

Tradition records that after the ascension of the Lord,

---

\* "Children" in John 20:5 is a different word, and is used by John in 1st. Epistle 2:18,

when the apostles made a division of the areas for preaching among themselves, Asia fell to the share of John. It is also claimed that he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jerusalem until the death of Mary.

He then proceeded to Asia and applied himself to the propagation of the truth, preaching it where it had not yet been known, and confirming it where it had already been planted. He was involved in the persecution instituted by Domitian, and tradition says that he was taken bound to Rome, and there condemned to be baptised in a cauldron of boiling oil (see *Eureka* vol. i, p.156). Tradition alleges that he was drawn out alive, but the Emperor, by no means impressed with the miracle, banished him to the island of Patmos. There he preached to the inhabitants, and ultimately received the wonderful vision of the future contained in the Revelation. Though Domitian may have thought that by thus banishing this notable Christian he would rid the world of his influence, in fact, his influence was increased. In the Revelation, he describes himself as "your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, being in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9).

It is said that upon the death of Domitian, and the succession of Nerva, John was released, and returned to Asia, establishing his headquarters at Ephesus, because the people of that city had recently martyred Timothy. John was the sole remaining Apostle, and labored to complete the work that had been set them by the Lord Jesus. According to Eusebius, he died at the beginning of Trajan's reign, in his ninety-eighth year, and was buried near Ephesus.

But John's work has not yet been completed. In the Revelation, he was given the assurance that he must yet, in the future, "prophecy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Rev. 10:11). He will yet rise from the dead to personally play a part in the final consummation of the great prophecy that was given through him.

It is significant that the Bible closes with a prayer and a benediction from this man whom Jesus loved: "Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

To John's gracious words and prayer, let us also add our 'Amen' — so be it!



# Introduction



## WHEN AND WHY JOHN WROTE

The general opinion is that the first Epistle of John was written about A.D.90, and that the succeeding epistles were written some time after that.

At that time, John would have been the only surviving apostle, and would have been a great age. The tone of the epistle is in keeping with this, for it is paternal both in the endearing expressions he used as well as the authority with which he wrote.

It was written to correct serious error that was developing among the Ecclesias. John does not name the error, but the general opinion is that it was incipient Gnosticism. The full development of this heresy was not in evidence until about the second century, but in its earlier forms it had been manifested before John, and is referred to by Paul to Timothy when he warned him to be on his guard against the "oppositions of science (*gnosis*) falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20).

## DANGER FROM WITHIN

The theory of Gnosticism threatened the Ecclesia from within, and constituted a more seductive and dangerous doctrine than persecution from without. John wrote to counter the influence of a so-called "higher form" of "knowledge" that challenged the foundations of faith. The peril came not from men who were out to destroy the Truth, but from those who thought that they were improving it, and whose aim was to make it intellectually respectable.

It is significant that there is a tendency to the same end today, which likewise threatens to destroy the foundations of faith, and against which we must be on our guard.

A further aspect also emerges that makes the comparison even closer. By the time John wrote (towards the end of his life), many members of Ecclesias were second or even third generation believers, and this is also so today in regard to the latter-day revival of the Truth. Then, as now, the pioneering spirit was being set aside, and more and more time was being given to mere speculating and philosophising upon truth.

Jesus had warned of this. He predicted: "The love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). By John's time, as today, the first thrill of the early establishment of Ecclesias had faded, and, in many instances, the early flame of zeal had dimmed to a flicker. Tradition has it that John ministered at Ephesus, and Christ warned this very Ecclesia: "I have somewhat against thee

because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4).

Therefore, whilst John constantly reminded the brethren of their obligations in the sphere of divine love, he also manifested a stern, unyielding attitude towards those who would undermine the faith with their theories. In describing them, he used appellations such as "liars," "seducers," "false prophets," "deceivers," "antichrists," and so forth, writing thus in the abundance of his love, in order to help the sheep who, as a good shepherd, he "knew by name" (3 John 14).

### WHAT WAS GNOSTICISM?

The Greek word *Gnosis* signifies "knowledge," and the Gnostics claimed to be "knowing ones." However, the form of knowledge they embraced, did not constitute a greater understanding of the Bible. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states:

"Among the majority of the followers of the movement "Gnosis" was understood not as meaning 'knowledge' or 'understanding,' in our sense of the word, but 'revelation.' These little Gnostic sects and groups all lived in the conviction that they possessed a secret and mysterious knowledge, in no way accessible to those outside, and not based on reflection, on scientific inquiry and proof, but on revelation. It was derived directly from the times of primitive Christianity; from the Saviour himself and his disciples and friends, with whom they claimed to be connected by a secret tradition, or else from later prophets, of whom many sects boasted."

Granted this definition, John's opening words challenged the basic ideas of the sect:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . . That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you . . ." (1 John 1:1-3).

In view of the Gnostic claim to have gained certain knowledge from specially endowed "prophets," John's warning is significant.

"Many false prophets are gone out into the world" (Ch. 4:1).

Gnosticism has been defined by A. Plummer in the following terms:

"Gnosticism, although it often had much in common with Ebionism and Judaism, was not, like these, the open enemy of Christianity. It professed to give its approval and patronage to the gospel. The gospel was very good as far as it went; but the Gnostics had 'a more excellent way.' They understood the gospel better than the apostles themselves. It was a mistake to suppose that the historical facts and moral precepts of the Scriptures were to be taken literally. It was a still greater mistake to suppose that the Scriptures contained all that was necessary for man's spiritual well-being. There was a higher knowledge, a more profound gnosis; and this the Gnostic would attain to and impart. Illumined by this, men would see that everything else was comparatively of unimportance. The philosopher whose mind was enlightened by this esoteric knowledge need not trouble himself much about his conduct. He was steeped in light. Good actions could not seriously detract from it. Indeed, there were many things commonly

regarded as bad, which the true Gnostic would not shun, but seek, as a means of enlarging his experience."

The upshot of all this was the emergence of three basic errors.

1. Righteousness was of no account in comparison with intellectual illumination.

2. Scripture was of no account in comparison with a higher knowledge which partly transmuted and partly superseded it.

3. The work of atonement was lessened in significance, for there was no real evil in sin.

The Gnostic claimed that all matter was evil. This resulted in two theories.

1. If the human body is utterly evil, it must be subdued and chastened to the utmost, that the spirit may be freed from the burden of so vile an instrument (see Col. 2:18-21).

2. If the human body is utterly evil, it is a matter of indifference what it does; and so worthless an instrument may be made to commit any act from which the real man might derive additional experience and knowledge.

John countered these ideas, in the epistles before us. He wrote of how he had "handled" the "Word of life"; he warned of the evil effect of the error that claimed that Jesus had not "come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2); he exhorted the need of manifesting Divine qualities in the bodies we now possess, for true sonship of God is only predicated on such action.

#### AN APPENDIX TO THE GOSPEL

Though no name is appended to the Epistles, there is no doubting the style of writing and the theme of exposition. The Epistles, and particularly the first, are closely linked with the Gospel. Consider such expressions as the following:

"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

Many other similar expressions and statements occur (cp. John 21:24 with 1 John 3:2, 14; John 17:3 with 1 John 5:20; John 1:1 with 1 John 1:1), but perhaps the most significant, is John's constant use of the term, "little children" (1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). This occurs in a most tender connection in the Gospel, for it was used by Christ after Judas had left the upper room, and the Lord, seemingly with relief, turned to the remaining Apostles, and addressed them as "little children" (John 13:33). It is the only time the expression is used outside of the epistles of John and it seems as though John used it, because similar circumstances had developed in the ecclesias. As Jesus had used the term after Judas had left the company, so John used it for those who remained after others had left. He

reminded his readers:

**"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19).**

These errorists were like Judas, and followed the example of the traitor.

In writing of the love of God, of the relationship of believers one to another and to the Father, and of the influence of truth upon their lives, John was not merely combatting the error of Gnosticism, but also expounding upon the words of the Lord Jesus in the upper room, and immediately afterwards. The intercessory prayer of the Lord (John 17), which emphasises the divine name (v.6), the relationship of believers to the Father (v. 11), and the manifestation of Divine love (v. 26) is constantly brought to view in the Epistle, as are other features of the Gospel.

These, of course, will become obvious as we treat with the Epistle verse by verse.

#### JOHN'S STYLE OF EXPRESSION

John combines a simple, direct style of language, with great profundity of thought. There is no doubt as to the meaning of his words, and yet the ideas presented thereby are susceptible of deep analysis.

He is not afraid of repetition. To emphasise his point he will repeat it, and almost in the same words. He therefore shows that he recognises that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

The lofty principles set forth by God in His revelation require constant repetition before they are grasped; and as John gives himself specifically to emphasising the doctrine of God manifestation in flesh, he saw the need for constant recapitulation.

As one writer has stated:

**"His repetitions do not weary us, and they do leave their impression. The rhythm of his simple sentences charms the ear, fixes itself in the memory, and sooner or later finds its way home to the heart."**

He adopts a style that is similar to Hebrew poetry which does not depend upon rhyme or rhythm, but expresses the poetry of ideas, setting forth its principles in a form of parallelism. There are various forms of this including the complete and contrastive. In the former successive lines add or emphasise the thought originally expressed; in the latter, the words and ideas are contrasted. Note the effect produced by the repetition of "love" and "world," and their contrast one with the other in

such sentences as these:

*"Love not the world,  
Neither the things that are in the world.  
If any man love the world,  
The love of the Father is not in him."*

Consider the same effect produced by setting "the last hour" and "antichrist" in relation one with the other:

*"Little children, it is the last hour;  
And as ye heard that antichrist cometh,  
Even now have there arisen many antichrists;  
Whereby we know that it is the last hour."*

This is similar to the introverted form of Hebrew poetry that is so common in the Old Testament, in which the first line corresponds with the last, and so on moving towards the centre. Read those lines above in that order, and notice how the ideas are emphasised.

It is obvious that John was deeply moved by the spirit of the Psalms and Prophets where this style of language is so constantly used.

Finally, it is necessary to notice how John speaks with authority. He dictates a message, and expects it to be received without question. He is the shepherd speaking to the sheep whom he knows by name (3 John 14); he is the elder writing to the children, and instructing them in matters of belief and practise; he is the last of the Apostles, speaking authoritatively as from Christ.

As the sheep of this age, the "little children" of the present, the earnest followers of Christ who listen to the voice of his Apostles, we need to heed the warning words of John as he would guide us in matters that affect our eternal destiny. For did not Jesus say:

**"Neither pray I for these (Apostles) alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as Thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me" (John 17:20-21).**

It was to that end that John penned his epistles, and we should heed his message.

# *Analysis of John's First Epistle*

There are several methods by which the Bible can be studied. We can consider its use of words, topics, themes, characters, and so forth. There are also the telescopic and microscopic methods. The former takes the overall view of a section of the Bible; the latter examines it verse by verse. Both systems of study are recommended to fully understand matters of Divine revelation.

When the telescopic outline of a book of the Bible has been set out, the reader is able to instantly discern the context of a particular verse or statement, and is thereby better equipped to comprehend its meaning.

We herewith first apply ourselves to that form of study, before treating with John's Epistles verse by verse.

## **WHY THREE EPISTLES?**

The hand of Inspiration is not only apparent in the words of Scripture, but also in the very setting in which the various books of the Bible are placed. The Epistles of Paul, for example, are in proper sequence of thought, though not in chronological order (see *Notes On Romans* — Introduction). The poetical books of the Old Testament reveal the same principle. It is significant that the Old Testament ends with the words: "With a curse," and that the New Testament records the birth of him who was to bear the curse away.

There is design in this; it is not mere coincidence.

Can we discover a design in the three epistles of John?

We believe that there is one, and for that reason, the very intimate and personal epistles written to "the elect lady," and "the well beloved Gaius," have been retained in the canon of Scripture.

Here is our suggestion:

- 1 John — The Truth and the Ecclesia.
- 2 John — The Truth and the Home.
- 3 John — The Truth and the Individual.

The first epistle urges the Ecclesia to oppose error in its midst; the second epistle shows that the home should be closed against errorists; the third epistle reveals how individuals should resist those who set themselves up against Apostolic authority.

## **THE FOUR SEVENS**

In his first Epistle, John reveals seven tests whereby true discipleship is manifested; seven reasons for writing as he did; seven characteristics of a true believer; and seven contrasts be-

tween the truth and error.

He prefaces the seven tests of true discipleship with the words: "If we say . . ." or "he that saith . . ." (see I John 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9; 4:20). He emphasises that mere profession of discipleship is not enough, for it creates a hypocrite, and not a true follower of Jesus. He summarises the seven tests in the following manner:

1. False fellowship — not honest with others (Ch. 1:6).
2. False sanctity — not honest with oneself (Ch. 1:8).
3. False righteousness — not honest with Christ (Ch. 1:10).
4. False allegiance — not honest with God (Ch. 2:4).
5. False association — not honest with the world (Ch. 2:6).
6. False understanding — not honest with one's brethren (Ch. 2:9).
7. False love — not honest with anybody (Ch. 4:20).

The seven reasons for writing can be listed thus:

1. To declare things that he has seen (Ch. 1:3).
2. To increase their joy (Ch. 1:4).
3. To assist them to avoid sin (Ch. 2:1).
4. To remind them of their privileges (Ch. 2:13-17).
5. To warn them against false doctrine (Ch. 2:21-24).
6. To warn them against false teachers (Ch. 2:26).
7. To show their true relationship to life (Ch. 5:13).

He outlines seven characteristics of a true believer:

1. He practises righteousness (Ch. 2:29).
2. He avoids sin (Ch. 3:9).
3. He manifests love (Ch. 4:7).
4. He believes on Christ (Ch. 5:1).
5. He loves God (Ch. 5:1).
6. He overcomes the world (Ch. 5:4).
7. He remains consistent (Ch. 5:18).

Finally, John sets forth seven contrasts:

1. Light versus darkness (Ch. 1:5-2:11).
2. The Father versus the world (Ch. 2:12-17).
3. Christ versus antichrist (Ch. 2:18-28).
4. Right versus wrong (Ch. 2:29-3:24).
5. Truth versus error (Ch. 4:1-6).
6. Love versus hypocrisy (Ch. 4:7-21).
7. The God-begotten versus the fleshly (Ch. 5:1-21).

The teaching of the Epistle is therefore taught in clear, distinct language, plainly setting forth the challenge of truth, and the uncompromising demands of a true love of God.

## THE EPISTLE AS AN APPENDIX TO THE GOSPEL

John indicates that his Epistle is supplementary to the Gospel which the believers already had received (Ch. 2:12-14; 5:13). Throughout his epistle, words and phrases identical with those found in the Gospel, constantly occur. The following list indicates how complete is this connection, though it is by no means exhaustive. The reader is recommended to study this matter further, with the aid of a Concordance. Much personal benefit will result, and a deeper appreciation of the Apostle's arguments, both in the Gospel and Epistles, will be obtained. All references quoted are from John's Gospel.

### CHAPTER ONE

- V. 1 "Beginning" - 1:1, 2.  
 "Heard" - 8:47.  
 "Seen" - 1:14.  
 "Handled" - 20:27.  
 "Word of life" - 5:26.  
 V. 2 "The life" - 14:6.  
 "Bear witness" - 15:27; 21:24.  
 "Eternal life" - 17:3.  
 "With the Father" - 1:2, 18.  
 V. 3 "That which" - 17:25.  
 "Fellowship" - 14:20-23.  
 "Declare we" - 17:20.  
 V. 4 "Joy" - 17:13.  
 V. 5 "Light" - 1:5, 8, 9; 8:12.  
 "Darkness" - 3:19-21.  
 V. 6 "Walk in darkness" - 3:19-21; 11:10; 12:35, 46.  
 "Lie" - 8:44-45.  
 "Do not" - 3:20-21.  
 V. 7 "Walk in light" - 12:35.  
 "Fellowship" - 12:36.  
 "Blood of Jesus" - 1:29.  
 V. 8 "Deceive ourselves" - 7:47.  
 V. 9 "Faithful and just" - 8:46.  
 "Cleanse us" - 1:29.  
 V. 10 "A liar" - 8:55.  
 "Word not in us" - 5:38.

### CHAPTER TWO

- V. 1 "Little children" - 13:33.  
 "Ye sin not" - 5:14.  
 "An advocate" - 14:16.  
 "With the Father" - 5:17; 16:10; 20:17.  
 "The righteous" - 8:46.  
 V. 2 "Whole world" - 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 11:51-52.

- V. 3 "Know him" - 17:3.  
 "Keep his commandments" - 14:15, 21; 15:10.  
 V. 4 "Liar" - 8:44, 55.  
 V. 5 "Keepeth his word" - 14:23.  
 "Love perfected" - 17:23.  
 "In him" - 6:56; 15:5.  
 V. 6 "Abideth" - 15:4.  
 "Walk" - 8:12; 13:15.  
 V. 7 "Commandment" - 15:12.  
 V. 8 "New commandment" - 13:34.  
 "Darkness past" - 12:46.  
 "True light" - 1:9; 8:12; 12:35.  
 V. 9 "In darkness" - 3:20; 9:41.  
 V. 10 "Light" - 12:46.  
 "Loveth his brother" - 13:35.  
 "Occasion of stumbling" - 11:9-10.  
 V. 11 "Walketh in darkness" - 12:35.  
 "Blinded their eyes" - 12:40.  
 V. 12 "Little children" - 13:33.  
 "Sins forgiven" - 13:10.  
 V. 13 "Ye have known him" - 8:19; 14:7; 17:3.  
 "From the beginning" - 1:1.  
 "Known the Father" - 8:54-55.  
 V. 14 "The word abideth" - 5:38; 8:31; 15:7.  
 "Overcome the wicked one" - 17:15.  
 V. 15 "Love not" - 7:7.  
 "If any love the world" - 16:8.

- V. 16 "The world . . . not of the Father" - 17:15-16.  
 V. 17 "The world passeth" - 12:31.  
 "Abideth forever" - 4:14; 6:58; 10:28-30.  
 V. 18 "Little Children" - 21:5.  
 "Last time" - 12:31-32; 10:16.  
 V. 19 "They went out" - 13:30.  
 V. 20 "Unction" - 14:16-17.  
 "Ye know" - 14:26.  
 V. 21 "Know the Truth" - 8:32.  
 V. 22 "Liar" - 8:44.  
 "Father and Son" - 17:3.  
 V. 23 "Denieth the Son" - 5:23; 8:19; 15:23-24.  
 V. 24 "Abide" - Jn. 15:7.  
 "Continue in the Son and the Father" - 14:23.  
 V. 25 "Eternal life" - 5:39; 6:27, 47, 54, 65; 10:28; 12:50; 17:2-3.  
 V. 26 "Seduce" - 16:1-3.  
 V. 27 "Anointing" - 14:16-17.  
 "Any man teach" - 6:45.  
 "Truth" - Jn. 6:63; 8:32.  
 "Abide in him" - 15:4.  
 V. 28 "Little children" - 13:33.  
 "Abide in him" - 14:2.  
 "When he shall appear" - 14:3.  
 "Confidence" - 17:22.  
 V. 29 "Righteous" - 17:25.  
 "Born of him" - 1:13; 3:3-5.



**CHAPTER THREE**

- V. 1 "What manner of love" - 3:16.  
 "Sons of God" - 1:12.  
 "The world" - 15:18-19; 16:3; 17:25.
- V. 2 "Sons of God" - 1:12.  
 "We shall see him" - 17:24.
- V. 3 "Purifieth himself" - 17:19.
- V. 4 "Committeth sin" - 8:34.
- V. 5 "Manifested to take away sins" - 1:29, 31.  
 "No sin" - 8:46.
- V. 6 "Abideth" - 15:4-7.  
 "Sinneth not" - 8:34-35.
- V. 7 "Little children" - 13:33.  
 "Doeth righteousness" - 8:39.
- V. 8 "Of the devil" - 8:44.
- V. 9 "Born of God" - 1:13; 8:42.
- V. 10 "Children of God and of the devil" - 8:33-47.
- V. 11 "The message" - 13:34-35; 15:12.
- V. 12 "Cain, of the wicked one" - 8:44.
- V. 13 "Marvel not" - 15:18-19; 16:2, 33; 17:14.
- V. 14 "From death to life" - 5:24.  
 "Because" - 13:35; 15:12, 17.
- V. 15 "Murderer" - 8:44.  
 "Eternal life abiding in him" - 4:14.
- V. 16 "Perceive we the love" - 3:16; 10:15; 15:13.  
 "And we" - 13:34; 15:12-13.
- V. 17 "And seeth his brother have need" - 13:35.
- V. 18 "Little children" - 13:33.  
 "In deed and in truth" - 13:34.
- V. 19 "Of the truth" - 18:37.
- V. 20 "If our heart condemn" - 8:9.  
 "God is greater" - 10:29-30.  
 "Knoweth all things" - 2:24-25; 21:17.
- V. 21.
- V. 22 " whatsoever we ask" - 14:13; 15:7; 16:23-29.  
 "Because we keep" - 15:10.  
 "And do" - 9:31.

- V. 23 "Ye should believe" - 6:29; 14:1; 17:3.  
 "Love one another" - 13:34; 15:12.
- V. 24 "Keepeth his commandments" - 14:15, 21-23; 15:10.  
 "Dwelleth" - 6:56.  
 "The Spirit" - 14:17-18.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

- V. 1 "Many false prophets" - 16:2.
- V. 2 "Every spirit" - 16:13-15.  
 "Come in the flesh" - 1:14.
- V. 3 "AntiChrist" - 16:3.  
 "Ye have heard that it should come" - 16:4.
- V. 4 "Ye are of God" - 1:12; 8:42.  
 "Greater is He" - 10:29; 14:17, 23; 17:23.  
 "He that is in the world" - 8:44.
- V. 5 "Of the world" - 8:23.  
 "The world heareth them" - 15:19.
- V. 6 "We are of God" - 1:12; 8:23, 42; 15:19; 17:16.  
 "Heareth us" - 8:47; 18:37.  
 "Spirit of truth" - 8:32; 14:17; 15:26.
- V. 7 "Love one another" - 13:34-35, 15:12-17.  
 "Love is of God" - 5:42; 8:42; 14:23; 17:26.  
 "Born of God" - 1:12; 3:4, 6.
- V. 8 "Knoweth not God" - 7:28; 8:19, 55.
- V. 9 "In this was manifested" - 3:16.  
 "God sent" - 3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 17:3, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21.  
 "Only begotten son" - 1:14-18; 3:18.  
 "That we might live" - 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24-40; 6:27-68; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25-26; 14:6.
- V. 10 "Not that we loved" - 15:16.  
 "He loved us" - 3:16.  
 "Propitiation" - 1:29.
- V. 11 "We ought to love" - 13:34; 15:12.
- V. 12 No man hath

seen God" - 1:18.  
 "God dwelleth" - 14:23; 17:23.

"His love perfected" - 17:23.

- V. 13 "Hereby know we" - 14:20-24.

"Given us of His spirit" - 14:26.

- V. 14 "Seen and testify" - 20:30-31.

"Savior" - 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 12:47.

- V. 15 "Shall confess Jesus is Son of God"

1:49; 3:16-18, 35-36; 5:19-26; 6:69;

8:35-36; 9:35; 10:36;

11:4; 14:13; 17:1; 19:7; 20:31.

Cp. 9:22; 12:42.  
 "God dwelleth" - 14:17, 23.

"He in God" - 17:21.

- V. 16 "We have known" - 17:25-26.

- V. 17 "Love made perfect" - 17:23, 26.

"Boldness in judgment" - 5:22-23, 27.

"Because" - 15:20; 17:14-16.

- V. 18 "Perfect love" - 14:23.

- V. 19 "He first loved" - 3:16; 15:16.

- V. 20 "And hateth" - 13:35.

"A liar" - 8:44.  
 "How can he love God" - 13:20.

- V. 21 "The commandment" - 13:34-35; 15:12.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

- V. 1 "Whosoever believeth" - 1:12; 3:16;

36; 6:69; 9:35, 38;

8:24; 11:27; 14:1;

17:20; 19:35; 20:31.

"Born of God" - 1:12; 12:36.

"Loveth the begotten" - 8:42; 15:23.

- V. 2 "By this" - 13:34-35.

"Keep the commandments" - 14:15, 21; 15:10.

- V. 3 "This is the love of God" - 14:21-24; 15:10-14.

- V. 4 "Overcometh the world" - 15:18-19;

16:33; 17:14-16.

"The victory" - 20:29-31.

- V. 5 "He that believeth" - 3:15-16, 18, 36;

5:24; 6:35, 40, 47; 11:25-26.

V. 6 "Water" - 1:31-32; 3:5; 4:10, 14; 7:38-39.  
 "Blood" - 6:55.  
 "Spirit beareth witness" - 1:33.  
 "Spirit is truth" - 6:63; 7:39; 14:17; 15:26; 16:13.  
 V. 7 "Bear record" - 8:13-14.  
 V. 8 "Spirit" - cp. v. 6.  
 "Water" - cp. v. 6.  
 "Blood" - 19:34-35.  
 V. 9 "If we receive witness of men" - Jn. 5:34-36; 8:17.  
 "Witness of God is greater" - 5:31-37; 8:18.  
 God hath testified of His Son" - 5:36; 12:28.  
 V. 10 "Witness in himself" - 5:38.  
 "He that believeth not God" - 1:11; 3:33.  
 "Believeth not the record" - 5:36-47; 21:

24-25.  
 V. 11 "Eternal life" - 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 6:40, 47, 68; 10:28; 12:50; 17:3.  
 "Life in the Son" - 1:4, 14; 5:21, 26; 11:25-26; 14:6.  
 "Hath not the Son" - Jn. 5:40.  
 V. 12 "Hath life" - 1:12; 3:36; 5:24.  
 V. 13 "Have I written" - 20:31; 21:24.  
 "That believe" - 1:12; 3:18.  
 "Ye have eternal life" - 17:3.  
 V. 14 "If we ask" - 14:13; 15:7; 16:24.  
 "He heareth" - 9:31; 11:42.  
 V. 15 "We know" - 14:13-14.  
 V. 16 "A sin unto death" - 17:12.  
 "Pray" - 17:9.  
 V. 17.  
 V. 18 "Whosoever" - 1:13.

"Keepeth himself" - 8:31-32.  
 "Wicked one" - 8:44.  
 V. 19 "Of God" - 1:12; 6:46; 8:42.  
 "World in wickedness" - 12:31; 16:8; 17:15.  
 V. 20 "We know" - 20:31; 21:24.  
 "Given understanding" - 17:3, 14.  
 "We may know" - 7:28-29; 8:55.  
 "Him that is true" - 3:33; 7:28; 8:26; 17:3.  
 "In him" - 14:20, 23; 17:21.  
 "In His son" - 14:6, 20-23; 15:4-7; 17:21.  
 "The true God" - 5:18-19; 6:46; 8:16; 10:30-38; 14:7-9.  
 "Eternal life" - 17:3.  
 V. 21 "Little children" - 13:33.  
 "Keep yourself from idols" - 12:25.

## THEME STUDIES

The Epistle is particularly rich in theme studies, for John is constantly contrasting ideas, or using words in particular relationships. The careful student of the Word will find great pleasure in developing these themes. As an indication of what might be done, we have outlined some themes on subsequent pages, and suggest that the reader extend the idea incorporating other subjects.

### ERROR OPPOSED

In the Epistle, John rejects the claims of errorists, and reveals the fallacy of the following contentions:

\* That we can walk in darkness and have fellowship (1:6) \* That sin is not inherent (1:8) \* That sin can be glossed over (1:10) \* That we can experimentally know Him without obeying Him (2:4) \* That we can abide in Christ, yet walk inconsistently (2:6) \* That fleshly hate is consistent with walking in Light (2:9) \* That disunity is consistent with Christ (2:18-19) \* That true fellowship can be maintained in face of a denial of the relationship of the Father and Son (2:22; 5:1, 10) \* That righteousness does not require works (3:7) \* That Jesus Christ did not come in human nature (4:3) \* That we can know God and refuse Apostolic teaching (4:6) \* That Love of God permits the exercise of fleshly hate. (4:20).

### ETERNAL LIFE

\* Promised in Christ (2:25) \* It is a gift of God on conditions (5:11) \* Christ is the Word of Life (1:1) \* He manifested eternal life, which is an attribute of God (1:2) \* Proclaimed by the Apostles (1:2) \* Only attained in Christ (5:12) \* By belief in him (5:13) \* This life can be obtained even in spite of sin (5:16) \* It is obtained only through a knowledge of the Father and Son (5:20) \* Believers have passed from a relation to death to one of life (3:14) \* They must sacrifice natural life to attain eternal life (3:16).

See pp. 22, 41, 65, 73 and 78 for further Theme Studies.

# The First Epistle of John

## THE TRUTH AND THE ECCLESIA

### THE UNCOMPROMISING DEMANDS OF TRUE LOVE

*In which the requirements of the Truth are contrasted with the attitude of Errorists.*

#### 1. INTRODUCTION: WHY THE EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN — Ch. 1:1-4

1. The Truth Has Been Plainly Revealed ... .. vv. 1-2.
2. Joy Is Fulfilled In Complete Fellowship Therewith ... .. vv. 3-4.

#### 2. GOD IS LIGHT — Ch. 1:5-2:29.

1. Fellowship Is Predicated Upon Walking In Light ... .. vv. 5-7.
2. Light Reveals Sin And Leads To Confession ... .. vv. 8-10.
3. This Emphasises The Need To Imitate Christ ... .. Ch. 2:1-6.
4. Love Is The Test Of An Enlightened Walk ... .. vv. 7-11.
5. Why Love Should Be Manifested ... .. vv. 12-14.
6. A Love That Must Be Avoided ... .. vv. 15-17.
7. Warning Against The Antichrist Of Darkness ... .. vv. 18-23.
8. An Exhortation To Abide in Truth ... .. vv. 24-29.

#### 3. GOD IS LOVE — Chapters 3, 4

1. God's Love Has Drawn Us To Sonship ... .. Ch. 3:1-3.
2. Divine Sonship Is Incompatible With Sin ... .. vv. 4-9.
3. True Sonship Is Predicated On Action ... .. vv. 10-15.
4. Love Defined ... .. vv. 16-17.
5. How Love Begets Confidence ... .. vv. 18-24.
6. Love Necessitates The Repudiation of Error ... .. Ch. 4:1-6.
7. True Love Originates Only From God ... .. vv. 7-10.
8. Love Should Be Manifested Towards Others ... .. vv. 11-16.
9. Love Will Reap Its Reward At The Judgment ... .. vv. 17-21.

#### 4. GOD IS LIFE — Chapter 5.

1. The New Life Is Begotten Of God ... .. Ch. 5:1-5.
2. The New Life Is Revealed Through Christ ... .. vv. 6-12.
3. The New Life Will Be Crowned With Eternal Life ... .. vv. 13-15.
4. The New Life Can Be Strengthened through Prayer ... .. vv. 16-17.
5. The Confidence Of Proper Living ... .. vv. 18-21.

# Verse by Verse Exposition

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### WHY THE EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN

(Chapter 1:1-4)

*The Epistle is an appendix to the Gospel. It takes hold of the very expressions used in the latter, and applies them under pressure of the false doctrines being taught at that time. Thus, whereas the Gospel of John emphasises the principle of God manifestation in the Lord Jesus, the Epistle asserts the reality of Christ's humanity, or flesh. The errorists denied that Christ came in the flesh (Ch. 4:2), but the Apostle countered by asserting the tangible reality of that one whom they had seen, considered, and handled.*

**The Truth Has Been Plainly Revealed** — vv. 1-2.

*John reveals that there is no shadow of doubt in the reality and tangibility of Christ's person.*

#### VERSE 1

**"That which was from the beginning"** — "That" is neuter gender, and therefore indicates inanimate things hidden with the Father, but since manifested by Christ.

**"Which we have heard"** — This relates to a Divine wisdom. Jesus disclaimed that the doctrine he preached originated from himself, and taught that it came from God (John 7:16; 8:47). Obviously the doctrine of the Trinity is wrong, for otherwise, he would have identified this doctrine as his own.

**"Which we have seen"** — John, as the last of the Apostles, represented them all, and explains how that they had seen Divine works, to supplement the Divine wisdom of Christ. (John 5:36; Acts 2:22). These were works that God did through Christ. Such power was with God from the beginning, long before it was manifested in the Lord Jesus.

**"Which we have looked upon"**

—The word "looked" is *theaomai* in the Greek, and signifies "to contemplate earnestly with regard and admiration" (Bullinger). From this word is derived the English word "theatre." The Apostles had "looked upon" or "earnestly beheld" the Divine ways or character as it was revealed in the Lord, and therefore saw God manifest in the flesh (John 6:38; 17:6; 1 Tim. 3:16).

**"Our hands have handled"** — The previous expressions could be related to the Lord Jesus before his resurrection, but this is obviously a reference to the post-resurrectional Lord who invited the Apostles to "handle him" and see for themselves (Luke 24:39; John 20:27). They saw his glory the glory of the "word made flesh," of the "only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The word translated "handled" is *pselaphao* and signifies "to handle with a view to investigation," especially "to grope like a blind man, or as in the dark." In the Lxx it is found in Gen. 27:22, which records that Isaac "felt" Jacob, to prove that he was really Esau! John is thus proving that the risen Lord was in a body as real and tangible as that which

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

he had before he died. This is denied by Jehovah's Witnesses who would find themselves in the category of those whom John condemned as errorists.

**"Of"** — This is the Greek preposition, *peri*, signifying 'concerning.' The Lord was the word of life made flesh. *Peri* being in the genitive case governs the significance of the phrase "the Word of (the — Greek) life," to mean: "The Word who is the Life." This endorses the Lord's own comment: "I am the life" (John 14:6). In this verse John describes what he handled with a view to investigation. This was the resurrected body of the Lord, then a body of life, and no longer mortal. In the body of the resurrected Lord he saw a nature never before revealed to man.

### VERSE 2

**"For the life was manifested"** — What life is this? Obviously that life which was revealed through the body that the Apostles handled: eternal life, which was originally with the Father, for it constitutes an element of Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), but was manifested for the first time in a member of the human race, in the person of the Lord Jesus, the Word made flesh.

**"Shew unto you"** — The word in the Greek is *apaggelo*, "to bring tidings." This was, the theme of apostolic witness (Acts 1:8).

**"Eternal life"** — This is shown to be Divine in its origination, and as forming the basis of Apostolic hope (Titus 1:2). John declares that it has been promised unto believers (1 John 2:25). As it is a matter of hope (cp. Rom. 8:24-25) and promise, it is not at present possessed by believers, except in that sense. John, indeed, says that "ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13), but it is only a present possession because it is promised of God, Who cannot lie, and Who "speaks of those things that be not as though they are"

(Rom. 4:17). If we fulfil the conditions set down, eternal life is a certainty, though we do not possess it at the moment. But what are we to make of such statements as: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God" (John 17:3)? Such expressions can signify: This is the basis upon which life eternal will be granted. The same form of expression is used in such places as John 3:19: "This is condemnation . . ." (it is the basis of condemnation); John 6:29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe . . ." (rather, this is the basis by which the work of God is performed); John 12:50: "His commandment is life everlasting . . ." (or, obedience to His commandment is the basis upon which life eternal will be granted). Eternal life is divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and is not only an element of the Father, but the objective that He set before Himself for His children. Thus it was part of God, and that which He desired to see bestowed upon His children.

**"With the Father"** — "With" is *pros* with the accusative case, thus signifying "before" or "facing" the Father, with motion towards Him, thus gravitating towards the Father. Eternal life, or Divine Nature, is not only the objective that God has in store for those who obey Him, but the ultimate means whereby they will be completely drawn to Him, so as to constitute them "one" with Him (John 17:21). This hope of eternal life, was formerly but an abstract principle, but became a reality in Christ.

The message of John is that since the believer is called to be a partaker of this nature and life, it is necessary that he reveal the ethical and spiritual qualities consistent with it, as revealed by the Father. Thus even the hope of eternal life, draws one towards (*pros* — flows toward) the Father (John 17:3).

**"Was manifested unto us"** — In

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

the person of the risen and glorified Christ.

### Joy is Fulfilled In Complete Fellowship Therewith — Vv. 3-4

*John re-affirms truths he has already declared unto the believers, that they might have confidence in that which they had espoused, and that their joy might be full.*

#### VERSE 3

**“That which we have seen and heard”** — The personal evidence of eyes and ears is contrasted with the theories of errorists who lack the credentials of the Apostle.

**“Declare we unto you”** — John does not limit this expression to the things contained in his Epistle, but relates them also to those found in his Gospel (John 17:20), by which fellowship might be had with the Father and Son (John 17:21).

**“Fellowship”** — The word in the Greek is *koinonia* and signifies “sharing in common,” from *koinos*, “common.” John would share with all believers, his knowledge of what he had seen, heard, and handled.

**“With us”** — “With” is *meta* in Greek, and signifies partnership. He would share in a common partnership his knowledge concerning the Christ. This “fellowship” and “partnership” is founded upon a common acceptance of revealed truth relating to God and His purpose.

**“Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His son, Jesus Christ”** — Here, again, “with” is *meta*, signifying “partnership.”

#### VERSE 4

**“And these things write we unto you”** — By “these things,” the Apostle signifies all the things he has disclosed to them, both in his Gospel as well as in this Epistle. He here gives his first reason for writing: “That your joy may be full.”

**“That your joy may be full”** — The Revised Version changes “your joy” to “our joy.” It is a joy that the Apostle shared in common with the believers. The joy relates to the pleasure experienced in true fellowship one with the other. See the use of the term in John 17:13; and the appeal of Paul in 1 Thess. 5:16.

## Theme Study

### SIN

\* Inherent in flesh (1:8) \* Must be acknowledged (1:9-10) \* Must be avoided or forgiven (2:1) \* Forgiven for Christ's sake (2:12) \* Christ is the propitiation for all sins (2:2) \* Cleansed from sin by Christ (1:7) \* A definition of sin as Lawlessness (3:4) \* The lack of the habitual sinner (3:6) \* The begotten of God do not sin (3:9) \* Degrees of sin (5:16) \* Another definition of sin (5:17) \* Attitude of the begotten towards all sin (5:18) \* Attitude of the world (5:19).

# God is Light

(Chapter 1:5 - 2:29)

*This is the first main division of the Epistle. It affirms that God is Light, and in so doing, lays the foundation for all that follows. Without light, there cannot be love, and without love there would not be the promise of life. Thus, in proper sequence, John declares that God is Light, God is Love, and God is Life.*

*He declared that God is Light, not that God is the Light. Grammarians claim that the absence of the definite article in such a statement as that stresses quality, nature, or essence, so that what John taught was that God as to His very nature, essence and character is Light. Other writers declare that He is the Father of lights (James 1:17), the Possessor of light (1 Peter 2:9), the Dweller in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16), but John goes further, and states that He is Light itself.*

*If God dwells corporeally in the heavens as a Being of Light, His children on earth must reflect that Light, being begotten by it.*

*Light creates, makes manifest, and conquers. It creates, because it causes life to spring forth; it makes manifest, because its searching rays penetrate everywhere; it conquers, because darkness ceases to be in its presence. Thus it is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent. And so also is God.*

*Light speaks of eternity, for whereas darkness limits, light is limitless. We might stand on a plain that is one hundred miles in diameter, but if it is night-time, and the moon (the reflector of the light of the sun) be not shining, we will be closely walled in by a darkness that will imprison us. But let the light of the sun appear, and the limitless distance will be exposed to our view; the immensity of the plain will spread out before us as far as the eye can see.*

*Light is active, but darkness is passive. Light penetrates, and completely destroys darkness. Darkness can only exist where light is absent.*

*Light is a revelator. It reveals the true shape of things, and brings out hidden beauty, by giving color and form to that about us. We see the beauty of light shining in the dewdrop, sparkling on the waters of the running brook, reflected from a million gems on the blue surface of the mighty deep.*

*Light is health-giving. Without light there could be no life, and where it is shut out true health languishes. It is anti-septic, for it purifies and heals.*

*Light is warming and cheering. How pleasant are the*

caressing rays of the sun! How mankind responds to the cheering influence of the bright light of a clear, sunny day! People are drawn from the shelter of their homes to bask in its cheering rays. It calls both rich and poor to its bounty "without money and without price."

Light gives hope and joy. Nothing ever seems so hopeless when the sun is shining. "Joy cometh in the morning," sang the Psalmist (Ps. 30:5). "I will sing of Thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of Thy mercy in the morning" (Ps. 59:16). "My soul waiteth for Yahweh more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning" (Ps. 130:6).

Light shone in the homes of the Israelites, from the God of Light, when darkness reigned in Egyptian dwellings (Exod. 10:23); there was a pillar of fire to give them light in the midst of the darkness of the night (Exod. 14:20); there was the lampstand of light in the holy place to emphasise to the people that they should "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).

Isaiah appealed to the people to "walk in the light of Yahweh" (Isa. 2:5), for, as the Psalmist declared, "Yahweh is light and salvation" (Ps. 27:1), "light and truth" (Ps. 43:3), "covering Himself with light as with a garment" (Ps. 104:2), "showing His light" unto the redeemed (Ps. 118: 27).

His law is described as light (Prov. 6:23), and the path of the just as "a shining light" (Prov. 4:18). Thus the mission of the Apostles was to turn people from "the power of darkness unto light" (Acts 26:23), so that they might be "light in the Lord" (Eph 5:8), being "children of light" (Eph. 5:13-14; 1 Thess. 5:5).

To that end, Christ came as the manifestation of Light (John 1:5, 7, 8, 9; 3:19-21), for he was "God manifest in flesh." He proclaimed himself to be the Light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5; 12:35-36, 46), though, for a time, that Light was encased in a body of flesh. Now, however, it is manifested through a body of glory (Phil. 3:21), whose radiant presence will one day destroy the forces of darkness that meanwhile enshroud the earth (2 Thess. 1:7-10), when he shall be "glorified in his saints."

These ideas are conjured up in the declaration of John that "God is light." But it is not sufficient to have light; we must have an organ adapted to its use. What is the use of a bright light to a blind man? It matters not how brightly it shines, it does not benefit him. Moreover, even when the eye has sight it must be correctly focussed, otherwise the vision will be distorted or blurred. When the natural eye is healthy, it brings all things into correct perspective, and the actions of the body can be regulated accordingly. In similar manner, when the mental eye is sound, the spiritual vision will be clear (Matt. 6:22-23). The



Lord Jesus exhorted: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Light is used in the Bible as a symbol for several divine things. The symbol of the Ecclesia is the moon, which has no light of itself, but reflects the light of the sun. The symbol of Christ, the manifestation of Yahweh, is that of the Sun of righteousness with healing in his beams (Mal. 4:1-2). The symbol of the coming age of glory is that of "the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds" (2 Sam. 23:4; Isa. 60:1). That Sun is the Sun of righteousness, whose illuminating, penetrating, purifying rays will flood the political, religious and social world with light to the glory of Yahweh and the wellbeing of man. It will then be acknowledged on all sides, that God is Light.

#### **Fellowship Is Predicated Upon Walking In Light — Vv. 5-7**

God is a Being of Light. The significance of that statement is illustrated by the influence of light in nature. To qualify as God's sons, believers must reflect that light, which, therefore, provides the basis of true fellowship.

#### **VERSE 5**

"God is light" — See introductory note.

"In Him is no darkness at all" — James describes God as "the Father of lights" with whom "there is no variability, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). In so describing God, he was using a scientific fact which was not generally known by the world of science of his day. To man it appears that the sun has movement that produces variations in the seasons such as summer and winter, and shadow of turning in forming day and night. But, in fact, the sun is constant in its shining, and these variations arise entirely from our situation in regard to it. When we experience night, it seems as though the sun has ceased to shine; when it is winter, it appears as though it lacks strength. But, in fact, it is the earth's position in relation to the Sun that causes these changes, not the strength or constancy of the sun's shining. So it is with our associations with Yahweh. Trials and

temptations are not indications that He has turned His face from us or forsaken us. John supplies the true affirmative and negative: God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all. He is always "shining," and we can always turn to Him in prayer to receive the warmth of His presence. Because God is light, fellowship with Him must be based on light. He cannot fellowship darkness, any more than darkness can continue where the sun is shining. See 1 John 1:8; 2:4, 23, 27; 3:6; 4:2, 3, 6-8; 5:12.

#### **VERSE 6**

"If we say" — This is the first of the seven tests of genuine discipleship that John postulates. He establishes the principle that fellowship is conditional upon walking in light; and declares that if we claim fellowship but walk in darkness we are not honest with others.

"We have fellowship with Him" — To claim fellowship with God, we must identify ourselves with His revelation in doctrine and practice, on the principle that, "Ye shall be holy: for I, Yahweh your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:2; 20:7, 26). The world repudiates that principle. Jesus declared: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil... But he that doeth truth cometh

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:19-21).

**"And walk in darkness"** — To walk in darkness is to walk according to the dictates of the flesh unenlightened by the truth of God.

**"We lie, and do not the truth"** — We are false in both word and deed, and our fate is described in such references as Rev. 21:27; 22:15.

### VERSE 7

**"If we walk in the light"** — If our actions conform to the Truth.

**"We have fellowship one with another"** — We are united together in belief and action, and are likewise united with God.

**"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son"** — See Acts 20:28; Rev. 7:14.

**"Cleanseth us from all sin"** — This is effected by the confession and forsaking of sin (see v. 9), in fulfilment of the promise of God (Ps. 65:3). See also Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 6:11; Tit. 2:14.

### Light Reveals Sin And Leads To Confession — Vv. 8-10

### VERSE 8

**"If we say"** — John advances a second test of genuine discipleship. It is possible to claim a false sanctity, in which we deceive ourselves. This stems from failing to recognise the true nature of flesh, by which we are shown to be not honest with ourselves. Notice, how these various tests reveal a deterioration of attitude. If we fail in the first test, we are proved to be liars; if we fail to pass the second test we are shown to be self-deceived; but if we fail the third test (v. 10) we make God a liar!

**"We have no sin"** — It is important to notice that John is referring to the individual who claims that he is not related to sin, not to the one who says that he has not sinned! The self-de-

ceived declare that they have "no sin," that is, that they are not related to sin in any sense. In the Greek, "sin" is in the singular number, and without the definite article. According to grammarians, when this happens in a context as the present, it relates to nature, and not to specific sins. The Diaglott renders the phrase: "If we say we have not sin..." Notice, that it does not render the statement as "If we say we have not sinned..." John is referring to those who delude themselves by failing to recognise the weakness of the flesh. The world does this when it speaks of the inherent goodness of flesh, of an inner light that reveals truth, or when it claims that the unenlightened conscience is competent to guide one in matters of conduct or belief. It is elementary to a walk in light to recognise the weakness of human nature, the evil tendency of flesh unenlightened by the Word, for such understanding will teach us to guard against it (see 2 John 7).

**"We deceive ourselves"** — The two basic doctrines of Scripture are the nature of flesh, and God manifest in the flesh. The former teaches us what we are; the latter reveals what we can become. If we fail to recognise the first, or to acknowledge the necessity of the second, we deceive ourselves.

### VERSE 9

**"If we confess our sins"** — The word "confess" is *homologeō* in Greek, from *homo*, "the same," and *logos*, "to say". Thus "to say the same thing," or to agree with another. In this context, it relates to acknowledging the reality of sins committed, by which we agree with God's estimate of our actions.

**"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins"** — In confessing our sins before God, we need to be frank and specific concerning them. Speak of them before Him, and seek His help in overcoming them. God has promised to for-

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

give sins and is both faithful and just in doing so, because He has provided the means of redemption that emphasises these attributes (see Rom. 3:23-26). In forgiving sins, God is faithful because He has made good His promise to do so which He proclaimed at the beginning of creation (Gen. 3:15); He is just because the terms of redemption emphasise that principle (Rom. 3:23-26).

When such are committed we must seek the forgiveness of God, and the strength to forsake them. The power to do so comes from the Word which is Yahweh's medium for cleansing.

**"And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** — In his Epistle, John provides two definitions of sin. The first is lawlessness (1 John 3:4), the second is unrighteousness, or wrong-doing (1 John 5:17). The truly begotten of God never commit the former, but they are guilty of the latter. However, Yahweh can cleanse them from the latter through the influence of His word (see Psalm 119:9; John 15:3; 17:7).

### VERSE 10

**"If we say"** — John advances the third test of genuine discipleship. The first revealed a false fellowship (v. 6), the second a false sanctity (v. 8), and now a false righteousness. In v. 8 he made mention of some who denied the fact of inherent sin; here he refers to some who do not acknowledge the reality of sin committed. They deny the fact of sin in action, even though they commit it. Like the adulterous woman of Proverbs 30:20, who wipes away external traces of her guilt and boldly declares, "I have done no wickedness," so some justify sinful actions and claim they are not sin.

**"We make Him a liar"** — To justify sin and repudiate its reality, is itself a sin of the greatest enormity, for it makes God a liar.

**"His word is not in us"** — The type of person referred to may

have an academic knowledge of the word, but the word is not in them as a living dynamic force (see John 5:38; 12:48).

## CHAPTER 2

**Light Reveals The Need To Imitate Christ — Vv. 1-6.**

### VERSE 1

**"My little children"** — John writes from the standpoint of "an elder," the last of the Apostles, and he addresses his readers with the tender expression of affection and endearment, rather than that which is indicative of immaturity and lack of growth. They had been given into his care, and he treats them as a father would his children. The words "little children" are a translation of *Teknia* which signifies a child, and is related to *tikto*, "to give birth to." It therefore emphasises that believers are children by birth, the new birth into Christ. In addition, John uses another word (cp. v. 13) that emphasises children by instruction rather than birth, and both words are significant as indicating the relationship of believers to the Father.

*Teknia* is an expression that John uses frequently (vv. 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), and one which he borrowed from Christ. See Introduction. The Lord used it to address the Apostles who remained after Judas had left the little company in the upper room (John 13:33). Now again there had been defectors who had left the company of believers (1 John 2:19), and John, recalling the expression of the Lord at that tragic moment when Judas left, used it to address those who remained, gently seeking to strengthen them in the face of trials that would test them. John is both patient and considerate, a contrast to his attitude when, as the Son of Thunder (Mark 3:17), he called upon Christ to pray for the destruction of the Samaritans (Luke 9:54-56).

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

### "These things write I unto you"

—This is the third reason given for writing (see Analysis). Previously he stated that he wrote. (1) — To declare things he had personally seen (Ch. 1:3); (2) — That their mutual joy might be full in the reaffirming of truth (Ch. 1:4). The third reason is now given: That they might avoid sin.

"That ye sin not" — John has already instructed them that they must walk in Light. What, then, did that Light reveal? It revealed that flesh is inherently sinful (Ch. 1:8), that acts of wrong-doing are inevitable (Ch. 1:10), but that forgiveness and cleansing from such are available in Christ (Ch. 1:9). Now he warns against presuming upon this. Some might reason that they could walk in light (i.e. with an academic understanding of truth), and yet sin with impunity placing confidence in the forgiveness that would be freely granted in Christ. Paul had already warned against this false philosophy (Rom. 6:1), and now John does likewise. He exhorts his readers to avoid sin by manifesting the way of Light in action, though he comforts them with the knowledge that if they do sin, they have an Advocate with the Father through whom they can plead forgiveness.

### "An Advocate with the Father"

— The word "Advocate" is *parakletos* in the Greek, and literally signifies "to call to one's side" or to one's aid, thus a helper. In Greek usage, *parakletos* related to a witness called to one's assistance in a law case, an advocate called in to plead a cause, or a person called in to instil encouragement in a company of depressed and dispirited men (such as a company of soldiers facing a dangerous and difficult consignment). Jesus Christ is all this to those who approach the Father through him. In John 14:16, the same word is translated "Comforter," and it is related to the Spirit of Truth. Originally, the

word "comforter" came from the word *fortis* meaning "brave." Thus Jesus, in speaking of the difficult and dangerous mission before the Apostles, promised that he would provide them with a means of help that would fortify and encourage them. That Advocate, even the Spirit of Truth, is still available to us through the words of the Apostles (see John 17:20-22), so that we have both an earthly and an heavenly Advocate: The Spirit of Truth and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Truth assists us in our approach to the Father, for it helps us to filter prayer so that it conforms to His will (Rom. 8:26), and such prayers are presented by Christ at the right hand of God (v.34). Thus the Spirit of Truth (our earthly Advocate) moves us to approach God in prayer, and the prayer is presented by Christ (our heavenly Advocate). Paul sums this up in Ephesians 2:18: "For through him (Christ our heavenly Advocate) we both have access by one Spirit (the Truth — our earthly Advocate — 1 John 5:6) unto the Father."

### "Jesus Christ the righteous"

— The Anointed Jesus rendered perfect obedience to the Father, even unto death, and this constituted him righteous (Rom. 3:23-26), and ensured his resurrection to life eternal (Acts 2:24; Heb. 13:20). None could convict him of sin (John 8:46), and this makes him an effective Advocate for us (Rom. 4:25).

## VERSE 2

"He is the propitiation" — The Greek word is *hilasmos*, which primarily signifies "to appease." This meaning, however, is out of place in this connection, for God needed not to be appeased, but in mercy and love extended the means whereby our sins may be covered over, or blotted out. The verb, *hilaskomai*, is rendered "merciful" in Luke 18:13, and the related word *hilasterion* is used in Romans

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

3:25 and Hebrews 9:5 for the mercy seat, or cover of the Ark. *Hilasmos*, therefore, points to the covering for sins obtained in Christ Jesus (Rom. 4:7), and evidently has that significance here.

**“Also for the whole world”** — Christ’s offering is adequate for every need, and is available unto all (John 1:29; 3:16). The unfortunate fact is that all do not avail themselves of it, though ultimately all the world will be redeemed thereby, both Jew (John 11:51-52) and Gentile (Zech. 14:16).

### VERSE 3

**“And hereby”** — The Greek is *en toutoi*, “in this.” John postulates a practical test that reveals a genuine knowledge of Christ.

**“We do know that we know him”** — The word “know” in this statement is *ginosko*. It signifies more than mere academic knowledge, and implies to know by experiencing the fruits of knowledge. Jesus declared: “This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” Such a knowledge, which is manifested experimentally, establishes a relationship between the person knowing and the object known. In this context it implies the manifestation of knowledge in action (ct. 1 Sam. 2:12; Exod. 16:6; 33:13). To “know” the Father and Son in the way expressed by the Lord would be to express the results of knowing in action. John more clearly states this in the verse before us, by teaching that “we know that we know him if we keep his commandments.”

**“If we keep his commandments”** — What tremendous importance is placed upon the little word “if.” It teaches that something more than academic knowledge is necessary, even the fulfilling of his requirements. The word “keep” is *tereo*, and it signifies to watch over, to preserve, guard, keep. It implies not merely the act of obedience, but the desire to obey.

It suggests the action of one keeping his eye fixed upon the object under observance; in this case, the commandments, or the precepts (Gr. *entole*) of Christ. If we watch over these, by filling our minds with his precepts, we are more likely to obey them, and, at the same time, to come to know him better. One of the best ways of coming to know a person or his true character, is to serve under him. Let us study the precepts of Christ, and apply them, and we will come to really “know” him.

### VERSE 4

**“He that saith”** — John introduces his fourth test: that which reveals a false allegiance, showing a person to be dishonest with God. The Apostle, however, has changed his approach. Instead of writing, “If we say,” he writes, “He that saith”. He is obviously referring to some specific person or persons. These were doubtless errorists, who were making claims to a relationship with God, which was not borne out by their deeds.

**“I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments”** — John is very forthright in his denunciation of those who make the claim of “knowing God,” and yet do not keep His commandments, for he plainly and dogmatically categorises them as “liars.” We must bear in mind that it is the Apostle of love who is writing, indicating that such expressions are not inconsistent with a scriptural love when the facts demand them. See also 1 John 1:6; John 8:44.

### VERSE 5

**“He that keepeth his word”** — John has been speaking of one “keeping His commandments,” now he uses a more embracing idea, in that he speaks of them “keeping His word.” There is sequential development in the two verses before us. A believer first “keeps God’s commandments” (or precepts — v.4), he then moves on to “keep His word” (v.5), and

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

through this development, love is perfected. John claims that this is necessary to the manifestation of divine *agape*, or love. Paul does likewise in teaching that "love rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6). Apart from the instruction, inspiration and guidance of the word it is impossible to manifest this form of "love." "Keepeth" is *tereo*, for which, see note on v.3. How important it is that we "keep," "watch over," and "guard" that word, that by its influence, love might be perfected. Let us graduate from "keeping his commandments" to "keeping his word" in its entirety that love in us might be so expressed as to fulfil that which God desires.

**"The love of God"** — See note on the significance of this love at Chapter 3.

**"Perfected"** — The word is *teleioo* in the Greek, and signifies to bring to completion. We first experience the love of God when we accept the call, and commence to "keep His commandments"; we develop in that love when we "keep His word" and the full power of His revelation begins to unfold. Through this means, we are brought into glorious unity with the Father and the Son, thinking along the channel of their ideals with the objective of being "made perfect in one" (John 17:23). By this means we experience the fulness of divine love (see John 17:26), and are induced by so doing, to reveal it to others. Paul describes this as "the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14).

**"Hereby know we that we are in him"** — What an important statement this is! It constitutes a comment on the Lord's intercessory prayer (see John 17:20-23). John warns us that we might claim to be in God and in Christ (1 Thess. 1:1), but that the claim is not valid unless we are manifesting the divine attributes of God that were revealed in such perfection in the Lord Jesus. In short, our claim to sonship is predicated

upon the truth in action, and not merely in profession. We are living a lie if it be otherwise.

### VERSE 6

**"He that saith"** — This is the fifth test of genuine discipleship. A person might make claim to an association with Christ which under test is revealed as false. Such a person is not honest with Christ nor the world.

**"He abideth in him"** — To "abide" is to dwell permanently. The word in the Greek is *meno*, and was an expression used by the Lord in the instruction he gave his disciples just prior to his crucifixion. In John 15:9-11, it is rendered by three words: "abide," "continue," "remain." It is used of persons abiding in a home, and not merely visiting it. It carries the idea of dwelling therein, and includes the principles of fellowship, family relationship, harmony, friendship. It signifies an intimate, continuous association and communion, and not a mere passing acquaintance. Thus Jesus exhorted: "Abide in me, and I in you... He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered..." (John 15:1-6).

**"Ought"** — John selected very important and significant words to express his teaching and we should ponder them earnestly. The Greek word translated "ought" is *opheilo*, and is much stronger in expression than the A.V. suggests. It signifies "to owe," and implies the existence of a debt that one must pay. It is our responsibility to pay the debt suggested in this verse in the way indicated recognising, as we do so, that there is no great merit attached to the payment of a debt; it is something we "ought" to do.

**"So to walk as he walked"** — Christ has left us an example of such a walk as Peter declared (1 Pet. 2:21). As Jesus was the mani-

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

festation of the Father, so we are called upon to be likewise, though, naturally, in lesser measure (Matt. 5:48). He is set before us as the ideal and objective of our calling (Eph. 4:13; 2 Cor. 10: 5). He called upon his followers to heed his voice (John 10:16), and to follow in his ways (John 8:12; 13:15).

### Love Is The Test Of An Enlightened Walk — vv. 7-11.

*John emphasises the need to manifest a divine love. The law did likewise. But this old commandment is given a new application and force in Christ Jesus. Love in action, and not merely in word, is the criterion of a true walk.*

### VERSE 7

**"Brethren"** — The R.V. renders this as "Beloved," following the best Greek texts. The word, in Greek, is *agapetos*, and indicates those who receive and who manifest the Divine love.

**"I write no new commandment unto you"** — There was nothing new in that which John placed before the brethren, for it had been stated from the very beginning, and yet, in a sense, it was new in that it had been given additional force by Christ's example. This fact John brings out in the verses now before us.

**"Ye had from the beginning"** — This could relate to the beginning of the Mosaic age, for the Law commanded, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19:18), but new force had been given to this in Christ, in that we have Christ's own example. He laid down his life in love for those who come unto God through him, and in doing so, placed us under a great debt to manifest a measure of the same love to others.

**"The old commandment is the word which ye have heard"** — The words "in the beginning" which follow this statement should be omitted, as they are in the Revised

Version, Diaglott etc. Those to whom John wrote, had heard of the old commandment which had been given at the beginning of the Mosaic age.

### VERSE 8

**"Again"** — This is a note of contrast. The Greek word *palin* can signify "on the other hand," "in another sense." Whilst the command was not really "new," in that it had been given from the beginning of the Mosaic age, in another sense it was "new" in that it had been only theory in the Law whilst it had been given substance through Christ's example.

**"Which thing"** — In the Greek, these two words are expressed by one, *ho* and this is in the neuter gender, whereas "commandment" is in the feminine gender. The "thing," therefore, relates to the "new" force injected into the old commandment, and not to the commandment itself. Christ's example gave new force to this old commandment, and John claimed that those to whom he wrote manifested it also.

**"Is true"** — the word *alathes* can signify that which is "unconcealed," "manifest," "open." The new force given to the old commandment had been made manifest by both the example of Christ and the faithful walk of those to whom John wrote. From John 13:34 it is obvious that John built his comment upon the words of the Lord.

**"The darkness is past"** — The R.V. gives the phrase in the present continuous tense — "is passing." Since the manifestation of God in Christ, more light had been shed upon the Divine purpose, which was, in consequence, described by Paul as "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Rom. 16:25). The Spirit of truth subsequently granted unto the Apostles guided them into "all truth," and as this knowledge was dispersed abroad, the darkness

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

passed away. This likewise can be our experience, as we grow in knowledge and experience. Thus "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18-19).

**"The true light now shineth"** — The adjective, "true" is from *alethinos*, and signifies that which is real, genuine, or ideal, in contrast to that which is shadowy or typical. See the use of this word in Heb. 8:2; 9:24, where the "true" tabernacle (the real, genuine one in contrast to the shadowy typical one under the law) is referred to. John refers to Jesus as the "true Light" in John 1:9. For centuries, the light had shone fitfully, but in the person of the Lord, the divine manifestation of light was revealed in its fulness (Rom. 16:25-26).

This was all foreshadowed in creation week. For the first three days, light penetrated the cloud that encircled the earth, but on the fourth day, the sun and moon shone in their full glory. Spiritual light, was similar. It had been predicted and proclaimed from the very beginning, but in the fourth millenium after creation, the true, genuine, or real light shone forth in the person of the Lord Jesus.

Consider the effect of this true light on the old commandment to love one's neighbour. The example of Christ gave substance to it. He illustrated the full requirements of it, so that it was no longer open to misinterpretation; and in so doing, he transformed it from mere precept to practical demonstration, and thus gave new meaning and power to it (John 13:34; Rom. 5:6-10; Eph. 5:25). The law could command but not enforce; the Israelite could give lip service to love, and yet hide hate in his heart, undetected by the priest who was his judge in those days (Deut. 19:17). That is not possible in Christ who not only revealed what is required, but can read the hearts and motives of his followers.

### VERSE 9

**"He that saith"** — John advances test No. 6, whereby the profession of truth is given close scrutiny. He reveals the possibility of a professed believer shown to be dishonest with his brethren, in that he claims to have light but manifests hate.

**"He is in the light, and hateth his brother"** — It is incongruous that one begotten of love should grow up to hate, and believers must be on their guard against such a possibility. The person who claims to walk in the light of Christ's love, and yet allows hate to govern his attitude towards his brethren is a hypocrite, and, as John remarks, "is in darkness." But there is need of warning lest "hate" is as badly misunderstood as "love" sometimes is. John, who manifested love and avoided hate, could yet speak of errorists as "liars," "deceivers," "antichrist," and so on, even though they claimed to be brethren of Christ. Further, Christ commended those of Ephesus because they "hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes which," he said, "I also hate" (Rev. 2:6), and because they "could not bear them which are evil" (Rev. 2:6). Hate has its place in the truth's relationships (see Ps. 97:10; 119:104), so that David could say: "Do not I hate them, O Yahweh, that hate Thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Ps. 139:21-22). Christ also, looked around on the hypocritical Pharisees with anger (Mark 3:5). Let us not misinterpret a vigorous repudiation of error as the hatred to which John makes reference in the verse before us. He is referring to hatred in the sphere of merely personal issues. Such emotion must be avoided, and we must extend love to the uttermost. As believers are sons of light, it becomes a law of their being that they oppose and destroy darkness, but it must be done without personal animosity.



## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

### **"Is in darkness, even until now"**

— Such a person remains in darkness, even though he may claim the light is shining, even though, in the person of the Lord Jesus, the true light of love in manifestation now shines forth to illuminate what should be done.

### VERSE 10

**"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light"** — To abide in the light is to abide in Christ who proclaimed himself to be the Light of the world. John emphasises that a person abides in light to the extent that he manifests love. What does that demand? Perhaps the best definition of *agape* love is given in 1 Corinthians 13. Paul makes the point that love is more than understanding (v. 2); more than giving goods to feed the poor or body to be martyred for a cause (v. 3). It is revealed in the affirmative qualities which he enumerates, and which he presents negatively and positively in the statement: "Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (v. 6). This divine love must not be confused with that sickly, sentimentality that passes current in the world of darkness for love, but develops out of an intelligent understanding of the will and purpose of God. Unless we manifest that love we are not of Christ; and yet it is an attribute that is frequently misunderstood even in the Ecclesia. Paul wrote the Corinthian brethren: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you: though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Cor. 12:15). Paul was prepared to sacrifice his personal interests to serve his brethren, and to win them back to a consistent walk in Christ, but his stern words of denunciation and exhortation to that end, all of which were uttered in love, only generated their dislike for the Apostle.

**"There is none occasion of stumbling in him"** — The phrase "occasion of stumbling" is *skan-*

*dalos* in the Greek, and was the name given to the spring of the trap that ensnared the unwary bird or beast. If a person walks in the light of Christ's example and teaching, he will neither be snared, nor will he ensnare others (John 11:9-10).

### VERSE 11

**"He that hateth his brother"** — The expression speaks of habitual hate based on mere personalities, not a hatred of evil.

**"Is in darkness"** — A person's profession of Christianity, his intellectual understanding of all mysteries of the Word, count for nothing in the absence of a practical manifestation of those principles in action. See Ps. 82:5; Eccles. 2:14; John 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46.

**"And knoweth not"** — This is a different word in the Greek to that used in v. 3. Here, the word is *oida*, and signifies "to see, perceive, or know." Vine comments:

**"The differences between *ginosko* and *oida* demand consideration. *Ginosko* frequently suggests inception or progress in knowledge, whilst *oida* suggests fulness of knowledge. Whilst *Ginosko* frequently implies an active relation between the one who knows, and the person or thing known, *oida* expresses the fact that the object has simply come within the scope of the knower's perception."**

*Ginosko* (the word used in v. 3) suggests experimental knowledge a knowledge that creates an active relation between the one who knows and the person or thing known as to reflect the one in the other. *Oida* signifies "to perceive, to intellectually understand." Thus v. 3 states: "We know (*ginosko*) that we know (*ginosko*) him if we keep his commandments." Knowledge is here predicated on action. That is not the case with *oida* in the verse before us. *Ginosko* is found in the statement of the Lord: "This is life eternal to know Thee" (John 17:3), by which we under-

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

stand that life eternal is dependent upon a knowledge that brings the believer into such relationship with the Father and the Son as to reveal them in character: In John's epistles, *Ginosko* is found in the following places, and the reader would be well advised to mark them: 1 John 2:3, 4, 5, 13, 14, 18, 29; 3:1, 6, 19, 20, 24; 4:2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 16; 5:2, 20. 2 John 1. *Oida* is found in the following places: 1 John 2:11, 20, 21, 29. 3:2, 5, 14, 15; 5:13, 15, 18, 19, 20.

The difference between the two words is seen in those verses where they occur in conjunction; e.g. "If ye know (*oida*) that he is righteous, ye know (*ginosko* — because you experience it) that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:29). Again: "We know (*oida* — intellectually) that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know (*ginosko* — experimentally) him that is true . . ." (1 John 5:20).

"Whither he goeth" — The person who does not manifest the truth in action walks in darkness, and is blind to his ultimate destiny.

### Why Love Should Be Manifested— vv. 12-14

*Those to whom John wrote were the recipients of divine love, and therefore had a responsibility to manifest it towards others.*

### VERSE 12

"I write unto you" — John gives a fourth reason for writing (cp. Ch. 1:3; 1:4; 2:1), this time to remind them of their privileged state in Christ and the responsibility it entails (vv. 12-14).

"Little Children" — See note, v.1. By addressing them as "children," John reminds them of the state into which they have been begotten. In addition, it is a term of endearment, and embraced all to whom he wrote, both young men and fathers.

"Your sins are forgiven you"—

This tremendous fact formed the basis of their hope. At the same time, the grace of God thus revealed through Christ, created a debt of love owing by recipients, that can only be repaid by them extending unmerited love to others — an extremely difficult thing to do (see Matt. 5:44-48; Rom. 5:8).

"For his name's sake" — What is meant by such an expression? A person's name relates to the qualities that mark his character. The Father's character is revealed to us in such expressions as Psalm 103:8-15; Jer. 29:11, which emphasise His mercy. There are two sides to the character of Yahweh, however, and Paul exhorts us to "behold His goodness and severity" (Rom. 11:22).

### VERSE 13

"I write unto you fathers" — The "fathers" are the more mature "children" to whom the Apostle wrote.

"Ye have known him that is from the beginning" — The verb is *egnokate*, the perfect tense of the verb *ginosko*, denoting an experimental knowledge of "him who is from the beginning." Who is that? The reference is to 1 John 1:1 which concerns the Word manifested in the Son, and therefore God manifest in the flesh. To "know" this in the sense of the word used by John is to manifest it, and to manifest it is to graduate for life eternal. See how John builds his thought on the words of the Lord Jesus in John 8:19; 14:7; 17:3. The perfect tense denotes something that has been brought to completion. These more mature members of the Ecclesia had developed the experimental knowledge of "Him that is from the beginning" to the extent that they manifested the Divine characteristics in their lives.

"I write unto you young men" — The younger, immature members of the Ecclesia.

"Because ye have overcome the wicked one" — The words "wick-

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

ed one" are a translation of the Greek *poneros* which denotes that which is evil in itself and in its influence. From the use of the word in Matthew 6:13; 13:19, it is obvious that it is the flesh that John is referring to, and which these "young men" had conquered by their acceptance of Christ. The evil propensities of the flesh dominate the world (1 John 3:12; 5:18-19), but these "young men" had come out of the world, and had learned to conquer the flesh.

**"I write unto you"** — These words should be expressed in the past tense, as they are in the Revised Version: "I have written unto you." To what is John referring? Obviously to the Gospel that bears his name. Having first

stated his reason for writing the Epistle (see v. 12), John now outlines his purpose in writing the Gospel which he had done earlier, and upon which this Epistle is based.

**"Little children"** — The word in the Greek is not *teknia* this time (see v. 1), but *paidion*. This word likewise signifies children, or infants, but in a different sense. *Teknia* has relation to birth, from *tikto*, "to give birth to." *Paidion* is related to *paideuo*, "to train children" and thus indicates children under instruction. The word pedagogue (rendered "school-master" — Gal. 3:24) is related. As in verse 12, John is here writing to all the Ecclesia, which he then separates into "fathers" and "young men."

### JOHN'S REASONS FOR WRITING (1 John 2:13-14)

*It is very clear that the Epistle is based upon the Gospel, for the impress of the latter is found in every verse of the former. John would have us understand that, and to carefully compare one with the other. See 1 John 1:3; 2:14. In 1 John 2:12-14, John compares the Epistle with the Gospel by prefacing his comments with: "I write unto you . . ." or "I have written unto you . . ." The separation between the present and past tense should commence at the conclusion of v. 13, where the A.V. should conform to the R.V. John epitomises his purpose in writing as follows:*

<b>I write this Epistle</b>	<b>Reasons for doing so</b>
To all of you children by birth . . .	You have been forgiven . . .
To the older members (fathers) . . .	You have experimental knowledge.
To the younger members (young men) . . .	You have gained a victory over evil.
<b>I wrote my Gospel</b>	<b>Reasons for doing so</b>
To all of you children by instruction . . .	You have knowledge of the Father.
To the older members (fathers) . . .	You have knowledge of the Word.
To the younger members (young men) . . .	You have strength through the abiding word, and have gained a victory over evil.

*Thus John showed that the Epistle is an appendix to the Gospel, and that both were written for similar reasons.*

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

### A Love That Must Be Avoided — vv. 15-17

*Whilst Divine love must be developed through the influence of the Word, a love for the world must be avoided. The present world, being temporary, is doomed to pass away with all that love it.*

#### VERSE 15

**"Love not the world"** — The word for "love" is *agapao* which suggests a self-sacrificing love. It is possible to sacrifice self in service to the world, in a way not pleasing to God. Demas sacrificed his future with Christ to serve the world which he loved (2 Tim. 4:10), thus setting an example we must avoid. The only way in which we can love the world is by preaching the Gospel to it. Jesus declared: "God so loved the world (i.e. He loved it in this way), that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Compare this verse with John 15:19; 17:15-16.

"The world," John referred to is the prevailing order or arrangement of things as it existed in the political, social and religious systems then and now extant. The word is *kosmos*, and signifies "order," "arrangement," "ornament," and so forth. It was the prevailing order or system of things that they were not to love.

#### VERSE 16

**"For all that is in the world"** — All the institutions of the world: its governments, its charities, its religions, are based on the flesh which is dominated by the three lusts enumerated by John. Originally, these lusts were inflamed by the teaching of the serpent, so that they dominated the fleshly mind, inciting Eve to disobey God. She looked at the tree from the perspective of the serpent's teaching. She saw that it was good for food, and so the lust of the flesh took possession of her; she saw that it was a tree calculated

to make one wise, and she was influenced by the pride of life (Gen. 3:6). Since then, the world of flesh has been governed by these three lusts. Christ prayed: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). John's comment is really an exposition of John 8:44.

**"The lust of the flesh"** — "The flesh lusteth against the spirit," wrote Paul (Gal. 5:16). "We all had our way of life in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2:3).

**"The lust of the eyes"** — The eye is never satisfied, no matter how much a person may possess. See Eccles. 4:8.

**"The pride of life"** — See James 4:16.

**"Is not of the Father, but is of the world"** — These lusts are not generated by God, but by the flesh. In the first instance, they were inflamed by the suggestion of the serpent, which thought and taught in accordance with the mind of the flesh unilluminated by God.

#### VERSE 17

**"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof"** — The world of flesh is temporary and fleeting, and wisdom dictates that we look, "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). This is not always easy to appreciate, for the world about us has all the appearance of power and permanency. This, however, is but an illusion. The world is doomed to pass away, and perhaps quicker than we think. Why, even the fashions of the world are shortlived, a token of the world itself. If we put our confidence in the things it can offer, we will build on a foundation of sand which the storm

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

of the last days will sweep away.

**"He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever"** — This defines a person who labors for eternity. He abides for ever. To "abide" is to dwell in, or to lodge. Where does he abide? John has already told us: not in the world but in Christ (Ch. 2:6). And Paul adds a comment: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

In what sense does the believer "abide in Christ forever"? The Diaglott clarifies the matter. It renders the last portion of this statement, as: "abides for the age." The preposition "for" is *eis* in the Greek and implies motion towards an object; in this case, the coming age. A person abiding in Christ, has found a lodgment that can secure for him a permanent place in the future age.

### **A Warning Against The Antichrist Of Darkness — vv. 18-23.**

*Having warned believers against the evil influence of the world, John now puts them on their guard against similar influences manifested within the Ecclesias.*

#### **VERSE 18**

**"Little children"** — The word is again *paidion*, instructed ones, the word used in v. 13 where John makes reference to his previous writing, i.e. the Gospel.

**"It is the last time"** — There is a need to discriminate between "the last time" of this verse, and "the end" referred to in such places as Matthew 24:10-14; Hebrews 1:1; 9:26. The former refers to the final dispensation in the preaching of the Gospel; the latter indicates the end of the Mosaic age which terminated with the fall of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:15-16). John wrote after this time, and declared that it was "the last time," doubtless referring to the final dispensation in the preaching of the Gospel, called by the Lord, the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke

21:24). The word translated "time" is *hora*, and signifies an hour, or, figuratively, a "season," and is apparently used in that way here. John thus declared that the "times of the Gentiles" or the last dispensation before the establishment of the Kingdom had commenced, and that it would be one noted for widespread error and opposition to the truth by those claiming to be its adherents.

**"Ye have heard that antichrist shall come"** — The antichrist is defined in Chapter 4:3 as those who teach error. In the verse before us, John warns that such organised efforts against the Truth had been predicted (see Matt. 24:24; Jude 17; 2 Pet. 2; 2 Tim. 3:1-5); but he makes the point that seeing the "last time" had commenced such were to be expected. What does he mean by "the last time"? It relates to the "times of the Gentiles," the final epoch of preaching which, John warns, would be characterised by antichrist.

**"Even now are there many antichrists"** — Even though the last epoch, or the times of the Gentiles, had only just begun, there were many who were teaching error in the name of Christ. John warned that this would develop into serious organised opposition to the Truth.

**"Whereby we know that it is the last time"** — John's words signify that the propagation of serious doctrinal error would be characteristic of the final dispensation (Acts 20:30). His statement is significant, for we are still in the same dispensation of time, though at its close. John's warning alerted the brethren to expect the Truth to be constantly under challenge during the final dispensation, and therefore constituted an exhortation to maintain vigilance that they be not seduced thereby.

#### **VERSE 19**

**"They went out from us" —**

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

When Judas left the upper chamber to betray his Lord, Jesus addressed the remaining disciples as "little children" (John 13:33). Now separatists within the Ecclesias were following in the footsteps of Judas the traitor, and it is significant that as Jesus had addressed those apostles who remained as his "little children," John does likewise to those who had remained faithful in the Ecclesias (v. 18). He evidently reverted in thought to the solemn occasion when the Lord was with his disciples, and sought to help and sustain them, even though the shadow of death stretched out to claim him. John was now in a similar position. His life, too, was nearing its end. But, before his departure, he followed his Lord in striving to help and sustain those who must follow on.

**"They were not of us" —** The preposition is *ek*, "out of." John disclaims that these separatists were ever really part of the true body of Christ; they had never developed "out of" the true teaching of the Apostles (cp. John 17:20).

**"They went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" —** The R.V. margin makes an important change in this statement. It renders the last phrase as: "that not all are of us." Accepting this reading, John's words become a warning to manifest the greatest vigilance. The action of the separatists in leaving the main body showed that they were not really part of Christ, even though they may have claimed to be so. But the fact that some could so act is a solemn warning that not all who claimed to belong to Christ were so in reality. There were some among them who were not of them. The Ecclesia must be on its guard against the fifth column activity of such a group; there was, and is, need for the greatest vigilance, lest a repetition occur of that which had already taken place.

**"But ye have an unction" —** The word in the Greek is *chrisma*, "an anointing," and it is so rendered in the R.V. What is this unction, or anointing? In v. 27, John defines it as "truth" which abode in them. It is the holy spirit word (John 6:63), "the truth" (1 John 5:6), described as an "anointing" because the truth was revealed by the spirit in prophets, the Lord Jesus, and the Apostles (Neh. 9:30; Heb. 1:1). John did not claim that his readers had been anointed with it, but that they "had" or possessed it, so that it "abode in them." The true members of the Ecclesia possessed it; but those of the anti-christ faction did not. Jude sums the matter up: "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit" (v.19). Obviously Jude was referring to the spirit word, not to the outpouring of holy spirit power. The unction, or anointing, was the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17) given unto the Apostles, and proclaimed by them in the Gospel message.

**"Ye know all things" —** If John's readers really knew all things, there would not have been any need for him to write unto them. The R.V. margin renders the phrase, "and ye all know." This changes the thought from knowing everything, to all having a sound understanding of Truth (v. 21). The purpose of anointing the Apostles with the holy spirit was to bring "all things to remembrance" (John 14:26). That having been accomplished, the fruits of that knowledge had been faithfully proclaimed by the Apostles to all believers so that all had come to an understanding. In measure therefore all possessed the anointing in that they received its benefit in the word of truth.

### VERSE 22

**"Who is a liar" —** The Greek text provides the definite article: "Who is the liar?" (see Diaglott). The reference is to the supreme lie, the lie against the Truth, and

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

not to falsehood in general (see Rev. 22:15). What was the supreme lie as far as John's statement is concerned? A denial that Jesus is the Anointed, involving a denial of the true relationship between the Father and the Son, and of the doctrine of God manifest in the flesh. This is the supreme lie. It is a lie that flesh unaided can reveal the righteousness manifested by the Lord; it is a lie, on the other hand, that teaches that Jesus did not come in the flesh, or that he is the second person of a trinity. Unitarianism and Trinitarianism are both lies. The former claims that flesh unaided can conquer sin; the latter denies that God manifest in the flesh was adequate to do it. The truth of the matter is that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19), that "God was manifest in flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). The Jews denied this, and were thus shown to be liars (John 8:44). On the other hand, the Lord taught: "This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

**"That denieth that Jesus is the Christ"** — To deny that Jesus is the Anointed, is to deny that the Word was made flesh, or that God was manifest in flesh. The Gospel of John and the Epistle of John were both written to emphasise the truth of the doctrine of God manifestation.

**"He is antichrist"** — The Greek supplies the definite article: "He is the antichrist."

**"That denieth the Father and the Son"** — The relationship of Father and Son is virtually denied when it is maintained that the flesh could accomplish unaided that which Yahweh wrought through His son. If the flesh could do it, and did so in the person of the Lord Jesus, there was no point in Yahweh begetting a Son. That was only necessary because flesh unaided could not lift itself out of the hopelessness of

sin and death into which it had fallen by the first transgression. Trinitarians, with those who deny the sinfulness of flesh constitute the antichrist, for they deny the two fundamental doctrines of the word: the nature of flesh, and God manifest in the flesh.

### VERSE 23

**"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father"** — Jesus spake similar words (John 5:23). A person denies the Son when he rejects the doctrine of God manifest in flesh, because the appellations and relationship of Father and Son declare it. John's stern, forthright indictment emphasises how important it is to embrace the truth of this matter. Only those who grasp the reality of the relation of Father and Son really possess the Father (1 John 5:12).

**"He that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also"** — Though these words are in italics in the A.V., they are acknowledged by many as being genuine, and are included in the Revised Version. The word " acknowledgeth " is *homologeo*, and signifies to confess to the same things. John, therefore, does not mean that if a person confesses to the existence of the Son as an historic fact, he has the Father, but, rather, he has the Father if he confesses the same things as John has been teaching.

### An Exhortation To Abide In Truth — vv. 24-29

*Having reminded them of warnings that already had been given concerning the uprise of error during Gentile times, John proceeds to exhort each one of his responsibility to abide in the truth.*

*In 1 John 2:16-17, John provides two reasons for avoiding the world: (1) — it is alien to the Father; (2) — it is passing away. Now he counters with two reasons why we should cleave to truth: (1) — it unites with the Father; (2) — it promises eternal life.*

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

### VERSE 24

**"Let that therefore abide in you"** — The R.V. commences this section: "As for you . . ." thus providing a sharp contrast to that which has been stated before. John calls upon his readers to allow that truth to abide in them which they had heard "from the beginning." Again we are directed back to Ch. 1:1, and to the theme of God manifestation: the theme of both John's Gospel and Epistle. The word "abide" in this verse, is from the Greek word *meno*, which is also translated in this verse as "remain" and "continue." The word signifies to be at home, to dwell as an inhabitant and not merely as a visitor. John exhorts that the truth should "abide" in us in that way.

**"If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you"** — The things proclaimed from the beginning relate to the word made flesh (1 John 1:1), that is to the doctrine of God manifestation. Let that "remain" or dwell, in a believer, in the sense implied by John, and obviously it will mould his character as the inmates of a house determine the quality of a home. The character of the believer being thus changed to conform to that which dwells in him, he shall, in turn, continue in the "Son, and in the Father."

### VERSE 25

**"And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life"** — If we develop divine characteristics, we shall ultimately attain unto divine nature. This was illustrated in the Lord Jesus (see 1 John 1:1-2), and is the promise made to all in him. In that sense, and that alone, eternal life is "given" unto those "in Christ." Eternal life is only found "in the Son," so that he that hath the Son hath life, in the sense that its ultimate bestowal upon him, is beyond all doubt (see Rom. 4:17).

### VERSE 26

**"Them that seduce you"** — John

could only view the errorists as being guilty of spiritual seduction and adultery (James 4:4; Rev. 2:20), for they are unfaithful to the truth that they have espoused. This is the case with all error, no matter how nicely it may be coated with sweet and attractive platitudes. There can be no compromise.

### VERSE 27

**"But"** — Again this introduces a note of contrast which the R.V. makes even more definite by rendering: "And as for you . . ."

**"The anointing ye have received of him"** — The "anointing" is the spirit, which John later defines as the truth (1 John 5:6), and which has been received from Christ. This must "abide" in the believer (cp. notes on v. 20).

**"Ye need not that any man teach you"** — They have no use for fleshly philosophy, no need for the words or wisdom of mere man, for their instruction comes from God (John 6:45; Isa. 54:13). They may need guidance from man (Acts 8:31), but it must be confirmed by the spirit word (1 Cor. 2:12-15).

**"The same anointing is truth"** — John's statement that the "anointing" (i.e. the spirit) teaches all things, and is truth, or true, aligns it with the "spirit of truth" that Jesus had promised the Apostles (John 14:17). He declared: "The words I speak unto you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). John defines the spirit as "the truth" (1 John 5:6).

**"Even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him"** — The R.V. renders this a little clearer: "Even as it taught you, ye abide in him." The spirit word teaches us to abide in Christ (John 15:4), and we abide in him to the extent that we manifest the principles he stood for (1 John 2:6).

### VERSE 28

**"And now, little children, abide**



## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

**in him**" — John thus impresses his readers with the exhortation that Jesus delivered to him in company with the other Apostles as they walked in the darkness toward Gethsemane (John 15:1-4).

**"When he shall appear"** — Some texts read *hotan* (see Diaglott), "whenever," implying uncertainty as to time; others read *ean*, "when" pointing to the future probability, and implying a set time. Whatever reading is accepted, the exhortation is that we should constantly abide in Christ, so that at the time of the return, we may receive him with confidence.

**"Confidence"** — The Greek word *parresia* signifies such a confidence as will be expressed in freely speaking. This, doubtless, relates to the account that each one will have to give of himself (see Rom. 14:12).

**"And not be ashamed before him"** — The word "before" is from the Greek *apo*, signifying "from," "away from," (Bullinger), and therefore implies the act of shrinking away from Christ in shame (see R.V. mg.).

### VERSE 29

**"If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him"** — In this verse we have the two words for "know" used in conjunction — *oida* and *ginosko* (see note on v.11). The former word implies a fulness of knowledge, and is used first in this verse. The latter word suggests that intimate understanding that will produce fruit. If a person comprehends that Christ is righteous, he will be led to that inner knowledge of the principles of righteousness that will find fruit in his own way of life. By that process Christ has a very powerful impact upon believers, for through it they manifest a newness of life. They are born, or begotten (see R.V.), of him. Here, the preposition is *ek*, out of; thus they are begotten out of him. As Eve was taken out of Adam, so the second, mystical Eve, the Ecclesia (2 Cor. 11:1-3) is begotten "out of" the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45; Heb. 2:13). In other words, Christ's example must become the mainspring of our actions.

## Theme Study

### THE BELIEVERS

\* Are begotten children (2:1, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4) \* Are begotten of God (2:29; 5:1) \* Are of God (4:4) \* Must seek for forgiveness of sins (1:9) \* Must walk in light (1:7) \* Must know the Truth (2:21) \* Must keep the Commandments (2:4; 5:2) \* Must be changed into Christ's likeness (3:1) \* Must test doctrine and teachers (4:1) \* Must confess the Sonship of Christ (4:15) \* Heeds Apostolic counsel (4:6) \* Abstain from idolatry (5:21) \* Purify themselves (3:3) \* Do not sin (3:6, 9; 5:18) \* Manifest righteousness (3:7) \* Manifest love (3:11; 4:11, 19, 21) \* Hated by world (3:13) \* Abide in Christ (2:6) \* Know the Father (2:13) \* Overcome the flesh (2:13) \* Promised eternal life (2:25; 5:11) \* Are anointed in Christ (2:20, 27) \* Seek confidence (2:28) \* Become Sons of God (3:1) \* Passed from death to life (3:14) \* Manifest confidence towards God (3:21) \* Are pleasing in God's sight (3:22) \* Recipients of God's love (4:9) \* God dwells within (4:12) \* Dwell with God (4:16) \* Overcome the world (5:4) \* Manifest the Witness (5:10) \* Petitions are heard and granted of God (5:14-15) \* Are in Christ (5:20) \* Summary of what is required (3:23).

# God is Love

(Chapters 3 and 4)

*The principle that God is light having been established, what does that Light reveal? First and foremost it reveals that God is Love, and this, naturally, becomes the second phase of John's treatise. But we must not confuse this love with that sentimental emotion that passes current in the world for love, for the love upon which John discourses is a Divine principle, and is not based upon flesh-likings.*

*There are three Greek words for love: eros, phileo, and agape. The first is never used in the Bible; the third is never found outside of it. The first relates to sensuality motivated by lust; the third relates to a self-sacrificing desire to serve, motivated by an enlightened mind.*

*The second word, phileo, is found both in the Bible and in Greek manuscripts. It expresses the affection of true friendship, and of personal regard. From this word is derived "philos", "a friend." Phileo speaks of the desire to cherish and manifest affection for the object of it. It is born of liking — something that attracts one to another.*

*Agape, on the other hand, is not necessarily born of liking, but can be shown towards an enemy as well as towards a friend. It is a word not found in any Greek writing outside of the Bible, and, apparently was originally coined by the translators of the Septuagint to express the Divine grace and mercy that God has revealed towards humanity, and which believers are expected to show to others. Bullinger defines it as: "Love that is self-denying and compassionately devoted to its object; the highest word among the Greeks was philanthropy but this does not denote love to man as such, but rather justice, giving him who was entitled to it his full rights; it even falls short of the philadelphia (brotherly love) of the New Testament. Agape, therefore, designates a love unknown to writers outside the Scriptures; love in its fullest conceivable form; first exhibited by Christ (1 John 3:16), expressive of God's relation to us (1 John 4:9), and the relation between the Father and the Son (John 15:10; 17:26; Col. 1:13). Lastly, it is the distinctive character of the Christian life in relation to the brethren and to all."*

*Because of the general misconception of the word "Love," we really need a different word to express it. The New Testament has "charity," but, again, that does not really define it. Agape is a self-sacrificing desire to render the greatest good to the object of it, not because that object has necessarily attracted one, but because the believer is intellectually enlightened to manifest that good. The qualities of that love are enumerated*

in 1 Corinthians 13. It can be extended towards enemies, because it does not necessarily require the "emotion" that is normally associated with the term. It is pre-eminently God's love as shown in His work of redemption (John 3:16), and is reproduced in the hearts of believers by the power of the Spirit-word (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22).

This is the love upon which John discourses. The noun is the word *agape*, and the verb, the word *agapao*.

## CHAPTER 3

### God's Love Is Revealed In That We Have Been Begotten To Sonship — vv.1-3

The love of God is already shown in our present position of privilege in Christ, but the fulness of it is yet to be revealed at Christ's coming.

#### VERSE 1

**"Behold"** — The word is in the plural (see Diaglott) — "Behold, all of you!"

**"What manner of love"** — The word "manner" is from the Greek *potapen*, "from what country," signifying that the love of God is foreign to that normally manifested. That love is defined in John 3:16, and was extended to sinners and enemies of God (Rom. 5:8, 10). Such action is foreign to normal behaviour.

**"That"** — The preposition is *hina* in the Greek and signifies the purpose or goal of an action. A love foreign to human practise has been manifested by God with the purpose or goal of begetting sons to His glory.

**"We should be called the sons of God"** — The word "sons" is *tekon* in the Greek, and is related to *tikto*, to give birth to (cp. 2:1). The word thus signifies children by begetting, and is rendered as "children" in the R.V. The begetting is by the Word which Peter styles the "seed of God" (1 Pet. 1:23).

**"The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not"** — Believers withdraw themselves from the world, and therefore the world

does not know them experimentally (*ginosko*), for it does not reproduce its fruit in them (cp. 1 John 2:16-17; John 17:14).

#### VERSE 2

**"Beloved"** — The word in the Greek is *agapetos*, signifying those experiencing *agape* or the Divine love.

**"It doth not yet appear what we shall be"** — Grammarians state that this verse is in the aorist, passive tense, and should be rendered: "It has not yet been made manifest or visible" what we shall be (see Diaglott). The R.V. renders: "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be." The Greek word *ephanerothe* (made manifest) signifies to publicly reveal or make manifest. It is true that the pattern had been revealed in the risen Christ, whom the Apostles had seen and handled (1 John 1:1-2), but that had not been the privilege of the general members of the Ecclesia, so that, as far as they were concerned, that which "shall be," had not been made physically manifest in their midst.

**"But we know"** — Gr. *oida* the word implies to know intellectually not experimentally.

**"That when he shall appear"** — The word *phaneros* signifies to be visibly manifested, and it occurs in the word *ephanerothe* above. The appearance of Christ, referred to by John, relates to his visible, physical manifestation in the earth, and not to the point of time of his coming. The time when we shall be made like him is after his actual arrival, for the resurrec-

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

tion and judgment must obviously take place before the saints are changed, and Christ is manifested to the world (see 2 Thess. 1:10).

**"We shall be like him"** — This refers to the change that shall be brought about in the accepted saints. "We shall be changed," declared Paul (1 Cor. 15:51). He "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). This change will complete our development from mere children of God (*teknon*) to mature sons of God (*huios*): the full manifestation of sonship (Rom 8:19-23).

**"For"** — The Greek preposition, *hoti*, "because," introduces "that which rests upon a patent fact" (Bullinger). It is obvious that as he is, we shall be, for both he and we will enjoy the same relationship with the Father (Rom. 8:23).

**"We shall see him as he is"** — *Opsomai* (see) is the future tense, middle voice, of *horao*, to see, and being in the middle voice, signifies "will see for oneself." However, it implies more than mere physical sight, and involves a discerning and perceptive mind. Bullinger states: "It denotes, not the action of seeing, but the state of him, and the affection of the mind of him to whose eye or mind the object is presented, to truly comprehend or know." The word thus suggests that the redeemed will gaze upon Christ with the realisation that they are one with him both mentally and physically, thus fulfilling the Lord's prayer on their behalf (John 17:21; cp. 2 Pet. 1:4).

**"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself"** — True worshippers are ever conscious that the time will come when they must present themselves before the Judge, and in anticipation of that solemn occasion, they purify their characters by seeking forgiveness of their sins through Christ and by reforming their ways (1 John 1:7). As the Israelites ceremoniously purified themselves

prior to appearing at the Passover (John 11:55), or as the nation was required to do likewise in preparation to meeting Yahweh at Sinai (Exod. 19:10-11), so Christ's followers do morally in preparation of the Judgment Seat.

### **Divine Sonship Is Incompatible With Sin — Vv. 4-9.**

*Having shown the need of a moral purification, John presents a contrast. The world is divided into those who either "do" lawlessness or "do" righteousness. The begotten of God cannot do the former; the begotten of the devil cannot do the latter.*

#### **VERSE 4**

**"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law"** — This is a most important statement, and definition of sin which governs the propositions that follow, in which John teaches that the begotten of God cannot sin. We concentrate firstly upon the verb "committeth." This does not signify a single act of sin, but implies a continuous doing of it. It is rendered "doeth" in the R.V. and "practises" in the Diaglott, both words indicating an attitude towards sin that suggests that it has become habitual. Further, the Greek text has the definite article: "the sin," indicating the worst degree of sin, the most abandoned form of sin, sin in the absolute sense of the word. What is *the* sin? John, according to the A.V. defines it as "the transgression of the law." But in the Greek these words are rendered by one word: *anomia*, from *nomos* (law), and *a* (no) and thereby signifies "no law," or "lawlessness." So we can render, with the R.V.: "Whosoever committeth the sin doeth the lawlessness: for the sin is the lawlessness." The enormity of the sin is not so much in what is done as in the indifferent, lawless attitude that the doer manifests to the law he breaks.

In this verse, therefore, John is

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

not referring to ordinary acts of sin such as will be forgiven (1 John 1:9), but to a specific type of sin such as those who are begotten of God could not possibly commit (v.9). The form of sin referred to is that which does not recognise God's law, and stubbornly refuses to submit to it. That is the sin, the most evil form of infamy in which the sinner pleases himself and practises lawlessness.

Now God has magnified His word "above all His name" (Ps. 138:2), and Jesus warned that those who refused to submit to it, would be judged by it (John 12:48). A man practises lawlessness when he lives in complete disregard of God's word, or when he refuses to submit to it. When a man reasons that God would not condemn him if he refuses to be baptised, he is practising lawlessness. When a baptised person lives inconsistently with the Truth, and yet justifies such action by claiming that circumstances in his case exempt him from the requirements of God's word, he is living lawlessly. This is such a thing as having the "conscience seared as with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2), as being "unrestrained in sin" (2 Pet. 2:14 — Diaglott), as walking "after their own lusts" (Jude 16), as refusing to be governed by God's Word.

The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, and is therefore lawless (Rom. 8:7). It is the manifestation of the flesh, and therefore of the devil and not of God.

John provides a further definition of sin in 1 John 5:17, which he describes as wrongdoing. The person who commits such sins (and we all do) is not lawless, but conscious that he is breaking law. In recognition of that fact, there is set forth for him a means of forgiveness (1 John 1:9-10). In the verses before us, however, John is not dealing with sin as wrongdoing, but with the specific sin of lawlessness: a sin that the truly begotten will never commit.

### VERSE 5

**"He was manifested to take away our sins"** — The Greek has the definite article and expresses the word in the plural: "the sins." The personal pronoun, "our" should be omitted, and the phrase read as the R.V.: "He was manifested to take away sins." The reference is to all forms of sin, wherever and by whomsoever committed (John 1:29).

As Jesus was manifested specifically to take away sins, it is incompatible that sons of God should practise habitually that which he was appointed to destroy, particularly in view of the statement, "in him is no sin."

Jesus was manifested to take away sin, but those guilty of the sin, the sin of lawlessness, do not recognise that they are sinning, and as such think to have no need of the atonement.

### VERSE 6

**"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not"** — To "abide" in Christ indicates a relationship in him which is revealed in the character of the one thus abiding. Such a person would have a healthy respect for the word of God, and as such could not possibly be guilty of the sin of lawlessness, which is complete disregard of divine law.

**"Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him"** — By this statement, John clearly shows that the sin of lawlessness, is only possible on the part of those ignorant of the truth in Christ. The word for "seen" is *horao* and signifies, to see with discernment. It thus speaks of understanding and comprehension of the true nature of the object seen. The word "known" is *ginosko*, and signifies an experimental knowledge which creates a relationship between the one knowing, and the object known. John is clearly saying that the person who is guilty of the sin of lawlessness has not viewed Christ with discerning eyes, nor felt the real impact

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

of his teaching. As such, he has not been begotten by God through His word.

### VERSE 7

**"Little children"** — The word is *Teknia*, for which see notes above.

**"Let no man deceive you"** — The word for deceive is *planao*, and signifies "to lead astray" (as per the R.V.). Some might reason, as they did in the Apostle's day (see Rom. 6:1), that as we are not under law but under grace we can please ourselves; and that so long as we profess truth we do not need to practise it (cp. Rom. 3:8). This is a common doctrine, often urged with seeming reasonableness. If our motives are sound, suggest the deceivers, God will not condemn us; but, in fact, if our motives are truly sound, we will seek out the will of God and do it. When Paul taught that we are not under law but under grace, he meant that personal justification cannot come by reliance of law because we inevitably sin and the law condemns us, and therefore we are in need of the forgiveness of God that comes through grace. But he did not mean that we can ignore law, nor that we will be saved whether we obey God or not. There is need for a twofold justification: by faith (as a sinner from past sin) and by works (as a saint, perfected in obedience). The latter is the outworking or development, of the former (James 2:19-26).

**"He that doeth righteousness is righteous"** — In this section of his epistle, John contrasts the person who "does" lawlessness with the one who "does" righteousness. The former lives a life that is not subject to God's word; the latter lives one that is built upon it. John teaches that we must practise righteousness, if we would be righteous or justified before God. It is sometimes implied that the redeemed have no righteousness of their own, which is true enough if it be meant that they build into their lives the righteous attributes

of Christ's character; but it is untrue if it is thought to mean that they do not have to do anything about changing their characters to conform to God's requirements. It is true that Paul says that "faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness" (Rom. 4:9), but it should be clearly understood that the preposition "for" does not mean "instead of" but rather "with a view to." It is the Greek preposition *eis* which implies motion towards an object. So Abraham's faith was reckoned to him for righteousness, because it became the motivating power of the acts of right living that he proceeded to manifest in faith.

**"As he is righteous"** — Christ is the model of righteousness for all who would obey God; saints must build into their lives the divine attributes that they see manifested by him.

### VERSE 8

**"He that committeth sin"** — The Diaglott renders this as "practises sin." Sin has already been defined as lawlessness, or refusing to acknowledge law, or the reality of sin.

**"Is of the devil"** — The preposition is *ek*, out of, so that John teaches that sin or lawlessness stems from out of the devil. By the devil is meant the flesh with its lusts, which Paul describes as "sin that dwelleth in me" (cp. Heb. 2:14; Rom. 7:17). These have been responsible for sin ever since they were enflamed by the serpent in the beginning (John 8:44).

**"The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil"** — The works of the devil constitute sin in active manifestation (Heb. 9:26), whilst the devil itself is the flesh (Heb. 2:14). Jesus never revealed the former, but he did come in the latter. The flesh never conquered him in life, and in death it could no longer assert itself against the will of God which it was his constant desire to perform. Consequently he was brought from the

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

grave, and given eternal life and so triumphed over the devil (Acts 2:24). The Lord Jesus was born to die that he might rise again and bring salvation to death-doomed humanity, for Paul taught: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). He saves them by blotting out their sins (the works of the devil) in forgiveness (Acts 2:38), and providing them with a strength that will enable them to rise above the flesh (Phil. 4:13; Rom. 8:5-9). The truly begotten are called upon to "mortify their members," or put them to death (Col. 3:5). Their baptism is a baptism "into the likeness of his death" from whence they rise to "newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). The "old man" of the flesh is figuratively crucified (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24), and thus the "works of the devil" are destroyed. From thenceforth believers live as unto God, and whilst the flesh still asserts itself, they continue to obtain forgiveness by confessing to their weakness.

### VERSE 9

**"Whosoever is born of God"** — "Born" should be rendered "begotten" as it is in the R.V. and Diaglott; "of" is *ek*, "out of." John thus taught that believers are begotten out of God, the process being through His word, which is described as "his seed" (1 Pet. 1:23).

**"Doth not commit sin"** — The Diaglott renders this: "No one who has been begotten by God practises sin . . ." The verb relates to "a continuous habit" (Vine). However, whether it is a continuous habit or not, it is true that those who are begotten of God cannot commit sin, if the sin is limited to lawlessness, as it is in this context. How can one begotten to newness of life through the word, live in a state of lawlessness. The very seed that begat them — a knowledge of God's will and purpose — makes it im-

possible for them to live in indifference to God's word and law, so that they would either be conscious of sins that have been committed, or would avoid committing them. A person guilty of the former is not lawless, unless he refuses to avail himself of the means of forgiveness by acknowledging the reality of sin and seeking the mercy of the Father.

**"For his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin"** — By the seed, is meant the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). Obviously, if this remains within a person, he cannot be guilty of lawlessness. However, it is possible for a spiritual miscarriage to occur. So long as the seed remains within a person, it would impress him with the reality of sin, and urge him to seek the forgiveness of God when it is committed.

**"He cannot sin, because he is born of God"** — The impossible sin for the truly begotten is the sin of lawlessness, for he either avoids sinning, or is conscious of it and seeks forgiveness.

The word "born" should be rendered "begotten" wherever it occurs in this Epistle. We wait the full birth of the spirit at the coming of the Lord Jesus, when the redeemed will experience "the redemption of the body" and the purpose of begetting will be completed in the full manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:23). Meanwhile, the present spiritual begetting demands action consistent with the One whom we recognise as our Father. We are either children of God or of the devil (the flesh). John's words are based upon those of the Lord recorded in John 8:34-44, and show that the very sin of which the Jews were guilty and to which they were enslaved (John 8:34) was now manifest among some who claimed to be of Christ. Jesus showed that the claim of the Jews to be sons of Abraham was false (v. 39), and John shows that the claim of the separatists to be of God was equally false.

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

The preposition "of" is *ek*, "out of." Saints are "begotten out of God." The birth of Jesus illustrated the need of this, for he "proceeded forth and came from (out of) God" (John 8:42), and taught that those who would serve God in truth must be the subjects of a new birth "from above" (John 3:3 — mg.).

### True Sonship Is Predicated On Action

*Our attitude and actions demonstrate whether we are of God or of the devil.*

### VERSE 10

**"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil"** — The spiritual parentage of a person is demonstrated by his actions. The children of God "do righteousness"; the children of the devil "do lawlessness." John's comments are based upon John 8:30-47, which records the Lord's discourse with certain who "believed on him" but who did not see any necessity for changing their lives. They claimed to be sons of God and sons of Abraham, but their actions belied their claim and demonstrated that they were of "their father the devil" (John 8:44).

**"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God"** — Sonship is predicated upon action, motivated by doctrine, and not merely upon the latter. Our ultimate justification will depend upon the manifestation of faith in action, or "doing righteousness." In this section of his Epistle, John has contrasted those who "do lawlessness" with those who "do righteousness." The actions of the former demonstrate that they are of the flesh, whilst those of the latter reveal that they are of God.

**"Neither he that loveth not his brother"** — The begotten of God owe their privileged state to Divine love exhibited in the offering of Jesus (John 3:16), and therefore, they have an obligation to extend a like grace unto others. If they

fail to love their brother, they fail to take pleasure in that which God has brought into being, and which provides Him with pleasure. Such an attitude demonstrates that they are not of God.

### VERSE 12

**"Cain was of that wicked one"** — The preposition "of" is *ek*, "out of": Cain was "out of" that wicked one, for he was a man of the flesh, here personified as the wicked one. See the note on this term in Ch. 2:13. The "world" is governed by this "wicked one" or the flesh, "for it lieth in wickedness" (the same word in the Greek. See 1 John 5:19; 2:16). Though Cain and Abel were brothers in the flesh, they were not related in the spiritual sphere for Cain was a seed of the serpent, and Abel was a seed of the woman.

**"Wherefore slew he him?"** — John's answer to this question is, "Because his own works were evil." The Greek word for "evil" is the same as that rendered "wicked one," namely, *poneros*, and therefore indicates that Cain's works were of the flesh. Cain was lawless. He gave the lusts of the flesh full scope, and refused to submit to the discipline of God's word. Abel, on the other hand, was righteous, and manifested it before God. Cain was consumed by envy and hatred against his brother; and the world (which likewise lies in wickedness) adopts the same attitude towards the saints.

### VERSE 13

**"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you"** — God declared at the beginning that mutual antagonism can be expected between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), and that record of history that has unfolded since, has demonstrated that principle. Therefore, believers must not marvel if the world hates them; in fact, they must expect it, and prepare to meet it. Christ warned the Apostles that they



## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

would experience the world's hatred (John 15:18-19; 16:2, 33; 17:14), and this soon became the lot of the early ecclesias. They were hated by the Jews because they refused to capitulate to the demands of Judaism; they were hated by the Gentiles, because they refused to compromise and capitulate to their demands. The Roman Government hated Christians because of their alleged disloyalty, and particularly because they opposed the principle of Caesar worship. Though this was ignored by the Caesars at first, it later aroused their antagonism. W. Barclay writes:

**"There came slowly the day when once a year every inhabitant of the empire had to burn his pinch of incense to the godhead of Caesar. By so doing, he showed that he was a loyal citizen of Rome. When he had done so, he received a certificate to say he had done so. Here was the practise and the custom and the convention which made all men feel they were part of Rome, and which guaranteed their loyalty to Rome. Now Rome was the essence of toleration. After he had burned his pinch of incense and had said, 'Caesar is Lord,' a man could go away and worship any god he liked, so long as the worship did not affect public decency and public order."**

It was little that the world demanded, and some could salve their conscience by conforming on the grounds that the action was meaningless anyhow. But true Christians refused to conform to this practise, and also resisted participation in military service. This refusal to conform caused them to be hated as insurrectionists. The motives which dictated their actions were distorted. Further, it was claimed that they were immoral. It was alleged that their love-feasts were orgies of flagrant and promiscuous immorality. Their withdrawal from normal Christianity interfered with family relationships, and it was condemned as

being anti-social. But the main ground of hate was the uncomfortable feeling that the presence of Christians gave to others, for their strict morality was a constant reproach to the ungodly ways of the world about them. The basic demand of the truth both then and now, was and is, the need to develop the courage to be different and to refuse to conform. This the world hates, and therefore it incites its hostility.

### VERSE 14

**"We know that we have passed from death unto life"** — In this statement, "from" is *ek*, out of, and implies movement away from an object, and "unto" is *eis*, and indicates movement towards an object. We have passed from out of a state that leads inevitably and permanently to death, into one that leads unto life in the Kingdom of God. It is quite obvious that the "death" and "life" referred to are not literal, and that the statement refers to a relationship to each.

**"Because we love the brethren"** — The manifestation of brotherly love is the vindication of the claim that we have passed from a relationship to death unto a relationship to life. In short, the truth is more than theory: it is a practical way of life. Jesus declared: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another, (John 13:35). Let us not be mistaken about the nature of this love; it relates to a self-sacrificing service that aims to the greatest good for the object of it. And more, it is a love that is born of intellect, that knows what is best for the other and seeks to perform it, so that even chastisement can form an expression of that love (see Heb. 12:5-7). This love is a characteristic attribute of Christ's disciples, because it is a characteristic attribute of their Lord and Master, and of the Father who begat them. And what a beautiful attribute it is! Let opposition be ever so strong,

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

let frustrations and difficulties make life dark and cheerless, there is inexpressible comfort, joy and encouragement in mutual sympathy and reciprocated helpfulness; whilst, on the other hand, alienation, distrust and antagonism among brethren add to the heavy burden of sorrow. There is nothing quite so bitter, so destructive, so discouraging as internecine strife.

**"He that loveth not his brother abideth in death"** — He abides in the sphere of death (Gr. *en*) because his loveless attitude demonstrates that he is no true disciple of Christ in spite of his profession of being so.

### VERSE 15

**"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer"** — In an earlier note (see p. 32) we saw that there is room for hatred in the sphere of the Truth, but not hatred of one's brother who is walking in the light (and such a walk is implied in the term "brother"). Hatred manifested under those conditions makes one a murderer by intent (Matt. 5:21; 27-28) and identifies one as a child of the flesh (John 8:44). As such he remains in the sphere of death and has not "eternal life abiding in him." The implanted seed has failed to germinate (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

### Love Defined — Vv. 16-17

*John reminds his readers that as they experienced Divine love, they have an obligation to manifest it towards others.*

### VERSE 16

**"Hereby perceive we the love"** — The word "perceive" is a translation of *ginosko*, elsewhere rendered "know". It implies experimental knowledge, a knowledge that has gone beyond mere intellectual understanding. The A.V. adds the words, "of God," but they should be eliminated. It was not God Who laid down his life, but Jesus Christ, and John re-

minds us that in him so doing we have come to understand what love is, for we have personally experienced its benefits in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus (see John 3:16). In that way, God extended love to the world that hates Him, and to His enemies who despise Him. We are called to do likewise. The effacement of self in a service of good to an enemy who hates us is the quintessence of love (Rom. 5:8-10; 1 Cor. Ch. 13).

**"We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"** — Christ has provided the example; what he did literally, we should do figuratively. We should sacrifice our own desires in order to help others. The word "ought" signifies a moral obligation, or debt, that we should repay (see note 1 John 2:6). To lay down one's life, is to sacrifice self for the benefit of others (Eph. 5:1-2).

### VERSE 17

**"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need"** — Love means much more than a profound exposition of the words *phileo* and *agape*; the significance of these terms must be transmitted into action, revealed in the humble services of everyday life (see James 2:15). Up until now, John has laid emphasis upon Christ's sacrificial offering as the supreme example of *agape* (v. 16), a manifestation of love which is quite beyond us, for we are not qualified to render it, even if we were prepared to do so. However, we are able to reveal a measure of the same love in little unobtrusive services done to others in need (Matt. 10:42).

On the other hand, if one is not prepared to extend this service to another, how dwells the love of God in him? It simply does not. Particularly under the circumstances that John's words reveal when they are closely examined. The word "seeth" is *theoreo* and signifies a steady contemplative glance, and not merely a pass-

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

ing look, "a careful perusal of the details in the object" (Vine). John thereby reveals that it is possible for some to attentively gaze upon the abject need of another, examining all the details of it, and remain unmoved. The onlooker has carefully examined all the facts, and recognises a real need, but still refuses to help. There is no self-sacrificing in such an attitude.

### How Love Begets Confidence — Vv. 18-24

*The manifestation of love in action can assure for us eternal life at the coming of the Lord, and therefore will create confidence for the day of judgment.*

#### VERSE 18

"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue" — "Word" is *logos*, and relates to doctrine; tongue speaks of profession. Love must not be limited to mere doctrine, or to meaningless words of hypocritical love such as the tongue finds easy to utter; but, stemming from doctrine, it must develop into action. That is the sign of spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:15).

"In deed and in truth" — Love must be manifested in such action as is consistent with the Truth. Paul poses the possibility of giving all one's goods to feed the poor, and yet be lacking in true Scriptural love (1 Cor. 13:3). Love, therefore, must be governed by the requirements of the Truth, and is not a boundless charity based upon flesh likings only, or the craving to satisfy a personal sense of well-being.

#### VERSE 19

"Hereby we know that we are of the truth" — We will experimentally know we are of the truth when we manifest a self-sacrificing service towards others, and even our enemies.

"And shall assure our hearts" — The word "assure" is from the

Greek *peitho*, "to persuade" (Vine), or "to tranquilise" (Thayer). The performance of true love in action, will serve as a tranquiliser in regard to any misgivings we may have concerning future judgment; it can persuade or calm us, and give us confidence as to its outcome.

"Before him" — In His sight, and under His scrutiny. Abraham was commanded by God: "Walk before Me and be perfect" (upright, sincere, or mature — Gen. 17:1). A man of faith recognises that he walks in the sight of God, and yet he is conscious of sin. This disturbs him. How can he be tranquilised? By performing deeds of love to others. In so doing, he builds up for himself a reservoir of mercy that can stand him in good stead at the judgment seat. That was the experience of David at the time of his great sin. He received mercy from God, because, when threatened with death, he had extended mercy to his enemy, when he had him in his power (1 Sam. 24:10-11). That is the significance of the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

#### VERSE 20

"If our heart condemn us" — If our heart condemn us by reminding us of the fact of sins committed, we can obtain a tranquiliser in acts of mercy to others.

"God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" — God is more discerning than conscience, and can penetrate to the hidden motives of our actions. Knowing this, we have greater cause to be circumspect in our ways, and to cleanse our motives in His sight.

#### VERSE 21

"Beloved" — *Agapetos* — see note Ch. 2:16. The use of this term in this section of the Epistle where John is discoursing on love, could perhaps be a reminder to his readers that, as they had experienced the *agape* of God, they

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

should extend it to others, and thus justify the title given them.

**"If our heart condemn us not then have we confidence toward God"** — In view of this obvious fact, the exhortation is to so live before God that our conscience does not condemn us; thus we can manifest confidence.

### VERSE 22

**"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him"** — In the context in which the statement is found, the requests doubtless relate to pleas for help to so walk as to develop confidence before God. Prayer will assist to that end, for God will surely answer such a prayer addressed to Him in faith (1 John 5:14; John 9:31; 14:13; 15:7; 16:23, 29).

**"Because we keep His commandments"** — The word "keep" does not necessarily imply "obey", otherwise we would have confidence before God. It is from the Greek *tereo* to watch over, to guard, hence to show respect for His precepts. Note the use of the phrase: 1 John 2:3; 3:22; 5:2, 3. Cp. John 15:10.

**"And do those things that are pleasing in his sight"** — This will develop from "guarding the commandments". It constitutes action, and demonstrates that the one so doing "abides in Christ". This is a necessary prerequisite for successful prayer (see John 15:7).

### VERSE 23

**"This is His commandment"** — John limits it to two main precepts: Belief (faith) and Love. The first essential is belief. The word is *pisteuo*, and signifies a confidence born of understanding. It is similar to "faith" — *pistis*, for belief leads to faith. Belief must be in the name of the son, by which is meant, in the character and purpose of the one named. "The name of His Son Jesus Christ" relates to the doctrines of God manifestation, atonement, cleansing, love.

### VERSE 24

**"He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him and he in him"** — This clearly states that the basis of "abiding in Christ" is the keeping of his commandments. The word signifies to guard or watch over them with the object of performing them. (Note the use of the word in Ch. 5:18, 21.) How is this done? By the study of the Word. There is no other way. Thus Christ declared: "Ye are clean through the Word that I have spoken unto you" (John 15:2). The Word "cleanses" in that it enables us to determine right from wrong. Thus we mentally acknowledge the right, and this leads us to reveal it in action. We can only "abide in him" by that means, for it is only by the Word that we can know either the Lord or the Father.

**"He abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us"** — He abideth in us by the Spirit. What spirit is that? Jesus promised the Apostles that he would send them the Spirit of truth (John 14:17), and John declares that "the spirit is the truth" (1 John 5:6). The Word, or the Truth, reveals the Father and the Son to us, and teaches us to manifest their ways. By that means their influence will be made apparent in our lives, and we will experience that intimate fellowship with them, as stated by the Lord (John 14:23).

## CHAPTER 4

### Love Necessitates The Repudiation Of Error — Vv. 1-6

*Divine love is not a boundless tolerance of evil, but is manifested in extreme jealousy of the honour of Yahweh and His word. This requires that the truth be preserved in its purity, and that we resist false teaching. God has magnified His word above all His name (Psalm 138:2) and love of God requires that we do likewise. John therefore warns that we care-*

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

fully analyse all teaching submitted to us to see whether it is of God.

### VERSE 1

**"Believe not every spirit" —** The word "spirit" is *pneuma* and is derived from a root, "to breathe." In the context of this verse it expresses the breathing forth of a doctrine. John uses it again in this way in 1 John 5:6 where he defines the spirit as "the truth."

**"But try the spirits whether they are of God" —** The word "try" signifies to put to the test with the object of approving. Thus it is obligatory, on the part of every believer, to carefully try all teaching, all doctrines that are breathed forth, to see if they are of God. The crucible, of course, is the Bible, God's revelation to man.

**"Because many false prophets are gone out into the world" —** These were the separatists of 1 John 2:19, and the object of their going forth was to make proselytes like the Pharisees (Matt. 23:15). Christ had predicted that "many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:11), and Paul had challenged their efforts (2 Cor. 11:4, 13). It is significant, that John is thought to have ministered at Ephesus, and to that Ecclesia Christ dictated the message: "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Rev. 2:2). These are expressions that John uses in this epistle.

### VERSE 2

**"Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" —** This declaration, wrote John, "is of God." As such it becomes a touchstone of truth. But do not all who claim the name of Christ subscribe to that? They do not. First of all, the name of Jesus is compounded of Yah and Shua: Yahshua: Yah's salvation. This alone teaches what is repudiated by many, namely, that Yahweh

is a Saviour. But when the title "Christ" is appended thereto, it proclaims that Jesus is the medium of salvation and has been anointed to that end. The name of Jesus Christ, therefore, speaks of God manifestation: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). This truth challenges Trinitarianism, and Unitarianism alike. It tries the doctrines of modern Christendom and finds them wanting. But John's declaration does not end there, for it includes the statement that this anointed one who is Yahweh's salvation, "is come in the flesh." He has already defined flesh as that in which sin dwells (1 John 1:9), and therefore as mortal. Therefore, the declaration also embraces the doctrine of the nature of man. Thus his statement incorporates the two basic doctrines of Scripture: that of flesh (what we are), and that of God manifest in the flesh (what we can become) . . . All saving truth, from the nature of the Godhead to that of the devil is comprehended in these two doctrines, so that they embrace much more than a mere affirmation that Jesus appeared in flesh. The word "confesseth" in its Greek form, signifies to proclaim the same things, so that John requires agreement upon two essential aspects of truth

### VERSE 3

**"And every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God" —** The A.V. adds the words in italics: "*that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.*" But they should be excluded, as they are in the R.V. and Diaglott, though it is obvious that to truly "confess Jesus" is to acknowledge his anointing. Again we emphasise the importance of the word "confess" which signifies "to speak the same thing, to assent, accord, agree with." It is not enough to proclaim, "I believe in Jesus," it is necessary to assent to the same things concerning him as are found in the Word. Every spirit or doctrine

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

that does that is of God; all others are of antichrist. So wrote John, from which we can see that antichrist is very widespread today, and comprises Christendom as a whole.

**"Ye have heard that it should come"** — The development of apostasy after Apostolic times is frequently foretold in Scripture. We find reference made to it in Matt. 24:24; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 2; Jude 17. To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and it was for that purpose that such predictions were given.

**"Even now already is it in the world"** — Paul warned in similar terms (2 Thess. 2:7), and showed that the error even then manifested would blossom out into great Apostasy which the Lord would ultimately destroy at his coming (Vv. 8-10).

### VERSE 4

**"Ye are of God, little children"** — The preposition "of" is *ek*, "out from", and "little children" is *teknia* emphasising a relationship through begetting. John constantly reverts to such expressions, to remind readers of their privileged and unique status.

**"And have overcome them"** — By driving them out (1 John 2:19).

**"Because greater is he that is in you"** — Let us appreciate the tremendous encouragement found in such words (cp. Rom. 8:31; 1 Cor. 2:12), and let us apply the principle expressed when faced with similar circumstances. Let us always lean upon Yahweh, and by prayer and meditation upon the Word, seek that strength that He will willingly grant.

### VERSE 5

**"They are of the world"** — The word "of" is "out of," indicating that the world has begotten them. This was so, in spite of their claims to be "of God".

**"The world heareth them"** —

The pseudo form of Christianity that they manifested is so pleasing to the flesh, that it receives a ready hearing from the world. That is why popular "religion" appeals to the masses, whereas the demands of the Truth do not.

### VERSE 6

**"We are of God"** — Jesus proclaimed this fact in regard of himself (John 8:23, 42) — and so revealed the authoritative nature of his message, and now the Apostle does likewise for the same purpose (Acts 17:20).

**"He that is of God heareth us"** — He does so because he perceives that the Apostles spake in the name and with the authority of the Lord (Matt. 10:40).

**"Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error"** — We may sometimes wonder why the Truth does not have a greater impact upon the general public, and here John places his finger on the cause. Those who are of the world reject the authority of the truth, because they do not believe that it represents the Word of God, and they refuse to submit to its basic requirements of separation from the world (2 Cor. 6:17-18; Acts 15:14). They reject the proposition that the "spirit of truth" was delivered into the hands of the Apostles (John 14:17), and have not the humility to undertake investigation of these claims. Paul taught that the natural man "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

**True Love Originates From God**  
— Vv. 7-10

*As love is a divine quality it must characterise those who are truly begotten of God. Christ told his Apostles: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).*

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

### VERSE 7

**"Let us love one another" —** cp. John 13:34-45.

**"Love is of God" —** The preposition, *ek*, signifies "from." Love stems from God. He first manifested love towards us, and did so when we were "sinners" and "enemies" (Rom. 5:8-10). *Agape* is therefore a Divine characteristic, and is not of the flesh. It does not stem from natural fleshly "feeling," but from an intellect that is enlightened in the will and purpose of God. Nevertheless it generates feelings of affection and regard for those who are like-minded, as John himself discovered (John 13:23). See John 5:42; 8:42; 14:23; 17:26.

**"Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" —** This statement shows that the type of love referred to by John is limited to the family of God, and therefore does not relate to that sentimental emotional feeling towards another which refuses to acknowledge a fault, and fears to administer a rebuke. It is a self-sacrificing interest in the welfare of others, that seeks for them the greatest good, knowing that such is only found in Christ. This divine love, therefore, only comes from God. Paul wrote: "Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9). It is manifested in deed, not merely in word (1 John 3:18), not in a grudging spirit, but with generous warmth (1 Pet. 1:22). Where love really exists it cannot be hid, but will find a way to prove itself in service to others, whether in laying down a life (see notes 1 John 3:16), or in offering material assistance (V.17).

At the same time, Paul warned against some presuming upon the love of brethren and eating the bread of idleness, by commanding the brethren to "work with their own hands" (1 Thess. 4:11), and decreeing that if they would not work, neither should they eat (2 Thess. 3:10).

### VERSE 12

**"No man has seen God at any time" —** cp John 1:18.

**"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us" —** As *agape* comes only from God (1 John 4:8), it is obvious that if we manifest it, we are demonstrating that God dwells in us (John 14:23; 17:23). Though no one has ever seen God, they can see Him reflected in the lives of those drawn close to Him by the Word. Thus it is possible to reveal unto men the reflected glory of He Who is invisible. Jesus did that. He told Philip: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). As we have been called out of the world as "a people for God's name" (Acts 15:14), it is our responsibility to glorify Him in action (1 Pet. 4:11).

**"His love is perfected in us" —** The word "perfected" is *teleioo* in the Greek, and signifies to bring to completion. The love that Yahweh revealed in making provisions for the sins of humanity, is brought to completion when His children are seen manifesting a measure of the same consideration and love to others. As Paul instructed the Colossians: "Love is the bond of perfectness" or completion (Col. 3:14). It is that which binds all other attributes together, and completes character.

### VERSE 13

**"Hereby know we that we dwell in Him" —** Two dwell in the Father, is to have fellowship with Him (1 Thess. 1:1).

**"And He in us" —** To claim that God is in us, we must manifest His characteristics in action.

**"Because He has given us of His Spirit" —** John's reasoning is clear. We know that we are in fellowship with God, and that we manifest Him in action, when we reveal His divine quality of love one towards another. But how does God get within us, so as to become the energising influence of these actions? The answer is

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

through His Spirit, for He has given us of His Spirit. This is not the outpouring of the Holy Spirit power to perform miracles, but the Spirit Word, styled by John "the truth" (1 John 5:6). That this has nothing to do with the power to perform miracles is clearly shown by the experience of the early Ecclesia in Samaria. Its members enjoyed fellowship one with the other, and with the Father, before they received the power to perform miracles (see Acts 8:14-18). Of course, by "the Spirit" is meant much more than the mere Word though it is based on the Word. It is expressive of the power of truth which becomes transmitted into action, in the believer's life.

### VERSE 14

"And we have seen and do testify" — The Apostles had seen the glory of the Invisible in the Lord Jesus (John 1:14), and to bear witness to that fact constituted their very office (John 15:27; Acts 1:8).

"That the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world"— cp. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 12:47.

### VERSE 15

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" — To confess to this truth demands that we reject the theories of Trinitarianism, Unitarianism, a pre-existent angel, and so forth, and acknowledge the doctrine of God manifest in the flesh. How can God dwell in mortal creatures? Only by His word. And what will be the effect of that? The manifestation of His precepts in action.

### VERSE 16

"We have known and believed" — John now explains what he means when he declared that God "has given us of His Spirit."

"The love that God hath towards us" — This is seen in the offering of His son.

"God is love" — The manifestation of the love of God was inevitable, because this divine love, this urge to so manifest Himself, is inherent in God's very being.

"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God" — This is obvious, because God is the author of *agape*; it is found nowhere else than in Him.

### Love Will Reap Its Reward At The Judgment — Vv. 17-21

*As this form of love is exclusively a Divine attribute, it will be manifested only by true children of God, and he who practises it can look forward with confidence to the future.*

### VERSE 17

"Herein is our love made perfect" — The margin renders this: "Herein love with us is made perfect." The divine love becomes ours when it is reflected by us.

"That" — The word in the Greek signifies, to the end that.

"We may have boldness in the day of judgment" — The same Greek word is translated "confidence" (1 John 2:28; 3:21; 5:14), and signifies to speak freely, without reserve. We must give account of ourselves at the judgment seat (Rom. 14:11-12), and if we have applied the principles of God in our lives, we will be able to speak without reserve, instead of shrinking back in shame (cp. 1 John 2:28).

"Because as he is, so are we in this world" — If we are not of the world, as he is not of the world (see John 17:14-16), we need have no fears as far as the judgment seat is concerned. The world rejected Christ so that he has no part with it, and in consequence he calls his followers out of it. This demands that we walk as he would have us walk. (See 1 John 2:6; 3:1, 7, 16).

### VERSE 18

"There is no fear in love" —



## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

The word translated "fear" is *phobos*, and has the meaning of flight, such as is caused by being scared, and then that which may cause flight such as fear, dread, terror. There is a need to discriminate between this fear, and a Godly fear or reverence (Gr. *euiaubeia* — Heb. 12:28). A Godly fear is a fear of offending one whom we love; but the fear before us in this verse is a dread consequent upon a realisation of failure in developing Godly characteristics.

**"Perfect love casteth out fear"** — In view of that obvious fact, we need to perfect our love.

**"Fear hath torment"** — The word in the Greek for torment is *kolaris*, and signifies "penalty," or "punishment." The R.V. renders it: "fear hath punishment." The fear will be well founded, for it will result in punishment.

**"He that feareth is not made perfect in love"** — John presents his exposition both positively and negatively. Where love is absent, there remains but fear at the judgment seat of Christ. The fear referred to will not necessarily be manifested before then. Usually pre-judgment fear is revealed by those who have least need of fearing it, whilst those filled with confidence today are often those who should least manifest it. When the latter are brought before the august presence of the Judge, however, their present boldness will be dissipated and replaced with a terrible fear as they reflect upon past failures and missed opportunities.

### VERSE 19

**"We love Him because He first loved us"** — In this statement, the pronoun "him" should be eliminated. The R.V. reads: "We love, because He first loved us." God first revealed love, first brought it to our attention, and by His Word begat it in us. By the inspiration of His love, we extend it to others and do not limit the manifestation of it to Him, as the A.V. suggests. The idea is that we should reflect love because He first loved us.

### VERSE 20

**"If a man say"** — John sets forth the seventh test of true discipleship: one that reveals the possibility of a false love, by which a man shows himself as not honest with anybody. He professes love, but manifests hate. He claims to love God, but spurns God's family on earth. Will any parent, who loves his children, stand for such treatment? By no means! If a person loves God, he must love those whom God loves. The Divine name has been named upon believers (Acts 15:14), and to ignore them is to ignore the One whose name they bear (John 13:20).

**"I love God, and hateth his brother"** — To claim a love for God and yet manifest hate towards one's brother, is to live a lie; for that brother is God's son.

**"If he loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"** — John has emphasised that love is not just an emotion, nor an idea, but is the outworking of an intellect that sees the need of extending to others a service calculated to extend to them the greatest good. We cannot see God, and therefore cannot extend to Him any greater service than that which He has commanded us to perform (v. 21), but we can see our brethren, and recognise that they are in need. Here is the opportunity to hand to extend this quality of love, and to demonstrate to God that we love Him. From this it can be seen that love is not merely emotion.

### VERSE 21

**"This commandment"** — *Agape* love is manifested in action (1 John 3:18). How can we love God? By performing His will. What is His will? It is for the believer to extend the love he professes for God in acts of service to his brother. See Matt 22:37-40; Luke 10:27; John 13:34.

# God is Life

The third main section of the Epistle introduces us to the miracle of a new life: the beginning of an existence that can culminate in eternal life. This requires various stages of growth from begetting, to childhood (*teknon*), to sonship (*huios*), to maturity (*huiothesia* — rendered “adoption” but signifying sonship, the placing of a son).

Where there is no life there can be no growth; but where there is life, it can be developed to maturity by careful nurturing.

In the spiritual sphere, life is begotten by the light of truth acting in conformity with the love of God to produce it. In a beautiful way, therefore, John presents these ideas in correct sequential order. First God is Light; and that Light illuminated His Love; and from His Love there sprang new Life.

In his intercessory prayer, the Lord declared: “This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3). The word “know” has been frequently used by John. It is the Greek word *ginosko*, which signifies an experimental knowledge; a knowledge that establishes a relation between the one knowing and that which is known, so as to produce results. The same expression is used in Scripture for conception (see Genesis 4:1), the fruit of such union producing fruit to the glory of the father.

Now John has revealed that God, as to His very nature, is Light and Love. This is entirely different to the flesh which is by nature Evil. One born of the flesh inherits the nature of his parents, a nature that soon reveals itself to be evil. But one begotten of God must reveal Light and Love, because God’s nature demands it. Where those attributes are absent, there is no true begetting.

The channel of this Love that produces a new Life is the Lord Jesus. He is set forth in John’s Gospel as the Light, the Love, and the Life of God. He declared that he was the Light of the world, the manifestation of divine Love, and he proclaimed: “As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:25). In the same context, he showed that the life referred to is first spiritual (v. 25), and then eternal (v. 29).

Jesus is styled the Author of Life (Acts 3:15—mg), and the call of the Gospel is a call to newness of life: “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). The Promise of this new life is proclaimed in John 5:24-25; the Process is revealed in Romans 6:4; and the Performance of it is announced in 1 John 3:13-14.

The Word of Truth constitutes the Seed of God by which He begets His creatures to newness of life (1 Pet. 1:23; Rom.

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

6:17). Consequently they are styled "children of light" (John 12:36). Believers should be conscious of that fact, and reckoning themselves to be "dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24). By that means, they will lay hold of eternal life, and, in the presence of the Lord Jesus after the judgment have it bestowed upon them. John's epistle commences and concludes with affirmations concerning Eternal Life, whilst the substance of it reveals how it can be transmitted from hope to fact. As God is Light, Love and Life, so Darkness, Hate and Death negate all that He is and will reveal in the earth. Death is the wages of sin which He hates, and because it is the negation of all that He stands for, He decreed, under the Law, that it was defiling. Thus the Law proclaimed that Yahweh is Life and called upon all to seek that life which is found only in the sphere of faith towards Him. We live unto Him by building into our lives the Divine characteristics seen in that of the Lord Jesus.

# CHAPTER 5

### The New Life Is Begotten Of God — Vv. 1-5

*Begettal comes from belief, is manifested by love, and lays the foundation for victory over the world. Thus the believer develops along the progressive stages of Light (belief) and Love to Life.*

#### VERSE 1

"Whosoever believeth is born of God" — Belief is the means of divine begettal (RV), the Word of God being described as His seed (1 Pet. 1:23; 1 Cor. 4:15).

"Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" — This is seen in family relationships. The members of a family are drawn more closely together than they are with outsiders through ties of blood, and this natural fact illustrates the spiritual (1 Cor. 15:46). No greater insult can be paid a parent than to ignore or disparage its child. There is nothing that pleases a parent more than to see his children in mutual affection, and assisting one another. These principles will be in-

corporated into our Ecclesial associations if we are truly the begotten of God.

#### VERSE 2

"We love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments" — In v. 1 John has shown that spiritual begettal develops from belief, and this, in turn, will be manifested in mutual love within the family of God. John now shows that this love for our brethren is governed by the commandments of God, and therefore is not merely tolerance or goodwill apart from His requirements. Love, therefore, must be an expression of God's will, and will follow the sequence suggested in this Epistle. As God is first Light, so we as "children of light" will, in love reveal that light to others; as God is Love, we as the children of His love, will manifest it to others; as God is Life, we as begotten unto newness of life, will find a desire to foster that life in others as the channel of our love. Thus, all that John in this Epistle has revealed God to be, we will manifest to others.

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

### VERSE 3

**"This is the love of God that we keep His commandments"** — This is a most important definition of the love referred to, removing it entirely from mere emotion, and elevating it to an intelligent understanding of the will and purpose of Yahweh. The word "keep" is *tereo* to "guard," "watch over," "preserve," and though obedience is implied, it is obedience that stems from a meditative appreciation of Yahweh's requirements, and a wholehearted acceptance of the virtue of them.

**"His commandments are not grievous"** — The word is rendered "burdensome" in the Diaglott. Far from burdensome, His commandments or precepts are elevating, and when viewed properly actually lift the burden from life. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," is the invitation of the Lord (Matt. 11:28).

### VERSE 4

**"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world"** — The begotten of God derive from Him a strength that enables them to conquer all that is in the world (1 John 2:16; 4:4).

**"This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith"** — Faith and belief are related terms. Faith (*pistis*) is derived from belief (*pisteuon*) and expresses the confidence and conviction of belief. *Pistis* is rendered "belief" in 2 Thess. 2:13 etc. It is belief that constitutes the seed of God (1 Pet. 1:23) that begets the child of God, whilst it is faith (continuing belief) that sustains, develops and matures him, enabling him to overcome all life's problems. See 1 Cor. 15:57; Heb. 11:6.

### VERSE 5

**"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God"** — This belief unites us with Christ who overcame the world (John 16:33),

and by his example, and the forgiveness available in him, enables his followers to do likewise.

### The New Life Is Revealed Through Christ — Vv. 6-12

*Christ's life of obedience was revealed by a threefold witness, a witness that is available to all who are the begotten of God, and which authenticates their claim as such, and their relationship to Eternal Life.*

### VERSE 6

**"This is he that came by water and blood"** — In this statement "by" should be rendered "through" (*dia*). The declaration relates to Christ's public ministry. He was inducted into it through baptism (the water), and concluded it with his sacrifice on the cross (blood). The former announced it; the latter sealed it. Baptism is a symbol of sacrifice (Rom. 6:3), so that, in the Lord's case, his symbolic sacrifice culminated in a literal offering. Jesus came in the flesh (1 John 4:2) which had to be overcome in order that he might manifest the Father in flesh. His life of obedience culminated in his death on the cross which testified that the righteous character he had revealed in life had only been possible by denying the flesh. He rose to eternal life and thus gained the victory over the world. "Be of good cheer," he told his disciples just before his death, "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Both the water and the blood were elements in his victory, and both revealed that the flesh profits nothing, and must be atoned for. Jesus benefited by his own death, for God Who is just, raised him from the grave to life eternal "through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20).

**"It is the Spirit that beareth witness"** — The Holy Spirit poured out upon the Apostles brought all things to their remembrance (John 14:26), guided them in understanding, and brought the Divine revela-

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

tion to man to its completeness (1 Cor. 13: 9-10). Throughout the ages, God spake to man through His spirit in the prophets (Neh. 9:30), and finally did so through His Son and the Apostles (Heb. 1:1). This revelation of the Truth, therefore constitutes the breathing forth of the Spirit (*pneuma* — to breathe). So that believers are asked to "hearken to what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias" (Rev. 2:7). The results of the breathing forth of God in that way are found in His Word which constitutes the medium of the Spirit today. Accordingly, John taught that the spirit "beareth witness" to the truth.

**"Because the Spirit is truth" —** The Greek supplies the definite article: "The Spirit is the Truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). This definition of the Spirit is in accordance with the consistent teaching of the Scriptures. Jesus declared: "The words I speak, they are spirit" (John 6:63); Paul taught: "The sword of the spirit is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). The expressions of the Epistles which speak of believers possessing the spirit should be understood in the light of this definition (e.g. Gal. 5:16-17). However, by the "spirit" is meant more than the truth, if the latter is limited to a statement of faith, or an outline of mere doctrine. The spirit of a teaching is its power, so that when John declared: "The Spirit is the truth," he signified that the spirit is the power of truth a power which changes the believer's outlook and character.

### VERSE 7

**"For there are three that bear record" —** This is the only portion of this verse that should be retained. The rest of it including portion of v. 8 on to "the earth" is an interpolation, as is generally acknowledged. It is excluded in the R.V., Diaglott, Rotherhams, etc. The text should read: "For there are three that bear record, the Spirit," etc. The excluded portion of the verses is generally

acknowledged as spurious, and is not cited in any document earlier than the 5th century. The Diaglott comments: "It was first cited (though not as it now reads) by Virgilius Tapsensis, a Latin writer of no credit, in the latter end of the 5th century; but by whom forged, is of no great moment, as its design must be obvious to all." Its design was to support the doctrine of the Trinity which has no support in Scripture.

### VERSE 8

**"The Spirit, and the water, and the blood" —** These three elements of the one witness represent the Truth, Baptism and Sacrifice, and thus stand for progressive stages in the development of a walk of faith towards the kingdom of God. The truth must come first, but it must be followed by the water, and this must lead to a changed life of personal sacrifice. When a person graduates through all three stages, he reveals God in word, action and character, and the manifestation is complete apart from nature.

**"These three agree in one" —** The word "agree" is a translation of the Greek *eis* which implies movement towards an object; the object, in this case, being the witness; and the witness testifying to God manifest in the flesh. Where Truth leads to Baptism, and that in turn to a life of sacrifice, God is manifested, and where God is manifested, priesthood is revealed. Now Aaron and his sons were inducted into their priestly office by a threefold witness of spirit, water and blood because they were anointed (the symbol of the spirit — Lev. 8:12), washed (Lev. 8:6), and sprinkled with blood (Lev. 8:23). That which was foreshadowed under the Law, therefore, finds its substance in the Lord Jesus and his priestly sons (Heb. 2:13) who are consecrated to the Melchizedek priesthood (Heb. 7:26; 1 Peter 2:5; Rev. 5:9-10) by a threefold witness.

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

### VERSE 9

**"If we receive the witness of men"** — John Baptist witnessed to Christ, but spake by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 5:34-36; 8:17).

**"The witness of God is greater"** — See John 5:37; 8:18. Yahweh audibly witnessed to the fact that Jesus is His Son (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 12:28-29), and confirmed this by raising him from the dead (Rom. 1:4).

### VERSE 10

**"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself"** — The witness constituting the truth concerning God manifest in flesh stems from belief (John 5:38).

**"He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar"** — The great crime of those who believe not is clearly stated. Those who believe testify that God is true (John 3:33); those who do not believe proclaim Him a liar. As such they prove themselves to be of the devil (John 8:44).

**"Because he believeth not the record that God gave His Son"** — This record was not merely in openly testifying to his Sonship at his baptism, transfiguration and death, but also in the obvious testimony of God manifest in the flesh, as stated by Paul in 1 Tim. 3:16. In all that Christ said, did and revealed, there was heard or seen the manifestation of the Father. In doctrine (John 7:16), deeds (John 5:36), and demeanour (John 4:34) he revealed God unto man.

### VERSE 11

**"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life"** — To what extent has He given us it? The answer by John is, By promise (1 John 2:25). Paul declared that he was "in hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:1), and reasoned that "hope that is seen is not hope" (Rom. 8:24). Eternal life is immortal life, and its pre-

sent possession can only be implied on the principle that "God calleth those things that be not, as though they are" (Rom. 4:17). He is able to so speak because of His ability to grant it, and the certainty of us receiving it if we fulfil the conditions.

**"This life is in His Son"** — That being so, until that Son is manifested in our midst, we cannot possess it. Paul declared: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4). See also Phil. 3: 20-21; John 20:31.

### VERSE 12

**"He that hath the Son hath life"** — The definite article is given to "life" in the Greek. As in John 3:15, eternal life is set in contrast to "perishing". The alternative is to live or die eternally. Meanwhile, we have "the life" as we have "the Son" — in hope. We await the Son from heaven, and we await the eternal life that he will then bring with him to bestow upon those who qualify for it.

**"He that hath not the Son of God hath not life"** — The believer has the Son; the unbeliever has rejected the Son of God; the former has no need to be reminded whose Son the Lord is, and hence the qualifying statement "of God" is not added to the declaration concerning him; but the unbeliever is reminded of the extent of his loss when John appends the words "of God" to the Son.

### The New Life Will Be Crowned With Eternal Life — Vv. 13-15.

*John states that the purpose of his writing the Epistle is to remind believers of their privileged state, and to remind them of what the future will reveal.*

### VERSE 13

**"These things have I written unto you"** — Notice the important variation between the text of the A.V. and that of the Diaglott

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

Greek text: "These things have I written unto you, that you may know that you have eternal life who believe on the name of the Son of God."

John wrote his Gospel for a similar reason (John 20:31), but there is a subtle difference between both even though the language is similar. The Gospel displays the Lord as God manifest in flesh; the Epistle reveals this as it applies to the believer.

**"That believe on the name of the Son of God"** — These words are an interpolation and should be eliminated. See R.V.

**"That ye may know that ye have eternal life"** — The Greek word for "know" is *oida*, to intellectually comprehend, not *ginosko*, to experimentally know. The truly begotten of God have it in promise (1 John 2:25), and the certainty to receive it in fact if they fulfill the conditions. This is indicated by the use of the present tense. It is conditional upon belief, or faith.

**"And that ye may believe"** — This statement should be changed to "ye that believe." John did not write to strangers so that they may be brought to knowledge, but to those who already believed. See R.V.

### VERSE 14

**"And this is the confidence"** — See note on Ch. 2:28 for the significance of "confidence."

**"That we have in him"** — The Diaglott renders this: "towards him," the Greek preposition, *pros* signifying "towards."

**"That if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us"** — There is wonderful consolation in this statement on the efficacy of prayer. However, it is governed by certain conditions. The Greek suggests continuous action: "keep on asking," implying continuous prayer, such as Christ advocated in Luke 18:1. Further, prayer must be limited "according to his

will," or by the restrictions of the Truth (Rom. 8:27). Prayer is unavailing when it does not answer these conditions.

**"We have the petitions"** — The context speaks of forgiveness of sins and strength to conquer. We will receive both through prayer. Cp. 1 John 1:9.

### VERSE 15

**"If we know that He hear us"** — We know academically that God hears and answers prayer, because it has been promised us (John 14:13-14), therefore we should freely exercise the privilege and "always pray and not faint" (Luke 18:1).

### The New Life Can Be Strengthened Through Prayer — Vv. 16-17

*Prayer can strengthen the begotten of God to attain unto eternal life through the forgiveness of sins that are not unto death.*

### VERSE 16

**"A sin not unto death"** — John concerns himself with two kinds of sin in his Epistle: one which he defines as lawlessness (Ch. 3:4), and the other which he describes as wrong-doing (Ch. 5:17). The former is the sin of the person who in fact (in possible contrast to profession) refuses the restrictions of God, rejects the reality of sin, and is intolerant of the limitations of law. For such an attitude there is no forgiveness, unless the person manifesting it completely reverses his attitude of lawlessness. This is a sin unto death.

**"He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death"** — The punishment of sin is death, and forgiveness of sin must be obtained as a basis for life. God has undertaken to forgive sins of wrong-doing when they are confessed (1 John 1:9; James 5:15), and this provides "new life" to the believer. The Psalmist declared: "With Thy precepts Thou hast quickened me," or given me

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

new life. The term "life" is used in the sense of renewed vigor by Paul in 1 Thess. 3:8: "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." The Apostle found renewed vigor and life from the reports of faithful action on the part of the brethren that he received. So by prayer, and the forgiveness of sin, we can receive "life" now in this sense, as well as laying the foundation for eternal life in the future.

**"There is a sin unto death"** — John has already illustrated this by defining it as lawlessness (1 John 3:4), and revealing that one who lives in such a way "hath not the Son" (v 12). The person who persistently and deliberately rejects the Truth concerning Christ is committing such a sin (Heb. 10:26-30). If such will not heed the Word of Yahweh, He will not hear their words, nor words of prayer spoken on their behalf. The judgment will be on the basis of the Word (John 12:48), and for those who reject it there is no hope. Such were the separatists referred to in this Epistle (1 John 2:19, 22; 2 John 10).

### VERSE 17

**"All unrighteousness is sin"** — This is a further definition of sin (cp. 1 John 3:4), but, in this case, forgivable sin. The Greek word rendered "unrighteousness" signifies "wrong-doing." It is forgivable, because John in Ch. 1:9 declares: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

### The Confidence Of Proper Living —Vv. 18-21.

*The Apostle rounds off his Epistle by re-iterating the privileges of the spiritually begotten in Christ, and the loyalty to God which is expected of them.*

### VERSE 18

"We know that whosoever is

**born of God sinneth not"** — The sin in question, is the "sin unto death" which is the subject of the context (cp. v. 16 and see notes 1 John 3:8).

**"He keepeth himself"** — The Greek word is *tereo*, "to take care of," "to guard." The truly begotten of God will keep a guard over himself recognising the weakness of his nature.

**"That wicked one"** — The undisciplined propensities of the flesh; the word is sometimes translated "evil." (See note 1 John 3:10, 12).

**"Toucheth him not"** — The Greek word is more expressive; it is *hupto*, "to grasp," "lay hold of." The begotten of God recognises that the flesh is evil, that the propensity to sin is there (1 John 1:8), but guarding himself, he does not permit it to gain the ascendancy over him.

### VERSE 19

**"The whole world lieth in wickedness"** — The word "wickedness", is translated from the same word as "wicked one." It is *poneros*, and it is expressive of that which is evil. The word has been translated "evil" in many places. See Matt. 7:11; 12:34; 15:19; Mark 7:23 etc. Jesus declared "These evil things (or, lit. "these things of evil"-*poneros*) come from within". Christ therefore saw the flesh as the source of evil, and John adds: "the whole world lieth" in this evil. The expression is in the passive voice, which signifies that it "lieth unresisting in evil." The world is governed by the flesh, and because of that, it passively lies in wickedness. Jesus prayed that his followers might be kept "from the evil" (John 17:15), and here the same word is used. Because evil characterises the world about us, we must remain separate from it.

### VERSE 20

**"That we may know him"** — This is the whole purpose of



## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

Christ's mission, as he declared in his prayer to the Father: "This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). John's epistle thus commences and closes with a reference to Christ's intercessory prayer. It begins by emphasising the Fellowship (oneness) that is possible between believers and the Father and Son (1 John 1:3; John 17:21), and ends by declaring that the purpose of the revelation is to have an experimental knowledge of the Father, a reference to John 17:3.

**"In His Son"** — This is the only way of approach to God, the only way to attain unto a knowledge of Him. See 1 Thess. 1:13.

**"This is the true God"** — The word "true" is *alēthinos* which signifies that which is genuine and real. God is a living reality, not merely a doctrine, or a proposition in a creed. We must worship Him as such, and not in the impersonal or detached way of one who takes everything for granted

because idolatry has blinded his eyes.

**"And eternal life"** — This is the way to Eternal Life which can only be derived from God through Christ, and that by a knowledge of the Truth.

### VERSE 21

**"Little children, keep yourselves from idols"** — An idol is anything that usurps the place of God. Paul defines idolatry as covetousness (Col. 3:5). It is therefore not limited to worship of a pagan idol, but to the worship of self, materialism, family, home, business — anything that might blot out God from our spiritual sight. Idolatry is a very common sin, and we are all susceptible to it. John's parting exhortation is a call for unqualified allegiance to the things of God.

**"Amen"** — This word is excluded from the Revised Version, leaving the exhortation of this verse as the closing appeal of the Apostle.

### Theme Study

#### LIGHT

\* A physical attribute of the Father (1:5) \* A moral quality of saints (1:7) \* Manifested by Christ (2:8) \* Revealed in action by saints avoiding hatred (2:9) \* Revealed by manifesting love (2:10).

#### LOVE

\* Love defined (4:9-10) \* Generated by the Word (2:5) \* The outcome of love is sonship (3:1) \* It must be manifested to one another (3:11) \* It is the token of our changed status (3:14) \* It must find practical expression (3:17-18) \* It characterises the family of God (3:23-24) \* It demonstrates that we are begotten of God (4:7) \* It is inherent in God (4:8) \* God's example of love (4:11) \* The outworking of that example (4:12-16) \* The confidence engendered by love (4:17-18) \* True love demonstrates that we are of the family of God (5:1-3) \* Is manifested in belief and obedience (5:3) \* A love to be avoided (2:15) \* The inconsistency of a pseudo-love (4:20).

#### THE NEWLY BEGOTTEN

\* Avoid sin (2:1) \* Have their sins forgiven (2:12) \* Know the Father (2:13) \* Overcome the flesh through the Word (2:14) \* Abide in Christ (2:28) \* Are begotten of love (3:1) \* Cannot sin in the sense defined (3:9) \* Manifest love in deed and truth (3:18; 4:7) \* Provide strength to overcome errorists and the world (4:4) \* Are begotten of the Word (5:1) \* Conquer the world (5:4) \* Are guarded by the only Begotten of the Father (5:18).

## THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

### The Truth and the Home

*John's second epistle appears to have been written to an unnamed sister and mother in the truth whose mistaken kindness to errorists endangered both her home and the ecclesia. She was noted for her love and hospitality, to the extent that she was harboring those who were propagating serious error.*

*The Apostle gently tried to impress upon her the danger of such action. She doubtless was doing this because of a mistaken understanding of the term "love" and what it required.*

*John showed that the manifestation of a divine love demanded strict obedience to the commandments of God, which disciplined and narrowed the channel of love. There is no weakness in love, but a firm determination to maintain the purity of the faith, to the extent that hospitality was to be denied those guilty of serious error. Friendship for those in the truth, therefore, must be limited to those who embrace truth. This is a requirement of Love, a Love that gives God first place in our lives.*

*Though John in this epistle repeats much of what he states in his first Epistle, this second letter is an extremely important addition to the canon of Scripture, inasmuch as it reveals the application of the principles set forth for the guidance of the Ecclesia in relation to the home.*

*The Epistle has been interpreted as being directed to an ecclesia who is styled "the elect lady". This, indeed, was our opinion once; but a closer look at it has convinced us that it relates to an individual: an outstanding sister in the truth, one for whom John had the highest regard. But whether it is interpreted as being directed to an individual or an ecclesia, the message remains the same. Certainly, if John would have individuals act towards heretics in the home as he set forth herein, he would desire the Ecclesia to act in similar manner.*

*The Epistles of John establish a most important principle. It is that the love of "agape" can only be manifested along the channel of Light and Life. It reflects the divine Light and therefore cannot condone that which is related to death. It is more than kindness, it is a manifestation and extension to others of the grace that we receive from God, and which is governed by Truth. Therefore true love cannot be manifested where truth is absent, or where it is not the dynamics of the action performed.*

*This Second Epistle illustrates that fact.*

# *An Analysis*

## THE TRUTH AND THE HOME

(2 John)

★

**1. INTRODUCTION — vv. 1-4**

To Whom Written	v. 1-2.
Greetings	v. 3.
Condition	v. 4.

**2. EXPOSITION — vv. 5-6**

Love Defined	v. 5-6.
--------------	---------

**3. EXHORTATION — vv. 7-9**

Beware of deceivers	vv. 7-8.
Their evil influence	v. 9.

**4. APPLICATION — vv. 10-11**

False Charity To Be Avoided	vv. 10-11.
-----------------------------	------------

**5. INFORMATION — vv. 12-13**

Many Things To Explain	v. 12.
Final Greetings	v. 13.

# Verse by Verse Exposition

## INTRODUCTION

(Vv. 1-4)

*The Epistle is written to the "elect lady" whose children caused the Apostle to rejoice (v. 14), and whose relations send her greetings (v. 13).*

*Was that lady an individual or an ecclesia? The Epistle could be interpreted as being sent to either, but on reflection, it does seem strange that John should address an Ecclesia in that way, even though it is an appropriate title for the espoused bride of Christ. As he wrote his third Epistle to a specific person, it seems most likely that this one was likewise written to an individual, a Sister of outstanding repute in an Ecclesia.*

*Some have translated the Greek word for "Lady" as a proper noun, and addressed the Epistle to the elect Cyria (see Diaglott). It could well be so. Of greater importance to us, however, is the instruction of John as to how love should be applied in the home.*

### To Whom Written — Vv. 1-2.

*It is addressed to an outstanding sister in the Truth whose reputation for good is widespread, and whose example is imitated by others.*

### VERSE 1

**"The elder"** — The word is *presbutera*, and signifies one older in age. However, it is also used to define one of higher rank or office. The title was given to members of the Sanhedrin. In this case, it could apply to John in both ways. He was older, and higher in rank; therefore, on both counts, his words should be respected and heeded.

**"Elect lady"** — The adjective, "elect" signifies "chosen," and implies that she was outstanding among sisters. "Lady" is *Kyria* in Greek (Eng. Cyria), and might well be the name of the person to whom the Epistle is directed. It is so rendered in the Diaglott and other translations.

**"Whom I love" etc.** — This speaks of the character of Cyria, and of her reputation which was widespread. It was particularly necessary, in view of the latter,

that she should be circumspect in every way.

### VERSE 2

**"The truth's sake"** etc. — See 1 Peter 1:23-25.

### Greetings — V. 3

*The expressions of greeting are carefully selected, and are of greatest significance. They are not idle words used without meaning.*

**"Grace"** — Grace is divine favor. Christ is the vehicle of such to mankind (John 1:14, 16, 17), and he himself experienced it from God (Luke 2:52). It is extended to mankind through the offering of Christ, who humbled himself to make this possible (2 Cor. 8:9). In Christ Jesus we live in a sphere of grace (Rom. 5:2), though it is possible to fall from the high plane of favor to which we have been elevated (Eph. 2:6; Gal. 5:4). Grace is the position of favor in which Cyria had been elevated in Christ.

In the Greek, however, this is given in the future tense (see margin): "There shall be with us grace . . ." The benefits indicated

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

in these terms shall continue with us into the future.

**"Mercy"** — The word in the Greek signifies kindness and goodwill to those who need it, and is manifested in the forgiving of sins. Thus mercy is still needed by those who have embraced Christ and have experienced favor.

**"Peace"** — This was promised the Apostles by Christ (John 14:27). The Greek word *eirene* is derived from *eiro*, "to bind together." The peace thus indicated is not merely absence of antagonism, but a complete welding together of individuals in understanding and outlook. Such a peace is also indicated by the Hebrew word *shalom*, which implies fellowship as a means to the complete unity that awaits the redeemed in the age to come (John 17:21).

**"From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father"** — This is the only Source from whence true grace, mercy and peace can come. The very full title that John gives the Lord Jesus precludes any possibility of Trinitarian ideas. He is "the Son of the Father," not God the Son.

**"In truth and love"** — This is

the sphere in which grace, mercy and peace will be found, and the only basis upon which it can be derived, even through the Father and the Son. They cannot be obtained outside of the truth, and the divine love expressed in the sacrifice of Christ (1 John 4:9).

### Condition Of Cyria — V. 4.

*Cyria was one who had brought up her children to embrace the truth; she was either a widow (which is more likely), or wife of a husband who was not in the Truth.*

### VERSE 4

**"I rejoiced"** — The R.V. renders this in the present tense: "I rejoice greatly that I have found," etc. Cyria is commended for the way her children behave, which is a reflection of her own teaching and discipline in the home.

**"Of thy children"** — The word "of" is *ek* in the Greek, which signifies "out of," and implies that some of the children were not walking in the way described. So there were some in the family who did not reflect the wise counsel and guidance of the mother.

## EXPOSITION

### (Vv. 5-6)

*John provides Cyria with a definition of love, that narrows it down to principles of the truth. She had been mistaking acts of hospitality and kindness for love (vv. 10-11).*

### Love Defined — Vv. 5-6

*Love is not a boundless tolerance, not kindly hospitality, but respect for and obedience of the commandments of God and Christ.*

### VERSE 5

**"I beseech thee"** — The Greek expression signifies a request. John is somewhat peremptory in tone, as he reminds her of earlier instruction (perhaps his first epistle), and requests her to apply the ex-

hortations therein outlined. See 1 John 2:7; 3:11.

**"That we love one another"** — This emphasises that Cyria's acts of hospitality to heretics were not love as Scripturally defined.

### VERSE 6

**"This is love"** — It is thus defined, expounded, and limited. This is a divine love for God and man. The commandment is found in Mark 12:28-31; 1 John 5:3, and elsewhere. Warmth of feeling, acts

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

of kindness, are useless, even dangerous, in the absence of a true love here defined as keeping the

commandments of God and Christ. These commandments define and limit love.

### EXHORTATION

(Vv. 7-9)

*John warns Cyria that love will clearly see heretics as deceivers, and in order to guard that which has been given into her care, will demand separation from such. The doctrine that they set before their dupes will only bring death, and as death is defiling, so there is need to carefully avoid that which defiles. Cyria owed it to her family, some of whom were already drifting, to protect them from the influences of those who taught doctrines contrary to Truth. Love demanded that; and demanded that she exclude these heretics from her home, and thus care for those who were in her particular care.*

#### VERSE 7

**"For many deceivers are entered into the world"** — The R.V. renders this: "are gone forth into the world" linking this statement with that of 1 John 2:19. See also 1 John 2:26; 4:1. The word "deceivers" is *planos* in the Greek, and signifies "to wander, rove, mislead," and hence to lead astray. The cognate verb, *planao* is one frequently used by John—1 John 1:8; 2:26; 3:7. Rev. 2:20; 12:9; 13:14; 19:20; 20:3, 10.

**"Who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh"** — See note 1 John 2:22.

**"This is a deceiver and an antichrist"** — John's insistence upon love forming the basis of a believer's life does not prevent him frankly and clearly stating the real character of these errorists. See also 1 John 2:18, 22.

#### VERSE 8

**"Look to yourselves"** — This was the very personal exhortation of the Lord Jesus to the Apostles (Luke 21:34), which John now passes on to those who have come "to believe through their word." The word "look" is *blepo* in the Greek which signifies: "Keep a watchful eye upon." As the deceivers were active in all direc-

tions, there was a great need for Cyria and her household to keep a watchful eye upon themselves lest they be led astray also.

**"That we lose not those things"** — The R.V. changes the "we" into "ye." The word "lose" is translated from *apollumi* which signifies to "destroy," to "ruin." In Matt. 10:42 it is used to describe losing a reward. Cyria was endangering the reward that she would otherwise receive by her unwise hospitality and pseudo-charity which had the effect of introducing these deceivers into her household, and into the ecclesia. John warns that they could lead their dupes astray, and by so doing, draw them out of the sphere of the Father and the Son, and away from life eternal.

**"Which we have wrought"** — In using the plural pronoun, John emphasised the mutual labor in which Cyria had engaged upon with the Apostle, and which had apparently brought some to a knowledge of the truth.

**"That we receive a full reward"** — The R.V. transposes the "we" into "ye," and by so doing, emphasises that Cyria would be responsible for any loss caused through her unwise action in introducing these heretics to her

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

household and to the Ecclesia. What reward would be endangered by such action? The reward suggested in 1 Cor. 3:13-15. Paul there emphasises the need to build soundly on the foundation of Christ, and declares that if we do not do so, we shall suffer loss, even though we personally might gain salvation. This means that a person will not only be granted Eternal Life at the Judgment Seat, but also a higher or lower status according to the value of work performed at present. A person might remain personally faithful to the truth, and yet labor unskillfully within the ecclesia, so that his work for Christ is imperfect. He may be personally saved, but will suffer loss in that he will be held responsible for the faulty workmanship of his ecclesial labors. That was the case with Cyria in her home. She was a faithful sister, whose personal attitude pleased the Apostle, but she was acting foolishly in allowing these heretics entrance to her home or the ecclesia, for their influence could be such as to lead some of her family astray. For that she would be held responsible at the judgment seat, and whilst she may receive eternal life, she would

lack the full reward which would otherwise be hers. Cp. Luke 19: 17-18.

### The Evil Influence Of The Deceivers — V. 9

*The Apostle realistically shows the true character of the deceivers; a character that might have been disguised by pleasant manners or kind speech. He factually reveals them for what they were.*

#### VERSE 9

**“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ”** — According to the best Greek texts, “transgresseth” is from *proago*, and signifies, “to lead forth, to go before” (Vine). The R.V. accordingly renders this: “Goeth onward.” These deceivers led their dupes from out of the abiding place in Christ into the world which lieth in wickedness (1 John 5:19).

**“Hath not God”** — cp. 1 John 2:23.

**“He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ”** — The doctrine of Christ is the doctrine of God manifest in the flesh. See 1 John 1:7.

## APPLICATION

### (Vv. 10-11)

*Having provided Cyria with a clear and concise definition of love, having warned her of the true character of many who were posing as the custodians of truth, and exhorted her to look to her own because there was a danger of them wandering out of the way of righteousness, John now gives specific and Apostolic advice in regard to the application of these principles.*

#### False Charity To Be Avoided — Vv. 10-11

*Cyria had allowed mere emotion to govern her conception of love, and in the kindness of her heart, had opened her home to the enemy. John sternly warns against such action, and clearly shows what it involves.*

#### VERSE 10

**“IF”** — The Greek word is *ei* with the indicative mood, assuming hypothesis as an actual fact. Bullinger defines it as: “If any come, as I know they do...”

**“Receive him not into your house”** — The Ecclesias were frequently located in the homes of

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

their members (Rom. 16:5; Col. 4: 15; Acts 12:12); and Cyria could have been a woman like Mark's mother who maintained an open house for the work of the Truth. That being the case, the children of Cyria, to whom John makes mention (v.4), may have included spiritual ones. Whether her home be used for this purpose or not, the Apostolic command was clear: no hospitality to heretics in the form here indicated!

**"Neither bid him God-speed"** — We normally use the term, "God-speed" when we are farewelling somebody, but that is not the way John used it. The word "God" does not appear in the original form of the word. In the Greek it is *chairem*, and signifies, "Greeting, hail, rejoice!" Therefore it is

a salutation of welcome. This was not to be extended to heretics.

### VERSE 11

**"Partaker of his evil deeds"** — If Cyria persisted in extending a greeting to these heretics, and opening her home to them, she would have to share the responsibility for all the harm that their false doctrines could cause. Her love for God and her family must nerve her to show firm resistance without any external appearance of welcome. Her conception of the real danger of false doctrine would enable her to see the wisdom of the Apostolic injunction. To act otherwise than directed would jeopardise her own worship before God, as well as the spiritual welfare of those gathered in her home.

## INFORMATION

(Vv. 12-13)

*John expressed his anxiety to write to Cyria of many things, but he lacked opportunity for the moment. However, the matter advanced in this short letter was so important, that he dared not delay writing, and therefore immediately penned the letter. This, in itself, expresses the urgency of the matter.*

### Many Things To Explain — V. 12

*John states his intention of visiting Cyria personally, which would imply that she was a person and not an ecclesia.*

### VERSE 12

**"I would not write"** — John had given careful thought to this. The word "would" is from the Greek *boulomai* and signifies: "A purpose formed after mature consideration" (Bullinger). John had pondered the problems that he wished to discuss with Cyria carefully, and concluded that letter writing was a poor medium of communication for the things he wished to say and explain to her, as it could lead to misunderstanding. So, having written this preliminary letter of warning, the aged Apostle, in love, determined to go out of his way to person-

ally visit his sister. In all this we perceive the hand of God. It is obvious that John would not have written at all if he could have immediately visited Cyria, but something prevented him from doing so. In consequence we share the benefit of this important little letter.

**"Our joy may be full"** — This would be the case after mutual discussion, as he would be able to personally expound the things of God. See 1 John 1:4.

### Final Greetings — V. 13

*John is in touch with relations of Cyria, and sends their greetings to her. It may have been that the letter was written in view of information he had received from them.*



## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

### VERSE 13

"The children of thy elect sister greet thee" — The reference to these relations may have been intended as a gentle reminder that John was in possession of the facts. The absence of any greet-

ings from Cyria's sister herself would suggest that the mother of these children was not present or was dead.

"Amen" — This concluding word is not contained in the Greek mss.

### Theme Study

#### GOD

\* The Father (1:3; 2:1) \* A Being of Light (1:5) \* Is revealed through the Son (2:23) \* Extends fellowship to humanity dwelling in light (1:6; 2:24) \* His love manifested in begetting us to sonship (3:1) \* He is Omniscient (3:20) \* He answers prayer (3:22; 5:14-15) \* His basic commandments (3:23-24; 5:3) \* He strengthens His children (4:4) \* He is the Author of Love (4:7-8) \* He revealed that Love in Christ (4:9) \* He has created a debt of Love for us to repay (4:11) \* He dwells in believers (4:12-16) \* Dwells by His Spirit-Word (4:13) \* And through His sacrificial love (4:16) \* He begets sons to newness of life (5:1) \* And through His indwelling witness (5:10) \* He is the Author of eternal life (1:2 cp. 5:11) \* The Father of the Divine family on earth (5:19) \* He is revealed through His Son (5:20) \* He demands total and exclusive allegiance (5:21).

#### JESUS CHRIST

\* He is a visible, tangible body of life (1:1) \* Came in flesh (4:2) \* God's only begotten Son (4:9) \* Savior of the world (4:14) \* The Christ (5:1) \* Witnessed by water and blood (5:6) \* The manifestation of the Father (5:20) \* The way to life eternal (5:20) \* Life is in him (5:11) \* A sacrifice (3:16) \* An example of righteous living (2:6; 3:3) \* Destroyed the works of the devil (3:8) \* The Atonement (1:7) \* The Advocate (2:1) \* The Righteous (2:1) \* The propitiation (2:2) \* The need to abide in him (2:6) \* He is denied by antichrist (2:22) \* He is pure (3:3) \* Fellowship with him (1:3) \* He is coming again (2:28; 3:2) \* To be manifested visibly (3:2).

#### ACTION REQUIRED

\* Walking in light (1:7) \* Confession (i.e. recognition) of sin (1:9) \* Guard over commandments (2:3-4) \* Walk as Christ walked (2:6) \* Manifestation of Divine love and avoiding hate (2:7-11) \* Separating from the world (2:15) \* Allowing the Word to abide (2:24) \* Abiding in Christ (2:28) \* Manifesting righteousness (2:29) \* Purification of character (3:3) \* Love one another (3:11; 4:7, 20) \* Sacrificing self interest (3:16) \* Relieve the destitute (3:17) \* Love in deed, not merely in Word (3:18) \* Manifest belief and obedience (3:23-24) \* Testing all teaching (4:1) \* Harken to Apostolic counsel (4:6) \* Keeping commandments because of love of God (5:1-3) \* To overcome the world through faith (5:4).

#### FELLOWSHIP

\* Conditional upon walking in Light (1:6, 7) \* Enjoyed with the Father and Son (1:3).

## THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

# The Truth and the Individual

### THE EXAMPLE SET BY THREE INDIVIDUALS

*John's third epistle highlights the example of three entirely different individuals, all of whom professed to follow Christ. It brings the trio of Epistles to a natural conclusion. The first Epistle expounds the principle of God manifestation, with particular emphasis on love; the second epistle reveals its application in the home; the third epistle describes its influence on individuals. The first Epistle sets forth Ecclesial responsibilities; the second Epistle, Domestic responsibilities; the third Epistle, Personal responsibilities.*

*The third epistle was written to Gaius, and mentions Diotrophes and Demetrius. These three men each provide an example of behaviour to be emulated or avoided. Like the second Epistle, this is an intensely personal one. It is one which circumstances compelled John to write (v. 13), although he sought to avoid it. But the Spirit through John was writing for posterity, and it is to our benefit that we are able to study the contents of this short letter. We can follow the example of Gaius, Diotrophes or Demetrius. Let us learn to apply the good and avoid the evil.*

## An Analysis

### 1. GAIUS: THE SINCERE, DEDICATED, LOVABLE — vv. 1-8

Introduction	.....	v. 1.
Supplication	.....	v. 2.
Reputation	.....	v. 3.
Consolation	.....	v. 4.
Commendation	.....	v. 5.
Exhortation	.....	v. 6.
Explanation	.....	v. 7.
Reciprocation	.....	v. 8.

### 2. DIOTREPHESES: THE DOMINEERING, SELF-ASSERTIVE, ARROGANT — vv. 9-11

Usurper of Christ's Position	.....	v. 9.
Domineering and Arrogant	.....	v. 10.
An Example To Avoid	.....	v. 11.

### 3. DEMETRIUS: OF GOOD REPUTE TO ALL — v. 12

Apostolic Approval	.....	v. 12.
--------------------	-------	--------

### 4. LAST WORDS FROM JOHN — vv. 13-14

Concluding Greetings	.....	vv. 13-14.
----------------------	-------	------------

# Verse by Verse Exposition

## GAIUS: SINCERE, DEDICATED, LOVABLE

(Vv. 1-8)

*Gaius was an extremely common name in the days of the Apostle, and several men by that name are mentioned in the Scriptures. If this Gaius was the one mentioned in Romans 16:23 (and there are similarities about their characters), then he was converted by John (3 John 4), baptised by Paul (1 Cor. 1:14), and was a wealthy and hospitable member of the Ecclesia at Corinth.*

*John wrote this urgent message to him, to encourage him in the attitude he was adopting towards the truth, and to warn him against the overbearing demeanour of Diotrephes.*

### Introduction — V. 1

**"The elder"** — See note 2 John 1.

**"The wellbeloved"** — Greek *agapetos*, and denoting one who is a recipient of the divine *agape* or love. The R.V. renders this: "Beloved." He is given this title four times in the epistle (Vv. 1, 2, 5, 11) which is an indication of his character. He was not only a recipient of the divine love but manifested it towards others.

**"Gaius"** — Gaius signifies, "I am glad." He was noted for his sincerity (v. 3), for using his material resources faithfully (v. 5), and for his generosity (v. 6).

### Supplication — V. 2

**"I wish above all things"** — The R.V. changes this to, "I pray that in all things." John's prayer on the behalf of Gaius was that he should prosper in all ways, recognising that even material blessings come from God (James 1:17). His prayer acknowledged that Gaius used his resources to the very best advantage. This is ever the responsibility of brethren in a position like his (see 1 Cor. 16:2; 1 Tim. 6:17; Eccles. 5:19; 6:2).

**"Thou mayest prosper and be in health"** — This does not necessarily indicate that he had been in ill health, but was the normal greeting of the times. Deissman in *Light From The Ancient East*

quotes from the papyri to show this to be the case.

**"Even as thy soul prospereth"** — Gaius was a man whose life was given to the truth without stint, and the prayer of the Apostle was that the blessing of God might continue with him in all the circumstances of his life both physically and spiritually, even as it had to that moment. "Soul" is sometimes used for feeling, or the heart, as in Luke 1:46, in which case John prayed that the material and physical wellbeing of Gaius might equal his spiritual health.

### Reputation — V. 3

**"For"** — John discloses the reason why he was able to write: "Thy soul prospereth;" it was because he was "walking in the truth."

**"I rejoiced greatly"** — Cp. 2 John 4. John's joy at the faithful conduct of Gaius outweighed his sorrow at the folly of Diotrephes, as a comparison of the expressions used in regard to both does show.

**"The brethren came and testified"** — The aged, and probably only remaining, Apostle evidently received reports of Ecclesial activities from various parts of the Ecclesial world (cp. 2 John 4). These caused him both joy and sorrow as this Epistle reveals.

**"Thou walkest in the truth"** —

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

His manner of life was consistent with his beliefs.

### Consolation — V. 4

“I have no greater joy” — The R.V. makes this more emphatic: “Greater joy have I none than this...”

“That my children walk in truth” — The personal pronoun, “my,” is a translation of *emos* which denotes possession, power over, authorship, and right (Bullinger), and implies that Gaius was converted by John. There was particular joy for John that such as Gaius should so walk, for it testified that he had built thoroughly upon the foundation of Christ (1 Cor. 3:13-15). In like manner, Paul stated that the faith of the believers in Thessalonica would be a cause of rejoicing by him when they stood before Christ (1 Thess. 2:19).

### Commendation — V. 5

“Thou doest faithfully” — The R.V. renders this as, “a faithful work.” The context shows that Gaius extended material help to some who were preaching the Gospel, and John emphasises that his action in that regard was a work of faith, that is, one stimulated by the requirements of the Truth, and not merely an act of kindness.

“To the brethren, and to strangers” — The phrase does not mean to believers and non-believers, but to believers who were strangers, or visitors. The Diaglott renders, “and this to strangers.” The hospitality of Gaius was extended to all who were brethren, whether they were personally known to him or not (Heb. 13:1-2; Matt. 25:35, 40).

John referred particularly to brethren who were moving from place to place, to preach the word. Gaius had shown exceptional kindness to these brethren (v. 6), and assisted them materially in the spiritual work in which they were engaged. On the other hand, Diotrophes resisted them, as he felt

that these strangers would challenge his authority and standing. John commended the attitude of Gaius, and condemned that of Diotrophes.

### Exhortation — V. 6

“Which have borne witness of thy charity before the ecclesia” — The word “charity” is *agape*, elsewhere rendered “love.” The stranger-brethren who had met Gaius and had been assisted by him, had witnessed to his love and generosity before John and the ecclesia.

“Whom if thou bring forward on their journey” — John exhorted Gaius to maintain his action in supporting their efforts from place to place, and to give them every assistance in their labors. See similar expressions used in regard to Paul’s labors (Rom. 15:24; Tit. 3:13). This Apostolic commendation and exhortation was needful in view of the bitter hostility Gaius had received from Diotrophes who was a dominant personality in his Ecclesia.

“After a Godly sort” — The margin renders: “worthy of God,” and this is supported by the R.V. Gaius is encouraged to continue his support of the brethren concerned. They were doing a work of God, and should be encouraged (cp. Matt. 5:48; John 13:20). This is entirely opposite to the manner in which Cyria was to treat the heretics who had sought her hospitality.

“Because for his name’s sake they went forth” — The R.V. renders this: “For the sake of the name they went forth.” They revealed the qualities of the Name, and their work was dedicated to the proclamation of it. They, therefore, went forth on the Truth’s labor, and as such were worthy of the help that Gaius extended to them.

“Taking nothing of the Gentiles” — The word Gentiles is *ethnikos* (“heathen”) in Greek, as in Matt. 6:7; 18:17. They refused help from

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

such, and only accepted it from brethren, evidently adopting the procedure indicated in Luke 10:5-8.

### Reciprocation — V. 8

"We therefore ought to receive such" — Christ taught that one genuinely going forth in the name of another should receive a like reward (Matt. 10:41). John urged that brethren have a moral obligation to extend such help. The word for "ought" is *opheilo* and signifies a debt to be paid. See its use in 1 John 2:6; 3:16; 4:11.

The word "receive" is from the Greek *hupolambano* which is compounded of *hupo*, under, and *lambano*, to hold up. It therefore has the idea lifting up or supporting from beneath. The word is used

in connection with the cloud that bore up Christ (Acts 1:9), and is particularly appropriate to describe the refreshing support that such as Gaius must have rendered those brethren who were devoting their life to serve Christ. It signifies more than merely supporting them financially, for it involves the idea of personal association with the problems facing such. The R.V. renders the word as "welcome," and the Diaglott as "entertain."

"That we might be fellow helpers to the truth" — By personally identifying themselves in a material way with the work of those brethren, others such as Gaius became effective fellow helpers in their labor.

## DIOTREPES: DOMINEERING, SELF-ASSERTIVE, ARROGANT

(Vv. 9-11)

*In contrast to Gaius, Diotrepes enjoyed the pre-eminence among the brethren, and bitterly opposed anybody who might challenge this. He looked with suspicion upon those brethren who were travelling from place to place in the service of the truth. Their selfless dedication was a contrast to his political place-seeking, and he not only opposed them, and refused them a voice in the Ecclesia, but also vigorously challenged the right of such as Gaius to assist them. This led to verbal conflict. The Apostle was asked to adjudicate in the matter, but his instruction, which supported such as Gaius, was ignominiously rejected by the arrogant Diotrepes.*

*The attitude of Diotrepes was a menace to the spiritual development of the Ecclesia, even though he may have been quite sound doctrinally. Even an Apostle was not safe from his prating tongue. The doctrine of love, preached so effectively by John, demanded that Diotrepes be vigorously challenged, and effectually silenced, and the Apostle now proclaimed his intention of doing it.*

Usurper Of Christ's Position — that pagan god!

V. 9

### VERSE 9

"Diotrepes" — The name signifies, "Nourished by Jove." He certainly imitated the thunder of

"Loveth to have the pre-eminence among them" — In this statement, the word "loveth" is from *phileo* which relates to a feeling of friendliness towards an object;

## THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

the object in this context being self! Diotrefes desired the "pre-eminence," and in so doing craved the very position in the Ecclesia that should be reserved for Christ. It is he who should have "the pre-eminence" (Col. 1:18).

"He receiveth us not" — He refused the advances of the Apostle, and in so doing, rejected the help of Christ and of God (Luke 10:16). John had written unto the Ecclesia, but evidently Diotrefes had repudiated or destroyed the letter. The terms of John's comment would suggest the latter, for apparently, Gaius knew nothing of any such letter.

### Domineering And Arrogant — V. 10

#### VERSE 10

"If I come" — At that stage, John could not state with certainty as to when he would come, or even if such a visit were possible. He was then very old, and this fact could have made the visit hypothetical.

"I will remember his deeds" — The Apostle is administering a rebuke to Diotrefes based upon Christ's instruction in Matthew 18. He had first remonstrated with Diotrefes privately to no avail (v.9); he had then sent messengers who had been treated in a similar manner; now the Apostle states his intention of laying the facts before the Ecclesia (see Matt. 18:17). The R.V. renders: "I will bring to remembrance his works ..."

### Theme Study

#### THE WORLD

\* Lies in wickedness (5:19) \* Governed by fleshly lusts (2:16) \* Cannot comprehend believers (3:1) \* Hates the followers of Christ (3:13) \* Followers love not the world (2:15) \* Though Christ died for its sins (2:2; 4:9, 14) \* The world passes away (2:17) \* False teachers gone into the world (4:1) \* Antichrist manifested in the world (4:3) \* Antichrist accepted by the world (4:5) \* A greater strength within saints to overcome the world (4:4) \* Antagonism from the world (4:17) \* The begotten of God overcomes the world (5:4) \* Gains the victory by faith in Christ (5:4-5).

"Prating against us" — The word in the Greek signifies "to bubble or boil up," and suggests words that are both fluent and empty!

"With malicious words" — The Greek word is *poneros*, evil, pernicious. The R.V. renders it as "wicked."

"Neither doeth he himself receive the brethren" — The brethren are those referred to in Vv. 5-6 who were travelling from place to place preaching the Word. Whereas such as Gaius received them, and supported their efforts, Diotrefes rejected them, and hindered them in their labors.

"Forbiddeth them that would" — Probably on the grounds of Ecclesial control, he stood up against such as Gaius, and publicly indicted them for receiving and supporting these brethren.

"Casteth them out of the Ecclesia" — By so doing, Diotrefes imitated the action of the Pharisees (John 9:4, 35); so that Pharisaism was now found in the midst of the Ecclesia (Luke 11:52), justifying the harsh rebuke of the Apostle, who imitated the Lord Jesus in that regard.

### An Example To Be Avoided — V. 11

"Follow not that which is evil" — For the exhortation see Ps. 34:14; for the assurance of Divine help see 1 Pet. 3:11, 13. Gaius is exhorted to observe the example of Diotrefes in order to avoid it.

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

**DEMETRIUS: AN EXAMPLE TO EMULATE**

(V. 12)

*The final individual introduced to our attention is faithful Demetrius, who probably carried the letter to Gaius, and whose reputation was in accordance with the truth and the subject of Apostolic endorsement .*

**Apostolic Approval — V. 12**

**VERSE 12**

**“Demetrius”** — Demetrius was a very common name, and the individual in question cannot be identified. The name means *Belonging to Demeter or Ceres*, the goddess of agriculture and rural life. He was probably the bearer of the Epistle. It is thought that John wrote from Ephesus, and if so, this Demetrius was a great contrast to the other Demetrius mentioned in Acts 19:24.

**“A good report of all”** — As such he was a contrast to Diotrefes, and a character that Gaius could safely emulate.

**“And of the truth itself”** — His life was a consistent manifestation of the truth he embraced and taught (1 John 3:18-19).

**“Our record is true”** — John’s commendation of Demetrius and warning against Diotrefes was true to fact, and could not be gainsaid by his opponents.

**FINAL GREETINGS**

(Vv. 13-14)

*With a few words of final greeting to his friend and brother, the faithful and hospitable Gaius, John lays down his pen.*

**VERSE 13**

**“I had many things to write”** — See note 2 John 12.

**“With pen”** — The word in the Greek signifies a reed pen as distinguished from a sharp stylus such as was used for writing on waxed tablets.

**VERSE 14**

**“I trust”** — The R.V. renders this as “hope.”

**“Peace”** — See note 2 John 3.

**“Greet the friends”** — He carefully discriminated between friends and enemies such as Diotrefes!

**“By name”** — This is a most important and significant addition.

John was a shepherd to the flock, leading it to Christ. As such he knew the sheep “by name,” and so called them along the way they should go (John 10:3). With this note, he lay down his pen, to continue his labors by personal instruction. One day all these individuals will be brought together at the judgment seat of Christ. And then will be recognised the wisdom of John’s instruction, and the abiding power of that self-sacrificing love that he taught and manifested. Let us learn from his words, and the experiences of his times, and let us build into our lives those divine attributes of virtue manifested by the Lord Jesus and by the Apostles who were changed for good by their contact with Him.