

1 John

The Prologue to the Letter

1:1 This is what we proclaim to you:¹ what was from the beginning,² what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and our hands have touched (concerning the word of life – 1:2 and the life was revealed, and we have seen and testify and announce³ to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us).⁴ 1:3 What we have seen and heard we announce⁵ to you too, so that⁶ you may have fellowship⁷ with us (and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ). 1:4 Thus⁸ we are writing these things so that⁹ our¹⁰ joy may be complete.¹¹

1 tn The phrase “This is what we proclaim to you” is not in the Greek text, but has been supplied to clarify the English. The main verb which governs all of these relative clauses is ἀπαγγέλλομεν (*apangellomen*) in v. 3. This is important for the proper understanding of the relative clauses in v. 1, because the main verb ἀπαγγέλλομεν in v. 3 makes it clear that all of the relative clauses in vv. 1 and 3 are the *objects* of the author’s proclamation to the readers rather than the *subjects*. To indicate this the phrase “This is what we proclaim to you” has been supplied at the beginning of v. 1.

2 tn Grk “That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard...”

3 tn Or “proclaim.”

4 tn In the Greek text the prologue to 1 John (vv. 1-4) makes up a single sentence. This is awkward in Greek, and a literal translation produces almost impossible English. For this reason the present translation places a period at the end of v. 2 and another at the end of v. 3. The material in parentheses in v. 1 begins the first of *three* parenthetical interruptions in the grammatical sequence of the prologue (the second is the entirety of v. 2 and the third is the latter part of v. 3). This is because of the awkwardness of connecting the prepositional phrase with what precedes, an awkwardness not immediately obvious in most English translations: “what we beheld and our hands handled concerning the word of life...” As J. Bonsirven (*Épîtres de Saint Jean* [CNT], 67) noted, while one may *hear* about the word of life, it is more difficult to see about the word of life, and impossible to *feel* with one’s hands about the word of life. Rather than being the *object* of any of the verbs in v. 1, the prepositional phrase at the end of v. 1 (“concerning the word of life...”) is more likely a parenthetical clarification intended to specify the *subject* of the eyewitness testimony which the verbs in v. 1 describe. A parallel for such parenthetical explanation may be found in John 1:12 (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, *tois pisteuousin eis to onoma autou*).

5 tn Or “proclaim.”

6 tn The ἵνα (*hina*) here indicates purpose.

7 tn Or “communion”; or “association” (a reality shared in common, so in this case, “genuine association”). This term also occurs in vv. 6, 7.

8 tn “Thus” is supplied to indicate the resultative nature of the Greek conjunction καὶ (*kai*) at the beginning of v. 4.

9 tn The ἵνα (*hina*) here indicates purpose.

10 tn A number of MSS, some of them important (A C K P 33 81 1505 1739 pm sy^h bo), read ὑμῶν (*humōn*, “your”) rather than ἡμῶν (*hemōn*, “our”), which is found in somewhat better witnesses (N B L Ψ 049 1241 pm sy^p sa). Although the majority of Byzantine minuscules are split between the two readings, the *Textus Receptus* reads ὑμῶν. It is possible that

God Is Light, So We Must Walk in the Light

1:5 Now¹² this is the gospel¹³ message¹⁴ we

ὁμῶν represents a scribal assimilation to John 16:24. As far as the immediate context is concerned, either reading could possibly be original, since the recipients have already been mentioned in 1:2 (ὁμῖν, *humīn*) and 1:3 (ὁμῖν), while it might seem more natural for the author to be concerned about the fulfillment of his own joy than his readers’ (cf. 2 John 4, 12; 3 John 3). Overall, the first person pronoun is preferred on both external and internal grounds.

11 tn Grk “be fulfilled.”

sn This is what we proclaim to you...so that our joy may be complete. The prologue to 1 John (1:1-4) has many similarities to the prologue to the Gospel of John (1:1-18). Like the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, the prologue to 1 John introduces the reader to important themes which will be more fully developed later in the body of the work. In the case of 1 John, three of these are: (1) the importance of eyewitness testimony to who Jesus is (cf. 4:14, 5:6-12), (2) the importance of the earthly ministry of Jesus as a part of God’s revelation of himself in Jesus Christ (cf. 4:2, 5:6), and (3) the eternal life available to believers in Jesus Christ (5:11-12, 5:20). Like the rest of the letter, the prologue to 1 John does not contain any of the usual features associated with a letter in NT times, such as an opening formula, the name of the author or sender, the name(s) of the addressee(s), a formal greeting, or a health wish or expression of remembrance. The author of 1 John begins the prologue with an emphasis on the eyewitness nature of his testimony. He then transitions to a focus on the readers of the letter by emphasizing the proclamation of this eyewitness (apostolic) testimony to them. The purpose of this proclamation is so that the readers might share in fellowship with the author, a true fellowship which is with the Father and the Son as well. To guarantee this maintenance of fellowship the author is writing the letter itself (line 4a). Thus, in spite of the convoluted structure of the prologue in which the author’s thought turns back on itself several times, there is a discernible progression in his thought which ultimately expresses itself in the reason for the writing of the letter (later expressed again in slightly different form in the purpose statement of 5:13).

12 tn The καὶ (*kai*) at the beginning of 1:5 takes on a resumptive force, indicated by the phrase “heard from him and announce to you,” which echoes similar phrases in 1:2 and 1:3.

13 tn The word “gospel” is not in the Greek text but is supplied to clarify the meaning. See the note on the following word “message.”

14 tn The word ἀγγελία (*angelia*) occurs only twice in the NT, here and in 1 John 3:11. It is a cognate of ἐπαγγελία (*epangelia*) which occurs much more frequently (some 52 times in the NT) including 1 John 2:25. BDAG 8 s.v. ἀγγελία 1 offers the meaning “message” which suggests some overlap with the semantic range of λόγος (*logos*), although in the specific context of 1:5 BDAG suggests a reference to the gospel. (The precise “content” of this “good news” is given by the ὅτι [*hoti*] clause which follows in 1:5b.) The word ἀγγελία here is closely equivalent to εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*): (1) it refers to the proclamation of the eyewitness testimony about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ as proclaimed by the author and the rest of the apostolic witnesses (prologue, esp. 1:3-4), and (2) it relates to the salvation of the hearers/readers, since the purpose of this proclamation is to bring them into fellowship with God and with the apostolic witnesses (1:3). Because of this the adjective “gospel” is included in the English translation.

have heard from him¹ and announce to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.² **1:6** If we say we have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking³ in the darkness, we are lying and not practicing⁴ the truth. **1:7** But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses⁵ us from all sin.⁶ **1:8** If we say we do not

bear the guilt of sin,⁷ we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. **1:9** But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous,⁸ forgiving⁹ us our sins and cleansing¹⁰ us from all unrighteousness. **1:10** If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. **2:1** (My little children,¹¹ I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.¹²) But if anyone does sin, we have an

1 tn The referent of the pronoun “him” is not entirely clear in the Greek text; it could be either (1) God the Father, or (2) Jesus Christ, both of whom are mentioned at the end of v. 3. A reference to Jesus Christ is more likely because this is the nearest possible antecedent, and because God (the Father) is specifically mentioned in the following clause in v. 5.

2 tn The key to understanding the first major section of 1 John, 1:5-3:10, is found in the statement in v. 5: “*God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.*” The idea of “proclamation” – the apostolic proclamation of eyewitness testimony which the prologue introduces (1:2, 3) – is picked up in 1:5 by the use of the noun ἀγγελία (*angelia*) and the verb ἀναγγέλλομεν (*anangelomen*), cognate to the verb in 1:3. The content of this proclamation is given by the ὅτι (*hoti*) clause in 1:5 as the assertion that God is light, so this statement should be understood as the author’s formulation of the apostolic eyewitness testimony introduced in the prologue. (This corresponds to the apostolic preaching elsewhere referred to as κήρυγμα [*kērugma*], although the term the Apostle John uses here is ἀγγελία.)

3 sn Following the theme statement in 1:5, *God is light and in him there is no darkness at all*, the author presents a series of three claims and counterclaims that make up the first unit of 1 John (1:5-2:2). The three claims begin with “if” (1:6, 8, 10) and the three counterclaims begin with “but if” (1:7, 9; 2:1).

4 tn The context of this statement in 1:6 indicates clearly that the progressive (continuative or durative) aspect of the present tense must be in view here.

5 sn The relationship of the phrase *keep on walking to if we say* is very important for understanding the problem expressed in 1:6. If one should say (εἰπομεν, *eipōmen*) that he has fellowship with God, and yet continues walking (περιπατοῦμεν, *peripatōmen*) in the darkness, then it follows (in the apodosis, the “then” clause) that he is lying and not practicing the truth.

4 tn Or “living according to...”

5 tn Or “purifies.”

6 tn BDAG 50 s.v. ἁμαρτία 1 defines this term as “a departure fr. either human or divine standards of uprightness” (see 1 John 5:17 where ἁμαρτία [*hamartia*] and ἀδικία [*adikia*] are related). This word occurs 17 times in 1 John, of which 11 are singular and 6 are plural.

7 sn From *all sin*. Sometimes a distinction between singular “sin” and plural “sins” has been suggested: Some would see the singular *all sin* of 1:7 as a reference to sinfulness before conversion and the plural *sins* of 1:9 as a reference to sins committed after one became a Christian. This amounts to making 1:7 refer to initial justification and 1:9 to sanctification. But the phrase *all sin* in 1:7 is so comprehensive that it can hardly be limited to preconversion sins, and the emphasis on “walking” in 1:7 strongly suggests that the Christian life is in view (not one’s life before conversion). In 1 John 1:8 sin appears as a condition or characteristic quality, which in 1:10 is regarded as universal. Apart from forgiveness in Christ it results in alienation from God (2:15) and spiritual death (3:14). But according to 1 John 1:7, cleansing from sin is possible by the blood (representing the sacrificial death) of Jesus.

7 tn Grk “say we do not have sin.” The use of ἔχω + ἁμαρτία (*echō + hamartia*) is an expression limited to John and 1 John in the NT. On the analogy with other constructions where ἔχω governs an abstract noun (e.g., 1 John 1:3, 6, 7; 2:28; 3:3, 15, 21; 4:16, 17; 5:12-13), it indicates that a *state* is involved, which in the case of ἁμαρτία would refer to a *state of sin*. The four times the expression ἔχω + ἁμαρτία occurs in the Gospel of John (9:41; 15:22, 24; 19:11) all refer to situations where a wrong action has been committed or a wrong attitude has already existed, resulting in a state of sin, and then something else happens which further emphasizes the evil of that action or attitude. Here in 1 John 1:8 the sense is the same. The author is addressing people who have sinned (resulting in a state of sin), warning them that they cannot claim to be free from the guilt of that sin. The context of 1 John does not imply libertinism (where sins are flaunted as a way of demonstrating one’s “liberty”) on the part of the opponents, since the author makes no explicit charges of immoral behavior against his opponents. The worst the author explicitly says is that they have failed to love the brethren (1 John 3:17). It seems more likely that the opponents were saying that things a believer did after conversion were not significant enough to be “sins” that could challenge one’s intimate relationship with God (a relationship the author denies that the opponents have to begin with).

8 tn Or “just.”

9 tn The ἵνα (*hina*) followed by the subjunctive is here equivalent to the infinitive of result, an “ecbatic” or consecutive use of ἵνα according to BDAG 477 s.v. 3 where 1 John 1:9 is listed as a specific example. The translation with participles (“forgiving, ...cleansing”) conveys this idea of result.

10 tn Or “purifying.”

11 sn *My little children*. The direct address by the author to his readers at the beginning of 2:1 marks a break in the pattern of the opponents’ claims (indicated by the phrase *if we say* followed by a negative statement in the apodosis, the “then” clause) and the author’s counterclaims (represented by *if* with a positive statement in the apodosis) made so far in 1:6-10. The seriousness of this last claim (in 1:10) causes the author to interrupt himself to address the readers as his faithful children and to explain to them that while he wants them not to sin, they may be assured that if they do, they can look to Jesus Christ, as their advocate with the Father, to intercede for them. After this, the last of the author’s three counterclaims in 1:5-2:2 is found in the *if* clause in 2:1b.

12 tn There is some dispute over the significance of the aorist tense of ἁμαρτήτε (*hamartēte*): (1) F. Stagg (“Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy in the Johannine Epistles,” *RevExp* 67 [1970]:423-32, esp. 428) holds that the aorist is nondescriptive, saying nothing about the nature of the action itself, but only that the action has happened. This is indeed the normal aspectual value of the aorist tense in general, but there is some disagreement over whether with this particular verb there are more specific nuances of meaning. (2) M. Zerwick (*Biblical Greek* §251) and N. Turner (MHT 3:72) agree that the *present* tense of ἁμαρτάνω (*hamartanō*) means “to be in a state of sin” (i.e., a sinner) while the *aorist* refers to specific acts of sin. Without attempting to sort out this particular dispute, it should be noted that certain verbs do have different nuances of meaning in different tenses, nuances which do not derive solely from the aspectual value of the tense per se, but from a combination of semantic factors which vary from word to word.

3 sn So *that you may not sin*. It is clear the author is *not* simply exhorting the readers not to be habitual or repetitive sinners, as if to imply that occasional acts of sin would be acceptable.

advocate⁴ with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One,² 2:2 and he himself is the atoning sacrifice³ for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world.⁴

Keeping God's Commandments

2:3 Now⁵ by this we know that we have

The purpose of the author here is that the readers not sin at all, just as Jesus told the man he healed in John 5:14 "Don't sin any more."

1 tn The description of the Holy Spirit as "Paraclete" is unique to the Gospel of John (14:16, 26; 15:26; and 16:7). Here, in the only other use of the word in the NT, it is Jesus, not the Spirit, who is described as παρακλητος (*paraklētos*). The reader should have been prepared for this interchangeability of terminology, however, by John 14:16, where Jesus told the disciples that he would ask the Father to send them 'another' paraclete (ἄλλος, *allos*, "another of the same kind"). This implies that Jesus himself had been a paraclete in his earthly ministry to the disciples. This does not answer all the questions about the meaning of the word here, though, since it is not Jesus' role as an advocate during his earthly ministry which is in view, but his role as an advocate in heaven before the Father. The context suggests intercession in the sense of legal advocacy, as stress is placed upon the righteousness of Jesus (Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον, *Iesoun Christon dikaiōn*). The concept of Jesus' intercession on behalf of believers does occur elsewhere in the NT, notably in Rom 8:34 and Heb 7:25. Something similar is taking place here, and is the best explanation of 1 John 2:1. An English translation like "advocate" or "intercessor" conveys this.

2 tn Or "Jesus Christ the righteous."

3 tn A suitable English translation for this word (ἱλασμός, *hilasmos*) is a difficult and even controversial problem. "Expiation," "propitiation," and "atonement" have all been suggested. L. Morris, in a study that has become central to discussions of this topic (*The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 140), sees as an integral part of the meaning of the word (as in the other words in the ἱλοσκομαι [*hilaskomai*] group) the idea of turning away the divine wrath, suggesting that "propitiation" is the closest English equivalent. It is certainly possible to see an averting of divine wrath in this context, where the sins of believers are in view and Jesus is said to be acting as Advocate on behalf of believers. R. E. Brown's point (*Epistles of John* [AB], 220-21), that it is essentially cleansing from sin which is in view here and in the other use of the word in 4:10, is well taken, but the two connotations (averting wrath and cleansing) are not mutually exclusive and it is unlikely that the propitiatory aspect of Jesus' work should be ruled out entirely in the usage in 2:2. Nevertheless, the English word "propitiation" is too technical to communicate to many modern readers, and a term like "atoning sacrifice" (given by Webster's *New International Dictionary* as a definition of "propitiation") is more appropriate here. Another term, "satisfaction," might also convey the idea, but "satisfaction" in Roman Catholic theology is a technical term for the performance of the penance imposed by the priest on a penitent.

sn The Greek word (ἱλασμός, *hilasmos*) behind the phrase *atoning sacrifice* conveys both the idea of "turning aside divine wrath" and the idea of "cleansing from sin."

4 tn Many translations supply an understood repetition of the word "sins" here, thus: "but also for the sins of the whole world."

5 tn The translation of καί (*kai*) at the beginning of 2:3 is important for understanding the argument, because a similar καί occurs at the beginning of 1:5. The use here is not just a simple continuative or connective use, but has more of a resumptive force, pointing back to the previous use in 1:5.

sn Now. The author, after discussing three claims of the opponents in 1:6, 8, and 10 and putting forward three counterclaims of his own in 1:7, 1:9, and 2:1, now returns to the theme of "God as light" introduced in 1:5. The author will now discuss how a Christian may have assurance that he or she has come to know the God who is light, again by contrast with

come to know God:⁶ if we keep his commandments. 2:4 The one who says "I have come to know God"⁷ and yet does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in such a person. 2:5 But whoever obeys his⁸ word, truly in this person⁹ the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in him. 2:6 The one who says he resides¹⁰ in

the opponents who make the same profession of knowing God, but lack the reality of such knowledge, as their behavior makes clear.

6 tn Grk "know him." (1) Many take the third person pronoun αὐτον (*auton*) to refer to Jesus Christ, since he is mentioned in 2:1 and the pronoun αὐτός (*autos*) at the beginning of 2:2 clearly refers to him. But (2) it is more likely that God is the referent here, since (a) the assurance the author is discussing here is assurance that one has come to know God (all the claims of the opponents in 1:5-2:11 concern knowing and having fellowship with the God who is light); (b) when Jesus Christ is explicitly mentioned as an example to follow in 1 John 2:6, the pronoun ἐκεῖνος (*ekeinōs*) is used to distinguish this from previous references with αὐτός; (c) the καί (*kai*) which begins 2:3 is parallel to the καί which begins 1:5, suggesting that the author is now returning to the discussion of God who is light, a theme introduced in 1:5. The author will now discuss how a Christian may have assurance that he or she has come to know the God who is light.

7 tn Grk "know him." See the note on the phrase "know God" in 1 John 2:3 for explanation.

8 tn The referent of this pronoun is probably to be understood as God, since God is the nearest previous antecedent.

9 tn Grk "in him."

10 tn The Greek verb μένω (*menō*) is commonly translated into contemporary English as "remain" or "abide," but both of these translations have some problems: (1) "Abide" has become in some circles almost a "technical term" for some sort of special intimate fellowship or close relationship between the Christian and God, so that one may speak of Christians who are "abiding" and Christians who are not. It is accurate to say the word indicates a close, intimate (and permanent) relationship between the believer and God. However, it is very important to note that for the author of the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles every genuine Christian has this type of relationship with God, and the person who does not have this type of relationship (cf. 2 John 9) is not a believer at all (in spite of what he or she may claim). (2) On the other hand, to translate μένω as "remain" removes some of these problems, but creates others: In certain contexts, such a translation can give the impression that those who currently "remain" in this relationship with God can at some point choose not to "remain", that is, to abandon their faith and return to an unsaved condition. While one may easily think in terms of the author's opponents in 1 John as not "remaining," the author makes it inescapably clear in 2:19 that these people, in spite of their claims to know God and be in fellowship with God, never really were genuine believers. (3) In an attempt to avoid both these misconceptions, this translation renders μένω as "reside" except in cases where the context indicates that "remain" is a more accurate nuance, that is, in contexts where a specific change of status or movement from one position to another is in view.

sn The Greek word μένω (*menō*) translated *resides* indicates a close, intimate (and permanent) relationship between the believer and God. It is very important to note that for the author of the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles every genuine Christian has this type of relationship with God, and the person who does not have this type of relationship (cf. 2 John 9) is not a believer at all (in spite of what he or she may claim).

God⁴ ought himself to walk² just as Jesus³ walked.

2:7 Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning.⁴ The old commandment is the word that you have already⁵ heard. **2:8** On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you which is true in him⁶ and in you, because⁷ the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.⁸ **2:9** The one who says he is in the light but still hates⁹ his fellow Christian¹⁰ is still in the darkness.

¹ **tn** Grk “in him.” Context indicates a reference to God since a different pronoun, ἐκεῖνος (*ekeinos*), is used later in the same verse to indicate a reference to Jesus. See the note on “Jesus” later in this verse.

² **tn** That is, ought to behave in the same way Jesus did. “Walking” is a common NT idiom for one’s behavior or conduct.

³ **tn** Grk “that one.” Context indicates a reference to Jesus here. It is clear that ἐκεῖνος (*ekeinos*) here does not refer to the same person as αὐτῷ (*autō*) in 2:6a. The switch to ἐκεῖνος indicates a change in the referent, and a reference to Jesus Christ is confirmed by the verb περιεπάτησεν (*periepatesen*), an activity which can only describe Jesus’ earthly life and ministry, the significance of which is one of the points of contention the author has with the opponents. In fact, ἐκεῖνος occurs 6 times in 1 John (2:6; 3:3, 5, 7, 16; and 4:17), and each one refers to Jesus Christ.

⁴ **sn** See John 13:34-35.

⁵ **tn** “Already” is not in the Greek text, but is supplied for clarity.

⁶ **tn** “In him” probably refers to Jesus Christ since the last third person pronoun in 2:6 referred to Jesus Christ and there is no indication in the context of a change in referent.

⁷ **tn** The clause beginning with ὅτι (*hoti*) is often taken as (1) exegetical or (2) appositional to the commandment (ἐντολήν, *entolēn*) giving a further explanation or clarification of it. But the statement following the ὅτι is about light and darkness, and it is difficult to see how this has anything to do with the commandment, especially as the commandment is related to the “new commandment” of John 13:34 for believers to love one another. It is far more likely that (3) the ὅτι clause should be understood as causal, but this still does not answer the question of whether it offers the reason for writing the “new commandment” itself or the reason for the relative clause (“that is true in him and in you”). It probably gives the reason for the writing of the commandment, although R. E. Brown (*Epistles of John* [AB], 268) thinks it refers to both.

⁸ **sn** The reference to the darkness...passing away and the true light...already shining is an allusion to John 1:5, 1:9, and 8:12. Because the author sees the victory of light over darkness as something already begun, he is writing Jesus’ commandment to love one another to the readers as a reminder to (1) hold fast to what they have already heard (see 1 John 2:7) and (2) not be influenced by the teaching of the opponents.

⁹ **tn** Grk “the one saying he is in the light and hating his brother.” Here καί (*kai*) has been translated as “but” because of the contrast present in the two clauses.

¹⁰ **tn** Grk “his brother.” Here the term “brother” means “fellow believer” or “fellow Christian” (cf. BDAG 18 s.v. ἀδελφός 2.a). In the repeated uses of this form of address throughout the letter, it is important to remember that sometimes it refers (1) to genuine Christians (those who have remained faithful to the apostolic eyewitness testimony about who Jesus is, as outlined in the Prologue to the letter, 1:1-4; an example of this usage is 2:10; 3:14, 16), but often it refers (2) to the secessionist opponents whose views the author rejects (examples are found here at 2:9, as well as 2:11; 3:10; 3:15; 3:17; 4:20). Of course, to be technically accurate, in the latter case the reference is really to a “fellow member of the community”; the use of the term “fellow Christian” in the translation no

2:10 The one who loves his fellow Christian¹¹ resides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.¹² **2:11** But the one who hates his fellow Christian¹³ is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.¹⁴

Words of Reassurance

2:12 I am writing to you,¹⁵ little children, that¹⁶ your sins have been forgiven because of

more implies that such an individual is genuinely saved than the literal term “brother” which the author uses for such people. But a translation like “fellow member of the community” or “fellow member of the congregation” is extremely awkward and simply cannot be employed consistently throughout.

¹¹ **tn** See note on the term “fellow Christian” in 2:9.

¹² **tn** The third person pronoun αὐτῷ (*autō*) could refer either (1) to the person who loves his brother or (2) to the light itself which has no cause for stumbling “in it.” The following verse (2:11) views darkness as operative within a person, and the analogy with Ps 119:165, which says that the person who loves God’s law does not stumble, expresses a similar concept in relation to an individual. This evidence suggests that the person is the referent here.

¹³ **sn** The one who hates his fellow Christian. The author’s paradigm for the opponents portrays them as those who show hatred for fellow Christians (Grk “brothers,” but not referring to one’s physical siblings). This charge will be much more fully developed in chap. 3, where the author will compare the opponents to Cain (who is the model for one who hates a brother, since he ultimately murdered his own brother). In 1 John 3:17 the specific charge against the opponents will be failing to give material aid to a brother in need.

¹⁴ **sn** 1 John 2:3-11. The section 2:3-11 contains three claims to intimate knowledge of God, each introduced by the phrase the one who says (participles in the Greek text) in 2:4, 6, and 9. As with the three claims beginning with “if” in the previous section (1:6, 8, 10), these indirectly reflect the claims of the opponents. Each claim is followed by the author’s evaluation and its implications.

¹⁵ **sn** I am writing to you. The author appears to have been concerned that some of his readers, at least, would accept the claims of the opponents as voiced in 1:6, 8, and 10. The counterclaims the author has made in 1:7, 9, and 2:1 seem intended to strengthen the readers and reassure them (among other things) that their sins are forgiven. Further assurances of their position here is in keeping with such a theme, and indeed, the topic of reassurance runs throughout the entire letter (see the purpose statement in 5:13). Finally, in such a context the warning which follows in 2:15-17 is not out of place because the author is dealing with a community that is discouraged by the controversy which has arisen within it and that is in need of exhortation.

¹⁶ **tn** The ὅτι (*hoti*) that follows all six occurrences of γράφω/ἔγραψα (*graphō/egrapsa*) in 2:12-14 can be understood as introducing either (1) a causal clause or (2) a content clause (if content, it could be said to introduce a direct object clause or an indirect discourse clause). Many interpreters have favored a causal translation, so that in each of the six cases what follows the ὅτι gives the reason why the author is writing to the recipients. Usage in similar constructions is not decisive because only one other instance of γράφω followed by ὅτι occurs in 1 John (2:21), and that context is just as ambiguous as this one. On other occasions γράφω does tend to be followed by a noun or pronoun functioning as direct object. This might argue for the content usage here, but it could also be argued that the direct object in the six instances in these verses is understood, namely, the content of the entire letter itself. Thus the following ὅτι clause could still be causal. Grammatical considerations aside, these uses of ὅτι are more likely introducing content clauses here rather than causal clauses because such a meaning better fits the context. If the uses of ὅτι are understood as causal, it is difficult to see why the author immediately gives a warning in the

his⁴ name. **2:13** I am writing to you, fathers, that² you have known him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young people, that³ you have conquered the evil one.⁴ **2:14** I have written to you, children, that⁵ you have known the Father.⁶ I have written to you, fathers, that⁷ you have known him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young people, that⁸ you are strong, and the word of God resides in you, and you have conquered the evil one.

2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, **2:16** because all that is in the world (the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the arrogance produced by material possessions)⁹ is not from the Father, but is from the world. **2:17** And the world is passing away with all its desires, but the person who does the will of God remains¹⁰ forever.

section that follows about loving the world. The confidence he has expressed in his readers (if the ὄτι clauses are understood as causal) would appear to be ill-founded if he is so concerned about their relationship to the world as 2:15-17 seems to indicate. On the other hand, understanding the ὄτι clauses as content clauses fits very well the context of reassurance which runs throughout the letter.

1 tn "His" probably refers to Jesus Christ. Note the last reference was to Jesus in 2:8 and before that in 2:6; also the mention of sins being forgiven suggests Jesus' work on the cross.

2 tn See the note on "that" in v. 12.

3 tn See the note on "that" in v. 12.

4 sn The phrase *the evil one* is used in John 17:15 as a reference to Satan. Satan is also the referent here and in the four other occurrences in 1 John (2:14; 3:12; 5:18, 19).

5 tn See the note on "that" in v. 12.

6 sn The versification of vv. 13 and 14 (so also NAB, NRSV, NLT) follows that of the NA²⁷ and UBS⁴ editions of the Greek text. Some English translations, however, break the verses between the sentence addressed to children and the sentence addressed to fathers (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV). The same material has been translated in each case; the only difference is the versification of that material.

7 tn See the note on "that" in v. 12.

8 tn See the note on "that" in v. 12.

9 tn The genitive βίου (*biou*) is difficult to translate: (1) Many understand it as objective, so that βίος (*bios*, "material life") becomes the *object* of one's ἀλαζονεία (*alazonēia*; "pride" or "boastfulness"). Various interpretations along these lines refer to boasting about one's wealth, showing off one's possessions, boasting of one's social status or lifestyle. (2) It is also possible to understand the genitive as subjective, however, in which case the βίος itself *produces* the ἀλαζονεία. In this case, the material security of one's life and possessions produces a boastful overconfidence. This understanding better fits the context here: The focus is on people who operate purely on a human level and have no spiritual dimension to their existence. This is the person who loves the world, whose affections are all centered on the world, who has no love for God or spiritual things ("the love of the Father is not in him," 2:15).

sn *The arrogance produced by material possessions.* The person who thinks he has enough wealth and property to protect himself and insure his security has no need for God (or anything outside himself).

10 tn See note on the translation of the Greek verb μένω (*menō*) in 2:6. The translation "remain" is used for μένω (*menō*) here because the context contrasts the transience of the world and its desires with the permanence of the person who does God's will.

Warning About False Teachers

2:18 Children, it is the last hour, and just as you heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists¹¹ have appeared. We know from this that it is the last hour. **2:19** They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us, because if they had belonged to us, they would have remained¹² with us. But¹³ they went out from us¹⁴ to demonstrate¹⁵ that all of them do not belong to us.¹⁶

2:20 Nevertheless you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.¹⁷

11 sn *Antichrists* are John's description for the opponents and their false teaching, which is at variance with the apostolic eyewitness testimony about who Jesus is (cf. 1:1-4). The identity of these opponents has been variously debated by scholars, with some contending (1) that these false teachers originally belonged to the group of apostolic leaders, but departed from it ("went out from us," v. 19). It is much more likely (2) that they arose from within the Christian communities to which John is writing, however, and with which he identifies himself. This identification can be seen in the interchange of the pronouns "we" and "you" between 1:10 and 2:1, for example, where "we" does not refer only to John and the other apostles, but is inclusive, referring to both himself and the Christians he is writing to (2:1, "you").

12 tn See note on the translation of the Greek verb μένω (*menō*) in 2:6. Here μένω has been translated as "remained" since it is clear that a change of status or position is involved. The opponents departed from the author's congregation(s) and showed by this departure that they never really belonged. Had they really belonged, they would have stayed ("remained").

13 tn Because of the length and complexity of the Greek sentence, a new sentence was started here in the translation.

14 tn The phrase "they went out from us" is not repeated a second time in the Greek text, but constitutes an ellipsis. For clarity it is necessary to repeat it in the English translation.

15 tn *Grk* "in order that it may be demonstrated." The passive infinitive has been translated as active and the purpose clause translated by an infinitive in keeping with contemporary English style.

16 sn *All of them do not belong to us.* The opponents chose to depart rather than remain in fellowship with the community to which the author writes and with which he associates himself. This demonstrates conclusively to the author that they never really belonged to that community at all (in spite of what they were claiming). 1 John 2:19 indicates that the departure was apparently the opponents' own decision rather than being thrown out or excommunicated. But for John, if they had been genuine believers, they would have remained in fellowship. Now they have gone out into the world, where they belong (compare 1 John 4:5).

17 tc πάντες (*pantes*, nominative plural in "you all know") is read by **Ν B P Ψ** sa. A C 049 33 1739 **℣** latt sy bo have the accusative πάντα (*panta*, "you know all things"). The evidence favors the nominative reading, but it is not overwhelming. At the same time, the internal evidence supports the nominative for a variety of reasons. A scribe would naturally tend to give the transitive verb a direct object, especially because of the parallel in the first half of the verse. And intrinsically, the argument seems to be in balance with v. 19: The "all" who have gone out and are not "in the know" with the "all" who have an anointing and know that they are true believers. Further, as R. E. Brown points out, "the fact of their knowledge (*pantes*), not the extent of its object (*panta*), seems best to fit the reassurance" (*Epistles of John* [ABJ], 349). Brown further points out the connection with the new covenant in Jer 31 with this section of 1 John, esp. Jer 31:34 - "they all [*pantes*] shall know me." Since 1 John alludes to Jer 31, without directly quoting it, this is all the more reason to see the nominative as original: Allusions are often overlooked by scribes (transcriptional evidence), but support the intrinsic evidence. Thus, the evidence

2:21 I have not written to you that¹ you do not know the truth, but that² you do know it, and that³ no lie is of the truth. 2:22 Who is the liar but the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ⁴? This one is the antichrist: the person who denies the Father and the Son. 2:23 Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either. The person who confesses the Son has the Father also.⁵

2:24 As for you, what you have heard from the beginning must remain⁶ in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. 2:25 Now this⁷ is the promise that he⁸ himself

made to⁹ us: eternal life.¹⁰ 2:26 These things I have written to you about those who are trying to deceive you.¹¹

2:27 Now as for you, the anointing¹² that you received from him¹³ resides¹⁴ in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you. But as his¹⁵ anointing teaches you about all things, it is true and is not a lie. Just as¹⁶ it¹⁷ has taught you, you reside¹⁸ in him.

Children of God

2:28 And now, little children, remain¹⁹ in

is solidly (though not overwhelmingly) behind the nominative reading.

sn The statement *you all know* probably constitutes an indirect allusion to the provisions of the new covenant mentioned in Jer 31 (see especially Jer 31:34). See also R. E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* [AB], 349.

1 tn The interpretation of the three ὅτι clauses in v. 21 is very difficult: (1) All three instances of ὅτι (*hoti*) may be causal (so NASB, NIV, NEB). (2) The first two may be causal while the third indicates content (declarative or recitative ὅτι, so KJV, RSV, TEV, NRSV). (3) However, it is best to take all three instances as indicating content because this allows all three to be subordinate to the verb ἔγραψα (*egrapsa*) as compound direct objects. The author writes to reassure his readers (a) that they do indeed know the truth (first two uses of ὅτι) and (b) that no lie is of the truth (third use).

2 tn See the note on the first occurrence of “that” in v. 21.

3 tn See the note on the first occurrence of “that” in v. 21.

4 tn Or “the Messiah”

5 tc The Byzantine text, almost alone, lacks the last eight words of this verse, “The person who confesses the Son has the Father also” (ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει, *ho homologōn ton huiōn kai ton patera echei*). Although shorter readings are often preferred (since scribes would tend to add material rather than delete it), if an unintentional error is likely, shorter readings are generally considered secondary. This is a classic example of such an unintentional omission: The τὸν πατέρα ἔχει of the preceding clause occasioned the haplography, with the scribe’s eye skipping from one τὸν πατέρα ἔχει to the other. (Readings such as this also suggest that the Byzantine text may have originated [at least for 1 John and probably the general epistles] in a single archetype.)

6 tn The word translated “remain” may also be translated “reside” (3 times in 2:24). See also the notes on the translation of the Greek verb μένω (*menō*) in 2:6 and in 2:19. Here the word can really have both nuances of “residing” and “remaining” and it is impossible for the English reader to catch both nuances if the translation provides only one. This occurs three times in 2:24.

7 tn It is difficult to know whether the phrase καὶ αὐτῆ ἐστίν (*kai hautē estin*) refers (1) to the preceding or (2) to the following material, or (3) to both. The same phrase occurs at the beginning of 1:5, where it serves as a transitional link between the prologue (1:1-4) and the first major section of the letter (1:5-3:10). It is probably best to see the phrase here as transitional as well; thus καὶ (*kai*) has been translated “now” rather than “and.” The accusative phrase at the end of v. 25, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον (*tēn zōēn tēn aiōnion*), stands in apposition to the relative pronoun ἣν (*hēn*), whose antecedent is ἡ ἐπαγγελία (*hē epangelia*; see BDF §295). Thus the “promise” consists of “eternal life.”

8 tn The pronoun could refer to God or Jesus Christ, but a reference to Jesus Christ is more likely here.

9 tn Grk “he himself promised.” The repetition of the cognate verb “promised” after the noun “promise” is redundant in English.

10 sn The promise consists of *eternal life*, but it is also related to the concept of “remaining” in 2:24. The person who “remains in the Son and in the Father” thus has this promise of eternal life from Jesus himself. Consistent with this, 1 John 5:12 implies that the believer has this eternal life *now*, not just in the future, and this in turn agrees with John 5:24.

11 sn The phrase *those who are trying to deceive you* in 1 John 2:26 is a clear reference to the secessionist opponents mentioned earlier in 1 John 2:19, who are attempting to deceive the people the author is writing to.

12 sn *The anointing*. The “anointing” (χρῖσμα, *chrisma*) which believers have received refers to the indwelling Holy Spirit which has been given to them at their conversion.

13 sn The pronoun could refer to God or Jesus Christ, but a reference to Jesus Christ is more likely here.

14 tn This use of μένω (*menō*) has been translated “reside” both times in 2:27 because it refers to the current status of believers.

15 sn The pronoun could refer (1) to God or (2) to Jesus Christ, but a reference to Jesus Christ is more likely here.

16 tn Grk “and is not a lie, and just as.” Because of the length and complexity of the Greek sentence, a new sentence was started here in the translation.

17 tn Or “he.”

18 tn The verb may be read as either (1) indicative or (2) imperative mood. The same verb is found in the following verse, 2:28, but the address to the readers there seems clearly to indicate an imperative. On analogy some have called for an imperative here, but others have seen this as suggesting an indicative here, so that the author is not repeating himself. An indicative is slightly more likely here. Up to this point the thrust of the author has been reassurance rather than exhortation, and an indicative here (“...you reside in him”) balances the indicative in the first part of 2:27 (“the anointing which you received from him resides in you...”). With the following verse the author switches from reassurance (the readers at the time he is writing still ‘remain’; they have not yet adopted the teaching of the opponents) to exhortation (he is writing so that they will ‘remain’ and not succumb to the deception of the opponents).

19 tn Again, as at the end of 2:27, the verb μένετε (*menete*) may be read as either (1) indicative or (2) imperative mood. At the end of 2:27 the translation opted for an indicative because the author had been attempting to reassure his readers that they did indeed possess eternal life, and also because an indicative at the end of 2:27 balances the indicative reference to the “anointing” residing in the readers at the beginning of the verse. With the return in 2:28 to the eschatological note introduced in 2:18, however, it appears that the author switches from reassurance to exhortation. At the time he is writing them, the readers do still “remain” since they have not yet adopted the heretical teaching of the opponents. But now the author wants to forestall the possibility that they might do so at some point, and so he begins this section with an exhortation to the readers to “reside/remain” in Christ. This suggests that μένετε in the present verse should be read as imperative rather than indicative, a view made even more probable by the following ἵνα (*hina*) clause which states the

him,¹ so that when² he appears we may have confidence and not shrink away from him in shame when he comes back.³ 2:29 If you know that he is righteous, you also know⁴ that everyone who practices righteousness has been fathered⁵ by him.

3:1 (See what sort of love the Father has given to us: that⁶ we should be called God's children – and indeed⁷ we are!⁸ For this reason⁹

purpose for the exhortation: in order that at the parousia (second advent) when Jesus Christ is revealed, the readers may have confidence and not shrink back from him in shame when he appears.

1 sn A reference to Jesus Christ is more likely here. Note the mention of the second coming (second advent) at the end of this verse.

2 tn In this context *ἐάν* (*ean*) does not indicate uncertainty about *whether* or *not* Christ will return, but rather uncertainty about the exact time *when* the event will take place. In the Koine period *ἐάν* could mean “when” or “whenever” and was virtually the equivalent of *ὅταν* (*hotan*; see BDAG 268 s.v. *ἐάν* 2). It has this meaning in John 12:32 and 14:3.

3 tn Grk “at his coming.”

sn *Have confidence...shrink away from him in shame when he comes back.* Once again in the antithetical framework of Johannine thought (that is, the author's tendency to think in terms of polar opposites), there are only two alternatives, just as there are only two alternatives in John 3:18-21, a key section for the understanding of the present passage in 1 John. Anyone who does not “remain” demonstrates (just as the opponents demonstrated by their departure from the community in 2:19) that whatever profession he has made is false and he is not truly a believer.

4 tn The mood of *γινώσκετε* (*ginōskete*) may be understood as (1) indicative or (2) imperative. It is better to understand the verb here as indicative, because in 1 John “knowledge” is something one *has* as a result of being a believer (2:3, 5:20, 21; 3:16, 19, 24; 4:2, 13; 5:2) rather than something one has to be exhorted about. The change in verbs from *οἶδα* (*oída*) to *γινώσκω* (*ginōskō*) is another example of Johannine stylistic variation.

5 tn The verb *γεννάω* (*gennaō*) presents a translation problem: (1) should be the passive be translated archaically “be gotten” (the action of the male parent; see BDAG 193 s.v. 1.a) or (2) should it be translated “be born” (as from a female parent; see BDAG 194 s.v. 2)? A number of modern translations (RSV, NASB, NIV) have opted for the latter, but (3) the imagery expressed in 1 John 3:9 clearly refers to the action of the male parent in procreating a child, as does 5:1 (“everyone who loves the father loves the child fathered by him”), and so a word reflecting the action of the male parent is called for here. The contemporary expression “fathered by” captures this idea.

6 tn The *ἵνα* (*hina*) clause is best understood (1) as epexegetical (or explanatory), clarifying the love (*ἀγάπην*, *agapēn*) that the Father has given to believers. Although it is possible (2) to regard the *ἵνα* as indicating result, the use of *ποταπὴν* (*potapēn*, “what sort of”) to modify *ἀγάπην* suggests that the idea of “love” will be qualified further in the following context, and this qualification is provided by the epexegetical *ἵνα* clause.

7 tn “Indeed” is not in the Greek text but is supplied to indicate emphasis.

8 tc The phrase *καὶ ἐσμεν* (*kai esmen*, “and we are”) is omitted in 049 69 93. There seems to be no theological reason to omit the words. This has all the earmarks of a classic case of homoioteleuton, for the preceding word (*κληθόμεν*, *klēthōmen*, “we should be called”) ends in *-μεν* (*-men*).

tn The indicative mood indicates that the verb *ἐσμεν* (*esmen*) at the end of 3:1a is not governed by the *ἵνα* (*hina*) and does not belong with the *ἵνα* clause, since this would have required a subjunctive. If the verb *ἐσμεν* were subjunctive, the force of the clause would be “that we should be called children of God, and be (children of God).” With *ἐσμεν* as indicative, the clause reads “that we should be called children of God, and indeed we are (children of God).”

9 tn Lexically it is clear that this phrase indicates reason,

the world does not know us: because it did not know him.¹⁰ 3:2 Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be¹¹ has not yet been revealed. We¹² know that¹³ whenever¹⁴

but what is not clear is whether (1) *τοῦτο* (*touto*) refers to what follows, (2) to what precedes, or (3) to both (as with the *ἐν τοῦτο* [*en touto*] phrases throughout 1 John). *Διὰ τοῦτο* (*dia touto*) occurs 15 times in the Gospel of John, and a pattern emerges which is so consistent that it appears to be the key to the usage here. Six times in the Gospel of John (5:16, 18; 8:47; 10:17; 12:18, 39) the phrase refers to what follows, and in each of these instances an epexegetical *ὅτι* (*hoti*) clause follows. Nine times in John (1:31, 6:65, 7:21-22, 9:23, 12:27, 13:11, 15:19, 16:15, 19:11) the phrase refers to what precedes, and in none of these instances is it followed by a *ὅτι* clause. The phrase *διὰ τοῦτο* is used three times in the Johannine Epistles. In two of these (1 John 4:5, 3 John 10) there is no *ὅτι* clause following, and so the *διὰ τοῦτο* should refer to preceding material. Here in 3:1 there is an epexegetical *ὅτι* clause following, so the *διὰ τοῦτο* should (unless it is the only exception in the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles) refer to what follows, that is, to the *ὅτι* clause itself. This is indicated by the colon in the translation.

10 sn The pronoun *him* is a clear reference to Jesus Christ (compare John 1:10).

11 tn The subject of the third person singular passive verb *ἐφανερώθη* (*ephanerōthē*) in 3:2 is the following clause *τί ἐσόμεθα* (*ti esometha*): “Beloved, now we are children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been revealed.”

sn *What we will be.* The opponents have been revealed as antichrists now (2:19). What believers will be is to be revealed later. In light of the mention of the parousia in 2:28, it seems likely that an eschatological revelation of the true character of believers is in view here.

12 tc The Byzantine text, the Syriac Peshitta, the Bohairic Coptic, and one ms of the Sahidic Coptic supply *δέ* (*de*) after *οἴδομεν* (*oidamen*) in 3:2b. Additions of coordinating conjunctions such as *δέ* are predictable variants; this coupled with the poor external credentials suggests that this addition is not likely to be original.

tn The relationship of 3:2b to 3:2a is difficult. It seems best to regard this as a case of asyndeton, although the Byzantine text, the Syriac Peshitta, the Bohairic Coptic, and some mss of the Sahidic Coptic supply *δέ* (*de*) after *οἴδομεν* (*oidamen*) in 3:2b. This addition is not likely to be original, but it does reflect a tendency among scribes to see an adversative (contrastive) relationship between 3:2a and 3:2b. This seems to be an accurate understanding of the relationship between the clauses from a logical standpoint: “and what we shall be has not yet been revealed, but we know that whenever he should be revealed, we shall be like him.”

13 tn The first *ὅτι* (*hoti*) in 3:2 follows *οἴδομεν* (*oidamen*), a verb of perception, and introduces an indirect discourse clause which specifies the *content* of what believers know: “that whenever it should be revealed, we shall be like him.”

14 tn In this context *ἐάν* (*ean*) does not indicate (1) uncertainty about *whether* or *not* what believers will be shall be revealed, but rather (2) uncertainty about the exact *time* the event will take place. In the Koine period *ἐάν* can mean “when” or “whenever” and is virtually the equivalent of *ὅταν* (*hotan*; see BDAG 268 s.v. *ἐάν* 2). It has this meaning in John 12:32 and 14:3. Thus the phrase here should be translated, “we know that whenever it is revealed.”

it⁴ is revealed² we will be like him, because³ we will see him just as he is.⁴ **3:3** And everyone who has this hope focused⁵ on him purifies⁶ himself, just as Jesus⁷ is pure).⁸

1 tn Many take the understood subject (“he”) of φανερωθή (phanerōthē) as a reference to Jesus Christ, because the same verb was used in 2:28 in reference to the parousia (second advent). In the immediate context, however, a better analogy is ἐφανερῶθη τι ἐσόμεθα (ephanerōthē ti esometha) in 3:2a. There the clause τι ἐσόμεθα is the subject of the passive verb: “what we shall be has not yet been revealed.” From a grammatical standpoint it makes better sense to see the understood subject of φανερωθή as “it” rather than “he” and as referring back to the clause τι ἐσόμεθα in 3:2a. In the context this makes good sense: “Beloved, now we are children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We know that whenever it shall be revealed, we shall be like him, because we shall see him just as he is.” This emphasizes the contrast in the verse between the present state (“not yet been revealed”) and the future state (“shall be revealed”) of believers, and this will of course take place at the parousia.

2 sn *Is revealed.* It may well be that the use of the same passive verb here (from φανερούω, phanerōō) is intended to suggest to the reader the mention of the parousia (Christ’s second coming) in 2:28.

3 tn The second ὅτι (hoti) in 3:2 is best understood as causal, giving the reason why believers will be like God: “we shall be like him, because we shall see him just as he is.”

4 sn The phrase *we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is* has been explained two ways: (1) believers will really become more like God than they now are, and will do this through seeing God as he really is; or (2) believers will realize that they are already like God, but did not realize it until they see him as he is. One who sees a strong emphasis on realized eschatology in the Gospel of John and the Epistles might opt for the second view, since it downplays the difference between what believers already are in the present age and what they will become in the next. It seems better, though, in light of the statement in 3:2a that “what we will be has not yet been revealed” and because of the reference to Christ’s parousia in 2:28, that the author intends to distinguish between the present state of believers and what they will be like in the future. Thus the first view is better, that believers really will become more like God than they are now, as a result of seeing him as he really is.

5 tn “Focused” is not in the Greek text, but is supplied for clarity.

6 sn The verb translated *purifies* (ἀγνίζω, hagnizō) is somewhat unusual here, since it is not common in the NT, and occurs only once in the Gospel of John (11:55). One might wonder why the author did not use the more common verb ἁγιαζώ (hagiazō), as in John 17:19, where Jesus prays, “On their behalf I consecrate myself, so that they may also be consecrated in the truth.” It is possible that there is some overlap between the two verbs and thus this is another example of Johannine stylistic variation, but the verb ἀγνίζω is used in the context of John 11:55, which describes ritual purification for the Passover, a usage also found in the LXX (Exod 19:10-11, Num 8:21). In this context the use of ἀγνίζω would remind the readers that, if they have the future hope of entering the Father’s presence (“seeing him as he is” in 3:2), they need to prepare themselves by living a purified lifestyle now, just as Jesus lived during his earthly life and ministry (cf. 2:6 again). This serves to rebut the opponents’ claims to moral indifference, that what the Christian does in the present life is of no consequence.

7 tn Grk “that one.” Context indicates a reference to Jesus here. The switch from αὐτός (autos) to ἐκεῖνος (ekeinos) parallels 1 John 2:6 (see note there). Since purity of life is mentioned in the context, this almost certainly refers to Jesus in his earthly life and ministry as the example believers should imitate (a major theme of the author throughout 1 John).

8 sn 1 John 3:1-3. All of 3:1-3 is a parenthesis within the present section in which the author reflects on what it means to be fathered by God, a subject he has mentioned at the end

3:4 Everyone who practices sin⁹ also practices lawlessness,¹⁰ indeed,¹¹ sin is lawlessness. **3:5** And you know that Jesus¹² was revealed to take away¹³ sins, and in him there is no sin. **3:6** Everyone who resides¹⁴ in him does not sin;¹⁵

of 2:29. The sequence of the argument is then resumed by 3:4, which is in opposition to 2:29.

9 sn *Everyone who practices sin.* In contrast to the πᾶς ὁ (pas ho) + participle construction in 3:3 (*everyone who has, πᾶς ὁ ἔχων [pas ho echōn]*) which referred to believers, the use of *everyone who practices sin* (πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν [pas ho poiōn tēn hamartian]) here refers to the author’s opponents. A similar use, referring to the opponents’ denial of the Son, is found in 2:23.

10 sn The Greek word ἀνομία (anomia) is often translated “iniquity” or “lawlessness” and in the LXX refers particularly to transgression of the law of Moses. In Jewish thought the ideas of sin (ἁμαρτία, hamartia) and lawlessness or iniquity (ἀνομία) were often equated because sin involved a violation of the Mosaic law and hence lawlessness. For example, Ps 51:5 LXX sets the two in parallel, and Paul in Rom 4:7 (quoting Ps 32:1) does the same. For the author, it is not violation of the Mosaic law that results in lawlessness, since he is writing to Christians. The “law” for the author is the law of love, as given by Jesus in the new commandment of John 13:34-35. This is the command to love one’s brother, a major theme of 1 John and the one specific sin in the entire letter which the opponents are charged with (3:17). Since the author has already labeled the opponents “antichrists” in 2:18, it may well be that he sees in their iniquitous behavior of withdrawing from the community and refusing to love the brethren a foreshadowing of the apocalyptic iniquity of the end times (cf. 2 Thess 2:3-8). In Matt 24:11-12 Jesus foretold that false prophets would arise in the end times (cf. 1 John 4:1), that lawlessness (anomia) would increase, and that “the love of many will grow cold” (which would certainly fit the author’s portrait of the opponents here).

11 tn Grk “and.”

12 tn Grk “that one.” The context makes it clear that this is a reference to Jesus, because the reader is told “he was revealed in order that he might take away sins.” The connection with Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world in John 1:29 provides additional confirmation that the previous use of ἐκεῖνος (ekeinos) in 3:3b should also be understood as a reference to Jesus, as 2:6 was.

sn In Johannine thought it is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

13 tn The ἵνα (hina) clause gives the purpose of Jesus’ self-revelation as he manifested himself to the disciples and to the world during his earthly life and ministry: It was “to take away sins.”

14 tn Here the verb μένω (menō) refers to the permanence of relationship between Jesus and the believer, as in 2:27 and 2:28. It is clear that Jesus is the referent of the phrase ἐν αὐτῷ (en autō) because he is the subject of the discussion in v. 5.

15 tn The interpretive problem raised by the use of the present tense ἁμαρτάνει (hamartanei) in this verse (and ποιεῖ [poiei] in 3:9 as well) is that (a) it appears to teach a sinless state of perfection for the true Christian, and (b) it appears to contradict the author’s own statements in 2:1-2 where he acknowledged that Christians do indeed sin. (1) One widely used method of reconciling the acknowledgment in 2:1-2 that Christians do sin with the statements in 3:6 and 3:9 that they do not is expressed by M. Zerwick (*Biblical Greek* §251). He understands the aorist to mean “commit sin in the concrete, commit some sin or other” while the present means “be a sinner, as a characteristic «state».” N. Turner (*Grammatical Insights*, 151) argues essentially the same as Zerwick, stating that the present tense ἁμαρτάνει is stative (be a sinner) while the aorist is ingressive (begin to be a sinner, as the initial step of committing this or that sin). Similar interpretations can be found in a number of grammatical works and commentaries. (2) Others, however, have questioned the view that the distinction in tenses alone can convey a “habitual”

everyone who sins has neither seen him nor known him. 3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you: The one who practices righteousness⁴ is righteous, just as Jesus² is righteous. 3:8 The one who practices sin is of

the devil,³ because the devil has been sinning⁴ from the beginning. For this purpose⁵ the Son of God was revealed: to destroy⁶ the works of the devil. 3:9 Everyone who has been fathered⁷ by God does not practice sin,⁸

meaning without further contextual clarification, including C. H. Dodd (*The Johannine Epistles* [MNCT], 79) and Z. C. Hodges ("1 John," *BKCNT*, 894). B. Fanning (*Verbal Aspect* [OTM], 215-17) has concluded that the habitual meaning for the present tense cannot be ruled out, because there are clear instances of habitual presents in the NT where other clarifying words are not present and the habitual sense is derived from the context alone. This means that from a grammatical standpoint alone, the habitual present cannot be ruled out in 1 John 3:6 and 9. It is still true, however, that it would have been much clearer if the author had reinforced the habitual sense with clarifying words or phrases in 1 John 3:6 and 9 if that is what he had intended. Dodd's point, that reliance on the distinction in tenses alone is quite a subtle way of communicating such a vital point in the author's argument, is still valid. It may also be added that the author of 1 John has demonstrated a propensity for alternating between present and aorist tenses for purely stylistic reasons (see 2:12).

sn Does not sin. It is best to view the distinction between "everyone who practices sin" in 3:4 and "everyone who resides in him" in 3:6 as absolute and sharply in contrast. The author is here making a clear distinction between the opponents, who as moral indifferentists downplay the significance of sin in the life of the Christian, and the readers, who as true Christians recognize the significance of sin because Jesus came to take it away (3:5) and to destroy it as a work of the devil (3:8). This argument is developed more fully by S. Kubo ("1 John 3:9: Absolute or Habitual?" *AUSS* 7 [1969]: 47-56), who takes the opponents as Gnostics who define sin as ignorance. The opponents were probably not adherents of fully developed gnosticism, but Kubo is right that the distinction between their position and that of the true Christian is intentionally portrayed by the author here as a sharp antithesis. This explanation still has to deal with the contradiction between 2:1-2 and 3:6-9, but this does not present an insuperable difficulty. The author of 1 John has repeatedly demonstrated a tendency to present his ideas antithetically, in "either/or" terms, in order to bring out for the readers the drastic contrast between themselves as true believers and the opponents as false believers. In 2:1-2 the author can acknowledge the possibility that a true Christian might on occasion sin, because in this context he wishes to reassure his readers that the statements he has made about the opponents in the preceding context do not apply to them. But in 3:4-10, his concern is to bring out the absolute difference between the opponents and his readers, so he speaks in theoretical rather than practical terms which do not discuss the possible occasional exception, because to do so would weaken his argument.

1 sn The one who practices righteousness. The participle (ὁ ποιῶν, *ho poiōn*) + noun constructions in 3:7 and in 3:8a, the first positive and the second negative, serve to emphasize the contrast between the true Christians ("the one who practices righteousness") and the opponents ("the one who practices sin," 3:8a).

2 tn Grk "that one." Context indicates a reference to Jesus here. As with the previous uses of ἐκεῖνος (*ekeinos*) by the author of 1 John (2:6; 3:3, 5), this one refers to Jesus, as the reference to "the Son of God" in the following verse (3:8) makes clear.

3 sn The person who practices sin is of the devil. 1 John 3:10 and John 8:44 might be cited as parallels, because these speak of opponents as the devil's "children." However, it is significant that the author of 1 John never speaks of the opponents as "fathered by the devil" in the same sense as Christians are "fathered by God" (3:9). A concept of evildoers as "fathered" by the devil in the same sense as Christians are fathered by God would imply a much more fully developed Gnosticism with its dualistic approach to humanity. The author of 1 John carefully avoids saying that the opponents are "fathered by the devil," because in Johannine theology not to be fathered by God is to be fathered only by the flesh (John 1:13). This is a significant piece of evidence that 1 John predates the more fully developed Gnosticism of the 2nd century. What the author does say is that the opponents ("the one who practices sin") are from the devil, in the sense that they belong to him and have given him their allegiance.

4 tn The present tense verb has been translated as an extending-from-past present (a present of past action still in progress). See *ExSyn* 520.

5 tn Here εἰς τοῦτο (*eis touto*) states the purpose for the revelation of God's Son. However, the phrase offers the same difficulty as all the ἐν τοῦτω (*en toutō*) phrases in 1 John: Does it refer to what precedes or to what follows? By analogy with the ἐν τοῦτω construction it is probable that the phrase εἰς τοῦτο here refers to what follows: There is a ἵνα (*hina*) clause following which appears to be related to the εἰς τοῦτο, and in fact is resumptive (that is, it restates the idea of "purpose" already expressed by the εἰς τοῦτο). Thus the meaning is: "For this purpose the Son of God was revealed: to destroy the works of the devil."

6 tn In the Gospel of John λύση (*luse*) is used both literally and figuratively. In John 1:27 it refers to a literal loosing of one's sandal-thong, and in John 2:19 to a destruction of Jesus' physical body which was understood by the hearers to refer to physical destruction of the Jerusalem temple. In John 5:18 it refers to the breaking of the Sabbath, in John 7:23 to the breaking of the law of Moses, and in John 10:35 to the breaking of the scriptures. The verb is again used literally in John 11:44 at the resurrection of Lazarus when Jesus commands that he be released from the graveclothes with which he was bound. Here in 1 John 3:8 the verb means, with reference to "the works of the devil," to "destroy, bring to an end, abolish." See BDAG 607 s.v. λύω 4 and F. Büchsel, *TDNT* 4:336.

7 tn The imagery expressed here (σπέρμα αὐτοῦ, *sperma autou*, "his seed") clearly refers to the action of the male parent in procreation, and so "fathered" is the best choice for translating γεννάω (*gennaō*; see 2:29).

8 tn The problem of the present tense of ποιεῖ (*poiei*) here is exactly that of the present tense of ἀμαρτάνει (*hamartanei*) in 3:6. Here in 3:9 the distinction is sharply drawn between "the one who practices sin" in 3:8, who is of the devil, and "the one who is fathered by God" in 3:9, who "does not practice sin." See S. Kubo ("1 John 3:9: Absolute or Habitual?" *AUSS* 7 [1969]: 47-56) for a fuller discussion of the author's argument as based on a sharp antithesis between the recipients (true Christians) and the opponents (heretics).

sn Does not practice sin. Again, as in 3:6, the author is making a clear distinction between the opponents, who as moral indifferentists downplay the significance of sin in the life of the Christian, and the recipients, who as true Christians recognize the significance of sin because Jesus came to take it away (3:5) and to destroy it as a work of the devil (3:8). This explanation still has to deal with the apparent contradiction between the author's statements in 2:1-2 and those here in 3:9, but this is best explained in terms of the author's tendency to present issues in "either/or" terms to bring out the drastic contrast between his readers, whom he regards as true believers, and the opponents, whom he regards as false. In 2:1-2 the author

because⁴ God's² seed³ resides in him, and thus⁴ he is not able to sin, because he has been fathered by God. **3:10** By this⁵ the children of God and the children of the devil are revealed: Everyone who does not practice righteousness – the one who does not love his fellow Christian⁶ – is not of God.

God Is Love, So We Must Love One Another

3:11 For⁷ this is the gospel⁸ message⁹ that

can acknowledge the possibility that a true Christian might on occasion sin, because in this context he wishes to reassure his readers that the statements he has made about the opponents in the preceding context do not apply to them. But in 3:4-10, his concern is to bring out the absolute difference between the opponents and his readers, so he speaks in theoretical terms which do not discuss the possible occasional exception, because to do so would weaken his argument.

1 tn Both the first and second ὅτι (*hoti*) in 3:9 are causal. The first gives the reason why the person who is begotten by God does not practice sin ("because his seed resides in him). The second gives the reason why the person who is begotten by God is not able to sin ("because he has been begotten by God)."

2 tn Grk "his"; the referent (God) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

3 tn The closest meaning for σπέρμα (*sperma*) in this context is "male generating seed" (cf. BDAG 937 s.v. 1.b), although this is a figurative rather than a literal sense. Such imagery is bold and has seemed crudely anthropomorphic to some interpreters, but it poses no more difficulty than the image of God as a male parent fathering Christians that appears in John 1:13 and is behind the use of γεννάω (*gennaō*) with reference to Christians in 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, and 18.

4 tn "Thus" is not in the Greek text, but is supplied to bring out the resultative force of the clause in English.

5 tn Once again there is the problem (by now familiar to the interpreter of 1 John) of determining whether the phrase ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*) in 3:10 refers (1) to what precedes or (2) to what follows. If it refers to what precedes, it serves to conclude the unit which began with 2:28. The remainder of 3:10 would then form a transition to the following material (another "hinge" passage). On the other hand, if the phrase ἐν τούτῳ refers to what follows, then the entirety of 3:10 is a summary statement at the end of 2:28-3:10 which recapitulates the section's major theme (*conduct is the clue to paternity*), and provides at the same time a transition to the theme of *loving one's brother* which will dominate the following section (3:11-24). Although R. E. Brown (*Epistles of John* [AB], 416) prefers to see the phrase as referring to the preceding material, it makes better sense to refer it to the remainder of 3:10 that follows, and see the entirety of 3:10 as both a summary of the theme of the preceding section 2:28-3:10 and a transition to the following section 3:11-24.

6 tn See note on the term "fellow Christian" in 2:9.

sn Does not love his fellow Christian. The theme of loving one's fellow Christian appears in the final clause of 3:10 because it provides the transition to the second major section of 1 John, 3:11-5:12, and specifically to the following section 3:11-24. The theme of love will dominate the second major section of the letter (see 1 John 4:8).

7 tn It could be argued (1) that the ὅτι (*hoti*) at the beginning of 3:11 is grammatically subordinate to the preceding statement at the end of 3:10. As BDF §456.1 points out, however, "Subordination with ὅτι and διότι is often very loose... and must be translated 'for.'" Thus (2) ὅτι assumes an inferential sense, standing at the beginning of a new sentence and drawing an inference based upon all that has preceded. This is confirmed by the structural parallel between the present verse and 1:5.

8 tn The word "gospel" is not in the Greek text but is supplied to clarify the meaning. See the notes on the words "gospel" and "message" in 1 John 1:5.

9 tn See the note on the word "message" in 1 John 1:5,

you have heard from the beginning; that we should love one another,¹⁰ **3:12** not like Cain¹¹ who was of the evil one and brutally¹² murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his deeds were evil, but his brother's were righteous.

3:13 Therefore do not be surprised, brothers and sisters,¹³ if the world hates you.¹⁴ **3:14** We know that¹⁵ we have crossed over¹⁶ from death to life¹⁷ because¹⁸ we love our fellow Christians.¹⁹

where this same phrase occurs.

10 sn For this is the gospel message...that we should love one another. The structure of this verse is parallel to 1:5, indicating the beginning of a second major section of the letter.

11 sn Since the author states that Cain...was of the evil one (ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ, *ek tou ponērou*), in the immediate context this imagery serves as an illustration of 3:8a: The person who practices sin is of the devil (ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου, *ek tou diabolou*). This is similar to John 8:44, where Jesus told his opponents "you people are from your father the devil...[who] was a murderer from the beginning." In both Jewish and early Christian writings Cain is a model for those who deliberately disbelieve; Testament of Benjamin 7:5 looks forward to the punishment of those who "are like Cain in the envy and hatred of brothers." It is not difficult to see why the author of 1 John used Cain here as a model for the opponents in light of their failure to "love the brothers" (see 1 John 3:17).

12 tn For the Greek verb σφάζω (*sphazō*) L&N 20.72 states, "to slaughter, either animals or persons; in contexts referring to persons, the implication is of violence and mercilessness – to slaughter, to kill." As a reflection of this nuance, the translation "brutally murdered" has been used.

13 tn Grk "brothers," but the Greek word may be used for "brothers and sisters" or "fellow Christians" as here (cf. BDAG 18 s.v. ἀδελφός 1, where considerable nonbiblical evidence for the plural ἀδελφοί [*adelphoi*] meaning "brothers and sisters" is cited). Since the author is addressing his readers directly at this point, "brothers and sisters" (suggesting a degree of familial endearment) has been employed in the translation at this point, while elsewhere the less direct "fellow Christians" has been used (cf. v. 14).

14 sn Cf. John 15:18, where this phrase also occurs.

15 tn The first ὅτι (*hoti*) clause, following a verb of perception, introduces an indirect discourse clause giving the content of what the readers are assumed to know: that they have passed over from death to life, that is, that they possess eternal life. The author gives a similar reassurance to his readers in 5:13. Alternation between the verbs οἶδα (*oīda*) and γινώσκω (*ginōskō*) in 1 John is probably a matter of stylistic variation (of which the writer is extremely fond) rather than indicative of a subtle difference in meaning.

16 tn This verb essentially means "to transfer from one place to another, go/pass over," according to BDAG 638 s.v. μεταβαίνω 1.

sn In John 13:1 the same Greek verb translated *crossed over* here is used to refer to Jesus' departure from this world as he returns to the Father. Here it is used figuratively to refer to the believer's transfer from the state of (spiritual) death to the state of (spiritual) life. This use is paralleled in John 5:24, where Jesus states, "the person who hears my message and believes the one who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned, but has *crossed over* (same verb) from death to life."

17 sn Cf. John 5:24, where this phrase also occurs.

18 tn The second ὅτι (*hoti*) clause in 3:14 is also related to οἶδαμεν (*oidamen*), but in this case the ὅτι is causal, giving the reason why the readers know that they have passed from death to life: because they love the brothers.

19 tn See note on the phrase "fellow Christian" in 2:9.

sn Because we love our fellow Christians. This echoes Jesus' words in John 13:35, where he states, "by this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." As in 1 John 2:3 and 5, obedience becomes the basis for assurance. But the relationship between loving one's fellow Christian (Grk "brother") and possessing eternal life

The one who does not love remains in death.⁴ **3:15** Everyone who hates his fellow Christian² is a murderer,³ and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing⁴ in him. **3:16** We have come to know love by this:⁵ that Jesus⁶

laid down⁷ his life for us; thus we ought to lay down our lives for our fellow Christians. **3:17** But whoever has the world's possessions⁸ and sees his fellow Christian⁹ in need and shuts off his compassion against him, how can the love of God¹⁰ reside¹¹ in such a person?¹²

3:18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue but in deed and truth.¹³ **3:19** And

goes beyond a proof or external test. Our love for our fellow Christians is in fact a form of God's love for us because as far as the author of 1 John is concerned, *all love comes from God* (cf. 4:7-11). Therefore he can add the next line of 3:14, "the one who does not love remains in death." Why? Because such a person does not have God's love residing in them at all. Rather, this person can be described as a "murderer" – as the following verse goes on to do. Note also that the author's description here of the person who does not love as remaining in death is another way of describing a person who remains in darkness, which is a description of unbelievers in John 12:46. This provides further confirmation of the spiritual state of the author's opponents in 2:9-11.

1 sn The one who does not love remains in death. Again, the author has the secessionist opponents in view. Their refusal to show love for the brothers demonstrates that they have not made the transition from (spiritual) death to (spiritual) life, but instead have remained in a state of (spiritual) death.

2 tn See note on the phrase "fellow Christian" in 2:9.

3 sn Everyone who hates his fellow Christian is a murderer. On one level it is easy to see how the author could say this; the person who hates his brother is one and the same with the person who murders his brother. Behind the usage here, however, is John 8:44, the only other occurrence of the Greek word translated *murderer* (ἀνθρωποκτόνος, *anthrōpoktonos*) in the NT, where the devil is described as a "murderer from the beginning." John 8:44 refers to the devil's role in bringing death to Adam and Eve, but even more to his involvement (not directly mentioned in the Genesis account, but elaborated in the intertestamental literature, especially the writings of Philo) in Cain's murder of his brother Abel. This was the first incident of murder in human history and also the first outward demonstration of the full implications of sin's entry into the world. Ultimately, then, the devil is behind murder, just as he was behind Cain's murder of Abel. When the hater kills, he shows himself to be a child of the devil (cf. 1 John 3:10). Once again, conduct is the clue to paternity.

4 tn The verb μένω (*menō*) in 3:15 refers to a spiritual reality (eternal life) which in this case does not reside in the person in question. To speak in terms of eternal life not "residing" in such an individual is not to imply that at some time in the past this person did possess eternal life and subsequently lost it, however. The previous verse (3:14) makes it clear that the individual under discussion here has "remained" in death (the realm of spiritual death) and so has never possessed eternal life to begin with, no matter what he may have claimed. Taken together with the use of μένω in 3:14, the use here implies that the opponents have "remained" in death all along, and have not ever been genuine believers. Thus "residing" rather than "remaining" is used as the translation for μένωσαν (*menousan*) here.

5 tn Here the phrase ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*) is followed by a ὅτι (*hoti*) clause which is expository (or explanatory), and thus ἐν τούτῳ refers to what follows.

6 tn Grk "that one." Context indicates a reference to Jesus. The mention of the sacrificial death in 3:16 (ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν, *huper ēmōn tēn psuchēn autou ethēken*) points to Jesus as the referent here. (This provides further confirmation that ἐκεῖνος [*ekeinos*] in 2:6; 3:3, 5, and 7 refers to Jesus.)

7 sn References to the fact that Jesus laid down his life using the verb τίθημι (*tithēmi*) are unique to the Gospel of John (10:11, 15, 17, 18; 13:37, 38; 15:13) and 1 John (only here). From John's perspective Jesus' act in giving up his life sacrificially was a voluntary one; Jesus was always completely in control of the situation surrounding his arrest, trials, and crucifixion (see John 10:18). There is a parallel with 1 John 2:6 – there, as here, the life of Jesus (during his earthly ministry) becomes the *example* for believers to follow. This in turn underscores the importance of Jesus' earthly life and ministry (especially his sacrificial death on the cross), a point of contention between the author and his opponents in 1 John. See 1 John 4:10 for a further parallel.

8 tn Here βίος (*bios*) refers to one's means of subsistence – material goods or property (BDAG 177 s.v. 2).

9 sn Note the vivid contrast with Jesus' example in the preceding verse: He was willing to lay down his very life, but the person in view in 3:17 is not even willing to lay down part of his material possessions for the sake of his brother.

9 tn See note on the phrase "fellow Christian" in 2:9.

10 tn Here a subjective genitive, indicating God's love for us – the love which comes from God – appears more likely because of the parallelism with "eternal life" (ζωὴν αἰώνιον, *zōēn aiōnion*) in 3:15, which also comes from God.

11 sn The love of God. The author is not saying that the person who does not love his brother cannot love God either (although this may be true enough), but rather that the person who does not love his brother shows by this failure to love that he does not have any of the love which comes from God "residing" in him (the Greek verb used is μένω [*menō*]). Once again, conduct is the clue to paternity.

11 sn Once again the verb μένω (*menō*) is used of a spiritual reality (in this case the love of God) which does or does not reside in a person. Although the author uses the indefinite relative *whoever* (Grk ὅς δ' ἄν, *hos d' an*), it is clear that he has the opponents in view here. This is the only specific moral fault he ever charges the opponents with in the entire letter. It is also clear that the author sees it as impossible that such a person, who refuses to offer help in his brother's time of need (and thus 'hates' his brother rather than 'loving' him, cf. 3:15) can have any of the love which comes from God residing in him. This person, from the author's dualistic 'either/or' perspective, cannot be a believer. The semantic force of the deliberative rhetorical question, "How can the love of God reside in such a person?", is therefore a declarative statement about the spiritual condition of the opponents: "The love of God cannot possibly reside in such a person."

12 sn How can the love of God reside in such a person? is a rhetorical question which clearly anticipates a negative answer: The love of God cannot reside in such a person.

13 sn The noun *truth* here has been interpreted in various ways: (1) There are a number of interpreters who understand the final noun in this series, *truth* (ἀληθεῖα, *alētheia*) in an adverbial sense ("truly" or "in sincerity"), describing the way in which believers are to love. If the two pairs of nouns are compared, however, it is hard to see how the second noun with *tongue* (γλῶσση, *glōssē*) in the first pair can have an adverbial sense. (2) It seems better to understand the first noun in each pair as *produced* by the second noun: Words are produced by the tongue, and the (righteous) deeds with which believers are to love one another are produced by the truth.

by this¹ we will know that we are of the truth and will convince² our conscience³ in his presence,⁴

1 tn Once again there is the problem of deciding whether the phrase ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*) refers (1) to what precedes or (2) to what follows. When an explanatory or exegetical ὅτι (*hoti*) clause follows, and the ὅτι clause is not grammatically unrelated to the phrase ἐν τούτῳ, then the ἐν τούτῳ is best understood as referring to what follows. Here in 3:19-20 there are no less than three ὅτι clauses that follow, one in 3:19 and two in 3:20, and thus there is the difficulty of trying to determine whether any one of them is related to the ἐν τούτῳ phrase in 3:19. It is relatively easy to eliminate the first ὅτι clause (in 3:19) from consideration, because it is related not to ἐν τούτῳ but to the verb γνωσόμεθα (*gnōsometha*) as an indirect discourse clause giving the content of what believers know ("that we are of the truth"). As far as the two ὅτι clauses in 3:20 are concerned, it is difficult to see how believers could know that they belong to the truth (19a) by means of either, since the first speaks of a situation where they are under self-condemnation ("if our heart condemns us...") and the second ὅτι clause seems to give a further explanation related to the first ("that God is greater than our heart..."). Therefore it seems better to understand the phrase ἐν τούτῳ in 3:19 as referring to the preceding context, and this makes perfectly good sense, because 3:18 concludes with a reference to the righteous deeds with which believers are to love one another, which are produced by the truth.

sn By this refers to the righteous deeds mentioned at the end of 3:18, the expressions of love. It is by doing these deeds that believers assure themselves that they belong to the truth, because the outward action reflects the inward reality of their relationship with God. Put another way, 'conduct is the clue to paternity.'

2 tn The verb πείθω (*peithō*) in the active voice (with the exception of the second perfect and pluperfect) means (a) "to convince"; (b) "to persuade, appeal to"; (c) "to win over, strive to please"; or (d) "to conciliate, pacify, set at ease or rest" (see BDAG 791 s.v. πείθω). Interpreters are generally divided between meaning (a) and meaning (d) for the verb in the present context, with BDAG opting for the latter (although it is pointed out that "the text is not in good order"). In any case the object of the verb πείθω in this context is καρδιά (*kardia*), and this leads to further problems because the meaning of καρδιά will affect one's understanding of πείσομεν (*peisomen*) here.

3 tn Further difficulties are created by the meaning of καρδιά (*kardia*) in 3:19. Although it may be agreed that the term generally refers to the "center and source of the whole inner life, w. its thinking, feeling, and volition" (BDAG 508 s.v. l.b), this may be further subdivided into references to (a) "the faculty of thought...as the organ of natural and spiritual enlightenment," that is, the mind; (b) "the will and its decisions"; (c) "the emotions, wishes, desires," i.e., the emotions or feelings; or (d) "moral decisions, the moral life," that is, the part of the individual where moral decisions are made, which is commonly called the conscience. Thus καρδιά in 3:19 could refer to either the mind, the will, the emotions, or the conscience, and it is not transparently clear which concept the author has primarily in view. In light of the overall context, which seems to discuss the believer's assurance of his or her standing before God (ἐμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ [*emprosthen autou*] in 3:19 and the mention of παρησία [*parresia*, "boldness" or "confidence"] in 3:21) it seems probable that the conscience, that aspect of one's καρδιά which involves moral choices and the guilt or approval for having made them, is primarily in view here. Thus the meaning "convince" is preferred for the verb πείθω (*peithō*), since the overall subject seems to be the believer's assurance of his or her standing before God, especially in the case when (v. 20) the believer's conscience attempts to condemn him on account of sin.

4 tn Both ἐμπροσθεν (*emprosthen*) in 3:19 and ἐνώπιον (*enōpion*) in 3:22 are improper prepositions and both express the meaning "before" in the sense of "in the presence of." (1) Some interpreters have tried to see a subtle distinction in meaning between the two in 3:19 and 22, but (2) as BDF §214.6 points out, ἐμπροσθεν and ἐνώπιον, along with a third classical expression ἐναντίον (*enantion*), all refer to

3:20 that⁵ if our conscience condemns⁶ us, that⁷ God is greater than our conscience and knows all things. 3:21 Dear friends, if our conscience does not condemn us, we have confidence in the presence of God, 3:22 and⁸ whatever we ask we receive from him, because⁹ we keep his commandments and do the things that

being in someone's presence and are essentially interchangeable. There can be little doubt that once more the author's fondness for stylistic variation in terminology is at work here.

5 tn The first ὅτι (*hoti*) in 3:20 may be understood either (1) as causal, "because if our heart condemns us," or (2) as exegetical (explanatory), "that if our heart condemns us." There are two other instances of the combination ὅτι ἐάν (*hoti ean*) in 1 John, 3:2 and 5:14. In 3:14 the ὅτι clearly introduces an indirect discourse (content) clause following οἰδαμεν (*oidamen*). In 5:14 the ὅτι is exegetical to a preceding statement ("and this is the confidence [ἡ παρησία, *hē parresia*] which we have before him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us"). This is analogous to the present situation, and the subject under discussion (the believer's confidence before God) is also similar (cf. 3:21-22). It is thus more likely, by analogy, that the first ὅτι clause in 3:20, ὅτι ἐάν καταγινώσκῃ ἡμῶν ἡ καρδιά (*hoti ean kataginōskē hēmōn hē kardia*), should also be understood as exegetical to the preceding clause, ἐμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πείσομεν τὴν καρδίαν (*emprosthen autou peisomen tēn kardia*), "and we convince our heart before him").

6 tn In Deut 25:1 LXX καταγινώσκω (*kataginōskō*) means "to condemn" (*dikaion*, "to acquit"). In Job 42:6 LXX (Symmachus) and Ezek 16:61 LXX (Symmachus) it is used of self-judgment or self-condemnation, and this usage is also found in the intertestamental literature (Sir 14:2). Testament of Gad 5:3 describes a person οὐχ ὑπὲρ ἄλλου καταγινωσκόμενος ἀλλ' ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας καρδίας (*ouch hup' allou kataginōskomenos all' hupo tēs idias kardiās*, "condemned not by another but by his own heart"). Thus the word has legal or forensic connotations, and in this context refers to the believer's self-condemnation resulting from a guilty conscience concerning sin.

7 tn The use of two ὅτι (*hoti*) clauses in close succession is somewhat awkward, but this is nothing new for the author; and indeed he has twice previously used two ὅτι clauses in close proximity in 3:2 and 14. In both those instances the second ὅτι was understood as causal, and (1) some interpreters would do the same here. Unless one understands both of the ὅτι clauses in 3:20 as causal, however (an option rejected based on the analogy with 5:14, see the discussion in the note on "that" at the beginning of the present verse), the first ὅτι clause must be understood as parenthetical in order for the second to be causal. This results in an even more awkward construction. It seems most probable that (2) the second ὅτι clause in 3:20 should also be understood as exegetical (explanatory), and resumptive to the first. The resultant meaning is as follows: "and we convince our heart before him, that if our heart condemns us, that God is greater than our heart and knows all things."

8 tn The conjunction καὶ (*kai*) which begins 3:22 is exegetical (explanatory), relating a further implication of the "confidence" (παρησία, *parresian*) which believers have before God when their heart (conscience) does not condemn them. They can ask things of God with the expectation of receiving their requests.

9 tn The ὅτι (*hoti*) is clearly causal, giving the reason why believers receive what they ask.

are pleasing to him. 3:23 Now¹ this is his commandment:² that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he gave³ us the commandment. 3:24 And the person who keeps his commandments resides⁴ in God,⁵ and God⁶ in him. Now by this⁷ we know that God⁸ resides in us: by the Spirit he has given us.

Testing the Spirits

4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit,⁹ but test¹⁰ the spirits¹¹ to

1 tn The καί (*kai*) is exegetical/explanatory (or perhaps resumptive) of the commandment(s) mentioned in the preceding verse.

2 tn This verse begins with the phrase καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν (*kai hautē estin*; cf. the similar phrase in 3:11 and 1:5), which is explained by the following ἵνα (*hina*) clause, “that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.” The ἵνα thus introduces a clause which is (1) epexegetical (explanatory) or (2) appositional. By analogy the similar phrase in 3:11 is also followed by an epexegetical ἵνα clause and the phrase in 1:5 by an epexegetical ὅτι (*hoti*) clause.

3 sn His commandment refers to what follows – the commandment from God is to believe in his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another.

3 sn The author of 1 John repeatedly attributes the commandments given to believers as given by God the Father, even though in John 13:34-35 it was Jesus who gave the commandment to love one another. 2 John 4-5 also attributes the commandment to love one another directly to the Father. Thus it is clear that God the Father is the subject of the verb *gave* here in 3:23.

4 tn The verb μένω (*menō*) has been translated “resides” here because this verse refers to the mutual and reciprocal relationship between God and the believer.

5 sn The verb *resides* (μένω, *menō*) here and again in the second clause of 3:24 refers to the permanence of relationship between God and the believer, as also in 2:6; 4:12, 13, 15, and 16 (3x).

5 tn Grk “in him.” In context this is almost certainly a reference to God (note the phrase “his Son Jesus Christ” in 3:23).

6 tn Grk “he.” In context this is almost certainly a reference to God (note the phrase “his Son Jesus Christ” in 3:23).

7 tn Once again there is the (by now familiar) question of whether the phrase ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*) refers to what precedes or to what follows. In this case, the following phrase ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος (*ek tou pneumatos*) explains the ἐν τούτῳ phrase, and so it refers to what follows.

8 tn Grk “he.” In context this is almost certainly a reference to God (note the phrase “his Son Jesus Christ” in 3:23).

9 sn 1 John 4:1-6. These verses form one of three units within 1 John that almost all interpreters consider a single unit and do not divide up (the other two are 2:12-14 and 15-17). The subject matter is so clearly different from the surrounding context that these clearly constitute separate units of thought. Since the Holy Spirit is not the only spirit active in the world, the author needs to qualify for the recipients how to tell if a spirit comes from God. The “test” is the confession in 4:2.

10 tn According to BDAG 255 s.v. δοκιμάζω 1 the verb means “to make a critical examination of someth., to determine genuineness, put to the test, examine.”

11 sn Test the spirits. Since in the second half of the present verse the author mentions “false prophets” who have “gone out into the world,” it appears highly probable that his concept of testing the spirits is drawn from the OT concept of testing a prophet to see whether he is a false prophet or a true one. The procedure for testing a prophet is found in Deut 13:2-6 and 18:15-22. An OT prophet was to be tested on the basis of (a) whether or not his predictive prophecies came true (Deut 18:22) and (b) whether or not he advocated idolatry (Deut 13:1-3). In the latter case the people of Israel are warned that even if the prophet should perform an authenticating sign or wonder, his truth or falsity is still to be judged on the basis

determine¹² if they are from God, because many false prophets¹³ have gone out into the world. 4:2 By this¹⁴ you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses¹⁵ Jesus as the Christ¹⁶ who has come in the flesh is

of his claims, that is, whether or not he advocates idolatry. Here in 1 John the idea of “testing the spirits” comes closer to the second OT example of “testing the prophets” mentioned above. According to 1 John 4:2-3, the spirits are to be tested on the basis of their christological confession: The person motivated by the Spirit of God will confess *Jesus as the Christ who has come in the flesh*, while the person motivated by the spirit of deceit will not confess *Jesus* and is therefore not from God. This comes close to the idea expressed by Paul in 1 Cor 12:3 where the person speaking charismatic utterances is also to be judged on the basis of his christological confession: “So I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus is cursed,’ and no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”

12 tn The phrase “to determine” is not in the Greek text, but is supplied for clarity.

13 tn “False prophets” refers to the secessionist opponents (compare 2:19).

14 tn There is no subordinating conjunction following the ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*) here in 4:2, so the phrase could refer either (1) to what precedes or (2) to what follows. Contextually the phrase refers to what follows, because the following clause in 4:2b-3a (πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν...ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἐστίν), while not introduced by a subordinating conjunction, does explain the preceding clause beginning with ἐν τούτῳ. In other words, the following clause in 4:2b-3a is analogous to a subordinate clause introduced by an epexegetical ἵνα (*hina*) or ὅτι (*hoti*), and the relationship can be represented in the English translation by a colon, “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every Spirit that confesses Jesus as the Christ who has come in the flesh is from God, but every Spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.”

15 tn Or “acknowledges.”

16 tn This forms part of the author’s christological confession which serves as a test of the spirits. Many interpreters have speculated that the author of 1 John is here correcting or adapting a slogan of the secessionist opponents, but there is no concrete evidence for this in the text. Such a possibility is mere conjecture (see R. E. Brown, *Epistles of John* [AB], 492). The phrase may be understood in a number of different ways, however: (1) the entire phrase “Jesus Christ come in the flesh” may be considered the single object of the verb ὁμολογεῖ (*homologeō*; so B. F. Westcott, A. Brooke, J. Bonsirven, R. E. Brown, S. Smalley, and others); (2) the verb ὁμολογεῖ may be followed by a double accusative, so that both “Jesus Christ” and “come in the flesh” are objects of the verb; the meaning would be “confess Jesus Christ as come in the flesh” (so B. Weiss, J. Chaine, and others). (3) Another possibility is to see the verb as followed by a double accusative as in (2), but in this case the first object is “Jesus” and the second is “the Christ come in the flesh,” so that what is being confessed is “Jesus as the Christ come in the flesh” (so N. Alexander, J. Stott, J. Houlden, and others). All three options are grammatically possible, although not equally probable. Option (1) has a number of points in its favor: (a) the parallel in 2 John 7 suggests to some that the phrase should be understood as a single object; (b) option (2) makes “Jesus Christ” the name of the preincarnate second Person of the Trinity, and this would be the *only* place in the Johannine literature where such a designation for the preincarnate Λόγος (*Logos*) occurs; and (c) option (3) would have been much clearer if Χριστόν (*Christon*) were accompanied by the article (ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν τὸν Χριστόν, *homologeōi Iēsoun ton Christon*). Nevertheless option (3) is preferred on the basis of the overall context involving the secessionist opponents: Their christological views would allow the confession of the Christ come in the flesh (perhaps in the sense of the Spirit indwelling believers, although this is hard to prove), but they would have trouble confessing that *Jesus* was (exclusively)

from God, 4:3 but⁴ every spirit that does not confess² Jesus³ is not from God, and this is the spirit⁴ of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now is already in the world.

4:4 You are from God, little children, and have conquered them,⁵ because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 4:5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world's perspective and the world listens to them. 4:6 We are from God; the person who knows God listens to us, but⁶ whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this⁷ we know the

Spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit.⁸

God is Love

4:7 Dear friends, let us love one another, because⁹ love is from God, and everyone who loves¹⁰ has been fathered¹¹ by God and knows God. 4:8 The person who does not love does not know God, because God is love.¹² 4:9 By this¹³

the Christ incarnate. The author's failure to repeat the qualifying phrases (Χριστόν ἐν σαρκί ἐληλυθότα, *Christon en sarki elēluthota*) in the negative repetition in 4:3a actually suggests that the stress is on *Jesus* as the confession the opponents could not or would not make. It is difficult to see how the parallel in 2 John 7 favors option (1), although R. E. Brown (*Epistles of John* [AB], 492) thinks it does. The related or parallel construction in John 9:22 (ἐάν τις αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ Χριστόν, *ean tis auton homologēsē Christon*) provides further support for option (3). This is discounted by R. E. Brown because the verb in John 9:22 occurs between the two accusative objects rather than preceding both as here (*Epistles of John* [AB], 493 – although Brown does mention Rom 10:9 as another parallel closer in grammatical structure to 1 John 4:2). Brown does not mention the textual variants in John 9:22, however: Both Ψ^{56} and Ψ^{75} (along with K, \mathfrak{f}^{13} and others) read ὁμολογήσῃ αὐτὸν Χριστόν (*homologēsē auton Christon*). This structure exactly parallels 1 John 4:2, and a case can be made that this is actually the preferred reading in John 9:22; furthermore, it is clear from the context in John 9:22 that Χριστόν is the complement (what is predicated of the first accusative) since the object (the first accusative) is αὐτὸν rather than the proper name Ἰησοῦν. The parallel in John 9:22 thus appears to be clearer than either 1 John 4:2 or 2 John 7, and thus to prove useful in understanding both the latter constructions.

1 **tn** The καί (*kai*) which begins 4:3 introduces the “negative side” of the test by which the spirits might be known in 4:2-3. Thus it is adversative in force: “every spirit that confesses Jesus as Christ who has come in the flesh is from God, but every Spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.”

2 **tn** Or “does not acknowledge.”

3 **tc** A number of variants are generated from the simple τὸν Ἰησοῦν (*ton Iēsoun*), some of which turn the expression into an explicit object-complement construction. Ἰησοῦν κύριον (*Iēsoun kurion*, “Jesus as Lord”) is found in **N**, τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν (*ton Iēsoun Christon*, “Jesus as Christ”) is read by the Byzantine minuscules, τὸν Χριστόν (“the Christ”) is the reading of 1846, and Ἰησοῦν without the article is found in 1881 2464. But τὸν Ἰησοῦν is well supported by A B Ψ 33 81 1739 *al*, and internally best explains the rise of the others. It is thus preferred on both external and internal grounds.

4 **tn** “Spirit” is not in the Greek text but is implied.

5 **sn** *Them* refers to the secessionist opponents, called “false prophets” in 4:1 (compare 2:19).

6 **tn** “But” supplied here to bring out the context. The conjunction is omitted in the Greek text (asyndeton).

7 **tn** The phrase ἐκ τούτου (*ek toutou*) in 4:6, which bears obvious similarity to the much more common phrase ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*), must refer to what precedes, since there is nothing in the following context for it to relate to, and 4:1-6 is recognized by almost everyone as a discrete unit. There is still a question, however, of what in the preceding context the phrase refers to. Interpreters have suggested a reference (1) only to 4:6; (2) to 4:4-6; or (3) to all of 4:1-6. The last is most likely, because the present phrase forms an inclusion with the phrase ἐν τούτῳ in 3:24 which introduces the present section. Thus “by this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit” refers to all of 4:1-6 with its “test” of the spirits by the christological confession made by their adherents in 4:1-3 and with its emphasis on the authoritative (apostolic)

eyewitness testimony to the significance of Jesus' earthly life and ministry in 4:4-6.

8 **sn** Who or what is the *Spirit of truth* and the *spirit of deceit* in 1 John 4:6? (1) Some interpreters regard the “spirits” in 4:6 as human spirits. Although 4:1a is ambiguous and might refer either to human spirits or spiritual beings who influence people, it is clear in the context that (2) the author sees behind the secessionist opponents with their false Christology the spirit of the Antichrist, that is, Satan (4:3b), and behind the true believers of the community to which he is writing, the Spirit of God (4:2). This is made clear in 4:4 by the reference to the respective spirits as the *One who is in you* and the *one who is in the world*.

9 **tn** This ὅτι (*hoti*) is causal, giving the reason why the readers, as believers, ought to love one another: because love comes from God. The next clause, introduced by καί (*kai*), does not give a second reason (i.e., is not related to the ὅτι clause), but introduces a second and additional thought: Everyone who loves is fathered by God and knows God.

10 **tn** As in 2:23 and 3:4, the author uses πᾶς (*pas*) with the present articular participle as a generalization to describe a category of people.

sn From the author's “either/or” perspective (which tends to see things in terms of polar opposites) the use of a generalization like *everyone* who presents a way of categorizing the opponents on the one hand and the recipients, whom the author regards as genuine Christians, on the other. Thus *everyone who loves* refers to all true Christians, who give evidence by their love for one another that they have indeed been begotten by God and are thus God's children. The opposite situation is described in the following verse, 4:8, where (although *everyone* [πᾶς, *pas*] is omitted) it is clear that a contrast is intended.

11 **tn** The verb γεννάω (*gennaō*) in this context means to be fathered by God and thus a child of God. The imagery in 1 John is that of the male parent who fathers children (see especially 3:9 and 5:1).

12 **tn** The author proclaims in 4:8 ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν (*ho theos agapē estin*), but from a grammatical standpoint this is not a proposition in which subject and predicate nominative are interchangeable (“God is love” does not equal “love is God”). The predicate noun is anarthrous, as it is in two other Johannine formulas describing God, “God is light” in 1 John 1:5 and “God is Spirit” in John 4:24. The anarthrous predicate suggests a qualitative force, not a mere abstraction, so that a quality of God's character is what is described here.

13 **tn** Once again there is the problem of determining whether the phrase ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*) refers (1) to what precedes or (2) to what follows. This is the first of 5 uses of the phrase in the present section (4:9, 10, 13, 17; 5:2). In this case (as also in the next two instances) there is a ὅτι (*hoti*) clause following which is related and which explains (i.e., which is exegetical to) the phrase ἐν τούτῳ. Thus the meaning here is, “By this the love of God is revealed in us: that God has sent his only Son into the world in order that we might live through him.”

the love of God⁴ is revealed in us:² that God has sent his one and only³ Son into the world so that we may live through him. **4:10** In this⁴ is love: not that⁵ we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice⁶ for our sins.

4:11 Dear friends, if God so loved us, then⁷ we also ought to love one another.⁸ **4:12** No one

1 tn In terms of syntax the force of the genitive τοῦ θεοῦ (*tou theou*) may be (1) objective, (2) subjective, or (3) both. The phrase occurs for the first time in the letter in 2:5. Here in 4:9 the exegetical ὅτι (*hoti*) clause which follows makes it clear that this is a subjective genitive, emphasizing God's love for us rather than our love for God, because it describes God's action in sending his Son into the world.

2 tn This phrase is best understood as the equivalent of a dative of sphere, but this description does not specify where the love of God is revealed with regard to believers: "in our midst" (i.e., among us) or "within us" (i.e., internally within believers). The latter is probable, because in the context the concept of God's indwelling of the believer is mentioned in 4:12: "God resides (μένει, *menēi*) in us."

3 sn Although the word translated *one and only* (μονογενής, *monogenēs*) is often rendered "only begotten," such a translation is misleading, since in English it appears to express a metaphysical relationship. The word in Greek was used of an only child (a son [Luke 7:12, 9:38] or a daughter [Luke 8:42]). It was also used of something unique (only one of its kind) such as the mythological bird called the Phoenix (1 Clement 25:2). From here it passes easily to a description of Isaac (Heb 11:17 and Josephus, *Ant.* 1.13.1 [1.222]) who was not Abraham's *only* son, but was one-of-a-kind because he was the child of the promise. Thus the word means "one-of-a-kind" and is reserved for Jesus alone in the Johannine literature of the NT. While all Christians are children of God (τέκνα θεοῦ, *tekna theou*), Jesus is God's Son in a unique, one-of-a-kind sense. The word is used in this way in all its uses in the Gospel of John (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18).

4 tn Once again there is the (by now familiar) problem of determining whether the referent of this phrase (1) precedes or (2) follows. Here there are two ὅτι (*hoti*) clauses which follow, both of which are exegetical to the phrase ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*) and explain what the love of God consists of: first, stated negatively, "not that we have loved God," and then positively, "but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins."

5 tn The two ὅτι (*hoti*) clauses are exegetical to the phrase ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*) which begins the verse.

sn What is important (as far as the author is concerned) is not whether we love God (or say that we love God – a claim of the opponents is probably behind this), but that God has loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice which removes believers' sins. This latter point is similar to the point made in 2:2 and is at the heart of the author's dispute with the opponents, because they were denying any salvific value to Jesus' earthly life and ministry, including his death on the cross.

6 sn As explained at 2:2, inherent in the meaning of the word translated *atoning sacrifice* (ἱλασμός, *hilasmos*) is the idea of turning away the divine wrath, so that "propitiation" is the closest English equivalent. God's love for us is expressed in his sending his Son to be the propitiation (the propitiatory sacrifice) for our sins on the cross. This is an indirect way for the author to allude to one of the main points of his controversy with the opponents: the significance for believers' salvation of Jesus' earthly life and ministry, including especially his sacrificial death on the cross. The contemporary English "atoning sacrifice" communicates this idea more effectively.

7 tn Grk "and." The Greek conjunction καί (*kai*) introduces the apodosis of the conditional sentence.

8 tn This is a first-class conditional sentence with εἰ (*ei*) + aorist indicative in the protasis. Reality is assumed for the sake of argument with a first-class condition.

sn The author here assumes the reality of the protasis (the

has seen God at any time.⁹ If we love one another, God resides¹⁰ in us, and his love is perfected in us.¹¹ **4:13** By this¹² we know that we reside in God¹³ and he in us: in that he has given us of his Spirit.¹⁴ **4:14** And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior¹⁵ of the world.

"if" clause), which his recipients, as believers, would also be expected to agree with: Assuming that God has loved us in this way, then it follows that we also ought to love one another. God's act of love in sending his Son into the world to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins (v. 10) ought to motivate us as believers to love one another in a similar sacrificial fashion. The author made the same point already in 1 John 3:16. But this failure to show love for fellow believers is just what the opponents are doing: In 1 John 3:17 the author charged them with refusing to love their brothers by withholding needed material assistance. By their failure to love the brothers sacrificially according to the example Jesus set for believers, the opponents have demonstrated again the falsity of their claims to love God and know God (see 1 John 2:9).

9 sn An allusion to John 1:18.

10 tn The phrase "God resides in us" (ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει, *ho theos en hēmin menēi*) in 4:12 is a reference to the permanent relationship which God has with the believer. Here it refers specifically to God's indwelling of the believer in the person of the Holy Spirit, as indicated by 4:13b. Since it refers to state and not to change of status it is here translated "resides" (see 2:6).

11 tn The phrase "his [God's] love is perfected (τετελειωμένη ἐστίν, *teleiōmenē estin*) in us" in 4:12 is difficult. First it is necessary to decide whether αὐτοῦ (*autou*), which refers to God, is (1) subjective (God's love for us) or (2) objective (our love for God). It is clear that a subjective genitive, stressing God's love for us, is in view here, because the immediate context, 4:11a, has believers as the objects of God's love (ὁ θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, *ho theos egapēsen hēmas*). The entire phrase ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν τετελειωμένη ἐστίν (*hē agapē autou en hēmin teleiōmenē estin*) then refers to what happens when believers love one another (note the protasis of the conditional sentence in 4:12, ἐάν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους [*ean agapōmen allēlous*]). The love that comes from God, the love that he has for us, reaches perfection in our love for others, which is what God wants and what believers are commanded to do (see 3:23b).

12 tn Again whether the referent of the phrase ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*) (1) precedes or (2) follows is a problem. This time there are two ὅτι (*hoti*) clauses which follow. The first is an indirect discourse clause related to γινώσκωμεν (*ginōskomen*) and giving the content of what believers know: "that we reside in him and he in us." The second ὅτι clause is exegetical (or explanatory) to the ἐν τούτῳ phrase, explaining how believers know that they reside in God and God remains in them: "in that he has given us of his Spirit."

sn By this we know. According to the author of 1 John, the Father's giving of the indwelling Holy Spirit to the believer is one means of providing assurance to the believer of his relationship to God. This is what was also stated in 1 John 3:24b in essentially identical terms.

13 tn Grk "in him." Context indicates that the pronoun refers to God (see 4:12).

14 sn The genitive of his Spirit here, like the phrase in 3:24, probably reflects a partitive nuance, so that the author portrays God as 'apportioning' his Spirit to individual believers. This leads to the important observation that the author is not particularly interested in emphasizing (1) the ongoing interior witness of the Holy Spirit (which is what the passage is often understood to mean) but is emphasizing (2) the fact that God has given the Spirit to believers, and it is this fact that gives believers assurance of their relationship to God. In other words, it is the fact that the Holy Spirit has been given to believers, rather than the ongoing interior testimony of the Holy Spirit within the believer, which is the primary source of the believer's assurance.

15 tn Because σωτήρα (*sōtēra*) is the object complement of υἱόν (*huion*) in a double accusative construction in 4:14,

4:15 If anyone⁴ confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God resides² in him and he in God. 4:16 And we have come to know and to believe³ the love that God has in us.⁴ God is love, and the one who resides⁵ in love resides in God, and God resides in him. 4:17 By this⁶ love is per-

fectured with⁷ us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because just as Jesus⁸ is, so also are we in this world. 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.⁹ The¹⁰ one who fears punishment¹¹ has not been perfected in love.

there is an understood equative verb joining the two, with the resultant meaning “the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”

1 tn Grk “Whoever.”

2 tn Here μένει (*menei*, from μένω [*menō*]) has been translated as “resides” because the confession is constitutive of the relationship, and the resulting state (“God resides in him”) is in view.

3 tn Both ἐγνώκαμεν (*egnōkamen*) and πεπιστεύκαμεν (*pepisteukamen*) in 4:16 are perfect tenses, implying past actions with existing results. In this case the past action is specified as the recognition of (ἐγνώκαμεν) and belief in (πεπιστεύκαμεν) “the love which God has in us.” But what is the relationship between the two verbs γινώσκω (*ginōskō*) and πιστεύω (*pisteuō*)? (1) Some interpreters would see a different nuance in each. (2) But in the Gospel of John the two verbs frequently occur together in the same context, often in the same tense; examples may be found in John 6:69, 8:31-32, 10:38, 14:7-10, and 17:8. They also occur together in one other context in 1 John, 4:1-2. Of these John 6:69, Peter’s confession, is the closest parallel to the usage here: “We have come to believe [πεπιστεύκαμεν] and to know [ἐγνώκαμεν] that you are the holy One of God.” Here the order between “knowing” and “believing” is reversed from 1 John 4:16, but an examination of the other examples from the Gospel of John should make it clear that there is no difference in meaning when the order of the terms is reversed. It appears that the author considered both terms to describe a single composite action. Thus they represent a hendiadys which describes an act of faith/belief/trust on the part of the individual; knowledge (true knowledge) is an inseparable part of this act of faith.

4 tn The force of the preposition ἐν (*en*) in the phrase ἐν ἡμῖν (*en hēmin*) in 4:16a is disputed: Although (1) “for” (in the sense of “on behalf of”) is possible and is a common English translation, the other uses of the same phrase in 4:9 (where it refers to God’s love for us) and 4:12 (where it refers to God’s indwelling of the believer) suggest that (2) the author intends to emphasize *interiority* here – a reference to God’s love expressed in believers. This is confirmed by the only other uses in 1 John of the verb ἔχω (*echō*) with the preposition ἐν (3:15 and 5:10) both of which literally mean something *in* someone.

5 tn Once again μένω (*menō*) in its three occurrences in 4:16 looks at the mutual state of believers and God. No change of status or position is in view in the context, so the participle and both finite verbs are translated as “resides.”

6 tn The referent of ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*) here is more difficult to determine than most, because while there are both ἵνα (*hina*) and ὅτι (*hoti*) clauses following, it is not clear whether or not they are related to the ἐν τούτῳ. There are actually three possibilities for the referent of ἐν τούτῳ in 4:17: (1) it may refer to the ἵνα clause which immediately follows, so that the love of believers is brought to perfection *in that* they have confidence in the day of judgment. The main problem with this interpretation is that since the day of judgment is still future, it necessitates understanding the second use of the preposition “in” (second ἐν [*en*]) to mean “about” or “concerning” with reference to the day of judgment in order to make logical sense. (2) The ἐν τούτῳ may refer to the ὅτι clause in 4:17b, meaning “love is perfected with us...*in that* just as he [Christ] is, so also are we in this world.” This makes logical sense, and there are numerous cases where ἐν τούτῳ is explained by a ὅτι clause that follows. However, according to this understanding the intervening ἵνα clause is awkward, and there is no other instance of the phrase ἐν τούτῳ explained by a following ὅτι clause where a ἵνα clause intervenes between the two in this way. (3) Thus, the third possibility is that ἐν τούτῳ refers to what precedes in 4:16b,

and this also would make logical sense: “By this – by our residing in love so that we reside in God and he resides in us – is love brought to perfection with us.” This has the additional advantage of agreeing precisely with what the author has already said in 4:12: “If we love one another, God remains in and his love is brought to perfection in us.” Thus option (3) is best, with the phrase ἐν τούτῳ referring to what precedes in 4:16b, and the ἵνα clause which follows indicates the *result* of this perfection of love in believers: In the future day of judgment they will have confidence. The ὅτι clause would then give the reason for such confidence in the day of judgment: because just as Jesus is, so also are believers in this world – they are already currently in relationship with God just as Jesus is.

7 tn The preposition μετά (*meta*) means “with” and modifies the verb τετελείωται (*teteleiōtai*). If the prepositional phrase modified the noun ἡ ἀγάπη which immediately precedes it, it would almost certainly have the Greek article, thus: ἡ ἀγάπη ἡ μεθ’ ἡμῶν (*hē agapē hē meth’ hēmōn*).

8 tn To say *love is perfected with us* means “with regard to our actions in loving our brothers.”

9 tn Grk “that one” (a reference to Jesus is indicated in the context). Once more the author uses the pronoun ἐκεῖνος (*ekeinos*) to refer to Jesus Christ, as he did in 2:6; 3:3, 5, 7, and 16. A reference to Christ is confirmed in this context because the author says that “just as he is, so also are we [believers] in *this world*” and since 3:2 indicated that believers are to be like God in the future (but are not yet), the only one believers can be like already in the present age is Jesus Christ.

10 tn The entire phrase *fear has to do with punishment* may be understood in two slightly different ways: (1) “fear has its own punishment” or (2) “fear has to do with [includes] punishment.” These are not far apart, however, and the real key to understanding the expression lies in the meaning of the word “punishment” (κόλασις, *kolasis*). While it may refer to torture or torment (BDAG 555 s.v. 1) there are numerous Koine references involving eternal punishment (2 Macc 4:38; T. Reu. 5:5; T. Gad 7:5) and this is also the use in the only other NT reference, Matt 25:46. In the present context, where the author has mentioned having *confidence in the day of judgment* (4:17), it seems virtually certain that eternal punishment (or fear of it) is what is meant here. The (only) alternative to perfected love, which results in confidence at the day of judgment, is fear, which has to do with the punishment one is afraid of receiving at the judgment. As 4:18b states, “*the one who fears [punishment] has not been perfected in love.*” It is often assumed by interpreters that the opposite to *perfected* love (which casts out fear) is *imperfect* love (which still has fear and therefore no assurance). This is possible, but it is not likely, because the author nowhere mentions ‘imperfect’ love, and for him the opposite of ‘perfected’ love appears to be not imperfect love but hate (cf. 4:20). In other words, in the antithetical (‘either/or’) categories in which the author presents his arguments, one is either a genuine believer, who becomes ‘perfected’ in love as he resides in love and in a mutually indwelling relationship with God (cf. 4:16b), or one is not a genuine believer at all, but one who (like the opponents) hates his brother, is a liar, and does not know God at all. This individual should well fear judgment and eternal punishment because in the author’s view that is precisely where such a person is headed.

10 tn Grk “punishment, and the person who fears.”

11 tn “Punishment” is not repeated in the Greek text at this point but is implied.

4:19 We love¹ because he loved us first.

4:20 If anyone says² “I love God” and yet³ hates his fellow Christian,⁴ he is a liar, because the one who does not love his fellow Christian⁵ whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.⁶ 4:21 And the commandment we have from him is this: that⁷ the one who loves God should love his fellow Christian⁸ too. 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ⁹ has been fathered¹⁰ by God, and everyone who loves the father¹¹ loves the child fathered by him.¹²

1 sn No object is supplied for the verb *love* (the author with his propensity for obscurity has left it to the readers to supply the object). The obvious objects that could be supplied from the context are either God himself or other believers (the brethren). It may well be that the author has *both* in mind at this point; the statement is general enough to cover both alternatives, although the following verse puts more emphasis on love for the brethren.

2 tn Grk “if anyone should say...”

3 tn “Yet” is supplied to bring out the contrast.

4 tn See note on the phrase “fellow Christian” in 2:9.

5 tn See note on the phrase “fellow Christian” in 2:9.

6 sn In 4:20 the author again describes the opponents, who claim to love God. Their failure to show love for their fellow Christians proves their claim to know God to be false: *The one who does not love his fellow Christian whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.*

7 tn The *ἵνα* (*hina*) clause in 4:21 could be giving (1) the purpose or (2) the result of the commandment mentioned in the first half of the verse, but if it does, the author nowhere specifies *what* the commandment consists of. It makes better sense to understand this *ἵνα* clause as (3) *epexegetical* to the pronoun ταύτην (*tautēn*) at the beginning of 4:21 and thus explaining what the commandment consists of: “that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”

8 tn See note on the phrase “fellow Christian” in 2:9.

9 tn Or “the Messiah.”

10 tn The verb γεννώω (*gennaō*) here means to be fathered by God and thus a child of God. The imagery in 1 John is that of the male parent who fathers children. See the note on “fathered” in 2:29 for further discussion of this imagery.

11 tn † Most witnesses ([N] A P 1739 M sy) have καί (*kai*, “also”) before the article τόν (*ton*). But the external evidence for the shorter reading is significant (B Ψ 048^{id} 33 pc sa), and the conjunction looks to be a motivated reading in which scribes emulated the wording of 4:21 (ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τόν, *agapa kai ton*). NA²⁷ places the conjunction in brackets, indicating doubts as to its authenticity.

12 sn Also *loves the child fathered by him*. Is the meaning of 5:1b a general observation or a specific statement about God and Christians? There are three ways in which the second half of 5:1 has been understood: (1) as a general statement, proverbial in nature, applying to any parent: “everyone who loves the father also loves the child fathered by him.” (2) This has also been understood as a statement that is particularly true of one’s own parent: “everyone who loves his own father also loves the (other) children fathered by him (i.e., one’s own brothers and sisters).” (3) This could be understood as a statement which refers particularly to God, in light of the context (5:1a): “everyone who loves God who fathered Christians also loves the Christians who are fathered by God.” Without doubt options (2) and (3) are implications of the statement in its present context, but it seems most probable that the meaning of the statement is more general and proverbial in nature (option 1). This is likely because of the way in which it is introduced by the author with πᾶς ὁ (*pas ho*) + participle. The author could have been more explicit and said something like, “everyone who loves God also loves God’s children” had he intended option (3) without ambiguity. Yet that, in context, is the ultimate *application* of the statement, because it ultimately refers to the true Christian who, because he loves God, also loves the brethren, those who are God’s offspring. This is

5:2 By this¹³ we know that we love the children of God: whenever we love God and obey his commandments. 5:3 For¹⁴ this is the love of God:¹⁵ that we keep his commandments.¹⁶ And his commandments do not weigh us down, 5:4 because¹⁷ everyone¹⁸ who has been fathered by God¹⁹ conquers²⁰ the world.²¹

the opposite of 4:20, where the author asserted that the opponents, who profess to love God but do not love the brethren, cannot really love God because they do not love the brethren.

13 tn Once more there is the familiar difficulty of determining whether the phrase refers (1) to what precedes or (2) to what follows. Here, because ἐν τούτῳ (*en toutō*) is followed by a clause introduced by ὅταν (*hotan*) which appears to be related, it is best to understand ἐν τούτῳ as referring to what follows. The following ὅταν clause is epexegetical to ἐν τούτῳ, explaining *how* we know that we love God’s children: “by this we know that we love God’s children, whenever we love God and keep his commandments.”

14 tn The force of the γάρ (*gar*) at the beginning of 5:3 is similar to another introductory formula used by the author of 1 John, καὶ αὐτῆ ἐστίν (*kai hautē estin*; used in 1:5; 5:4, 11, and 14). The γάρ draws an inference based on the preceding statements, particularly the one in 5:2b, regarding the love of God. If in 5:2 loving God and keeping his commandments is the key to knowing that we love God’s children, it is important to define what the love of God involves, and this is what the author is doing in 5:3. In fact, as the following ἵνα (*hina*) clause makes clear, loving God consists in keeping his commandments.

15 tn Once again the genitive could be understood as (1) objective, (2) subjective, or (3) both. Here an objective sense is more likely (believers’ love for God) because in the previous verse it is clear that God is the object of believers’ love.

16 tn Contrary to the punctuation of NA²⁷ and UBS⁴, it is best to place a full stop (period) following τηρῶμεν (*tērōmen*) in 5:3. The subordinate clause introduced by ὅτι (*hoti*) at the beginning of 5:4 is related to the second half of 5:3 which begins with καὶ (*kai*). Καί is commonly used by the author to begin a new sentence, probably by analogy with the Hebrew *vav* consecutive.

17 tn The explicit reason the commandments of God are not burdensome to the believer is given by the ὅτι (*hoti*) clause at the beginning of 5:4. It is because “everyone who is begotten by God conquers the world.”

18 tn The masculine might have been expected here rather than the neuter πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (*pan to gegennēmenon ek tou theou*) to refer to the person who is fathered by God. However, BDF §138.1 explains that “the neuter is sometimes used with respect to persons if it is not the individuals but a generic quality that is to be emphasized”; this seems to be the case here, where a collective aspect is in view: As a group, all those who have been begotten by God, that is, all true believers, overcome the world.

19 sn The author is once more looking at the situation antithetically (in “either/or” terms) as he sees the readers on the one hand as true believers (*everyone who is fathered by God*) who have overcome the world through their faith, and the opponents on the other as those who have claimed to have a relationship with God but really do not; they belong to the world in spite of their claims.

20 tn Or “overcomes.”

21 sn *Conquers the world*. Once again, the author’s language is far from clear at this point, and so is his meaning, but the author has used the verb *conquers* (νικάω, *nikāō*) previously to describe the believer’s victory over the enemy, the evil one himself, in 2:13-14, and over the secessionist opponents, described as “false prophets” in 4:4. This suggests that what the author has in mind here is a victory over the opponents, who now belong to the *world* and speak its language (cf. 4:5). In the face of the opponents’ attempts through their false teaching to confuse the readers (true believers) about who it is they are supposed to love, the author assures the readers that loving God and keeping his commandments assures us

Testimony About the Son

This¹ is the conquering power² that has conquered³ the world: our faith. 5:5 Now who is the person who has conquered the world except the one who believes that⁴ Jesus is the Son of God? 5:6 Jesus Christ is the one who came by water and blood – not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because⁵ the Spirit is the truth.

that we really do love God's children, and because we have already achieved victory over the world through our faith, keeping God's commandments is not a difficult matter.

¹ **tn** Grk "And this."

² **tn** The standard English translation for ἡ νίκη (*hē nikē*) is "victory" (BDAG 673 s.v.) but this does not preserve the relationship with the cognate verb νικᾶω (*nikāō*; used in 2:13,14 and present in this context in participial form in 5:4b and 5:5). One alternative would be "conquest," although R. E. Brown (*Epistles of John* [AB], 570) suggests "conquering power" as a translation for ἡ νίκη since here it is a metonymy for the means of victory or the power that gives victory, referring to believers' faith.

³ **tn** The use of the aorist participle (ἡ νικήσασα, *hē nikē-sasa*) to refer to faith as the conquering power that "has conquered the world" in 5:4b is problematic. Debate here centers over the temporal value of the aorist participle: (1) It may indicate an action contemporaneous with the (present tense) main verb, in which case the alternation between aorist participle in 5:4b and present participle in 5:5 is one more example of the author's love of stylistic variation with no difference in meaning. (2) Nevertheless, an aorist participle with a present tense main verb would normally indicate an action antecedent to that of the main verb, so that the aorist participle would describe a past action. That is the most probable here. Thus the aorist participle stresses that the conquest of the world is something that has already been accomplished.

⁴ **tn** After a verb of perception (the participle ὁ πιστεύων [*ho pisteuōn*]) the ὅτι (*hoti*) in 5:5 introduces indirect discourse, a declarative or recitative clause giving the content of what the person named by the participle (ὁ πιστεύων) believes: "that Jesus is the Son of God." As in 4:15, such a confession constitutes a problem for the author's opponents but not for his readers who are genuine believers.

⁵ **tn** This ὅτι (*hoti*) is best understood (1) as causal. Some have taken it (2) as declarative, giving the content of the Spirit's testimony: "and the Spirit is the One who testifies that the Spirit is the truth." This is certainly possible, since a ὅτι clause following the cognate verb μαρτυρῶ (*marturō*) often gives the content of the testimony (cf. John 1:34; 3:28; 4:39, 44). But in the Gospel of John the Spirit never bears witness on his own behalf, but always on behalf of Jesus (John 15:26, 16:13). There are, in fact, some instances in the Gospel of John where a ὅτι clause following μαρτυρῶ is causal (8:14, 15:27), and that is more likely here: "and the Spirit is the One who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth."

5:7 For⁶ there are three that testify,⁷ 5:8 the Spirit

⁶ **tn** A second causal ὅτι (*hoti*) clause (after the one at the end of the preceding verse) is somewhat awkward, especially since the reasons offered in each are somewhat different. The content of the second ὅτι clause (the one in question here) goes somewhat beyond the content of the first. The first ὅτι clause, the one at the end of 5:6, stated the reason why the Spirit is the witness: because the Spirit is the truth. The second ὅτι clause, here, states that there are three witnesses, of which the Spirit is one. It is probably best, therefore, to understand this second ὅτι as indicating a somewhat looser connection than the first, not strictly causal but inferential in sense (the English translation "for" captures this inferential sense). See BDF §456.1 for a discussion of this 'looser' use of ὅτι.

⁷ **tc** Before τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα (*to pneuma kai to hudōr kai to haima*), the *Textus Receptus* (*TR*) reads ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι. 5:8 καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ ("in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. 5:8 And there are three that testify on earth"). This reading, the infamous *Comma Johanneum*, has been known in the English-speaking world through the King James translation. However, the evidence – both external and internal – is decidedly against its authenticity. For a detailed discussion, see *TCGNT* 647-49. Our discussion will briefly address the external evidence. This longer reading is found only in nine late mss, four of which have the words in a marginal note. Most of these mss (221 2318 [18th century] [2473 [dated 1634]] and [with minor variations] 61 88 429 629 636 918) originate from the 16th century; the earliest ms, codex 221 (10th century) includes the reading in a marginal note, added sometime after the original composition. The oldest ms with the *Comma* in its text is from the 14th century (629), but the wording here departs from all the other mss in several places. The next oldest mss on behalf of the *Comma*, 88 (12th century) 429 (14th) 636 (15th), also have the reading only as a marginal note (v.l.). The remaining mss are from the 16th to 18th centuries. Thus, there is no sure evidence of this reading in any Greek ms until the 14th century (629), and that ms deviates from all others in its wording; the wording that matches what is found in the *TR* was apparently composed after Erasmus' Greek NT was published in 1516. Indeed, the *Comma* appears in no Greek witness of any kind (either ms, patristic, or Greek translation of some other version) until A.D. 1215 (in a Greek translation of the Acts of the Lateran Council, a work originally written in Latin). This is all the more significant since many a Greek Father would have loved such a reading, for it so succinctly affirms the doctrine of the Trinity. The reading seems to have arisen in a 4th century Latin homily in which the text was allegorized to refer to members of the Trinity. From there, it made its way into copies of the Latin Vulgate, the text used by the Roman Catholic Church. The Trinitarian formula (known as the *Comma Johanneum*) made its way into the third edition of Erasmus' Greek NT (1522) because of pressure from the Catholic Church. After his first edition appeared, there arose such a furor over the absence of the *Comma* that Erasmus needed to defend himself. He argued that he did not put in the *Comma* because he found no Greek mss that included it. Once one was produced (codex 61, written in ca. 1520), Erasmus apparently felt obliged to include the reading. He became aware of this ms sometime between May of 1520 and September of 1521. In his annotations to his third edition he does not protest the rendering now in his text, as though it were made to order, but he does defend himself from the charge of indolence, noting that he had taken care to find whatever mss he could for the production of his text. In the final analysis, Erasmus probably altered the text because of politico-theologico-economic concerns: He did not want his reputation ruined, nor his *Novum Instrumentum* to go unsold. Modern advocates of the *TR* and KJV generally argue for the inclusion of the *Comma Johanneum* on the basis of heretical motivation by scribes who did not include it. But these same scribes elsewhere include thoroughly orthodox readings – even in places where the *TR*/Byzantine mss lack

and the water and the blood, and these three are in agreement.

5:9 If we accept the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, because¹ this² is the testimony of God that³ he has testified concerning

them. Further, these advocates argue theologically from the position of divine preservation: Since this verse is in the *TR*, it must be original. (Of course, this approach is circular, presupposing as it does that the *TR* = the original text.) In reality, the issue is history, not heresy: How can one argue that the *Comma Johanneum* goes back to the original text yet does not appear until the 14th century in any Greek *MSS* (and that form is significantly different from what is printed in the *TR*; the wording of the *TR* is not found in any Greek *MSS* until the 16th century)? Such a stance does not do justice to the gospel: Faith must be rooted in history. Significantly, the German translation of Luther was based on Erasmus' second edition (1519) and lacked the *Comma*. But the KJV translators, basing their work principally on Theodore Beza's 10th edition of the Greek NT (1598), a work which itself was fundamentally based on Erasmus' third and later editions (and Stephanus' editions), popularized the *Comma* for the English-speaking world. Thus, the *Comma Johanneum* has been a battleground for English-speaking Christians more than for others.

1 tn This ὅτι (*hoti*) almost certainly introduces a causal clause, giving the reason why the "testimony of God" is greater than the "testimony of men": "because this is God's testimony that he has testified concerning his Son."

2 tn The problem with αὕτη (*hautē*) in 5:9 lies in determining whether it refers (1) to what precedes or (2) to what follows. A few interpreters would see this as referring to the preceding verses (5:7-8), but the analogy with the author's other uses of αὕτη (1:5; 3:11, 23) suggests a reference to what follows. In all of the other instances of αὕτη ἐστίν (*hautē estin*, 1:5; 3:11, 23) the phrase is followed by an exegetical (explanatory) clause giving the referent (ὅτι [*hoti*] in 1:5, ἵνα [*hina*] in 3:11 and 23). The ὅτι clause which follows the αὕτη in 5:9 does not explain the testimony, but should be understood as an adjectival relative clause which qualifies the testimony further. The ὅτι clause which explains the testimony of 5:9 (to which the αὕτη in 5:9 refers) is found in 5:11, where the phrase αὕτη ἐστίν is repeated. Thus the second use of αὕτη ἐστίν in 5:11 is *resumptive*, and the ὅτι clause which follows the αὕτη in 5:11 is the exegetical (explanatory) clause which explains both it and the αὕτη in 5:9 which it resumes.

3 tn The second ὅτι (*hoti*) in 5:9 may be understood in three different ways. (1) It may be causal, in which case it gives the reason why the testimony just mentioned is God's testimony: "because he has testified concerning his Son." This is extremely awkward because of the preceding ὅτι clause which is almost certainly causal (although the second ὅτι could perhaps be resumptive in force, continuing the first). (2) The second ὅτι could be understood as exegetical (explanatory), in which case it explains what the testimony of God mentioned in the preceding clause consists of: "because this is the testimony of God, [namely,] that he has testified concerning his Son." This is much smoother grammatically, but encounters the logical problem that "the testimony of God" is defined in 5:11 ("And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life") and the two definitions of what the testimony of God consists of are not identical (some would say that they are not even close). Thus (3) the smoothest way to understand the second ὅτι logically is to read it as a relative pronoun: "because this is the testimony of God that he has testified concerning his Son." In this case it is exactly parallel to the relative clause which occurs in 5:10b: "because he has not believed the testimony that (ἣν, *hēn*) God has testified concerning his Son." (There is in fact a textual problem with the second ὅτι in 5:9: The Byzantine tradition, along with *MS P*, reads a relative pronoun [ἣν] in place of the second ὅτι in 5:9 identical to the relative pronoun in 5:10b. This represents an obvious effort on the part of scribes to smooth out the reading of the text.) In an effort to derive a similar sense from the second ὅτι in 5:9 it has been suggested that the

his Son. **5:10** (The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has testified concerning his Son.)⁴ **5:11** And this is the testimony: God⁵ has given us eternal life,⁶ and this life is in his Son. **5:12** The one who has the Son⁷ has this⁸ eternal⁹ life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have this¹⁰ eternal¹¹ life.

conjunction ὅτι should be read as an indefinite relative pronoun ὅτι (sometimes written ὅ τι). The problem with this suggestion is the use of the neuter relative pronoun to refer to a feminine antecedent (ἡ μαρτυρία, *hē marturia*). It is not without precedent for a neuter relative pronoun to refer to an antecedent of differing gender, especially as some forms tended to become fixed in usage and were used without regard to agreement. But in this particular context it is difficult to see why the author would use a neuter indefinite relative pronoun here in 5:9b and then use the normal feminine relative pronoun (ἣν) in the next verse. (Perhaps this strains at the limits of even the notorious Johannine preference for stylistic variation, although it is impossible to say what the author might or might not have been capable of doing.) Because of the simplicity and logical smoothness which results from reading ὅτι as equivalent to a relative pronoun, the third option is preferred, although it is not without its difficulties (as are all three options).

4 sn This verse is a parenthesis in John's argument.

5 tn The ὅτι (*hoti*) clause in 5:11 is exegetical (explanatory) to the phrase καὶ αὕτη ἐστίν (*kai hautē estin*) at the beginning of the verse and gives the content of the testimony for the first time: "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

6 sn In understanding how "God's testimony" (added to the three witnesses of 5:8) can consist of *eternal life* it is important to remember the debate between the author and the opponents. It is not the reality of eternal life (whether it exists at all or not) that is being debated here, but rather which side in the debate (the author and his readers or the opponents) possesses it (this is a key point). The letter began with a testimony that "the eternal life" has been revealed (1:2), and it is consummated here with the reception or acknowledgment of that eternal life as the final testimony. This testimony (which is God's testimony) consists in eternal life itself, which the author and the readers possess, but the opponents do not. This, for the author, constitutes the final apologetic in his case against the opponents.

7 sn The one who has the Son. The expression "to have the Son" in 5:12 means to "possess" him in the sense that he is present in the individual's life (see 1 John 2:23 for the use of the Greek verb "to have" to indicate possession of a divine reality). From the parallel statement in 5:10a it is clear that believing in the Son and thus having God's testimony in one's self is the same as "having" the Son here in 5:12a. This is essentially identical to John 3:16: "that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." In contrast, the negative statement in 5:12b reflects the author's evaluation of the opponents: "the one who does not have the Son does not have (eternal) life." The opponents, in spite of their claims to know God, do not possess (nor have they at any time possessed, cf. 2:19) eternal life.

8 tn "This" is a translation of the Greek anaphoric article.

9 tn The word "eternal" is not in the Greek text but is supplied for clarity, since the anaphoric article in Greek points back to the previous mention of eternal life in 5:11.

10 tn "This" is a translation of the Greek anaphoric article.

11 tn The word "eternal" is not in the Greek text but is supplied for clarity, since the anaphoric article in Greek points back to the previous mention of eternal life in 5:11.

Assurance of Eternal Life

5:13 I have written these things¹ to you who believe² in the name of the Son of God so that³ you may know that you have eternal life.

5:14 And this is the confidence that we have before him: that⁴ whenever⁵ we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. **5:15** And if we know⁶ that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests that we have asked from him. **5:16** If⁷ anyone sees

1 tn Theoretically the pronoun ταῦτα (*tauta*) could refer (1) to what precedes or (2) to what follows. Since it is followed by a ἵνα (*hina*) clause which gives the purpose for the writing, and a new subject is introduced in 5:14 (ἡ παρρησία, *hē parrēsia*), it seems almost certain that the ταῦτα in 5:13 refers to preceding material. Even at this, some would limit the referent of ταῦτα (1) only to 5:1-12 or even 5:12, but more likely ταῦτα in 5:13 refers (2) to the entirety of the letter, for two reasons: (a) based on the structural analogy with the Gospel of John, where the conclusion refers to all that has preceded, it is probable that the conclusion to 1 John refers likewise to all that has preceded; and (b) the statement ταῦτα ἐγράψα ὑμῖν (*tauta egrapsa humin*) in 5:13 forms an inclusion with the statement καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς (*kaì tauta graphomen hēmeis*) at the end of the prologue (1:4) and encompasses the entire body of the letter.

2 tn The dative participle πιστεύουσιν (*pisteuousin*) in 5:13 is in simple apposition to the indirect object of ἐγράψα (*egrapsa*), ὑμῖν (*humin*), and could be translated, "These things I have written to you, namely, to the ones who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know." There is an exact parallel to this structure in John 1:12, where the pronoun is αὐτοῖς (*autois*) and the participle is τοῖς πιστεύουσιν (*tois pisteuousin*) as here.

3 tn This ἵνα (*hina*) introduces a clause giving the author's purpose for writing "these things" (ταῦτα, *tauta*), which refers to the entirety of the preceding material. The two other Johannine statements about writing, 1 John 1:4 and John 20:31, are both followed by purpose clauses introduced by ἵνα, as here.

4 tn For the third time in 5:9-14 the author uses the construction αὕτη ἐστίν (*hautē estin*; 5:9, 11, 14). As in the previous instance (5:11) the ὅτι (*hoti*) clause which follows is exegetical (explanatory) to the pronoun αὕτη and explains what the "confidence" (παρρησία, *parrēsia*) consists of (technically the subject is ἡ παρρησία, the predicate nominative is the pronoun αὕτη, and the ὅτι clause explains the predicate nominative): "And the confidence which we have before him is this, namely, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us."

5 tn A third-class condition is introduced by ἐάν (*ean*) + present subjunctive. Because the apodosis also contains a present tense verb (ἀκούει, *akouei*) this belongs in a subcategory of third-class conditional sentences known as present general. In the Koine period ἐάν can mean "when" or "whenever" and is virtually the equivalent of ὅταν (*hotan*; see BDAG 268 s.v. ἐάν 2). Thus the meaning here is, "whenever (i.e., if) we ask anything according to his will, then he hears us."

6 tn This use of ἐάν (*ean*) with the indicative mood rather than the subjunctive constitutes an anomalous usage. Here ἐάν is used instead of εἰ (*ei*) to introduce a first-class condition: "if we know (οἶδαμεν, *oidamen*) that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests which we have asked from him." The reality of the condition (protasis) is assumed for the sake of argument; given the protasis, the apodosis follows. The use of ἐάν for εἰ is rare but not without precedent; see M. Zerwick (*Biblical Greek* §§330-31).

7 tn Again ἐάν (*ean*) in 5:16 introduces (as in 5:14) a third-class condition, but this time, with the future indicative (αἰτήσει, *aitēsei*) in the apodosis, the condition is known as "more probable future." As BDF §371.4 points out, such a condition describes what is to be expected under certain

his fellow Christian⁸ committing a sin not resulting in death,⁹ he should ask, and God¹⁰ will grant¹¹ life to the person who commits a sin not resulting in death.¹² There is a sin resulting in

circumstances. If a person sees his Christian brother committing a sin not to death, it is expected that he will make intercession for the sinning brother ("he should ask..."), and that life will be granted to the sinner in answer to the request. The author has already pointed out in 5:14-15 that if believers make requests of God in accordance with his will they may have confidence that they will receive the requests they have asked for, and this is a specific instance.

8 tn See note on the phrase "fellow Christian" in 2:9.

9 tn Grk "a sin not to death."

10 tn Grk "he" (see the note on the word "grant" later in this verse for discussion).

11 tn The referent of the (understood) third person subject of δώσει (*dōsei*) in 5:16 is difficult to determine. Once again the author's meaning is obscure. Several possibilities have been suggested for the referent of the subject of this verb: (1) From a grammatical and syntactical standpoint, it would be easiest to understand the subject of δώσει in 5:16 as the person who makes the request, since this person is the subject of the preceding verb αἰτήσει (*aitēsei*) and the following verb ἐρωτήσῃ (*erōtēsē*). From a theological standpoint this is extremely difficult, however, since it would make the person who prays for the sinner the giver of life, and it is questionable whether the author (for whom God is the ultimate source of life) would say that one believer could 'give' life to another. In this case the meaning would be: "he [the petitioner] should ask, and he [the petitioner] will grant life to him [the sinner], namely, to those who sin not to death." (2) Another option is to see God as the subject of δώσει in 5:16 and the Giver of life to the sinner. This is far more consistent theologically with the author's perspective on God as the Giver of life everywhere else, but it is awkward grammatically (as explained in reference to the previous position above) because it involves a shift in subjects for the three third-person verbs in the context from the person who makes the request (αἰτήσει) to God (δώσει) and back to the person who makes the request (ἐρωτήσῃ). In this case the meaning would be: "he [the petitioner] should ask, and he [God] will grant life to him [the sinner], namely, to those who sin not to death." (3) A third possibility is to see God as the subject of δώσει in 5:16, but the person who makes the request (rather than the sinner) as the referent of the indirect object αὐτῷ (*autō*) in 5:16. This is possible because the indirect object αὐτῷ is singular, while the dative substantival participle τοῖς ἁμαρτάνουσιν (*tois hamartanousin*) which follows (which clearly refers to those who sin) is plural. Thus the meaning would be: "he [the petitioner] should ask, and he [God] will grant life to him [the petitioner], with reference to [his praying for] those who sin not to death." Although this is a difficult and awkward construction no matter what solution one takes, on the whole the second alternative seems most probable. Even if option (1) is preferred it must be acknowledged that God is ultimately the source of life, although it is given as a result of the petitioner's intercessory prayer and the petitioner becomes, in a sense, the intermediate agent. But in the preceding context (5:11) the author has emphasized that God is the Giver of life, and in spite of the awkwardness in the change of subjects, that would seem to be the most likely meaning here, so option (2) is preferred. Option (3) is improbable because it seems clear that it should be the sinner for whom intercession is made, rather than the petitioner, who is the recipient of life. The petitioner would be assumed to possess life already or he could not be making a request which God would hear. In this case the change from the singular dative indirect object (αὐτῷ) to the plural dative substantival participle (τοῖς ἁμαρτάνουσιν) is merely a loose construction (which by this time should come as no surprise from the author).

12 tn Grk "a sin not to death."

death.¹ I do not say that he should ask about that. 5:17 All unrighteousness² is sin, but there is sin not resulting in death.³

5:18 We know that everyone fathered⁴ by God does not sin, but God⁵ protects⁶ the one he

¹ tn Grk "a sin to death."

² tn The meaning of ἀδικία (*adikia*) here is "unrighteousness" (BDAG 20 s.v. 2). It refers to the opposite of that which is δίκαιος (*dikaïos*, "right, just, righteous") which is used by the author to describe both God and Jesus Christ (1 John 1:9; 2:2, 29). Here, having implied that sins committed by believers (sins "not to death") may be prayed for and forgiven, the author does not want to leave the impression that such sin is insignificant, because this could be viewed as a concession to the views of the opponents (who as moral indifferentists have downplayed the significance of sin in the Christian's life).

³ tn Grk "a sin not to death."

⁴ tn The concept represented by the verb γεννάω (*gennaō*) here means to be fathered by God and thus a child of God. The imagery in 1 John is that of the male parent who fathers children (see 2:29).

⁵ tn Grk "he"; see the note on the following word "protects."

⁶ tn The meaning of the phrase ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τῆρεῖ αὐτόν (*ho gennētheis ek tou theou tērei auton*) in 5:18 is extraordinarily difficult. Again the author's capacity for making obscure statements results in several possible meanings for this phrase: (1) "The fathering by God protects him [the Christian]." Here a textual variant for ὁ γεννηθεὶς (ἡ γέννησις, *hē gennēsis*) has suggested to some that the passive participle should be understood as a noun ("fathering" or perhaps "birth"), but the ms evidence is extremely slight (1505 1852 2138 latt [sy^l] bo). This almost certainly represents a scribal attempt to clarify an obscure phrase. (2) "The One fathered by God [Jesus] protects him [the Christian]." This is a popular interpretation, and is certainly possible grammatically. Yet the introduction of a reference to Jesus in this context is sudden; to be unambiguous the author could have mentioned the "Son of God" here, or used the pronoun ἐκεῖνος (*ekeinos*) as a reference to Jesus as he consistently does elsewhere in 1 John. This interpretation, while possible, seems in context highly unlikely. (3) "The one fathered by God [the Christian] protects himself." Again a textual problem is behind this alternative, since a number of mss (N A^c P Ψ 33 1739 ℓ) supply the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτὸν (*heauton*) in place of αὐτόν in 5:18. On the basis of the external evidence this has a good possibility of being the original reading, but internal evidence favors αὐτόν as the more difficult reading, since ἑαυτὸν may be explained as a scribal attempt at grammatical smoothness. From a logical standpoint, however, it is difficult to make much more sense out of ἑαυτόν; to say what "the Christian protects himself" means in the context is far from clear. (4) "The one fathered by God [the Christian] holds on to him [God]." This results in further awkwardness, because the third person pronoun (αὐτοῦ, *autou*) in the following clause must refer to the Christian, not God. Furthermore, although τῆρεῖ (*tēreiō*) can mean "hold on to" (BDAG 1002 s.v. 2.c), this is not a common meaning for the verb in Johannine usage, occurring elsewhere only in Rev 3:3. (5) "The one fathered by God [the Christian], he [God] protects him [the Christian]." This involves a *pendant nominative* construction (ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ) where a description of something within the clause is placed in the nominative case and moved forward ahead of the clause for emphatic reasons. This may be influenced by Semitic style; such a construction is also present in John 17:2 ("in order that everyone whom You have given to him, he may give to them eternal life"). This view is defended by K. Beyer (*Semitische Syntax im Neuen Testament* [SUNT], 1:216ff.) and appears to be the most probable in terms both of syntax and of sense. It makes God the protector of the Christian (rather than the Christian himself), which fits the context much better, and there is precedent in Johannine literature for such syntactical structure.

has fathered, and the evil one cannot touch him. 5:19 We know that we are from God,⁷ and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us insight to know⁸ him who is true, and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This one⁹ is the true God and eternal life. 5:21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.¹⁰

⁷ tn The preposition ἐκ (*ek*) here indicates both source and possession: Christians are "from" God in the sense that they are begotten by him, and they belong to him. For a similar use of the preposition compare the phrases ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς (*ek tou patros*) and ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου (*ek tou kosmou*) in 1 John 2:16.

⁸ tn The ἵνα (*hina*) introduces a purpose clause which gives the purpose of the preceding affirmation: "we know that the Son of God has come and has given us insight (so that we may) know him who is true."

⁹ sn The pronoun *This one* (οὗτος, *houtos*) refers to a person, but it is far from clear whether it should be understood as a reference (1) to God the Father or (2) to Jesus Christ. R. E. Brown (*Epistles of John* [AB], 625) comments, "1 John, which began with an example of stunning grammatical obscurity in the prologue, continues to the end to offer us examples of unclear grammar." The nearest previous antecedent is *Jesus Christ*, immediately preceding, but on some occasions when this has been true the pronoun still refers to God (see 1 John 2:3). The first predicate which follows *This one* in 5:20, *the true God*, is a description of God the Father used by Jesus in John 17:3, and was used in the preceding clause of the present verse to refer to God the Father (*him who is true*). Yet the second predicate of *This one* in 5:20, *eternal life*, appears to refer to Jesus, because although the Father possesses "life" (John 5:26, 6:57) just as Jesus does (John 1:4, 6:57, 1 John 5:11), "life" is *never* predicated of the Father elsewhere, while it is predicated of Jesus in John 11:25 and 14:6 (a self-predication by Jesus). If *This one* in 5:20 is understood as referring to Jesus, it forms an inclusion with the prologue, which introduced the reader to "the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us." Thus it appears best to understand the pronoun *This one* in 5:20 as a reference to Jesus Christ. The christological affirmation which results is striking, but certainly not beyond the capabilities of the author (see John 1:1 and 20:28): *This One [Jesus Christ] is the true God and eternal life*.

¹⁰ tc Most later mss (P ℓ) have ἀμήν (*amēn*, "amen") at the end of this letter. Such a conclusion is routinely added by scribes to NT books because a few of these books originally had such an ending (cf. Rom 16:27; Gal 6:18; Jude 25). A majority of Greek witnesses have the concluding ἀμήν in every NT book except Acts, James, and 3 John (and even in these books, ἀμήν is found in some witnesses). It is thus a predictable variant. Further, the earliest and best witnesses, along with several others (N A B Ψ 33 323 630 1505 1739 *al* sy co), lack the inoffensive particle, rendering its omission as the authentic reading.

sn The modern reader may wonder what all this has to do with idolatry. In the author's mind, to follow the secessionist opponents with their false Christology would amount to idolatry, since it would involve worshiping a false god instead of the true God, Jesus Christ. Thus *guard yourselves from idols* means for the readers to guard themselves against the opponents and their teaching.