



STUDY LED BY  
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# Interlaken Study of First John

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## SESSION TWO: CHAPTER TWO

### INTRODUCTION

In chapter one, we noted the Prologue in vv. 1-4 which establishes a conceptual foundation for the entire document: Christ is ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς that the apostles proclaim. This Christ is real, not a spirit and has lived and existed among people in this world. In the Gospel message centered on Him one can establish κοινωμία, a relationship, not only with Him but also with the Father in heaven. It is exclusively through the apostolic Gospel message that John's readers have heard him preach that such is possible. Thus John's purpose in composing this "essay" to his readers is to help them go deeper into the gladness that comes out of this authentic κοινωμία. This in term deepens John's gladness.

In his first expansion (1:5-10) of the concept of κοινωμία with God set forth in the Prologue, John centers on the ἀγγελία, *message*, of the Gospel (v. 5). Central to understanding how κοινωμία with God works is to understand that ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία, *God is light and darkness in Him absolutely is not present*.

Absolutely no one can legitimately claim κοινωμία with God while living in the σκοτία of sinful behavior. This point is repeatedly drilled home by a series of third class conditional sentences in vv. 7-10 with the first two in vv. 6-7 in a negative positive sequence. This pair of conditional sentences is expanded in the three conditional statements that follow in vv. 8-10. The use of the third class protasis in these five sentences sets up a non accusatory scenario which John uses to begin describing the position of the false teachers influencing his readers in the province of Asia toward the end of the first century. Gradually, as we will observe in chapter two, John becomes increasingly blunt in accusing the teachers of phony religion and utterly non-legitimate claims to Christianity.

For one to enjoy a healthy spiritual life the positives protasis clauses in vv. 7 and 9 provide the key. First, by walking in God's salvational light κοινωμίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας, *we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son cleans-*

*es us from every sin.* Second, by confessing our sins, πιστὸς ἐστὶν καὶ δίκαιος, ἵνα ἀφῆ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας καὶ καθαρῖσῃ ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας, *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* The false teachers, on the other hand, are ignoring the presence and implications of sin in the Christian's life, and thus reflect no genuine κοινωμία with God.

In chapter two, John continues to develop implications of κοινωμία as set forth in the Prologue, as well as to build upon the points established in the first expansion of 1:5-10. He begins **first** in [2:1-2](#) to elaborate upon the topic of ἁμαρτία, sin. **Then** κοινωμία with God is defined in terms of γινώσκωμεν ὅτι ἐγγνώκαμεν αὐτόν, *we know that we know Him*, in [2:3-14](#). Central to this experiential knowing God is ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν, *if we keep His commandments*. Here John expands the two positive protasis clauses in 1:7, 9. Again the foundational assumption of 1:5, ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία, *God is light and darkness in Him absolutely does not exist*, provides the spiritual basis for obeying God's commands.

**Third**, in [2:15-17](#) loving God is equated with obeying God. It also means intense denial of everything connected to this material world. This leads, in the **fourth** place in [2:18-27](#), to a blunt and vigorous condemnation of the false teachers in John's community as ἀντίχριστοι, *antichrists*. The **climax** then comes in [2:28-29](#) in a pair of statements encouraging faithful commitment to Christ.

### First John 2:1-2 Texts

#### **N-A 28th GNT:**

2.1 Τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ ἁμάρτητε. καὶ ἐὰν τις ἁμάρτη, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον· 2 καὶ αὐτὸς ἰλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου.

#### **NRSV:**

2.1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and

he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

#### LB 1984:

2.1 Meine Kinder, dies schreibe ich euch, damit ihr nicht sündigt. Und wenn jemand sündigt, so haben wir einen Fürsprecher bei dem Vater, Jesus Christus, der gerecht ist. 2 Und er ist die Versöhnung für unsre Sünden, nicht allein aber für die unseren, sondern auch für die der ganzen Welt.

### Comments

The use of the vocative Τεκνία μου, *my children*, signals a topic shift. This is the first instance of the vocative form being used, but it will become an important signal in the remainder of the essay, seven of the eight NT uses occurring here in First John.<sup>1</sup> The nature of τεκνίον as a diminutive of τέκνον is John's pastoral addressing of his readers as his little children. This is a term of deep affliction for believers with whom John has had a close personal connection for many years prior to the writing of this essay to them. Such a perspective seemed natural to John since Jesus used the term in reference to His disciples in Jhn. 13:33 in very affectionate express.

A further signal of topic shift is seen in ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα..., *these things I am writing to you so that...*, which essentially repeats the climatic statement of the Prologue in v. 4, καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα..., *and these things we are writing so that...* Now now that John is beyond the formal language of the Prologue, he is free to shift over to the first person singular when he so chooses, rather than the first person plural of the Prologue.

John will stress the γράφω aspect with ten uses of this verb, nine times in the first singular and once just in the Prologue in the first plural form.<sup>2</sup> Whether or not John utilized a writing secretary as did Paul for all of his letters we don't know with certainty. Very likely he did, but the so-called letters don't give signals that he did. If he did use a writing secretary, this would help explain the dramatically different language and style of First John from the other two letters. The style of First John matches that of the fourth gospel significantly suggesting a common writing secretary for both these documents, but the very different style in Second and Third John would suggest a different secretary.

The attaching of the adverbial purpose clause expressed with the subordinate conjunction ἵνα to γράφω adds a statement of intention to John's assertion of writing. In the Prologue in v. 4, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη, *in order that our gladness might be complete*, John reflects his goal for this essay of helping the readers go deeper in the apostolic Gospel. Here in 2:1, ἵνα μὴ ἀμάρτητε, *in order that you might not commit sin*,

reflects the more narrow objective coming out of the preceding scenarios asserting the danger of ignoring the presence of sin in the believer's life. The aorist subjunctive verb ἀμάρτητε states this goal in very idealistic terms of his readers (note 2nd plural verb) hopefully not committing a single sin after reading this essay.

But in the expansion sentence that follows in 2:1b-2, John deals with reality rather than idealism. It is framed in another third class conditional protasis: καὶ ἐάν τις ἀμάρτη, *and if one does sin*. This is non-accusatory, and acknowledges that his idealistic goal in writing this essay is setting the bar higher than his readers will achieve. But it remains the worthy goal that every believer should aim for. The precise meaning of ἐάν τις ἀμάρτη here is defined by ἐάν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν, *if we say that we have not sinned*, in 1:10. The aorist subjunctive verb in 2:1, ἀμάρτη stresses the committing of a sin, while the perfect indicative ἡμαρτήκαμεν in 1:10 emphasizes committing a sin without consequence.

So what happens when a believer fails to achieve this goal?

The apodosis in 2:1 answers this question: παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον, *an advocate we have with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One*. Believers who are in κοινωνία (1:3) with the Father and the Son enjoy the privilege of access to Christ as παράκλητος. Though often translated as advocate in the sense of a modern attorney in a court setting, the closer sense of παράκλητος in the ancient world was in the sense of a mediator or intercessor who stood between the individual and God. In the five NT uses of παράκλητος,<sup>3</sup> all are in either the gospel or First John. In the fourth gospel with four of the five instances, the παράκλητος is the Holy Spirit, and only here in First John is the παράκλητος presented as Christ.

Thus John asserts that, for our sins as a believer, Christ stands between us and the Father to nullify the destructive impact of our sins upon our κοινωνία with the Father. But as he emphasized in 1:9 (also 1:7), our responsibility is ἐάν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν, *if we confess our sins*. The reason for this being critically important comes out of the foundational axiom in 1:5, ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἐστὶν οὐδεμία, *God is light and darkness in Him absolutely does not exist*. Sin establishes a barrier hindering κοινωνία with the Father.

The reason Christ stands between us and God as παράκλητος is that He is δίκαιον, *the Righteous One*. His character matches that of the Father whom John asserted is δίκαιος in 1:9. He then has unhindered access to the Father. John's concept of δίκαιος, *righteous*,

<sup>1</sup>Note this usage in 2:1, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21.

<sup>2</sup>Note 1:4; 2:1, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 21, 26; 5:13.

<sup>3</sup>Note John 14:6, 26; 15:16, 16:7; 1 John 2:1.

becomes increasingly clear as the essay progresses.<sup>4</sup> It stands ultimately as a label for the axiom of 1:5, ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἐστὶν οὐδεμία, with emphasis upon how this impacts us as believers.

The second half of this expansion sentence in 2:1b-2 contains two profoundly significant declarations that explain how Christ as the Righteous One stands between the believer and God: καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, *and He is atoning sacrifice for our sins, but not only for our sins but also for those of the entire world.* Christ, the Righteous One, stands as παράκλητος now through having become our ἱλασμός. Central to this is the anchor point of ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, *our sins*. Note the further amplification in 4:10b, αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, *He loved us and sent His Son as ἱλασμὸν for our sins.*

What was an ἱλασμός?<sup>5</sup> Of course the history backdrop to this is Calvary and the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple. In the ancient Jewish festival of the Day of Atonement, known today as *Yom Kippur*, The sprinkling of the sacrificial blood on the altar inside the Holy of Holies by the high priest expiated the sins of the Israelites for the previous year, and insured them access to God for another year.<sup>6</sup> Jesus' death on the cross then stands as the divine initiated action that removes the barrier of the σκοτία of our sin that hinder our κοινωνία with the Heavenly Father. The neuter form ἱλαστήριον, had John used it rather than the mascu-

<sup>4</sup>Note 1:9; 2:1, 29; 3:7, 12.

<sup>5</sup>The inner connection of the verb ἰλάσκομαι, *I conciliate*; the noun ἱλασμός, *expiation*; and the noun ἱλαστήριον, *means of expiation*, is very close. Although used in the Greco-Roman religious traditions to some extent, the New Testament perspective unquestionably is shaped by the Jewish temple sacrificial system and theology out of the Law of Moses.

In the Greco-Roman religious tradition the offering of sacrifices in the various temples to the different gods and goddesses was designed to turn them into an ἕλωσ, that is, a deity favorably included toward the sacrificer. In that way, the deity would leave the worshiper along for a period of time and not mess up his life by some arbitrary harmful action. For more details see Kittel, Gerhard, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–, volume 3, page 300. Article by Friedrich Büchsel.

<sup>6</sup>“Along with ἱλασμός the LXX has ἐξιλασμός, ἐξιλασμα, ἐξιλασις. It uses these words for derivatives of קָפַר, specifically קָרְבָּן. ἱλασμός is usually the cultic expiation by which sin is made ineffective. In Ez. ἱλασμός and ἐξιλασμός are the sin offering קַרְבַּן, 44:27; 45:19. God is not the object of ἱλασμός (ἐξιλασμός, ἐξιλασις). It is expressly stated that man cannot offer Him an ἐξιλασμα (ψ 48:7). ἱλασμός, however, is also God's forgiveness, קַפַּרְתִּיךָ ψ 129:4. This usage corresponds to that of ἰλάσκομαι and ἐξιλάσκομαι → ἰλάσκομαι.” [Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 3:317.]

line form, would have stressed Jesus as the sacrificial offering that achieved the removal of this barrier. But the masculine form ἱλασμός puts the emphasis on the action of removing the barrier of sin standing between us and God.<sup>7</sup> This becomes the amplification of the 1:7 statement τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας, *the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.*

Wow! Jesus becomes our παράκλητον through being the ἱλασμός. And even more astounding is the scope of this ἱλασμός action: οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, *and not only for our own sins but also for those of the entire world.* Now don't overlook the contextual assertion (1:9) of ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, *if we confess our sins*. This removal of the barrier of sin between us and God requires our dealing seriously with the sin. God's cleansing through the blood of Jesus (1:9) is not automatic apart from the individual's obligation.

Thus John asserts clearly that the potential of this cleansing blood of Christ is great enough to remove all the sins of everyone in the entire world. This is made emphatic in the way John expresses it. The initial περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν is repeated as περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων, using the possessive adjective ἡμετέρων that would stress exclusivity. Believers in no way can claim Jesus as ἱλασμός exclusively for their sins! John emphatically denies this with οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον, *and not concerning ours only*. Then the other side of the οὐ... μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ, *not...only, but also*, contrast is stated as ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, *but also concerning the entire world*.<sup>8</sup>

## First John 2:3-14 Texts

### N-A 28th GNT:

3 Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν, ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. 4 ὁ λέγων ὅτι ἐγνώκα αὐτόν καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν, ψεύστης ἐστὶν καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἐστίν· 5 ὃς δ' ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται, ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐσμεν. 6 ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν ὀφείλει καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιεπάτησεν καὶ αὐτὸς [οὕτως] περιπατεῖν.

7 Ἀγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν ἀλλ' ἐντολὴν παλαιὰν ἣν εἶχετε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς· ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιὰ

<sup>7</sup>The older commentaries and theological books will contain substantial discussion on the difference between appropriation and expiation. The first stresses the satisfying of the demands of a holy God, while the latter emphasizes the removal of the offending sin from the worshiper. Both perspectives miss the point of John here of using ἱλασμός for the action of removal of the barrier of sin.

<sup>8</sup>This statement alone is enough to invalidate the false claims of hyper Calvinists that Christ died only for the sins of the elect.

ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε. 8 πάλιν ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, ὃ ἐστὶν ἀληθὲς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει. 9 Ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι. 10 ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν. 11 ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν καὶ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία ἐτύφλωσεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ.

12 Γράφω ὑμῖν, τεκνία, ὅτι ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. 13 γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. γράφω ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν. 14 ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, παιδιά, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα. ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι ἰσχυροὶ ἐστε καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει καὶ νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.

#### **NRSV:**

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments. 4 Whoever says, "I have come to know him," but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; 5 but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: 6 whoever says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just as he walked.

7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. 9 Whoever says, "I am in the light," while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling. 11 But whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness.

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven on account of his name. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young people, because you have conquered the evil one. 14 I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young people, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

#### **LB 1984:**

3 Und daran merken wir, dass wir ihn kennen, wenn

wir seine Gebote halten. 4 Wer sagt: Ich kenne ihn, und hält seine Gebote nicht, der ist ein Lügner, und in dem ist die Wahrheit nicht. 5 Wer aber sein Wort hält, in dem ist wahrlich die Liebe Gottes vollkommen. Daran erkennen wir, dass wir in ihm sind. 6 Wer sagt, dass er in ihm bleibt, der soll auch leben, wie er gelebt hat.

7 Meine Lieben, ich schreibe euch nicht ein neues Gebot, sondern das alte Gebot, das ihr von Anfang an gehabt habt. Das alte Gebot ist das Wort, das ihr gehört habt. 8 Und doch schreibe ich euch ein neues Gebot, das wahr ist in ihm und in euch; denn die Finsternis vergeht und das wahre Licht scheint jetzt. 9 Wer sagt, er sei im Licht, und hasst seinen Bruder, der ist noch in der Finsternis. 10 Wer seinen Bruder liebt, der bleibt im Licht, und durch ihn kommt niemand zu Fall. 11 Wer aber seinen Bruder hasst, der ist in der Finsternis und wandelt in der Finsternis und weiß nicht, wo er hingeht; denn die Finsternis hat seine Augen verblindet.

12 Liebe Kinder, ich schreibe euch, dass euch die Sünden vergeben sind um seines Namens willen. 13 Ich schreibe euch Vätern; denn ihr kennt den, der von Anfang an ist. Ich schreibe euch jungen Männern; denn ihr habt den Bösen überwunden. 14 Ich habe euch Kindern geschrieben; denn ihr kennt den Vater. Ich habe euch Vätern geschrieben; denn ihr kennt den, der von Anfang an ist. Ich habe euch jungen Männern geschrieben; denn ihr seid stark und das Wort Gottes bleibt in euch, und ihr habt den Bösen überwunden.

#### **Comments**

In this series of small pericopes, the other side of confessing sin (2:1-2) comes to the forefront: that of obeying the commandments of God. The core principle is the simple *γινώσκωμεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν*, *we know that we know Him*. How is this possible? *ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν*, *if His commandments we keep*. From this basic principle in v. 3, John will proceed to amplify this in a variety of ways down through verse 14. In vv. 4-6 he switches to the substantival participle phrase rather than the earlier third class conditional protasis to set up his positive and negative scenarios. In vv. 7-11, he stresses the old established nature of this principle of obeying the commandments of God. In vv. 12-14, he resorts to poetic expression to drive home the point of obedience to the commandments of God. Through all of this John manages to periodically tie his statements back into the images of the Prologue in 1:1-4 in good literary strategy.

**Principle, v. 3.** In the Prologue, John vigorously stressed his "hands on" relationship with Christ in the series of relative clauses, along with the claim *ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, *our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ*. The relative clauses emphasized the deep interaction with the historical

Jesus during His earthly ministry, but the claim to ἡ κοινωνία is spiritual in nature and stresses a conscious awareness of the presence of God and of Christ in John's life via the relationship he enjoys with them. His readers had no opportunity for the physical interaction with the earthly Jesus, but a spiritual κοινωνία with God and Christ lay as the foundation of their salvation. Being spiritual and not material in nature, how could they be confident of this relationship?

In the main clause, ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν, *in this we know that we know Him*, John asserts the possibility of certainty of being in κοινωνία with the Father and with the Son. Note the subtle yet profound play off the verb γινώσκω. For John this verb stresses knowledge out of experience primarily. Thus what John claims is an experiential knowing of Christ (αὐτόν). This has a salvational framework in the Johannine writings and is but another way of defining κοινωνία with the Father and with the Son from the Prologue. The use of the present and perfect tense forms of this verb is ingenious, but untranslatable into modern western languages. The resulting sense of the statement is *we know presently that we have established a saving knowledge of Him that continues on*. This is the same premise assertion as καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, *and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1:3b)*. That we are in κοινωνία with the Father and the Son can be known with certainty. This is John's declaration.

But how can we know this? In two typically Johannine grammar patterns John answers this question. First, ἐν τούτῳ is the key. The use of the demonstrative pronoun for this here with the preposition sets up an idea that from an ancient Greek way of thinking establishes the τούτῳ as the means by which something is known. But John comes out of a Hebrew / Aramaic speaking background which means that such a construction as ἐν τούτῳ defines the setting or atmosphere in which something is known. Second, the τούτῳ refers to something else. Usually the antecedent of demonstrative pronouns like τούτῳ reaches back to something previously stated. But in one of the unique traits of the Johannine writing style the use of ἐν τούτῳ at the beginning of a sentence anticipates its antecedent forward at the end of the sentence.<sup>9</sup> And when the antecedent is more than a single word such as a phrase, the neuter singular form of the pronoun will be used. And this is the case here.

The means of knowing that we know is thus ἐὰν

<sup>9</sup>“The phrase τούτῳ γινώσκομεν (literally, “in this we know”) is a typical formula in 1 John, where it appears, with variations, on ten occasions (cf. v 5; 3:16, 19, 24; 4:2, 13; 5:2; also 2:18; 4:6).” [Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, vol. 51, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 44.]

τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν, *if we keep His commandments*. Obedience to the will of God is the way that we know that we know! This had special significance against the false teachers among John's readers. Their claim to knowing God rested on appealing to a highly charged emotional conversion experience in which they received salvational γνώσις, *knowledge*. The proof of this was glossolalia, i.e., speaking in tongues. The gift of this γνώσις thus “liberated them once and for all time” from ἁμαρτία, *sin*, which in their adoption of the classical Greek definition of it meant ‘ignorance.’<sup>10</sup> Now possessing ‘knowledge’ they were automatically free from ‘sin.’ John's declaration here on obedience as the only way to certainty of relationship with God directly contradicts their false teaching.

The key to correct understanding of John's declaration is grasping his meaning of τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ, *His commandments*. Systematically what John means by this unfolds in the subsequent discussion. Clearly he is not advocating a Jewish Torah obedience like what Paul condemned in declarations such as Gal. 2:16:

εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ.

*but knowing that a person is not made righteous out of works of Law but only through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have put our faith in Christ Jesus so that we would be made righteous out of faith in Christ and not out of works of Law, because out of works of Law no flesh will be made righteous.*

No legalistic approach to religion in which the individual takes on himself the burden of keeping every command of God's Law will ever succeed. What John has in mind is similar to Paul's declaration in Eph. 2:10:

αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἐσμεν ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς οἷς προητοίμασεν ὁ θεός, ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν.

*For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*

And both John and Paul are echoing Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount in Mt. 7:21:

Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι· κύριε κύριε, εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιῶν τὸ

<sup>10</sup>Also looming in the background of this false teaching is the adoption of Greek philosophical definitions of φῶς and σκοτία (cf. 1:5). Light is intellectual enlightenment, while darkness is the opposite. To live in σκοτία is to live in ignorance and to fail to achieve enlightenment, i.e., ἁμαρτάνειν., to sin. For them, coming to possess γνώσις in a momentary experience solved every problem.

θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

What all three -- Jesus, Paul, and John -- are advocating is that a life changing encounter with God through Christ produces a re-orienting of one's life to do God's will and to shun sinning. John's gnosticizing opponents among his readers were doing neither. Thus John was passionate about pulling his readers deeper into κοινωνία with the apostles and away from the false teachers' corrupting influences (1:3-4).

**Amplification 1, vv. 4-6.** The first expansion of his core principle in v. 3 comes in three complex sentence form statements in vv. 4-6.

- 1) ὁ λέγων ὅτι ἔγνωκα αὐτὸν καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν,  
ψεύστης ἐστὶν  
καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν.
- 2) ὃς δ' ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον,  
ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ  
τετελείωται,  
ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐσμεν.
- 3) ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένει  
ὀφείλει καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιεπάτησεν καὶ  
αὐτὸς [οὕτως] περιπατεῖν.

In 1:6-10, John used a series of third class conditional protasis clauses in order to set up his various scenarios. Then the apodosis main clauses present his evaluation of each scenario. Here in 2:4-6, John achieves essentially the same idea but stylistically by using either *a participle phrase* (#s 1 & 3) or *a relative clause* (# 2) as the subject of the first main (#s 1 & 3) or as the antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun ἐν τούτῳ in the first main clause (# 2). Notice the pattern unfolding here in 1:5-10 and 2:3-6: *core principle amplified by series of scenarios illustrating various implications of the core principle*. And all of this is anchored deeply into the foundational principles set forth in the Prologue (1:1-4).

The three scenarios are built around the expansion of the theme of ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν in verse three.

**The first one** makes the claim (ὁ λέγων ὅτι) to have come to a saving knowledge of Christ (ἔγνωκα αὐτὸν with perfect tense verb form). But behavior wise is not obeying the commandments of God (τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν). This claim parallels the earlier claim in 1:6, 'Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατῶμεν, *if we say that we have fellowship with him and in the darkness are living*. The same hypocritical pattern of a claim not matched by behavior then violates the principle of 1:5, ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία, *God is light and dark-*

*ness absolutely is not in Him*. The false teachers have made the fatal error of letting their surrounding Greek culture define the parameters of their religious experience, rather than the revelation of God through the Old Testament and the Jewish grounded teachings of Jesus. This provided a much easier version of religion with far less demands, but it also was spiritual suicide.

The two main clauses for this first scenario make similar assertions to the apodosis main clauses in 1:6-10. John in 1:6 declares that the one claiming to have fellowship with God while living in darkness is lying and producing truth, ψευδόμεθα καὶ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. Here in 2:4 the one claiming to know Christ and not obeying His commandments ψεύστης ἐστὶν καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν, *is a liar and in him the truth does not exist*. Essentially John makes the same evaluation for both scenarios which are essentially the same. Such a false hypocritical claim means the individual is denying God and not producing the character of God in his living.

In **the second scenario** of v. 5 is a positive affirmation that matches the second scenario of 1:7,

1.7, ἐὰν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν ὡς αὐτὸς ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ,

2.5, ὃς δ' ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον,  
To walk in the light is the same as keeping His word. The focus in 2:5 centers on defining the parameters of obedience as doing what Christ says. This is helpful tightening of the broader walking in the light of 1:7. Thus the teachings of Jesus in the four gospels provide a beginning point for understanding the word of Jesus. But the writings of the apostles also come under this scope since they are speaking in behalf of Christ as His appointed messengers. Also remember John's presentation of Christ as τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς, the life giving Word (1:2), along with ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν, *His Word is not in us*, in 1:10 to those denying the presence of sin in their lives. When one τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, he is doing far more than obeying a set of religious and moral rules. In reality, he is allowing Christ as the Word to mold and shape his life and thinking. It is a part of having κοινωνία with Christ (1:3).

Thus John's evaluation of this scenario is ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται, ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐσμεν, *truly in this one the love of God has come to fullness. In this (scenario) we know that in Him we exist*.<sup>11</sup> This asserts the same essential principle as the apodosis in the second protasis of 1:7, κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας,

<sup>11</sup>Note that the first instance of τούτῳ is masculine singular and refers back to ὃς ἂν, *whoever*. But the second instance of τούτῳ is neuter singular and refers back to the relative clause ὃς δ' ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, *but whoever keeps His Word*.

fellowship we have with one another and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. In 2:5 the principle of *κοινωνία* now is defined as the maturing of God's love in the believer. The beginning adverb *ἀληθῶς* serves to distinguish genuineness of religious experience in the second scenario as opposed to false claims in the first scenario.

Two points are made by John in his evaluation of the second scenario. First, *ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται*. In the person keeping Christ's word the life transforming love of God has the opportunity to come to fulness. Although *ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ* can be taken different ways depending on the assumed function of the genitive case *θεοῦ*,<sup>12</sup> the primary meaning here is God's love for the believer.<sup>13</sup> As such it stands as another defining criteria of *κοινωνία* with the Father (1:3). Our relationship with God, i.e., *κοινωνία*, is defined by God's love.<sup>14</sup> But *ἀγάπη* is not feelings or emotions. Instead, *ἀγάπη* is God's commitment to transform the sinner into a child who grows up spiritually in healthy religious adulthood. The apodosis in 1:7, *κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας*, is a significant aspect of this *ἀγάπη*. But the numerous subsequent references to *ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ* will expand the idea greatly and provide us with a fuller image of divine love.

The perfect passive verb *τετελείωται* provides a dramatic, defining picture of God's love. The idea of *τελειώω* is to bring to completion of a goal. In application to people, most often it referenced the reaching of adulthood from childhood. Thus the English sense of 'to grow up.' God's commitment in *ἀγάπη* achieves its goal in our spiritual maturity. Thus His commitment to us becomes our commitment to Him in a deep, consistent, mature expression of obedience. Our willingness to submit to Him in obedience is what enables that divine love to achieve its intention in our lives.

Second, John now expands the scenario of keeping His commandments (= *ἐν τούτῳ*, 2nd instance) with the powerful declaration of *ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἔσμεν*. This is close to being

<sup>12</sup>“The genitive τοῦ θεοῦ (‘of God’) may be taken as subjective, in which case John is speaking (as in 4:9) of God's love for man (so Westcott, 49; Bultmann, 25; Houlden, 68). Or the genitive may be objective, to give the sense of man's love for God (as in our translation here, and at 2:15 and 5:3; so also Brooke, 32; Dodd, 31; Marshall, 125). A third construction takes the genitive as one of quality, denoting God's kind of love (so Schnackenburg, 103).” [Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, vol. 51, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 49.]

<sup>13</sup>Note the dominate pattern of this meaning in the references to *ἀγάπη* in 2:5, 15; 3:1, 16, 17; 4:7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18; 5:3. <sup>14</sup> Note the limited emphasis on love in the OT: “*ἀγάπη* (*agapē*), love. Cognate words: *ἀγαπάω*, *ἀγαπητός*. Heb. equiv. fr. LXX: *הָבֵן* (12×), *הָבֵן* (1×)” [*The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Logos Bible Software, 2011).]

the opposite of the negative second apodosis clause in 1:10, *ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν*, *His Word is not in us*, which matches the negative assessment in 2:4, *ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν*, *in this one the truth does not exist*. The emphasis in *ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἔσμεν* (2:5) does define the previous core declaration *γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν*, *we know that we know Him* (2:3). Thus through obeying Christ we can have certainty that our spiritual existence is in Christ and this means certainty in knowing that we know Him.

Third, John reaching back in v. 6 to making a claim of knowing God in Christ. But here the emphasis falls not upon the establishment of the *κοινωνία* with God through Christ but upon the continuation of that through life: *ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν*. Here John evidently takes on the false teachers even more directly. In their perverted theology, having the emotional *γνώσις* acquisition experience in conversion took care of everything the rest of one's life in terms of enjoying *κοινωνία* with God. No more worries about sin; no concern about spiritual maturing. God gave you the secretive *γνώσις* in one bundle at conversion, which is all one would ever need.

Thus the claim *ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν* to remain in Him could be made solely on appeal to the previous acquisition of the saving *γνώσις* which permanently sealed one's eternal destiny. One automatically continued in Him! Not so declares John.

When the claim to be continuing in Christ is made, the individual is acknowledging a huge obligation to God that must be met if the claim is genuine: *ὀφείλει καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιεπάτησεν καὶ αὐτὸς [οὗτως] περιπατεῖν*, *ought just as that One walked also himself thusly to walk*. Once again (cf. 1:6, 7; see also 2:6, 11) the image of 'walking' is picked up as an image for living life with behavior at the center. Here a standard of measurement for defining the framework of 'walking' is provided: *καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιεπάτησεν*, *just as that One walked*.

What was one important consequence of the very “hands on” encounter with the Word stressed so strongly in the series of relative clauses in the Prologue of 1:1-3? It was a first hand, eye witness observation of how Jesus walked through life while on earth. John knew the religious and moral standards that Jesus lived by first hand by observing Him up close for nearly three years. And how can John's readers learn what that was? A significant part of it is *ἡ ἀγγελία*, *the message*, from Christ (1:5) that centers in God as pure light. Jesus lived a life free from the darkness of sin, and thus sets the standard for everyone claiming to maintain a relationship with Him. The adverb of manner *οὕτως* underscores that Jesus' standards are to be our stan-

dards as His followers.

**Amplification 2, vv. 7-11.** What exactly were Jesus' standards? In verses 7-11, John summarizes them in one basic principle, which he calls an *έντολήν παλαιάν*, *an old commandment*, and then identifies it as *ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε*, *the Word which you have heard*. From whom? Note 1:3, *ἀπαγγέλλομεν καὶ ὑμῖν*, *what... we are proclaiming also to you*. It also is, from 1:5, included in *ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν*, *this is the message that we have heard from Him and are proclaiming to you*.

The initial signal of a slight turn in topic comes with the vocative *Ἀγαπητοί*, *beloved*. In 2:1, John had used *Τεκνία μου*, *my little ones*, to signal a new direction. The next signal of topic shift comes with *Παιδιά*, *children*, in 2:18. The use of *Ἀγαπητοί* in 2:7 both picks upon on the previous phrase *ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ* in 2:5 and additionally indicates that the concept of God's love is going to be more prominent in what he is about to say.

Also the idea of *γράφω ὑμῖν* (2:7) from the Prologue in 1:4, *ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς*, comes back to the foreground, just as it did in 2:1 with *ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν*. John is not following any pre-formed outline in this essay, but he does have a series of topics to discuss, all of which are linked by in some way or another to the Prologue in 1:1-4. Probably the most appropriate modern image to describe the literary approach of John would be the key chain. The Prologue is the key ring and the various pericopes are the keys, some of which look very similar to one another and others which are considerably different from one another. But all are deeply anchored into the foundational concepts set forth in the Prologue in 1:1-4.



What John first centers on in vv. 7-8 is a new perspective on the axiom of 1:5, *ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἔστιν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία*, *God is light and darkness in him absolutely does not exist*. This represents the very being and character of God Himself. Now we are given the insight that *ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει*, *darkness is fading and the genuine light already shines* (v. 8b). This insight is characterized in an interesting manner as a *έντολήν*, *a commandment*.<sup>15</sup> Although *ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ*

<sup>15</sup>This interpretation takes *ὅτι* in v. 8 as substantial object (= *that*) in function thus defining the content of the *έντολήν*. An alternative way it can be taken is adverbial causal (= *because*) thus providing the basis for the *έντολήν* which then is specified in content in vv. 9-11. In this latter approach the declaration *ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει* is a part of the *έντολήν* as the foundation.

*ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει* seems more like theological axiom than theological commandment, one must not overlook that *σκοτία* defines supernatural evil forces which in no way would voluntarily fade, *παράγεται*, out of the issue and in their powerful influences. This declaration understood as an *έντολήν* underscores the superior power and authority of God to put *σκοτία* out of business with the passing of time. Just as with the literal meanings of *φῶς* and *σκοτία*, as symbols of God and supernatural evil when light begins to shine darkness always fades.

John first characterizes this principle of the fading of darkness in the presence of shining light as *οὐκ έντολήν καινήν*, *not a new commandment*, but as *ἀλλ' έντολήν παλαιάν ἣν εἶχετε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς*, *instead an ancient commandment which you have possessed from the beginning*. That is, this is a spiritual truth in place from the very beginning of creation. It is not some brand new untested idea. More importantly this *ἡ έντολή ἡ παλαιά* is nothing less than *ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε*, *the Word which you have heard*. John here picks up *τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς*, *the Word of life*, from v. 1 in the Prologue as the focus of the Gospel message that *ἀπαγγέλλομεν καὶ ὑμῖν*, *we are proclaiming also to you* (1:3). Note the identical declaration in 1:15 introducing the theological axiom of God as light: *ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν*, *this is the message which we have heard from Him and are proclaiming to you*.

Then with a certain ironic twist in v. 8 John comes right back to assert this principle as *πάλιν έντολήν καινήν γράφω ὑμῖν*, *again a new commandment I am writing to you*. This is not an *έντολήν καινήν* in the sense of some new untested idea (v. 7), but it is an *έντολήν καινήν* (v. 8) because it captures the ancient truth that *ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἔστιν*, *God is light* (1:5) in the person and essence of Christ as *τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς*, *the life giving Word*.

The gnosticizing tendencies of John's opponents in the communities of his readers would have agreed that the reality of *ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἔστιν*, *God is light*, stood as an old reality reaching back in time at least to the creation of the world. The Jewish God indeed is eternal in nature. They would concur with John that Christ as the visible expression of God as light also is eternal. His goal in coming to earth was to dispel darkness as ignorance from humans. But when John asserted this *έντολήν καινήν* as something *ὃ ἔστιν ἀληθές ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν*, *that is true in Him and in you*, some questioning would have surfaced because the apostolic proclamation of Christ as the Word defined these images of light and darkness not in their terms of the Greek philosophical assertions of mental enlightenment and mental ignorance with religious implications, but in terms of the Jewish moral background of light as



holiness and darkness as immoral behavior. Thus the shining of light pressures one to deal seriously with sin and moral behavior, something they felt unnecessary and of no religious importance.

When John affirms that ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει, *darkness is fading and the genuine light already is shining*, is also ἀληθὲς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, *true in Him and in you*, we begin to see where John is going spiritually here.<sup>16</sup> Truth is virtually a synonym of light biblically and both center in God, His character and actions. That God as a moral presence was exemplified in the life of Christ as the Word of God is asserted powerfully here by John. Furthermore, in the genuine commitments to this God through Christ among John's readers this authentic character of God is present in them who have made the life changing commitment to God. Their way of living and behaving themselves has been profoundly altered. Indeed the strangle hold of darkness as supernatural evil upon their lives has been broken and is diminishing. This comes out of the resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Christ as the genuine divine Word who has first broken the death grip of darkness over humanity.

Strong signals have been given that this spiritual truth has strong overtones morally. John in vv. 9-11 puts those moral implications on the table directly picking up on his previous allusion to the love of God, ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ, being brought to completion (τετελείωται) in the one obeying God's commandments (2:5). That divine love as a dynamic expression of God's love in the obedient believer impacts relationships with others. The implication of κοινωνία in 1:3-4 is bridge building between John's readers and the apostolic Gospel represented by John. This comes naturally out of κοινωνία with God and Christ.

Thus the shining of the true light in the presence of God through Christ in the believer means loving one's brother in Christ. At the very center of κοινωνία is the commitment of ἀγάπη to others, particularly those

<sup>16</sup>For readers who understand Greek, something here appears at first glance as strange and incorrect Greek. The relative clause ὃ ἐστὶν ἀληθὲς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν that contextually defines ἐντολήν is neuter gender rather than the expected feminine gender matching its antecedent ἐντολήν.

Why did John use the neuter ὃ rather than the expected ἥ? Typically in ancient Greek the relative pronoun matches its antecedent in both gender and number. But here -- and a few other places -- John seeks a double link for the antecedent of the relative pronoun. He places the relative clause sequentially close to ἐντολήν, but at the same time he also wants to make it very clear to his readers that the relative clause is especially defining the ὅτι clause that follows. This would require the neuter singular ὃ spelling of the relative pronoun which John uses. That darkness is fading and the true light is already shining is indeed true in Christ and in John's readers. And this also constitutes the heart of the new commandment that John writes about.

inside the community of faith. This point would have been especially stinging to John's opponents, whose spiritual elitism had led them to separate themselves from the Christian communities John writes to (cf. 2:19).

Once more John casts his comments in the same literary structure of vv. 4-6 that stands as a stylistic equivalent to the series of conditional protasis clauses in 1:6-7 and 8-10. Here the slight variation is the use of the substantival participle phrase as main clause subject rather than the ptc - conj - ptc sequence of 2:4-6. The negative - positive - negative sequence is, however, maintained. Note the three scenarios presented:

- 1) Ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶν  
ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι.
- 2) ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ  
ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει  
καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν·
- 3) ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ  
ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν  
καὶ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ  
καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει,  
ὅτι ἡ σκοτία ἐτύφλωσεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ.

The metaphors of darkness and light again play a fundamental role in expressing the spiritual reality. The contrast is between ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ and ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ. Hating one's brother constitutes a hypocritical claim to existing in the light. This is the same principle as ὁ λέγων ὅτι ἔγνων αὐτὸν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν, *saying that I know Him and not keeping His commandments* (2:4), and Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατῶμεν, *if we say that we have fellowship with him and in the darkness live* (1:6).

Now κοινωνία is extended further. First it was expanded to cover serious dealing with sin in the believer's life (1:6-10), then keeping God's commandments (2:3-6). Now it covers loving one's brother (2:9-11). Increasingly we as readers are discovering the deeper implications of claiming κοινωνία with God.

In the three scenarios, which really are but two distinct ones as the three participle phrases make clear above,

John **first** deals with the hypocrisy of claiming to be existing spiritually in God as light and at the same time exhibiting a deep dislike for one's fellow Christian. To make such a claim while possessing such a stance toward fellow believers means but one thing: ἐν τῇ

σκοτία ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι. Such a false Christian has never made saving contact with God who is light: ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι, *is until now*. This is in spite of claims to have experienced a supposed γνῶσις based saving encounter with God.

John's use of μισέω reflects a very intense attitude of both dislike and disgust. But in the LXX background of this term μισέω -- and μῖσος / μισητός which are not used in the NT -- defines this more as a stance where intense attitude produces destructive action against someone.<sup>17</sup> It is the antonym of ἀγαπή / φιλή. Just as ἀγαπή defines commitment to enrich another person's life, μῖσος defines a commitment to harm another person.<sup>18</sup> Here John is specifying the stance of these false teachers who have convinced some of those in John's community to disassociate themselves from the believing community. Step by step the accusatory tone of how John sets up the scenarios is increasing.

**Second**, in the positive second scenario (v. 10) John follow consistently the pattern of the positive scenarios beginning in 1:7. He stresses the actions of the genuine believer: ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν ὡς αὐτός ἐστιν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ, *in the light we are walking as He is in*

<sup>17</sup>“The word group μισέω, μῖσος, μισητός is also found in the LXX, and μισητὸν ποιεῖν is common, mostly for κῆψ (noun κῆψ) .”<sup>7</sup> This hatred or dislike may be of different kinds and may show itself in different external relations. The word is first used when men are at enmity, e.g., Gn. 26:27; Ju. 11:7; 2 S. 5:8; 13:22; 18:28 B; 22:18, 41; 1 K. 22:8 = 2 Ch. 18:7. In a trial it is noted whether a man who has killed hated or did it unintentionally, Dt. 4:42; 19:4, 6, 11; Jos. 20:5. Very often a man hates or is tired of the wife he has lived with, Gn. 29:31, 33; Dt. 21:15; 22:13, 16; 24:3; Ju. 14:16; 15:2; 2 S. 13:15; Sir. 42:9; Is. 54:6; 60:15. It is natural that the political enemy should come within this hatred which divides men, Da. 4:16; 1 Macc. 7:26; 11:21; 4 Macc. 9:3.8 The opp. of ‘to hate’ in the OT is always ‘to love.’ Of two wives it may be that a man loves the one and hates the other, Dt. 21:15 and n. 23f., or that love turns to hate, Ju. 14:16; 2 S. 13:15. To hate is to feel distaste, Dt. 22:13; 24:3; Ju. 14:16; 15:2, or to slight, Dt. 21:15 ff.; Is. 60:15, to be unfriendly or not to love, Ex. 20:5; Dt. 7:10.9 Typical is 2 Bas. 13:15: καὶ ἐμίσησεν αὐτὴν Ἀυνων μῖσος μέγα σφοδρά, ὅτι μέγα τὸ μῖσος, ὃ ἐμίσησεν αὐτὴν ὑπὲρ τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἠγάπησεν αὐτήν. To love is also the opp. (ἀγαπᾶν/μισεῖν) in 2 Bas. 19:7; Prv. 13:24; Eccl. 3:8; Mi. 3:2; Mal. 1:2, 3. Into this world of passions which ineluctably overtake men there comes the divine command to overcome hate, Lv. 19:17: οὐ μισήσεις τὸν ἀδελφόν σου τῆ διανοία σου, ἐλεγμῶ ἐλέγξεις τὸν πλησίον σου καὶ οὐ λήμνη δι’ αὐτὸν ἀμαρτίαν. The reprimand (ἐλεγμός) is to replace hate by love. The later rule of wisdom in Tob. 4:15a points in the same direction: καὶ ὁ μισεῖς, μηδενὶ ποιήσης. Both apply to the personal dealings of men, originally within the limits of the national community (Lv. 19:17).” [Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 4:685.]

<sup>18</sup>The English word ‘*misogyny*’ has its etymological roots in μῖσος.

the light (1:7) and ὃς δ’ ἂν τηρῆ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, *but whoever keeps His Word* (2:5). Then here ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, *the one loving his brother* (2:10). One's actions rather than his claims establish whether he is in κοινωνία with God. Thus true κοινωνία with God produces actions consistent with who our God is and what He does.

John's evaluation of the one loving his brother is quite interesting in its twofold declaration. First, ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει, *in the light he continues*. Here John picks up an allusion in the third scenario of the previous set in 2:4-6: ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, *the one claiming in Him to remain*. This theme of ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν is going to become more prominent in subsequent discussion by John. The idea of ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν is virtually synonymous with the previous assertions denied to those in the negative scenarios: ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν, *in this one the truth is not* (2:3); Ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι, *the one claiming in the light to be* (2:9); ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν, *the truth is not in us* (1:8); ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν, *His word is not in us* (1:10). Thus εἶναι... ἐν, *to be...in...*, is very similar to μένειν... ἐν, *to remain...in*. John understands that κοινωνία with God is a life changing transformation that not only stands as the basis of our spiritual existence, but also is the basis of our continual existence and vitality.

To be in such an ongoing life transformation also means καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν, *and there is no offense in him*. The richness of the Greek word σκάνδαλον almost defies translation.<sup>19</sup> The English scandal comes from this Greek word but doesn't begin to capture its meaning. What σκάνδαλον specifies here in the negative framing of it is that absolutely nothing in the behavior, actions, or thinking of the believer leads to harming the faith commitment of other believers. Behind this stands a strong condemnation of the false teachers who unwillingness to deal with sinful behavior (1:8-10) caused conflict and harm to the spiritual life of others in the communities of faith. It through their influence had led some to indulge themselves in sinful behavior in direct contradiction to their faith commitment to Christ. Such represents a clear contradiction to the stance of ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφόν, *loving their brother*. This destructive impact upon fellow believers was clear indication this they ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι, *in the*

<sup>19</sup>“At the same time, the use of the noun σκάνδαλον (‘stumbling-block’) and the verb σκανδαλίζειν (‘to cause to stumble, to trip up’) elsewhere in the NT favors an interpretation which regards the ‘stumbling-block’ as being placed in the way of others. See e.g. 1 Pet 2:8 (πέτρα σκάνδαλον, ‘a rock that makes [men] fall’). In the Johannine literature the noun σκάνδαλον is found only at Rev 2:14 (βαλεῖν σκάνδαλον, ‘to put a stumbling-block [before the sons of Israel]’); for the verb see John 6:61; 16:1.” [Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, vol. 51, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Incorporated, 1989), 62.]

darkness are until now. And are not ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει, in the light continuing. Thus loving one's brother means continuing commitment to do everything possible to enhance his spiritual life.

**Third**, in v. 11 John returns to the first negative example to add addition insight. The scenario focuses on action but assumes the false claim stated in v. 9: ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, but the one hating his brother. In this scenario the evaluative conclusions are stacked one on top of the other in climatic effect. What are they?

One, ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν, is in the darkness. This repeats the single evaluative comment in the first negative scenario (v. 9): ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι. Failure to be committed to a fellow Christian's best interests signals a life existing not in the light of God but in the darkness of sin. Its essential character is darkness, despite its claim to be light.

Second, καὶ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ, and in darkness is walking. Its existence is darkness is betrayed by its behavior in darkness. Repeatedly in John's discussion thus far, the importance of our walking as an image of our behavior to reflect whether or not we enjoy κοινωμία with God has been asserted. True κοινωμία defines not just who we are but how we live as well. And the latter signals the nature of the former. To exist in darkness means to behave in darkness.

Third, καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει, and he does not know where he is going. Although a new element in John's evaluations, this statement is a logical extension of his image of darkness: If one walks in darkness, he cannot see where he is going. But the spiritual point of the image is the important aspect in John's declaration. Such a person is utterly lost spiritually. And this despite making claims to being a Christian. This mindless wandering in lostness will serve as a basis for John's later statements in 2:18-21 about the departure of the false teachers and their followers from the apostolic Christian communities.

For this third evaluative declaration John provides a reason: ὅτι ἡ σκοτία ἐτύφλωσεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. Here the spiritual point of the analogy takes precedence over the logic of his image of darkness. In physical darkness the inability to see one's way does not mean blindness. But in spiritual darkness the supernatural evil that controls one's life produces spiritual blindness that prevents the discernment between truth and lies, between God and evil, between knowledge and ignorance spiritually, et als. Thus in his spiritual blindness he does great harm to the spiritual life of others around him. One fascinating undertone of John's expression is οὐκ οἶδεν, he does not know. The gnostic oriented teachers claimed superior knowledge to that of John and the apostles

with their special 'enlightenment.' But John asserts that they know virtually nothing about the things of God.

**Amplification 3, vv. 12-14.** In this rather poetic section John brings this discussion somewhat to a close with a summation of his perception of the spiritual situation of his readers. The poetic nature is quite obvious, and can even be preserved somewhat in English translation, which is rather unusual for ancient Greek poetry.

That this pericope is a continuation of two of the previous discussions is clear from the repeated use of γράφω ὑμῖν in 2:1, 7, 12ff. And vv. 12-14 accomplish what each of the amplifications of the Prologue since 1:5 have done: they add a new dimension of meaning to the central concept of κοινωμία with the Father through Christ as set forth in the Prologue.<sup>20</sup> Here in vv. 12-14 we encounter considerable summation of previous pericopes. This possibly suggests a 'wrapping' up of the discussion thus far in anticipation of turning in a new direction.<sup>21</sup>

Note the structure in vv. 12-14:

*I write/wrote*

*vocative*

*ὅτι clause*

This structure is repeated again in exact parallel with two sets: vv. 12-13 and v. 14. The first difference is between them is the present tense γράφω in the first series and the aorist ἔγραψα in the second series. The content of the ὅτι clauses vary but in tandem with its counter part in the other series.

τεκνία -- πατέρες -- νεανίσκοι (vv. 12-13)

παιδία -- πατέρες -- νεανίσκοι (v. 14)

The first question to surface is why the difference in the verb tenses? Seemingly the present / past time significance of the two tenses has faded into the background here. Stylistic variation for the sake of the poetic structure evidently drives John's shift in verb tense. The first set of γράφω in the present tense enables a present time frame, while the aorist ἔγραψα in the second set moves into the epistolary aorist shifting

<sup>20</sup>In examining quite a number of commentaries, I am rather amazed that the majority do not seem to understand John's writing strategy. Evidently they cannot step outside a modern western based outline of I. A. 1. II. A. B in order to grasp the first century Jewish mindset of John. One can readily spot this cultural blindness in the earlier commentaries prior to the mid-1900s, but would expect that over the past 60 years better sensitivity to cultural influences would be present in the exegesis of the biblical text.

<sup>21</sup>"Some terms and themes used in 1:5-2:11 are echoed here, compare for example, 2:12 with 1:7, 9, and with 2:2; 2:14a with 2:3f; and 'the word of God abides in you' in 2:14 with the last clause of 1:10." [C. Haas, Marinus de Jonge, and J. L. Swellengrebel, *A Handbook on the Letters of John*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 50.]

to the time frame of the readers rather than that of the writer. This flexibility of the Greek tenses allows John to 'play around' with the verb tenses for the sake of stylistic purposes.

The second question to arise generally from these two sets of declarations is concerning the identity of the three groups listed in the two sets. The commentary speculation is all over the place and represents pure guess work.<sup>22</sup> A few things, however, are clear.

<sup>22</sup>"The Gr. words used are *τεκνία* ('dear children'), *πατέρες* ('fathers') and *νεανίσκοι* ('young men'); although during the virtual repetition of vv 12 and 13 in v 14 *παιδιά* ('little children') is used instead of *τεκνία*. (For *τεκνίον*, 'child,' see 2:28; 3:7 in some MSS, 1:8; 4:4; 5:21; for *παιδίον*, 'child,' see 2:18.) Against Westcott (61), who thinks that *τεκνίον* emphasizes 'the idea of subordination,' while *παιδίον* suggests 'kinsmanship,' there is probably no significant difference involved between the two words. Both are terms of endearment. Brooke, 43, argues that *τεκνία*, as used here, may express 'community of nature,' in contrast to *παιδιά*, which implies (as in 1 Cor 14:20) the need for moral training and guidance. But the *παιδιά* who have 'known the Father' (v 14), or who are told that the last hour is upon them (2:18), and the disciples (*παιδιά*) of whom the risen Jesus inquires, 'Haven't you any fish?' (John 21:5) can scarcely be considered as morally deficient! The diminutive *τεκνία* is confined in the NT to the Johannine literature (the reading of Gal 4:19 is uncertain), and is used only once in John's Gospel (at 13:33).

"How are we to understand the author's triple description of his readers, as children, fathers and young men? Three approaches to this question are possible, and have been suggested by commentators (see the excellent summary in Marshall, 137–38).

"First, it could be argued that John is referring to three distinct groups of people in his church. (a) In this case the meaning may be a literal one: children, younger men and older men (cf. Windisch, 115–16). The difficulty with this level of interpretation, however, is twofold. In the first place, the order in which the groups are mentioned is not consecutive; and secondly, the naming of 'fathers' and 'young men' seems to indicate a male-dominated (even monastic?) community. While some scholars (e.g. Käsemann, Testament; cf. Cullmann, Circle) have argued for the 'sectarian' character of Johannine Christianity, there is no evidence for supposing that John's church discriminated between the sexes in terms of its membership. See further Brown, Community, 88–91; cf. also 2:15–17. (b) On the other hand, John may be addressing groups within his circle whose members are at different stages of spiritual development, and describing them metaphorically as children (that is, recently converted), fathers (those established in the faith), and young men (those still growing in Christ). So Stott (96). Again, however, there are difficulties in this view. Once more the order does not follow a chronological sequence; secondly, the qualities specified sometimes overlap (cf. v 14a, 'you have known the Father' and v 14b, 'you have known him who has existed from the beginning,' which cannot be sharply distinguished; see the comment below); and thirdly, there is no obvious reason why each of the qualities mentioned should not be typical of all Christians, and not just of one group at a particular stage of spiritual growth. At the same time, as Marshall (137) points out, the characteristics to which John refers are in each instance particularly relevant to the group which is being addressed: the young convert would be specially

### John consistently addresses the entire group of reader

conscious of God's forgiveness (but see v 14a, where knowledge of the Godhead, shared with the fathers, is alluded to in place of 'forgiveness'); the mature Christian would know God in a deep way; and growing believers would have the spiritual motivation and strength to conquer the evil one.

"Second, it has been proposed that by 'children' John means all the members of his congregation (as often in this letter; cf. 2:1, 28); and that, within this community, he then goes on to address as 'fathers' and 'young men' two specific groups. (c) In this case two sets of church officers may be in mind, and John is using the formal titles *πατέρες* and *νεανίσκοι* as the equivalents of the terms *πρεσβύτεροι* ('elders' or 'presbyters') and *διάκονοι* ('deacons' or 'servants'), which were coming into use as designations for the leaders of the church and their assistants in the NT period (cf. Acts 20:17; 1 Tim. 3:8–13; also Ignatius, Phld., 4.1). This is the view of Houlden (70–71), who speculates that the title *πατέρες*, rather than *πρεσβύτεροι*, is used for officials in John's church because his 'elders' were those with supervising responsibility for 'a number of dependent congregations' (71). Houlden does not, however, provide a balancing explanation for John's use of *νεανίσκοι* instead of *διάκονοι*. (For a similar view cf. Spicq, RB 76 [1969] 524.)

"(d) An alternative suggestion, close to the previous one, is to take *πατέρες* and *νεανίσκοι* in a general sense: as the older and younger Christians who belonged to John's community of 'children.' (Among these, in fact, the 'fathers' were most likely to be leaders.) Other NT writers refer to these two categories of believers in similar terms: e.g. 1 Tim 5:1, 'Do not rebuke an older man (using *πρεσβύτερος*) harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father (*ὡς πατέρα*). Treat younger men (*νεώτερος*) as brothers'; also 1 Pet 5:5, 'Young men (*νεώτεροι*), in the same way be submissive to those who are older (*πρεσβύτερος*).' Middle-age was evidently not a concept which existed in the early Church!

"This interpretation is attractive, and frequently adopted. So Brooke, 43–45; Bultmann, 31; Schnackenburg, 123. I. de la Potterie, "Connaissance," 86–91 (especially 91), followed by Malatesta, Interiority, 167, suggested that the writer's sense is an inclusive one: all believers are being exhorted, from the oldest to the youngest. In support of this proposal are cited Jer 31:34; Joel 2:28 and 3:1 (in the Hebrew text); cf. Acts 2:17. However, if the "fathers" and "young men" in this passage are understood exclusively in terms of office or age, how is it that what is said to be true of one group could and should be true of them all? Deacons and young men, for example, are not the only Christians who should know about the conquest of evil. Indeed, John himself seems to acknowledge this fact by attributing to the "children" in v 14a what he says about the "fathers" in vv 13a and 14b (that they have known the Lord).

"A third approach (e) refers the triad "children-fathers-young men" rhetorically to the spiritual qualities which should characterize all Christians at any time. John, it is claimed, emphasizes these and draws them out by distributing them into groups. This interpretation, which goes back to Augustine (see Wilder, 236–37), thus amounts to saying that "all Christians are (by grace, not nature) children in innocence ... young men in strength, and fathers in experience" (Dodd, 38–39, who unnecessarily adduces parallels from the Corpus Hermeticum, 11:20 and 13:11, to support his argument). Whatever the age of his readers, therefore, John can properly say to them all: 'your sins have been forgiven; you have

as τεκνία (cf. 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). But he uses the vocation of direct address πατέρες only twice here in 2:13, 14; elsewhere it is the singular πατήρ as a reference to God as Father: 2:15, 22, 23, 24; 3:1; 4:14. The plural νεανίσκοι is only used here twice in 2:13, 14. Also, the alternative form παιδία for τεκνία is only used twice in 2:14, 18. A further distinctive is that John does not follow a chronological listing with children - fathers - young men.

One is strongly inclined to assume that all three terms are used to identify the Christian communities that John is writing to. Given the highly suspect alternative views proposed down through the years, this generally synonymous use of the three terms becomes attractive. The poetic style may very well account for the shift in designations of his readers. Clearly contextually this pattern would have generated the reader reaction of Who am I? A child? A father? A young man? That is, how far along in my spiritual life am I?

The third general question arises over the role of the dependent conjunction ὅτι in each of the six statements. This conjunction can specify either the content of what John is writing, and thus translated as “that.” Or, it can specify the basis for John writing with the translation “because.” Although many modern translations adopt “because” in their translation, “that” seems contextually preferable in that it specifies a series of theological affirmations made regarding his readers whom John is assuming fall into the positive scenarios in 1:7; 2:5; 2:10. John here seeks to encourage his readers through a rather dramatic series of affirmations of his confidence in their spiritual commitment to Christ.

A fourth general observation is the repeated use known him who has existed from the beginning; and you have conquered the evil one.’

“The variety of possible interpretations we have surveyed, combined with the literary character of this passage, indicates that we should perhaps avoid making exclusive decisions about the meaning of the terms τεκνία (παιδία), πατέρες and νεανίσκοι. Knowing the Johannine mentality as we do, it is quite possible that our author is at this point being deliberately ambivalent. Almost certainly he is referring to his whole church when he calls his readers ‘children,’ but within that group he is in one sense recollecting and addressing the young and old in physical age (d); while in another sense he is referring to the spiritual privileges of Christian youth and maturity which should belong to all believers: interpretation (e), but cf. also (b). In either case he is pointing out the riches of orthodox faith belonging to the “fathers” and “young men” of his church, in stark contrast to the heresies which were being propagated by the other two groups within the Johannine community: those with too high a view of the nature of Jesus, and those with an inadequate understanding of his fully divine person. Marshall, 138, thinks that John was indebted to a traditional scheme of expression here, originally used in the manner (c) or (d), but now applied in the manner (e).”

[Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, vol. 51, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 68–71.]

of the Greek perfect tense verb in most of the declarations: ἀφέωνται (2:12), ἐγνώκατε (2:13a), νενικήκατε (2:13b), ἐγνώκατε (2:14a, b), νενικήκατε (2:14c). These consistently point to a genuine conversion moment that brought about life changing transformation moving the individuals into the pattern of healthy spiritual growth.

We will examine each matching pair together but in a complete listing in order to see the full picture of John’s affirmations. The focus will center on the ὅτι clauses.

1) Children, vv. 12, 14a.

*Γράφω ὑμῖν,  
τεκνία,*

ὅτι ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.

*Ἐγραψα ὑμῖν,  
παιδία,*

ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα.

2) Fathers, vv. 13a, 14b

*γράφω ὑμῖν,  
πατέρες,*

ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς.

*Ἐγραψα ὑμῖν,  
πατέρες,*

ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς.

3) Young men, vv. 13b, 14c

*γράφω ὑμῖν,  
νεανίσκοι,*

ὅτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.

*Ἐγραψα ὑμῖν,  
νεανίσκοι,*

ὅτι ἰσχυροὶ ἐστε

καὶ

ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει

καὶ

νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.

In regard to the ‘children’ John affirms in these two declarations what was stated in the positive scenarios of 1:7, and 1:9. Forgiveness of sin is linked to κοινωνία, which is the equivalent of knowing God (2:5). In these two powerful declarations John asserts his readers to be spiritual children whose sins are forgiven and who have come to know God in saving κοινωνία.

Regarding the ‘fathers’ John asserts the same point in both declarations thus highlighting it even further: ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, you have known the One from the beginning. This has close linkage to the axiom in 2:3, γινώσκωμεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν, *we know that we know Him*. Perhaps John somewhat targets older more spiritual members with this. But it carries clearly the sense of spiritual maturity comes out of deep saving knowledge of Christ. Here is the ideal.

Regarding the ‘young men’ John centers on the common theme of victory over the Evil One. In the second series he builds up to the victory declaration with assertions of them being spiritual strong and the Word

of God continuing in them. The theme of victory has not yet been put on the table but from 2:14 it will surface again in 4:4 and 4:5-6. Establishing this foundation for spiritual victory over the devil here provides a foundation for the subsequent declarations in chapters four and five. Somewhat in similar fashion the mention of the devil here as τὸν πονηρὸν lays the foundation for subsequent references in 3:12; 4:4; 5:4-5, and 5:18-19. The reaching back rather than forward comes with ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, the Word of God, with the references in 1:1, 5, 10; 2:7. Highly commentary is John of these who are 'young' Christians. They have gotten off to an excellent beginning in their spiritual journey.

One strong implication of this beautiful picture of spiritual health affirmed here by John is the clear signal that he considers his readers as spiritual healthy in contrast to the spiritual sickness of the false teachers and those who are following their teachings. The series of 'negative' scenarios collectively paint a picture of a sick religion living in the self deception of being superior while in reality it is totally false and ruinous of those caught up in it. In fact, John's point is that it is spiritual suicide.

### First John 2:15-17 Texts

#### N-A 28th GNT:

15 Μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. ἔάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ· 16 ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν. 17 καὶ ὁ κόσμος παράγεται καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία αὐτοῦ, ὃ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

#### NRSV:

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; 16 for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever.

#### LB 1984:

15 Habt nicht lieb die Welt noch was in der Welt ist. Wenn jemand die Welt lieb hat, in dem ist nicht die Liebe des Vaters. 16 Denn alles, was in der Welt ist, des Fleisches Lust und der Augen Lust und hoffärtiges Leben, ist nicht vom Vater, sondern von der Welt. 17 Und die Welt vergeht mit ihrer Lust; wer aber den Willen Gottes tut, der bleibt in Ewigkeit.

#### Comments

With this pericope John seems at first glance to turn to a new direction. But reflection on the collec-

tive nature of society in John's world, unlike modern western individualism, opens an important insight of connecting links here. The emphasis on κοινωνία as including loving one's brother in 2:7-11 with its theme of ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφόν, *loving one's brother*. The opposite scenario μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφόν, *hating one's brother*, that dominates the pericope, has a reason behind it. Clearly playing off the axiom in 1:5 that God is light, the new commandment of 2:7-8 stresses pulling away from darkness which John contends is fading (παράγεται, 2:8), just as is also the world (παράγεται, 2:17).

How does one live in darkness and also hate his brother? Clearly by ἀγαπῶν τὸν κόσμον, the theme of 2:15-17. What John is doing here is returning to 2:7-11 but with more precise assertion of the danger of getting caught up in the world, which is equivalent to living in darkness. It inevitably leads to hating one's brother, particularly if that brother seems more successful in life. Given the clearly defined gnosticizing tendencies asserted in the negative scenarios of these first two chapters, legitimizing worldliness was the attraction of the teaching of these false teachers. John therefore seeks to condemn such as utterly false and also as spiritually dangerous to his readers.

John uses a combination of literary forms in vv. 15-17 in order to communicate his message. The core principle in v. 15a is expressed for the first time in a direct command containing strong tones of demand from John. The amplification then begins with the trusty third class conditional protasis sentence (vv. 15b-16) with a causal ὅτι clause basis. He finishes with a pair of matching theological axioms in verse 17 that bring his point to a climax.

**Core Admonition, v. 15a.** Μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. *Stop loving the world and the things in the world.* Is John introducing a new topic with τὸν κόσμον? Not really. The world is the concrete expression of σκοτία, *darkness*, that he has repeatedly condemned thus far. His shift in terminology is both to clarify what σκοτία actually is, as opposed to the definition of ignorance adopted by the false teachers. ὁ κόσμος stands in opposition to God (2:16b) just as σκοτία does (1:5). By getting the theme of the world in opposition to God on the table in vv. 15-17, he prepares us for the concept of the ἀντίχριστοι, *antichrists*, already at work in the world in vv. 18-22.

The use of the present imperative of prohibition Μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε calls upon readers to cease any commitment to the world they may have in place. And this backing away from worldly commitments is to be permanent, rather than temporary, as the Greek present tense with the negatives Μὴ and μηδὲ underscore.

What believers are prohibited from doing is

ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. The Johannine use of ἀγαπάω stresses a commitment to someone or something. Now in vv. 16-17 John throws more light on his definition of ἀγαπάω. It is profoundly more than just an emotional attachment, as the English verb 'love' would suggest.

But what is τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ? Here defining precisely becomes somewhat more challenging. In the Johannine writings, κόσμος can allude to either the material world and/or the people world. Sometimes the nuances between these two meanings are not very great, thus making it even more difficult to determine what John is talking about. In either definitional meaning, and especially in the material focus, the corruption of evil stands strongly present.

John shares with the Greek philosophers the belief that the material world is temporary and doomed to destruction, although for entirely different reasons than found among the philosophers. Embedded in his concept of the κόσμος is the hand of Satan at work turning the material world into a distraction that pulls one away from God. In the twenty-first century materialistic oriented world, John's views do not find much popularity, even among Christians.<sup>23</sup> Here in our passage τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ centers on the material world and its items, the vast majority of which stand in exact opposition to God and spiritual reality.

**Conditional Sentence amplification, vv. 15b-16.** In his first elaboration of the axiom of 15a, John utilizes the third class conditional protasis to set up opposites of love: ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ· 16 ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν, *if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father does not exist in him; because everything in the world -- the desires generated by the flesh and those generated by the eyes and the arrogance coming out of physical existence -- are not out of the Father but out of the world.*

In the protasis, ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, John sets up the non-accusatory scenario of an individual being committed to the world. This stands in direct violation of the exhortation in the axiom of v. 15a. Without expressed tones of accusation, clearly John has in mind here his gnosticizing opponents among his readers who refused to deal with sin in their lives but were claiming κοινωμία with God (1:3). He is convinced differently about his readers as 2:12-14 affirms.

For that person committed to the world, John concludes οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ, an

<sup>23</sup>The certain mark of a materialistic Christian is the first attempt to explain away texts condemning the accumulation of things and material possessions. Christians from the so-called 'developing world' are not nearly so prone to take this interpretive twist.

apodosis somewhat similar to ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν in 1:8. The life transforming presence of God's love has not touched such a worldly person's life. But in the *double entendre* nature of ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς, that person possesses no authentic commitment to God either.

The subsequent ὅτι clause provides John's rationale for this evaluation in the apodosis. The core statement πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ...οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν, *everything in the world does not originate from the Father but from the world.* John sees in the material world the corruption that stemmed from the Garden of Eden and comes to represent what stands in opposition to God. The preposition ἐκ τοῦ... denotes the source of origin, not just mere connection.

But what signals this? His threefold parenthetical insertion of ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου stands as clear signals of worldliness that is in opposition to God. The two nouns ἐπιθυμία and ἀλαζονεία, *passion and arrogance*, specify the heart of the problem. They define what John means in the scenario ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον. To love the world is to exhibit a passion for it and an arrogance about life. The first quality ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς signals a passion for the fleshly. The σὰρξ references the physical but with the tone of it being corrupted by sin. It is not far from Paul's idea of the fleshly nature of unredeemed man who has inherited an evil nature from the fall in the Garden of Eden (cf. Rom. 5). It always focuses attention away from God and on that which promotes its own destruction.

The second quality ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν is closely linked to the first one and stresses passions that focus attention on the visible material world. The flesh is the inward dynamic while the 'eyes' stress the outward dynamic. The outcome is defined by the third trait, ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου. What comes with focusing on the sinful world? An arrogant elitist attitude about one's physical life. The noun τοῦ βίου stresses the outward physical existence over against ζωὴ which defines inward life particularly from a religious perspective. Very likely John here condemns the religious elitism of the gnosticizing teachers who felt they had found the 'better way' that allowed them to claim God and live in sin at the same time.

**Theological axioms climax, v. 17.** This leads to a climatic declaration of a timeless spiritual principle: καὶ ὁ κόσμος παράγεται καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία αὐτοῦ, ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, *And the world is fading and its passion, but the one doing the will of God continues forever.* The gnosticizing teachers among John's readers had 'hitched their wagon' to a dying horse, but those obeying Christ are linked to God

in a life that transcends death. But the same is true for every person who has ever lived in this world.

Does John mean by ὁ κόσμος παράγεται καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία αὐτοῦ that worldliness is loosing its grip on people? Not at all! To declare that the material world is slowly dying seems to share the dualistic views of the Greek philosophers of neo-Platonism. Everything accessible via sensory experience is transcendent and does not last. Yet John asserts a dualism out of his Jewish heritage that a life centered on material accumulation is morally and spiritually doomed. Such a life is so shallow and empty that it destroys rather than enriches. It will not -- and cannot -- last indefinitely.

On the other side, however, stands the believer ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, [doing the will of God](#). This gathers up all of the positive scenarios put on the table thus far by John: 2:9 (loving one's brother); 2:5 (keeping His commandments); 1:9 (confessing our sins), and walking in the light (1:7). The believer living inside the will of God will continue right on through death into eternity with each stage simply enhancing that κοινωνία with God and with Christ.

### First John 2:18-27 Texts

#### N-A 28th GNT:

18 Παιδιά, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν, ὅθεν γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν. 19 ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν· εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν· ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν. 20 καὶ ὑμεῖς χρῖσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ οἴδατε πάντες. 21 οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀλλ' ὅτι οἴδατε αὐτὴν καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν.

22 Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ χριστός; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν. 23 πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει, ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει. 24 Ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω. ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνη ὁ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε. 25 καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἣν αὐτὸς ἐπηγγέλατο ἡμῖν, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον.

26 Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν περὶ τῶν πλανῶντων ὑμᾶς. 27 καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ χρῖσμα ὃ ἐλάβετε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, μένει ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκη ὑμᾶς, ἀλλ' ὡς τὸ αὐτοῦ χρῖσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων καὶ ἀληθές ἐστὶν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ψεῦδος, καὶ καθὼς ἐδίδαξεν ὑμᾶς, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ.

#### NRSV:

18 Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they

had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us. 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge. 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and you know that no lie comes from the truth.

22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also. 24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what he has promised us, eternal life.

26 I write these things to you concerning those who would deceive you. 27 As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him.

#### LB 1984:

18 Kinder, es ist die letzte Stunde! Und wie ihr gehört habt, dass der Antichrist kommt, so sind nun schon viele Antichristen gekommen; daran erkennen wir, dass es die letzte Stunde ist. 19 Sie sind von uns ausgegangen, aber sie waren nicht von uns. Denn wenn sie von uns gewesen wären, so wären sie ja bei uns geblieben; aber es sollte offenbar werden, dass sie nicht alle von uns sind. 20 Doch ihr habt die Salbung von dem, der heilig ist, und habt alle das Wissen. 21 Ich habe euch nicht geschrieben, als wüsstet ihr die Wahrheit nicht, sondern ihr wisst sie und wisst, dass keine Lüge aus der Wahrheit kommt.

22 Wer ist ein Lügner, wenn nicht der, der leugnet, dass Jesus der Christus ist? Das ist der Antichrist, der den Vater und den Sohn leugnet. 23 Wer den Sohn leugnet, der hat auch den Vater nicht; wer den Sohn bekennt, der hat auch den Vater. 24 Was ihr gehört habt von Anfang an, das bleibe in euch. Wenn in euch bleibt, was ihr von Anfang an gehört habt, so werdet ihr auch im Sohn und im Vater bleiben. 25 Und das ist die Verheißung, die er uns verheißt hat: das ewige Leben.

26 Dies habe ich euch geschrieben von denen, die euch verführen. 27 Und die Salbung, die ihr von ihm empfangen habt, bleibt in euch, und ihr habt nicht nötig, dass euch jemand lehrt; sondern wie euch seine Salbung alles lehrt, so ist's wahr und ist keine Lüge, und wie sie euch gelehrt hat, so bleibt in ihm.

#### Comments

As the paragraphing in the above translations signal, three major subunits of text surface in these verses. Clearly verse 18 signals a new direction -- an-



other key is being added to the key chain -- but it is wrong to conclude that this new theme has not connection to what has preceded.<sup>24</sup> John is persuaded that he and his initial readers are living in the last days, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, but it means something different than was commonly proclaimed in the first century. In this passage his condemnation of the false teachers intensifies considerable to direct accusations of heresy as ἀντίχριστοι, *antichrists*. Thus the section of 2:18-3:10 will give primary focus on these false teachers, and John's critique of them against the backdrop of the spiritual principles in the Prologue of 1:1-4. Throughout in typical Johannine fashion he will drop into this discussion admonitions directed to his readers either to avoid the teachings of these people or admonitions to do the opposite of what they are claiming.

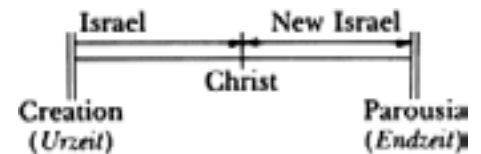
In 2:18-27 the controlling motif pulling the subunits together is ἔγραψα, *I am writing*, 2:21 and 2:26. He will throw in a few scenarios with either the third class protasis (v. 24) or the substantival participle (v. 23). Echoes of 1:5 ἐστὶν αὕτη ἡ ἀγγελία... show up in 2:25, αὕτη ἐστίν.... But most important is the contrast between ἀλήθεια, *truth*, and ψεῦδος / ψεύστης, *lie / liar*. Centrally the anchor point of these opposites is confessing or denying the earthly Jesus. Here the series of relative clauses in the Prologue (1:1-3) about Christ is the life giving Word receive amplification and re-affirmation. All this revolves around the ἀντίχριστοι who are spreading their false teaching across the communities that John is writing to in this essay.

**The last time, vv. 18-21.** 18 Παιδιά, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγονάσιν, ὅθεν γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν. 19 ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν· εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν· ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν. 20 καὶ ὑμεῖς χρῖσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ οἴδατε πάντες. 21 οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἀληθειαν ἀλλ' ὅτι οἴδατε αὐτὴν καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν.

18 Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs

<sup>24</sup>“Most commentators agree that the passage beginning at 2:18 marks a new section in the literary arrangement of 1 John. But some (including Haas, Handbook, 14–15; Marshall, 26, 147; and Schnackenburg, 10–11) find a clear break after 2:17, which in their view concludes one major part of the letter (in the case of Haas, Handbook, 15, 60, the first part), and signals the beginning of a completely new division.” [Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, vol. 51, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 92–93.]

to us. 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge. 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and you know that no lie comes from the truth.



With a note of seriousness the pericope begins with a strong declaration: Παιδιά, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, *Children, the last hour is here!* John asserts that the principle of the last period of human history was inaugurated with the first coming of Christ and holds the prospect of human society becoming increasingly evil as time progresses toward the very end of human history. This was a commonly held teaching in the first century (John 2:4; 4:23; 16:2; Luke 22:53; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1; James 5:3; 1 Peter 1:25). Very likely at the end of the first Christian century, the majority expectation was that Christ's second coming was not far away.<sup>25</sup> But the NT is careful to note that no one knows the exact time that this will happen (Acts 1:6-7). John seems to be convinced that his day was not far from the very end of this 'last days' as is reflected in 2:28 and 3:2.

In the second beginning declaration John appeals to the apostolic teaching about the antichrist: καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, and just as you have heard that an antichrist is coming. Interestingly the Greek word ἀντίχριστος only shows up in the Johannine letters of the NT (1 Jhn 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jhn 7).<sup>26</sup> Most likely it is to be linked to Paul's "man of law-

<sup>25</sup>“NT eschatology is notoriously ambivalent. At some points the ‘end-time’ appears to extend over a very short period, and the climax seems to be imminent (cf. Matt 10:23); at others the final day is apparently far removed (cf. Matt 28:19–20). Nowhere is this ambivalence more marked, among the NT documents, than in John's Gospel, with its distinctive tension between salvation in the future and in the present. On occasions the fourth evangelist mentions the ‘last day,’ at which point the history of salvation is to be gathered up climactically (cf. John 6:40). At other times (and indeed more frequently) John's reference to the future tense of salvation gives place to his stress on the believer's experience of Christ in the present (6:47). The parousia of Jesus in the future (14:3) is balanced by his coming into history here and now (14:18). Indeed, these two tenses of salvation, the immediate present and the distant future, overlap in the Fourth Gospel from time to time; and this produces a typically Johannine tension between the ‘is now’ and the ‘not yet’; between what has already happened in terms of salvation history, and what is yet to come (2:4; 7:39; cf. 5:26–27; note also 1 Cor 10:11).” [Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, vol. 51, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 96.]

<sup>26</sup>“The term ἀντίχριστος occurs in the NT only in John's Epistles and is very rare in the first teachers of the early Church.<sup>497</sup> The author of 1 Jn. can speak of the awareness of the community that antichrist will come, 2:18; 4:3.<sup>498</sup> Antichrist is here a coming apocalyptic figure. This figure is connected with the opponent of

lessness” in 2 Thess. 2:1-12 which is connected to the ‘day of the Lord. In the background stands the Jewish apocalyptic use of this term to reference the opponent to God who launches a futile battle against God at the very end that results in him being thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented forever.

Thus John’s comparative declaration is to remind his readers of the coming of this antichrist at the very end of time. This had been proclaimed to them through the apostolic preaching of the Gospel John asserts.

But John’s twist on this theological proclamation is that multiple antichrists are already at work in the Johannine community of believers: καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγονάσιν, and now many antichrists have appeared. The influence of the devil upon believers is already reflecting itself in the false teachers circulating in the Johannine churches of Asia. Their presence is the indicator that the last hour is already present in John’s day: ὅθεν γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν.

The even worse aspect is that these false teachers as ἀντίχριστοι had been a part of the Johannine churches. But as asserted in v. 19, these had broken ties to the Johannine community in order to form their own: ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξήλθαν ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν, they went out from among us but they were not of us.

Here John labels them as ‘secessionists’ who had broken ties with the apostolic communities of Asia. He gives as a rationale for this the contention that they never possessed a genuine faith commitment to the Gospel. The prepositional phrase ἐξ ἡμῶν literally specifies that they did not come from the same spiritual source as those in the apostolic communities of faith.

The reason (γὰρ) for this is given in v. 19b: εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ’ ἡμῶν· ἀλλ’ ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν, for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but

God in Jewish apocalyptic, which for its part is found elsewhere in the history of religion.<sup>499</sup> The opponent of God increases his power and dominion on earth just before the apocalyptic end; he is then judged and destroyed. In primitive Christian apocalyptic, confession of Jesus as the Messiah gives antichrist the features of a counter-christ (cf. Rev. 13 etc.; 2 Th. 2:3–10; Mk. 13:14–27), though the term ἀντίχριστος is not used until we come to John’s Epistles.<sup>500</sup> These give actuality to the apocalyptic figure by saying that it is already at work in false prophets who lead Christians astray by contesting their confession of Christ and thereby undermining their allegiance to the Father. The ἀντίχριστοι come from the community itself. They threaten it from within. Their coming shows that the last hour is dawning → VI, 246, 26 ff.: παιδία, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγονάσιν· ὅθεν γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, 1 Jn. 2:18, cf. 4:3; 2 Jn. 7.” [Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 9:571–572.]

(they departed) so that it would be made clear that none of them share the same source as we do. John sees their breaking ties with the apostolic community of believers as the outward visible conformation that they did not have God as the source of their spiritual existence. It is this assumption of John that stands behind his earlier criticism of them beginning in 1:5 and continuing periodically through this passage. Very possibly this “church split” with their breaking ties disturbed those left in the Johannine communities.

Clearly implicit in this pericope is that their severing ties with the apostolic communities was motivated by a pseudo assumption of possessing a superior version of the gospel to that advocated by John. The charismatic nature of instant possession of γνῶσις supposedly gave them a direct line to heaven that superseded that of the apostles and provided them with a gospel that allowed them sinless perfection before God while indulging in physical immorality at will.

Thus John asserts the superiority of the communities’ understanding of the true Gospel in vv. 20-21: 20 καὶ ὑμεῖς χρῖσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ οἴδατε πάντες, 21 οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀλλ’ ὅτι οἴδατε αὐτὴν καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν. 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge. 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and you know that no lie comes from the truth.

Although these ἀντίχριστοι claimed superior γνῶσις of God, John reminds his readers of the χρῖσμα they had received in conversion ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου, from the Holy One. This gave them the spiritual source so that οἴδατε πάντες, all of you know (what is needed).<sup>27</sup> Thus

<sup>27</sup>Among several copyists πάντες (all of you) was replaced with the accusative neuter plural πάντα, all things.

20 {B} πάντες κ B P Ψ 1852 cop<sup>sa</sup> arm Hesychius<sup>lat</sup> // πάντα A C 33 81 322 323 436 945 1067 1175 1243 1292 1409 1505 1611 1735 1739 1844 1881 2138 2298 2344 2464 Byz [K L] Lect it<sup>ar, h, z</sup> vg syr<sup>rp, h</sup> cop<sup>bo</sup> eth geo slav Cyril-Jerusalem<sup>dublem</sup> Didymus<sup>dub</sup>

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

The evidence favors the reading οἴδατε πάντες, all of you know, over the alternative οἴδατε πάντα, you know all things. A majority of the Committee, understanding the passage to be directed against the claims of a few to possess esoteric knowledge, adopted the reading πάντες, read by κ B P 398 1838 1852 cop<sup>sa</sup> Jerome Hesychius. The reading πάντα, which is widely supported by A C K 33 614 1739 Byz Lect it<sup>h</sup>.<sup>65</sup> vg syr<sup>h</sup> cop<sup>bo</sup> arm eth al, was regarded as a correction introduced by copyists who felt the need of an object after οἴδαμεν.

[Bruce Manning Metzger, United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testa-

not just a special few elitists possessed supposed spiritual understanding, as claimed by these ἀντίχριστοι. Instead, all of the community in conversion commitment to Christ received the spiritual blessing, the χρῖσμα, of the indwelling Holy Spirit from Christ -- as promised by Christ in Jhn 16:4b-11. Thus in actuality it was the apostolic community who was genuinely “plugged in” to heaven through the Holy Spirit as a source of spiritual insight.

Thus John declares to his readers that he is not writing to give them some new truth, but to remind them of what they have already come to understand as truth: οὐκ ἔγραψα<sup>28</sup> ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκ οἶδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀλλ’ ὅτι οἶδατε αὐτὴν καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν. John affirms that his readers already grasp the meaning of ἀλήθειαν as that which reflects the character and actions of God. Thus detection of a ψεῦδος as that which contradicts God’s character and actions is not difficult to do. The unwillingness of these ἀντίχριστοι to seriously deal with sin in their lives (1:8-10) is a dead give away that ἀλήθεια is not present in their lives. Here the distinctive prepositional phrase ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας especially highlights that no lie ever has its origin in God. But John has repeatedly accused these ἀντίχριστοι of being liars (1:8-10; 2:4-6; 2:9-11).

**The liar, vv. 22-25.** 22 Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ χριστός; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν. 23 πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει, ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει. 24 Ὑμεῖς ὁ ἠκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω. ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνη ὁ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε. 25 καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἣν αὐτὸς ἐπηγγείλατο ἡμῖν, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον.

22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also. 24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what he has promised us, eternal life.

**The axiom, v. 22.** In the pericope, John reaches back to especially pick up the series of relative clauses in the Prologue (1:1-3) that stress the humanity of Christ as the Word. This continues he denunciation of these false teachers. Here the initial axiom is framed as a rhetorical question: Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ

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ment (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 641.

<sup>28</sup>The aorist ἔγραψα reflects to so-called ‘epistolary aorist’ function which assumes the time vantage point of the reader rather than the present time of the writer.

μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ<sup>29</sup> ἔστιν ὁ χριστός; *Who the liar if not the one denying that Jesus is the Christ.* A new perspective implicit in the Prologue comes to the surface here. That Jesus was the promised Messiah, i.e., ὁ χριστός, lay at the core of the apostolic Gospel message. The evident Greek Platonic dualistic thinking that viewed everything and everyone with material existence as irretrievably corrupt and evil had pushed these ἀντίχριστοι to question the humanity of Jesus as ὁ χριστός. It is not clear in First John whether this thinking had progressed to an outright denial of Jesus as ὁ χριστός, or whether it moved along later second century gnostic thinking that Jesus only seemed to be human but actually was a spirit with a human shaped appearance. In this particular system of later Gnosticism, only a spirit based Christ had authentic existence along with the ability to grant saving γνώσις to people.

What John precisely means in the axiom Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ χριστός, *Jesus is not the Christ*, is made clear by the amplification that follows in vv. 22b-25.

**First** comes an evaluation of every person denying that Jesus is the Christ: οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν, *this one is the antichrist, the one denying the Father and the Son.* This denier is then one of the ἀντίχριστοι, who stand in opposition to Christ Himself. Further, such denial means denial of both God the Father and His Son, who is Jesus as the Son of God. This comes very close to John’s assertion in 1:10 where refusal to deal with sinful behavior while falsely claiming sinless perfection means we are calling God a liar (ψεῦστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτὸν) and that Jesus as the Word does not exist in us (ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν).

**Second**, John utilizes a pair of his trusty scenario structures, the substantival participle phrase, to expand the idea of denial further: πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει, ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει, *everyone denying the Son does not have the Father at all; everyone confessing the Son also possesses the Father.* The phrase τὸν πατέρα ἔχει plays off the Prologue concept of possessing κοινωμία, *fellowship*, with the Father. It has no implications of controlling God as though He were some possession that we owned; note κοινωμίαν ἔχητε in 1:3. Thus the negative denial means absolutely no connection to God at all, despite all kinds of claims of superior knowledge of Him. Only those confessing faith commitment to Jesus as the Son of God enjoy a relationship (κοινωνία) with God as well

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<sup>29</sup>The Greek double negative, as εἰ μὴ,.. οὐκ here, intensifies the negation, while in English grammar two negatives together produce a positive. A literal translation of this Greek statement into English would actually generate an English statement exactly the opposite of what the Greek is saying.

as (= και) with the Son.

**Third**, John appeals to his readers to continue in the apostolic Gospel originally preached by him to these readers: Ὑμεῖς ὁ ἠκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω, *What you heard from the beginning, let it continue in you*. This reaches back to the axiom in 1:5 that stood at the core of the apostolic Gospel: ἡ ἀγγελία ἦν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, The foundational message was ὅτι ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία, *God is light and absolutely no darkness exists in Him*. This is the second time that John has appealed to this primary principle; the first time was in 2:7. This fundamental religious principle was critical to developing a healthy relationship with God. And John appeals to his readers to remain steadfast in this principle as foundational to their Christian life.

John then affirms this with the alternative third class conditional protasis scenario in v. 24b: ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνη ὁ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε, *If what you heard from the beginning continues in you, you continue both in the Son and in the Father*. The scenario assumes adherence to his admonition to continue in the apostolic Gospel. On that assumption then these believers enjoy the ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, *our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ*, set forth in the Prologue (1:3b).

What is the ultimate conclusion to such a commitment? It is the realization of what John had already proclaimed to them (v. 25): καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἦν αὐτὸς ἐπηγγείλατο ἡμῖν, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον, *and this is the promise which He himself has promised us, life eternal*. Again we see another aspect of Christ as the life giving Word, τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς, in the Prologue (1:1). In this authentic κοινωνία relationship to God through Jesus Christ we have the divine promise of eternal life.

**The deceiver, vv. 26-27.** 26 Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν περὶ τῶν πλανῶντων ὑμᾶς. 27 καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ χρῖσμα ὃ ἐλάβετε ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, μένει ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ οὐ χρειαν ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκη ὑμᾶς, ἀλλ’ ὡς τὸ αὐτοῦ χρῖσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων καὶ ἀληθές ἐστὶν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ψεῦδος, καὶ καθὼς ἐδίδαξεν ὑμᾶς, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ.

26 I write these things to you concerning those who would deceive you. 27 As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him.

John now comes directly back to the ἀντίχριστοι in the beginning pericope of vv. 18-21. The theme of the χρῖσμα of that initial pericope re-surfaces also, along with the ἔγραψα motif.

What John has been writing in this essay (Ταῦτα) centers on τῶν πλανῶντων ὑμᾶς, *those deceiving you*. The idea of πλανῶντων is to claim something to be correct when it is a lie. The ἀντίχριστοι are deceiving the Johannine communities by denying Jesus as Christ, the Son of God (2:22-25). This in turn has led them to a dangerously false denial of sin in their lives (1:8-10). Thus they have turned their backs on Christ as παράκλητον, *assistant*, and ἰλασμός, *sin offering* (2:1-2). Consequently they moved into a spiritual elitist mentality where they could hate their brothers justifiably (2:7-11). All of this came out of their supposedly saving γνῶσις experience with God that gave them such “superior” spirituality.

John picks up the χρῖσμα theme again in v. 27 with an admonition to stand fast in the apostolic tradition that came through the Gospel proclamation that led to a conversion bringing the presence of God into their lives to give them a basis for authentic spiritual understanding. This is the true χρῖσμα, the gifting of the individual with God’s presence.

John makes several points about this gift of grace in conversion. First, ὃ ἐλάβετε ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, that is, it was received from Christ and not from some elitist false teacher. Second, μένει ἐν ὑμῖν, that is, it continues among John’s readers as the foundation of their religious commitment of God. Third, οὐ χρειαν ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκη ὑμᾶς, that is, they have no need of some false teacher trying to convince them of a better alternative. Fourth, ὡς τὸ αὐτοῦ χρῖσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων, that is, the presence and leadership of God Himself provides them with all the spiritual insight they need. Fifth, ἀληθές ἐστὶν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ψεῦδος, that is, this divine presence is true in that it is consistent with God’s character and essence. This means it is no lie, such as the γνῶσις of the false teachers. Sixth, καθὼς ἐδίδαξεν ὑμᾶς, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ, that is, this divine presence teaches us to plant ourselves squarely in the life of God Himself, and thus we should stay centered in Christ.

### First John 2:28-29 Texts

#### N-A 28th GNT:

28 Καὶ νῦν, τεκνία, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ, ἵνα ἐὰν φανερωθῇ σχῶμεν παρρησίαν καὶ μὴ αἰσχυρθῶμεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ. 29 ἐὰν εἰδῆτε ὅτι δίκαιός ἐστιν, γινώσκετε ὅτι καὶ πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται.

#### NRSV:

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming.

## LB 1984:

28 Und nun, Kinder, bleibt in ihm, damit wir, wenn er offenbart wird, Zuversicht haben und nicht zuschanden werden vor ihm, wenn er kommt. 29 Wenn ihr wisst, dass er gerecht ist, so erkennt ihr auch, dass, wer recht tut, der ist von ihm geboren.

### Comments

In this final pericope of chapter two John brings to a climax the emphases begun in 2:1-2. He picks up again the vocative *τεκνία* of 2:1 rather than repeating the *Παιδιά* of 2:18 or even the *Ἀγαπητοί* of 2:7. The adverb *νῦν*, now, adds to the summarizing climatic nature of the pericope. The climatic nature of this is also seen in the generalized admonition of v. 28a. This is expanded with a *ἵνα* clause expressing ultimate objective behind the admonition. Further expansion is seen in picking up a third class protasis framing of another scenario summarizing the discussion from 1:5 to 2:28.

The admonition *μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ*, *remain in Him*, is short, to the point, and gathers up all of the previous discussion in a simple point. John's readers began their Christian journey in the apostolic Gospel which brought them into *κοινωνία*, *relationship*, with God through Christ. John's preaching of Jesus as the Christ to them laid an authentic foundation for living day by day in fellowship with God. It provided the basis for dealing with occasion sin committed as Christians in a spiritual healthy manner with Christ as the One standing between them and God. Out of this Gospel came a new respect and love for fellow Christians, many of who were of different races and spoke different languages. This Gospel message brought the presence of God into their lives to guide and instruct them in the proper way to live the Christian life. Despite the alternative gospel of the false teachers based upon lies and deceptions, John's word to his readers was simply: Stay put where you are in Christ.

Why? *ἵνα ἐὰν φανερωθῆ σχώμεν παρρησίαν καὶ μὴ αἰσχυνθῶμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ*. There is coming a day at the end of this final hour when Christ will appear (*ἐὰν φανερωθῆ*) that we will face final judgment before Almighty God (*ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ*). For most folks a terrifying moment of horrors, but for those whose lives have been planted squarely in Christ it will be a day of encouragement and confidence (*σχώμεν παρρησίαν*) standing before a Holy God in judgment. Further, it will be a time when nothing that we have done centered in Christ will cause us shame and embarrassment (*μὴ αἰσχυνθῶμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ*). Achieving such a goal as this in final judgment is why we need to continue our stance centered in Christ.

The further amplification comes in v. 29 and

continues the theme of confidence in final judgment. The scenario proposed by the third class protasis is *ἐὰν εἰδῆτε ὅτι δίκαιός ἐστιν*, *if you know that He is just*. This scenario builds off the similar one in 1:9, *ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πιστός ἐστιν καὶ δίκαιος*, *if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just...* John assumes that his readers have been dealing in a spiritually healthy manner with occasion sins in their lives as believers. In that confessing of sins to God, they have discovered that *πιστός ἐστιν καὶ δίκαιος*, *He is faithful and just*.

This is what he assumes in the scenario of 2:29. They have indeed discovered the justice and dependability of God through confession of sin. Thus knowing this as spiritual reality, they also know that the individual living piously in commitment to God through Christ is born of God: *γινώσκετε ὅτι καὶ πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται*. Now the significance of John's use of *ἐξ αὐτοῦ* comes to the light: To be of Him means to be born from Him. That is, God is our spiritual Father who has birthed us by implanting His own character and being into our lives. Wow!

### CONCLUSION

Chapter two unpacks several more of the implications of the Prologue, as well as continues to build on the amplifications in 1:5-10. Hopefully you have been able to see more clearly how John both expands the foundational concepts in the Prologue, and also networks them with all kinds of links to the materials that have preceded. If you have ever written texts in formats where hyper links both internal and external play an important role in the writing, then you have something of a picture of what John is doing in this essay. Such writing is 'three dimensional' writing rather than the older 'one dimensional' approach in the pre-internet days. Footnotes were always easier than hyper links! But not nearly as helpful.

Hopefully the central picture emerging in chapter two is the critical importance of taking our stance squarely in faith commitment to Jesus as the Christ and planting our lives there for the entire journey. Such enables us to deal with occasion sins in a spiritually healthy manner. It pulls us into productive relationships with other Christians. It gives us the spiritual gifting of God's presence to enable spiritual growth and developing insights into the will of God for our lives. This reinforces us to resist the weird and twisted perversions of the Gospel that float around and occasionally seek to lure us away from Christ.