

COMMENTS ON 1 JOHN

The period for the writing of this letter is determined by John A.T. Robinson (*Redating the New Testament*, The Westminster Press, 1976) to be AD 60-65. Although it is not addressed to a specific village or city, most scholars see it as having been written primarily to address the rise of Gnosticism within the early called-out communities. Nonetheless, it is clear that the many doctrinal statements address the basics of what the "early church" believed about the nature of God, His relationship to us, and how the covenant community should treat one another as well as those outside its local group. Some have simply classified this letter as a sermon. However, based upon the opening line in 2:1, "**My little children** (born ones), **I am writing these things to you** (or: for you)," A.E. Harvey writes, "There is nothing conventional or literary about this: we are reading a real message written to a real congregation.... This is an essentially private piece of writing..." (*The New English Bible Companion to the New Testament*, Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, 1970, p 758). Tradition associates it with the covenant groups in Asia Minor. "The main thing which this writer seems to have taken for granted in his readers is a knowledge of the gospel according to John.... and the whole argument centers around words like 'light,' 'life,' and 'love'..." (ibid.).

William Barclay (*The Daily Study Bible Series, the letters of John and Jude*, Revised Edition, The Westminster Press, 1976, p 3-12) gives an overview of the varieties of Gnosticism and cites passages here that he saw as representative of the false teachings that were being introduced. He states: "The basic belief of all Gnostic thought was that only spirit was good and matter was essentially evil." He points to 2:19,

"They came (or: come; go; or: went) **out from us, but they were not existing out of us** (or: they were not [a part] of us), **for if they were out of us, they would have remained** (dwelt; abided) **with us; but [this was] to the end that they may be manifested** (caused to appear) **that they are not all out of us or from us,"** (my translation, here and below)

as evidence that the false teachers had formerly been a part of the group, or groups, to whom he was writing. Then he cites 4:1, "... **because many false prophets have gone** (or: come) **out into the ordered System** (world of societal culture, government, economy and religion) **and continue there,"** to support the idea that they had been community members, but are now out spreading their views.

Some of these teachers may have been Jewish, for they denied that Jesus was the Messiah (2:22). Since "the Gnostic point of view [was] that spirit alone was good and matter was utterly evil" (ibid. p 6), some of these folks denied the incarnation, and these gave rise to "Docetism," from "the Greek verb *dokein* [which] means *to seem*... [thus] Jesus only *seemed* to have a body" (ibid. p 7). Gnosticism led to a variety of practices and behaviors that strayed from the teachings given by Jesus, His disciples, and Paul. Examples are: asceticism (deprivation of the body), licentiousness (since the body is evil, its lusts could be satisfied without limit), elitism and exclusiveness (those with *gnosis*, "knowledge," were "spiritual" and made up a higher class than the "soulish" or "carnal" folks that were not initiated into the secret knowledge, and thus had no "insight") which divided the believers into two groups (this was later manifested in the division of clergy from laity) and promoted prejudice of us, versus them. "The consequence was obviously the annihilation of Christian fellowship" (ibid. p 12).

Barclay sums up the Gnostics in this way: "They talked of being born of God, of walking in the light, of having no sin, of dwelling in God, of knowing God" (ibid. p 12). Thus we will find John addressing these specific issues. Two central points of Christian doctrine emerge here: God is Light (1:5) and God is Love (4:8). This second point leads to the core of the Christ event, and its effects, as found in chapter 4:

9. Within this, God's Love is instantly manifested (was at one point made visible) **within us** (among us), **in that** (or: because) **God has sent** (dispatched) **His uniquely-**

born (or: only-begotten) **Son as a Representative** (Envoy; Emissary) **into the ordered System** (world of society, culture, religion and government; or: the cosmos; or: = the aggregate of humanity), **to the end that we would live** (or: can experience life) **through Him.**

10. **Within this exists** (or: is) **the Love, not that we ourselves have loved** [other MSS: not that we ourselves love or accept] **God, but in contrast, that He Himself loves us and sends** (or: urged toward reunion with us and sent) **His Son as a Representative** (Emissary): **a propitiatory covering around our sins** (failures to hit the target; errors; mistakes; deviations).

11. **Beloved ones, since thus** (or: in that manner) **God loves** (or: loved) **us, we also are constantly indebted** (or: under obligation) **to habitually love and accept one another.**

"But it would be wrong to think that this Epistle is no more than a refutation of heresy. There is a very positive aim, as John tells us himself. He writes 'so that you may have fellowship with us... that our joy may be complete' (1:3f)... [It] is thus directed rather at bringing its readers into a state of assurance and a true knowledge of what faith implies" (Leon Morris, *The New Bible Commentary, Revised*, Edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer, A.M. Stibbs, D.J. Wiseman, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970, p 1260). Cf also 5:13, below.

Chapter 1

1. **The One who was continuously existing from [the] beginning** (or: He Who was progressively being parted away from Headship and Rule). **The One whom we have listened to, and still hear; the One whom we have seen, and now yet perceive with our eyes** (or: in our eyes); **the One whom we gazed upon as a public spectacle** (as an exhibit in a theater) **and our hands handled** (felt about for and touched) – **groping around the Word of the Life** (or: the Logos, which is the Life; the thought which pertains to life; the Idea from the Life; the message which has the character and qualities of the Life; the Reason which belongs to the Life; [note: I have treated *ho* as the definite article in the first four phrases here and in vs. 3; many treat it as a neuter relative and render it: That which])

Dr. Ann Nyland has also rendered *ho* "The One who... One whom..." in this verse (*The Source New Testament*, Smith and Stirling Publishing, 2004, p 477). John is speaking of Jesus Christ here, referring to the time of His ministry as a human, as recorded in the gospels. Rendering it "that which," as many do, would make his statement refer to the message that Christ preached. However, the last clause, "**our hands handled...**" instructs us that John is referring to "**the Word of the Life**" that appeared as the Man, Jesus.

Rudolf Bultmann says "The first expression... apparently means nothing other than what John 1:1 expresses..." (*A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, Edited by Robert W. Funk, *Hermeneia*, Fortress Press, 1973, p 7-8). My second translation of this sentence, in the parenthetical insertion, expresses the imperfect tense of the verb *eimi* (being) as a progressive existence, then describes the motion indicated by the preposition *apo* (parted away from), and finally gives two other semantic meanings of *arche* (headship; rule). See my expanded translation of John 1:1.

As to the Greek *logos* (Word), the semantic range of this word expands our view to observe that the Christ was Himself the "message," the "idea" and the "reason" which came into the world and manifested in flesh and blood, as verse 2 goes on to indicate. Here, as in John 1:14, "**the Word which is the Life**" – and the Way to Truly Live (John 14:6) – was incarnated in the life of a Man who could be seen and touched, and who could speak words of life (John 6:63) which folks could hear with their ears. Paul uses this same phrase in Phil. 2:16. Bultmann points out that the "subject matter and person are basically identical" (ibid. p 8). John was speaking of historical, existential experiences as verse 2 makes clear. The verbs of this second sentence all "denote sense perception" (ibid. p 9).

We see in this first verse a corporate theme in this letter, and a sense of solidarity, in John's use of the first person, plural, as expressed in the personal pronoun "**we**." This will be seen again and again.

2. And the Life was manifested (or: is brought into the clear light and made visible) **and we have seen, and still observe, and are repeatedly testifying** (bearing witness; giving evidence) **and in a message are constantly reporting to you folks the Life which has the character and qualities of the Age** (or: the life of, for and pertaining to the ages; eonian life) **which Certain [Life] was continuously existing [oriented and proceeding] toward** (or: was face to face with) **the Father, and was manifested** (or: is made visible) **to us, in us, by us, and for us.**

Again, "the Life" – the life of the Second Man, the *eschatos* Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), the historical appearance of the *logos* – which humanity was meant to live, was brought to clear light and made visible (manifested) so that folks could witness it, make observations, and report it to all of humanity – as they have done in the Scriptures such as this letter.

In the last clause we again have the same verb of being in the imperfect tense. But here it is followed by the preposition *pros*, which can be translated as "face to face with," or "**toward**." I inserted "**[oriented and proceeding]**" because these two concepts are inherent in the meaning of the preposition. John 1:2 reads "*pros* God," while here it is "*pros* the Father." Bultmann notes, "*Pater* [Father] is a familiar designation for God in 1 Jn (1:2f; 2:1, 13, 15f, 22-24; 3:1; 4:14) and is used continually in John" (ibid. p 9). As we further unpack this verse, we can observe that since the Life is also the message, it follows that the message directs us "**toward the Father**."

In the last phrase, the personal pronoun "**us**" (note again, the plurals **we** and **us**) is in the dative case with no expressed preposition. Thus, I have given four functions of the dative which make sense to the context, but indicate different aspects of the Life in its manifestation: It was made visible **to** them, and through their written report is made visible to us; It was manifested **in** them (and now, us) and **by** them – to others folks; It was manifested **for** them (and us) – i.e., for **our** benefit.

As to the term *ten zoen ten aionion*, I give the following expansion: "**the Life which has the character and qualities of the Age** (or: the life of, for and pertaining to the ages; eonian life)." The bold rendering expresses the Jewish conception of the Age of Messiah, the age that they were expecting to come when the Messiah came, and the new quality and character of the life of that age. In the parenthetical alternatives, the first gives a literal translation of the phrase and the second (eonian life) gives a close equivalent in English, based upon the word eon (similar to age: an indefinite period of time). The Greek *aion* (age) originally referred to the lifetime of a human. Thus, it came to mean an indefinite period of time – and one which could not be foreseen, as to its duration. Jesus Christ came in the conjunction of two ages (*cf* Heb. 9:26 and Mt. 28:20, my translation), ending the age of the Law, and beginning the age of the new creation.

3. The One whom we have seen, and still now see, and we have heard, and now continue listening to and hearing, we are also constantly reporting to you, to the end that you, too, may be continuously having common being and existence (or: would be progressively holding partnership and participation) **with us. And yet, our common being and existence** (or: participation; fellowship; partnership; sharing) **[is] with the Father, even with His Son** (or: as well as with the Son from Him; or, in apposition: and with the Son which is Him), **Jesus Christ.**

Here we should first consider the tense of the first two verbs. They are in the perfect tense, which indicates a completed action of the past with results which continue on into the present time. They had seen Him in the past, and yet they still see Him. How? Perhaps in the same way that Jesus did what He SAW the Father doing (John 5:19-20). Perhaps the experiences were so vivid that in their mind's eyes they could still see Him. Perhaps they could see Him now in members of His body. Paul uses the perfect infinitive of this same verb *horaō* in 1 Cor. 2:2,

"for I decided not to see or know anything among you folks, except Jesus Christ – and this One being one having been crucified (executed on a stake)!"

Another meaning of this verb is "to know" – from having seen! Paul wanted to see Christ within and among the covenant community in Corinth – see Him in their lives; see their lives in union and identity with Him – who laid down His life and was crucified for all (as we see below, in 3:16) – as they laid down their lives for their friends (John 15:13).

The second verb means to listen and to hear. They had heard Him in the past, and they were still listening to Him speak within their spirits, and through members of the communities. They still listened to the teaching and message which He had spoken, as well. They were hearing Him now through the voice of the Spirit, the effect of the Breath of God that hovered over them and moved within them (they being the "new creation" of which Paul spoke in 2 Cor. 5:17) just as it had in Gen. 1:2.

It was this constant seeing and continued hearing that created a common participation with one another, and with God: the Father and the Son. The word *koinonia* has the root meaning of **common being and existence** (which the work of Christ founded in making the "new creation" – Eph. 2:10; Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17) which becomes the basis of active fellowship, participation and partnership among the members of the community and with God. This is what Paul referred to in 1 Cor. 3:9,

"For we are God's fellow-workers (or: we are co-workers of and from God; we exist being co-workers who belong to God). **You folks are God's farm** (or: field under cultivation), **God's building** (or: construction project; structure, or act of building)."

All this comes from "seeing Him" and seeing what He is doing; from "hearing Him" and doing what He tells us to do. The term "Christ" means "anointed," and it is a picture of God's Spirit coming into union with a human. The new **common existence**, fellowship and participation with God are expressions of being in union with Him (*cf* John 14-17).

Barclay says of this verse that it gives one of the objects of writing this letter, which is, "to produce fellowship with men and fellowship with God" (*ibid.*, p 21). The following verses bear this out. Bultmann comments that the motif of *koinonia* "runs throughout the whole Epistle.... not as mysticism, but rather as a mode of life" (*ibid.* p 13). This mode of life is a **common existence** in a covenant community. It is a **common being** in the Spirit into Whom, and into Which, we have been immersed to the point of saturation,

"For we, ourselves – within the midst of one Spirit (or: in union with one Breath-effect and Attitude) – **are all submerged into one body** (or: were all immersed into, so as to be enveloped by, one body) – **whether Jews or Greeks** (or: Hellenists), **whether slaves or free folks – and we all are** (or: were) **made** (or: caused) **to drink one Spirit** (or: spirit; Breath-effect; Attitude)" – 1 Cor. 12:13.

4. And so we ourselves are proceeding in writing these things, to the end that your joy [other MSS: our joy] **would continually exist having been filled up and then continue full.**

This is an echo of John 15:11, 16:24 and 17:13. Note the present subjunctive "**would continually exist**" paired with the perfect passive "**having been filled up and then continue full**" – as John speaks the purpose of this writing (**to the end that**) into the lives of the recipients.

Other manuscripts read "our joy," and there are good witnesses for both readings. The differences are in one letter of the word. It is the echoes of John, cited above, that lead me to the reading "**your**," and Griesbach's text has this reading. William Barclay's NT translation also reads "your" here. However, the more recent texts read "our." Whichever was original, the joy of the Lord is for all! In either case, it is one of the purposes for writing the letter.

5. And this is the message (or: And it is this message) **which we have heard – and still hear – from Him, and we are continually bringing back tidings** (or: announcing again) **to and among you people that God continuously exists being** (or: is) **Light, and within Him**

darkness and obscurity do not exist – not even one (or: and so, there is absolutely no dimness or shadiness in Him).

Note that John points to a single topic (stated in the last half of the verse) as he says "**this is the message**," or, "it is this message." And here the reader is drawn back to the gospel of John, once again, 1:4-9,

4. **Within It** (or: Him), **life was continuing and progressively existing** (or: In It was life [as a source]; [Aleph, D and others witnesses read present tense: In union with it there continues being life; Life progressively exists within the midst of It]). **And the life was continuing being, and began progressively existing as, the Light of mankind** (or: Furthermore, the Light progressively came to be the life known as "humanity," and was for human beings; or: Then the life was existing being the light from the humans).

5. **And the Light is constantly shining in the dim and shadowed places, and keeps on progressively giving light within the gloomy darkness where there is no light** (or: within the midst of the obscurity of The Darkness where there is no light of The Day; or: = in the ignorant condition or system).

And yet the darkness does not grasp or receive it on the same level (or: Furthermore, the Darkness did not take it down, so as to overcome it or put it out; or: = the ignorant condition or system would have none of it, nor receive it down into itself [in order to perceive it]; But that darkness does not correspondingly accept It nor commensurately take It in hand so as to follow the pattern or be in line with Its bidding).

6. **A man came to be** (was birthed), **being one having been sent forth with a mission, as a representative, from God's side** (or: having been commissioned as an emissary and sent forth from beside God; having been sent forth to the side, as an envoy, whose source was God); **a name for him: John.**

7. **This one came into a testimony** (or: went to witness; came for evidence), **to the end that he may give testimony** (be a witness; show evidence) **about The Light, so that all humanity** (or: everyone) **would at some point come to believe and trust through him** (or: by means of it).

8. **That person** (= He) **was not The Light, but rather [he came] so that he could give testimony** (would be a witness; should present evidence) **about The Light.**

9. **It was** (or: He was, and continued being) **the True and Genuine Light which** (or: Who) **is continuously** (repeatedly; progressively) **enlightening** (giving light to) **every person** (or: human) **continuously** (repeatedly; progressively; constantly; one after another) **coming into the world** (or: the ordered system of culture, religion, economics and government; or: the universe) (or: It was the real Light, progressively coming into the world {organized system}, which is progressively enlightening {or: shedding light on} every human).

With this passage of John to instruct us as to his use of the word "light," let us now open the aperture to receive more light into our camera as we consider what John means by, "**God continuously exists being** (or: is) **Light.**" I have rendered the verb both as an ontological statement (**exists being**) in expressing John's metaphor, and also as a simple copulative (is).

As we consider the above passage in John 1, it seems that John's use of this language about Light – in referring to the Christ, the incarnate expression of the Logos – is metaphorical. He is obviously not speaking of sunlight or the light given off by energy, although we can draw analogies from both. I suggest that the light spoken of both in John's gospel and in this letter is the light of Truth (which can also be translated "Reality") and Knowledge (*gnosis*). And since many scholars have suggested that this letter was written to counter the influence of Gnosticism within the Christian communities, I think that we can conclude that this is how John is using the word "light."

Bultmann points us to 4:8 and 16, below, where we have the expression, "**because God continuously exists being Love** (or: for God is Love and Acceptance)." And then he reminds us of John 4:24, "**God [is] spirit** (or: Breath; Wind; a Breath-effect and Attitude)," and comments that these expressions "rather express[] what God means for man.... the real meaning of light is the luminosity man needs in order to find his way in his daily as well as his spiritual life" (ibid. p 16).

We must recall that "light" is a part of the creation (Gen. 1:3-5), in its literal use. Likewise is "spirit," which can also be rendered "wind; breath-effect." Each of these words is a human word used to help us to understand the nature, essence and sphere of the divine. I will admit to a strong penchant for seeing 4:8 and 16 as being ontological, still, "love (*agape*)," too, is a human word used to describe what most consider the highest quality of being of which we can conceive, and 1 Cor. 13:4-8a gives us a good picture of the nature of God. Yet with all the above considered, it is with these words of Paul to Corinth that we should think about the qualities and essences of God, or as Paul Tillich terms Him, the Ground of Being – for "being," too, is a part of creation.

But now to the last phrase of our verse, "**and within Him darkness and obscurity do not exist – not even one** (or: and so, there is absolutely no dimness or shadiness in Him)." In Gen. 1:2 we see that darkness is mentioned before light, and in vs. 4 there, after light was created in vs. 3, we find that Yahweh had to separate between the light and the darkness. Paul references this in 2 Cor. 4:6,

"because the God suddenly saying (or: the God Who once was saying), **"Light will shine forth** (give light as from a torch; gleam) **from out of the midst of darkness** (dimness and shadiness; gloom and the absence of daylight)!" **[is] the One who shines forth within the midst of our hearts, with a view to illumination of the intimate and experiential knowledge of God's glory – in a face of Christ**

(or: [is] He Who gives light in union with our hearts, [while] facing toward an effulgence and a shining forth which is an intimate knowing of the praise-manifestation whose source and origin is God, and which is God, [while] inducing in union with face to face presence of Christ [other MSS: Jesus Christ])."

Darkness is a part of the creation, which came out of God (e.g., Rom. 11:36), but it does not exist in Him Who is Light. But we see in Gen. 1 and Paul, above, that He initially put light within the midst of darkness. It is from this that Paul draws his analogy, using it as a metaphor – as does John in this letter. But what is John saying here? We can get a hint from 2:8 where we find the expression

"the Darkness (the obscure dimness of the realm of the shadows and of lack of the light of the Day; [note: a figure of the ignorance of the prior system and realm]) **is progressively being caused to pass by, and the True Light** (or: = real knowledge and understanding; = Light of the new Day) **is already** (before now) **progressively shining and appearing."**

As you see, in my translation I gave a note and two paraphrases to help the reader, and I think that these "shed light" upon the last phase of this verse. In John 1:5, above, the Light that shined in the Darkness was Jesus speaking Truth and Reality into the shadows, dimness and gloom of the old covenant (Heb. 8:5; 10:1) and the ultra-religious Phariseism of Galilee and Judea. We can observe another witness in John 3:

19. **"Now this continues being the** (or: So there continues being the same) **process of the sifting, the separation and the decision** (the evaluation; the judging), **because the Light has come** (or: has gone) **into the world** (the aggregate of humanity; the ordered system and arrangement of religion, culture and government; or: the system of control and regulation), **and yet mankind loves the darkness** (or: the people love the dimness of obscurity and gloom; or: the humans loved the realm of the shadow) **rather than the Light, for their works** (deeds; actions) **were continuing to be bad ones** (unsound ones; wicked ones; laborious ones; toilsome ones that created bad news; wrongful ones),
20. **"for everyone [who is] habitually practicing** (or: performing) **worthless things**

(base, mean, common, careless, cheap, slight, paltry, sorry, vile things or refuse) **is continuously hating** (regarding with ill-will) **the light, and is not coming** (or: going) **to the light** (or: the Light), **so that his works** (deeds; actions) **may not be tested and put to the proof** (and thus, exposed and perhaps reprovved).

21. **"Yet the one habitually doing the truth** (constantly constructing the real; repeatedly making the genuine) **is constantly coming** (or: going; moving) **toward the light** (or: the Light), **so that his works** (deeds; actions) **may be set in clear light and manifested, because they exist being ones having been worked and accomplished** (or: performed as deeds) **within God** (or: that it is within God [that they are] ones having been acted out)."

Darkness is a metaphor for a negative and ignorant way of living, just as **"walking about... within the midst of and in union with the Light"** (vs. 7, below) is a positive and *enlightened* "mode of human existence" (Bultmann, *ibid.*, p 17). Paul contrasts these two metaphors in Eph. 5: 8, speaking ontologically,

"for you folks were once existing being darkness (dimness; obscurity; gloom; shadiness), **yet** (or: but) **now [you are] light, within and in union with [the] Lord** [= Christ or Yahweh],"

and then continues in vs. 11,

"do not continually participate together (involve yourselves in joint communion or community; or: Stop having fellowship together) **in unfruitful acts** (works; deeds; performances) **of the Darkness** (dimness in the shadows; gloom and obscurity),"

connecting the metaphor with conduct.

In Col. 1:13 Paul again uses the figure of darkness, this time contrasting their past existence with that of Christ's reign (the eschatological presence of the Messiah's kingdom),

He who drags us out of danger (or: rescued us) **forth from out of the midst of the authority of the Darkness** (from Darkness's jurisdiction and right; from existing out of gloomy shadows and obscure dimness; = the privilege of ignorance), **and changes [our] position** (or: transported [us], thus, giving [us] a change of standing, and transferred [us]) **into the midst of the kingdom and reign of the Son of His love."**

It was the previous arrangements of our lives – those which had authority over us – which he here has termed **"the Darkness."** (see my comments on this verse in *Peter, Paul and Jacob*, Harper Brown Publishing, 2012). In 1 Thes. 5:5 Paul again uses an ontological contrast, but there expands the contrast to darkness in the compound phrase: "... **sons of** (= associated with and having the qualities of) **Light and sons of** (= associated with and having qualities of) **Day!"**

6. **If we should up and say that we are continuously having common being** (or: constantly enjoying fellowship, participation and partnership) **with Him and yet may be habitually walking round about** (= living our lives) **within the Darkness and the dim realm of shadows** [note: a figure of ignorance, or the obscure previous way of seeing reality; the existence before the Breath-effect vibrated over us], **we are constantly lying** (speaking falsely) **and are not in the habit of doing the truth** (or: are not constructing, practicing or producing reality).

I again inserted an interpretive note when I translated this verse, instructing the reader as to the meaning of the figurative language about darkness and pointing back to Gen. 1:2. As discussed above, John is referencing the prior environments of those in the called-out communities, and whether their involvement had been in Judaism or paganism, prior to the coming of the Light to them, darkness was upon the faces of their lives.

Bultmann points out here that the dualistic language of **"constantly lying** (speaking falsely)" and **"doing the truth"** corresponds to the dualism in the metaphors of **"Light"** and **"the Darkness"** (*ibid.* p 19) and instructs us about what John means by "constructing, practicing or producing reality." In this last clause I have painted in the semantic range of the verb normally just rendered **"do,"** here used in its present tense form. Truth "designates the authentic reality" while lying and speaking falsely designates "the inauthentic, the unreal... basically death, just as he who does not

love his brother but hates him is a liar (4:20) – one who, according to 2:11, remains in darkness, and according to 3:14, remains in death" (ibid. p 19).

Observe, also, that John associates the idea of "**common being** (or: constantly enjoying fellowship, participation and partnership)" with the living of our lives (seen in the common metaphor of "**walking around**"). The life of a covenant community is one of interactions and relationships between its members, not just coming together for a "meeting." Shining the Light to "the world" about them will also involve interaction and relationship – and sometimes partnership – with those with whom the group associates in daily living. It is the prejudiced religious mindset that seeks to withdraw and not be involved with those outside one's own group. We see the contrast of this religious mindset (as demonstrated by the prejudice of the Pharisees) when considering the mindset of loving inclusion as demonstrated by the words and behavior of Jesus.

7. **Yet if we keep on walking about** (= continue living our life) **within the midst of and in union with the Light, as He exists** (or: is) **within the Light, we constantly have common being and existence** (or: hold common fellowship, participation and enjoy partnership) **with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, keeps continually and repeatedly cleansing us** (or: is progressively rendering us pure) **from every sin** (or: from all error, failure, deviation, mistake, and from every [successive] shot that is off target [when it occurs]).

"Verse 7a shows that doing the truth is a mode of life that is realized in conduct" (ibid. p 19). Now notice that the Light is a sphere of living our lives. It is the sphere within which God and Christ have their existence. Here God is not just Light, but resides "**within**" the light of authentic living; within the light of the reality of the new arrangement (or: covenant; cf Heb.8:6-13) of the new creation (cf 2 Cor. 5:17). The message – the Logos – of the Life (vs. 1) is in fact the very life in union with which, and in the midst of which, we are called to live and move and have our existence (Acts 17:28).

In proceeding to unpack the last half of this verse we must keep in mind the present tense of the verb "**cleansing**." Following Catholic theologians (e.g., Thomas Aquinas) justification is a doctrine that involves continued forgiveness of sins throughout the believer's life. The traditional Reformed view of this verse is that "**the blood of Jesus**" refers here to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. When justification (*dikaiosisune*) is rightly understood as "being turned in the right direction (or: being rightwised – Bultmann's term)" or "being placed in the Way (Christ) pointed out" (W.E. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament*) which involves "right relationship" (Barclay, and others) or "fairness and equity," the forensic notion of both Catholics and Protestants quickly disappears. Note that the clause that we are considering here is following a discussion about **common being and existence**, fellowship, partnership and common participation (*koinonia*). It is primarily a horizontal setting that is in view, although a setting that is located within the midst of God, as manifested in His Light. The message is about God bringing us into union with Him so that we can live "rightly" with other people, and treat them with love, fairness and equity. It is the cruciform life of follower of Jesus (Matt. 16:24). The good news never speaks of God having to be reconciled to us. The message is for US to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:18-20). God loves us and even loves human society (the world – John 3:16). Brian Zahnd is instructive here:

"The world is not just an aggregate of individuals; it is also civilization and human society as a whole, and God intends to save it. Thus Jesus is the savior of souls (individuals) *and* the savior of the world" (*Beauty Will Save the World, Rediscovering the Allure & Mystery of Christianity*, Charisma House, 2012, p 99, emphasis original).

Now I will agree that the shedding of Christ's blood was both a historical and an "eternal" act, since 2 Cor. 5:19 tells us that God was within the midst of, and in union with, Christ reconciling the aggregate of humanity (and society) to Himself. Our being cleansed by His blood reaches back to the Christ event that changed history and ended the age of the Law, bringing about a new creation. However, I would suggest that vs. 7b can have another application that is based upon our participation with one another, and with Him. The metaphor of a body has been used to

describe the called-out community. The life of a body is within the blood (Lev. 17:14). Christ is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25) and we must drink in His life-blood (John 6:51-56) in order to have His life within us – it becomes our food. But "blood" is also a metaphor, a symbol, of giving one's life for one's friend – as John 6:51 indicates in speaking of "the bread of life" that Jesus gave "for the life of the aggregate of humanity (the world)."

The body of Christ has life within it because His blood (within which is His life) circulates through every member, bring life to each cell and carrying off the waste. As the members of the body come together in fellowship and inter-participation with one another, His life, via His Spirit and His Word (both of which are life) flows from member to member, both feeding and repeatedly, continuously cleansing each member from mistakes and failures. Keep in mind that John has been speaking about living our lives in the Light (another bringer of life). Our *koinonia* is a source of life and cleansing, as His life-blood is drunk-down through the fellowship of our **common being**. He came that we might have Life. The shedding of the blood of animals, so that we can eat their flesh, is a means of providing life to us. And so was the cross (at Passover) a sign and a figure to us: it proclaimed our deliverance and fed us for our journey out of bondage and into His promises.

Another thought on the two parts of this one verse: the first part speaks in corporate terms of a way of life, using the metaphor of Light to describe the character and quality of the covenant community. Perhaps we should see the second part, about His blood, as being the blood that created the covenant community – that it is this new arrangement (Matt. 26:26-29), this new covenant, which is being referenced as the vehicle for carrying away from the community the error and wrong direction of thought, cleansing it from the infection of the false teachings. My friend John Gavazzoni pointed here to Paul's "house-building" term used in Eph. 4:

16. – **from out of Whom** (or: out from the midst of Which) **all the Body** (or: the entire body) **being continuously fitted and framed together** (made a common joint by a word; laid out and closely joined together) **and constantly being knit together and caused to mount up united through every fastening** (or: joint) **of the supply of rich furnishings** (or: through every assimilation of the full supply of funds; through every touch {kindling; setting on fire} of the completely supplied requirements) **in accord with** (or: down from; commensurate to) **the operation** (operative, effectual energy) **within [the] measure of each one part** [other MSS: member], **is itself continually making** (or: is for itself progressively producing and forming) **the growth and increase of the Body, [focused on and leading] into house-construction** (or: unto building [up] and edification) **of itself within the midst of, and in union with, love.**

Here in vs. 7 John may have in mind the thoughts that Paul had shared with the Corinthians about when the community came together for covenant meals, that some were behaving poorly towards others, not discerning that they were all coming together as Christ's body (1 Cor. 11:17-34). It was within that context that Paul was addressing "**tearing splits** (= separations into cliques; divisions) **continually inherent among [them]**" (vs. 18). And it was within their fellowship that they were partnering with the life (figured by the blood) of Christ, figuratively drinking it with Him in a new way, within the kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

8. **If we should up and say that we have no error** (or: do not periodically possess deviation or hold sin and mistake), **we are continuously leading ourselves astray** (or: deceiving ourselves and driving ourselves off the Path), **and the Truth is not** (or: reality does not exist) **within us.**
9. **If it would be our habit to confess** (admit; avow; say the same thing as; speak in accordance with; or: would continue in agreement [about]) **our error** (our failure; our mistake; our sin), **He is constantly faithful and just** (fair; in accord with the Way pointed out and in right relationship; rightwised), **to the end that He would at once send away for us** (or: dismiss or pardon and cause to flow away in us) **the errors** ([some MSS add: our] failures, mistakes and deviations) **and then would cleanse** [other MSS: He will cleanse] **us from all injustice** (all that is contrary to the Way pointed out; every unrighteousness; all unfairness, inequity and unrighteous relationships; every behavior that is turned in the wrong direction).

10. **If we would say that we have not failed to hit the target** (or: sinned; made a mistake; erred; deviated), **and exist thus, we habitually make Him a liar** (one who utters falsehood), **and His Word** (Thought; Idea; message; Logos) **does not exist among** (or: is not within) **us**.

Now as we approach John's thought in vss. 8-10, let us keep in mind the context of what has just been said, before: **common existence**, corporate fellowship, participation and partnership (*koinonia*), vs. 6-7, which is either within the Light (the truth, reality and proper conduct of the new covenant) or within darkness (vss. 5-6 – which is a metaphor for ignorance, wrong behavior and false teachings).

These verses have traditionally been read as applying to individuals – and a secondary reading can apply in this way. But the context instructs us that up to this point John is speaking corporately, and that these verses are addressing corporate issues of error and deviation.

Hamartia is an archery term that refers to endeavoring to hit a target, but making some mistake in our aim or release of the arrow and thus deviating and missing the goal of our endeavor. By seeing this term through the eyes of traditional Christian doctrine (via a limited translation which does not instruct us as to the core idea of the term) and the concepts of individual piety, I suggest that we have strayed from the point that John was making as he addressed covenant communities. Consider that the messages that were sent to the seven congregations in the Book of Revelation were primarily spoken to the corporate bodies; to the entire community of each city (see my translation and the careful rendering of the personal pronouns, which were mostly singular, addressing the issues not to individuals but to the entire group as a unit).

The communities addressed in this letter had errors introduced into them by false teachers (folks who were in darkness and spoke lies and falsehoods), and they were being led astray into Gnosticism. The confession of error and deviation (vs. 9) is a corporate issue. He is not talking about making personal confessions to a priest or even to the group. This would not have been appropriate in a society that had honor versus shame as a core value. Folks would have been embarrassed to do this – just as they are today, and so continue to carry a sense of guilt.

Note in 9b that their admitting the error of these false teaching would cleanse the group of all injustice: all that is contrary to the Way pointed out; every unrighteousness; all unfairness, inequity and unrighteous relationships; every behavior that is turned in the wrong direction. The false elitism and divisive, prejudiced individualism, characteristic of Gnosticism, was resulting in behavior that was contrary to the Way of Christ – which is a life of cruciform love, in covenant community. The "sin" was a corporate problem, just as was the improper table conduct in Corinth, cited above.

By claiming that they had no errors or deviations (had not failed to hit the target) they were making Christ and God a liar, for their behaviors were contradicting His Word, message and idea. If we do this (notice the corporate "**we**"), we show that His Word is not in existence within our group ("**among us**").

Chapter 2

1. **My little children** (born ones), **I am writing these things to you** (or: for you) **to the end that you may not fail to hit the target** (deviate from the goal; sin). **And if anyone should at some point fail** (or: suddenly commit sin, make a mistake or deviate), **we constantly have One called alongside to help, give relief and guide us toward the Father** (or: we continuously possess a Paraclete, face to face with the Father): **Jesus Christ, [the] One in accord with the Way pointed out** (or: a Just One; [the] Righteous One; [the] Fair One who is in right relationship with all; a Rightwised One; [the] right one; a Person that is turned in the right direction).

There are two ways in which we can understand John's use of the word "**little children**." The first is in its literal sense, for the good news brought by Jesus began social change with these

new covenant communities. Children were being addressed directly in letters (*cf* Col. 3:20. Eph. 6:1, 2) – something that was unheard of in secular societies of that time and culture.

The second is the metaphorical sense such as when Paul spoke to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 3:1-2, indicating that their spiritual development was like new believers. Also, there is Heb. 5:12-13 where when folks should have grown in Christ so as to be teachers, they were still categorized as babies, "**untried** (inexperienced) **pertaining to [the] Word of the Way pointed out** (from the message of fair and equitable dealing or an idea about rightwised relationships; also: = in regard to the idea of, and the reason derived from, covenant membership."

Taking this second use a step farther, and considering the foregoing context of the previous chapter (and recall that there were no chapter divisions in the Greek texts, so verse 1 is continuing the thoughts just expressed in the previous verses), John is likely classifying many of the recipients of this letter as little children. The noun *teknia* is the diminutive form, so he is not just calling them children, but "**My little children...**" The possessive pronoun shows that he is taking a position of a father to these folks – just as Paul did in 1 Cor. 4:15. Then he expresses another purpose for writing this letter: "**that you may not fail to hit the target** (deviate from the goal; sin)." Vss. 8-10 have assured the group(s) that they had missed the goal, but he is now writing that this should no longer be the case. At same time, individuals who were "little born ones," in either sense mentioned above, would receive positive encouragement in hearing this read to them. Bultmann points out that this purpose clause "is intended to prevent the misunderstanding that 1:8-10 implies" (*ibid.* p 22).

But not to worry, "**we constantly have One called alongside to help, give relief and guide us toward the Father.**" Jesus is always available to us (we need not wait for some "end-time return"), and He functions as our Paraclete. He is "face to face with the Father," for they both have made their dwelling place with us (John 17:23). In fact, Paul refers to the called-out communities as "God's temple." Barclay says, "A *parakletos* has been defined as 'one who lends his presence to his friends'" (Barclay, *ibid.* p 38).

Now note here His qualifications for being our Paraclete: He is "**in accord with the Way pointed out** (or: a Just One; [the] Righteous One; [the] Fair One who is in right relationship with all; a Rightwised One; [the] right one; a Person that is turned in the right direction)." He is the perfect Guide for literal young children, and for folks who are new to the Way. He is turned in the right direction (toward the Father), so folks can follow Him with confident assurance. He is One who is in right relationship with all, so He will bring concord and unity to the communities. The deviant teachers should not be followed. Jesus the Messiah will be with their spirits, as their Guide and Assistant. They "**constantly have**" (the present tense) Him. What assurance John imparts – and what awareness of His presence being with them.

The personal possessive pronoun "**His**" in vs. 7 shows that the personal pronoun "**He**" in vs. 9 is referring to God, where the adjective "**just** (fair; in accord with the Way pointed out and in right relationship; rightwised)" is applied to Him – just as it is applied to Jesus in this verse. In the following verse we see an example of what this "justice" and "right relationship" implies.

2. And He Himself exists continually being a sheltering cover around our mistakes and errors, sheltering us from their effects so that we can be in peaceful and rightwised relationships (or: being the act by which our sins and failures are made ineffective, effecting conciliation [to us]), **yet not only around those pertaining to us** (or: having their source in us), **but further, even around the whole ordered System** (secular realm and dominating world of culture, economy, religion and government; or: universe; or: aggregate of mankind)!

Jesus the Messiah exists as our covering. In this He exemplifies what is right and just – what is the Way pointed out for one that is rightwised. "Covering or shelter" is the literal meaning of *hilasmos* (which is usually rendered "propitiation" or "propitiating shelter" or "atoning sacrifice"). This word is used only here and in 4:10, below in the NT. Nyland renders it here "the means for

taking away our sins," (ibid. p 478). This word is used in the LXX for the Heb. *kaphar*, which is often rendered "atonement," e.g., in Num. 5:8 and Ps. 130:4 (in other places, such as Lev. 1:4, we find the verb form prefixed by *ex-*), but literally meaning of this noun is "a covering" or "a shelter." A related word, *hilasterios*, is the word for the "mercy seat," the cover of the ark of the covenant (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:5). We find the verb form (*hilaskomai*) only in Lu. 18:13,

"But the tax collector (or: tribute contractor), standing far off (= remaining at a distance, in the background), continued unwilling even to lift up his eyes to heaven (or: unto the atmosphere or sky) – and in contrast kept on beating (striking) his chest, repeatedly saying, 'O God, at your mercy seat let me, the failure (the one who has missed the goal; the sinner), be sheltered in propitiation, and may You be favorably inclined to me!'"

and in Heb. 2:17,

"... so that He might become a merciful and a faithful (or: loyal) Chief Priest (Leading, Ruling or Beginning Priest) [in regard to] the things toward God, into the [situation] to be repeatedly and continuously overshadowing the failures (mistakes; errors; misses of the target; sins) of the People with a gentle, propitiatory covering and shelter."

In this context, we should consider 1 Pet. 4:8,

"because love is constantly covering (habitually throwing a veil over; progressively concealing; [and with other MSS: will be covering]) a multitude of failures (mistakes; errors; misses of the target; sins)." [Prov. 10:12]

– especially considering that **"God is Love."**

I rendered the preposition *peri* literally, **"around,"** giving a more graphic picture of the act of covering in order to provide shelter. And with this picture, Ezk. 16:8 comes to mind, where Yahweh "... spread His hem (or: skirt) over [Jerusalem] and covered [her] nakedness... and entered into covenant with [her]..." This was describing Yahweh's entering into covenant with Israel, using the metaphor of making her His wife. These last two references, which include Israel's story, should be kept in mind when seeking to understand vs. 2, above. Before it was a covenant with one nation, Israel. But now we see that the new covenant and the new covering include "the whole aggregate of mankind," or as Bultmann puts it, "the whole of the human world" (ibid. p 23). We see a similar thought expressed in John 1:29, where it says that the Lamb of God is the One **"continuously lifting up and carrying away the Sin of the world, and removing the sin which belongs to and is a part of the System."**

The giving of His life to us was sufficient to place a covering around all of humanity, and make them all His. You see, when Israel sacrificed an animal to the Lord, the animal became Yahweh's as a symbol signifying that Israel belonged to Yahweh. Here it is a better sacrifice (Heb. 9:23) that includes a covering for everyone with a "better covenant" (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). It is now a situation of **"the hearts [not the mercy seat of the ark] having been sprinkled from a consciousness of evil"** (Heb. 10:22).

Barclay comments, "There is in the New Testament a strong line of thought in which the universality of the salvation of God is stressed. God so loved *the world* that he sent his son (John 3:16). Jesus is confident that, if he is lifted up, he will draw *all men* to him (John 12:32). God will have *all men* to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4)" (Barclay, ibid. p 40).

Bultmann notes that *kosmos* (world) does not have the same meaning in this verse as it does in 2:15, below, but rather as how "the thought is encountered" in Rom. 3:23f (**"You see, all at one point veered off the mark {or: all folks deviated; or: everyone fails; everyone sins}..."**), 2 Cor. 5:19 (**"God was existing within Christ {or: God was and continued being in union with [the] Anointed One} progressively and completely transforming [the] world to be other [than it is] in Himself, to Himself, for Himself and by Himself, not accounting to them {not putting to their account; not logically considering for them; not reasoning in them} the results and effects of their falls to the side (their trespasses and offences}..."**) and 1 Tim. 2:6 (**"the One giving**

Himself a correspondent ransom {a ransom in the place of and directed toward the situation} **over [the situation of and] on behalf of** {or: for} **all** {everyone; all humanity and all things}..." and then suggests that in this verse it refers to "the whole of the human world, as in John 1:29; 3:16f; 4:42; 12:47" (Bultmann, *ibid.* p 23).

3. And so within this [situation], if we could be continuously watchful and would habitually keep, guard, observe, and maintain His implanted purposes and internalized goals (or: inner projections of destiny), **we [would] progressively know through experience and continue to recognize with insight, because we have come to know Him, and we now experience Him intimately with insightful knowledge.**

(or: So in union with this [relationship] – should we constantly maintain His impartations from the finished product, and would observe His inward directives of destiny – we progressively know by experience, and recognize by insight, that we have known Him.)

We should not miss the solidarity with them that John expresses with the plural "we." I suggest that this is more than a rhetorical device (the "epistolary we"). What he is saying applies to everyone – all are one body in Christ.

I expanded *tereō* in the first clause (**watchful... maintain**) to inform the reader of the semantic range of this verb. The present subjunctive suggests that we can constantly do this. The direct object of this verb is the word *entole* which is composed of the preposition *en* (within; and in composition: inner; internal) and the word *telos* (purpose; goal; destiny; finished product; end in view; final outcome). In common use it can mean a command, but when an officer gave a command to a soldier, he was implanting his purpose into him. When an owner gave a precept or an instruction to his slave, he was imparting his immediate goal into him/her and that instruction had to be internalized for the slave to carry it out. But our Father deals with us as children and friends, so I have chosen to emphasize the characteristics of the action, giving a picture of its mechanics, rather than simply use a common word that carries with it either a military or an owner-slave connotation. When God speaks to us, He projects an inner goal or destiny into us, implanting His Seed (Word) into our soil. He inserts a destiny into us.

Next in this verse, we come to two forms of the same verb *gingsko* (to know by intimate experience and have insight). In its first use here it is a present indicative. However, since I placed the dependent clause first and since it is in the subjunctive, I have added "[**would**]" to correspond to the "if" of the dependent clause, and thus to conform to English syntax. John is saying that "if we could do this, then we would **progressively know through experience and continue to recognize with insight.**" We would have increased knowledge and insight **"because we have come to know Him, and we now experience Him intimately with insightful knowledge."** It is in this last clause that we meet this same verb, but here it is in the perfect tense – which describes an action completed in the past but with present and continuing results. It is based upon the established experience of knowing Him that "watching... keeping... maintaining" His implanted purposes and internalized goals bring us progressive knowledge and continued insight. The "if-clause" suggests that progressive knowledge and continued insights are dependent upon tending the things that He has placed within us. This is like the metaphor of "abiding in the Vine" (John 15:1-10) where He says to His students, **"Whenever you may observe, watch over, guard and keep My implanted goals, you will be remaining** (abiding; dwelling) **with the midst of and in union with My love..."** (vs. 10).

Here Bultmann points out that "The theme of fellowship with God is now replaced by the theme of the knowledge of God... [which] forms a substantive unity with the fellowship with God..." and later states that "There is no knowledge of God which as such would not also be 'keeping the commandments'." (*ibid.* p 24, 25).

4. The person who keeps on saying, "I have come to know Him by experience," and yet is not habitually keeping (observing) **His implanted goals** (impartations of the finished product

within; inward directives), **is a liar** (exists being one who speaks falsehood) **and God's Truth** (the Reality of God; the Genuine Actuality which is God) **is not** (or: does not exist) **within this one**.

This statement could apply to anyone who claims to be a part of God's called-out covenant community but is not existentially living his or her life in accord with the truth and reality of the qualities and characteristics of the Life in Christ, namely in self-giving love. We could relate this to the parable of the sheep and the kids in Matt. 25. If we don't recognize Him in His brothers and give ourselves into their need, we are not ready for participation in His reign and have need of His purging fires in our lives.

Considering the spiritual environment that John has been addressing, this verse probably referred to the Gnostics among them – those who claimed to have a special knowledge. He says that their claims and their teaching are lies. The requirements of the "if-clause" of vs. 3 must be met if one is to have experiential knowledge of Him: of the truth and reality which is the Christ, and which was implanted, imparted, inserted within through the Word of Christ's destiny within humanity.

5. Yet whoever may be habitually keeping (attentively guarding to observe) **His Word** (Thought; Idea; message), **truly** (or: actually; in reality) **within this person God's Love has been perfected and brought to its goal** (or: the love which is God has been matured, finished and reached its purposed destiny). **In this we constantly know experientially that we continuously exist within the midst of Him, and in union with Him.**

Note that "**God's Love**" is the goal of the above "if-clause" in vs. 3, and of the "may be" of the first clause here. Note also the "**His Word**" explains the content of His imparted goal, inner directive and implanted destiny. It is keeping and observing His message – i.e., living out His idea of a loving covenant community that reaches out to others – that lets us know that our existence is in union with Him, and that we are in the midst of the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). It gives proof to us, by our own experience, that we have been placed in the Way pointed out: that we have been rightwised into being fair, equitable and in right relationship with Him and with humanity. John has here given a practical, simple definition of what Paul termed *dikaiosune*, and what theology has termed "justification." It is a living state of being, not a "forensic fiction."

Bultmann sheds additional light, here, "...God's reality and his love are identical, as stated in 4:8, 16: *ho theos agape estin* ('God is love'). It is thereby also determined that the *to theou* ('of God') [in the last phrase of this verse] is not an objective genitive ('love for God'), but rather a subjective genitive ('God's love for men')" (ibid. p 25). He further notes that when it speaks of "**has been perfected**" it "means that brotherly love is brought to fulfillment..." (ibid. p 26).

6. The person habitually speaking [thus, as though] to be constantly abiding (remaining; dwelling) **within Him, is continuously under obligation himself also to go on walking about** (= behaving and conducting his life) **just as That One** (or: on the level and in the sphere as [He]) **walked** (or: walks; = lives His life).

Again, we are instructed that the ideas of "**abiding** (remaining; dwelling)" – cf John 15:1-13 – and of being "**within Him**" means living our lives "**just as**" He lived His life. "Jesus is thus referred to as the model and the foundation of Christian conduct" (ibid., p 26). Cf John 13:15.

Or, since the verb "walk," in reference to His life, is in the aorist tense, it can be translated as a simple English present, "walks." This would infer that John was speaking of His living His life within us, His body, and this would suggest an ontological sense of being in union with Christ (vs. 5, above) – not just an agreement of our will with His.

7. Beloved ones, I am not writing an implanted goal (impartation of the finished product within; inward directive of purpose) **new in kind or quality to you** (or: for you), **but rather an old implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward directive of destiny) **which you**

folks have continually had (or: were habitually holding) **from [the] beginning. The old implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward directed destiny) **is the Word** (Thought; Idea; message) **which you folks heard** (or: attentively hear [and thus obey])!

In other words, he is saying, "This is nothing new to you, it is what was told to you from the start. You have had this idea placed in your minds with the first message you heard about the Christ, and it has been this very Truth that you were habitually holding." Recall the words of Jesus in John 13:34,

"I am giving to you men a new implanted goal (an inward purposed directive different from that which had been formerly; an impartation of a finished product and destiny that is new in kind and character): **that you folks are to be continuously and progressively loving** (or: should constantly love) **one another, just as** (correspondingly as; to the same level as; in the sphere as) **I love you folks so that you also may constantly** (or: would habitually) **love one another,"**

so we see that what John is speaking of here is indeed the original goal of Christ's covenant community. In fact, for the Jews of the recipient communities, the idea of loving one's neighbor dates at least to Lev. 19:18.

8. **Again,** (or: Once more) **I am writing to you an implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward directive) **new in kind and quality, which is** (exists being) **true** (actual; real; genuine) **within Him, and within you** [other MSS: us], **that the Darkness** (the obscure dimness of the realm of the shadows and of lack of the light of the Day; [note: a figure of the ignorance of the prior system and realm] **is progressively being caused to pass by, and the True Light** (or: = real knowledge and understanding; = Light of the new Day) **is already** (before now) **progressively shining and appearing.**

In the message brought by Jesus quoted with the previous verse, we see that the folks participating in the new reality of the reign of God are told to love and accept one another "just as" Jesus, the Good Shepherd, loves them. He loved the whole aggregate of humanity and gave His life for all. This was beyond Lev. 19:18 which was an injunction that applied only to those of their own community (their neighbors). Not only that, His teaching called His students to love their enemies and pray for their persecutors (Matt. 5:44). This was certainly a revolutionary idea.

John is adding something more to the message here. Not only has the Christ come and given Light to the world, but with this dawning of the eschatological Day of the Lord (or, Christ), **"the Darkness is progressively being caused to pass by."** The old order of the previous age of ritual and animal sacrifice at a physical temple is about to vanish (John 4:21-24). Also see Heb. 8, beginning with vs. 6, **"But now..."** on through vs.13:

"In thus to be saying "new," He has made the first (or: former) **"old," and that [which is] progressively growing old and obsolete** (failing of age), **[is] near its disappearing** (vanishing away)."

The **"True Light"** which embodies the "true *gnosis* (knowledge; insight)" is **"already progressively shining and appearing"** as the message of the Christ spreads throughout the world. What had been looked for by the prophets of old was now present and growing. Nothing else needed to be sought through mystic experience or secret knowledge. The Reality of the kingdom of God had arrived and His sovereign influence was in action.

9. **The person who keeps on speaking [thus, as though] to be within the Light, and yet is constantly hating** (or: regarding with ill-will) **his brother** (or: = fellow believer; or: fellow member of his society), **is a liar and continues being within the Darkness** (the obscure dimness of the realm of the shadows and lack of the light of the Day; = prior night) **until the present moment.**

It was **"the Darkness"** that was the state of existence (both in Judaism and in the pagan religions) before the coming of the Christ – **"the Light"** (John 1:4-9; 3:19-21). Hate and ill-will are the very opposite of Love and acceptance, just as darkness is the opposite of the Light. It was the hate that killed the Christ, just as hating another person makes one a murderer (3:15, below).

A person cannot be in union with the Light and be hating others. So the person who claims to be a Christian but hates someone else is really not a Christian, but is lying and is in darkness.

With regard to the false teachers, assuming that they were teaching Gnosticism, John is calling them liars because in their elitism they actually had ill-will toward those that they considered to be "average" believers within the community. John is saying that what they presume to be enlightened "knowledge" was nothing more than the darkness (ignorance) that existed before the advent of the Light. (cf Matt. 5:21-22)

10. The person habitually loving (seeking accepting reunion with) **his brother constantly abides** (remains; dwells; = has his home) **within and in union with the Light, and there exists no snare** (trap-spring; stick upon which bait is put; = cause for stumbling) **within him.**

Love is the quality and character of God and of His Light (Christ). It is the opposite of hate and darkness. Here John gives further instruction of how we can know that we are within Christ, and "in union with the Light." When we are really operating in love there will be no cause for stumbling within us, causing us to stumble; no trap-spring within us to ensnare or stumble other folks. If we are always "seeking accepting reunion" with people, we are on the right track – we are walking in the Light of the Way.

11. But the person habitually hating (or: repeatedly having ill-will toward) **his brother** (or: = fellow believer or fellowman) **constantly exists within the Darkness** (the obscure dimness of the realm of the shadows, lacking of the light of the Day) **and so continuously walks about amidst the Darkness, and has not seen so is not aware where he is progressively departing** (or: habitually going away), **because that Darkness blinds** (or: blinded) **his eyes.**

Again, hate is a sign of darkness. It is an absence of love and acceptance of people. When we are in darkness we are not being led by God's Spirit; we are not existing as "sons of God" because we are hating folks. We thus do not know where our life is going and are ignorant of our destiny. We are not participating in the rightwised conduct, the peace or the Spirit-generated joy of kingdom (Rom. 14:17). The false teachers were "blind guides" (Matt. 23:16-26), as were the Pharisees. Much of the divisive teaching of Christianity with the "us and them" mentality which results in exclusion of others has continued this same tradition of darkness. Elitism has been the plague of every religion.

12. I am writing to you, little children (or: young born ones), **that the failures** (mistakes; sins; deviations; situations of missing the goal) **have been sent away** (or: caused to flow away; put away; divorced; forgiven) **for you through His Name** (or: because of the Name which is Him)!

Whether he is referring to the work of the cross, in the phrase "**through His Name**" / "because of the Name...", or whether John is speaking prophetically in the Word of this letter, saying that he, John, is sending away the mistakes of the group, is not certain. Recall that Jesus said to His disciples in John 20:23,

"If you folks should send away (dismiss; allow to depart; forgive; pardon; divorce) **the mistakes** (sins; errors; failures) **of certain ones, they have been sent away for them** (or: have been and remain pardoned in them; have been dismissed or divorced by them). **If you would continue holding fast and controlling** (or: should keep on grasping and exercising strength; or: can restrain, hinder, hold back) **those of certain ones, they have been and continue being held fast and controlled** (seized; grasped; restrained)."

Which ever, and perhaps both, we are here instructed in the power and authority of His Name, and he is referring to the results as a statement of fact.

See the discussion on "little children" in 2:1, above. He may here be speaking of categories of development within the group, or of age levels.

A word about "**His Name**" seems appropriate here. "The Jews used *the name* in a very special way. The name is not simply that by which a person is called; it stands for the whole character of a person in so far as it has been made known to men" (Barclay, *ibid.* p 53). Ps. 9:10 tells us, "Those who know Your Name put their trust in You." This signifies that they knew His *nature*. In the same way, Ps. 25:11 lays claim to Who He is in the plea for pardon: "for the sake of Your Name" – i.e., "Your reputation." Ps. 31:3 bases a request for guidance "for the sake of Your Name" because Yahweh was David's "mountain crag and stronghold." Ps. 20:7 professes that they "trust in the Name of Yahweh our God" instead of trusting in military might, because His Name represented His power and sovereignty. Thus, here, we see that it is because of the authority that John bears as a member of His body who represent Him, as well as the power inherent in His Name itself, that John can make this statement. His Name equals His Word.

13. **I am writing to you, fathers** (or: parents), **that you have by experience known, and now have intimate insight of, the One [Who is] from [the] beginning** (or: the Original One). **I am writing to you, young men** (or: youths), **that you have overcome** (conquered; are victorious over) **the one bringing a gush of misery**

(or: the useless, unprofitable situation; the wicked man; the evil one; the bad situation or sorry plight; the worthless man; the pernicious and knavish fellow; the one causing anguish and painful labor; the condition full of harassed toil and annoying perils; the base fellow) – **and this now exists as a decided victory.**

The categories of "**fathers**," "**young men**" and "**little boys and girls, or servants**" (in vs.14) seems to suggest that in this passage he is directing his words to the age-groups that compose the community, recognizing each as significant and important – as opposed to the false teachers who would only recognize the elite of the group: those with the supposed *gnosis*. The term "**fathers**" (*pateres*) has been found in papyrus writing where it referred to both male and female, and thus have I inserted "(or: parents)" as a possible meaning (e.g. *cf* Nyland, *ibid.* p 374, note 6, and others).

The fathers have experience in knowing Christ. The phrase "**the One [Who is] from [the] beginning** (or: the Original One)" is a clear reference to John 1:1 where Christ is identified as the *Logos* (Word). He is reminding them that they have intimate insight into the truth of Christ, so they should not be easily led astray for exotic teachings.

He reminds the young people that in Christ they have overcome this unprofitable situation (or: the person who is bringing a gush of misery into their lives; the useless false teacher; the one who is causing anguish and painful labor and harassing toils – the base fellow that is adding unnecessary religious practices to your lives). My bold translation gives the most literal meaning of the word *poneros*, and the parenthetical expansions give the full sweep of its semantic range. Unfortunately, traditional doctrines have personified this word as always indicating "the devil." But if we let the context instruct us, we will see that John is most likely referring to the false teachers that were among them.

Notice the effect of the perfect tense of "**overcome**." He is saying that they presently have the victory, and are in a state of being, or in the situation, of having completely overcome it. Again, he is either reminding them of their ongoing victory in Christ, or he spoke prophetically into their lives, bringing release from the worthless situation and knavish person that had brought it about.

14. **I write to you, little boys and girls, or servants, who might be hit for discipline** (or: those of the age for being educated and trained), **that you have by experience known the Father; I write to you, fathers** (or: parents), **that you have by experience known, and now have insight into, the One [Who is] from [the] beginning** (or: the Original One). **I write to you, young men** (or: youths), **that you are** (or: exist being) **constantly strong, and God's Word** (*Logos*; Thought; Idea; message) **continuously dwells** (abides; remains) **within you and you have overcome** (conquered; are the victor over) **the one bringing a gush of misery** (see parenthetical expansion in verse 13, above).

I brought the first clause, which addresses again the boys and girls, or servants, into vs. 14 because of the similarities of the dependant **"that"** clauses in both this and the next clause that addresses again the fathers/parents. The first one speaks of knowing the Father, while the second is a reference to Christ. I suggest here that John is referencing the words of Jesus in John 14:7, 9-11, and I quote vs. 7 here,

"Since you men have personally and experientially known Me (or: If you folks had insight of Me or were acquainted with Me), **you will also personally and experientially know and perceive My Father** [other MSS: you would likely have seen and now know (or: perceive) My Father, as well]. **And so from right now** (this moment) **you are intimately, experientially and progressively knowing Him** (or: gaining insight of Him) **and have seen [Him]."**

He is likely repeating the last clause about overcoming for emphasis. But here he adds the idea of their being **"constantly strong"** because **"God's Word... dwells"** in them as the reason for this. Of this second clause, Bultmann observes, "... the strength of the 'young men' rests on the fact that God's word 'abides [dwells]' in them and determines their existence" (ibid. p 32).

15. **You folks should not be habitually loving** (as indicative: are not normally accepting; as imperative: Stop constantly seeking reunion with) **the world** (secular realm and the controlling ordered System of culture, religion, economy and government), **neither** (or: not even) **the things within the world** (ordered system). **If anyone is in the habit of** (or: keeps on) **loving the world** (ordered system of religion, or of secular society), **the Father's** [other MSS: God's] **Love** (or: the love which the Father has; the Love which is the Father) **does not exist within him,**

In unpacking this verse, the first thing to realize is the particular meaning of *kosmos* (world) in this and the following verses. As Bultmann says, "That it is not the world as a creation of God, and that it is also not the world of men, is self-evident" (ibid. p 32). Here we need to consider the semantic range that includes those parenthetically inserted in my translation of this verse, above, following the word **"world."** In vss. 16-17 John explains what he means by his use of this word. Many false ideas have stemmed from a Gnostic reading of this verse, coupled with the Platonic ideas about *essences* – that the true and real are only in the realm of "spirit" or in a "heaven beyond the blue sky." Barclay quotes C.H. Dodd in his definition of *kosmos* here: "Our author means human society in so far as it is organized on wrong principles, and characterized by base desires, false values and egoism" (ibid. p 56).

The verb form *agapate* is in the present tense, but this can be a subjunctive, an indicative or an imperative – as my expanded rendering shows. John is either affirming that they are not, saying that they should not or telling them to stop. The expanded meanings of **"loving"** – accepting; seeking reunion with – are the central ideas of what John is saying. They should stop accepting what their local culture or the Roman rule say are right, and accept the message that Jesus brings. They should not repeatedly seek reunion with the systems of religions from which they have been called out. As a new creation community they are not normally embracing the norms of the secular society or the economics of the systems in which they live. They are living by kingdom norms and the economics of giving. Recall vs. 5, above, and the relation of God's love to keeping His Word (= living His message).

If someone IS **"in the habit of,** or keeps on, **loving"** these arranged systems, then it is evident that they are not in union with **"the Father's Love,"** and this love is not an existential part of their being. The term **"Father"** is in the genitive case, and the varied renderings present the potential function which the genitive can express.

16. **because everything within the world** (ordered but dominating System of the secular and the religious) – **the flesh's over-desire**

(full passion of the alienated human nature; lust of the estranged self; earnest wants of the false persona that was conformed to the System), **and the eyes' over-desire, and**

the arrogant ostentation (haughty, presumptuous or pretentious egoism) **pertaining to living** (= the biological and sociological life we live), **is not out of the Father as a source** (or: does not proceed from the Father), **but rather is continuously forth from out of the world** (the ordered System of society, culture and religion),

So here John's language about love and the "world" is explained. The parenthetical expansion gives insights to the meaning of "**the flesh's over-desire**." Alienation and estrangement give rise to desires for reunion, which in itself is good, but which the state of being alienated and estranged from God distorts into "**over-desire**," and lust. The allurements of the System (be this system a religious one, or a secular one) draw us towards conformity to itself. This is why Paul said,

"And stop constantly conforming yourself to (or, as passive: Then quit being repeatedly fashioned or patterned together by) **this age** [or, with other MSS: and not to be continuously configured to this age; and not to constantly remodel yourself for this age], **but on the contrary, be continuously transformed** (transfigured; changed in shape, form and semblance) **by the renewing** (or: in the renewal; for the making-back-up-new again) **of your mind...**" (Rom. 12:2).

We see in the advertising and media industries of our culture the realities of which John is speaking here. From them arise great and repeated "**over-desires**" which draw us into accepting and seeking union with the Systems of religion, as well as the Systems of the norms of cultural relating to people. The result is "**the love, which many people have**, (or: the love of many folks) **will be caused to blow cold**" (Matt. 24:12) and the Father's love is not to be found in them.

As to "**the eyes' over-desires**," Barclay again cites C.H. Dodd who says this means "the tendency to be captivated by outward show" (ibid. p 58), but this could also refer to desiring to possess the thing at which one looks. The next word, *alazoneia*, Barclay describes this as "the boastful braggart who tries to make himself out a far bigger man than he is" (ibid. p 58).

17. **and the world** (ordered System of religion, society, culture, economy and government) **is progressively** (or: constantly; repeatedly) **being caused to pass along** (pass by; pass away), **as well as it's over-desire** (full passion; earnest wants; lust), **yet the person constantly doing** (or: performing) **God's will** (intent; purpose; desire) **remains** (abides; dwells) **on into the Age** (= the time and sphere characterized by the Messiah).

The passing away of this world equates to "**the Darkness**" that "**is progressively being caused to pass by**" in verse 8, above. This is an ontological statement, referring to the passing of the previous age that accompanied the dawning of the new creation. It was also an eschatological statement, referring to what was about to happen at "**the combination of parts to one end of the age**" (Matt. 24:3) and the "**conjunction of the age**" (Matt. 28:20). It is what Paul referred to in 1 Cor. 7:31b,

"for the outward fashion, mode of circumstance, condition, form-appearance (or: character, role, phase, configuration, manner) **of this System** (ordered world of culture, religion and society) **is progressively passing by** (= the present scheme of things is changing and passing away)."

Consider well the second half of this verse: it is not speaking of being "whisked away" somewhere, but of remaining and dwelling. This continues on in this new age in which we are presently living and the body of the Messiah – here, upon the earth. The previous age ended in AD 70, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The old has passed away (2 Cor. 5:17).

18. **O undeveloped ones or folks of the age to be educated** (or: servants, little boys and little girls who might be hit in training and for discipline), **it continues being** (or: is progressively) **a last hour** (= an *eschaton* of the Day, or the closing moment [of the age]), **and according as you hear** (or: heard) **that an antichrist** (or: anti-anointing; that which is instead of, or in the place of, Christ or the Anointing) **repeatedly comes** [other MSS: the anti-anointing (or: antichrist)]

continuously comes], **even now many anti-anointings** (or: antichrists; many things or people taking the place of Christ or stand in opposition to the Anointing) **have been born and are here** (or: have come into existence and are at large), **from which fact** (or: whence) **we constantly know by experience that it continues being a last hour** (= a closing moment [of the age]).

Peter spoke of the ransom paid by Christ's precious blood: **"a flawless (unblemished) and spotless Lamb.... One being set in clear light and manifested upon [the] last part** (or: final; [p72 and others read plural: last things, circumstances or aspects]) **of the times** (or: of the [or: these] successive chronological time periods)" in 1 Pet. 1:18-20. This historically sets the time period of "the last time or days," or as John phrases it here, "a last hour." They knew that they were at the close of one age, and the beginning of the new.

Balaam prophesied to Balak in Num. 24:14-19,

"I shall counsel you what this people shall do to your people **in the latter days**....

A Star will position itself from Jacob; and a Scepter will arise from Israel...

And Israel will do ably. For One from Jacob shall hold sway (or: wield dominion) and will destroy the survivors of a city (or: fortress)."

This word has long been applied to Jesus as the Messiah, as was Jer. 23:5-6 which speaks of "a righteous Branch" who will reign as King, "And THIS is His name where by He shall be called, 'Yahweh our Righteousness'." Then in vs. 20 we read, "In the last (or: **latter end**) of the days shall you people understand it perfectly." These are just a couple examples of the long history of the idea of "the last day," which Bultmann says "stem from OT Jewish apocalyptic" literature. (ibid. p 36) Even Jacob used the concept when beginning the prophecies about his sons in Gen. 49:1, speaking first of all about "when the people of Israel would enter into the Promised Land" (Barclay, ibid. p 59). "In biblical thought the last time is the end of one age and the beginning of another" (ibid. p 60).

Bultmann rightly says that "the antichrists are the false teachers, and everyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ (vs. 22), who does not 'confess' him (4:3), who does not acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh (2 Jn 7)..." (ibid. p 36). Because such folks have arisen within the covenant communities John avers that by experience they are aware that **"it continues being a last hour,"** or, a closing moment of that age. This is another way of saying that the darkness is passing away (vs. 8), and "the true light is already shining" (ibid. p 36).

Note the opening phrase of this verse: John is speaking to the entire community(ies) and he is classifying them as folks of the age that still needs to be taught. The next verse continues to speak of the antichrists.

19. **They came** (or: come; go; or: went) **out from us, but they were not existing out of us** (or: they were not [a part] of us), **for if they were out of us, they would have remained** (dwelt; abided) **with us; but [this was] to the end that they may be manifested** (caused to appear) **that they are not all out of us or from us.**

This verse instructs us that the term and concept of "antichrist" does not refer to any one person, it is simply a manifestation of the darkness which comes from time to time but is always caused to flee because of the Light. John wrote here about situations that existed in Asia Minor during his lifetime. Of these folks, Bultmann writes, "The repeated warnings against them show that they constitute a present danger to the congregation..." (ibid. p36). Paul prophesied of such situations in Acts 20:

29. **"Now I myself have seen and am aware that, after** (or: with) **my spreading forth as dust and ashes** (= going away, so as to be out of reach), **heavy** (= burdensome and oppressive) **wolves will enter into the midst of you folks – folks by habit not sparing** (or: treating with tenderness or forbearance) **the flock,**

30. **"and men from among you yourselves** (= from your own community) **will of themselves stand up, repeatedly speaking things having been thoroughly turned**

and twisted (things that are distorted and not straight), **to progressively drag** (or: draw; [D & p41 read: turn]) **away the disciples behind** (thus: after) **themselves.**"

20. **And further, you folks continue having the effects** (or: constantly hold and progressively possess the results) **of an anointing from the set-apart One** (or: the Holy One), **and so you all have seen and are aware** (or: know; perceive; [other MSS: and you know all {those} folks]).

In the first clause the verb is in the present tense and means to have, hold and possess, and thus the three renderings which I have provided. Each sense of the linear action of the verb gives a slightly different nuance. Something can continue without being constant. Something can continue or be constant without being progressive. Taken together they give a vital sense to the anointing. As to the semantic range of meaning, a person can have something without holding or possessing it; it can be a possession without him presently having it or holding it. Holding it lends a sense of controlling it in a very immediate sense. Recall that Paul said,

"Also – [the] spirits and attitudes of the prophets are normally humbly aligned with [other] prophets, or, to [the] Prophets (or: breath-effects of those having fore-light are constantly subjected and subjoined to the arrangements [made] by [the] folks having fore-light)." (1 Cor. 14:32)

Now observe that what is had, held or possessed is not the anointing itself, but the effects or the results. This comes from the *-ma* ending of the Greek word, *chrisma*. Notice its closeness to *christos*, Christ. This could be rendered "the effects of Christ," and it would be exactly right. And John here spoke this to the entire community – or to the communities in which this letter was shared. He did not say "Some of you have...," or "The leadership possesses and controls..." He would not likely have known each individual or the personal states of piety or understanding. They constantly had the effects of the anointing and progressively possessed the results of the "Christ-ing" because they were members of the covenant community; they were alive in Christ.

The anointing was a symbol, a figure that represented the presence and effective participation of the Spirit of God, the Beath-effect, with a human. This was an ontological union which was intimate to the extent that the believer became **"one spirit; one Breath-effect; one Attitude"** with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). Here, John regards this as a corporate experience because a covenant community is one – they are members one of another (Rom. 12:5).

John Gavazzoni has written,

"In fact, there is no such thing as an enjoyment of Christ on a merely individual basis. I think that's a thread that runs through all of Paul's thought. That is not to say, of course, that to receive from the Lord means that we must be in the physical presence of other believers, but that since 'he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,' the 'mystical body of Christ' factor is always present, so that in some way, others' spirits, in union with Christ's Spirit, are always a part of our personal communion with God." (from a private email)

Because of the first clause of this verse, John reminds them that **"you all have seen and are aware** (or: know; perceive)." Again, this is a corporate awareness, knowledge and perception of what he has just been saying in the previous verses. This verse has often been taken out of context, and poorly translated to suggest that "ye know all things" (KJV). They were aware because they had seen and perceived what he was talking about in vs. 19 and above. Other MSS have all in the accusative, instead of the nominative, and so can read "and you know all [those] folks (or: [them] all)," which makes sense to the context, as well. Again in reference to the false teachers, vs. 27 instructs them that because **"the effects of the anointing which you folks received** (or: receive) **from Him constantly remain** (abide; dwell; make their home) **within you folks... you continually have no use** (or: you are not constantly having a need) **that anyone should keep on teaching you** (or: be repeatedly giving you a course of lessons; coach you; instruct you)." They did not need these false teachers that left their group(s).

Bultmann (ibid. p 37) informs us "that 'anointing' played an important role in Gnosticism, viz., as the sacrament of anointing," citing Rudolf Schnackenburg (*Die Johannesbriefe*, Frieberg, Herder, p 152 notes 3 and 4). This sheds much light on why John brought this up at this juncture.

21. I do not write to you because you do not know the Truth (or: [new] Reality), **but rather because you do know it, and because every lie is not forth from the Truth** (or: even that all falsehood is not [coming] from Reality).

With our understanding enlightened by vss. 19-20, we see that the "lie" refers to the false teachings that had been coming into these communities, and that they were not a part of the true message from the Christ – and the reality was that these communities really knew this. The history of the "church" is rife with such experiences – such as these against which John is writing in this letter – and today such things are in full bloom. Cf the letter from Judah (Jude).

22. Which one is (exists continuously being) **the liar, if not the person habitually denying** (repeatedly disowning; = constantly turning his back), **[saying] that Jesus is not the Christ** (the Anointed One [= Messiah])? **This person is** (exists being) **the anti-anointing** (or: anti-anointed person; the one taking the place of and being in the opposite position of the anointing and of Christ): **the one habitually denying** (constantly turning his back on) **the Father and the Son.**

At first glance, the first statement might indicate that John is referring to the Jews, specifically, here – and indeed this does historically apply to many of them even to this day who did not accept Jesus as their Messiah. But with the understanding that John is addressing the Gnostic belief that the historical Jesus only "seemed" to be the Christ, that the Christ only came upon Him at His baptism and departed from Him just before He died, we can better understand why John's next sentence refers to such a person as personifying "the anti-anointing" or is "the anti-anointed person." This person, the one who does not see "The Man Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 2:5) or the Second Man and *eschatos* Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-47) as the embodiment (incarnation) of God in humanity, is "the one taking the place of and being in the opposite position of the anointing and of Christ."

To deny the historical Jesus as the Christ is to also deny "the Father and the Son" because, **"no one is by habit completely or accurately knowing the Son in an intimate and personal way – except the Father – nor does anyone continue having an intimate experiential full-knowledge of the Father – except the Son, as well as to or in whomever the Son in now desiring (wanting) to unveil [Him]."** (Matt. 11:27; cf Lu. 10:22)

Also there are the witnesses from the gospel of John,

"The person progressively believing and continuing to put trust into Me is not continuously believing and placing trust into Me, but rather, into the One sending Me, and the person continually gazing at and contemplatively watching Me is continuously looking upon (viewing and contemplating; watching) **the One sending Me."** (12:44-45)

"No one is presently going to, or progressively coming toward, the Father, except through Me (through means of Me, or, through the midst of Me)." (14:6)

"The one having seen Me has seen, and now perceives, the Father!" (14:9)

These fly in the face of those who wish to bypass Jesus or "move beyond" Him as they endeavor to simply discover the god within us, as did the Gnostics of John's day. It is true that our real identity is that of being His children and that it is by His indwelling Spirit that Christ is within us. As Paul quoted in Acts 17:28, **"we are also a family of the One** (His species and offspring; a family which is composed of the One)."

Peter spoke to a same or similar issue,

"as also false teachers will exist (or: be) **among you folks, ones who will stealthily introduce** (bring in alongside; smuggle in) **destructive choices** (or: destructive sects or schools; heresies marked by, and which pertain to, loss or destruction) **even repeatedly**

denying (disowning; disclaiming) **the Sovereign Owner** (or: Absolute Master) **having purchased them** (or: buying them at the gathering, or market, place)..." (2 Pet. 2:1)

This is a clear reference to the ransom paid by Jesus. Denying the Son is denying "**the Head of the body**" (Col. 1:18). Denying the Father is denying all that Jesus taught.

We see, below, in 4:2-3 (and in 2 John 7) that these teachers disputed Jesus Christ as "**having come and now continuing in flesh.**" "[A]nd when in 5:6 it is claimed in opposition to them that Jesus came *di' hudatos kai haimatos* ('by water and blood'), then everything points to the fact that they deny that the Christ is identical with the earthly, historical Jesus.... [which is] the dualism of Gnosticism, which asserts the exclusive antithesis between God and the sensible world" (Bultmann, *ibid.* p 38). Barclay points out that there are three main confessions of Jesus in the NT: as the *Son of God* (Matt. 16:16; John 9:35-38); that He is *Lord* (Phil. 2:11); and that He is the *Messiah*, here in this verse (*ibid.* p 68).

23. **Everyone continuously denying or turning his back on the Son does not even have** (or: not even is he possessing; neither holds) **the Father. The one habitually speaking like the Son** (or: the one continuously confessing and avowing the Son; the one habitually speaking in accord with or saying the same thing as the Son) **also constantly has** (possesses) **the Father.**

"The relationship to the Father is here designated by *echein* ('have'), as in 2 Jn 9" (*ibid.* p 39). We saw this same verb in vs. 20, above. There it spoke of "having" the anointing; here it speaks of having "**the Father.**" We can conclude that to have the one is to have the other, and likewise, confessing the Son equates to possessing the Father. Conversely, by turning one's back on or denying the Son (i.e., Jesus, the Human) one denies and turns one's back on God.

24. **As for you folks, let what you heard from [the] beginning be continuously remaining** (abiding; dwelling; staying) **within you. When** (or: If; If at any time) **that which you heard from [the] beginning would remain** (should abide; can dwell; may stay and make its home) **within you, you also will be remaining** (abiding; dwelling; staying) **within the Son, even within the midst of and in union with the Father!** (or: you will dwell both in the Son and in the Father).

For us, today, John's admonition would be, "Stay with the Scripture and its message." When His Word remains, abides, dwells and stays within us, we – by and through this – continue remaining and abiding "**within the Son, even within the midst of and in union with the Father!**" This answers to John 15:4-10. This is the goal, our destiny, and it can be our present reality. We can want no more than this. This is the glory. Our understanding of this may increase, and the experience will progress, but it is as we actually live in and with Him that these are actualized. This is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

25. **And this is** (continues being) **the Promise which He Himself promised** (or: promises) **to us** [other MSS: to you]: **the Life of the Age**

(or: eonian life; life into the un-seeable future; age-lasting life; Life having the character and qualities of the Age [of Messiah]; life pertaining to the ages; Life for and on through the ages). [note: in Acts 1:4-5 the "Promise" was the Holy Spirit]

The Promise is the coming of the Age of Messiah, when the Holy Spirit indwells the New Humanity – the Last Adam, of whom Jesus is the Head and Source. This is the Life:

"Now THIS is (or: exists being) **eonian life** (living existence of and for the ages; life pertaining to the Age [of Messiah]): **namely, that they may progressively come to intimately and experientially know You, the only true and real** (genuine) **God – and Jesus Christ, Whom You send forth as an Emissary** (or: as well as Jesus [as the] Anointed One, whom You sent off as a Representative)." (John 17:3)

You see, this is the true *gnosis*, and it is all based upon union with the Father and the Son (John 17:21-26), and it is the true Promise. Today Christians are told that they should have material wealth and possessions. They primarily base this upon the lives of folks that lived under the old covenant – like Abraham or Solomon. But the wealth and possessions that those folks had did

not last, and neither did they bring those people into the kingdom. Consider what Jesus said about material wealth,

"It continues being easier for a camel to pass through the midst of a needle's perforation (or: eye; hole bored or worn-through) than for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of God (God's sovereign reign and activities)." (Mk. 10:25; cf Mt. 19:23)
How more plain could He make it? Yet we are repeatedly given OT promises (which applied to Israel, alone) about wealth and abundance, as they ask for money to support their ministries. But seldom do we hear about **"the Promise"** which He Himself promised.

We find expression of this "eonian life," of the Life of the Age, in the covenant communities to which the letters of the NT were written.

26. **I write these things** [other MSS: But I wrote these things] **to you about the folks constantly trying to lead you astray** (or: periodically causing you to wander; repeatedly deceiving you),

So here, again, we find the purpose for his saying these things: to warn them about the false teachers that had been among them – the wolves that Paul spoke of and the **"impious ones, people continuously changing the grace and favor of God into licentiousness, as well as repeatedly denying and disowning our only Sovereign and Lord** (or: Supreme Ruler and Owner), **Jesus Christ [= Messiah]"** of whom Judah spoke (Jude 4) that **"came in unobserved."**

Being led astray or being deceived was not about immoral living, but about false teaching that would put the focus on the individual and not upon Christ or His body. It caused them to wander away from the Way, or Path, pointed out (the real meaning of "righteousness").

27. **and the effects of the anointing which you folks received** (or: receive) **from Him constantly remain** (abide; dwell; make a home) **within you folks, and you continually have no use** (or: you are not constantly having a need) **that anyone should keep on teaching you** (or: be repeatedly giving you a course of lessons; coach you; instruct you), **but rather, just as the effects of His anointing is continuously and progressively teaching you about everything** (or: concerning all people), **and is continuously true, and real, and is not a lie, even according as it taught** (or: as He instructs) **you: you are continuously abiding** (remaining; dwelling; being at home) **within and in union with Him** (or, reading as an imperative: be constantly remaining, abiding, staying and dwelling within the midst of Him).

Barclay has pointed out something very significant in the first clause of this verse: "In the old days anointing had been the privilege of the chosen few, the priests, the prophets and the kings; but now it is the privilege of every Christian, however humble he may be" (ibid. p 69). And furthermore, its effects constantly remain **"within"** us. You may have heard some preacher or teacher characterized as having a "strong anointing on" her or him. It is Christ within us and among us that gives us the effects of the anointing. Having a "strong anointing" finds no place in Scripture: you either have it by being "in Him," or you don't yet. Me thinks we have been misled by Darth Vader who said, "the force is strong within this one." This is just another term of religious elitism.

Note well that this first clause is once again addressed to the plurality of the group(s). We have the effects of the anointing because of being part of the body of Christ.

The context of the second clause is John's message concerning the false teachers: they and we do not need teachers who possess esoteric knowledge or those who give instruction on things that are outside of the message and Word of Christ. But within this message, He gave us teachers of the true Reality (e.g., Eph. 4:11).

But as he continued in this verse, we see that the "effect" of His anointing **"is continuously and progressively teaching you [and us] about everything** (or: concerning all people), **and is continuously true, and real."** The word *panton* is a form of the word "all" that is both neutral and masculine, thus I have given renderings of both. Note that the teaching about everything is progressive. And in this Life we also learn about all people.

Yet let us direct our gaze to the focus of all this teaching: it is concerning the present reality of our **"continuously abiding** (remaining; dwelling; being at home) **within and in union with Him"** – taking *menete* as a present indicative. This same spelling can also be an imperative, thus the second rendering as an admonition.

28. **And now** (at the present time; in this moment), **little children** (born-ones; bairns), **you are continuously** (or, reading as imperative: keep on) **dwelling** (abiding; remaining; staying) **within and in union with Him, to the end that if** (or: whenever) **He** (or: it) **may be manifested** (made visible and apparent; shown in clear light) **we can** (or: may; should; would) **have confident boldness** (freedom in speaking associated with citizenship; complete outspoken bluntness) **and may not feel or receive shame** (disgrace; dishonor; humiliation) **from Him, within His presence** (or: may not be shamed away from Him in the midst of His presence).

We have the same verb *menete* once again. And again, this is either a reminder of their realm of spiritual existence, or an admonition to remain there. But let us open our lens aperture to take in more light on the purpose of our remaining in union with Him, introduced by the phrase **"to the end that."** Traditional eschatology has put the following clause to some time in the future when Jesus will somehow physically appear either to the "end-time church" or to the world (the traditions vary).

I first chose the word **"manifested"** to trigger association with the KJV rendering of Rom. 8:19 ("the manifestation of the sons of God") in the reader, and because this is a good rendering of the Greek. But the parenthetical expansion should add clarity to this phrase. The literal means to show in clear light. Thus, to be made visible so other folks can see something.

In 2 Cor. 4:10-11 Paul uses this same verb in relation to Christ, so let us consider what he says, **"... to the end that the life, also, of Jesus** (or: so that also the life which comes from and is Jesus; or: so that Jesus' life) **can** (may; would) **be set in clear light and manifested, within our body** (or: in the midst of the body, which is us)! **For we, ourselves – the continuously living ones – are ever being repeatedly handed over into death** (or: = continuously delivered into life-threatening experiences) – **because of Jesus – to the end that the life, also, of Jesus** (or: so that also the life which comes from and is Jesus; or: so that Jesus' life) **can** (may; could; would) **be set in clear light and manifested – within our mortal flesh!"**

I suggest that John is meaning something quite similar in vs. 28, here. Note Paul's repetition of the name, Jesus, and note the corporate (and corporal) manifestation to which he refers. Remaining in union with Him gives us the "freedom of speaking" and **"confident boldness"** that the disciples always sought from the Lord (Acts 4:29, 31; 2 Cor. 7:4) and Phil. 1:20,

"that within nothing will I be put to shame (disgrace; embarrassment), **but to the contrary, within all freedom of speech** (boldness and public openness which comes from being a citizen) – **as always, even now** (at the present moment) – **Christ will be made great** (be magnified; be enlarged) **within my body, whether through life, or through death!"**

Paul, like John here, does not want to be put to shame (they lived in an honor/shame society). I suggest that both were referring to this life, when our life can set His Life in clear light for others to see, and thus will His sons (the called-out, covenant community) be manifested to them, that they are dwelling and abiding within Him – in union with His Spirit. This happens **"within His presence"** because it is His presence that creates the manifestation of His Life. Recall the illustration of the Vine in John 15. The fruit that Jesus wanted was the manifestation in the

branches (us) which was generated by the flow of the sap (figure of the Spirit) from the Vine into the branches. It is the Vine that gives life to the branches and that grows the fruit (the Fruit of the Spirit – cf Gal. 5:22-23).

29. **If you folks may have come to see** (or: perceive), **and should now know, that He is continuously One who constantly lives in accord with the Way pointed out** (is right, just, fair, rightwised and in right relationship [in covenant]), **you continue to know by experience that everyone habitually making or doing fair and equitable dealing** (accomplishing that which is right and in accord with the Way pointed out; practicing justice; constructing righteousness; producing rightwised [existence]) **has been born and now exists being a born-one** (or: now stands begotten), **from out of the midst of Him** (and: with Him as the Source).

John concludes his reasoning on this section of the letter with an ontological metaphor of birth that echoes the reasoning that Jesus gave to Nicodemus in John 3:3-8. There birth "**back up again to a higher place** (or: being brought to birth again, from above)" resulted in both "**seeing**" and "**entering**" the kingdom of God (**God's reign and realm – the place of Sovereign activity**). In that same chapter, what was mentioned here in vs. 25 ("**the Life of the Age [of Messiah]**," or "eonian life") is associated there with "**habitually trusting and believing**" (vss. 15, 16 and 36).

In 5:12, below, John says "**The one continually holding** (or: constantly having; progressively possessing) **the Son continuously holds** (constantly has; progressively possesses) **the Life**," and in vs. 23, above, "**speaking like the Son**" means that one "**has the Father**." Then in vs. 24, by the message (what was heard) remaining and dwelling within, one will dwell both in the Son and in the Father.

Here, in vs. 29, being born from out of Him is demonstrated, or recognized, by "**making or doing fair and equitable dealing** (or: practicing justice; producing rightwised [existence]; accomplishing that which is right; etc.)." This corresponds to "keeping His implanted goals" in vs. 3, and "keeping His Word/message" in vs. 5.

Putting these ideas together we see an association, or an interweaving, of 1) being born of Him, from above; 2) seeing and entering the reign/kingdom; 3) trusting and believing; 4) having the Son – which means having life: the life of the age of Messiah; 5) speaking like the Son – which means having the Father; and, because of being born from Him, 6) constructing fairness and equity and doing what is right. What all these ingredients produce is living in love within the covenant community. Vs. 29 says this happens because we have both seen and now know that Christ is the one who lives in accord with the Way (= covenant living), and those living like Him are living a life in covenant with the called-out community – living in the Light.

Chapter 3

1. **You people at once consider** (or: look and perceive) **what kind of** (what sort of; what unusual, foreign or exotic) **love** (or: acceptance) **the Father has given to** (or: in; for) **us** [other MSS: you], **which we now have as a gift, to the end that we can** (may; should; would) **be called** (or: named) **God's children** (born-ones; bairns)! **And we are! Because of this** (On account of this; Therefore) **the System** (the world; the realm of the secular and religious; the ordered arrangement of culture, religion, economy and government) **is not habitually having experiential or intimate knowledge of us** (does not know or have insight into us [other MSS: you]), **because it did not know** (or: it does not have an intimate, experiential knowledge of) **Him**.

Building upon the metaphor of our being born from Him, and thus our now being God's children, John now extracts the reality that such an action by God reveals and exhibits "**love**" and "acceptance." It is an unusual kind of love, a foreign acceptance, that God would call humanity His born-ones – folks did not normally expect this from God. This had only happened in special cases before. Furthermore, this love is a gift to us which we (corporate humanity) now possess, and this gift means that we can, may, should or would (the verb is in the subjunctive) "**be called**

God's children." Now consider that this means we are His family. When God "calls" or "names" something or someone, it becomes what He has called it. And so John says, "**And we are!**" It is now a fact. The subjunctive of the previous statement is simply rhetorical, as John calls his audience to ponder with him the wonder of such a thing – that such a thing could actually be! – as his words embrace what has actually happened. Bultmann points out that "being born of God (2:29) and being a child of God are synonymous for the author" (ibid. p 47 note 15). Cf Matt. 5:9

Note the corporate "**You people**" in the address, and the plural personal pronouns – the inclusive "**us**" (or the corporate "you" of other MSS) and "**we**." He is speaking of the inclusion of all of us in the Second Human (or: Mankind), the *eschatos* (or: last) Adam, as did Paul in 1 Cor. 15:45. God calling us His children was a creative pronouncement by God; it is the new creation of which Paul spoke in 2 Cor. 5:17.

Not everyone knows this yet, just as the Jewish leadership and the Roman government did not know that Jesus was God's Son. The secular system of culture, religion, economy and government does not have experiential knowledge of this, nor does it have the insight from the Light that John spoke of in 1:7, 2:8,10, above. We, the folks that have been existentially made aware of this, know of the Logos from John 1 that

9. **It was** (or: He was, and continued being) **the True and Genuine Light which** (or: Who) **is continuously** (repeatedly; progressively) **enlightening** (giving light to) **every person** (or: human) **continuously** (repeatedly; progressively; constantly; one after another) **coming into the world** (or: the ordered system of culture, religion, economics and government; or: the universe)
(or: It was the real Light, progressively coming into the world {organized system}, which is progressively enlightening {or: shedding light on} every human).

10. **It was** (or: He was, and continued existing being) **within the world** (or: ordered system), **and the world** (ordered system) **came to be** (or: was birthed) **through It** (or: by means of Him), **and the world** (ordered system) **did not have intimate, experiential knowledge of It** (or: did not recognize Him; had no insight into It).

2. **Beloved ones, now** (at the present time) **we continuously exist being God's children** (born-ones; bairns from the standpoint of origin), **and it has not yet been made visible** (or: it is not yet apparent or manifested) **what we will be. We have perceived, and thus know** (or: are aware) **that if it** (or: He) **should be** (or: whenever it {or: He} may be) **made visible, apparent and manifested, [then] folks like to Him** (like-ones to Him; ones like Him; people resembling Him) **we will be, because we will see and perceive Him just as** (according and exactly as; in the manner that) **He constantly exists** (or: He is).

The first clause restates what he said in vs. 1 – emphasizing the point of the present reality of our being God's children – using redundancy as a persuasive technique that is typical of Asian rhetoric, with which his audience would be familiar. But now he adds another facet: "**what we will be**" has "**not yet been made visible.**" Things have changed, there is a new creation (or, to use Paul Tillich's term, there is a "New Being"), but we have an expectation of more to come – or a further unfolding of what is now present.

In the second sentence, the subject of "**should be made visible**" is not expressed, so from the verb in the third person, singular, this can be rendered either "**it**" or "He." The antecedent of the verb – and thus, its subject – is most likely the "**it**" (i.e., what will be made visible) of the previous clause, but traditionally the subject has been taken to be Christ, the "**Him**" of following clauses. But John's line of thought has been about "**what we will be**" being made visible, and that we will resemble Him.

The verb (made visible; manifested), used twice in this verse, is the same verb that John used in 2:28, above, and I suggest that what is meant there is the same as what is meant here: when we manifest Christ and when He is made visible in our lives, it makes us look like Him – and folks

see Him in our lives. When the goal – Christ in His body: the expectation of glory – is made visible, apparent and is manifested, we will be **"folks like to Him."** Paul put it this way in Col. 3:4, **"Whenever the Christ, our life** [other MSS: your life], **may be brought to light** (or: should be manifested), **you folks also will be brought to light** (will be manifested), **together with Him, within the midst of glory** (or: in union with a manifestation which calls forth praise; or: in a good reputation; or: = in His manifest presence).
(or: When Christ, the Anointing, can be manifested, then your life – even you yourself, together with Him – will be manifested in His manifest presence)."

Now the question arises, How does **"He constantly exist"**? I suggest that the answer that most pertains to us is that He now exists within His Body, the called-out, covenant community. When we see Him manifested within others we are seeing Him as He presently "is." As we see Him, we are made like Him – as Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 3:18 – for we are being transformed into His image and become the destiny for which God created humanity: to be His image-bearers. As Jesus said of Himself, **"The one having seen Me has seen, and now perceives, the Father..."** (John 14:9), so it should be said of us, "The person seeing us sees Christ, and perceives the Father." When He is manifested, folks see Him and not us. That is the expectation of His glory: a manifestation that calls forth praise to God. In proof reading this work for me, my sister Rebecca Mitchell inserted the following here, "LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN" (KJV, emphasis hers).

3. **So everyone who continuously has** (or: habitually holds) **this expectation** (or: expectant hope) **[placed; resting] upon Him is [by this] constantly** (repeatedly; progressively) **purifying himself, just as** (according as; in the way that) **That One is** (or: exists being) **pure.**

The **"expectation"** is that which was expressed in vs. 2: being like Him (Jesus, the Messiah). The **"That One"** of the last clause also points to Jesus. With **"Him"** as the foundation and resting place of our expectation – which is placed, or resting, **"upon Him"** as our strength, support and ability – the result is our being purified by His Life, to which we are joined. This is equivalent to what Paul calls "being in Him." His purity purifies us, just like the touch of Jesus cleansed those with skin eruptions (Mk. 1:40-42). Bultmann states, "Substantively *hagnos* ('pure') does not mean anything different from *dikaios* ('righteous') in 2:29; 3:7" (ibid. p 49). John has simply reached back to a metaphor of Jewish cultic ritual to give another picture of the same thing: right conduct within the covenant community – living a life in the Way pointed out by Christ, and which is Christ – The Way, The Truth and The Life (John 14:6). Jesus used the metaphor of needing to have one's feet washed (John 13:10). This constantly keeps the community clean from the impurities of the way of life of society outside the group – e.g., be it a system of religion, or the arrangement of the stratification of economic groups which bring division among people in the world at large.

I find it interesting that one of the meanings of *hagnos* is "chaste" and a young woman of that time who was "chaste" had not "known" a man. The word that means not to know is *agnoeo* (the "h" of the verb *hagnizo* is simply a rough breathing mark). I wonder if John was making a subtle play on these words, suggesting that the "pure" were those who were *a-gnostic*, i.e., not having the so-called "knowledge" of the Gnostics.

4. **Everyone constantly practicing** (habitually committing; progressively producing) **the error** (or: deviation; missing of the target; sin; failure) **is also constantly practicing the lawlessness** (or: habitually commits a lawless act, or progressively does the violation of custom), **and the error** (or: the failure to hit the target; the deviation; the sin) **exists being** (or: is) **the lawlessness** (or: the violation of law or the act apart from custom is the mistake and the error).

In vss. 3, 4 and 6, **"everyone"** renders the Greek *pas*, which is the singular form of the word "all," which is an inclusive word, signifying in these verses either groups or classes of people. So although using a singular, John is still addressing hypothetical groups.

The definite article used with **"error"** (or: deviation from the Path, as given to them originally) refers to a specific error, or deviation, and we are drawn to understand that he is referring to the false teachers and **"the error"** of Gnosticism. John is not making a moral statement here, but is referring to doctrinal error. The **"lawlessness"** is referring to a lack of **"the principle and law of, and which is, the spirit and attitude of 'The Life within Christ Jesus'"** that Paul described in Rom. 8:2. John means that these deviators are void of the custom that was received regarding the Messiah – the **"old implanted goal which [they] held from [the] beginning"** (2:7) which they were admonished to keep, guard, observe and maintain (2:5).

We should also keep in mind the present tense of the active verbs, **"constantly practicing or producing" the "error."** This was a habitual behavior of the error of these false teachers which was progressively producing deviation from the reality in Christ. Cf Matt. 23:28; 24:12; and Paul in 2 Thes. 2:3-4

5. You have also perceived, and thus know and are aware, that That One was manifested (made visible) to the end that He would in a point of time lift up and carry away (or: sustain, bear and raise up) the errors (or: those failures to hit the target; the mistakes; those deviations; the sins; [some MSS: our sins]), and yet error (failure to hit the target; deviation; sin) does not exist within Him (or: and in Him is no sin or failure).

John uses the perfect tense in the first verb to affirm that they **"have also perceived, and thus know and are aware."** He is taking them back to the cross, and **"That One"** who was historically manifested to carry away the errors that plagued humanity. Jesus addressed the errors in both the teachings and the behaviors of the Jewish religious leaders during His teaching ministry. Then He included everything into the one act of the cross – taking it all away. He removed all the error, but there was no error within Him: He is the Truth, the Reality. But why is John bringing them back to this? It is to bring them back to the One Who has all that they need – without any deviations into mysticism or "secret doctrines."

6. Everyone continuously remaining (dwelling; keeping his residence; abiding; staying) within and in union with Him is not habitually missing the target (practicing sin; repeatedly failing in his purpose); everyone continually failing to hit the target (habitually sinning; progressively in error) has neither seen Him, nor come to know Him by intimate experience or insight.

Here John returns to the group that has **"continuously remain[ed]"** within Him and in union with Him. This is the key to not repeatedly failing and falling into error. He is our Path, our Way pointed out, our inclusion in the covenant. John calls up an echo of what Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:1-10. Then he exposes the emptiness and lack of those that proceed into error and miss the target, which is life in union with Christ. These false teachers do not have a special knowledge or spiritual experience of Him: they have not seen Him but have seen illusion; they have not come to know Him, but have only fantasies; they have no insight into Him Who is Love, but only pagan traditions of false gods. They set themselves apart as elite, rather than taking the foot towel of the servant. By disassociating their idea of the Christ, the anointing, from the character manifested in the historical Jesus, they have not come to know the Father either – which Jesus expressed.

7. Little children (born-ones), let no one be constantly leading you astray (misleading or deceiving you); the person continually doing that which is in accord with the Way pointed out (or: repeatedly practicing rightwisdom; progressively producing the justice, fairness and equity in right [covenantal] relationships) is (or: exists being) just (or: a person in accord with the Way pointed out; righteous; fair; equitable; rightwisdom; someone turned in the right direction, and is in [covenant] relationships), according as (just as) That One is just (is One in accord with the Way pointed out; is righteous, fair, equitable and offers the right covenant relationships).

He again reminds them that they are born of God: children. But again he uses the diminutive: they are still young, not yet matured in Christ. So he reminds them not to let these false teachers deceive or mislead them into straying from the Path that accords "**with the Way pointed out**" – which is the right "covenantal" relationships of the rightwised community. And it is the person who is constantly doing, practicing and producing fairness and equity that is the just and fair person. "**That One**" (the Messiah) is the Pattern to Whom we are being conformed, through the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2), through our union with Christ. Thus is John speaking to their minds.

8. Yet the person habitually practicing (repeatedly doing; progressively producing) **the error** (the failure to hit the target or accomplish his purpose; or: the sin; the mistake; the deviation) **is existing from out of the adversary who thrusts something through the midst, [with a weapon, or with ill-intent], creating a wound or division** (or: = is [operating] from [the influence of] the "devil"), **because this adversary is habitually sinning** (or: repeatedly missing the target; continuously falling short of the goal; constantly deviating from his purpose) **from [the] beginning** (or: from [its] origin). **Into this [situation] was** (or: is) **God's Son manifested and made visible, to the end that He would unbind** (loose; untie; destroy; disintegrate) **the works and actions of the adversary who casts things through the midst of folks.**

John continues his theme, now associating this negative activity with someone – or a spirit or an attitude – that thrusts something through the midst of the group (or, and individual) and causes wounding and division. The elitism of Gnosticism (or: today, perhaps of some "supernaturalism") was what could do just this. To understand this, let us look at the end of Israel's history: the eschatological time of Jesus and the first century called-out which led up to the end in AD 70. This was when "**God's Son**" was "**manifested and made visible.**" It was the work of the cross that unbound the heavy burdens of religion put on the people by the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:4). It was the power of the resurrected life of Christ that set humanity free from the yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1) from the strength of sin (the Law) – 1 Cor. 15:56. It was the Jewish leadership whose conduct made them to be described by Jesus as characterized as those "**who cast things through the midst of folks**" in John 8:44,

"You folks, in particular, are (exist and have your being) **from out of, and have your source in, the ancestor who cast [an object] through [someone]** (or: the father, the devil; or: the devil father; or: the father – the one thrusting [words or issues] through [folks/groups] and dividing them), **and you are habitually wanting** (willing; intending; purposing) **to be constantly doing your father's passionate cravings** (full-rushing over-desires)."

It was their religious works that Jesus loosed away and destroyed via His cross, and His coming in judgment on Jerusalem – as he predicted.

But He also disintegrated the work of deception that is described in the Eden story of Adam and Eve and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (foreshadow of the Law) which brought death to humanity (Rom. 5:12). So John is accessing the stories of both Israel and humanity in making his points regarding the false teachers.

Bultmann considers "to destroy the works of the devil" as "a variation on 'to take away sins'." (ibid. p 52)

9. Everyone who has been given birth, and is now in the state of having been born, from out of the midst of God is not habitually practicing failure to hit the target (repeatedly doing sin; constantly producing error), **because His Seed** (sperm) **is continuously remaining** (dwelling; abiding) **within him** (or: within, and in union with, Him), **and he is not able** (or: he has no power) **to constantly fail to hit the target** (repeatedly sin; continuously deviate; go on failing; continue in error), **because he has been born forth from out of God.**

In this first clause we have the birth metaphor instead of the "**continuously remaining** (dwelling; keeping his residence; abiding; staying) **within and in union with Him**" of vs. 6a, above, in

regard to not constantly producing error. But then he expands the metaphor and speaks of God's seed, or sperm remaining within this corporate person – another inclusive *pas* (all). Again, I suggest that John is speaking of the group as though being one individual. God's DNA remains within His Body and produces many members (1 Cor. 12:12). It is this true body that remains in union with the Anointed One and that has been born by the Seed of God that is not able to constantly fail to hit the target or continue in error. The Seed remains, dwells, abides (as Jesus said that He would) – and this equates to a birth forth from out of God. It is this corporate new human that is not able to continuously deviate from the Path.

10. **[Both] God's children and the adversary's children are constantly visible** (apparent; manifest) **within this [thing or situation]: everyone not practicing righteousness** (not habitually doing justice; not progressively constructing his life turned in the right direction to accord with the Way pointed out; not being fair or equitable; not being in [covenant] relationships) **as well as the one not continuously loving his brother** (= a believer, or fellowman) **is not existing out of God** (= is not living with God being his source of life and direction),

This is an amazing statement: you can tell whether or not one is born from God by observing the person's conduct. The distinction between "**God's children**" and "**the adversary's children**" is whether their way of life is one of loving other people and living a life "turned in the right direction" in equitable relationships and covenant community – or, not. This applies to the individual, but John is addressing groups – "children." Those who have left the community (2:19) he is categorizing as "**the adversary's children**," for they were not "participat[ing] more fully in the narrative that [should] now [be] theirs in Christ" (J.R. Daniel Kirk, *Jesus have I Loved, but Paul?*, *A Narrative Approach to the Problem of Pauline Christianity*, Baker Academic, 2011, p 26): they were "not habitually doing justice; not progressively constructing [their lives] turned in the right direction to accord with the Way pointed out; not being fair or equitable; not being in [covenant] relationships." So their claim to be "begotten of God" (a claim of Gnosticism; cf *Corpus Hermeticus* XIII, cited in Bultmann, *ibid.* p 52 n 36) was shown to be false by their behavior and their lack of remaining joined to the Vine (John 15) – which of necessity required remaining united to the local covenant community.

This lack of practicing righteousness (doing what is right [*dikaiosunē*]) is equated to "not continuously loving [one's] brother/fellowman." This group – the children of the adversary – was not living with God being their source of life and direction, and it was not participating as a part of the "holistically restored cosmos" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 32). They were adversarial to the rule of God through Christ and His called-out community, so they separated themselves into "an individualistic and escapist gospel" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 32). An elitist mentality is one that is divided, and is thus adversarial to the purposed unity of Christ. [note: I have taken Kirk's words out of his context that regards Paul's narrative theology; I used his phrases because I see them as appropriate to John's context here]

11. **because this is the message** [other MSS: promise; or: complete announcement] **which you heard** (or: hear) **from [the] beginning, so that we are habitually** (or: to the end that we would or could progressively be) **loving** (accepting and participating in) **one another –**

He again returns to the original message of goodness which they had originally heard in the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah and Lord of All. That message was God's *agape*: love, acceptance and participation in one another. Here we are instructed that love and acceptance of others is the characteristic of "**God's children**" (vs. 10). The verb "**loving**" is either indicative (first rendering), or subjunctive (parenthetical rendering).

Being termed "born-ones from God" means existing (vs. 10) out of the sphere of God's Spirit, which is Love, and thus exhibiting the life of God and the love of God through loving our brothers, or our neighbors. This is the goal of God's dominion, and it is what the "world" needs now: accepting love.

The variant reading *epangelia* (promise, or, complete announcement) is well attested, and if this is the correct reading, then John is either referencing the fulfillment of the Messiah, Israel's promise through the fathers, or he is saying that what they had been taught "**from [the] beginning**" was the "complete announcement," and they needed no further secret messages through mystic experiences. Christ brings the love of God.

12. **not [living] like** (or: not just as) **Cain. He was existing, and continued being, from out of the condition** (or: situation; or: one; thing; = influence) **causing misery and hard labor** (the unprofitable attitude; the worthless mindset; the wicked intent; the toilsome situation; the sorry plight), **and so he slaughtered** (killed by cutting his jugular vein) **his brother. And on what score** (or: for what pleasure) **did he slaughter him? Because his works** (actions) **were gushed with misery and hard labor** (were wicked or evil; were toilsome; were unprofitable and worthless), **but those of his brother [were] ones in accord with the Way pointed out** (just ones; righteous ones; fair and equitable ones; rightwised ones).

John takes his audience back to the story of Adam's sons and the narrative of the conflict between the two brothers, Cain and Abel (Gen. 4). The point is that Cain personifies the extreme lack of love: the killing of another person. This is the dark backdrop to clearly show the Light of rightwised living and conduct that is fair and just: love and acceptance of one's neighbor.

Here John presumes that his audience knows the story by now. The adversarial issue was due to Cain's envy and animosity over what God wanted or accepted as a sacrifice, at that point of Israel's story of humanity. But John is using it as an example of those whose "**works** (actions; = behavior and conduct; treatment of others) **were gushed with misery and hard labor.**" This adjective *poneros* was also used earlier in the verse to describe Cain's condition, situation, or that which was influencing him. Unfortunately the dualism of pagan cosmologies has misguided the translation and interpretation of this word so as to personify it as "the wicked or evil one." Some bizarre teachings have been the result. But I think that we can understand John's meaning if we look back at the story of the judgment pronounced against Adam in Gen. 3:17-19 which tells of the gush of misery that was going to be the environment and condition of humanity's way of life. Cain was a farmer of the very ground that had come under the curse.

Not only this, the word *poneros* can be rendered: unprofitable attitude; worthless mindset; wicked intent; toilsome situation; sorry plight. All these conditions or situations are a result of humanity's predicament: the estrangement and alienation of death that came upon mankind by one man's disobedience (Rom. 5:12). And as we review the story in Gen. 4, we see that the slaughtering of Abel was the result of Cain's attitude and thinking.

Furthermore, in the last part of this verse, the contrasts of the works of the two brothers are used by John to contrast covenant living in the Way of Christ, and hard labor (the root meaning of *poneros*) of religious works that are not what God desires. He desires proper treatment of our fellow human beings, not the mystical works or "spiritual experiences" of the Gnostics – which works and experiences are worthless and brought about a sorry plight on the practitioners.

13. **Stop marveling** (Cease wondering; Quit being astonished), **brothers, if** (or: since) **the ordered System** (world of culture and religion; or: the estranged secular system of governmental control) **is constantly hating you** (habitually regarding you with ill-will).

As you can observe from the term "**ordered System**" (*kosmos*) along with the parenthetical expansion showing its semantic range, John can be referring to a number of situations. If it is the system of the Jewish religion, then we see the parallel to how that corrupted system hated Jesus. Paul found the religious-economic system of the silver smiths of the Diana/Artemis cult treating him and his associates with ill will (Acts 19:24f). The governmental system of Rome often had ill-will toward the followers of Jesus. John is pointing out that this is to be expected. The story of the kingdom, reign, dominion and sovereign activity of God that had come to the point of history of being inaugurated by the Messiah was counter-cultural in every way. It's manifestation in

Jesus and the covenant communities proclaimed Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 11:15; 19:16). We see religious systems of our day that hate others, and kinship systems of race and culture that have historically done the same. The message of love's acceptance and the goodness of God stands in stark contrast to the "us-and-them" attitudes by people groups, and the ego-centric mindsets of estranged humanity.

We see again that John is painting broad strokes of group and corporate situations.

14. **We ourselves have seen, and thus know** (or: are aware), **that we have walked together** (or: proceeded to change, passing from) **out of the Death into the Life, because we are habitually loving the brothers** (= fellow believers; [some MSS: our brothers; {or: = our fellow human beings}]). **The person not habitually loving** [some MSS add: his brothers] **continues remaining** (dwelling; abiding; staying) **within the Death.**

We return to contrasting metaphors, this time Life versus Death. The defining difference between the two is a life of loving folks, or not. The fact of the called-out folks loving others gives evidence that can be seen, and thus known, that the group has "**walked together**" out of the Death and "**into the Life**," this latter being the same thing as Paul's "**new creation**" (2 Cor. 5:17). The Light and the Life came with the advent of the Messiah (John 1:4-9), "the second exodus.... [and] the surprising climax of Israel's story" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 25).

The parenthetical amplification "proceeded to change, passing from" stresses the meaning of "change" inherent in the prefix *meta* when used in combination with a verb. However, as in the first rendering, it can also have the meaning of "together." The verb *baing* means to step or walk, thus pass from one place to another. Either emphasis of the semantic range of *metabaing* gives the picture of a change of place, and the plural number of the verb affirms the idea of a group walking together on a path or road, or stepping into something different. The perfect tense of the verb shows that this took place and was completed in the past, and that the result of the change of place continues on into the present.

Bultmann says that "since 'we' obviously characterizes the congregation as that of believers, it may be asked whether the basis *hoti agapomen tous adelphous* ('because we love the brethren') may also be understood simply as a characteristic of the congregation as a community of those who love," and suggests that love may be understood "as a duty of the congregation" (*ibid.* p 55).

Again John is speaking corporately, as seen by the plural "**we's**." Anyone that is not "**habitually loving**" remains in the old creation where folks are still dead, as Paul says in Eph. 2:

1. **And you folks [who were] continuously existing being dead ones by** (or: to; with; in) **the results and effects of your stumblings aside** (offences; wrong steps) **and failures to hit the mark** (or: mistakes; errors; times of falling short; sins)
2. **– within the midst of and in union with which things you once walked about** (= lived your lives) **in accord** (or: in keeping; corresponding) **with** (or: as directed by) **the age of this ordered System** (or: down through the time period of this world of secular culture, religion, economy and government), **in line with the primary directive of the right and privilege of air: the Breath-effect of the One at the present time continuously operating within the sons of The Disobedience**
(or: down under the controlling aspect of the authority of "the blowing" – of the Spirit of the One now progressively working internally in union with
people having the character and qualities of incompliance;
or: in correlation to the chief and leader of the privilege which comes from blowing: the attitude which expresses a lack of persuasion, or of not
being convinced, which repeatedly energizes at the present time;
or: in keeping with the one in first position with regard to the right concerning the atmosphere – the attitude now habitually effecting inward action within
the midst of people displaying non-conviction or an inconviction disposition).

Paul has rehearsed the condition in the story of the old, and John is reminding them that they have been turned in another direction (= been "justified") and have "**walked together out of [that] Death.**" It was walking out of an old way of life and into the new creation which exists within the sphere of the Christ – in union with the historical event of the Messiah. He is speaking of the death both of the Adam story, and of the death brought by the Law (Rom. 7:9-14). But God's story did not end there, but continued via the resurrection of the Messiah, which in turn brought in these Gentiles of Asia Minor into the story that began in Eden.

15. **Everyone constantly hating** (or: regarding with ill-will) **his brother constantly exists being a person-slayer** (a murderer), **and has not seen so as to be aware that every person-slayer does not presently have** (or: is not continuously holding) **life having its source in, or having the quality of, the Age** (or: eonian life) **presently remaining within him** (or: continuously dwelling and abiding in union with him).

This redundant, but expanding, statement is another example of driving the point home with the techniques of Asian rhetoric. John is bringing Cain back into view: the "**person-slayer.**" To say that such folks do not presently have or hold "**life**" is the same as what he said in vs. 14 about "**remaining within the Death.**" The new Age of Messiah has come, but these folks are not "**walking within the midst of, and in union with, the Light**" (1:7, above) but are still walking "**within the Darkness**" (2:11, above). They are dwelling in past chapters of the continuing story. The supposed elite teachers of the Gnostic way do not have the Life of the Christ presently dwelling within them. Eonian life is not supernatural, spiritual experiences or esoteric knowledge:

"Now THIS is (or: exists being) **eonian life** (living existence of and for the ages; life pertaining to the Age [of Messiah]): **namely, that they may progressively come to intimately and experientially know You, the only true and real** (genuine) **God – and Jesus Christ, Whom You send forth as an Emissary** (or: as well as Jesus [as the] Anointed One, whom You sent off as a Representative)." (John 17:3)

It is intimate, experiential knowledge of the Person of God, and of Jesus.

16. **Within this we have come to know the Love** (acceptance which drives to overcome estrangement and achieve reunion) **by intimate experience: that That One placed** (or: places; sets; deposited) **His soul over us; we ourselves are also constantly indebted** (obligated) **to place [our] souls over the brothers** (= fellow believers, or, fellow humans; = [God's] family).

Truly knowing God, and Jesus, His Emissary, brings us intimate, experiential knowledge of the essence and character of God: Love which drives toward reunion, overcoming estrangement. It was expressed by the Messiah embracing the cross – God's means of His placing His soul over us. This gives us another picture of what was said in 2:2, above, "**continually being a cover around our mistakes and errors, sheltering us from their effects.**" It also evokes the story of Israel in Ezk. 16:8, which spoke of Yahweh entering into a covenant with her by covering her nakedness (this reference reaching all the way back to the Eden story, Gen. 3:10-21). "Christ is named as the paradigm of love..." (ibid. p 55)

The indebtedness and obligation to enter into the Messiah's story and expand it, doing the works that He did, echoes what Paul says in Rom. 1:

14. **I am** (or: I continue being) **a debtor to** (or: for; or: with) **both Greeks** (Hellenists) **and to** (for; with) **barbarians** (non-Hellenists: those who do not possess Greek culture); **to** (or: for; with) **both wise ones and to** (for; with) **those without understanding** (unintelligent ones; foolish ones; folks who lack sense).

15. **In this condition** (or: Thus so) – **commensurate with me, the ready** (willing; eager) **one – [I] myself [desire and intend] to also bring and proclaim** (or: announce) **the message of goodness, ease and well-being** (or: Good News)...

Placing our souls over others is both loving them, and proclaiming the message of goodness, ease and well-being to them. Entering into the story of the Christ brings obligation and

indebtedness: the justice that comes from God; the righteousness that is God's; the being placed in the Way and being rightwised toward the Father – all have the character of being indebted to others to love them, accept them, and help them. So "justification" (*dikaio σ une*) brings obligation and debt toward others, as both John and Paul instruct us.

17. **But whoever may continuously have the world's means of living** (or: may habitually hold the sustenance of the life pertaining to the secular ordered System), **and may habitually gaze upon his brother [who is] continuously having a need, and may close shut** (or: would slam and lock) **his intestines** (= his compassions) **away from him, how is God's love dwelling** (abiding; remaining; staying) **within him** (or, reading as a future: how will God's love dwell in him)?

Now John brings his audience from the realm of ideas and words to the practical reality of inclusion in the covenant community – the heart of the "good works" of which Paul spoke in regard to the new creation:

"for you see, we are (we continually exist being) **the effect of what He did** (or: His creation; the thing He has constructed; the result of His work; His achievement; His opus; the effect of His Deed); **people being founded from a state of disorder and wildness** (being framed, built, settled and created), **within and in union with Christ Jesus, upon good works** (virtuous actions; excellent deeds) **which God made ready** (prepared; or: prepares) **beforehand, to the end that we may walk about** (= live our lives) **within and in union with them.**" (Eph. 2:10).

How is God's love dwelling within our community if we, as a group, do not take care of those who have needs? This applies to us as individuals, of course, but we are part of Christ's body, and as Paul instructs us in 1 Cor. 12:26-27,

"And further, whether one member is continuing to experience the effect of something, or constantly undergoes suffering, all the members continually experience the effect or the suffering together with [it]; or if a member is being constantly glorified or is progressively receiving a good reputation, all the members are continuously rejoicing together with [it].

Now you folks yourselves are, and continuously exist being, Christ's body (or: a body which is Anointed; or: a body whose source and character is Christ) – **and individually [you are] members of a part [of it] –"**

We do not live or act as individuals, but as members of others as Paul said in Rom. 12:5,

"thus we, the many, are and continue to exist being one body within Christ (in union with [the] Anointed), **yet individually** (or: the situation being in accord with one), **members of one another** (or: but still, [being] on one level, [are] members whose source is, and who belong to, each other)."

We are thus instructed to view other people as a part of us, and ourselves as a part of them. This is the *agape* love which is God. The story of humanity leads us from an individual to a family to a tribe to a people group or nation, and finally to "**One New** [p46 & others: common] **Humanity**" (Eph. 2:15).

18. **Little children** (little born-ones), **we should not be habitually loving in word** (by a word or thought), **nor even in** (or: by) **the tongue, but rather within action** (deed; work) **and truth** (or: reality).

Here we see the element of restatement, driving home the point in a succinct statement that echoes the message of Jacob (or: James) 2:18, 26 (see my comments of this passage in *Peter, Paul and Jacob*, Harper Brown, 2012). Living the message of the Messiah is our calling.

19. **And within this we shall come to know by our own experience that we continuously exist** (or: are) **from out of the midst of the Truth** (Reality), **and so before Him** (in front of Him; in His very presence) **we shall persuade** (prevail upon; convince; win over; reassure; set at ease; render tranquil) **our hearts,**

These clauses need special attention. First, note how often John has used forms of the word-family *gnosis*, as he speaks against the Gnostic heresy. The covenant community "knows" by their own experience what "**the Truth**" (Christ) is: that it is the Reality (an equal meaning of *aletheia*) of the new creation.

Second, the group knows that they will **persuade**, prevail upon, convince, win over, reassure, set at ease and render tranquil their hearts. They will have a positive influence upon their hearts – the core of one's being – because of what he continues saying in vs. 20. But is this clause a statement about the far-off future, or an awareness of their sure foundation in Christ – and that they exist in His very presence (e.g., Acts 17:28), that they continuously live *coram Deo*? I was introduced to this Latin term through the teaching of R.C. Sproul, and I have never forgotten it. A simple phrase that says so much. So I will quote from an article by R.C. from his Ligonier Ministries website (Feb. 23, 2009):

"The big idea of the Christian life is *coram Deo*. *Coram Deo* captures the essence of the Christian life. This phrase literally refers to something that takes place in the presence of, or before the face of, God. To live *coram Deo* is to live one's entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God."

These folks know that because they are members of the covenant community that they are part of the restored humanity, and that their heart is no longer "desperately wicked" (as was the situation under the fallen creation – Jer. 17:9). "**And so**" they will set their hearts at ease "in His very presence."

20. **because, even if our heart may continually condemn** (censure; know-down by experience), **God is constantly greater than our heart, and He knows all mankind**, (all people; or: everything; all things) **by intimate experience.**

What an assurance: "**God is constantly greater than our heart.**" This applies as well to those who have not yet been "born of God" but are yet "children of the adversary," for,

"Yet God constantly stands together with His own love [flowing] into us (or: But God continuously puts the urge for accepting-reunion, from, and which is, Himself, together into the midst of us), **because during our still continuing to exist being** (= while we were yet) **failures** (folks deviating from the goal; ones missing the target and making mistakes; sinners; outcasts), **Christ died over our [condition and predicament]** (or: on our behalf; for the sake of us)." (Rom. 5:8)

A "desperately wicked" heart is no problem for God, because His plan was to give us a new one (Ezk. 11:19). "**He knows all mankind** (all people) **by intimate experience.**" Nothing surprises Him. And do not overlook that He knows all by intimate experience of and with all humanity. He is an imminent God, with everyone. It was by this that Jesus knew what was "in humans" (John 2:24, 24; cf Lu. 16:15). So "**even if**" our heart may be constantly condemning, God overcomes both the condemning and its effects, because "God continues being greater than our heart."

You will note that I do not give "us" as the object of the verb "**condemn**" in this verse. For the pronoun to be rendered "us" it should be in the accusative, *hemas*. But it is *hemon*, the genitive (our), as in vs. 19. Thus, the pronoun "our" goes with the word "heart." John is talking about our inner being condemning anyone or anything. There is no expressed object of the verb.

21. **Beloved ones** [other MSS: Brothers], **if our heart should not be constantly condemning or censuring** (or: would not repeatedly experience negative insights or habitually have knowledge which leads [some MSS add: us] down), **we constantly have confident freedom in speaking** (boldness from our citizenship) **toward and face to face with God,**

Bruce Metzger (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd Ed., UBS, 1994, p 643-4) lists eleven different MS readings for the first clause. Westcott and Hort follow B and readings in Origen which omit *hemon* (our). The Nestle-Aland text puts the word in brackets before the verb since there are a number of good witnesses for it being there (and I have thus included it) but lists the readings for the word a second time only in the footnotes. In the parenthetical

expansion I include in brackets "us" as an object of the verb, since there are a number of textual traditions which include *hēmōn*, even though to be the direct object it should be in the accusative. But this may simply be scribal error.

John's point is that with the absence of condemning thoughts we can have freedom in our speaking with God. The inference is that if we have condemning thoughts about anything or anyone, our speaking with the Father may be hindered by those thoughts. Keep in mind the parenthetical expansion "boldness from our citizenship." Here John is referencing our membership in the "**Jerusalem which is above**" (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22-24). We have "**face to face**" access to our heavenly Father. Bultmann comments that this last clause "is materially related to Rom. 5:1... 'we have peace with God'." (ibid. p 58 n 69)

22. **and whatever we may continuously ask** (or: habitually request), **we keep on progressively receiving from Him, because we are regularly keeping** (attentively watching over, guarding and observing) **His implanted goals** (impartations of the finished product within; inward directives of purpose and destiny) **and are constantly doing** (performing; constructing; producing) **the things [that are] pleasing and acceptable in His sight** (or: before Him).

Note the present tense of the verbs "ask," "receiving," and "keeping." The lineal action that this tense expresses shows habit, and even progression, as a part of the community's way of life. Here John speaks of reciprocity in the covenant living that is in rightwised relation to God (implied by the word "Him" as the One that is asked, and the One that gives). Keeping the goals that were implanted by the proclaimed message, and "**constantly doing**" things that accord with those goals, give Him pleasure.

The receiving often comes through other members of the community. This verse calls to mind the story and teaching of Jesus, e.g., in Matt. 7:7-12.

23. **And this is His implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward directive of the end in mind): **namely that we could, should and would be continuously believing, progressively trusting and habitually faithful** [other MSS: would at once place faith and trust] **in and by the Name** (or: constantly loyal to and for the Name; habitually full of faith with the Name) **of His Son, Jesus Christ, and thus should be constantly** (or: habitually; progressively) **loving** (accepting; overcoming estrangement to) **one another, precisely** (or: accordingly; correspondingly) **as He gave [the] implanted goal** (or: gives an impartation of the finished product within, with an inward directive of the purposed end and destiny) **to us, for us and in us.**

Pistis: faithfulness, trust and belief (or: conviction), along with *agape*: love, acceptance, the drive to overcome estrangement or alienation, are the destiny of humanity. They are shown forth through the covenant community when it abides in union with Jesus Christ through the power and ability inherent taking on His Name. He, via His Logos, gave the impartation of the finished product (Christ) within the members of the group. Bultmann, noting that "believe" is mentioned before "love" suggests that this indicates "that love has its basis in faith" (ibid. p 59).

The dative form of "**the Name**" gives us a number of possibilities of understanding just what His Name means in relation to our belief, trust, loyalty and being filled with faith. Jesus told His disciples to immerse folks "**into the Name**" (Matt. 28:19). Reading the form here as the locative function of the dative, John instructs them to trust "**in**," i.e., "in union with" or "in the sphere of" that which His Name represents: His person, identity, character and authority. This last aspect leads us to the next function of the dative, the instrumental, as it is "**by**" the Name, i.e., by the power and authority inherent in our Owner's Name, that we are enabled to continue believing, progressively trusting and habitually remain faithful. His Name gives us His authority and His ability as we identify ourselves with Him.

"Loyalty to and for the Name" presents us with another aspect of life "in Christ," and it is "with the Name" that we are filled with faith. In these expanded renderings I have also given more of the

semantic range of the verb *pisteuein* which normally has only been translated as "believe." All of this comes to us as a gift which is imparted into us. We are able to constantly and progressively love others corresponding to the fact of His having placed this purpose and destiny within us, and among us.

The last, expanded phrase gives the different functions of the dative form of the plural pronoun *hemin* (us). John continues in his corporate expressions, as we also see by the inclusive plural verbs. The Messiah's directives of His purposed end for humanity were placed within us via the message that was spoken to us, and is for us. John's redundancy here, of the second clause of vs. 22, shows his emphasis on the "**implanted goal.**"

24. And the person habitually watching to attentively keep His implanted goals (impartations of the finished product within; inward directives of destiny) **continuously remains** (dwells; abides; stays) **within and in union with Him, and He Himself within and in union with him. And within this we are constantly coming to know by intimate experience that He is continuously abiding** (dwelling; remaining; staying) **within us and in union with us: from out of the Spirit** (or: from the midst of the Breath-effect; forth from the attitude) **which He gives** (or: at one point gave) **to us** (or: in us).

And now again, the repetition characteristic of Asian rhetoric is seen in the first clause. But now John informs his audience that the person (an expression of the one new man) that is habitually "**watching to attentively keep**" these directives which incorporate the goals and destiny of this new humanity "**continuously remains** (dwells; abides; stays) **within and in union with Him.**" But note the solidarity of Christ with us. There is reciprocity: for "**He Himself [remains] within and in union with**" the person, or group. Each member has the responsibility to be habitually watching and keeping, but not as a lone individual – rather as a member of a body.

Their experience confirmed that "**He is continuously abiding**" with them, and this happened through the Spirit, the Breath-effect which produced an attitude of Love, which He gives (or: gave) to and in them. The verb "give" is in the aorist tense, so I have given two possible renderings since this tense is the fact form and does not give a sense of time or type of action. "If the, the 'spirit' effects love and thereby 'abiding in God,' so it must be the power of divine activity..." (ibid. p 59).

Chapter 4

1. Beloved ones, stop believing (or: you must not continually believe or put trust in; being loyal or pledging allegiance to) **every spirit** (or: expression of some influence; breath-effect; attitude), **but rather, you folks must constantly examine, test and prove the spirits** (influences; attitudes) **to assay** (or: prove) **if they are existing from out of God, because many false prophets have gone** (or: come) **out into the ordered System** (world of societal culture, government, economy and religion) **and continue there.**

If we look at the last clause of this sentence, we see that he is talking about "**false prophets,**" by which he probably means the false teachers of the Gnostic groups. However, there were false prophets even within Israel just as there were false Messiahs, so this would have applied to any religious group. But the question naturally arises: What does he mean by "**believing**" or "putting trust in" or "pledging allegiance to" these spirits, and what does he mean by his use of the word *pneuma*? I have inserted other words, parenthetically, to express its semantic range: attitude; breath-effect; expression of some influence.

I suggest that he means "Do not trust what they say or believe their message." Or, "Stop following after them from some misplaced sense of loyalty or allegiance, as they leave your covenant community" (cf 2:19, above). But why the word "**spirit**" (*pneuma*)? Recall the words of Jesus in Matt. 5:3, "**The destitute folks [are] happy in spirit and attitude...**" Here the sense seems almost to mean one's "mood," or "disposition." And then in John 6:63b we read,

"The declarations (gush-effects; spoken words; sayings; results of the Flow) **which I Myself have spoken to you folks are** (or: continue to be) **Spirit** (or: spirit; Breath-effect; attitude) **and they are** (or: continue being) **Life.**"

Were these words of the false teachers "spirit and death"?

Note in vss. 2 & 3, below, that he refers to a spirit, attitude or influence that **"speaks."** Does this lend support to the understanding that John is referring to the message or to the teaching? Or, perhaps he is referring to the "essence" or "mindset" that these folks have. Are they claiming that their "spirits" are really God, and so John is instructing them not to simply accept this at face value?

Verses 2 & 3 seem to answer the question of how they were to **"examine, test and prove"** them. Paul advised in 1 Cor. 14:29,

"Now let two or three prophets be speaking, one after another, and let the other folks continue thoroughly sifting and sorting so as to fully evaluate and reach a decision."

Paul is here telling them to use their spirits to sense if there is a "right spirit" in these folks, and to use their minds and understanding to judge the matter. They should compare what these folks have said to the message that they had originally been taught about the Christ. Jesus had prophesied that false prophets would come (Mk. 13:22; Matt. 24:11, 24).

It is instructive to note that these "spirits" have gone out into all the systems of their society. We likewise find them today in our work places, schools, political entities, religious groups and families. Discernment is a much-needed gift for the body of Christ. Bultmann points to *einai ek* (**existing from out of**) "which designates the origin and thereby the essence" and cites Schnackenburg, p 224, as being "correct in stressing the following: 'One's basic nature may be inferred from his practical behavior....'" (ibid. p 61 n 1).

2. Within this you continually come to know by experience (or: be progressively becoming acquainted intimately with) **the Spirit of God** (God's Breath-effect, influence and attitude): **every spirit** (breath-effect; attitude; influence) **which constantly speaks in accord with** (says the same as; speaks like; or: confesses and avows) **Jesus [the] Christ [as] having come and now continuing in flesh** (= in a physical body), **continuously exists being** (or: is) **from out of God** [other MSS: every spirit confessing Jesus Christ to have come in flesh is forth from God],

The first understanding that is mined from this verse is that when listening to a person speak, or when considering the teaching of a group, or when evaluating the content of a message, if this person avows, or this group "says the same thing as," or the content of the message "accords with" the fact that Jesus is the Christ that historically came as a human, in flesh, then we can be assured that this person, group or message exists with the source being God.

The second insight that we can mine is that we know the results based upon our own experience of folks and groups – we don't have to wait for some special decision or personal opinion by someone else. Our own acquaintance with the teachings in the gospels and in the letters of the Scriptures that affirm this fact tell us what is truth, and what is a false teaching, so we can recognize whether or not the **"Spirit of God"** is being demonstrated by what is being said.

The third consideration is that John can mean that the spirit of Jesus Christ has come in the person or group that is bringing the message, or that their "attitude" can be seen to have been "influenced" by what Jesus has said. In other words, if you can discern God's Breath-effect or the character of Jesus in what they say or who they are, then you can conclude that they are **"from out of God."**

John has given the criterion by means of which the testing (vs. 1) should be done. The verb "know" is in a form that is either indicative (my first rendering) or imperative (the parenthetical rendering). I inserted **"[the]"** after **"Jesus"** because Jesus and Christ are in the accusative,

making them a predicate accusative and the object of the verb. The emphasis is not just that Jesus is the Messiah (*cf* 2:22), but also that the Messiah (Anointed One) has come in flesh, as in 2 John 7.

The other manuscript readings present what we first mined from this verse.

3. **and every spirit** (influence; attitude; breath) **which is not habitually speaking in accord with** (speaking like; or: avowing; confessing) **Jesus** [some MSS add: {the; as} Lord, having come in flesh] **is not out of** (does not originate in) **God. And this [spirit, expression, or speech which is not in accord with Jesus] is** (or: continuously exists being) **of the anti-anointing** (or: that which pertains to the antichrist; from something in the place of Christ) – **which you folks have heard that it is constantly** (repeatedly; habitually) **coming, and now** (or: presently) **exists within the controlling ordered System** (or: is in the world of religion, economy, government and culture; or: has being in the realms of the secular and the religious) **already** (before now).

The first clause is basically a restatement of vs. 2, telling us that the reverse is also true. Not "**habitually speaking in accord with** (speaking like; or: avowing; confessing) **Jesus** [some MSS add: {the; as} Lord, having come in flesh]" means that the spirit under consideration "**is not out of** (does not originate in) **God.**"

He goes on here to define a term (*anti-christos*) of which I have given three definitions: **the anti-anointing**; that which pertains to the antichrist; something in the place of Christ. I also expressed these with three different functions of the genitive case in constructing the prepositional phrases. This term was seen in 2:18, and like there it here refers to the heretical teachers of John's day. "The mythological figure of the antichrist is thereby demythologized and historicized" (Bultmann, *ibid.* p 63).

The present tense of the verb "**come**" is given three expressions of the lineal action that is inherent in this tense. This "antichrist" constantly, or habitually, or repeatedly comes. And you will note that it comes in people. It exists within the entire "**controlling ordered System**" and was with them in that first century world, in all that system's various forms. We see the same thing today, and can observe its presence throughout the history of the "church" system, as well as in other religions and in political institutions. The economic system of slavery is the black background that puts in sharp contrast the light of the freedom that came through the Messiah. The spirit of antichrist is whatever is "**not habitually speaking in accord with,**" or "speaking like" Jesus! And again note John's emphasis on and rhetorical repetition of "speaking" – this has to do with the message of the Gnostic teachers, and the issues of their hearts which are being displayed in their words.

In place of "not confessing or speaking like" in the first clause, some early witnesses (e.g., Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen) have *luei* (thus: "and every spirit which destroys or annuls Jesus...") which gives a striking reading. The Vulgate also follows this reading.

4. **Little children** (born ones), **you continuously exist from out of God** (or: you exist with God as your source; you originate your being from God), **and you have conquered** (overcome) **and are now victorious over them, because greater is the One** (or: He) **within you than the one within the ordered System** (the person in union with the world of religion, culture, society, economy and government; or: the individual centered in either the secular or the religious).

There is of course an element of tenderness in the term "**little children,**" as John speaks as the Father to them. And we see his acceptance and drive toward overcoming any estrangement, and to bring about reunion, when in vss. 7 & 11, below, he employs the endearing term *agapētoi*.

Next he affirms that they are confessing and affirming the positive avowal that he described above, in vs. 2. They, as a group, "**continuously exist from out of God.**" They are not like those false teachers, and in fact (here John grows more exuberant) they "have overcome" these

false teachers **"and are now victorious over them."** John is now declaring "accomplished" the purpose of this letter! By the very fact of these covenant communities being **"out of God"** – which is a phrase equivalent to Paul's **"in Christ"** – they have the victory over those antichrists. This is an echo of what he said to the young men in 2:13-14. What wonderful assurance for them – and now for us.

You see, not only are they **"out of God"** but God (the Greater One) is within them. This corresponds to Paul's **"Christ within you folks."** This also corresponds to the **"great Chief Priest having passed through the atmospheres"** (Heb. 4:14) that was greater than the chief priest of the **"ordered System"** of Judaism.

The "one within the world" has normally been interpreted to refer to "the devil," but that has to be read INTO this context, for as we see from the following verse, John was referring specifically to **"They themselves,"** i.e., the false teachers. Having a different understanding of some verse or passage does not constitute a person as a "false teacher." The sent-off emissaries such as John, Paul, Peter, Apollos, etc., probably had different understandings of the message of goodness (*cf* 1 Cor. 1:12; 2 Pet. 3:15-16). Rather, the false teacher usually represented a false system of belief, such as the Gnostics or the Judaizers. This is why John refers to them in the plural.

5. They themselves exist being from out of that ordered System (or: they exist with the world as their source; they originate their [sense of] being from the System). **On account of this they continually speak from out of the System** (they habitually speak out of the world [as a source and perspective]), **and the ordered System** (world of ideas: culture, religion and education, as well as the control of economy and government; the arranged realm of the religious as well as the secular) **constantly listens to and hears them.**

The folks who adhere to these other systems of belief will naturally listen to these false teachers, because they are speaking the doctrines of those systems – be they Gnosticism, the system of the Old Covenant, paganism, Roman imperialism, or whatever. We can find application of this statement in the philosophical systems of economics, education and political ideologies, as well.

6. We, however, continuously exist (or: are) **from out of the midst of God. The person habitually and progressively coming to know God by intimate experience is continually hearing us** (or: listening and paying attention to what comes from, or pertains to, us). **He who does not exist from out of God is not hearing** (or: listening to) **us. From out of this we constantly know by intimate experiences the Spirit** (or: spirit; Breath-effect; influence; Attitude) **of the Truth** (or: of reality), **and the spirit** (influence; breath-effect; attitude) **of wandering** (deception; error; straying).

Here is the stark contrast. We have our being in the midst of God. Those coming to know God listen to and hear us. Those out of the systems of society and religion listen to the false teachers, and pay attention to them – and that is because they are not **"from out of God."** The source of their ideas and messages is some "system," not God. Note here that John uses the verb **"hearing** (listening)" – he is talking about the message and teaching from God versus what comes from the false teachers. He finally contrasts these messages as either **"the Spirit of the Truth"** as opposed to **"the spirit of wandering"** – i.e., straying from what they had heard "from the beginning," the teachings of the disciples of Jesus. The Attitude and influence of the Truth are words of Life.

Those who listen and hear the true message show themselves to be **"from God"** and to possess God's Spirit – **"the Spirit of the Truth,"** which is Christ: the Way of covenant inclusion. This is a reference to John 14:

16. **"and I Myself will ask** (make a request of) **the Father, and He will give another Helper** (One called alongside to give assistance, relief, comfort and encouragement; Paraclete) **of like kind to you folks – to the end that He** (or: It) **can continue being** [other MSS: would be constantly remaining and dwelling] **with you folks on into the**

midst of the Age –

17. **"the Spirit of the Truth** (or: the spirit and breath of reality; the Breath-effect and Attitude which is Reality), **whom** (or: which) **the System** (world; ordered arrangement of religion, politics and culture; controlling system) **has no power** (is not able) **to receive, because it is not habitually gazing upon It** (or: Him) **with contemplation** (continually viewing and watching it with attentive interest), **nor is it coming to intimately and experientially know It** (or: Him). **Yet YOU folks are progressively knowing It** (or: Him) **by intimate experience, because It** (or: He) **is continuously dwelling** (remaining; abiding) **alongside you folks – in your presence – and It** (or: He) **continuously exists** (or: is; [other MSS: will be]) **within, in union with, and among you people.**

18. **"I will not leave you abandoned or send you off as orphaned ones** (or: folks without family). **I am repeatedly** (or: habitually) **and now progressively coming toward you people.**

Cf 5:6, below; also John 15:26; 16:13.

7. **Beloved ones, we are** (or: can and should be) **continuously loving one another, because love** (or: the urge toward reunion and acceptance) **exists continuously** (or: is) **from out of the midst of God, and every one continuously loving has been born, and exists being a born-one, from out of the midst of God, and constantly experiences intimate knowledge of God** (or: comes to know by experiences from God; gains knowledge and insight by the experience which is God).

John again returns to his main theme in the passage in 3:11-23. This is the central focus of the message of goodness, and is the purpose for the called-out community. The goal that Jesus spoke of in John 17:20-23 was for the group to be one as they are sent into the aggregate of humanity, and that their maturity in this oneness would bring the knowledge of Him to the world. And as we see, His love brings "the urge toward reunion and acceptance." The verb of the first clause is either the subjunctive (the parenthetical rendering) which informs them of what they can and should do, or it is the indicative (the first rendering) which affirms what the group is normally doing. Many translators render the subjunctive as an admonition in the sense of "let us" be doing this. I tend toward the indicative because they received His word which brought the Love; and furthermore, they have been born from out of that love, and have come to know Him – so it follows that they were (and we are) continuously loving one another.

He again affirms that by constantly loving they show to the world that they have been born from God, and already habitually experience the intimate knowledge of God which the Gnostics are trying to obtain. This pronouncement can instruct us today, as well, as the lure and enticements of "spiritual experiences" attempts to draw us away from the simplicity of Christ.

8. **The one not habitually loving has not come to know God by intimate experience, because God continuously exists being Love** (or: for God is Love and Acceptance).

There is no need for special routines or religious practices to have intimate experience, insight and knowledge of God. A life of loving others, accepting them, seeking to overcome all estrangement and alienation within them and draw them into reunion with God and humanity is the Way, the Truth and the Life. And this is because Love is the very essence of God. John is here equating loving with experiencing the knowledge and insight of Who and What God is. You want to know God? Love people.

"The aorist tense [of the verb 'know']... 'indicates that such a man has not yet come to a knowledge of God' (Schnackenburg, p 229 n 1)" – Bultmann, *ibid.* p 65 n 2.

My first rendering of the last clause give the ontological/existential meaning of *eimi* (to be; to exist). Many understand this to be a statement of God's essence, and almost a definition of God. Most translators render *eimi* as a copulative and simply say "is," as in my parenthetical alternative, and commentators such as Bultmann disagree that this is a definition, citing parallel

structures such as 1:5, "God is light," and John 4:24, "God is spirit." Bultmann sees in this statement that "God's work is described, i.e., his acts in their significance for man, which becomes the subject matter in what immediately follows (vss. 9f)" (ibid. p 66). His point is well taken, but I also see this pronouncement as descriptive of how God "exists" in His creation, e.g., in His existential entry into the cosmos via the incarnation and the giving of His Spirit at Pentecost, to name just two. What He is to humanity is His essence in relationship to humanity. As vs. 9 states, He has made Himself clear to us as being Love through the sending of His Son.

But the point of this verse, within its context, is that love describes the nature of the covenant community – in contrast to the community of the false teachers, which John describes as not loving other people. Cf 2:9, 11; 3:10, 14-15, 17.

9. **Within this, God's Love is instantly manifested** (or: was at one point made visible; is made apparent and clear) **within us** (or: among us), **in that** (or: because) **God has sent** (dispatched) **His uniquely-born** (or: only-begotten) **Son as a Representative** (Envoy; Emissary) **into the ordered System** (world of society, culture, religion and government; or: the cosmos; or: = the aggregate of humanity), **to the end that we would live** (or: can experience life) **through Him.**

The verb tense of "**manifested**/made visible" or "made apparent and clear" is aorist: the fact tense, so I have given both the simple present and the simple past, but in each case emphasizing the "snap-shot" or "point of time" aspect. Because God sent His uniquely-born (a reference to John 1:18) Son into the world, God's love was and is manifested and made clear within and among us, so the goal and destiny of humanity is to live (experience Life) through Him. The reference to the sending of the Son recalls John 3:

16. **"For thus God loves the world** (the universe; the ordered arrangement; the organized system [of life and society]; or: = all mankind), **so that He gives His uniquely-born** [with other MSS: the only-begotten] **Son,**

(or, reading $\omega\sigma\tau\epsilon$ as an adverb: You see, in this manner God loves the sum total of created beings as being the Son: He gives the Only-begotten One; or: reading $\omega\varsigma\ \tau\epsilon$: For you see, [it is] in this way [that] God loves the aggregate of humanity – even as it were His Son: He gives the uniquely-born One), **to the end that all** (or: everyone) – **the one habitually believing, putting confidence and trusting into Him – would not lose or destroy himself, or cause himself to fall into ruin, but rather can continuously have** (or: would habitually possess and hold) **eonian life** (age-durative life with qualities derived from the Age [of the Messiah]; living existence of and for the ages).

John is accessing the story of the incarnation (another argument against the Gnostics and Docetists) and this calls to mind Paul's narrative of the Messiah in Phil. 2:

7. "... **He empties Himself** (or: removed the contents of Himself; made Himself empty), **receiving** (or: taking; accepting) **a slave's form** (external shape; outward mold), **coming to be** (or: birthing Himself) **within an effect of humanity's** (mankind's; people's) **likeness.**

8. **And so, being found in an outward fashion, mode of circumstance, condition, form-appearance** (or: character, role, phase, configuration, manner) **as a human** (a person; a man), **He lowers Himself** (or: humbled Himself; made Himself low; degrades Himself; levels Himself off), **coming to be** (or: birthing Himself) **a submissive, obedient One** (one who gives the ear and listens) **as far as** (or: to the point of; until) **death – but death of a cross** (torture stake)!"

And this was the manifestation of what God is like; a manifestation of Love. God gave us His Son so that we can live. Delivering us from death and sin frees us to live in Him and to love as He does.

10. **Within this exists** (or: is) **the Love, not that we ourselves have loved** [other MSS: not that we ourselves love or accept] **God, but in contrast, that He Himself loves us and sends** (or:

urged toward reunion with us and sent) **His Son as a Representative** (Emissary): **a propitiatory covering around our sins** (failures to hit the target; errors; mistakes; deviations).

John is rehearsing this again so that we will do as God does: He puts a covering around our sins and failures so that other people will not see them, and thus we in turn will not feel shame. We should also note that God's actions are the cause and source of *agape*: He "urged toward reunion with us and sent His Son." We see here an echo of Israel's Temple cultus and the blood put upon the mercy seat, which brought propitiation to the entire nation on the Day of Atonement. This repeats the same metaphors of 1:7 and 2:2, and the concepts in 3:5 and 3:8b.

11. Beloved ones, since thus (or: in that manner) God loves (or: loved) us, we also are constantly indebted (or: under obligation) to habitually love and accept one another.

The communities of Christ are called to imitate God – to be like Him. This was the goal set forth in the Genesis story: humanity was formed to be in the image and likeness of God. We are now at the conclusion of that story. The word "**indebted**" calls to mind Paul's metaphor of the Owner (Lord)/slave relationship. We were bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23); we are under obligation to reflect our Master. John's last clause is a repetition of vs. 7a, above, and parallels 3:16b. It is really hard to miss his point.

12. No one (or: Not even one) has yet once (or: ever yet) gazed upon God as an object in a theater (as a public spectacle). If we are (or: may be) habitually loving (urging toward reunion, acceptance and participation in) one another, God constantly remains (dwells, abides) within us, and His love (or: the love, which is Him,) is existing having been brought to its goal and is now matured, perfected and has reached its destiny within us, and among us.

The thought expressed in the first sentence is a reflection of John 1:18a, but here a different verb is used, as you can observe by my detailed rendering. In the former the verb carries the sense of perceiving in order to know. Here John seems to be placing a blow to folks who boast of visions in which they can observe God as a spectacle or as someone on a stage. Bultmann points out that in John's gospel "God is accessible only through revelation." But here, "a relation to God is realized only in mutual love" (ibid. p 68).

John now returns to "loving and being in participation with one another." If the community does this, God remains within His temple (us), and His very Essence and Being are brought to their goal. His Love (*autou* as a subjective genitive, or as apposition, "which is Him") has matured and reached its destiny within us, and among us. This is what Paul calls "**the expectation of the glory**" (Col. 1:27). The realm of "the glory" is simply loving-acceptance of others, with a drive toward reunion and inter-participation which drives away estrangement. The topic of remaining/dwelling/abiding is taken up again in 13, and once more in 16b where the verb is repeated three times, and there the inter-penetrating union of Love is both the vehicle and the realm of the dwelling.

13. Within this we are continually knowing by experience that we are constantly remaining (dwelling; abiding) within the midst of, and in union with, Him and He Himself within us, because He has given to us from out of His Breath-effect (or: Spirit; Attitude).

All this has come about "**because He has given to us.**" The source of the gift (which we see and experience to be Himself) is His Breath-effect, or Spirit. He also gives us His attitude, which, as we see, is an attitude of Love and Acceptance. This abiding union, which is within the midst of Him while He is within the midst of us (which = interpenetration; or: reciprocal dwelling, cf 3:24a), comes from the gift of His Spirit, and is in the very realm of God. This is a relational union, but I suggest that it is also an existential union of our spirits, as the Family of the God who is our Father.

14. **And we have gazed upon this public situation, and are repeatedly testifying** (giving witness and evidence) **that the Father has sent forth** (dispatched as a Representative) **the Son – [the] Savior of the world** (or: Deliverer of the ordered and controlling System of religion and secular society; Restorer of the universe; or: = the Rescuer and Healer of all humanity).

The term "**public situation**" refers to the historical experience that was referenced in the opening lines of this letter. What they saw was what God did in the incarnation. The "**repeatedly testifying**," etc., had been the work of the first and second generations of disciples. The message has continued to be "**that the Father has sent forth the Son**" in the Person of Jesus. His goal and destiny was to be "**[the] Savior of the world** (i.e., the aggregate of all humanity)." This was the demonstration of the Father's love for all of His creation; all of His people. Cf John 4:42.

15. **Whoever may speak in accord** (confess; avow; say like words; say the same thing; agree) **that Jesus exists being God's Son** (or: is continuously the Son which is God), **God continuously dwells** (abides), **remaining in him, and he himself within God.**

These repeated, redundant thoughts and expressions are the height of Asian rhetoric. Speaking the same message and confession are again stressed. Reciprocal dwelling is again stressed. I have presented another example of the genitive of apposition in the parenthetical alternative, "the Son which is God" for you to consider. How this would be understood depends upon one's understanding of who Jesus is, or how the term "son of God" is being used – e.g., if it is in reference to Him being the Messiah, or the King: God's anointed (cf Ps 2; 2 Sam. 7; Ps 89:26-27 – referring to David; and Ex. 4:11 – speaking of Israel).

16. **And we have come by intimate experience to know and have believed, trusted and are convinced of the Love which God has** (or: holds) **continuously within** (or: among) **us. God exists continually being Love** (God is Love), **and the person continuously remaining** (dwelling; abiding) **within, and in union with, the Love, is continuously remaining** (dwelling; abiding) **within, and in union with, God – and God constantly dwells** (remains; abides) **within him and in union with him.**

The Love, which is God, is "**within** (or: among) **us.**" Remaining and dwelling within that Love (which God holds **within** {or: among} **us**) means that we are "**remaining** (dwelling; abiding) **within, and in union with, God.**" And again we see the reciprocal dwelling; the interpenetrating abiding. Note again the corporate connotation in the "**we**," "**us**" and the rendering of *en* with a plural as "among." He uses "**the person**" to represent the group in his repeated description of the reciprocal solidarity with the covenant community. However, although addressing a group, what he says also applies to the individual cells of the "body."

The verb *echo* means both to have (or: possess), and to hold (and thus, possess). God has, and **holds** His Love (which He is) within and among us. This calls to mind Paul's wonderful words in Rom. 8:

35. **Who or what will separate, divide or part us away from the Love of and from Christ** (or: the separation-overcoming love which is Christ; [other MSS: the God's love within Christ Jesus])?

17. **Within this the Love has been brought to its goal, been matured, reached its destiny and is now perfected with us, to the end that we may continuously have confident freedom of speech** (the boldness of a citizen to speak publicly without fear of punishment) **within the day of sifting and separation** (distinction, evaluation and decision; judging; judicial proceeding; or: administering of justice), **because just as That One is, we also continuously exist being: within the midst of this ordered System**

(or: because in this world of culture, religion, economy and government, even we, ourselves, progressively exist – correspondingly as, and to the according level as, That One continuously exists and is progressively being).

"The Love" is God's love, just as the love spoken of by Paul in 1 Cor. 13:7 is also God's love:
"[Love] continuously covers all mankind; it is habitually loyal to all humanity; it constantly has an expectation for all mankind; it is continuously remaining under and giving support to all people."

The goal and destiny of God's love is That Love being lived and put into action within humanity as a covenant community. This desire and urge to overcome human estrangement in other people gives us confidence in our speaking openly about God's love for people and His desire for them to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

But what about the phrase that follows John speaking of confident freedom of speech? What is **"the day of sifting and separation** (distinction, evaluation and decision; judging; judicial proceeding; or: administering of justice)"? In 3:21, above, **"we constantly have confident freedom in speaking** (boldness from our citizenship) **toward and face to face with God**" – **"if our heart should not be constantly condemning or censuring."** And in 2:28 John speaks of this same confident boldness and freedom, along with **"and may not feel or receive shame** (disgrace; dishonor; humiliation) **from Him, within His presence** (or: may not be shamed away from Him in the midst of His presence)." These situations have traditionally been interpreted as being at some future time, when "Christ returns," or at the "Judgment seat of Christ." Jesus spoke of the same, or a similar, situation in Matt. 10:

15. **"Assuredly – I now say to you folks – it will be more endurable in the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in [the] day of separation and decision, than in that city** (or: it will be more supportable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in a day of judging, than for that town)!"

Now observe that He spoke here in terms of **"in the land..."** and **"than in that city..."** The setting of His pronouncement was here on earth, as it had always been in the history of Israel, and not off in some "spiritual realm." Jesus also spoke of Jerusalem being left abandoned, as a desert place (Matt. 23:38; Lu. 13:34-35) and referred to the temple being destroyed in Matt. 24. In Lu. 19:42-44 He wept over Jerusalem, saying **"days will arrive upon you, and your enemies... will cast up a mound beside [you and] a staked fortification.... Because you do not know the season of your visitation."** History tells us of the events of AD 70 – the Day of the Lord, when Jerusalem and the surrounding territories were "sifted," separated off for judgment. The story of Israel is a story of God repeatedly bringing judgment upon their land. Their story is exemplary, and all of humanity has been inserted into their story with progressive changes as the chapters continued to be written. See the article, "Coming Versus Present," at the end of the comments on this letter. His presence is always with us – He lives in His Home: His Temple. And when we need it, it becomes a **"day of sifting and separation."**

Let us turn to the final clause of this verse, and it will become even more clear to us:

"because just as That One is, we also continuously exist being: within the midst of this ordered System

(or: because in this world of culture, religion, economy and government, even we, ourselves, progressively exist – correspondingly as, and to the according level as, That One continuously exists and is progressively being)."

We are within the systems of our society, and He is here, too – going through it all with us, experiencing what we experience, progressively bringing His sovereign influence and dominion into all levels and realms of existence. We must look with the eyes of the Spirit to see this. Things are not like they seem to be. The first century communities that were called out of their cultures and religions to be the Light of the world did not outwardly look different, and they still physically lived within those systems (in them, but not of them). But these expressions of His covenant with humanity were like the mustard seed of the parable given by Jesus. The Vine which began as Jesus the Messiah, into which was first engrafted His disciples and later the ethnic multitudes (Rom. 11:17f), has grown and increased to fill the entire globe (cf Dan. 2:35b).

Because He, the Vine, remains joined to us **"within the midst of this ordered System,"** we have confidence that His prayer (John 17:15) will be answered:

"I am not now making a request to the end that You should pick them up and carry (or: remove; take) them out of the System (world; ordered arrangement of culture, religion and government; secular society), but rather that You should observe, guard, protect, maintain, care for and keep them out of the worthless or bad situation, the sorry plight, the effect of the knavish and good-for-nothing person, the oppressive toil and the base or evil influence."

This would seem to speak against the idea of a physical "rapture" of the community. With these thoughts in mind, I suggest that vs. 18 is not an aphorism, but a continuation of the context. The fear which they might have had may have been associated with concerns about the coming eschatological judgment.

18. **Fear does not exist within the Love, but rather perfect love (mature love; love having reached its goal) repeatedly (habitually; progressively) throws the fear outside, because the fear constantly has and holds a pruning (a curtailment; a checking; restraint; a lopping off – thus, a correction). But the one habitually fearing or dreading has not been perfected within the Love (has not been brought to the destined goal of maturity – in union with love).**

The "**perfect love**" is God's love that He holds (vs. 16, above) within and among us, so that we may in turn express that love (along with the absence of fear) to those around us. Note the present tense of the verb "**throw**." This shows that situations that may ordinarily cause fear are repeatedly arising in this life.

The word "**pruning**" (*kolasis*) is an agricultural term, and care of a vineyard or an orchard should always be kept in mind when we come across this term. Bultmann referred to its use in Matt. 25:46 where it is often rendered "punishment," but which I suggest spoke of the judgment that was about to come upon God's people (there termed the "kids" – immature goats – of His herd) in AD 70, while the "sheep" (always a reference to His disciples) were ushered into the kingdom activities, as seen in the book of Acts. Bultmann cites Luther's understanding of the context here: "For fear has its own agony," and then concludes that "the concept of the eschatological *kolasis* ('punishment') is historicized like the concept of *krisis* ('judgment') in John 3:19; 5:24, which corresponds to the statement in 3:14 [above] that those who love have already passed out of death into life" (ibid. p 74).

Fear often brings a "checking," a "restraint" of our proposed activities. But the love of which John has been speaking gives us confident boldness to speak freely, even in the face of danger. So it is in this way that His love throws the fear outside of the community. Fear cannot exist with such Love that accepts outsiders and seeks to overcome their estrangement and bring them into union with the covenant community.

The next sentence states the antithesis and describes those who have not yet been born into the body of Christ, or to an immature believer who "has not been brought to the destined goal of maturity – in union with love."

19. **We ourselves are [some MSS add: now] habitually loving (or, as a subjunctive: can and should be constantly loving) because He Himself first loved (or: urges to reunion with) us.**

John here describes the covenant community that has confident boldness of speech (vs. 17) and has no fear (vs. 18) because God (and Christ) loved us first (or: because He Himself first "urges to reunion with us"). The verb of the last clause is in the aorist, giving the fact of the historic act of God giving us His Son, but also giving the timeless sense that He – being Love – from His very nature drives toward reunion with all humanity (the aggregate of the humans that compose the world).

20. **If anyone may up and say, "I am constantly loving God," and yet may be habitually hating (or: would keep on regarding with ill-will) his brother, he is a liar (he exists being a false one). For the one not habitually loving his brother (= member of the community, or, fellow**

human) – **whom he has looked at and now sees – he continues being unable and has no power to be loving God, Whom he has not seen** (or: looked at).

John is saying here that to love God requires that we love others. This makes perfect sense if we realize that God also lives in other people, not just ourselves. In 2:10 he said the person habitually loving his brother dwells in the Light, but 2:9 & 11 tell us that hating a brother means dwelling in the Darkness (that which existed before the coming of the Day; that which does not belong to the community of Light) and being a liar. So being devoid of love and compassion puts one in the same categories as "hate" and "darkness," and someone in these conditions is unable – has no power – to love God. Such conduct also makes the person "a person-slayer" (3:15). Being a liar separates this person or group from the reality from God (1:6; 2:4, 22). Loving God means solidarity with others, and this is because "God in this way loves the aggregate of humanity" (John 3:16).

21. **And we continuously hold** (or: have) **this implanted goal** (impartation of the finished product within; inward and purposed directive of destiny) **from Him, to the end that the person continuously loving God can, should and would also habitually love** (accept and drive toward reunion with) **his brother** (= his fellow believer, or his fellow human being).

Repetition for emphasis is once again seen in this verse. But he also points to the fact that the person "**continuously loving God**" has the ability, opportunity and duty to love and accept other people and seek to bring them into the covenant community, delivering them from their alienation and death. This speaks of practical acts of inclusion and doing the work of a paraclete: giving aid and assistance where it is needed. The "**implanted goal**" is for the community to live the life of Christ on the earth, to continue His mission and bring His deliverance to humanity. It means to act like Christ, and to act like God, reflecting His character to the world. Daniel Kirk puts it this way, "The community he forms around himself is the continuation of Jesus' presence on earth" (Kirk, *ibid.* p 60). Kirk also point us to the Sermon on the Mount, where in Matt. 5 Jesus says,

44. **"Yet I, Myself, am now saying to you folks: Be constantly loving your enemies** (urging toward reunion with, and accepting as persons standing on the same ground, those folks hostile to you; [comment: this could have applied to the Romans, as well as to personal enemies]), **and be habitually praying over** (on behalf of) **the people continuously persecuting you –**

45. **"so that** (by what means) **you folks can be birthed** (may come to be) **sons of your Father – the One within [the] atmosphere and in union with [the] heavens – because He is repeatedly making His sun to rise back up again upon bad** (evil; wicked) **folks as well as [upon] good** (virtuous) **folks, and He is habitually sending rain upon fair and equitable people** (those in right relationship; those within the Way pointed out; just ones; rightwised ones) **as well as [upon] unfair and inequitable people** (those not in right relationship; those not in the Way pointed out; unjust ones).

46. **"You see, if you should happen to love and participate with the ones constantly loving you folks, what wage or reward do you continue holding** (or: having)? **Are not also the tax collectors constantly doing the very same thing?**

47. **"And further, if you folks should only greet and welcomingly embrace your brothers, what are you continuing to do [that is] excessive or extraordinary? Are not also the folks of the ethnic multitudes** (the nations; the pagans; the non-Israelites) **constantly doing the very same thing?**

48. **"Therefore, you folks will exist being ones that have reached the purposed and destined goal: finished and completed ones; mature and perfected ones – in the same way as your heavenly Father** (or: your Father which has the qualities of, and is characterized by, the atmosphere) **constantly exists being One that is the goal and destiny: finished, complete, mature, perfect!"**

The message of Jesus, Paul, John and the other NT writers is the same: love people.

1. **Everyone (All) continuously believing, constantly convinced and progressively trusting that Jesus is (or: exists being) the Christ (the Anointed One; = the Messiah) has been brought to birth and is now a born-one (= is a child) from out of God. And everyone continuously loving (urging toward reunion with) the One bearing and giving birth (the Parent) should and would also love (accept in unity) the person having been born (the child) out of Him.**

If we keep in mind that the purpose of John's letter was to take a stand against the Gnosticism which claimed similar union with God through their mystical experiences, then his repeated insistence that this comes from the imparted trust and belief that Jesus is the Messiah becomes more understandable. In John 3:7, speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus said, "**It is necessary and binding for you folks to be born back up again to a higher place** (or: for you people to be given birth from above)." Notice the plural pronoun that Jesus used: "**you folks**" – He was referring to the entire nation. Here, John is telling these groups that "all" (*pas*), as a collective but inclusive singular, "the trusting and believing" are children of God – folks brought into the community of Christ by a birth from out of our Parent.

It only follows that if we love our Father, we should also love our siblings – the other children brought into being from "**out of Him.**" So if we truly do the first, then we will also do the second.

2. **Whenever we are (or: may be) habitually loving God, and then may be habitually doing or producing His implanted goals (impartations of the finished product within; inward, purposed directives), in this [condition and situation] we progressively come to know by insight and intimate experiences that we are [also] normally loving God's children.**

Bultmann called this verse "most difficult, indeed almost incomprehensible" (ibid. p 77). But he ends his section on this verse by asking the question, "Or may the continuation of the [Whenever] clause... 'and obey his commandments' [which I render, "... **doing or producing His implanted goals, etc.**"] be taken so closely with 'when we love God' that the two parts of the clause form hendiadys [two words or thoughts, but one thing meant], with the result that love of God is understood as 'keeping his commandments?'" (ibid. p 77; brackets mine). With this he has hit the mark dead center.

I rearranged the clauses of the Greek to help the English reader understand what John was saying. We see the same idea of "**loving God**" equaling "**doing or producing His implanted goals**" in what Jesus said in John 14:

"If you are habitually loving Me (or, as a subjunctive: would continue loving Me), **you WILL** [other MSS the subjunctive: can; should] **observe** (note and keep watch over; guard and preserve; keep in view; hold in custody; [other MSS, the imperative: Be observing]) **My implanted goals** (impartations of the finished product within; inward directives; interior purpose and destiny)."

This is entirely in line with what John has been saying in ch. 4, above. And when we are abiding in love of, for and from God, "**in this [condition and situation]**" we come to realize that "**we are [also] normally loving God's children.**" Loving others is the normal fruit of God's love dwelling within us. There simply is not the one without the other. The hermit or person who withdraws from community cannot love God in the way that our Messiah has taught us to love Him.

3. **You see, that we would continuously observe His imparted and implanted goals is itself the Love of God** (or: the love which pertains to God; the Love which is God)
(or: For this exists being love from God so that we can progressively watch over, keep maintain and guard His interior finished product) – **and His implanted goals** (impartations of the finished product within; inward directives) **are not heavy** (weighty, thus, burdensome) –

So John goes on to clearly define "living out His directives and goals (His imparted 'end in view')" as being "**the Love of God.**" This is put another way in the alternate parenthetical rendering where I again reverse the clauses and render "**God**" as an ablative (God being the source of the

love) instead of a genitive. In the parenthetical expansions of the first rendering, the first gives the subjective genitive (love that we would have which pertains to God, or, our love for God). The second is the genitive of apposition (the Love which IS God), pointing to Himself as the Love that is within us as we produce His destiny in humanity by injecting His Love into them.

That His impartations **"are not heavy"** reminds us how Jesus instructed His listeners, **"You see, My crossbeam** (or: the yoke which is Me; the balance beam that comes from and pertains to Me) **is useful and kindly obliging, and My load** (the burden that is Me and which pertains to Me) **continues being light** (not heavy)." Matt. 11:30
He has called us to enter into His rest (Heb. 4:10-11) and simply produce His fruit (John 15). But the fruit is love for others, expressed in practical ways.

4. **because everything** (all) **having been born from out of the midst of God continuously overcomes** (habitually conquers and is progressively victorious over) **the controlling System** (ordered world or religion, secular culture, economy and government). **And this is the victory** (or: conquest) **at once overcoming** (conquering; victorious over) **the controlling System** (ordered world of religion, culture, economy and government): **our trust, confidence and faith!**

The subject of the first clause (**everything**; all) is neuter, so this is not referring to people (as some have erroneously rendered it; e.g., Nyland and the NIV). The next sentence makes this clear, as well, since we observe that it is **"trust, confidence and faith"** that is **"overcoming"** whatever controlling system that would put us in bondage. I expanded the rendering of this aorist participle by the phrase **"at once"** to indicate the point in time aspect of the verb tense. The faith, trust and confidence which the work of Christ has given to us is instantly victorious over situations which arise from the systems within which we live. What we are overcoming is not people, but systems of control and management, as well as our own internal system of dealing with people which has been erected as a defense mechanism.

Bultmann, however, sees in the aorist a reference to the past event and the "victory already won," and of course this sense of the aorist is also correct in that it has in view the Victory of Christ who is:

"the One presently and progressively giving the Victory (or: the overcoming) **to us, in us and for us through our Lord** (Owner; Master), **Jesus, [the] Christ!"** 1 Cor. 15:57.
By bringing the Victory of our Lord into our situations – through the faith that He gives us – we bring victory into those situations. John's focus is still the communities as a whole, for it is **"our"** trust, confidence and faith. The gift that He has given is to people at large (in the text, literally, **"the faith of us"** – which could also be rendered "the trust that pertains to us; the confidence that [now] belongs to us"); the gift that forms covenant communities around Him.

5. **Now who is the person continuously overcoming** (or: progressively conquering) **the ordered System** (world; secular realm; religious arrangement) **if not the one continuously believing, progressively trusting and constantly loyal to [the fact] that Jesus is** (continuously exists being) **the Son of God** (God's Son; or: the Son who is God)?

Here John makes it personal and presents the person or the group that is **"continuously believing, progressively trusting and constantly loyal"** as the one being continuously victorious over the world's systems in our society. The faith is to be lived, and it is specifically the faith, trust and loyalty to the fact that Jesus is God's Messiah. It is in this way that the "world" is overcome.

Bultmann suggest that from 2:22, and the following verses, that pronouncements such as are made in this verse "are aimed at the christology of the gnosticizing false teachers, who of course see Jesus Christ as the bringer of salvation, but who deny that the Christ is to be identified with the historical Jesus" (ibid. p 79). Cf 4:2; 5:1.

6. **This is the One at one point coming through water and blood and breath** (or: spirit; Breath-effect), **Jesus Christ. Not within the water alone** (or: not in only water), **but rather within the water and within the blood** (or: in union with water and in union with blood; [other MSS add: and within spirit; note: figure of a human birth, or natural lineage]), **and then there is the breath – that which is continuing to give evidence** (or: and the Spirit {Breath-effect} continuously exists being the One repeatedly testifying), **because the breath is** (or: Spirit or Breath-effect exists being) **the Truth and Reality!**

(or: and the spirit is the One {or: one} continuously witnessing that the Spirit is The Truth!
or: the breath is that which constantly gives testimony that the Breath-effect is reality...)

The manuscripts vary on this verse. Most modern versions follow MSS B, Ψ, 1739*, the Majority text, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, which read only "**water and blood**" in the first clause, omitting "**breath** (spirit; breath-effect)." I included this third word on the basis of its being in MSS Aleph, A, 614 and 1505, and also since MSS P, a number of later MSS, as well as a number of Vulgate MSS read "spirit and blood." Ambrose, 945, 1241 and the margin of 1739 all read with only the word "spirit." John's gospel may instruct us here where we read in ch. 3:

5. **Jesus decisively replies, "Certainly it is so, I am saying** (laying it out; = pointing out) **to you, unless anyone** (or: someone) **may be born forth from out of water and spirit** (or: – even Breath-effect and attitude –) **he continues being unable** (he remains having no power) **to enter into God's realm** (or: reign; kingdom; sovereign activity and influence).

However, the "**water and blood**" readings are widely accepted due to the fact that this verse is read as being opposition to the false teachers. *The NIV Study Bible*, Gen. Ed. Kenneth Barker, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1995, p 1911 has the following note on this verse:

"Water symbolizes Jesus' baptism, and blood symbolizes his death. These are mentioned because Jesus' ministry began at his baptism and ended at his death. John is reacting to the heretics of his day... who said that Jesus was born only a man and remained so until his baptism. At that time, they maintained, the Christ (the Son of God) descended on the human Jesus, but left him before his suffering on the cross – so that it was only the man Jesus who died..."

Bultmann states: "... this sentence affirms: the Son of God is the historical Jesus, who was baptized and crucified" (ibid. 0 79). It has been further recognized that the idea of "**coming through**" signifies the way in which He came, but here the word "**spirit**" would align with the incarnation story in Lu. 1:35, as well as the report of the Holy Spirit coming upon Him at His baptism. The second clause of the second sentence also has a variety of MS readings, which correlate to the variations in the first sentence in those particular MSS, so I included "spirit" in the parenthetical readings, but we have the word "spirit; breath" in the next clause (with no textual variations).

In this next clause I rendered *pneuma* first as simply "**breath**" since it seems to correlate to the preceding "**water and blood**" as being with them in a natural birth. But the parenthetical renderings may give us another picture to consider. The Spirit of God within the believers, and among the community, continuously gives evidence of the presence of the new Reality into which they have been birthed. It is the Spirit of the risen Jesus, the Truth and the Life. The Spirit of God (God's Reality and Truth) bears witness for Itself through the revelation of the Messiah that has been given to us, imparted as "the anointing."

As to my rendering *pneuma* as "**breath**" the second time, the breath means that there is life, and this reaches all the way back to Gen. 2:7, the giving of life to the first Adam, and then traces the story of humanity to the last Adam (the corporate Christ; the Second Humanity) in 1 Cor. 15:44-49 where Paul also reaffirms God's purpose of creating humanity: to bear His image (vs. 49). We are corporately this new Humanity (Eph. 2:25 – Jew plus Gentile as "one"), and then individually we follow Paul's admonition as member of this new Humanity. In Eph. 4, he puts it this way,

23. **and then to be continuously renewed** (or: from time to time, or, progressively made young again) **by** (or: in; with) **the spirit** (or: attitude; breath-effect) **of your mind** (or: from the mind which is you),

24. **and to enter within** (or: clothe yourselves with) **the new humanity** (or: the person that is new and fresh in kind and quality) – **the one in accord with and corresponding to God** (or: the person at the Divine level) – **being formed** (framed, built, founded and settled from a state of disorder and wildness; created) **within the Way pointed out** (or: in union with fair and equitable dealings with rightwised relationships, justice and righteousness; also = in covenant participation) **and reverent dedication** (or: benign relationship with nature) **pertaining to the Truth** (or: in intrinsic alignment with reality).
Note: "being formed within the Way..." This is the corporate part of it, for we walk His Path in union with the entire community: one body, temple, bread (1 Cor. 10:17 – a figure for our being food and life-sustenance for others, as we continue His life).

7. **Because there are three constantly testifying** (or: ... that three progressively give evidence; or: seeing that the normal witness bearers exist being three):

8. **the breath** (or: spirit; Breath-effect) **and the water and the blood, and these three are [coming; proceeding] into the midst of the One** (or: exist [leading] into one [reality]; are existing into the one thing; or: = are in unison; or: = are in agreement, or are for one thing).

Were it standing by itself, this pronouncement (unfortunately divided into two verses) could present us with an enigma. But it is a continuation of vs. 6, whose subject is Jesus, the Messiah who came by means of water and blood (= natural birth) and breath. Or, taken figuratively, came through immersion (baptism) and the blood of His cross, and now through the agency of His Spirit. Taken either way, each bears testimony and gives evidence to the historical Jesus being the Messiah, God's Anointed, and the breath of His words (in His teaching and speaking to people) brought Life (*cf* John 6:63). His life and His words are constantly testifying of God's love for humanity.

The second part of the message here (vs. 8) shows that these three aspects that compose the Second Human are, or exist being, "**into the midst of the One.**" I have suggested two secondary verbs, "**[coming; proceeding],**" since the preposition *eis* is a preposition of movement into the midst of something. These three elements of the Last Adam come into the midst of God (**the One**) to compose the Messiah. The parenthetical amplification suggests other ways of understanding the final clause, for your consideration.

Verse 9 continues John's thoughts here, showing that the three of vss. 7 & 8 are the testimony and evidence "**of God,**" signifying that the Christ is the work of God, the purpose of God, or as John the immerser said, "**the Lamb of God.**" It is also "**God's testimony**" of His love for humanity, and His evidence, or testimony "**concerning His Son.**" In vs. 10 we will see the appropriate conclusion of this line or reasoning, which is "affirmation concerning His Son."

9. **Since** (or: If) **we are habitually receiving the testimony** (the witness; the evidence) **of humans** (or: from people), **the evidence of God** (God's witness; testimony from God; or: the testimony and evidence which is God) **is** (or: exists being) **greater, because it is God's testimony** (or: the witness which is God) **that He has testified** (given as evidence; witnessed) **and it now exists available as evidence** (or: testimony), **concerning His Son** (or: round about the Son which is Him; about the Son Who originates from Him).

The evidence from God, or God's testimony, came through the Words of Jesus, His life and actions, and through the giving of the Holy Spirit. As the Word (*logos*) and as the Breath-effect (or, Spirit), the testimony "is God" (here presented as the genitive of apposition for the word "God"). God gave the testimony through the giving of the Son and the Spirit. His Son is the evidence, and the life of His Son within the called-out covenant community is further available evidence of God's new work: the new creation.

10. **The person continuously and progressively believing** (or: keeping confidence and habitually putting trust) **into the midst of God's Son constantly holds** (or: has; possesses) **the testimony** (witness; evidence) [p74 & A add: of God] **within himself; the one not believing in**

God [A reads: the Son] **has made Him out to be** (or: has construed Him) **a liar, because he has not believed or put trust into the evidence** (testimony; witness) **which God has attested and affirmed concerning His Son** (or: shown as proof round about the Son from, and which is, Him).

The testimony has been given, the evidence has been manifested in clear light, and through the message that they had received the Word of testimony comes into the very being of both the individual and the community, creating the new life of God's dominion. The one not believing this testimony (be this an individual, or the groups such as the Judaizers or the Gnostics false teachers) by not accepting the evidence and the testimony does not make out the messenger to be a liar, but God to be a liar – since the testimony comes from God: "This is my Son..." As to understanding the significance of the genitive of apposition "which is" in the alternate rendering of the final clause, consider Paul's words in 2 Cor. 5:19, "God was in Christ..."

This calls to mind another word concerning those of Christ's covenant community. In John 3:33 we read,

"The one receiving (grasping; taking in hand; getting hold of) **His witness** (or: testimony; evidence) **certifies – by setting a seal** (= giving attestation) **– that God is true** (real; genuine; truthful)."

11. **And so this is the evidence** (or: exists being the testimony, witness and attested affirmation): **that God gives** (or: gave; grants) **Life pertaining to, and having the quality of the Age** (life whose source is the Age [of Messiah]; eonian life; Life of, for and on through the ages) **to, for and in us, and this very Life continuously exists within His Son** (or: is in union with the Son which is Him)!

The life was exhibited in the life of Jesus, and then within the life of the covenant community which He formed around Himself via His Spirit. The Age of Messiah had arrived, and is also referred to by Jesus as the kingdom, reign, sovereign activity and dominion of God (or, especially in Matt., of heaven). This life, with its authority and power, was given to His disciples, and passed on from them – via the Message – to others in ever increasing concentric circles until today it has filled the whole earth. And this Life, which the believer constantly possesses (vs. 10), is also the evidence, the testimony, the witness and the attested affirmation. Cf John 11:25; 14:6.

12. **The one continually holding** (or: constantly having; progressively possessing) **the Son continuously holds** (constantly has; progressively possesses) **the Life. The person not continuously holding** (constantly having) **God's Son does not now have** (or: hold) **the Life.**

Since the Life of the age of the Messiah is within the Son, it logically follows that whoever, or whatever group, continuously holds, constantly has and progressively possesses (various expressions of the present tense of the verb, and its range of meanings) **"the Son"** continuously holds and progressively possesses **"the Life."** It would appear here that John is instructing us that "the Son" is "the Life." You do not hold or possess an experience or a spiritual realm of being, but the Person. This is why we are told to call Him **"Father,"** not "Creator," or "Source." He is all three, but Jesus came to show us our Father. Both the words Father and Son are words of Family – and this is what God is, else how could we be His children, and Jesus be our brother (Rom. 8:29). In seeing and understanding the metaphors and social aspects of our relationship to one another, let us not forget that we also exist. We are beings. And to use Paul Tillich's term, He is the Ground of our being.

The second statement of this verse simply describes a womb that God has closed for the time being, as we witness a number of times in the early part of our story, in the book of Genesis. Such a person or, corporately, such a group is like the field that needs to be burned off in order to plant a crop (Heb. 6:4-8), or like the path that has been trodden down by many folks walking on it, or like the section that has shallow soil, not deep enough to support the roots of the Seed.

13. **I write these things to you folks to the end that, having seen, you may know that you are presently holding** (you folks constantly and continuously have) **Life pertaining to, and having the qualities of, the Age** (life whose source is the Age [of Messiah]; or: eonian life; Life of, for and on through the ages) – **for the folks** (or: in and among the ones) **continuously believing and putting their trust, confidence and reliance into the Name of God's Son.**

Despite what the false teachers may have told them, John is writing this letter to affirm that they indeed presently and constantly possess this Life of the Age of the Messiah, and which lasts on into the ages. Note again his corporate reference in the plural pronoun and verbs. They have the life and will be able to birth others into inclusion in the covenant, for they are the Jerusalem which is above – the new Eve – the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26). The identity markers of such a group are His faith which was injected into them, making them to continuously believe, trust, and have confidence – all of which have sent their roots deep **"into the Name of God's Son."** This last phrase recalls 3:23. Against the false teachers, John once again reminds his readers that they have all that they need, that the new Age has come, and that their focus should be on God's Son whose Name they have taken for their identity and for their life.

14. **And this is the freedom of speech with outspoken boldness inherent to citizenship which we constantly have toward, and hold face to face with, Him: that if we ourselves should keep on asking or persistently request anything in line with** (or: down from; in the sphere of; that accords with) **His will** [A reads: Name], **He is continuously hearing us.**

There is no fear in the covenant communities; instead they have the confidence from being citizens of the New Jerusalem which Christ has established. This includes the freedom to boldly **"keep on asking"** regarding their needs, and He constantly hears these persistent requests. The topic of asking is put in the plural, with the contingency that the request be **"in line with His will."** Rather than these requests being about individual needs or desires, it would seem this is referring to the needs or questions that pertain to the community. And when they accord with and are in the sphere of His will, He is habitually hearing **"us."** This does not preclude individuals making personal request of their Father, but the focus of this letter has been in regard to corporate situations. His presence within the community is affirmed by our holding **"face to face"** access to Him (Eph. 2:18; 3:12).

15. **And if we have seen and are thus aware that He constantly hears, and listens to, us, whatever we may keep on requesting concerning or for ourselves, we have seen and are aware that we habitually have** (or: hold; possess) **the requests** (the things asked for) **which we have asked – and now stand requested – from Him.**

The phrase **"concerning or for ourselves"** reflects the middle voice of the verb. The communities are encouraged to make corporate requests about their concerns, and they **"have seen and are aware"** – based upon their experiences of God's faithfulness – that they **"habitually have** (hold; possess) **the requests."** What a statement of trust and confidence. The verb **"asked... requested"** is in the perfect tense, showing that he is speaking of requests that had previously been made, and that **"now stand requested"** from Him. This last clause demonstrates the faith that they have been heard, and that their request has been granted.

16. **If anyone of you may happen to see his brother** (= fellow believer, or, fellowman) **habitually failing to hit a target** (sinning; making mistakes), **with a failure** (error; offense; deviation) **not with a view toward** (= that would lead to) **death, he shall ask** (make a request) **and He will give life to him – for those habitually failing to hit a target** (erring; sinning) **not [leading] toward death. There is a failure to hit a target** (a mistake; a deviation; sin) **[which leads or points] toward** (or: with a view to) **death** (perhaps: = bearing a death penalty, [within that culture]). **I am not saying that he should ask about** (or: concerning) **that one.**

Here we see John speaking in regard to some individual, in contrast to his corporate expressions in the previous verses. Note the singular pronouns and tense throughout this verse. Issues

concerning an individual's mistakes or failures should be kept private, "**because love is constantly covering** (habitually throwing a veil over; progressively concealing; [and with other MSS: will be covering]) **a multitude of failures, mistakes, errors, misses of the target and sins**" – 1 Pet. 4:8. The person who happens to notice this situation can make a request to God regarding his brother, and God will "**give life**" to that brother for that situation or problem.

The last half of the verse deals with a "failure, error, deviation, sin" that points a person toward death and may well lead him there. Death here may be used as a contrast to the Life of which John spoke in vs. 11-13, above. So this may not refer to physical death, although in serious offenses against society it might well lead to physical death, just as Jesus used the literal dump (Gehenna) outside Jerusalem – where for serious crimes the Romans would dump the bodies of those whom they had crucified – to warn folks from pursuing a negative path (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30). John is most likely referring to those who cut themselves off from the flow of life in the body, by following after the false teachers. Experience has often shown us that the fruit of their error is what is required to show them the error of their ways. The writer of Hebrews spoke of such a situation in ch. 6:

4. **For you see, those once being enlightened, besides tasting** (= experiencing) **the heavenly gift** (or: the granted bounty from the One [holding sway] upon the atmosphere) **and after being born** (or: coming to be) **partakers** (participants; partners; associates) **of set-apart spirit** (or: of a holy Breath-effect; or: of [the] Holy Spirit),

5. **and then tasting** (= experiencing) **a beautiful gush-effect of God** (or: an ideal result of the flow from God; or: God's fine speech; an excellent declaration pertaining to God; a profitable thing spoken, which is God) – **besides abilities and powers of an impending age,**

6. **and yet then falling by the side** (or: falling aside along the way), **[are] powerless and unable to be repeatedly renewing again into a change of mind: [they are] continuously crucifying again in themselves** (or: to, for or by themselves) **the Son of God, and [are] constantly exposing [Him] to public disgrace.**

But this is not the end of the story, for our writer continues the story, by way of restatement, in the agricultural metaphor in the following two verses:

7. **For you see, a piece of land which is drinking** (= soaking in) **the rain often coming upon it, and producing vegetation** (pasture; produce) **fit for and useful to them through whom it is habitually being cultivated, [is] also continuously sharing in and partaking of a blessing from God;**

8. **but when repeatedly and progressively bearing forth thorns and thistles [it is] disqualified** (worthless; unable to stand the test [for planting a new crop]) **and [is] close to** (or: near) **[the] curse** (or: [the] curse is at hand), **the end** (the resultant situation) **of which [the thorn, briars, thistles and the field is] into [a time of] burning** (or: = the field ends up being burned off).

This is a time-honored agricultural practice for preparing a field for planting a crop – the competition has been removed and the ground has been enriched by the ash. This is an example of how God uses death in our lives (the burning off of an unwanted crop – even if we are reaping what we sowed – causing the death of unwanted "fruits of death" in our lives so that our soil will be ready to receive His Seed). So praying against this kind of dealing from God in a person's life would be a mistake. Sometimes people need to go through a metaphorical death (their lake of fire "second death") in order to be resurrected back into His Life.

17. **All injustice** (contrariness to the Way pointed out; inequity; unfairness) **is a failure to hit the target** (deviation; error; sin; a failure toward the Purpose), **and yet there is failure to hit a target [that is] not toward death** (or: deviation [that does] not [lead] to death).

In the same way of the first clause, All injustice is an absence of Love. Contrariness to the Way pointed out is anti-Christ, Who is the Way. Social injustice and inequity means a lack of the Christ-Life. It is the call of the covenant community to inject the Christ-Life of love, acceptance and fairness into our society (or, as Bultmann would have said, "Rightwise it.").

Nonetheless, as we aim our lives toward Christ as our target, or horizon, our flesh nature can at times cause our "arrow" to stray to the side or fall short. This is still a failure to hit the target, but it is not one that is orienting us, nor leading us, toward death.

18. We have seen and thus know that everyone being a person having been born from out of the midst of God is not habitually failing to hit the target (erring; deviating; sinning; falling short of the Purpose), **but rather, the person at some point being born from out of God habitually keeps a guarded watch over himself** (or: keeps himself; [other MSS: for instead, the One born from the midst of God continuously watches over and keeps him]), **and so the fellow** (the one; the person) **that causes misery or painful labor is not habitually touching him** (or: the disadvantageous and worthless situation does not repeatedly lay hold of him; the base fellow is not constantly assailing him; wickedness and evil are not continuously fastening upon him; the misery-gushed [attitude] is not repeatedly affecting him).

The first statement, giving a variation of 3:9, tells us that those that are included in the covenant do not have a habit of deviation or of "falling short of the Purpose." That is not the way of life for the called-out community. Their habit is to watch over themselves, and as Jesus said to His disciples, "Abide in [Him]."

The New Man is the one that resides "in Christ" (which means being connect to the community, as well as to the Spirit) and so the "**fellow that causes misery... is not habitually touching him.**" The parenthetical alternatives for this last clause express the semantic range of the word *poneros* that has traditionally been assumed to refer to "the devil." Consider these four alternate ways of translating the Greek to get a wider understanding of what John was including in the words that he used.

19. We have seen and thus know that we are continuously existing from out of the midst of God, yet the whole ordered System (or: the entire realm of the religious and the secular) **is continuously lying outstretched** (lying as asleep, idle or dead; reclining) **within the gush of misery** (within the disadvantageous, laborious and worthless situation; within the sorry plight; in union with wickedness and evil; in the midst of the misery-gushed [attitude and existence]),

Because the community has been born from out of God, we now continue to exist from out of God. He is our source of the Christ-Life. We have been made aware that, **"within the midst of and in union with Him we continuously live** (or, as a subjunctive: could be constantly living), **and are constantly moved about and put into motion, and continue existing** (experiencing Being)" (Acts 17:28).

By comparison, "**the whole ordered System**" is continuously "**lying outstretched within the gush of misery.**" This is a graphic description of the human predicament that is not yet experiencing membership in His body, the covenant community. They are "lying asleep within the disadvantageous, laborious and worthless situation," and need to be rescued from it. They are "idle or dead within the sorry plight." They are "reclining in union with wickedness, in the midst of the misery-gushed attitudes and existence." This is the world around us. They need the Light; they need the Life; they need the Truth that brings the Reality of the New Creation. The living water needs to gush up out of the midst of the community of loyalty to Christ, and give drink to the thirsty.

20. yet we have seen and thus know that God's Son has arrived and is continuously here, and He has given thorough understanding (comprehension; faculty of thought; intelligence; intellectual capacity; input throughout the mind) **to the end that we would constantly know** [other MSS: so that we constantly know] **by experience the True One** (or: the true, the real and the genuine), **and we constantly exist within and in union with the True One** (or: in the real [situation]; in the midst of Reality): **within His Son, Jesus Christ. This One is the True** (Real; Genuine) **God, and Life pertaining to and having the qualities of the Age** (or: life having its source in the Age [of Messiah]; eonian life; Life of, for and on through, the ages).

The first clause, following "**we have seen and thus know**" is an illuminating statement about the "coming" of Christ. The verb is the present tense of *hēko*. It means "the result of moving toward and reaching a point; as being in a place." The Son of God (Christ) "**[had] arrived**" in John's time, and was "**continuously [there]**." He resides within His Temple, lives with His Body and dwells among His Covenant Community that has been called-out of religions and cultures so as to be the Light of their world, a city set on a hill (Matt. 5:14). Stop looking at the literal sky or physical clouds.

Of this, He has given us "**thorough understanding**" (*dia-noia*: throughout the mind; full intellectual capacity, comprehension and intelligence). The reason for this is so that we, corporately, "**would constantly know by experience the True One**" (God; Christ). This could also refer to the real and the genuine – as opposed to the false that the Gnostics presented. Furthermore, "**we constantly exist within and in union with the True One**" – or "in the real [situation] and in the midst of Reality." Then John identifies the True One: "**His Son, Jesus Christ.**"

The last sentence makes a profound statement: "**This One** [just identified as His Son, Jesus the Messiah] **is the True (Real; Genuine) God, and Life pertaining to and having the qualities of the Age [of Messiah].**" What more needs to be said? Cf John 11:25; 14:6.

21. **Little children** (born ones) **keep yourselves in custody** (or: guarded)! – **away from the idols** (the external appearances; the forms; or: = false concepts)!

Because Jesus is the True God – and the Way, the Truth and the Life – stay away from other religious concepts and things that worship external appearances (be they religious, secular, economic or political). Keep and guard yourselves from pagan ideas and doctrines. Bultmann suggests that this closing remark "must have the meaning of an admonition not to fall prey to false teachings..." and footnotes Herbert Braun, *Qumran und das Neue Testament*, pp 115f, "In Qumran the warning against idols is a warning against apostasy from the community with its strict observance; in ordinary Judaism the warning is against any heathen cultus; in 1 John there is a general warning against any taint of paganism in Christianity." (Bultmann, *ibid.* p 90; p 91 n 44)

COMING VERSUS PRESENT

The words translated as "come" or "coming" in the common translations have not normally been rendered accurately. In this study we will look at these two forms of this one Greek word, and at a word that is a synonym. Following this is a short review of a couple other words that have also been misunderstood through mistranslation.

The first word, which is normally found in the Greek lexicons and dictionaries in the form of the 1st person, singular, is *erchomai*. Its basic meaning is: come; go.

The present tense in the Greek language primarily signifies continued, repeated, habitual or progressive action, and within context can signify something that was presently happening. We find this partly presented correctly in the Amplified Bible in Mt. 7:7-8,

"Keep on asking and it will be given to you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds and to him who keeps on knocking it will be opened."

What is not fully rendered are present indicatives in verse 8 (receives; finds). These should also be given the force of the Greek present tense, e.g.: keeps on receiving – or: presently receives; habitually receives; repeatedly receives; progressively receives. The same applies to the verb

"finds." Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation renders all the verbs and participles accurately in these two verses.

Unfortunately, the meaning of the present tense is seldom presented in the common versions. We will now consider how these two versions rendered the present participle of our word *erchomai* in Rev. 1:4 and 1:8.

Amplified: "is to come."

Wuest: "is coming."

The Amplified (with most other translations) gives a present participle rendered as an infinitive; Wuest renders it correctly as a participle, but gives no sense of the kind of action that the verb indicates: continual or habitual, etc.

I will now present my translation of *erchomai*, giving both meanings "come" and "go" in the present tense, and then *heko* in the future tense. First is the present participle *erchomenos*, given in **bold**:

Rev. 1:4, "the One Who was, and continued being, and the One Who **is continuously** (or: repeatedly; habitually; progressively) **coming or going**..."

Rev. 1:8, "the One Who was and continued being, and the One **presently and continuously** (or: progressively) **coming and going**..."

These expanded renderings of "coming **or** going" or "coming **and** going" give a very different understanding of what is being said. But before we form any conclusions, let us look further: Rev. 2:16, "You must change mind (your way of thinking), therefore! Yet if not, I **am repeatedly** (habitually) **coming** swiftly in you (to you; for you) [note: the 'you,' is singular], and I will wage war (do battle) with them within the broadsword of My mouth."

Rev. 3:3, "Continuously keep watch (or: Guard [it]) and change your way of thinking, [and turn to God]. If ever, then, you should not be watching, I **will** (or: may) **arrive** upon you as a thief, and under no circumstances would you know what hour I **will** (or: may) **arrive** upon you." Here the verb "**arrive**" is *heko*.

Within the context of the 1st century churches to which John sent this letter, ch. 2:1 has a revealing verb in the present tense: "the One **continuously walking about** within the midst of the seven golden lampstands..." In 1:20 we have the identity of these lampstands: the "churches," or "called-out communities." The resurrected Christ is **continuously walking** among our midst! Does this not recall what Jesus said in Mt. 18:20?

"You see, where there are two or three people that have been led and gathered together into My Name, I am there (in that place) within the midst of them."

That place is the gathering of the ecclesia, the "church."

In John 14:18 we have Jesus' promise:

"I will not leave you abandoned or send you off as orphaned ones (or: folks without family). **I am repeatedly** (or: habitually) **and now progressively coming toward you people.**"

Then in vs. 23 we have:

"... and My Father will love him, and, facing toward him, We will come to him and will be making (constructing; forming; creating; producing) **a home** (an abode; a dwelling place; a place to stay) **with him** (or: at his side and in his presence)."

Here we have a future tense of the verb "**come**." But note the circumstance and requirement for this, stated in the first part of the verse:

"If anyone continues (or: may be habitually) **loving Me, he will be constantly watching over so as to observe, guard, preserve and keep My word** (My thought, idea and message)..."

So Jesus said that anyone who does this has the promise of Jesus and the Father making their abode with him.

Returning to Rev. 3, we have this promise in vs. 20:

“Consider! I have stood, and continue standing upon the door (entrance), and I am constantly knocking; if ever anyone may (or: can) hear My voice (or: sound) and would open the door, I will enter (come or go in) toward him, and I will eat the evening meal with him, and he with Me.”

This was a present situation in the church of Laodicea, one of the communities to which this letter was sent. This was not some future event, unless we place an artificial construction upon the plain reading of the text. As it pertained to them at that time, so it pertains to us. He walks in our midst, and when necessary knocks on the door of the gathering, seeking a covenant meal with us.

Now let us move to Rev. 21:3-4,

“Consider! God’s tent (the Tabernacle of God) [is] with mankind (the humans), ‘and He will live in a tent (dwell in a Tabernacle) with them, and they will be (will exist being) His people, and God Himself will be with them [some MSS add: their God].’ [Lev. 26:11-12; Isa. 7:14; 8:8, 10; Jer. 31:33; Ezk. 37:27; 2 Chr. 6:18]
And He will anoint (smear; or: wipe away) every tear from their eyes. And death will no longer exist (or: the death shall be no more) – neither will mourning (sadness; grief), nor an outcry, nor hard work (painful toil; misery) exist any longer ([they] will be no more), because the FIRST THINGS went (or: passed) away.”

These verses are traditionally set as speaking of a future time and event, but note all the OT references in vs. 3: these reference Israel's history, but point to the fulfillment in the Messiah. Note that there ARE tears in the context of vs. 4, above, but He promises to wipe them away, or anoint them. Now look at the last phrase of vs. 4: "the first things went, or passed, away." This is an echo of Paul in 2 Cor. 5:17,

“Consequently, since someone [is] within Christ (or: if anyone [is] in union with [the] Anointed One), [there is] a new creation (or: [it is] a framing and founding of a different kind; [he or she is] an act of creation having a fresh character and a new quality): the original things (the beginning [situations]; the archaic and primitive [arrangements]) passed by (or: went to the side). Consider! New things have come into existence (have been birthed; or: It has become new things; or: He has been birthed and now exists being ones of a different kind, character and quality).”

The last clause here carries us back to Rev. 21:5 where the verb "make" is in the present tense.

The tabernacle later became the temple, in Israel's story. So in 1 Cor. 3:16 we have Paul saying,

“Have you folks not seen, and know, that you people continuously exist being God's Temple (Divine habitation; holy place and holy of holies; inner sanctuary), and God's Spirit is constantly dwelling (God's Breath is making Its home; the Wind which is God is housing Himself; the Attitude from God is progressively co-habiting) within the midst of you folks?”

This is a present existing situation and realm of being!

In Eph. 2:22, Paul puts it this way:

“within the midst of (or: in union with) Whom you folks, also, are continuously and progressively being formed a constituent part of the structure (or: being built together into a house) – into God's down-home place (place of settling down to dwell; abode; permanent dwelling) within [the] Spirit (or: in spirit; or: in the midst of a Breath-effect and an attitude).”

Speaking of "dwelling," Jesus told His disciples that a branch needs to dwell and remain within Him (John 15:4-5). He has many branches (or: members, as Paul put it in 1 Cor. 12:12, and He is the Head of those member-branches, as in Col. 1:8).

Col. 1:27 tells us that Christ within us IS the expectation of the manifestation which calls forth praise (or: the expectant hope of glory). At the same time we are told in Eph. 2:6,

“He jointly roused and raised (or: suddenly awakens and raises) [us] up, and caused [us] to sit (or: seats [us]) together within the things situated upon [thus, above] the heavens within and in union with Christ Jesus.”

Then in Col. 3,

1. **Since, therefore, you folks were awakened and are raised up together in the Christ** (or: If, then, you are aroused and raised with the Anointed One), **be constantly seeking and trying to find the upward things** (or: the things being above), **where the Christ is** (exists being), **continuously sitting within the right [side]** (or: at the right [hand]; = at the place of receiving, and in the place of honor and the power) **of God.**

4. **Whenever the Christ, our life** [other MSS: your life], **may be brought to light** (or: should be manifested), **you folks also will be brought to light** (will be manifested), **together with Him, within the midst of glory** (or: in union with a manifestation which calls forth praise; or: in a good reputation; or: = in His manifest presence).

(or: When Christ, the Anointing, can be manifested, then your life – even you yourself, together with Him – will be manifested in His manifest

presence).

This second alternate rendering of vs. 4 means that whenever your life manifests Christ, then your own life will also be set in clear light and manifested, together with Him, in that situation. This applies to right now.

Next we proceed to a 1st century situation, noted by Paul concerning himself, in Gal. 1:16, where he says, "**to unveil** (reveal; uncover; disclose) **His Son within the midst of me.**" He uses the same word in regard to all God's sons in Rom. 8:19,

"For the looking away and watching with the head stretched forward alertly (or: peak expectation; premonition; intuitive opinion; or: = the concentrated and undivided focus) **of the creation is constantly receiving and taking away from out of the unveiling of God's sons** (or: = the uncovering and revealing of folks who have the character and qualities of God).

The compound verb which I have rendered "**constantly receiving and taking away from out of**" is the word *dechomai*, which means: to take into one's hands; to receive. To this verb are prefixed two prepositions which modify the verb: *apo* (away from) and *ek* (from out of). This word is wrongly translated as "looking for, or awaiting" in the common versions. We have this same word again in vs. 23, where it states that,

"we ourselves also continually sigh and groan within (in the center of) **ourselves, continuously accepting, and with our hands taking away from out of, sonship** (the open recognition and placing as a son; the setting in position of one having the quality and character of the Father; the placing in the Son; or: = technical adoption [Greek or Roman law])."

Rightly rendering this word also gives a different understanding to Heb. 9:28 which ends a chapter that has been speaking of the work of our Chief Priest, Jesus, and His finished work on the cross, in which He fulfilled once and for all the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement. I have translated this verse as follows:

28. **so also, the Christ – being once borne** (or: carried) **close into the many** (or: being offered once unto and for the many) **to carry failures** (errors; sins mistakes; deviations; misses of the target) **back up again – will be made visible** (will be seen) **forth from out of the midst of the second** [place (cf 9:3,7 & 10:9; {comment: = the holy of holies})] – **apart from failure** (apart from sin; apart from a sin offering; apart from error in attempting to hit the target) – **IN those** (or: BY those; to those; for those) **habitually receiving** (or: progressively taking) **from out of the midst of Him, [progressing] into a deliverance** (or: [leading] into a rescue; with a view to health and wholeness; into the midst of salvation).

Much of what applies to us now has been erroneously postponed to some future time, robbing us of our present enjoyment of our inheritance in Christ. The Lord constantly comes to us, yet is also continuously present with us.

Another word that has sometimes been mistranslated "coming" is the Greek *parousia*. This word is composed of *ousia*, which is a present participle of the word "to be; to exist," and means "being." Prefixed to this is the preposition *para*, which means "beside; along side of," so *parousia* means being alongside, or, being present – as opposed to being absent. But this is for another study.

Robinson places the writing of this letter in the same general period as that of 1 John, AD 60-65.

1. **The old person, to a chosen-out (selected) Lady** (feminine form: mistress; lord, female owner or authority), **and to her children** (born-ones), **whom I love in truth and in union with reality** (or: I truly love), **and not I only, but also all those having come to know the Truth by personal experience and are now having insight of Reality,**

I have given the literal meaning of the word used for the writer. It is often rendered, "The elder," but this presumes an organizational structure that may not have existed at this early date. Bultmann states that "It is improbable that the term is the title of an office; in that case, one would expect the text to read: ... 'the elder of the church at...'. In an earlier period the term could mean simply the 'old man'" (ibid. p 95). The assumption by other scholars that this letter is from a later date leads them to conclude that it meant the later office of an "elder" in the church system, such as with the letters of Ignatius. Tradition has identified this person as John, the writer of the other letters in this collection, and many believe him also to be the author of the gospel of John. Similar statements are made in all of these documents.

Scholars differ as to the significance of the word *kuria*, to whom the letter is addressed. It is the feminine form of the word "lord; master; etc." as shown above. Some take this to be a specific woman in a place of authority (perhaps the leader of the local group), or even a property owner. Others assume that it is a technical word to signify the called-out covenant community itself, with "her children" referring to the members of that community. Whichever the case, the letter is written to a specific person, or community.

If written to a community, then the word "old person" may have been used in a communal way signifying the writer had a relationship with them as being a part of their community, and was their leader. "Elders" was a term that referred to the older people within a community, and from their wisdom and experience they naturally function as the leaders. But it was not normal for there to be just one elder in a community. The leadership was usually a group. If this was written to a woman who was the head of her household (which may have comprised the entirety of the called-out folks of that town or area), then the term which he uses to identify himself may simply have been a relational term by which he had been known to them, a term of endearment and honor. He expresses covenant love for them which has its source in the reality which came with the resurrection of the Messiah, and in the Truth that *had* been brought to them.

He affirms that these folks, and perhaps others by now, have come to know (*ginosko*) the Truth by personal experience, and are now having insight of the Reality of the new arrangement between God and humanity – what Paul also calls "the new creation." Using the word Truth, which also means Reality, instead of the term Christ may be setting the tone of this letter as a polemic against the gnosticizing false teachers of that time and place – just as 1 John is understood to be written.

2. **because of the Truth and Reality [which is] continuously remaining** (abiding; dwelling; staying) **within us – and shall be with us on into the Age;**

Note the affirmation of the Truth (which also refers to Christ Himself – John 14:6) constantly dwelling with "us." This inclusive plural pronoun shows that John considered these folks a part of the greater body of Christ. The term "**Age**" (*aiōn*) signified an indefinite period of time whose end could not be discerned. In the Jewish world view, "**the Age**" referred to the Age of the Messiah, and since the story of the Messiah that had come to these folks had its roots in the story of Israel, this was probably John's meaning. This Truth and Reality of the new covenant would continue to be with them into the unforeseeable future into which this Age would extend. This was another way of saying that Christ would be with them from then on.

3. **grace** (or: Joyous favor), **mercy [and] peace** [= shalom] **will be with us from beside** (or: in the presence of; along with) **God the Father, and from beside** (or: in the presence of; along with) **Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, within Truth** (or: in the midst of reality) **and Love**.

The Truth and Reality that he spoke of in the previous verse have three central components, which are also qualities of God the Father and Jesus Christ: "**grace** (or joyous favor), **mercy [and] love**." These have their source in God and Jesus Christ, and are always present alongside of them (the Greek preposition is *para*). So since we have the Father and the Son (vs. 9, below), we have grace, mercy and peace. And all this is "**within Truth and Love**" – which also describe God, so this indicates the sphere within which the joyous favor, the mercy and the peace have come to humanity – as well as the environment within which humanity exists (Acts 17:28).

4. **I was made exceedingly glad and joyful** (or: was greatly graced) **because I have met with and found folks from among your children [who are] continuously walking about within Truth** (or: = living their lives in union with reality), **according as we took in hand an implanted goal** (impartment of the finished product within; inward purposed directive) **from beside the Father**.

The verb "**met with and found**" indicates that John had experienced a personal encounter with some of "her children." So he was not stranger to this group, and thus had a relationship with them. He had observed their conduct and found their lives to be in union with this new reality of the covenant community that the risen Christ had gathered around himself.

I rendered the verb *lambano* with its very literal meaning, "**took in hand**," to stress metaphorically the personal involvement in "receiving" (a usual translation of the word) a gift with intent to make use of it. John spoke frequently in 1 John (e.g., cf 2:7 & 8 there) of the "**implanted goal**" – the impartation of the finish product (Christ) within us, which embodies His inward purposed directive: just love people!

The Greek word *entole* is often translated "commandment." I have opted instead for rendering it from the meaning of the elements of the word, *en* (in; within; in the midst; in union with; inner; inward) and *telos* (purposed end; goal; destiny; finished product). As just one example, when a father tells his child something that he wants the child to do or be, by his words he implants the goal of the desired action or being into the child's mind and heart. He imparts something from his mind or heart with a view to the finished product by or within the child. It can come in the form of a command or a directive, but its essence and meaning is the desired result – not the form in which the goal is given. As we see here, the context is familial. The word or thought comes to us from our Father, and as you see below in vs. 5, the intent of the goal is a love that is lived out to other people. He imparts this destiny into our very DNA, our heart and being – by placing Himself within us and thus we become "**one spirit**" (1 Cor. 6:17) and act from out of our renewed nature. Love is not commanded, but rather imparted via His Word of Truth, and the new Reality – it is His Seed that is planted within us (1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 3:9). It is the sphere of the life of the covenant community.

The last phrase "**from beside the Father**" points to our unity with Him, as well as to the unity of the Father and the Son – the answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17:22-23. This also recalls 1 John 1:3.

5. **And so now I am asking you, Lady, not as writing a new implanted goal** (impartment of the finished product within; inward directive of destiny) **to you, but one which we have had from [the] beginning** (or: one which we originally had), **to the intent that we may continuously be loving each other**.

We meet this title "**Lady**" once again, rather than the more normal "brothers" – if he was speaking corporately – or, "little children," as we find in 1 John. It is almost an echo of the letters written to the called-out communities in Rev. 2 & 3, where the messages were addressed "**to the agent**" of

the covenant group within each city. Of course, if this "**Lady**" is actually an individual, the head of a household, then this is quite reasonable.

This verse is almost identical to 1 John 2:7 (*cf* John 13:35-35), but here that "directed destiny" is simplified: "**Be continuously loving each other.**" In this, the idea of community and interpersonal involvement can easily be seen. He is not talking about mere words, "I love you brother," but the entire sense of *agape*, as distilled from the writings of Paul Tillich:

"the whole being's drive and movement toward reunion with another, to overcome existential separation; an ecstatic manifestation of the Spiritual Presence; acceptance of the object of love without restriction, in spite of the estranged, profanized and demonized state of the object" – *Systematic Theology III*, pp 134-138.

6. And this is Love: that we may be continuously walking about (= go on living our lives and ordering our behavior) **according to** (or: down from; in line with; on the level of; in the sphere of; commensurate with) **His implanted goals** (impartations of the finished destiny within; inward directives). **This is the imparted and implanted goal, even as you heard from [the] beginning** (or: even which you originally heard): **that you would** (or: could) **be continuously walking about within it** (= go on living your lives in union with it)!

Something more that I want to point out about His "inward directives," is this is simply the leading by His Spirit (Rom. 8:14) – and He does this because we are His sons and daughters, His family. Take note of the expanded meanings of "**according to**" (*kata*). In 1 John 2:3 he states it differently. There we to "keep, guard, observe and maintain" the internalized goals. Here we are shown the quality and extent that we are to "keep... maintain" them, as we live our lives. Furthermore, part of the implanted and imparted goal is the very living in union with it, and ordering our lives "accordingly." But the redundancy of this concluding clause is typical of the Asian rhetoric, a kind of communication that the recipients of that time and area would have been quite familiar. He was emphasizing his point. (*cf* 1 John 5:3; John 14:35)

7. Since many wandering-astray folks (or: many who lead astray; many deceivers) **went out into the ordered System** (world of religion, secular culture, economics and government) – **those not continuously speaking like** (saying the same thing as; confessing) **Jesus presently coming in flesh** (= a physical body; or: = in [their] inner self): **this is the person wandering astray, even the one in opposition to Christ** (the one instead of Christ; the one in place of Christ; or: the anti-anointing) –

Like 1 John, he now turns to addressing the issue of the false teachers and continues speaking on this topic through vs. 11. These admonitions are virtually the same as those presented in 1 John 2:18-27 and 4:1-6. This may be an indication that this was an individual letter, repeating what he had previously sent out in the general letter (1 John), but found that this particular group had not received that one.

See the comment on this topic in 1 John 2 & 4 for a more complete explanation of the last clause here.

8. be continuously seeing to yourselves (looking at yourselves), **to the intent that you people may not destroy** (or: lose) **what we** [other MSS: you folks] **did** (produced; worked for), **but rather may receive back full wages.**

He is describing the life of the community like a building project, or a crop planted – familiar metaphors in Paul and Jesus. This negative admonition is the reverse side of the "keeping, guarding, observing and maintaining" that he spoke of in 1 John 2:3, and elsewhere. Paul gave a similar admonition in 1 Cor. 3:6-23. There Paul speak of the "**the wisdom** (cleverness; skill) **of this world System** (or: pertaining to this ordered and controlling arrangement of culture, religion and politics; or: from this secular society)" in vs. 19, then cites Ps. 94:11 that says,

"the reasonings (thought processes; designs) **of the wise ones, that they are and continue being fruitless and to no purpose"** (vs. 20).

These were examples of those community members or groups that built upon God's "house" with wood hay and straw – things that would not stand the tests of God's dealings (fires). In vs. 14 Paul told them,

"If anyone's work which he built upon [it] will remain, he will receive wages (pay; compensation)."

John is saying the same thing here. He is using, as did Paul, analogies from the physical life of the community to point out that God's reign is in many ways similar. But our wages and rewards are things of the spirit. When we sow love into people, we reap love back.

9. **Everyone leading forward** (going ahead; leading in advance; [some MSS: transgressing]) **and yet not remaining** (abiding; dwelling; staying) **within Christ's teaching does not have God; the person remaining** (dwelling; abiding; staying) **within that teaching, this one continuously has** (or: holds; possesses) **both Father and Son** (or: the Father and the Son).

The false teachers thought that they were "leading in advance," or pressing forward in the realm of spirit and glory. But their self-centered efforts to be spiritual blinded them to the fact that they were not loving others, meeting their needs, serving them – as Jesus taught and demonstrated. They were on a religious quest into the heights, but forgot that the good news is the God had come here to dwell with people and make their communities His home. They were caught away in the raptures of their own imaginations and deceptive experiences, while leaving Lazarus outside their doors (Lu. 16:19-31). And they are unaware that they do **"not have God."** They have illusion.

But the group that remained in union with Christ's teaching **"has** (holds; possesses) **both Father and Son."** The verb that John used here is astounding, and the present tense instructs us that this is our constant possession. Can we hold and possess God? Yes, because He has given Himself to us and a bridegroom gives himself to his bride. Paul teaches us that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the called-out community (Eph 5:25). We have and hold both God and one another, in love. And as Christ loved His covenant family and **"gave Himself for her"** so are we to love others, thus carrying on the life and mission of Jesus.

10. **If a certain person is continually coming toward you and yet is not normally carrying** (or: habitually bearing; continually bringing) **this teaching, do not repeatedly take him into a house, and do not continuously say to him, "Rejoice!"** (= giving him a greeting).

11. **You see, the person continually telling him to be rejoicing** (= greeting him as an associate) **is continually sharing in common his worthless deeds**

(having fellowship with his acts which bring a gush of misery; maintaining partnership with his wicked and evil works; participating in his painful, toilsome and useless actions).

To understand what on the surface seems like a harsh admonition, we need to first of all note that the verb **"take"** is in the present tense. They were not to **"repeatedly"** bring such folks into **"[the] house"** – i.e., into their covenant community, for the called-out groups of that day met in homes. They were not to receive them into union with their love-community because their false teachings were void of love, which was the very essence of the covenant group. Their teachings were self-centered and divisive, and promoted elitism.

Verse 11 gives the reason for this behavior, which at first glance can seem un-Christlike. Telling them to **"Rejoice"** in their teachings would be hypocrisy and give a false approval of what they were teaching. Furthermore, in that culture, such a greeting was a marker of social union with the person, and as John said, would indicate that the covenant community was in continued **"sharing in common with [their] worthless deeds."**

The parenthetical expansions of vs. 11's final clause paint the dire picture of joining such folks in common partnership with their group. This is in line with Jesus separating His sheep from His

kids, in Matt. 25:31-46, and His taking the kingdom away from the corrupt Jewish leadership (of which this very parable spoke). In the same way Jesus spoke of shutting the door to those that did not have the "oil" of the Anointing so as to be the Light of the world, when they tried to enter the wedding festivities (symbol of the celebrating of the arrival of the age of the Messiah – Matt. 25:1-12). Cf also Matt. 10:14; Lu. 10:10. We can love folks that are caught in such deception, but until they are joined unto the Lord in His Truth and Reality, there must for a time be a separation from what they are doing or teaching.

12. Having many things to write to you folks, I resolved not to – by means of paper and ink. For I am expecting (or: hoping) to come to y'all and to speak mouth-to-mouth, so that our [other MSS: your] joy can be "having been filled" (= be completely happy)!

13. The children of your chosen-out (selected) sister (= female fellow believer; or: = sister community of summoned forth folks) draw you to themselves (= greet you).

John, the old man, was being to them a father. His solidarity with them is unmistakable. The word normally translated "greet" here (*aspazomai*) literally mean "to embrace," and thus "**draw**" to oneself. This is a beautiful picture, and is instructive, for John uses it of those who were in another town, where John was staying – but it was used of welcoming someone into a person's house, in direct contrast to what he had advised in vs. 10. The children (probably = members) of her "**chosen-out sister**" were including her (the "you's" of vs. 13 are singular, so this closing is speaking directly to the "elect Lacy") and her "children" into the house (body) of Christ, welcoming them as joint-participants in the Messiah. Although perhaps a letter written to an individual woman, the message has obviously been for the entire congregation that likely meets in her home.

My normal indicator of a "you" being plural has been to add the word "folks," or "people," but I decided to end these comments with a smile, and follow J.R. Daniel Kirk's suggestion, "y'all" for plural personal pronouns (ibid. p 58). As to the MS differences on "**our** [your]" in vs. 12, Nyland's translation resolves this by rendering the clause: "so that we will be totally happy" (ibid. p 483). On this same phrase, see: 1 John 1:4; John 15:11; 16:24.

Robinson places this letter in the same time period of 2 John.

1. **The old person, to Gaius, the beloved one, whom I myself am continuously loving in** (or: within the midst of) **truth and reality** (or: truly loving).

This is obviously a personal letter to a man that was likely a dear friend (vs. 2) who would have known John by this curious reference to himself. From this we are to assume that it was written by the same person as 2 John. In this opening we see again the importance to John of "**truth and reality**," as he uses word *alētheia* to set the scene, the realm of this new creation "within the midst of" which he dwells.

2. **O beloved one! I am continuously having** (or: thinking and speaking) **goodness, ease and well-being** (or: wishing and professing loudly; claiming) **concerning all things [for] you to be constantly having a prosperous journey** (or: to progressively travel a good path; to habitually be prospered unto success; to be continuously helped along the Way) **and to be constantly sound and healthy [in mind, thought and body] just as** (or: to the same degree as) **your soul** (inner being; or: = your life) **is progressively being prospered on its journey** (helped along the Way; prospered unto success; caused to travel the Good Path).

What an expression from a heart of love. This form of address, "**O beloved one**" was common among Christians (*cf* Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 4:14; 10:14; 1 Pet. 2:11), but it could also been used from close personal relationship and argue for the rendering "**old person**" in vs. 1, as likewise in 2 John. The first verb of the first clause is commonly translated "pray" and it might fit into the category of this English word. It is *euchomai*, a shortened version of the usual *proseuchomai*. Ann Nyland, in an extended note in her volume *The Source New Testament* (Smith and Sterling Publishing, 2004, p 250-1), stress that it does not mean "pray" (and here Bultmann concurs, *ibid.* p 97), but rather "claim, or vow." The literal meaning is "have goodness, ease and well-being." It would seem that John is experiencing the goodness, ease and well-being while he is considering everything concerning Gaius "**journey**" in life.

3. **You see, I was made exceedingly glad** (or: I am caused to greatly rejoice) **at the coming of the brothers** (= fellow believers or members), **from time to time, and their bearing witness of your [being] in the Truth, according as you yourself are continually walking about within Truth**

(or: testifying to the reality concerning you in correspondence to the fact that you yourself are habitually living your life in union with truth and reality).

His "**having goodness, ease and well-being**" (in vs. 2) from considering Gaius' situation in regard to the Truth, gained expression in his greatly rejoicing when his associates brought the news about him. The parenthetical alternate rendering presents another way of understanding the Greek of the last clause. Both readings make sense. The same sentiment is expressed in 2 John 4. The reason for the joy is Gaius' conduct in life. Gaius is actually living out what he was taught when he learned of the presence of the Messiah.

4. **I do not presently have greater joy than from these things: that I am repeatedly hearing that my own children** (born-ones) **are continuously walking about within the Truth** (= living their lives in union with reality).

Again we see the closeness of their relationship: John considers Gaius as one of his own children in this new reality. Gaius is continuing the story of Jesus, walking the Path of the Truth within the Life of the Messiah (John 14:6). In observing this relationship, we can think of Paul referring to himself as a father to the community in Corinth (1 Cor. 4:15). In these examples we are instructed concerning the family characteristics of the reign of God – Who is our Father.

5. **O beloved one! You are continually doing** (performing; constructing; forming; producing) **a faithful and loyal thing** (act of loyalty and allegiance), **whatsoever you yourself may work unto** (or: actively accomplish into the midst of) **the brothers** (= fellow believers and members of the family) **and unto** (or: into) **the strangers** (or: foreigners) –

John commends Gaius' work and accomplishments within the covenant community – the local family members – and also "**unto the strangers.**" This last term can apply to itinerant missionaries (as Bultmann suggests, p 98), but it would not be limited to such folks. The communities were to be a light unto the ethnic multitudes (or: nations), and so this comment could refer to his hospitality to and care for alien residents, or visitors from other countries. As with Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-39), bringing God's sovereign activity to foreigners is an important means of extending Christ's existential presence into the world.

Notice also John's referring to Gaius' active accomplishment as "**a faithful and loyal thing**" – a central aspect of "believing into" Christ: acts of loyalty and allegiance, which are voluntary charitable actions. The living-out of our allegiance to Him is a core quality of being the "kingdom" and of being "in Him."

6. **who bear witness of you for the love** (or: testified to your love) **before** (in the sight of; in the presence of) **[the] called-out community – [for] whom you will do** (or: perform; produce) **beautifully** (finely; ideally), **sending [them] forward** (or: escorting them on; = attending to their needs in their travels, giving them supplies and finances) **in a manner worthy of God** (or: = in a way equal to God's value of them),

Again, this could refer both to the missionaries (or, itinerant teachers), or to actual foreigners. Members of either category would "**bear witness of [his] love,**" either within the community or to the people to whom these folks were "**sent forward.**" Note the parenthetical paraphrase of this term, showing the practical consideration involved for folks being sent on. Treatment of people in this manner expresses "God's value of them," so in doing so we are true representatives of our King.

7. **for they came out for the sake of** (or: went forth in behalf of) **the Name, continually taking** (or: receiving) **not even one thing from the nations** (the ethnic multitudes; the non-Israelites).

Probably the best reading of this verse is to see it as referring to the itinerant missionaries, but like the Queen of Sheba of old, pilgrims from nearby countries could well have traveled to the closest towns of Asia minor to learn more about this new teaching, and may have done it on their own without seeking support from those of those nations from which they came.

Notice "**for the sake of** (in behalf of) **the Name.**" This designation presents a picture to us of 1) the importance of the "**Name**" that it would be used to designate the whole of the Christian movement of that time; 2) the fact that the name "Jesus," or "Jesus the Messiah," was considered the embodiment of the message, or as vs. 8 puts it, "**the Truth;**" or 3) that either the name Jesus, or the designation Christ/Messiah, was shorthand for "the Way, the Truth and the Life."

8. **We ourselves, then, are constantly obligated to continuously take [them] up, while placing ourselves underneath to support such people as these, to the end that we would progressively come to be folks working together** (co-workers) **in** (or: for; by; with) **the Truth** (or: reality).

So here John describes the responsive quality of the loyal community of faith: actually attending to the needs of such folks. It is this care for those with needs that makes us "co-workers" with God (1 Cor. 3:9), or as John puts it here, "**folks working together in the Truth.**" On this last phrase, also consider the meanings on offer from the prepositions that represent the other functions of the dative case: for the Truth; by the Truth; with the reality [e.g., of the new creation].

As is the case throughout the NT, there is no expressed preposition for this phrase – thus the options, based upon the case of the noun.

9. **I wrote something to (or: for) the called-out community, but Diotrephes, the one constantly liking to be their leader (to be pre-eminent among them and dominate them), is habitually not thoroughly receiving or accepting us (or: repeatedly not fully acknowledging us).**

Since no accusation of false teaching is brought up, Bultmann (saying that Harnack long ago pointed it out) suggests that it is an issue of "congregational organization" (ibid. p 110). From John's characterization of Diotrephes' conduct of liking to dominate people, Bultmann is probably correct. However, it may have been that there was a personality conflict between Diotrephes and John, and the former did not want to acknowledge anything whatsoever that John may have said to the group. Verses 9 and 10 peel back the layers of ordinary human relations to give us a peek at some of the things with which the folks whom the Messiah sent out had to deal.

10. **Because of this, if I can come, I will remind him of his actions (or: call to mind his works and bring them up [for discussion]) which he is repeatedly doing (or: progressively producing) by worthless, irresponsible and abusive words – unjustified charges (or: in messages causing a gush of misery; by ideas leading to painful labor; with evil or wicked verbal expressions; by laying out thoughts leading to a bad situation), continually speaking nonsense of us or gossiping against us, and then, not being satisfied or content upon these things, neither is he himself fully receiving or accepting (showing complete hospitality to) the brothers (= fellow believers; Family members; [or: = the itinerant missionaries of 5-8, above]). And further, those continuously intending (or: determining) [to do so] he is habitually hindering (or: forbidding) – even casting [them] out of the called-out community!**

Whatever the issue was, John is not at all concerned about being able to handle things when he arrives. He will address the issue with him. We see from the verb tense which John chose that this man has a habitual problem (Bultmann says, "The present tense indicates the customary conduct of Diotrephes..." ibid. p 101) and is causing disruption and division within the covenant community and denying hospitality to strangers.

We find in this verse the same intensified verb "**fully or thoroughly receiving or accepting**" (epi-dechomai) that John used in vs. 9 in regard to himself and his associates. Here we see it as signifying "receive (as a guest)," i.e., show complete hospitality to someone.

It is not clear from the text whether those whom Diotrephes excludes from the communities are members of the community, or the strangers to whom he refuses hospitality. Bultmann thought the former, suspecting that they were "followers of the elder, or at least his line of thinking in the congregation" and footnotes Schnackenburg (note 13) as also interpreting it this way (ibid. p 101).

11. **O beloved one [i.e., Gaius]! Do not have the habit of imitating this ugly thing (or: that which ought not to be; the base; the worthless; that which is of bad quality; the malicious; the wicked; the evil), but rather the Good (or: the thing of excellent quality; the virtuous)! The person habitually doing good (progressively producing virtue; repeatedly creating excellence) is continuously existing from out of God; the one habitually doing what is ugly (base; what ought not to be; worthless; evil) has not seen or perceived God.**

The "**ugly thing** (that which ought not to be)" had two parts: the denial of hospitality and the casting of folks out of the community. The "**Good and virtuous**" refers to acts of hospitality and inclusion of strangers or foreigners. In the restatement of Asian rhetoric, John emphasizes his point by connecting the dots: "**The person habitually doing good** (progressively producing virtue; repeatedly creating excellence) **is continuously existing from out of God,**" while those doing "**what is ugly**, etc." have "**not seen or perceived God.**" Bultmann describes the last two statements of this verse – connected without a conjunction – as "antithetical parallelism."

12. **Demetrius has been attested by all and by the Truth itself. Now we ourselves are also continuously bearing witness** (or: testifying), **and you have seen, and so know, that our witness** (testimony; evidence) **is** (exists being) **real and true.**

Nothing is known of this Demetrius. He may have been the bearer of this letter to the community, and thus the recommendation. John says that all the folks of their area attest to him, as well as "**the Truth itself**" (which may refer to Christ, the new Reality evident in Demetrius, or the truth of the revelation within the message that they live). The "**we**" of the second sentence refers to John and his associates, and he calls to their experiential knowledge of John and his circle of friends – that their testimony and evidence is "**real and true**" for they have "**seen**" it. The verb "**seen... know**" is the second perfect form *oida* of the obsolete *eidō* (to see).

13. **I have been having** (or: holding) **many things to write to you, however, I do not normally want to be constantly writing to you by means of pen and ink!**

This is very similar to John 20:30, but its purpose is simply to say that he would say all that when he next sees them, as vs. 14 explains.

14. **So I am continuing in expecting** (or: hoping) **to see you immediately, and then we will speak mouth to mouth!**

This "mouth to mouth" is the same thing as "face to face" – i.e., in their presence. John expected this to be "**immediately**" – the familiar *eutheos* that is frequently used in the Gospels.

15. **Peace** (or: Harmony; [= Shalom]) **to you. The friends continually greet** (pay respect to; send salutations to) **you. Be continuously greeting the friends by name** (= individually).

The closing of this letter corresponds to the Jewish wish, which actually signified well-being and prosperity. The Greek term also carries the meaning of "Harmony," which would be most appropriate in consideration of the activities of Diotrephes. The first "**friends**" refer to John's associates, who were likely also friends of Gaius. Note the singular "**you**" (no "folks" added), as this is a personal letter. He again uses the word "**friends**," now to describe those of Gaius' community. This time it might be referring to the associates of Gaius in the same way that John used it of his own circle of friends, or, he might be using it emphatically to refer to those who supported John and Gaius and who opposed the assumed "authority" of Diotrephes.

Here, as indicated in the parenthetical paraphrase, "**by name**" was an idiom meaning "individually." In this we see John emphasizing the intimacy of his relationship to them.