

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE:

A STUDY OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

A Thesis

Submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

of the University of Edinburgh

by

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December 1960

TO MY MOTHER

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM: ITS DEFINITION AND TREATMENT

I. THE PROBLEM TO BE STUDIED

The problem confronted by this dissertation is that of discerning the true message of the First Epistle of John. This would seem to be a simple matter since the 105 verses comprising the epistle have a small Greek vocabulary with few semasiological difficulties. But a closer look at this little writing reveals why it is that so many scholars refer to it as a homily without apparent unity. I John displays a deceiving appearance of being a series of rather disconnected aphorisms. Our task is to discover if this is true.

Historical criticism must play an important part in helping to decide the true message since the writer did not compose his epistle in a vacuum. A central thread running through this dissertation concerns the extent to which John was influenced by his contemporary society and cultural environment. A proper understanding of the history surrounding John is essential to a sound perception of his didactic appeal. Our chief problem then is to uncover the real message which this writer is presenting to the Church of his day, and to analyze the method and manner employed in its proclamation.

II. THE NEED FOR SUCH A STUDY

Such a study is needful at the present time for four reasons. First, the heavy emphasis on historical criticism of the Synoptics has

served to divert the attention that scholars might otherwise have shared with the Johannine literature. There has been the raising of the Synoptic problem and its apparent solution in the Source-theory. In addition, form-criticism, now over forty years old, has gone to the extreme of declaring that the Sitz im Leben of the "apothegm" and "paradigm" is found in the primitive Church rather than in the life and teaching of Jesus. Then, there was the nineteenth century search for the Jesus of history that appeared to end with Schweitzer's pronouncement that such a Jesus will never be known. But this conclusion to the search was more apparent than real. There is now a new quest of the historical Jesus that finds it necessary to take issue with the kerygmatic theology of Rudolph Bultmann based on the demythologizing of Scripture. Amidst all this literary flurry, the writings of John have received infrequent and inadequate treatment.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has served to throw the spotlight back upon John and this presents the second reason for the present study. The similarity of terminology has led some scholars to contend that the very etiology of the Johannine works lies in the foothills of the Judean plateau in the ancient community of Khirbet Qumran. When such conclusions are arrived at, however, it is usually because I John has not been properly taken into account. In many ways the First Epistle is illuminative of the Fourth Gospel and certainly neither one should be studied without the other, especially in a historical sense.

Thirdly, there has been no recent exegetical study made of I John

to demonstrate the structural unity of the epistle. Even a hasty glance at the English text indicates that John is answering point blank certain watchwords that enemies of the Church are freely employing. His answers come in the positive presentment of Christianity in the form of topics discussed in random style rather than a systematic, orderly dialectic. A commentary's verse-by-verse approach often does little to relieve the seeming obfuscation of this writing.

Finally, the Church in the twentieth century is faced with the challenge of how best to conduct a dialogue with a world that is becoming more and more existentially concerned. The nihilistic attitude of anguish, abandonment and despair of Sartres, Camus and their disciples demands that the Church rethink the Gospel, especially by scholarly research in the Bible, in order to discern how the primitive Church confronted and conquered similar challenges. No literature in the New Testament bears such fruit for contemporary knowledge ^{as} ~~than~~ does the message of I John which places the accommodation, eclecticism, and universalism of the world over against the demanding, unswerving, and unique thus saith of the Lord of the Gospel. Through it all, John explains how the dialogue between Church and world is never to be discouraged nor broken off, but entered into with a vigorous and confident testimony to the self-revelation of the one, true God, with confident assurance of a victory already achieved.

III. THE GENERAL OUTLINE

The writer of I John makes repeated reference to seven major

concepts or themes, leaving them for short periods only to return for further explication. They are eternal life, sin, born of God, knowing God, the Incarnation, love of the brother, and abiding in God. It is quite evident from what John says that the false prophets of his day were directly concerned with all of these concepts. John frequently introduces the heretical position by saying, "If any one says," and then he concludes by giving the correct Christian interpretation. Most of these themes involve watchwords of the Gnostics, and John is anxious to put the record straight in order that the Christians may be reassured in their faith. The main body of this dissertation is composed of detailed examinations of these seven concepts.

In addition to these seven major topics and an excursus on Gnosticism, seven lesser concepts are discussed in appendices. They concern the meaning of "old and new commandment," John's teachings on prayer, the meaning of "children, fathers, and young men" in 2:12-14, John's concept of the devil, the meaning of world, parousia, and anointing. These appendices serve to throw light on the main body of discussion.

IV. TREATMENT IN THE PAST AND PRESENT

The finest work on I John, in English or German, is Robert Law's "The Tests of Life." But this was written in 1909. Since then there have been few monographs, and in the last fifteen years none at all, that have performed research in I John to a critical depth. This is to be deplored particularly because in 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were brought out of their caves. Some scholars have simultaneously been

brought out of their timeworn shells of tradition and have been forced to rethink the whole Johannine problem. This, of itself, has been good. But, as usually happens in the initial stages following the excitement of unearthing "buried treasure," the relevance of the Qumran findings upon Biblical criticism may be overstated. This is especially true in the field of John's writings where some scholars now feel that a Gnostic environment is to be discounted because the Johannine language shows a philological dependence upon the Jewish sect at Qumran. We shall discuss whether such extreme conclusions may be logically drawn, particularly from the standpoint of John's First Epistle. Our own hypotheses and conclusions can only be provisional since much more needs to be known about the Essene sect that lived on the edge of Wady Qumran valley.

V. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

This dissertation is an exegetical study of I John in the light of historical criticism. The chapters dealing with the major topics under discussion are made up of logical, sequential segments. These sections are composed of various verses in I John that pertain to the topic under discussion. We are certain that such a procedure does not distort John's thinking, but actually assists in clarifying his central message.

Each major section is preceded by our own translation of the passages. The translation is not always smooth flowing, nor is it meant to be. We are not striving to achieve good English but rather to bring out the meaning of the Greek.

The key to the translation is as follows:

() - Explanation, or paraphrase, or English idiom faithful to the Greek translation.

[] - Strong alternate reading, or different rendering of the Greek word.

It has been a God-given privilege to labor in this field. The little letter of I John exerts an influence on the total message of the New Testament far out of proportion to its minute size. We have never felt at any time that this study was comparable to the myopic labor expended on one small piece of a mosaic at the expense of missing the total design. On the contrary, it has been more akin to touching a little electric wire that carries with it the full force and power of all the current coming into the house.

It is our earnest prayer that this dissertation successfully communicates the power breathed into the Scriptures by God's Spirit to the end that Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, will be glorified.

"To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever."

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN: ITS TEXTUAL BACKGROUND AND RELATION TO THE FOURTH GOSPEL

I. HISTORY OF THE TEXT

Manuscripts

Fortunately for the student of the First Epistle of John there are few problems or difficulties in determining the true text. All the major manuscripts are in general agreement.

The primary uncial MSS (vellum MSS from the fourth to tenth centuries written in large capital letters) containing the text of the First Epistle of John, and placed in the order of their purity and reliability are: (1) B - Codex Vaticanus, now in Rome; 4th century; (2) \aleph - Codex Sinaiticus, in London; 4th century; (3) A - Codex Alexandrinus, in London; 5th century; (4) C - Codex Ephraemi, a palimpsest now in Paris (4:3-5:21 missing); 5th century.

In addition to these primary MSS there are also three secondary uncial MSS, more than 200 cursive MSS (minuscule MSS from the 10th to 15th centuries), and Old Latin, Syriac and Egyptian versions.

The major manuscript problem is the variant readings due to glosses and even these are few in number. Perhaps the most familiar gloss is the one found in 5:7-8 (verse numbering taken from Nestle's text) which concerns the "heavenly witnesses."¹

Probably the best rendering we have of this letter at the present time is the Nestle text which is based on the editions of

Tischendorf (1869), Westcott and Hort (1881) and Bernhard Weiss (1894).

Literary History

If the First Epistle of John were written by 110 A.D., as was probably the case (C. H. Dodd believes that the Epistle was known in the province of Asia by 125 A.D.), it is strange that the apologists and fathers of the early and middle second century at no time refer to the letter by name or assert that it was written by the Apostle John. Such references and assertions appear later.

The early writers can only be suspected of being acquainted with the First Epistle because their writings reflect faint echoes and reminders of the language and/or thought of the Epistle. Such writers and writings include Clement of Rome (c. 100 A.D.), Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna (c. 115 A.D.), the Didache (c. 150 A.D.), Hermas (c. 130 A.D.), Epistle to Diognetus (c. 150 A.D.), Athenagoras (c. 180 A.D.), Epistle of Barnabas (120 A.D. "came in the flesh," Cf. I John 4:2; "the son of God appeared," Cf. I John 3:8), Ignatius (116 A.D.), Justin Martyr (c. 150 A.D.). These writings do not quote directly from the First Epistle of John nor do the authors mention John and his letter. Eusebius says that Papias (120-160 A.D.) quoted from "the former epistle of John" but we have no statement directly from Papias to that effect.

It is only in the latter half of the second century that writings are found in which the authors refer to the First Epistle as having been written by the Apostle John. Among these writers are Tertullian (160-230 A.D.), Irenaeus (c. 185 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (189-219 A.D.), Origen (184-253 A.D.), Muratorian Canon by Hippolytus

(c. 200 A.D.), Dionysius of Alexandria (247-265 A.D.), and Cyprian (c. 250 A.D.). Eusebius placed I John among the homologoumena c. 325 A.D.

It was in the second century that the First Epistle of John was translated into Syriac (Peshitta) and Old Latin.

*Pesh. not
2nd c.!*

The Syrian Church took only I John into the Peshitta; and down to the fifth century only the three major Catholic Epistles, James, I Peter and I John, were reckoned as Scripture. The evidence suggests that the Johannine Epistles achieved canonical status one at a time in the West, and that in the order in which they appear in the New Testament.²

II. RELATION OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Author

Let it be stated at the outset that we seriously doubt the apostolic authorship of the First Epistle of John. There is far too much evidence to the contrary. And yet we must hurriedly add that there is no proof forthcoming on either side. Such proof may someday come to light out of the warm sands of the Middle East, but for the present the identity of the writer of the First Epistle of John and the year in which he wrote are matters for conjecture only. As Hoskyns and Davey say,

No one knows who wrote the Johannine writings; and it is better to read the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles, and to discuss the meaning of what is there set down, than to pretend to a knowledge which we do not possess.³

There is a wide range of opinion concerning the authorship. The viewpoints may be broken down into the following categories: (1) the same author for the Fourth Gospel and First Epistle, the Apostle John;

(2) the Fourth Gospel and First Epistle by different authors; (3) the same author for the Gospel and Epistle, but not the Apostle.

Among those who maintain that the Apostle John is the author of both the Fourth Gospel and First Epistle are Ebrard, Westcott, Howard, Grimm, B. Weiss, Jülicher, Law, Rothe, Schaff, William Alexander, and Wordsworth. They present their case in such terms as these: it would only have been superfluous for the writer to declare his identity; the Johannine literature is the high water mark in the New Testament and one cannot ascribe such a peak to a literary forger; the characters in the Fourth Gospel are so sharply delineated that the author must have been an eye-witness; it was by the mercy of God that the Apostle's life was extended to the beginning of the second century after Christ; John 19:35 ("He who saw it has borne witness . . . that you also may believe") practically decides the question of apostolic authorship because the Church Fathers demanded that canonical writings come from eye-witnesses; finally, there is the heavy weight of Church tradition.

There are others who do not believe with Rothe that, "the First Epistle of John stands or falls with the Fourth Gospel;" such scholars as C. K. Barrett, H. J. Holtzmann, Hans Windisch, C. H. Dodd, Hans Wendt, S. G. Lange, Baur, Welhausen, and E. von Dobschütz. They declare that these writings come from two different hands. Most of the proponents of this view base their contention on the purported differences in phrases, style and concepts. Hans Wendt had the novel theory that the author of the Fourth Gospel was a redactor using material from a Source, this Source being the author of the First Epistle. Dodd thinks that

the author of the First Epistle is the Presbyter who was a disciple of the Evangelist and a student of his work. Baur and the Tubingen school said that the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle were written by different authors in the second century.

Before stating the reasons why other scholars (e.g. Strachan, Deissman, T. W. Manson, Harnack, E. H. Abbott, Wendtland, Baumgarten and A. E. Brooke) feel that both writings come from one author, but one who is not necessarily the Apostle John, let us reply to some of the views presented above. It may be true that the writer would not need to declare his identity, but the use of the word "apostle" would assert his authority. And it does seem strange that under such circumstances the writer, if he were an apostle, would fail to declare his status that allows him to write as boldly as he does. Paul and Peter do not hesitate to declare their ground of authority in their epistles. And if one or both of Peter's letters were written by someone other than the apostle, it is doubly apparent that great importance is placed upon the word "apostle" as signifying one with special authority: I Peter 1:1, II Peter 1:1.

Furthermore, it is unfair to designate the writer as a "literary forger of the second century." Nowhere, in either the Fourth Gospel or First Epistle, does the writer claim to be the Apostle John. To call the author a "forger" is to beg the question.

In addition, those who maintain that the writer was an eye-witness because of the sharp delineation of characters in the Fourth Gospel and the faultless preservation of Jesus' words "in every detail" are

overstating their case. No biography could be written of any character in the Fourth Gospel if recourse were made to that book alone; and who is in a position to say that the reporting of Jesus' words is "faultless?"

Wordsworth says, "By the mercy of God, the life of the Apostle and Evangelist St. John, the beloved disciple of Christ, was extended to the beginning of the second century after Christ."⁴ This reverent language, more pious than proved, perhaps does a greater disservice to God than it brings Him glory.

B. H. Westcott believes that John 19:35 practically decides the question of apostolic authorship. Strachan, on the other hand, understands this verse to indicate that the Evangelist is claiming the authority of the apostle for what is written in the Fourth Gospel, and thus is evidence why the apostle could not have written the Gospel.

The strongest argument for the position that the Apostle John wrote both the Gospel and the Epistles is that the Church Fathers demanded the works of eye-witnesses for the canon in order to fight the infiltration of heathen ideas. It is generally believed that I John was fully accepted into the canon before the end of the second century. But this means that approximately 100 years might have elapsed between the time of its writing and its canonical acceptance, and in that period of time the Church could have erred in attributing the authorship to John the Apostle. Communication and transportation were not then what they are today.

Scholars who go into the details of the style, concepts and language of the two writings to prove that the writers were different

persons are countered by others who take the same three categories to substantiate the unity of authorship. It is our belief that the latter are correct, but it is our further contention that this author was probably not the Apostle John.

The style of the two writings would seem to indicate that both writings had their source in one writer. In both we find similar usage of parataxis, asyndeton, parallelism, antithesis, the pronoun ἑαυτοῦ is used substantivally, there are few particles, a limited vocabulary, and the expegetic ὅτι, ὅτι.

The grammatical characteristics of I John . . . and the close relationship which they bear to those of the Fourth Gospel tend to point to the unity of the authorship of the two books insofar as it is possible to judge on the ground of grammatical style.⁵

The concepts of the Fourth Gospel and First Letter of John are likewise not as opposed as some scholars, such as C. H. Dodd, indicate. W. F. Howard gives an acceptable answer to Dodd in discussing eschatology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus' death, and Gnosticism as found in the two writings. Concerning eschatology, the Gospel has a strong element of consummation (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 14:3, 18, 28) which is not out of harmony with the First Epistle where the idea of antichrist is spiritualized to presage the imminent appearance of Jesus. As for the Person of the Holy Spirit, He witnesses to the revelation of the incarnate life in both writings: John 7:39; 14:26; 16:13, 14; I John 3:24b; 4:2; 5:7-9. Both the Gospel and First Epistle are strongly opposed to Gnosticism and use language, including the technical phrases of the Gnostics, to commend the Christian message to the contemporary Graeco-Roman world. Howard

summarizes by saying, "There is so much that is common to Gospel and Epistle, both in language and in thought, that presumptive evidence favors the substantial unity of authorship."⁶

Both the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle use a specialized language. Such words as life, light, truth, pleroma, knowledge, etc. are similar to the terminology of the Gnostics.⁷ But the similarity does not denote equivalence; it is only for purposes of refutation. Both the Gospel and First Epistle use these special words in the same distinctive way with the same meanings.

It is highly improbable that the author of the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle is the Apostle John. Why, then, has the contrary opinion been vigorously held since the early centuries? It is Irenaeus (185 A.D.) who first advances the idea that the Apostle John was the writer when, in a letter to Florinus, he records that Polycarp (c. 115 A.D.) was a personal disciple of John. However, Polycarp himself nowhere mentions John. Irenaeus (Adv. Haer. III 1:1) says that John, the disciple of the Lord who leaned upon Jesus' breast, published a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia, this tenure being until the time of Trajan.

The first clue to the mazes of this later Johannine tradition lies in the strong tendency, felt as soon as the canon began to be formed, to connect any gospel or epistle with the apostles, directly or indirectly. . . . This error [tendency to confuse John the Apostle and John the Presbyter] due to or fostered by the mistake of Irenaeus, threw practically the whole of the subsequent tradition out of focus.⁸

Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus in the latter part of the second century A.D., referred to the Apostle John's residence in Ephesus and

his burial there. However, it is felt by many that Polycrates was mistaken here just as he was in declaring that there were two Philips: that Philip the Apostle and not Philip the Evangelist was at Hierapolis.⁹ We should also mention that John was such a common name that mistaken identity might easily have occurred in this instance. J. E. Carpenter cites several examples of mistaken identification in early tradition.¹⁰

It is surprising that Ignatius of Antioch (c. 116 A.D.) has nothing to say about John and his residence in Asia. In writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul is the only apostle mentioned. Silence is never conclusive, but it does raise doubts.

If there is the possibility that the Apostle John did not write the First Epistle, is there a record of someone else at that time who might have written it? Yes, and Papias provides this information for us when he says in his "Exposition of Oracles of the Lord,"

If on any occasion any one who had been a follower of the Elders came, I used to inquire about the discourse of the Elders--what Andrew or Peter said, or Philip, or Thomas or James, or John or Matthew, or any of the Lord's disciples; and what Aristion and the Elder John, the disciples of the Lord, say.¹¹

Papias is undoubtedly referring to two Johns, one the apostle who is mentioned in the same context as the other apostles, with the other John being an elder who is referred to along with Aristion.

B. H. Streeter points out that apostles and men who were not apostles might be referred to collectively as Elders but it is another matter to speak of an individual apostle as an elder.¹² Besides, if the "elder John" is the apostle would he be put on a par with Aristion and indeed mentioned second?

We might arbitrarily construct a chronology as follows:

Apostles: 6-71 A.D.; Elders: 40-105 A.D.¹³ Papias: 70-155 A.D. Papias would thus have been 20-30 years of age in 90-100 A.D. when I John was written by John the Presbyter, aged 50-60. why 6?

There is some evidence, albeit very weak, that the Apostle John may have been martyred before 70 A.D. Moffatt gives three reasons why he believes this to be true: (1) the prophecy found in Mark 10:39; (2) Papias declared that the Apostle John "was killed by the Jews" (this statement was attributed to Papias by the Church in the fifth century A.D.); (3) the calendars of the Church in the East and West commemorate the martyr-death of the Apostle John.

Strachan believes that the disciple mentioned in John 21:24 is already dead; this death being attested to by 21:23.¹⁴ Concerning these and other arguments for the early death of John we can only concur with the Bishop of Gloucester who said, "I do not think the arguments convincing but they throw much uncertainty over the whole problem."

Another factor militating against the apostolic authorship of the First Epistle of John is the numerous legends that surround the figure of John. When we see all the stories related about him, so many of which are obviously only tradition, it raises the distinct possibility that here is one to whom the authorship of certain early second century writings might be ascribed.

Among the legends of the Apostle John are these:

(1) A young man, brought into the Church by John, later becomes

a bank robber. The Apostle rides to the robbers' den and there as he cries out, "Believe, Christ hath sent me!" the youth repents and returns to the Church.

(2) In extreme old age, when too weak to walk into the assembly, he was carried in and he would lift his trembling hands and simply say, "Little children, love one another." When asked why he constantly repeated this expression, John's answer was, "Because this is the command of the Lord; and nothing is done unless this thing be done."

(3) Jerome gives Tertullian as the authority for the story that John was taken to Rome and cast into a caldron of boiling oil which had no ill effects on him; to the contrary, John emerged more pure and vigorous.

(4) On a voyage from Tyre to Asia Minor, he was shipwrecked.

(5) John had a tame partridge for the sole purpose of relaxing his intellectual powers. He told a passing hunter, "If you unbend your bow to prevent its being useless, I unbend my mind for the same reason."

(6) On returning from Patmos he observed a funeral procession passing through the gates of Ephesus. Upon inquiry he discovered that the dead person was Drusiana, a dear friend who had often provided him lodging. John prayed earnestly for the return of her life and she rose, returned to her house, and John took up his abode with her.

(7) John drank from a poisoned cup intended for his death, but suffered no ill effects.

(8) No rain fell on the uncovered oratory near Ephesus where it is said he wrote his Gospel.

(9) Two wealthy men sold all their possessions to follow him, but when they later repented, John turned pebbles and sticks into gold nuggets and ingots telling them to take back their riches as they regretted exchanging them for heaven.

(10) Feeling death approach, John ordered preparation of his grave, then lay down in it and died. Thereafter strange movements were noticed in the earth covering the body.

(11) It was due to John that the temple of Diana was razed to the ground.

(12) As true priest of the Lord, at Ephesus John wore a plate of gold on his brow on which was inscribed the sacred name, Credat Judaeus Apella.

(13) Eusebius records the narrative given by Irenaeus of an oral account from Polycarp that John ran screaming from the public baths that the roof would collapse because the arch heretic, Cerinthus, was within.

(14) John was translated like Enoch and Elijah.

The Apostolic Constitutions (c. 370 A.D.) says that at the close of the first century the bishop of Ephesus was named John. Bishop Gore prefers to believe that this John was the apostle, for he says that the Elder John "is a most shadowy figure" and therefore his existence is to be doubted. B. H. Streeter gives answer to this by saying, "It is not surprising he is rather 'shadowy' when everything he did or said is ascribed to someone else!" As Moffatt puts it, "John the Presbyter is not to be emended out of existence in the interests of John the apostle."¹⁵

It is highly doubtful whether a man in his 90's would be capable of writing such a letter as the First Epistle of John. Of course it is not impossible, but it is certainly very improbable. Furthermore, John's name is never once used in the Epistles or the Gospel as author. In III John 9 where the author is attempting to emphasize his powers of authority, he refers to himself, not as the apostle, but as the elder.

The above evidence, even though so much of it is inconclusive, points to someone called John the Elder instead of John the Apostle as author of the First Epistle.

Date

Until recently, it was generally believed that the First Epistle of John was written between 90 A.D. and 110 A.D. Some doubt has now been cast upon this position with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The language and concepts of the Johannine literature appear to bear such a marked resemblance to the writings of the Qumran sect, which went out of existence as a community c. 68 A.D., that it is now held by some that the Gospel and Epistles of John could not possibly have an origin as late as 90 A.D.

Oscar Cullmann is one who maintains that the Johannine date of writing was much earlier than normally has been accepted.¹⁶ In order to substantiate such a position, it is necessary to demonstrate the connection between sectarian Judaism and the early Christian community. If the Qumran sect influenced the Johannine literature, where is the link between the two?

Cullmann would like to believe that this link is John the Baptist.

but the evidence put forth is not strong. His logic is as follows: John the Baptist was in the desert; the Essene cloister was in the desert; thus, "it is impossible to think that John would have been there without coming into contact with the Sect."¹⁷ We need only point out that we do not know how long John was in the desert, and besides, the desert was of such an area that Amos could ask (3:3), "Do two walk together unless they have made an appointment?" It is highly unlikely that Jesus, who spent forty days in the wilderness, came across the cloisters of Qumran.

Cullmann tacitly admits that this position is not as strong as it should be when he points to the possibility of an even stronger link between Qumran and the early Jewish-Christians: the Hellenists in the book of Acts.¹⁸ He believes that the main point of similarity between Qumran, the Hellenists, and the Johannine literature is found in opposition to the Temple. We would only point out that John 1:14 is not spoken against the Temple, but is in reference to the fact that the Temple is no longer in existence and that Jesus is Himself the Temple. The dialogue between Jesus and the woman at the well of Sychar is another case in point (4:21). This is no polemic against the Temple, but is written in the "hour" when the Jews no longer worship at Jerusalem for the Temple has been destroyed.

Even if we concede that Cullmann is correct, a further question must be posed. If sectarian Judaism had been such a profound influence on the Johannine literature within a few decades after the Resurrection, why is it that the Synoptic Gospels, composed in the same period, were

not affected? Gullmann is ready to admit that what we have are two distinct forms of Christianity?

Both forms of Christianity existed from the beginning, because both found their roots in forms of Judaism present in Palestine. If we know the main-line Jewish form better, it is only because the other was rather esoteric in its leanings.¹⁹

Other scholars such as W. F. Albright and Frank Cross agree with Oscar Cullmann insofar as the early origination is concerned. However, they believe that the actual writing came later than the oral tradition.

Both narratives and logia of John's Gospel certainly or presumably date back to oral tradition in Palestine, before A.D. 70; they were probably transmitted orally in the Diaspora for at least a decade--possibly two decades--before being put into writing.²⁰

Albright would agree with Cullmann in believing that John the Baptist must be considered as the mediatorial figure between the Qumran community and the primitive Christian community. However, he disagrees with Cullmann in one major respect. He does not see two distinct forms of Christianity existing side by side in Palestine. Rather, he believes that most of the New Testament writers are indebted to Qumran for language and concepts. "John, the Synoptics, St. Paul, and various other books draw from a common reservoir of terminology and ideas which were well known to the Essenes."²¹

Millar Burrows, maintaining a more conservative position, also believes that the New Testament literature draws "from a common reservoir," but he sees this common source as the old Testament, not an Essene community.

If such ideas as the dualism of light and darkness, to take only the most conspicuous example, appear in Paul and the Synoptic Gospels as well as in John, the reason may be that they were widely known in the Jewish world in general and need not have been derived

by any of the New Testament writers from the sect of Qumran in particular.²²

Otto Piper, agreeing with Albright et. al., thinks that the faith referred to in I John is that which was held by the early Christians. However, his reasons are not founded upon the Dead Sea Scrolls. Piper believes that the frequent use of $\acute{\alpha}\kappa\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ and the absence of references to written authorities indicate that I John is based upon oral, not written, tradition.²³

In answer to this argument, we may point out that the Church has always looked upon the preaching and hearing of the Word as a means of grace. "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Romans 10:17). "Wherever we see the Word of God sincerely preached and heard . . . there we cannot have any doubt that the Church of God has some existence."²⁴ John's intention is thus not to emphasize the oral tradition, but to emphasize the prophetic act of preaching.

The issue is far from being clear, because the religious life of Palestine at the time of Jesus and shortly thereafter still remains a mystery for the most part. There is no proof that any one of the above theories is incorrect, nor for that matter, can any be absolutely proven.

We disagree with Cullmann's thesis that there were two concurrent streams of Christian thought in the mid-first century. He predicates his theory on the two-fold assumption that the Johannine literature has its conceptual and linguistic foundations based on Qumran, and that there is a solid connection between the writings and the sect. Neither

of these assumptions has been adequately substantiated. Furthermore, such an idea as two parallel Christian streams tends to foster the belief that the language used in the works of John is exclusive of that found in the Synoptics and Pauline letters. A comparison indicates that similarities are clearly in evidence.

We disagree with the position taken by Burrows because he goes too far in minimizing the apparent differences between the Synoptic Gospels and the Johannine literature. The big question is this: what has caused these differences? Gullmann, Albright and Cross would point to the language of the Dead Sea Scrolls as the primary source. Indeed, they feel that Gnosticism, once considered the headwaters of the Johannine current, can no longer be considered.

Since we are here concerned mainly with I John we will limit ourselves to that little letter. A careful scrutiny of its contents should completely convince one that the writer is engaged in a polemic against false prophets who adhere to the tenets of Gnostic mystery religions. He gives answer to these heretics by quoting some of their own sayings. These sayings fit the picture which we have of incipient Gnosticism, and can in no way be considered to be the beliefs held by the Dead Sea sect.

But is there no connection whatsoever between I John and Qumran? There may be. Gnostic beliefs accumulated by a fantastic process of eclecticism. It is entirely conceivable that after the Romans overran Khirbet Qumran c. 68 A.D. the concepts contained in the Scrolls were carried abroad orally and immediately fastened upon by the Gnostics.

The writer of I John would thus have not only the Old Testament as a background for such a dualistic concept as light versus darkness (e.g. Genesis 1:4; Job 17:12; 18:18; 29:3; Psalms 139:11f; Ecclesiastes 2:13; Isaiah 5:20; 42:15; 50:10; Jeremiah 13:16b; Amos 5:18; Micah 7:8), but would be answering the mystery religions which had come into contact with a literature that spoke of "The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness."

There are other reasons also for believing that I John was written between 90 A.D. and 110 A.D. rather than the middle of the first century. (1) It would seem that Israel has already rejected Christ since no notice is taken of controversy between the Jew and the Gentile within the Church. (2) As mentioned above, the polemic is directed against incipient Gnosticism and it is not likely that this was present to such a disturbing degree as indicated in I John until the end of the first century. (3) There is a bare possibility that Christians were anointed with oil at the time of baptism (2:20,27) and this is highly unlikely before the turn of the second century. (4) Verse 5:6 probably refers to Cerinthianism and Cerinthus is generally considered to have lived at the end of the first century. (5) The author of the Fourth Gospel is acquainted with the Gospel of Mark (written c. 70 A.D.)²⁵ and it is likely that I John was written after the Gospel of John.²⁶

Place Written

The great majority of scholars believe that I John was written in or near Ephesus. The Epistle itself gives no hint concerning its

place of origin nor are there strong external factors to substantiate this traditional view. C. K. Barrett ventures to say, "The characteristic Johannine theology was not a product peculiar to the province of Asia."²⁷ Ebrard believes that the First Epistle was written on Patmos to the church at Ephesus and neighboring churches. But this position has no more proof than any other.

Many of the traditional stories about the Apostle John are centered in Asia and thus, since he has from the earliest times been associated with I John, it is not unnatural that this province should have been looked upon as the locale in which the letter was written. In addition, Irenaeus (185 A.D.) designated Ephesus as the point of origination (Cf. p.14).

C. H. Dodd observes in his commentary on III John that,

A quasi-technical use of the term [Presbyter] was current for a short time, mainly or even exclusively in the Province of Asia. . . . Christians of this province seem to have spoken of 'the Elders' (Presbyters) in referring to a group of teachers who formed a link between the apostles and the next generation (Eusebius, Eccl. Hist., III 39. 3-4).²⁸

The case for an Ephesian source has been mitigated in recent years by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. If such men as Gullmann, Albright and Cross are correct in believing that the concepts found in the Johannine literature have a Jewish Palestinian background, it is not unlikely that Palestine is the locale for the writing of I John.

However, if the actual writing of I John took place at the turn of the second century, as we believe, and if some of the terminology used in the polemic is similar to that of the Gnostics and not necessarily that of Qumran, we are in no position to ignore the

possibility that Ephesus was the scene of writing.

We would be remiss though if we did not point out that the possibility for a Palestinian source of origination is now much stronger than it ever has been. No scholar dares to declare glibly that the Johannine works come from the pen of the Apostle John who lived in Ephesus.

In conclusion it can only be said that there is no internal or external evidence available for asserting with any degree of certainty that the provenance of the First Epistle of John was either Asia or Palestine.

Plan

I John does not readily lend itself to easy outlining nor, for that matter, is it possible to determine the exact nature of the writing. It has been given such diverse descriptions as pastoral homily or sermon, epistle, tract or pamphlet, basically a hymn, and wisdom literature.

Westcott, E. F. Scott, Huther and Ebrard maintain that it is a pastoral letter. B. H. Streeter and C. H. Dodd believe that it can be either a sermon or a tract. Ernst von Dobschütz and Rudolph Bultmann try to show that underlying the text is a didactic hymn which is used by the writer as a Grundschrift or Vorlage into which he worked his own ideas as well as elements of primitive tradition.²⁹ Richard G. Moulton feels that I John is so unlike a letter that he refers to it as "The Wisdom of St. John" because "wisdom literature . . . falls regularly into separate, independent, often brief meditations" whereas the First

Epistle lacks continuity from beginning to end.³⁰

Whether or not we can describe this writing as an epistle depends upon our definition of an epistle. If it is necessary to have a proper opening and closing, then certainly this is no letter. I John has no name of the author at the beginning as was the custom, no introductory greeting nor is there a benediction closing.³¹ Since we notice that both II John and III John do have the recognizable epistolary opening and closing, it is not beyond the bounds of reason to suppose that a writing by the same author without these characteristics is undoubtedly intended for a somewhat different purpose. This purpose is probably not that of a sermon since the author mentions his "writing" to the readers in several places. One does not speak of "writing" when delivering a homily. It may be that we have here a piece of literature more in the form of a tract or pamphlet that was sent forth in the spirit of a letter.³² Perhaps the messenger who carried it to one or more churches explained from whom it came in the knowledge that the readers knew the writer well. The courier thus provided the introductory salutation and the concluding benediction.

As mentioned above, I John is not easily outlined. Several schemes for dividing the Epistle were put forward in correspondence between Westcott and Hort in the "Expositor" (1907 III p. 481ff) but Westcott admits that no arrangement is suitable. A. E. Brooke goes so far as to say, "Perhaps the attempt to analyze the Epistle should be abandoned as useless."³³

The translator of Martin Buber's "I And Thou," Ronald G. Smith,

in describing Buber's style says, "The argument is not as it were horizontal, but spiral; it mounts, and gathers within itself the aphoristic and pregnant utterances of the earlier part." Some scholars would use these same thoughts to describe I John but the Epistle does not bear out such a "spiral" description.

The author has no preconceived outline or plan. We might well call his style of writing, "stream of consciousness." His thoughts assume a riparian flow as follows:

1:1-4, Prologue; 1:5-7, Christians have fellowship with God and with each other; 1:8-2:2, Forgiveness of sin through Jesus.

2:3-11, "Knowing" God and being "in Him" evidenced by keeping His commandment of love; 2:12-14, Parenthetical remarks to children, fathers and young men; 2:15-17, Do not love the world; 2:18-27, Those leaving the Church are antichrists who deny that Jesus is the Christ, but the Christian has received God's anointing and confesses the Son. 2:28-3:3, Children of God lead righteous lives and will see Christ and assume His likeness at His coming.

3:4-10, Children of God are recognized by their righteous lives and lack of habitual sinning; 3:11-20, Following Christ's example Christians should love the brethren in deeds; 3:21-24, Loving the brethren and believing in Jesus Christ is proof of mutual indwelling with God.

4:1-6, The Christian, led by God's Spirit, testifies that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; 4:7-12, Proof of God's indwelling is one's love for others; 4:13-15, Evidence of mutual indwelling with God is

seen in confessing that Jesus is the Son of God; 4:16-20, Evidence of mutual indwelling with God is seen in love for the brethren; 4:21-5:5, Christians keep God's commandments to love the brethren and believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

5:6-10, God provides testimony that Jesus is the Son of God; 5:11-13, Eternal life is for all who believe in the Son of God; 5:14-17, Instructions for prayer; 5:18-19, Christians are kept safe by God but the world is in the power of the evil one; 5:20-21, Fellowship-in-Union with God is only through Christ, so avoid false gods.

A close examination of the above "stream of consciousness" indicates why this dissertation has been titled, "Christian Faith and the Christian Life: A Study of the First Epistle of John."

1:1-4	Prologue
1:5-2:2	Fellowship-in-Union
2:3-17	Life
2:18-27	Faith
2:28-3:20	Life
3:21-24	Faith and Life
4:1-6	Faith
4:7-12	Life
4:13-15	Faith
4:16-20	Life
4:21-5:5	Faith and Life
5:6-13	Faith
5:14-17	Prayer
5:18-19	Safekeeping
5:20-21	Fellowship-in-Union

Faith and Life are the two chief concerns of John. By Faith he means the committing of one's mind and will to Jesus who is acknowledged to be the incarnate Son of God. By Life is meant the reflection of God's love in one's encounter with others. For the author Christian Faith, which is an affirmative response to the love of God in the Incarnation, is coexistent with and exemplified by, the Christian Life

which is an incarnation of God's love. Throughout the letter John alternately dwells first upon one and then upon the other of these two component parts of his general theme.

We must thoroughly disagree with Farrer who says, "The student who reads [this Epistle] in the light of some well-considered scheme, will gain more advantage from it than others, even if details of his scheme be untenable."³⁴ The letter was not originally written with a well-considered scheme in mind. Furthermore, intellectually untenable views of Scripture never lead to a spiritual advantage.

The "stream of consciousness" analysis is presented here simply to show how John confirms and encourages his readers in their faith and exhorts them to lives of love.

Summary

In summarizing the relation of the First Epistle of John to the Gospel of John it is our belief that the internal evidence of both writings favors a common authorship. Neither the internal nor external evidence is conclusive that the writer is the Apostle John. The assertion for apostolic authorship gains its strength from tradition, a tradition that has its strongest roots late in the second century. On the other hand, there are several very good reasons for attributing the writings to another besides the Apostle John, one who may have been known as the Presbyter (Elder).

I John was probably written between 90 A.D. and 110 A.D. We cannot say with any degree of certainty whether it preceded or followed the writing of the Gospel of John.

The Epistle may have been written in the province of Asia, more particularly the city of Ephesus, but it is the strong force of tradition that has fostered this belief. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls there is increasing reason to believe that the Johannine literature found its inception in a Palestinian environment.

The Epistle possesses more the spirit of a letter than it does an epistolary structure. The form of I John appears to be that of a tract or pamphlet. No well defined dialectical scheme can be discerned because the writer is setting down his thoughts as they come to him. This "stream of consciousness" style of writing is not predicated upon a hard and fast outline.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER II

1. Cf. Chapter VIII, footnote 14.
2. T. W. Manson, "Entry Into Membership of the Early Church," The Journal of Theological Studies, 48:33, 1947.
3. Sir Edwin Hoskyns, and Noel Davey, The Riddle of the New Testament (New York: (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931), p. 33.
4. Christopher Wordsworth, The New Testament (Oxford: Rivingtons, Waterloo Place, 1867), p. 104.
5. A. P. Salom, "Some Aspects of Grammatical Style of I John," Journal of Biblical Literature, 74:102, June, 1955.
6. W. F. Howard, "The Common Authorship of the Johannine Gospel and Epistles," The Journal of Theological Studies, 48:24, 1947.
7. It is more probable that the eclectic Gnostics borrowed such terminology from the Jews, the Old Testament and the Jewish-Christians rather than vice versa. Indeed, such borrowing may have been induced by the special emphasis placed upon these words by Jewish sects such as the Essenes. Frank M. Cross, Jr. believes that the Johannine literature itself is indebted to Jewish sects. "[John's] concepts . . . must be seen, not as rooted in Greek or Gnostic thought, but as concepts emerging precisely out of sectarian Judaism." The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies. p. 161.
8. James Moffatt, An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1911), p. 615.
9. Some scholars, such as J. B. Lightfoot, believe that Polycrates was correct.
10. J. Estlin Carpenter, The Johannine Writings (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1927), p. 218.
11. Eusebius, H. E. III. xxxix.
12. B. H. Streeter, The Primitive Church (London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1929), p. 90.
13. "A group of teachers who formed a link between the apostles and the next generation," (C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 155). "The word Elder was until the third century used as a general title of respect for the great men of a previous generation." (Streeter, op. cit., p. 89).

14. But here Strachan assumes, as do so many others, that the "beloved disciple," the one "who had lain close to his breast at the supper," is the Apostle John. Floyd V. Filson puts forth excellent and convincing arguments to show why Lazarus should be considered as the beloved disciple. "Lazarus is the one figure who ties together the public ministry, the Last Supper, the Cross, and the empty tomb, and so gives the Gospel a structural unity which scholars have often failed to find." (Floyd V. Filson, "Who Was the Beloved Disciple?" Journal of Biblical Literature, 68:88, June, 1949). This theory has been espoused by others, one of the earliest being J. Kreyenbühl in "Das Evangelium der Wahrheit" (1900).

15. Moffatt, op. cit., p. 601.

16. Oscar Cullmann, "The Significance of the Qumran Texts for Research into the Beginnings of Christianity," Journal of Biblical Literature, 74:214, December, 1955. Cullmann hints that the date is much earlier than originally thought by implying that the converse of the following statement is true, "Since Hellenistic elements are found in the Gospel, it was believed that a very late origin was proved."

17. Ibid., p. 219.

18. See arguments, p. 70.

19. Cullmann, op. cit., p. 224.

20. W. D. Davies and D. Daube, editors, The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology (Cambridge: The University Press, 1956), p. 170.

21. Ibid., p. 169.

22. Millar Burrows, More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), p. 128f.

23. Otto A. Piper, "I John and the Didache of the Primitive Church," Journal of Biblical Literature, 66:437-451, December, 1947.

24. Calvin's "Institutes" Vol. II p. 289.

25. C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S.P.C.K., 1955), p. 108.

26. No conclusive case can be made for the priority of either. It seems logical to assume however that the letter was preceded by a dialectic similar to that projected in the Fourth Gospel. Furthermore, the Gospel refers to Jewish opposition (15:25; 16:2) and there is no evidence of this in I John. In any case, the two writings are independent of each other, and must not be looked upon as crutches for one another.

27. Barrett, op. cit., p. 111.
28. G. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946), p. 155.
29. Piper, op. cit., p. 449. Piper is undoubtedly correct in disagreeing with Dobschütz and Bultmann when he says that there are no distinct differences in style traceable to chronology.
30. Richard G. Moulton, The Gospel, Epistles and Revelation (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1898), p. vii.
31. It is interesting to note that the Letters of James and Jude have no closing and the Letter to the Hebrews has no greeting.
32. R. Newton Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 93. "R. Bultmann (Die Analyse des ersten Johannes-Brief), in his attempt to find a written source which the writer of the letter has utilized, strikes out the passages which are homiletical and edifying, and therefore are not so original!"
33. A. E. Brooke, The Johannine Epistles (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), p. xxxii.
34. Frederick W. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1882), p. 394.

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF I JOHN

I. THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF THE DAY

Oscar Cullmann, in speaking of the early church, says,

Never has Christianity been in such danger of foundering in syncretism, that mixture of oriental religions and philosophies, that false universalism which, in order to integrate Christianity into one vast synthesis, sacrifices the very heart of the Gospel.¹

This is an accurate description of the historical environment out of which came the First Epistle of John.

It was an ostentatious and materialistic society with a love of the grandiose. Ephesus had its Temple of Artemis and its theater; Pergamum its gigantic Altar to Zeus; Rhodes its Colossus; and there was a society of the fashionable rich. . . . People were sensual and artistic--but without God.²

But people were without God not because they were totally unconcerned. On the contrary, men were striving through philosophical and mystical means to come into a proper relationship with the Being who was "above all and through all and in all." It was because of this much striving that Christianity was in such grave peril and a letter such as I John needed to be written at all.

The air was full of competing claims to truth. And where the claims were not resolute enough to compete, there usually evolved a merging with other beliefs. Clement of Alexandria c. 200 A.D. said, "The way of truth is one, but different streams from different quarters flow into it as an ever flowing river."³ A century earlier the author of I John would have agreed that "the way of truth is one," but he saw the "different streams from different quarters" requiring a need for

dikes, levies, and flood control measures. His letter was just such a dike.

What were these "different streams" that swirled and eddied in the region of Mare Nostrum at the end of the first century? We must come to an understanding of them if we are to comprehend the historical context in which I John was written, and if we are to appreciate the concepts and language employed by the author.

Christianity found itself in an age of syncretism confronted by three other main sources of religion and thought: Judaism, Greek philosophy, and Gnosticism and the mystery religions. There was also the Emperor worship of Roman rule, but this was more the imposed religion of a conqueror than a soteriology that proved appealing to either the rationally or mystically inclined.

Judaism

In speaking of Judaism it is customary to distinguish between Rabbinic Judaism and Hellenistic Judaism. C. H. Dodd points out that in the Fourth Gospel John demonstrates his familiarity with Rabbinic Judaism by contrasting the concepts of the Torah as light, bread, and water with their Christian counterparts, by contrasting the Jewish concept of the Messiah with the distinctive concept of the "lamb of God," and demonstrating that the shem hammephorash was made known in Jesus' mission, John 17:6,26.⁴

The Rabbinic Judaism which "grew out of the movement for the re-establishment of a reformed Judaism in the time of Ezra, and is worthily reckoned the heir of Old Testament religion,"⁵ was no longer

a pure religion as such, but was now a religion in dispersion. At the time of the writing of I John, Hellenistic Judaism, characterized by the allegorizing method of Philo, was claiming the attention of Jewish thinking. The Jew lived in an age when the mind had to be accommodated in every religious system, the Hebrew religion being no exception. This accommodation resulted in a speculative system of thought that can best be described as religio-philosophical. For most of the Jews in the first and second centuries A.D., this was an era of Hellenistic Judaism.

But neither Rabbinic nor Hellenistic Judaism are referred to pointedly in the First Epistle. The "false prophets" and "antichrists" are not Jews. Indeed, it would appear that there is no Jewish controversy whatever in the polemic and dialectic of the First Epistle. We only refer to Judaism here to indicate that it was part of the historical milieu out of which I John made its appearance.

Greek Philosophy

The second major area of intellectual and spiritual activity at the time of the writing of I John was Greek philosophy, particularly as it was found in Platonism and Stoicism.

Plato taught that the visible universe is a copy or reflection of the perfect, unchanging order or world of invisible ideas, in the contemplation of which . . . man's highest good consists.⁶

Plato . . . in the first century after Christ was both more and less than a great personal teacher of a philosophical system; he was an atmosphere, absorbed though not understood by many who had never read his works. He had given definite expression to the notion of a real world, invisible and eternal, of which this world of appearance and time-sequence was but a transient and imperfect copy. Out of this contrast came the conception of mind, far superior

to the flesh, and the ideal of a life of abstraction and contemplation, in which the mind, freed from matter and fixed upon the truly real, became one with God, the Idea of the Good.⁷

Some Greek philosophers such as the Stoics taught that a divine principle of logos or reason is within and behind the universe and maintains it in being and order, and that man, whose reason itself has affinity with the divine reason, can raise himself, by the practice of moral and intellectual virtues, to contemplate, and even to enter into union with, this principle.⁸

It is very doubtful whether John shows any direct relationship with real Stoicism [although] Logos plays a vital part in the Stoic view of the world. All things in the universe were pervaded (it was believed) by Logos, itself a fine, impalpable material substance. . . . Stoic physics was hardly separable from pantheism.⁹

The Platonism and Stoicism which flourished at the time of the writing of the First Epistle of John were not the pure philosophies of the classical Greek period. Man had progressed from the gnothi seauton of Socrates to the further pursuit of knowing the universe, and inquiring into the ontology and teleology involved in man's relationship to the Reason upholding the universe. Philosophy found that she could not divorce herself for long from religion.¹⁰

The fact is that Hellenistic religious philosophers drew upon Platonic cosmogony and Stoic physics . . . , upon the ethics of all schools, and upon non-Greek contributions, in their attempts to meet the need for a philosophy which should supply a scientific basis for religion and a satisfying guide for life.¹¹

Just as with Rabbinic and Hellenistic Judaism, there is no evidence in I John of Stoic or Platonic philosophy. The Fourth Gospel may present a polemic that demonstrates an awareness of Greek philosophy (e.g. the Stoic behavior of Jesus as seen in such acts as John 2:4; 11:3-7 where His actions are not controlled by human affections, and the reference to the Logos in 1:14; and a Platonic manner of referring to the "true" vine, 15:1, light, 1:9, and bread, 6:32), but such is not

the case in the First Epistle. The only possible exception to this is verse 5:20 where the word "true" may be construed in an archetypal sense. But even though Greek philosophy does not make an assertive appearance in I John, it is part of the swirling maelstrom of thought that pervades the Johannine background at the turn of the second century A.D.

Gnosticism and the Mystery Religions

In addition to Judaism and Greek philosophy, there was yet a third stream, with its headwaters in the East, which made its circuitous way westward and eventually bubbled into the "ever flowing river" of truth. This was the stream of the mystery religions and Gnosticism. It is here that we find the immediate background for the writing of I John, and for this reason a more thorough investigation is required.

There was no one mystery religion just as we shall find in the excursus to this chapter on Gnosticism (a more inclusive term) that there was no one cult to which the label Gnostic could be attached. But the various mysteries did possess certain features in common. They were influenced greatly by a Persian and Zoroastrian heritage in which myth played a major role. The cult ceremonies contained lustrations, secret knowledge imparted to the initiate, drama, and an ecstatic emotionalism culminating in a vision of the god and eventual union with the god.

The mystery religions, however they may have differed from one another in details, acknowledged the dualism of matter and spirit in the human personality, the eventual need to be divested of the material portion which is evil, and to have the spark of the divine reunited with

the One Power over all. Before this apotheosis can take place, there must be a mediation between the Supreme Being and the world accompanied by esoteric knowledge so that a complicated cosmos may be eventually penetrated.

Alike in the philosophy, the religion and the magic of this period, the idea of union with God plays a fundamental part. Both in the later Stoicism and in the higher teaching of the mystery religions this union is an end; in magic it is a means. For Epictetus such union . . . [is] partially realized in this life by the deliberate subordination of the will of the individual to the will of God; after death it will be more completely consummated in the absorption of the rational element or soul in the Divine Principle, which is the soul of the cosmic process. In the mystery religions too, a temporary foretaste of perpetual union after death with the Savior God may be achieved on earth through mystic ecstasy, but, as compared with philosophy, the matter, both as regards here and regards hereafter, is more emotionally envisaged, and the conception of God is more warmly invested with personality. In magic the union is temporary and its purpose is not to realize the will of God but the will of the magician. It is not so much a matter of the absorption of the human soul by the Divine Spirit of the universe, as of an absorption of the god or spirit by the wonder-worker, who thereby controls it for his own ends.¹²

The language of the Mystery Religions is very frequently similar to that of the New Testament. Strachan points out some of these similarities:¹³ the initiated man is saved; he becomes perfect through illustrations, sacred meals etc.; he knows, becomes possessed of gnosis; he is spoken of as the image of God, the son of God; he has obtained eternal life and has seeds of immortality in him; he has seen the Divine face. Sometimes the initiate is described as having been born again, and glorified or enlightened. By knowledge he receives power and through the mystical experience the soul of the initiate is said to ascend to heaven.

It is difficult to say just how much of the terminology of the mysteries is borrowed from the Jewish faith. But enough of the

expressions are found in the Old Testament, which preceded the mysteries by hundreds of years, to force the conclusion that the language of the eclectic mysticism of the Apostolic and early post-Apostolic period is in debt to the Jewish religion.¹⁴

The age was one of syncretism, when men's minds were hospitable to ideas from all quarters. Out of various religious traditions a common background formed itself, and innumerable systems of religious belief, differing widely in detail, and also in spirit, assumed this common background.¹⁵

At the end of the first century Christians found themselves proclaiming the Apostolic message of the Gospel against this very background of theosophical speculation. Unfortunately, such an environment threatened a compromise to the purity of the Christian faith. When I John was written two or three generations had been born since the Ascension of Jesus Christ, and His early return, so long expected, had not occurred. The fire of original dedication was beginning to cool, and with this subsiding of the zeal of discipleship, doubt and uncertainty entered in. This uncertainty was fostered by the pagan neighbors of the Christians who were not concerned with keeping difficult moral commandments, but who seemed to enjoy a union with God that was escaping the followers of Christ. It is not surprising then that there were those Christians who adopted some of the ways of the mystery religions and Gnosticism, as well as those who defected from the Way entirely.

It was against such a historical background as this that I John was written. The author is attempting, throughout the letter, to instill confidence in his readers. He wants them to know positively that they

have Fellowship-in-Union with God. In addition, he is attempting to repair the breach in the fellowship among the Christians that has resulted from some defecting to the superior spiritual claims of the Gnostics.

John refers to those who made such claims as the "many false prophets who have gone out into the world." They are the antichrists who "went out from us, but they were not of us." Does he have just one major opponent or specific Gnostic sect in mind? It is highly unlikely. The Epistle presents no opposition to any one clearly delineated, unified system of doctrine which one particular sect may have held.

Cerinthus and Docetism

It is commonly believed that John is opposing the docetic belief which declared that the body of Jesus was not physical but merely seemed to be tangible. A close inspection of the Epistle reveals that the author is striking out at the Gnostics who deny the true and complete union and harmony of body and spirit. To the Gnostic, the God of creation who is Good could have no part of the material world which is Evil. The spark of the Divine imprisoned within each member of the illuminati would someday be released and become an integral part of the Good.

If John is conceived of as being anti-docetic, it is because he is mainly concerned with the truth of the Incarnation rather than primarily dealing with a refutation of a false metaphysical dualism. John says that those who possess true "gnosis" are the Christians who profess "Jesus Christ come in the flesh" (4:2).

Now, what about Cerinthianism? There is little that can be said, for very little is known about Cerinthus. Bishop Gore does not believe that Cerinthus was even a docetist, and this may be correct if we restrict docetism to the concept that the body is just an appearance. The one Cerinthian belief that we may be most certain of is that which understands the Christ coming upon Jesus at Baptism but leaving just before death occurs on the Cross. To take a position such as this is not to doubt the reality of Jesus' physical body, as did the docetists, but rather it is to deny the perfect Incarnation of Him who was the God-Man.

Adolph Schlatter goes to the extreme of suggesting that John is not in opposition to Cerinthus at all, and if it were not for verse 5:6 we might also agree. But when the author says, "This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood," we cannot deny that this is a strong argument by John, intentional or not, against the position advocated by Cerinthus.

Irenaeus and Hippolytus are the two principal sources of information about Cerinthus. The most famous story is the one related by Irenaeus who quotes Polycarp as saying that John ran out of a public bath in Ephesus because Cerinthus was inside and John feared that the roof might fall (but according to Epiphanius it was Ebion whom John met in the public bath). Both Schaff and J. B. Lightfoot agree that Cerinthus belongs to the last half of the first century. "Cerinthus is the proper link between the incipient gnosis of the Colossian-heretics and the mature gnosis of the second century."¹⁶ Eusebius quotes

Hegesippus as saying that it was only after the death of the apostles, after Trajan, that the teachers of error appeared. Since such systems of false doctrine needed time to blossom forth it may well be that Cerinthus was one such forerunner in the last decade of the first century.

II. WHY WAS I JOHN WRITTEN?

This letter was not written primarily as an argument against Gnosticism and the schisms threatening the Christian faith, but rather as a statement on behalf of the Christian religion.

John is interested, first of all, in clarifying the Christian position concerning the soteriological union with God and the evidence of this union in a Christian's life. The Christian position is in grave danger of compromise due to the prevailing Gnostic climate. To do the most effective job possible in combating Gnosticism, John finds it necessary to use the nomenclature currently in use so that his readers may comprehend his thesis.

The author's aim is to reinterpret the gospel to the new generation which had arisen in the Greek world 70 or 80 years after Jesus had departed. It was the same gospel but had now to be thrown into new form, corresponding to the thought of the later time. But the Evangelist never meant that his interpretation should be final. He believed that the Spirit which had inspired him would work continually in the Church, unfolding the message of Christ, and presenting it in new forms to each new age.¹⁷

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the author's first task and the real reason for writing was in recalling the Christians to the Gospel by explaining what the Gospel consisted of and the proper response that was to be made to it. This letter was not sent

on its journey to the several churches simply to provide a polemic against Gnosticism. As Alford says,

The fact of . . . false teachers having come forward in the church was most probably the occasion which suggested the writing of the Epistle, [but the main object for writing the Epistle is] to certify [the readers] of the truth and reality of the things in which they believe.¹⁸

We can say that the raison d'etre for I John is edification, and not refutation.¹⁹

But we dare not deny that John courageously refutes the teachings which are gaining stature as heresies within Christianity. Even though such refutations are not the basic reason for the writing of the letter, they are most certainly present. Westcott puts it very well when he says that John confutes error by exposing the truth.²⁰ Whereas the Pauline polemic against Judaism emphasizes a juridical soteriology characterized as justification, the Johannine polemic against Gnosticism emphasizes the Fellowship-in-Union soteriology characterized as eternal life.

One is unable to read this stirring, spiritual letter without realizing how much confidence it must have infused into the churches to which it was sent. So many Christians at this time were uncertain and wavering in their faith that some spiritual bolstering was demanded if the Church were to continue her duties as the saved and saving remnant. This letter by John served such a purpose admirably.

The "illuminati" were making wild claims about their emotionalistic and mystical vision of God, their ultimate deification when the body would be left behind, and other cult-centered statements based on

an esoteric gnosis. As a result, the Christians became concerned about how they themselves might be certain that they worshiped the one God properly and were in a right relationship with Him. After all, most of them had no mystical visions to fall back upon, and the Christ whom they worshiped had failed to reappear. It is at this juncture that John steps in with his letter of assurance. "I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life" (5:13). He reasserts what the proper relationship with God consists of, and how this relationship is manifested in the every day life.

Robert Law says that John furnishes the readers "with an adequate set of criteria (tests) by which they may satisfy themselves of their being 'begotten of God.'" Law gives these criteria, or tests, as righteousness, faith and love.²¹ In our opinion, righteousness and love might well be combined since, according to John, the epitome of "doing righteousness" is in "loving one another." To put it another way, righteousness is love in action.

In I John the Christian is given new confidence in God and the Church by John's setting forth what is the Christian Faith and Life. The author explains that the simultaneously interacting belief in Jesus Christ as Son of God incarnate, and Godly love for Christian brothers (who are likewise sons of the Father) give positive and experiential evidence of one's Fellowship-in-Union relationship with God. John's readers are told that any one who fails to back up his rodomontade attitude with such Faith and Life is boasting in vain and

does not really "know" God.

The current Gnostic claims and the resulting inroads into the Christian faith had brought about dissention among the Christians themselves. Some went much further than others in synthesizing their faith and the mystery religions. The love relationship among many of the brethren of the Christian faith soon became rather thin. This breach had to be healed if the Church were to fulfill her mission as the suffering servant, the New Israel. John frankly addresses himself to this task when he says, "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; . . . And we are writing this that our joy may be complete" (1:3-4).

III. TO WHOM WAS I JOHN WRITTEN?

There is no internal evidence to assist us in determining the destination of John's letter. Neither, for that matter, is there any definite and reliable external evidence.

Early tradition expresses the belief that the title of the letter was either *πρὸς Παρθούς* or *πρὸς Παρθέvous*.²² The title that had been given to II John, *πρὸς Παρθέvous*, may have been misinterpreted as the colophon of I John. There is also the tradition which gives John the title, "Virgin."

The title, "to the Parthians," apparently originated in the East and may have reached the West by the time of Athanasius. This alternative view holds that "the elect lady" of II John may have been identified with "she who is at Babylon" of I Peter 5:13. In keeping with other New Testament epistles addressed to specific peoples it

would have been natural to give this letter the title, "to the Parthians."

In addition to the above two titles, manuscripts provide us with at least four other titles that have been given to I John. MSS B and A have "of I John;" X has "The First Epistle of John;" L (9th century) shows "The Catholic Epistle of the Holy Apostle John;" P (9th century) gives "The First Epistle of John the Evangelist and Apostle."

Because tradition gives Asia Minor as the locale of the Johannine writings, it has been generally conceded by the bulk of scholarship that I John is written to churches in and around Ephesus. In admitting that there is nothing in the Epistle itself to refute such a position, we find it difficult to be as positive as Huther who believes that the Asia Minor destination is based on "unquestionable accounts of antiquity" concerning John's residence in this region. Investigation and research into the authorship and destination of the Johannine works has brought forth no area of knowledge that we may classify as "unquestionable."

And yet it may very well be that I John was a circular letter that made its way throughout Asia Minor bringing its message of edification, refutation and assurance. Verses 1:1-4 may indicate that the author was writing on behalf of one group of churches to Christians in another church or churches. On the other hand, it may be that the "we" and "us" are meant to be taken in an editorial sense.

The letter itself furnishes no clues as to its destination, and this probably indicates that the author and his readers are well known to each other. It may, or may not, be that the Christian churches involved were located in Asia Minor. It is really of little moment as far as the content of the message is concerned.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER III

1. Oscar Gullmann, The Early Church (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1956), p. 206.
2. G. J. Barker, The Johannine Epistles (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), p. 40.
3. Stromateis I 5 (29.1)
4. G. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: The University Press, 1953), p. 74ff. Also Cf. Dodd's "The Background of the Fourth Gospel" in the Bulletin of John Rylands Library vol. 19, no. 2, July 1935; G. K. Barrett's Gospel According to St. John, p. 26ff; R. H. Lightfoot's St. John's Gospel, p. 48ff.
5. G. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S.P.C.K., 1955), p. 26.
6. R. H. Lightfoot, St. John's Gospel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 53.
7. Barrett, op. cit., p. 28.
8. Lightfoot, loc. cit.
9. Barrett, op. cit., pp. 28-29.
10. Paul Tillich defines religion as, "the state of being grasped by an infinite concern." Adventures of the Mind, p. 49.
11. Barrett, op. cit., p. 20.
12. W. R. Halliday, The Pagan Background of Early Christianity (Liverpool: The University Press of Liverpool Ltd, 1925), p. 232.
13. R. H. Strachan, The Fourth Gospel (London: S.C.M. Press, 1941), p. 75.
14. Ibid., p. 77. ". . . Johannine similarities of language [with the Mystery Religions] may often be due to the influence of the common source in Judaism and are indirect."
15. G. H. Dodd, "The First Epistle of John and the Fourth Gospel," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Manchester, 21:15, April, 1937.
16. J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1886), p. 108.

17. Ernest F. Scott, The First Age of Christianity (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1926), p. 227.

18. Henry Alford, The Greek Testament (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, & Co., 1871), p. 180.

19. The edifying nature of the Epistle is denied by Rudolph Bultmann in Die Analyse des ersten Johannes Brief. Bultmann maintains that all existing passages of edification are not original because, according to his thesis, there is a written source not yet located which the writer has utilized. Such speculation cannot be seriously considered.

20. J. E. Huther, Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistles of James and John (Edinburgh; T&T Clark, 1882), p. 255. "The main force of the Apostle's polemic throughout does not consist in negation, but in the positive presentment of the truth, in the light of which the antagonistic doctrine is manifested as a lie."

21. Robert Law, The Tests of Life (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909), pp. 5-6.

22. A. E. Brooke gives a thorough treatment of these explanations in his commentary in the I.C.C. series, The Johannine Epistles, p. xxxff.

CHAPTER III - EXCURSUS

I. GNOSTICISM

The word Gnosticism is a broad, general term that is used to denote a quasi-religious point of view, a syncretism of magic, speculative theosophy, Oriental Mysteries and Hellenistic philosophy.¹ There are some who prefer to narrow the definition of Gnosticism so that it is contemporary with Christianity and, indeed, is referred to as a Christian heresy.² We prefer the broader description although admitting at the same time that our interest in Gnosticism is due solely to the fact that it proved to be a serious threat to the intellectual development of the early Church. It is more illuminative of the historical situation to think of Gnosticism as religious and philosophical syncretism that reached out to incorporate and adapt Christianity, rather than to delimit it to the intellectual strivings of Christians to accommodate their faith to a Hellenistic environment.

When God sent His Son in the fullness of time the world was not only prepared spiritually and emotionally, but intellectually. The events of the first century A.D. provide ample evidence that God always appeals to man's total personality and not merely a segment thereof. The religious element of his personality found firm and substantial roots in the monotheistic Hebrew faith that called for the keeping of the Torah. The religions of the Orient provided the emotional quality, and the Hellenistic appeal was to the intellect. Everywhere men were trying to unravel the mystery of the universe and to "know" God for who

He really is.³ This is not to say that Christianity is but the amalgamation or synthesis of these three elements (as Bousset implies in Kyrios Christos), but these elements give evidence of man's preparation for the unique Word of God become flesh who calls for a total response by man.

When the Gnostics spoke of $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ they were referring to an ecstatic or mystical vision enjoyed by a select few who thereby knew God and were united with Him. $\Gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ was thus a technical term in much the same way as was $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ and $\sigma\phi\iota\alpha$. The writer of the Johannine literature is very much aware of these expressions although nowhere does he refer to them precisely.⁴ John's concern is to take the language of his day (although not the exact terms in order to preclude his concepts being misconstrued as Gnostic) and to fill it full of fresh Christian truth.⁵

John contends that a Christian truly "knows" God, but such knowledge has nothing to do with esoteric speculation and mystical visions of an emotionalistic nature.⁶ The Johannine "knowledge" of God has its roots in Judaism, not Hellenism.

For the Greek, to know God means to contemplate the ultimate reality, $\tau\acute{o} \delta\acute{\nu}\tau\omega\varsigma \delta\acute{\nu}$, in its changeless essence. For the Hebrew, to know God is to acknowledge Him in His words and to respond to His Claims. While for the Greek knowledge of God is the most highly abstract form of pure contemplation, for the Hebrew it is essentially intercourse with God; it is to experience His dealings with men in time, and to hear and obey His commands.⁷

In the Old Testament, "knowledge" is perception accompanied by the movement of the will. The Jews did not know God by studying Him objectively, but rather by reacting to His acts with a subjective response. Three passages from Hosea demonstrate this fact:

4:1 - "There is no . . . knowledge of God in the land."

4:6 - "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;
because you have rejected knowledge,
I reject you from being a priest to me.
And since you have forgotten the law of your God,
I also will forget your children."

6:6 - "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the
knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings."

It is evident that here "knowledge" involves a response by man to the commandments of God, the keeping of the Law. A Jew "knows God" when he responds affirmatively with his will to the Torah (the Torah here being used almost synonymously with Word, and not just the Pentateuch). Hosea is much farther advanced than many Old Testament prophets, for he sees the Torah as basically the law of "steadfast love." This Minor Prophet's concept of the knowledge of God is not far removed from John.

We must disagree with Bultmann when he maintains that John's knowledge does "not include obedience or thankful submission."⁸ Bultmann's position is due to interpreting John as speaking of "knowledge" and "knowing" in a Gnostic sense rather than with the meaning found in Judaism and the Old Testament. For this reason it is possible for Bultmann to say that there can be a "reciprocal knowledge" between the Father and the Son. Obedience of the Son to the Father can be omitted and the metaphysical union of Father and Son is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that there is a reciprocal knowledge in the Godhead.

But such is not the case. When John speaks of "knowledge" in an attempt to refute the false Gnostic position, he always implies a union relationship of love. In addition, when speaking of the

relationship of the Son to the Father, John also includes the idea of obedience. "The Son can do nothing of his own accord" (John 5:19). "I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me" (John 7:29). "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34). "I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me" (John 5:30b). "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38).

In this sense there can be no "reciprocal knowledge" between the Father and the Son for the Father is never spoken of as being obedient to the Son. But there is a reciprocal relationship of love within the Godhead. In John 10:15, the only Johannine passage where John speaks of the Father knowing the Son, this relationship of love is implied. It is also hinted at in such passages as John 17:21 where Jesus says, "even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee."

When John speaks of man's knowledge of God (cf. John 17:4 to see that the Son of God is looked upon as man too) obedience is involved.⁹ The relationship between man and God is ethical, being fulfilled in love.

This is the whole point of the writing of I John. To the Gnostics, *γνώσις* involves theosophical speculation with apotheosis as the soteriological result. But to the Christian, the real knowledge of God is seen in man's response to God's historical act in Jesus Christ through a life of love and obedience. No boasts of mystical visions can replace Christian Faith (believing that Jesus is the Son of God) and the Christian Life (if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another) as evidence of one's knowledge of God.

II. WHERE DID GNOSTICISM SPRING FROM, AND WHY?

Two opposite views have been held. On the one hand the typical Gnostic systems are regarded as varying attempts on the part of the people who in intention at least accepted fundamental Christian beliefs, to expand, supplement and re-interpret those beliefs in terms acceptable to the thinking religious public of the time. On the other hand, Gnosticism is regarded as a religious movement older than Christianity, and originally independent of it, which being from the outset syncretistic in character, readily adopted Christian ideas into its systems as those beliefs became known to the wider public.¹⁰

Two viewpoints might also be subsumed under the second view mentioned above. Bousset sees Gnosticism reflecting primarily the Persian and Babylonian influences. In other words, Gnosticism is essentially a mystery religion per se. But Reitzenstein believes that Gnosticism was a synthesis between the Hellenism of the Graeco-Roman world and the Mysteries of the Orient, such synthesis beginning before the Christian era.¹¹

F. C. Burkitt, in disagreement with Bousset and Reitzenstein, believes that the Gnostics first appear historically as Christians. The prime factor in the rise of the Gnostic systems was Christ's failure to return.

The [Gnostic systems] were invented to explain Jesus in terms of the science of the day by Christians who were dissatisfied with the Old Testament, [which opposed such scientific conclusions as Ptolemaic astrology etc.]¹²

Bultmann also believes that eschatology enters in, but contends that it is a case of the Christian Church taking over already existent Gnostic concepts to make redemption intelligible to the Christians.

The eschatological event must be understood as a process already inaugurated with the coming of Jesus, or with his death and Resurrection, and the Gnostic redemption myth lay ready to hand as a vehicle for its expression.¹³

According to Bultmann, the only alternative left to the Christians was the Jewish eschatological hope which proved inadequate because it looked for redemption in the future.

R. P. Casey agrees with Burkitt that Gnosticism is an aberration of Christianity, but he does not believe that any Gnostic system attempts to answer the eschatological question.

Perhaps the scholar most noted for holding the view that Gnosticism began as an intellectual activity of Christianity is Harnack who sees Gnosticism as nothing more than the acute Hellenization of Christianity. According to him, Gnostics were the first Christian philosophers.

We must take a position in disagreement with such scholars as Burkitt, Casey, and Harnack. J. B. Lightfoot may be correct in saying that the name "Gnostic" is not applied until the religious syncretism of the day had first made contact with Christianity, but it cannot be denied that the desire to "know" God existed anterior to, and outside of, Christianity.

The syncretism of Gnosticism was very likely given an impetus by the loss of independence of the Greek city-states. New deities and forms of religion began to take over.

Christianity appeared and was being diffused at a time when men were interested in what is known as comparative religion. [Men were interested in the nature of the gods, origin of myths, mystery religions, magic, religions of India and Egypt etc.] No wonder therefore that efforts were made to combine Christianity with other systems and philosophies.¹⁵

Gnosticism was thus not a particular religion in itself. The word "Gnostic" describes a type or category of religious attitude

rather than any one specific mode of religion with a distinct liturgy or doctrine of salvation.

From out of the classical Greek period of Plato came the concept that to know something meant to share in its very essence. This did not exclude the knowledge of a god. The later Hellenistic period, inaugurated by Alexander, saw the infiltration of the Oriental Mysteries and their belief that the intellect needed an ineffable experience if the highest knowledge were to be attained. When the Christian faith came along, with roots sunk deeply in the Hebrew monotheistic religion, there was an attempt to accommodate this unique soteriological viewpoint too: the viewpoint that acknowledged the importance of knowing God but insisted that this was only obtained in a moral response of faith to God's historical acts in man's history.¹⁶

There can be little doubt that Gnosticism was an eclectic attitude of mind manifesting itself in various religious cults which looked upon apotheosis as the summum bonum of man's existence. The forces that eventually merged to be known as Gnosticism had their inception outside of Christianity which thus precludes the origination of Gnosticism as a Christian heresy. But when the Gnostics attempted to incorporate Christianity into the framework of speculation and the mystery religions, it became a heresy in the sense that there was a defection from within the Koinonia on the part of those who strove to make such an amalgamation possible.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GNOSTICISM

We are here treating Gnosticism as a speculative form of religion

that combines both the mystery elements of the Orient and the dialectical propensities of the inhabitants of the Mediterranean basin. There is scholarly disagreement concerning which element was more preponderant, but for our purposes we will simply admit that both were involved.¹⁷

Among the outstanding characteristics common to the many forms of Gnosticism, are the following:

(1) The element of dualism whereby the spiritual or rational was good, with the ultimate Good being deity; the body, or matter, was bad (*σῶμα σῆμα* - "the body a tomb") with the devil being the antithesis of the Good. N. P. Williams refers to this concept of evil being bound up with finite and material being as "cosmic pessimism." In the Gnostic cult ceremonies a cosmological myth explained how man came to be a dualistic creature with the rational part of man being trapped within the evil world of matter.

(2) Esoteric knowledge of the divine enables the rational good to escape from the evil world of matter. This knowledge is gained through initiation and can be claimed only by a select and prideful group which came to be known as the illuminati or pneumatikoi.¹⁸ Such knowledge contained passwords and other information needful for the successful penetration of the planetary spheres.

(3) Possession of this esoteric knowledge led to an unethical intellectualism, or perhaps it would be better to say that the illuminati exhibited a supra-ethical intellectualism. Their mystical knowledge put them above the need for ethics and morals. For some it meant extreme asceticism, not for the sake of morality, but because of the repugnancy of matter in the dualistic nature of man. On the other hand,

there were the antinomian Gnostics who knew that it did not matter what acts the body engaged in, because the only immortal part of man was his rational soul.

(4) Until such time when the spark of the divine flew upward, the only communication between the evil world of matter and the heavenly, spiritual realm was through aeons, spirits, and angels.

(5) The final soteriological goal was one of regeneration whereby apotheosis took place. The soul, released from the tomb of the body, found safe passage through the heavenly spheres by means of secret passwords etc. Deification was achieved when the soul became absorbed into the Godhead much like a raindrop losing itself in the sea.

The aim of the mystery worshiper is by means of certain cult ceremonies, lustrations, and secret rites, accompanied by dramatic representations of scenes in the life of the god, to induce a condition of ecstasy in which the god finally appears to him in vision, and a mystical union with the divine is attained.¹⁹

This entire mystical process might be described as *συμπικία* by means of *γνώσις*.

The Gnosticism opposed in I John is of an incipient character. In later years it assumed an expanded form and changed somewhat in its concepts. For example, the Gnosticism found in the era of I John is an adumbration of the mysticism found in literary form that was composed mostly in the second and third centuries A.D. in Egypt and became known as the Corpus Hermeticum.

G. H. Dodd draws a sharper line between Gnosticism and the Corpus Hermeticum than is perhaps necessary. He sees the Hermetic literature as the fusion of Platonism and Stoicism with little use of myth but with a complicated metaphysic. Gnosticism, on the contrary, according

to Dodd, has a predominance of myth which emphasizes the structure of the higher world and is more oriental and less Hellenic in appearance. We must agree with C. K. Barrett that the Corpus Hermeticum should be considered as a form of Gnosticism. They are much too similar to be treated as two theosophical systems parallel to one another. It may be that an evolutionary process took place whereby the myth element became less apparent. But both the Corpus Hermeticum and the earlier Gnostic religions emphasize the release of the spiritual from the material by means of esoteric knowledge that brings eventual deification.²⁰

IV. THE INFLUENCE OF GNOSTICISM ON CHRISTIANITY

Perhaps the biggest influence exerted by Gnosticism on Christianity is seen in the lack of confidence that the Christians came to have in their own religion. Many years had now passed since Jesus walked the earth, it is doubtful if any men remained who had seen and heard Him, and as yet no canon of Scripture had appeared to witness to this one who called Himself Son of Man. Besides, Jesus had said that He would return and there were no signs visible that such an event would soon be forthcoming.

It is easy to see how the Christians would be affected by those who made positive claims to ecstatic visions that gave them a knowledge of God not possessed by any one else. This group of people appeared to have all the answers and a supreme confidence of their relationship with God, whereas the Christians seemed to be occupied with more questions than answers.

One of the easy solutions for the Christians was to adopt some

of these mystic practices and integrate them with Christianity. This syncretistic answer (used by Christians in every century throughout the history of the Church) led to various forms of asceticism and libertinism. If the body and all material matter is evil then it is to be kept under strict control so that the divine spark of the soul may someday be given its freedom from such a prison house. Or, as the antinomian belief had it, it mattered little what the body did since it was evil and of no importance anyway. Both concepts were held to some degree by various groups of Christians.

It is possible, however, to exaggerate the distorting influence exerted by Gnosticism on Christianity and its historical development. A prime example of this is found in Environmental Factors in Christian History where the following assertions are made: (1) The Church was fashioned by Gnosticism; (2) second and third century Christendom owed its theology and philosophy to the intellectual stimulation of the Gnostics; (3) forming of the Christian canon was stimulated by the offering of a Gnostic canon minus certain Jewish features; (4) Gnosticism's devotees were satisfied with nothing short of world conquest; (5) the Roman bishop acquired his great power in order to offset the influence of Gnosticism.²¹

The Church was "fashioned" by none other than Jesus Christ Himself.²² The New Testament is a chronicle of God's elect as they are given and receive the redemptive mission from God Himself in the New Covenant. The scattered refutations and references to Gnosticism in the New Testament in general, and I John in particular, are like the

shadows and dark portions of a painting that serve to focus one's attention all the more on the highlighted central area of interest. The First Epistle of John and the other writings of the New Testament are positive and not negative in their presentation of the Christian Faith and Life.

There is no denying the fact that any rival religion of major proportions results in a mental stimulation for Christians. But the basic theology and philosophy of second and third century Christendom were founded in the proper fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies in Christ. The majority of the writings of the New Testament canon, which witnessed to this fulfilment, had been composed before the last quarter of the first century, and by the middle of the second century the entire New Testament had been written (even if some of the letters were still in dispute concerning their canonical validity).

Marcion was not strictly a Gnostic and thus any stimulation that his canon provided in the forming of a true Christian canon cannot be identified as Gnostic stimulation.

The Gnostics had no visions of world conquest because there was no single body with a unified purpose known as "Gnostics." Gnosticism was not an organized cult. Its adherents found expression for theosophical speculation in numerous societies which differed one from another in details and found agreement only in certain broad, general categories that are mentioned above under "The Characteristics of Gnosticism."

The Roman bishop was certainly instrumental in combating the heretical influences of Gnosticism. But to attribute to Gnosticism

the major responsibility for the rise of the Papacy is to go beyond the facts of history. One dares not discount the geographical location of Rome, the size of the Roman congregation, the bishop's claim to cathedra Petri, and the successful defense made against the barbarians in the fifth century. Almost any one of these is of greater importance than Gnosticism as a factor in the emerging domination of the bishopric of Rome.

V. THE RELATION OF GNOSTICISM TO THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE

The author of the First Epistle of John was not a Gnostic. Neither does he employ Gnostic terms in their distinctive Gnostic sense as the Tübingen school and Bultmann have contended. The former believed that I John incorporates Gnostic ideas that were not available until the second century. But Düsterdieck places the true situation in proper perspective when he says, "Baur, misunderstanding or ignorant of the apostolical thoughts, has regarded the [Gnostic] caricature of those thoughts as their type."²³

Since we are not positive of the exact dates of the writing of the Johannine literature, and we know that Gnosticism was an evolving philosophy with no known beginning date or point of termination, no simple statement can be made about who borrowed from whom. G. H. Dodd, in speaking of the Johannine literature and the Corpus Hereticum, believes that there is no evidence of substantial borrowing from either side. Barrett, on the other hand, contends that, "the earliest known users of the fourth gospel were gnostic heretics."²⁴

Deductive reasoning would lead us to hazard a guess that the

Gnostics, in typical eclectic fashion, made use of many terms found in the Jewish, and eventually Christian, religions and remolded them to fit their speculative pattern. In I John, the author is forced to take these distorted terms and demonstrate their original and true meanings.²⁵

What are some evidences that Gnosticism and the Johannine literature are not compatible? John purposely utilizes the Gnostic watchwords, such as know, abide, light, etc., to correct the false way in which they are being used and to throw illumination on their Christian sense. As Robert Law points out, John stresses knowledge as much from recoil as assimilation of Hellenistic speculation and Gnostic theosophy. When John speaks of knowing God, he is not referring to a speculative notion of God brought about by an ineffable vision of the divine, but rather a spiritual perception of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, issuing in the keeping of His commandments.

One of the biggest differences lies in the two distinct kinds of dualism found in the Gnostic and Johannine literature. The Gnostics claimed that spirit is good and matter is evil. The evil was not the work of God but rather the action of a demiurge who opposed God. The Supreme Being was only capable of creating that which was good and this could not include anything of a physical nature. Furthermore, there were two groups of men who, by the nature of their original creation, either had the ability to become members of the illuminati or they did not. Some possessed within themselves the spark of the divine which was only awaiting release so as to fly upward and to become one with the Good and True.

The dualism of John was not of a metaphysical nature. That which is good is the doing of righteousness as a result of Fellowship-in-Union, and that which is evil is not doing righteousness. Matter and spirit do not enter in, for everything has been created by the one God, through the Logos become flesh. "All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). Furthermore, John's writings constantly presuppose the doctrine and history of the Old Testament which are monotheistic. Likewise, salvation is not intended for the elite few who are permanently divided from those who must suffer exclusion from redemption. "He is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2). All men prior to being born of God are in a state of sin and death. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death" (I John 3:14). "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

There are yet other distinctions between Gnosticism and the literature of John. The former is a religion of symbolism with redemption achieved through secrets, but John emphasizes a life of love with redemption given through faith in Jesus Christ. The exponents of theosophical speculation believed that deification, the real goal of man, was reached through reason. John is writing about a religion in which metaphysical apotheosis never is reached, but there is Fellowship-in-Union through faith in Jesus, the Son of God.

VI. GNOSTICISM AND RECENT DISCOVERIES

About the year 1945 the Nag Hammadi codices, 13 in number and containing 48 works, were found in an Upper Egypt cliff cemetery. These MSS were copied about the third or fourth century A.D. but the autographs probably came into being c. 150 A.D.

Of the 13 codices the only one to be found outside Egypt at the present time is the Jung Codex. This MS is undoubtedly a product of the Valentinian school with Valentinus himself probably the author of that portion of the Jung Codex known as "The Gospel of Truth." This work has all the earmarks of being the Evangelium Veritatis referred to by Irenaeus c. 180 A.D.

Some scholars assert that there is good reason to believe that traces of I John can be detected in the Valentinian writings.

It must not be concluded that [the New Testament books alluded to in the Gospel of Truth] formed, for Valentinus, a canon in the strict sense of the word; but it is interesting and important to note that a Christian (even though incipiently heretical) used them all in the middle of the second century; and that his (gnostic) Gospel was undoubtedly secondary to the New Testament.²⁶

Some believe that the Gnosticism of the second century, epitomized by Valentinus, was not as heretical as we have been led to believe. The recent tendency is to moderate the strong anti-gnostic refutations made by Irenaeus.

At least in its earlier stages speculation about the procession of the aeons played a smaller part than has generally been supposed, and Valentinianism was more "Christian" than most of its adversaries would like us to think.²⁷

The most recent discovery to excite the imagination of Biblical scholars is the bringing to light of the library which had been hidden

so long in the vicinity of Khirbet Qumran, the documents known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is still too early to give a complete description of the character of this community or to identify precisely the connection between the covenant community and the Johannine literature.²⁸

Dupont-Sommer believes that this group was an Essene community but Millar Burrows disagrees.

For the present it seems to me best not to speak of the Qumran sect as Essenes, but rather to say that the Essenes and the covenanters, with other groups of which we know little or nothing, represented the same general type.²⁹

When Dupont-Sommer describes the community it is a description bordering on Gnosticism rather than Essenism. "The Sect of the Covenant was thus a crucible, in which the most ardent form of Jewish mysticism mingled with the mysticism of Iran and Greece in their most lofty and spiritual expression."³⁰ Gullman is also guilty of a double and inappropriate (for Essenes were not Gnostics) description for he believes that Qumran was an Essene community, but he also refers to it as, "a sort of Jewish Gnosticism."³¹

We cannot accept such a double description because the Covenant Community of Qumran differed from the Gnostics in several important ways: (1) "knowledge" through mystical illumination was not the way of salvation but rather knowledge through obedience of divine laws; (2) the dualism was between good and evil and not spirit and matter; (3) the Qumran community did not believe in the soul as a spark of light imprisoned in the dark world of matter. As Burrows points out, the Covenant Community cannot be described as Gnostic although both Gnosticism and the Judaism of the Qumran sect may have drawn water from

the same well of Zoroastrianism.³²

There are others who would agree that the Qumran community did not consist of Gnostics, but who feel that the Johannine literature is indebted to Qumran for concepts and phrasing. Raymond E. Brown presents eight areas of agreement between the Scrolls and the Johannine literature. (1) A modified dualism: Kuhn, Albright, Cross, Reicke and Brownlee agree with Brown that the Scrolls provide the Jewish background for Johannine terminology and ideology because both have an ethical dualism as opposed to the Gnostic physical dualism; (2) "Doing the truth" and "walking in the truth" are common to both; (3) both teach love within the community. Brown gives five other areas of similarity but admits that they cannot be too seriously considered.³³

The above three conceptual similarities may be answered in this fashion: (1) The Old Testament also presents a modified ethical dualism; Cf. Appendix B for examples in the Old Testament; (2) Compare I John 1:6 and Nehemiah 9:33; II John 4 and Psalm 26:3; (3) "The Old Testament nowhere speaks of the love of God reaching out beyond Israel."³⁴

Even the most striking parallels between the Johannine literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls involve little that is peculiar to them. . . . What may be said without any exaggeration is that the Gospel and epistles of John and the Dead Sea Scrolls reflect the same general background of sectarian Judaism. The scrolls thus show . . . that we do not have to look outside of Palestinian Judaism for the soil in which the Johannine theology grew.³⁵

In summary we may say that the conceptual ties between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Johannine literature are more apparent than real. Most of the similarities find their ultimate roots in the Old Testament.³⁶

Many scholars, such as Cullmann, are ignoring these facts and

insisting that it is the Qumran community that provides the roots and reason for the Johannine literature. In considering the message presented by the author of I John such assertions fail to stand up. It was not the members of the Covenant Community who were saying, "we have fellowship with Him," "we have no sin," "I know Him," "we abide in Him," "we are in the light," "Jesus is not the Christ," "I love God" (but hates his brother). The polemic is rather against the incipient Gnosticism that was an adumbration of that which was to follow in the second century. If some of the refutations are couched in the language and style of the Qumran community it may be due to the fact that the Jewish sect of Qumran and/or its phraseology were not unknown to the author.

This does not necessarily mean, as Albright and Cross insist, that the inception of the Johannine literature must be several decades before the turn of the second century. When the Qumran community was overrun in 68 A.D. by the Romans, the covenanters may have dispersed to Syria from whence their ideas spread.³⁷

We must insist that John is opposing the theosophical speculations of the Gnostics by turning against them some of their own weapons of language. In doing so, John is making use of concepts that find their basic meaning in the Old Testament. However, these concepts are clothed in a language similar to that used by a Jewish sect that existed at the time of Jesus and afterwards.

Before concluding this section, we must take special notice of the thesis that has been put forward by Oscar Cullmann³⁸ in which he

declares that the Qumran Community is Essene in nature, a kind of nonconforming Judaism which Gullmann describes as Gnostic. He believes that here we find "the cradle of Christianity." We believe that his thesis is incorrect because of four basic reasons: it is built upon conjectures, misuse of terms, self-contradictions, and improper emphases.

Gullmann's entire argument is built upon the conjecture that the Hellenists of Acts, of whom Stephen is one, are not Greek-speaking Jewish proselytes but are a nonconforming group of Jewish-Christians. They, along with John the Baptist and the author of the Johannine literature, find their source and inspiration in the Qumran Community which is a body within Judaism with esoteric tendencies of a syncretistic origin. Gullmann is forced to beg the question to arrive at this conjecture. It is difficult to understand why, in Acts 6:5 ("And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch") where Nicolaus is referred to as a proselyte, that this "proves precisely that the others were not proselytes and that this is not in any case the distinctive mark of this group."³⁹ It may well be that the emphasis here is upon Antioch and not proselyte, with the meaning that the others in the company were proselytes from Palestine or elsewhere.

As mentioned above, Gullmann is guilty of misusing terms when he applies the appellative, "Gnostic," to the nonconforming Jews of Qumran. Gnosticism was much more than the mere Hellenization of Judaism for there was also involved a complicated, farraginous admixture of mystery religions, magic etc.

Cullmann also carries his argument too far when he attempts to link Stephen with Gnosticism. Not one of the characteristics of Gnosticism presented above, p.576, can be applied to Stephen. Stephen's emphasis on "the supra-historical purpose which God has had for His chosen people"⁴⁰ has nothing to do with Gnostic eschatology that anticipates a release of the human spirit from the evil body.

Cullmann's self-contradictions come to light when he maintains that opposition to Temple worship by the Essenes of Qumran indubitably connects them with the Fourth Gospel and the Hellenists of Acts. He then goes on to say that the Essenes sent gifts to the Temple and that the Dead Sea Scrolls show no rejection of Temple worship. In fact, on the one hand, he describes Stephen's rejection of the Temple as being of a "revolutionary character," but can only say of Qumran,

The theory of the Jewish sectarians may have differed, but in any case we understand perfectly that the ground was favorable for an opposition to the temple and the sacrifices, in spite of the expectation of an ideal future temple.⁴¹

A rejection of Temple worship by one group that can be described as being of a "revolutionary character," and a rejection by another group described only as a favorable ground for opposition to temple worship would not seem to provide an indisputable or indissoluble link between the two groups.

An example of improper emphasis is found in Cullmann's stressing the use of the title "Son of Man" in the Fourth Gospel in an effort to confirm a connection with the Hellenists and Essenes. And yet the Gospel of Luke uses this title 2-1/2 times as often, and Mark uses the title 14 times as against John's 10, although Mark is only 80 per cent

as long as John.

We do not believe that Cullmann has presented a conclusive case to warrant the belief that I John is a product of the very early days of Christianity, having come out of a nonconforming branch of Judaism. The polemic of I John is not against Christians who were leaving the Church to return to a form of Jewish Gnosticism. It is the presentation of the truth of the Christian Faith and Life, in the process of which it is necessary to offer rebuttals to the speculative theosophy of that Hellenistic age.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER III - EXCURSUS

1. Among the New Testament references to Gnosticism are: I Cor. 1:19-2:5; 8:1, 7-11; 13:2; I Tim 6:3-5; II Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:10, 16; II Peter 2:12-22; Jude 4:7-19; Rev 2:14,15,20.

2. R. McL. Wilson, The Gnostic Problem (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1958), p. 68. "Gnosticism appears first as a heresy within the Church, but it is not simply a depraved form of Christianity. It arises out of the attempt to express Christianity in Hellenistic terms, without the safeguards which Paul and his fellow-laborers imposed upon their work."

3. Rudolph Bultmann, Gnosis (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1952, from Gerhard Kittel's TWNT, 1933), p.2. $\gamma\iota\nu\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu$ - knowing things for what they are; $\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\tau\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ - knowledge resulting from the exercise of reason.

4. Ibid., p. 45. "The simple verb $\gamma\iota\nu\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu$ plays a bigger part in John and I John than in all the rest of early Christian literature, but they do not use the compound $\epsilon\pi\iota\gamma\iota\nu\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu$ or, perhaps intentionally, the noun $\gamma\iota\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$."

5. The rather recent discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has led many scholars to declare that Gnosticism may now be forgotten as of primary consideration for the study of the Johannine literature. For example, Jeremias says that the Fourth Gospel, "is not to be interpreted against the background of Gnostic presuppositions, but against that of Palestinian, Old Testament, theological thinking, and of a piety rooted and grounded in the Bible" (Joachim Jeremias, "The Qumran Texts and the New Testament," The Expository Times, 70:69, December, 1958).

This is swinging the pendulum too hard in the opposite direction from where it has been. In the past it has been an accepted fact that the Gnostics used certain esoteric terms that conformed to a dualistic pattern. It was thought by many (including Rudolph Bultmann in his commentary on the Gospel of John, Göttingen, 1941) that John derived his dualistic concepts solely from Gnosticism. Now, with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, many persons believe that John must be confined to the Essene camp.

Certain facts must be recognized. Gnostics and their particularized language did exist. John was certainly aware of this language, for his polemic is against the Gnostics, not against the Qumran Covenanters. For example, I John 3:17 would never have been written to a community that practiced communal sharing of goods. (The Manual of Discipline further specifies that property of another accidentally destroyed must be replaced) His answer to the Gnostics is in the language of concepts found in the Old Testament. That some of the terminology clothing these concepts bears a strong resemblance to the Dead Sea Scrolls, which come from a community that also derives its basic beliefs from the Old Testament, cannot be denied. Uncertainty still exists about how much

John is indebted to the Qumran Community for the phrasing of such terminology. It is conceivable that he was aware of it and derived great use from it. This may still be true even though the Qumran Community ceased to exist as a corporate entity after 68 A.D. It is likely that the language became more widely known when dispersed than before.

However, if the Gnostics borrowed freely from Jewish sectarian nomenclature, as very likely was the case, the similar phrases used by John find their source in both places, not just one or the other. At any rate, John expresses his basic concepts in contemporary idioms so essential for the dialogue between the Spirit and the world. John's sole purpose in making use of such idioms is to denote that these concepts, with their roots sunk deeply in the Old Testament, find their fulfilment in the person of the Incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. The Qumran Community was Jewish (a sect) and John wrote as a Christian. Therein lies all the difference.

6. Others, besides John, who bitterly opposed Gnosticism were Ignatius (Antioch), Irenaeus (Rome), Clement (Alexandria), Tertullian (Carthage), Epiphanius (Cyprus), Hippolytus (who wrote "Philosophumena"), and Origen (in his Sermon on the Gospel according to St. John).

7. C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: The University Press, 1953), p. 152.

8. Bultmann, op. cit., p. 49.

9. G. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S.P.C.K., 1955), p. 136. "Very little is said in John of God's knowledge of man."

10. Dodd, op. cit., p. 97.

11. Rawlinson would agree that the essentials of Gnosticism (dualism, mythology, magical rites, salvation by gnosis) are pre-Christian in origin. But he takes Reitzenstein to task for failing to draw the distinction in Die hellenistischen Mysterien between the salvation achieved by the Mysteries and the salvation gained through gnosis. "Side by side with the idea of salvation by 'mysteries' (in the sense of secret rites and initiations), [there was] the alternative idea of salvation by gnosis, that is to say by revelation." (A.E.J. Rawlinson, The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ, p. 67). It is not within the purview of our discussion to enter into the question of whether Gnosticism was a speculative religion apart from the mysteries or, in typical eclectic fashion, included the mysteries. We prefer to take the second alternative as a presupposition in this dissertation.

12. F. C. Burkitt, Church and Gnosis (Cambridge: University Press, 1932), p. 87.

13. Rudolph Bultmann, Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting (London: Thames & Hudson, 1956), p. 198.

14. R. P. Casey, "The Study of Gnosticism," The Journal of Theological Studies, 36:55, 1935.

15. F. J. Foakes-Jackson, Studies in the Life of the Early Church (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1924), p. 60.

16. It may well be that Christianity was the catalytic agent which served to coagulate the syncretistic elements of Gnosticism. Such a situation would provide an explanation for this statement by C. H. Dodd, "There is no Gnostic document known to us which can with any show of probability be dated . . . before the period of the New Testament." (The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 98).

17. Philip Schaff, History of the Church. Vol. II. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1883), p. 450. "In form and method [Gnosticism] is . . . more Oriental than Grecian. The Gnostics . . . speculate not so much in logical and dialectic mode, as in an imaginative, semi-poetic way, and they clothe their ideas not in the simple, clear and sober language of reflection, but in the many-colored, fantastic, mythological dress of type, symbol and allegory."

18. Reinhold Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1956), p. 82. In quoting Santayana's Platonism and the Spiritual Life, "Spirituality is the supreme good for those who are called to it, the few intellectuals who can be satisfied only by the impartial truth and by the self-annihilating contemplation of all ages," Niebuhr remarks, "It is rather revealing that Santayana reserves the mystic summum bonum for a few intellectuals. It reveals how aristocratic is the conception, and how closely mysticism is related to rationalism."

19. R. H. Strachan, The Fourth Gospel (London: S.C.M. Press, 1941), p. 73.

20. H.A.A. Kennedy, St. Paul and the Mystery-Religions (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), p. 105, quotes Reitzenstein on the Hermetic literature: "Hermes, the herald of Egyptian religion, is summoned by the god $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, the Shepherd of men (Poimandres), to become Savior of the whole world. He proclaims the new religion to his two disciples, Asclepios, son of the god Ptah, and his own son Tat; consecrates them at the close to be prophets, causing them to be born of God, and united with Him, and then ascends again to heaven. The two prophets preach the new doctrine to King Ammon who adopts it, and thus the Egyptian religion is founded."

21. James T. Carlyon, "The Impact of Gnosticism on Early Christianity," Environmental Factors in Christian History, edited by John T. McNeill, Matthew Spinka, Harold R. Willoughby. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), pp. 114-130.

22. John Wick Bowman, The Intention of Jesus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. 190. "Jesus' intention was to set up the Church--a fellowship of those who share the Kingdom experience."

23. John H. A. Ebrard, Biblical Commentary on the Epistles of St. John (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1860), p. 14.

24. Barrett, op. cit., p. 155.

25. Cf. footnote no. 5.

26. C. K. Barrett, "The Gospel of Truth," The Expository Times, 69:170, March, 1958.

27. Ibid., p. 169.

28. Joachim Jeremias, "The Qumran Texts and the New Testament," The Expository Times, 70:69, December, 1958. "I would not like to omit a warning against the possibility of over-estimating the significance of these texts, a possibility which is understandably present in the enthusiasm for a new discovery. The small group of Essene monks and their followers represent, after all, only a very limited part of Judaism at the time of Jesus."

29. Millar Burrows, The Dead Sea Scrolls (London: Secker and Warburg, 1956), p. 294.

30. A. Dupont-Sommer, The Jewish Sect of Qumran and the Essenes (London: Vellentine, Mitchell & Co. Ltd., 1954), p. 132.

31. Oscar Cullmann, "A New Approach to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel," The Expository Times, 71:9, October, 1959.

32. Burrows, op. cit., p. 259.

33. Raymond E. Brown, "Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 17:403-419, 559-574, July, October, 1955.

34. Gottfried Quell and Ethelbert Stauffer, Love (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1949, from Gerhard Kittel's TWNT), p. 24.

35. Burrows, op. cit., p. 339.

36. Cf. footnote number 5.

37. This would bolster T. W. Manson's theory of an Antiochene source for the Johannine literature.

38. Oscar Cullmann, "The Significance of the Qumran Texts for Research into the Beginnings of Christianity," Journal of Biblical

Literature, 74:312-227, December, 1955. Also Cf. The Expository Times, 71:39-43, November, 1959.

39. Oscar Cullmann, "A New Approach to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel," The Expository Times, 71:10, October, 1959.

40. William Manson, The Epistle to the Hebrews (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951), p. 35.

41. Oscar Cullmann, "A New Approach to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel," The Expository Times, 71:40, November, 1959.

CHAPTER IV

ETERNAL LIFE

I. THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE EXPRESSION "ETERNAL LIFE"

Eternal Life! That is the theme about which the entire First Epistle revolves. If a reader of this letter does not understand the significance of Eternal Life as John uses the term, he will fail to glean the rich harvest of spiritual fruit, and instead must be satisfied with the provisions of a few low-hanging branches.

This chapter will discuss two major questions concerning Eternal Life as propounded in the First Epistle: (1) What does the author have to say about the nature of Eternal Life? (2) How does he view Eternal Life in respect to the Christian Faith and the dynamic Christian Life of a believer?

First, let us bisect the expression, Eternal Life, into its two component parts, and then bring them together again for a fresh appraisal.

The noun "eternity" has a double meaning, both in the Hebrew אֵלֶּיךָ, and the Greek αἰών. It refers to world-time as well as to the eternity of God.¹ It is most likely that the meanings contained in both the Hebrew and Greek words find a common Oriental source, possibly Babylonian.

On the one hand, αἰών refers to the space-time continuum confined within the limits of Creation and the End. In the New Testament this word for eternity is used in two ways when given the meaning of world-time.

In Luke 1:70 (also Acts 3:21, John 9:32), "he spoke by the mouth

of his holy prophets from of old," αἰών refers to the boundless past. In similar manner, it may also refer to the boundless future. But in either case, past or future, the meaning in these instances does not go beyond the dimension of time.

The word "eternity" may also refer to a bounded period of time. This may be seen in Colossians 1:26 where αἰώνων and γενεῶν are parallel. No definite number of years is defined but the implication is that the temporality of the world consists of eras, each of which has a definite beginning and ending. The word αἰών may be found in this sense with an eschatological interpretation in I Corinthians 10:11 and Matthew 13:39. "The course of the world (the great αἰών) breaks into a series of lesser αἰῶνες."²

On the other hand, when we find such a passage as John 6:51, "if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever," we recognize that we have then passed over into the other meaning of αἰών. The temporal realm has been transcended. (The only way in which it may be determined whether αἰών has reference to world-time or to supra-temporal eternity is to examine the context in which it is found).

The Old Testament word for eternity, אֲזַיִן, provides the background for the New Testament usage of αἰών. In the older writings אֲזַיִן described God who has always been and always will be. This is in contrast to man who has a very short span of life. But even in this description of God, אֲזַיִן did nothing more than look far back into time and far ahead into the future. There was no sense of endless time.

But when the great Deutero-Isaiah came onto the stage of prophetic

history, a noticeable change in interpretation took place. When the prophet declares, "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth," he is using the word $\alpha\beta\eta\iota\tau\omicron\varsigma$ to go beyond the temporal realm. God now is recognized as being the first and the last; He existed before the Creation (Psalm 89:2) and will continue existing after the End (Psalm 101:26ff). In more modern Copernican terms, He is the eternal God who cannot be delimited by the measured revolutions of the spinning earth around the sun.

The New Testament carries over this meaning into the word $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\upsilon$. God is spoken of in terms of being either pre-existent of human history (I Corinthians 2:7) or post-existent. His eternalness means that He is supratemporal. No history can be written of God.

The New Testament, in the word $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\upsilon$, goes beyond the Old Testament $\alpha\beta\eta\iota\tau\omicron\varsigma$ in one critical way. Whatever has been said of God in the past in referring to Him as being eternal, is now applied to Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:10ff; Revelation 22:13). The Son who came into history incarnate in flesh is also above the confinements of time, even as is the Father.

It is thus seen that the New Testament meaning of $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\upsilon$ is a direct carry-over from the Old Testament $\alpha\beta\eta\iota\tau\omicron\varsigma$. This is not to ignore the fact that Greek philosophers also spoke of $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\upsilon$. The primary example is Plato, who, in his Timaeus, "distinguishes between $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\upsilon$ as timeless, ideal eternity in which there is no day, month and year, and $\chi\rho\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ as time which is created with the world as a moving image of eternity."³

In Alexandria c. 200 A.D. $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\upsilon$ was given as a name to an eternal

god. But such usages of $\alpha\lambda\acute{\iota}\nu$ by the Hellenistic mysteries and Greek philosophers did not serve as models for the author of I John.

To illuminate the second part of the $\alpha\lambda\acute{\iota}\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma \zeta\omega\eta$ phrase, we must first look at the Old Testament to see what words are used for "life" and what their proper meanings are.

The Hebrew word $\square \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \square$ has reference to the physical, organic life and the various ways in which that earthly life manifests itself in well being.⁴ This plural emphatic form of $\square \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \square$ (for which there is no singular) denotes, "diversity in unity; . . . [expressing] life in its many manifestations and modes."⁵ It is used to express physical life, Deuteronomy 4:9, although this is not in opposition to death. In the Israelite religion there was no teaching of an active, spiritual life after death. Sheol is merely the abode of the dead in which there is no relationship with God. In Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2,3 we have hopes represented rather than didactic beliefs.⁶

$\square \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \square$ is the symbol for happiness and the joyous life, Proverbs 16:15. It is also used to denote the highest good that man can possess and which is to be sought above all else (Ecclesiastes 9:4); that is, it is a righteous and ethical life, Proverbs 10:17. Finally, $\square \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \square$ is the religious life, "the life which is nourished by fellowship with God," Psalm 30:5.⁷

The usual equivalent of $\square \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \square$ in the LXX is $\zeta\omega\eta$. Rudolph Bultmann believes that a better translation is $\beta\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$.⁸ However, $\beta\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$ usually denotes the course of life and the livelihood to sustain it and lacks the colorful nuances which $\square \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \square$ reveals in the contents and manifestations of life.

The other word in the Old Testament for "life" is $\psi\ddot{\nu}\ddot{\nu}$. It literally means "breath" and signifies the soul as the principle of life. It is a way of saying "I" or "self" (I Samuel 18:3). The seat of life was supposed to be in the blood; Cf. Leviticus 17:11. The LXX equivalent of $\psi\ddot{\nu}\ddot{\nu}$ is $\psi\chi\gamma'$. But in contrast again, Bultmann thinks that $\zeta\omega\gamma'$ is the more proper Greek approximate.⁹ Such an equivalence has little to recommend it.

The concept of "life" appeared in somewhat different fashion to others besides the writers of the Old Testament. To the Stoics $\zeta\omega\gamma'$ meant the physical life that moved in the body, but this was not merely a natural process. Man's will and determined resolution partially accounted for this "life."

Aristotle saw "life" as completely transcendent of man, and thus was presaging the dualistic interpretation to be given $\zeta\omega\gamma'$ by the future Gnostics.

Life resides in God, for the energy of thought is life; and this energy as it exists absolutely in God is the best and eternal life. . . . God is living, eternal, best, so that life and continuous existence must be ascribed to Him.¹⁰

In the realm of Gnostic dualism, "Life . . . belongs simply on the side of Godliness."¹¹ The $\pi\upsilon\epsilon\acute{\nu}\mu\alpha$ of God carries the emanation of $\zeta\omega\gamma'$ to men. It is not strange then to find the Hermetica, which is in the Gnostic milieu of the second century, saying that $\zeta\omega\gamma'$ is, "the divine life into which man may enter, either here and now or after death."¹²

And now to bring together the two words: eternal and life.¹³ The New Testament is, "the earliest body of literature in which the

expression 'eternal life' . . . is at all common, or possesses any far-reaching importance."¹⁴ To gain an insight into its meaning we must look back to the intertestamental period when the idea was promulgated that there are two "ages" of the world: the life of this age, and the life of the age to come. The difference between the two is one of quality, not length of time. The life of the age to come denotes the Messianic era, and the New Testament expression, "eternal life," appears to be based on this concept.

In the Synoptic Gospels the phrase kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven (this latter expression is found only in Matthew in the New Testament, but has the same meaning as the former) is found much more frequently than the phrase eternal life.

The kingdom of God in the Synoptics denotes the kingship, or ruling sway, of God in the hearts of men and may be used to denote either the present or the future. Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom is present in Himself (Mark 1:15), and yet the fulfilment of it is still to come (Matthew 19:23).¹⁵ Insofar as kingdom of God in the Synoptics refers to both present and future, it is nearly equivalent to eternal life in the Johannine literature.¹⁶

However, in those Synoptic passages where "eternal life" is literally expressed as an equivalent to "kingdom of God," only the future is being dealt with. And in almost every instance it is Jesus Himself who uses the phrase, "eternal life."¹⁷

For example, the meaning of eternal life in Matthew 19:16 ("And behold, one came up to him, saying, 'Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?'") is explicated in Matthew 19:23 ("And Jesus said

to his disciples, 'Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.'"). That these uses of eternal life and kingdom of heaven have reference to the future is amplified further on in the same chapter, Matthew 19:28f: "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will . . . inherit eternal life."

Again, Matthew 18:9 ("And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire") has its parallel in Mark 9:47 ("And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell").

The eschatological meaning inherent in Jesus' usage of eternal life in the Synoptics is also seen in Matthew 25:46 ("And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life") and Mark 10:30 ("and in the age to come eternal life").

In the Johannine literature we find the richest meaning for $\alpha\iota\omega\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$ $\beta\omega\chi$ in all the New Testament. Whereas, in a Platonic sense, both terms used together would be in utter contradiction, in John's writings neither word may be safely ignored. And together they connote very salvation itself.

All the rich concepts hovering in the background of $\alpha\iota\omega\nu$ and $\beta\omega\chi$ come surging forward to become something new in the fusion process. The word $\alpha\iota\omega\nu$ does not let us forget that this new life is concerned

with the Messianic Age and the Messiah. We are also made aware that this life is intimately connected with the very nature of God Himself who cannot be contained within time and space. But the time element is definitely present for man since this new life may be had both now and after the earthly frame is laid to rest.

The word *ζωή* reminds us that this life from God for man is only possible in and through His Son, Jesus Christ. The very nature of the Son in relationship to the Father can best be defined as "life." The incarnation of the Son in Jesus Christ presents a visible manifestation of this relationship within the Godhead which is to be mediated to man. Only as one is in a relationship of faith with the Son is one in a relationship of life with the Father.

And thus we might define the Johannine expression eternal life as a qualitative relationship with the God whose nature is love, mediated by His Son Jesus Christ who is the incarnation of this relationship; this spiritual relationship with God being made evident in the present by a life of love, and consummated in the future life with a perfecting of this love-relationship.¹⁸ We may more simply define it as Fellowship-in-Union.

Before passing on to the further explication of the Johannine meaning of eternal life, let us ask this question: why is it that we find the phrase eternal life used so frequently in John's Gospel and Epistles in comparison to the few times that it is found elsewhere in the New Testament? For example, the word *ζωή* is found 37 times in the Fourth Gospel and 13 times in the Epistles of John, but the combined number of appearances in the Synoptic Gospels is only about one third

the Johannine total.

There can be but one answer to our question. The false, speculative religions of the post-apostolic era that were making such heretical inroads into the life of the Church were misusing (according to the Christian dialectic) the words $\alpha\lambda\acute{\iota}\omega\nu$ and $\zeta\omega\eta'$. Thus, Bultmann says (TWNT Bd II s.v. $\zeta\omega\eta'$) that there is a reference to Gnosticism in that the Gnostics have the wrong concept of $\zeta\omega\eta'$ and John attempts to point out that the revelation of Jesus Christ leads from a false to the true idea.

"Life" cannot be thought of, says John, in the sense of some cosmic power that can only be approached theosophically through inter-mediating aeons. It is not something only in the realm of the spiritual Good completely separated from the material evil.

God's people of the worshiping community would never be able to realize their redemptive status as long as they misunderstood such great truths as those found in $\alpha\lambda\acute{\iota}\omega\nu$ and $\zeta\omega\eta'$. How could they acknowledge themselves to be the redeemed community if the power of life necessary for their redemption were available only to an elite few who possessed certain esoteric knowledge of the Divine? How could they acknowledge themselves to be the redeeming community on earth if the very regenerative life itself were wholly outside the material context of physical history?

And so John takes this expression eternal life and exhibits it to the Christians for what it really is in the mind of the one, true God.

II. THE NATURE OF ETERNAL LIFE

Fellowship-In-Union

(2:24) That which you have heard from the beginning, let (it) abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also abide in the Son and [in] the Father. (2:25) And this is the promise which He promised us [you], eternal life. (5:20) And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given to us understanding, [in order] that we [might] know the True One; and we are in the True One, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

When the Gnostics boasted that they were in the deity, they referred to the possession of the essence of the god. Just as a drop of rain falling into the ocean becomes lost in the same essence, so it was possible for man to be "in" his god; that is, to become deified.

John meets such an assertion head on lest the Christians believe that this is what is involved in salvation. They must cease listening to the idle prating of the self-styled illuminati and turn their attention back to the Gospel which has claimed their obedience and loyalty from the day of their rebirth ("that which you heard from the beginning").

It is only when a Christian allows the Gospel to become a part of him that he is worthy of saying that he is "in the Son and in the Father." For the Gospel is the Word of God revealed in the Incarnation of the Son, and when one responds affirmatively in deeds to such a proclamation, one is thereby testifying to a spiritual relationship which exists with the self-revealing God.

John goes on to refer to this spiritual relationship as "eternal life." To John, "abiding in the Son" and "abiding in the Father" are the equivalent of "eternal life." This is also seen in 5:20b where eternal life refers specifically to "we are in the true one."

The nature of eternal life according to the writer of I John is a spiritual relationship or union. In this thesis, we prefer to characterize this relationship as Fellowship-in-Union. We shall see below that it is a relationship which is mediated to man in a definite way and demands a definite moral and soul-giving response on the part of man.

SOME EXEGETICAL COMMENTS: The $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\lambda\upsilon \acute{\epsilon}\nu$ in the Johannine literature is parallel to the Pauline $\acute{\epsilon}\nu \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ insofar as it denotes a mystical spiritual union. But John's expression puts much greater emphasis on the fellowship with God involved in the union. Paul emphasizes, "the redeemed man's new environment," which is, "the sphere of Christ," especially as that environment means participating in the Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ.¹⁹ For Paul, the state of being "in Christ" is the result of salvation. But when John speaks of "abiding in" he uses the phrase almost synonymous with salvation.

The $\acute{\epsilon}\mu\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ at the beginning of 2:24 is an example of anacoluthon. The writer probably intended to follow it with $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\epsilon \acute{\epsilon}\nu$, but then abruptly put in a new subject. As it stands, the best interpretation is, "as for you," pointing out the contrast between the Christians and the antichrists.

The $\acute{\alpha}\pi \acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\varsigma$ of 2:24 must be compared with 1:1 and 3:8 to see that this expression means different things in different contexts.

Here it refers to the time of the "rebirth," the $\delta' \gamma\eta\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\alpha\tau\epsilon$ being the Gospel of salvation.

The $\acute{\epsilon}\nu \delta\omega\acute{\iota}\nu \mu\epsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\tau\omega$ of 2:24 is another use of the imperative as John exhorts his readers to work out the salvation in deeds which God has worked in them through faith. The phrase does not denote the same mystical union as the following "in the Son and in the Father." When one has the Gospel abiding in Him, that person professes Jesus as Son of God, and reflects God's love on the human plane. All this gives evidence that he is in a Son-mediated relationship with the Father. Or, as the writer of the First Epistle puts it, he has eternal life.

In 2:25, $\alpha\acute{\upsilon}\tau\eta$ refers to both the preceding and following ideas. If it only pointed forward, then a totally new subject, eternal life, would be introduced and dropped within one verse. This "abiding in" the Son and the Father is the promise He has given us, eternal life (although no such explicit Divine promise is recorded in the Scriptures). There is no reason to feel that this is forcing the meaning, or that "abiding in" is merely the content of eternal life or its condition. As we have said (and discuss further in Chapter X) it is equivalent to eternal life.

There can be little doubt that in 5:20b $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\sigma$ means God and not Jesus Christ, for it has direct reference to the preceding $\alpha\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omicron\upsilon$. Tautology is not involved because the following $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ is an adjective modifying $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$, whereas in the first part of the verse, $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{\omicron}\nu$ and $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{\omega}$ are used as substantives. As such, the principle emphasis is upon God as True, over against the false gods mentioned in 5:21.

It would appear that another ¹ *οὗτος* to precede "eternal life" would have made the author's intention clearer. For he means that "this is the true God:" the One who has revealed Himself in His Son. He is not a god conjured up in an emotionalistic experience. And "this is eternal life:" to be "in the True One, in His Son Jesus Christ." Eternal life is a moral relationship of Fellowship-in-Union. (note)

And now we come to the prologue of the Epistle where we learn even more about the nature of eternal life. So far, we have found it to be the mystical union of men's spirits with God who is Spirit. This union is a communion or fellowship, and certainly cannot be equated with the Gnostic goal of the redemptive process wherein, "The soul, freed from its limitations, is simply to be reunited with the 'Pleroma'-- the fullness of the Divine being."²⁰

From God Through The Son

(1:1) (That) which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and our hands touched, concerning the word of life, (1:2) and the life was made visible, and we have seen (it) and we testify and we declare to you the life eternal which was with the Father and was made visible to us. (5:11) And this is the witness, that God gave eternal life to us, and this life is in His Son. (5:12) He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

The first two verses of the Epistle have the task of delineating the author's theme. From the great numbers of interpretations it is apparent that the Church has never agreed concerning what that theme is.

Windisch expresses the basic problem when he says,

The exact meaning of this expression ["concerning the word of life"] (the word of life is Christ, or of life which Christ brings, or the word that is life or the word of life which Christ preaches) can hardly be identified.²¹

But other difficulties also present themselves. Why is the neuter ⁽¹⁾ used if "word of life" refers to the personal Logos? And, for that matter, does the writer have the personal Logos in mind? What is precisely meant by "from the beginning?" Why are the sensuous verbs divided into the perfect and aorist tenses, and do they represent an account of an actual eye-witness? How can $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota$ be grammatically accommodated? And what is meant by eternal life being "with the Father?"

The key to these problems lies in, (1) the correct understanding of "word of life," and (2) the proper placement of the phrase, "concerning the word of life." As to the former, scholars are pretty well divided: about half maintaining that "word of life" has reference to the personal Logos (Plummer, Heltzmann, Haupt, Law) while others declare that John has the Gospel in mind (Dodd, Westcott, Brooke).

Neither of these alternatives is completely satisfactory. First, in regard to the personal Logos: (1) This prologue is only similar to the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, and not parallel to it. In John 1:1 the Logos is said to be "with" or "alongside" the Father, while in I John 1:2 it is the "eternal life" which is with the Father. Also, nowhere does the Epistle say that "the eternal life was God" in the same way that the Gospel speaks of, "and the word was God." (2) Nowhere else in the Epistle is "word of life" used to refer to the pre-Incarnate Christ. On the other hand, the personal nature of the Logos in the

Gospel is alluded to throughout the entire prologue. (3) Some scholars contend that the only reason why "of life" is added to "the word" is to provide a point of dependence for "the life" which follows in 1:2. This would seem to indicate that the main substantive is "life" and not "word" and $\beta\omega\gamma$ is never used to refer to the personal Logos. Besides, it is difficult to imagine John subordinating the idea of the personal Logos to any other concept. (4) Finally, in a sweeping generalization, it is stated that there is not a clause or word in the prologue of the Epistle which does not naturally point to the personal Logos. This is merely to beg the question.

The viewpoint in which "word of life" is equated with the Gospel has much more in its favor. But only if we do not understand the expression to signify the Gospel as the life giving word of God. Here the emphasis would be upon "word" and 1:2 indicates that this is not the intent of John. But, if "Gospel" is meant to interpret "word of life" as the revelation of eternal life, then this is undoubtedly what the author has in mind. John is stressing the essential relationship within the Godhead from which all life springs.

The phrase, "concerning the word of life," is not coordinate with the preceding clauses and therefore must be relocated for a proper understanding. The neuter pronoun $\overset{c1}{\text{O}}$ makes good sense when we read, "That which was from the beginning (concerning the word of life), which we have heard, seen, looked upon, and touched, concerning the word of life." Here, the initial $\overset{c1}{\text{O}}$ refers to "life" rather than to "word of life." Its reference is to the Fellowship-in-Union relationship which

has always existed within the Godhead. The other three neuter pronouns allude to the Incarnation of this relationship within history, manifested to the human senses; that is, they allude to the revelation of eternal life, the "word of life."

The meaning of the first two verses is thus: We proclaim to you the Fellowship-in-Union within the Godhead which has always existed and which has now taken human form and been revealed to human senses by becoming visible in an earthly setting. Verse 1:2 puts in a slightly different way what has already been said in 1:1.

Borrowing terminology from G. H. Dodd, we can say that "the revelation of eternal life" is the theme of the Epistle; and the "Fellowship-in-Union within the Godhead" comprises the contents of the proclamation.

In verse 2, the writer uses great subtlety when he says that the eternal life was *πρὸς τὸν πατέρα*. John is pointing here to the Christ, the pre-incarnate Son (the Logos of the Fourth Gospel). He declares that the Son has, "from the beginning," enjoyed a unique relationship with the Father. This relationship is one of Love and is incapable of being perfectly described in human language. The writer of the Epistle speaks of it as eternal life.

The birth of Jesus of Nazareth heralded the breaking into time and history of this Fellowship-in-Union. An abstract quality of the Divine Life which exists on the heavenly plane is now also a concrete reality in human life on the earthly plane. Because of this, man now has the opportunity of participating in that selfsame relationship of love which is between the Father and the Son. To do so, he must

recognize, believe, and confess that Jesus is the Son of God come in the flesh. This is Christian Faith. The results should be Christians loving their fellow-Christians and experiencing Fellowship-in-Union within the Christian community and with God. This is the Christian Life.

One major difference between the First Epistle and the Fourth Gospel must be noted. In the Gospel, the Evangelist speaks of the personal Logos become flesh; i.e. the self-revealing Person of God come in human form. Throughout, the focus of attention is upon God's revelation of Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ. This is the word of God, not as the medium of creation, nor as spoken by the prophets, nor as written in the Law, nor as Wisdom; but the word become flesh. The watchword is, "He who has seen me, has seen the Father."

In the First Epistle, John concentrates on the relationship of love between the Father and the Son and on the Incarnation as the means whereby man is now enabled to share this fellowship with God, which is Life in the only true sense. "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him," 4:9. The watchword in the Epistle is, "the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us."

To put it in terms, perhaps too simple, we may say that the Fourth Gospel tells us who God is by what He has done for us. That is to say, the Gospel presents the God who reveals Himself through His Son and exhibits in an existential way His nature of love. On the other

hand, the First Epistle of John tells us what God has done for us because of who He is. That is, He has made possible a spiritual union between Himself and man through a relationship of love mediated to man by the Son who became incarnate just for that purpose.

This incarnation of the love relationship between the Father and the Son, and the way it has appeared to the human senses, is represented in 1:1-2 by perfect and aorist tenses. John would probably be appalled at the number of interpretations concerning his choice of grammar. Expositors have tried to show that the difference in tenses denotes that the writer was the last of the Apostles; that the perfect tense refers to the entire preparation for the Advent; and that the aorist, in being held to a strict punctiliar import, can only mean the post-Resurrection appearances of the Lord to His disciples, and very likely the touching of the Lord Himself.

It is probably misleading to attach such undue weight to John's grammar at this point. He may simply have used the perfect tense (which stresses an abiding result) for "see" and "hear" because it is due to these two sensory experiences that the Incarnation was recognized in the past and the Gospel passed on to the present day. The aorist (which stresses a punctiliar occurrence) for "looked upon" and "touched" implies past action of a more limited time duration and effect.

In any case, we must not look for mysterious, hidden meanings. The writer is chiefly interested in explaining that a Godly relationship of love has taken a finite, temporal form and been perceived by men.

But who are these men, the ones whom the writer refers to as

"we" throughout the prologue? The general consensus (Plummer, Westcott, Huther, Holtzmann, Rothe) has declared them to be the Apostolic band, of whom the writer is the representative surviving member. A. E. Brooke will not venture so far as to say that the writer refers to Apostolic authority, but he has no doubt that eye-witnesses are meant. C. H. Dodd stands almost alone in maintaining that the meaning of the first person plural in 1:1-2 is in a corporate sense referring to the Church.²²

In the proem of the Epistle, the writer speaks from the standpoint of the entire worshiping community and recalls to mind the basic meaning of the Gospel so that a certain defecting group of Christians may be restored into the fellowship once again. He leaves no doubt that the basis of the Gospel is the Incarnation of the Son without which man could have no relationship of love with the Father.

In 5:9 John makes it quite clear that God has testified to His Son. The contents of this witness are given in 5:11. The last two clauses of 5:11 are in apposition to the first so that the testimony is this: God has given men eternal life; and this eternal life is of the very essence of the Son. The following verse declares that whoever is in union with the Son through faith (for this is the meaning of "he who has the Son") possesses this eternal life.

The meaning is clear. The only way one can enjoy the highest form of fellowship with God and man, Fellowship-in-Union, is through the surrender of one's spirit to Him who is the very manifestation of this summum bonum.

Many scholars feel that "he who does not have" of 5:12 describes

a particular class of men. But John uses $\mu\tau\acute{\iota}$ to show, not that some are predestined never to possess the Son and eternal life (this would parallel a Gnostic type of thinking), but that if and when a person refuses the Son then it can be absolutely and dogmatically stated that he does not have eternal life.²³

For some inexplicable reason the Revised Standard Version omits the translation of $\tau\omicron\upsilon\acute{\iota}\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\acute{\iota}$ following the second $\tau\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\ \iota\upsilon\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon\acute{\iota}$ in 5:12 although there is no MS dispute concerning authenticity. As Plummer says, this expression is neither fortuitous nor pleonastic. Bengel explains,

The verse has two clauses; in the former, the Son only is mentioned, without the addition, 'of God,' for the faithful know 'the Son;' in the other this addition is made, that unbelievers may know at length what a serious thing it is not to have Him.²⁴

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE WHO POSSESS ETERNAL LIFE

They Believe In Jesus As Son Of God

(5:13) These things I wrote (write) to you in order that you may know that you have life eternal, to you (plural) who believe in the name of the Son of God.

The primary purpose of this verse is to encourage the Christian readers by assuring them that they have eternal life. This note of confidence underlies the entire Epistle, and probably for very good reason. The false teachers had infiltrated the ranks of the Christian community to such an extent that some of the believers were beginning to question the validity of the Christian revelation in the light of the theosophical speculations of the Gnostics. John thus feels it

necessary to tell the Christians that he wants them to know (εἰδῆτε and not the verb γινώσκουσιν ; an absolute, intuitive certainty in contrast to the recognition which comes through the process of experience) that they who believe in the Son of God are in a Fellowship-in-Union relationship with the Father.

However, for purposes of discussing the marks or characteristics exhibited by a person who has eternal life, we must reverse the emphasis. Let us look at the verse from the viewpoint that the person who possesses eternal life is one who believes in Jesus as the Son of God. This is further evidence that the man who lives his life in fellowship with the Father, does so only because of his faith in the Son, through whom this relationship is given.

Whether the phrase "these things I write" is used in reference to the entire Epistle or only to the preceding six or twelve verses is a moot question. The writer is striving to assure the readers that they, even now, possess eternal life. As Robert Law points out, this encouragement is the aim of the whole Epistle, but the epistolary aorist, ἔγραψα, probably has in mind the foregoing passage that speaks of God's testimony to His Son, in whom the readers have eternal life.²⁵

The syntax of ἵνα ἔχετε αἰώνιον is interesting because the verb comes between the substantive and the adjective. Robertson explains that this is, "to give unity to the clause."²⁶ Robert Law interprets the meaning as, "Ye have Life, and that Eternal."²⁷ Other examples of similar syntactical construction may be found in Acts 1:5 and Mt 1:20.

They Love The Brethren

(3:14) We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death. (3:15) Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Everyone who possesses eternal life, Fellowship-in-Union, has become joined in spiritual union to the One who appeared in the flesh as the very Incarnation of this relationship. As a result of a disciple's faith in the Son of God, he will exhibit the Christian Life. That is, the fellowship which he enjoys with God in the sphere of love will find its earthly expression and reflection in the love of fellow-Christians ("brethren").

That Christians will also love non-Christians is beyond dispute, but this matter is not within the purview of John. His immediate object in this Epistle is to discuss eternal life and the various ways in which it makes its presence felt among men who have experienced it. To bring in the "neighbor," one who knows nothing about this Godly relationship, would be to introduce an element foreign to the subject under discussion.²⁸

In 3:14, John explains that Christians have the inward assurance that they have eternal life (the *μεταβέβηκαμεν* indicates present possession due to a transition made in the course of their life) because their Christian fellowship with other believers testifies to this fact. On the other hand (the emphatic *γινωσκεις* serves to illustrate the contrast with the world mentioned in the previous verse), the person who does not exhibit love in his life must be considered to be

spiritually dead. That is, he does not know the joy of being in communion with God, the Source and Giver of love.

This is probably John's way of indirectly pointing the finger at the Gnostics. They who make such bold claims about their salvation are still capable of ignoring, disdain and even hating, those who have not been so fortunate to be in such close touch with Deity. From the Christian viewpoint, says John, such boasts are in vain and the Gnostics themselves remain spiritually dead.

In 3:14, ἀγάτου can only mean the absence of the Fellowship-in-Union relationship, just as ζωῆν indicates its presence. Life is the spiritual state of a Christian's being; love is the dynamic working out of that state. These terms become merged only when applied to God. His Being of Eternal Life within the Godhead can never be seen apart from His active essence of self-giving Love directed toward His creation.

Verse 3:14 is thus clear that when a person does not love he thereby indicates by his lovelessness that he is spiritually dead. But the following verse is not quite as incisive in its meaning. For it goes on to say that when a person is involved in lovelessness, the death of other personalities result.²⁹ As the writer puts it, they are murdered.

John probably finds himself using such a term as "murder" because he still has the Cain and Abel illustration of 3:12 firmly in mind. The hatred within the family eventually found Cain slaying his brother, Abel. John is desirous of pointing out that defections within the Christian household and the rupture in Christian fellowship are being accompanied

by lack of love and hatred which is tantamount to murder.

John may have in mind Matthew 5:21f where Jesus equates anger and killing insofar as both fall under judgment. Our Lord had insights into the existential relationships of personalities and the soul-destroying potentialities that each person possesses.³⁰

John stresses throughout his Epistle that the love which God has for man is to be mediated on earth from person to person. If anyone is guilty of preventing God's love from entering the life of another, then the obstructionist, he who hates, is under judgment for keeping that person in a state of spiritual death. He is one who can be truly called a murderer, for his actions have denied the existence of Eternal Life to another.

It has been established in this chapter that eternal life is a relationship with God that may be called Fellowship-in-Union. This relationship which is true Life, finds its source in the Godhead where it is revealed as Love through the Son who manifested this heavenly relationship on earth in the Person of Jesus Christ. All who yield their wills to Him in faith are testifying to the grace of God that permits them to experience this Divine relationship in their own lives during their earthly existence. In addition to faith, the further evidence of possessing eternal life is the love that one gives to one's fellow-Christians; the love that testifies to the same spiritual relationship among men as that which exists between God and man.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER IV

1. For a detailed discussion of ²αἰών see Gerhard Kittel's Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Bd I, pp. 197-209.

2. Ibid., p. 203.

3. Ibid., p. 197.

4. Cf. Kittel's TWNT, Bd II, s.v. ζωή .

5. John Turner Marshall, "Life and Death (Hebrew)," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1915), VIII, p. 32.

6. The former is an emotional outburst of surcharged poetizing and the latter is part of an apocalyptic word-picture. But C. H. Dodd in The Fourth Gospel (p. 144) takes the view that Daniel is, "the one Old Testament book which teaches quite unequivocally the doctrine of a future life." We must readily admit that in the intertestamental period, ³× was used to mean life beyond the grave: Ps Sol 14:6; II Macc 7:9, 14. ? αἰών

7. Marshall, op. cit., p. 33.

8. Kittel, op. cit., p. 851.

9. Loc. cit.

10. Metaph. XI 6, as quoted in E. F. Scott's The Fourth Gospel.

11. Kittel, op. cit., p. 840.

12. C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), p. 146.

13. C. H. Dodd, New Testament Studies (Manchester: University Press, 1953), p. 163. "The idea of 'life' is determinative, and . . . whatever implications the epithet 'eternal' may bear, they do not in any case reduce the fullness of the substantive." Thus, in the New Testament, "eternal life" and "life" may generally be taken as equivalent.

14. Ibid., p. 161. The same expression is found only once in Philo's works (De Fuga, 78) where he defines eternal life as "flight to the Absolute," and Daniel 12:2 is the only place in the LXX where it is located. "There are rare examples (doubtfully pre-Christian) in other Hellenized Jewish writings. In pagan writers it does not appear to be found until well on in the Christian era."

15. Cf. Kittel's TWNT, Bd I, s.v. βασιλεία . "That which is,

and remains, future for the Christian, that for which he waits, is in Jesus Christ alone . . . a present reality."

16. The kingdom of God in the Synoptics is not the exact equivalent of the Johannine eternal life. The Synoptic expression emphasizes the rule of God that involves rewards. Jesus affirms, "that the inheritance of the future is dependent on a service already begun, and is its natural consequence and outcome" (E. F. Scott, The Kingdom of the Messiah, p. 128). The phrase used by John emphasizes more the reality of the present rather than the possibility of the future.

17. Ernest F. Scott, The Kingdom of God in the New Testament (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1931), p. 163f. "For Jesus himself the supreme blessing of the Kingdom was Life. He describes it occasionally by the very term characteristic of the Fourth Gospel as 'eternal life.' In the Synoptic Gospels, however, 'eternal life' is to be understood literally as 'life in the coming aeon,' in the future age."

18. Bultmann believes that John 5:28f and other comparable verses (John 6:51b-56; I John 2:28f; 3:2; 4:7) are due to redaction because they reflect the "jüdisch-christlichen Eschatologie" (TWNT, Bd II, p. 872). However, we would agree with C. H. Dodd who says that John 5:28f refers to $\beta\omega\eta\ \alpha\iota\omega\nu\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ "in the sense of a future life, like the Jewish 'Life of the Age to Come.' We must conclude that this is a part at least of what the evangelist meant by 'eternal life'" (The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 147).

19. James S. Stewart, A Man In Christ (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1935), p. 157.

20. Ernest Findlay Scott, "Gnosticism," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), VI, p. 235.

21. Hans Windisch, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1911), IV part 2, p. 105.

22. Cf. Chapter X, p. 292.

23. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914), p. 1167. " $M\eta$ ' is just the negative to use when one does not wish to be too positive. $M\eta$ ' leaves the question open for further remark or entreaty. $O\upsilon$ closes the door abruptly."

24. John A. Bengel, Gnomon of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1858), p. 150. "habet versus duo cola; in priore non additur 'Dei,' nam fideles norunt Filium; in altero additur, ut denum sciant fideles, quanti sit, non habere." m/

25. The normal usage of an epistolary acrostic is to refer to a letter just finished; e.g. Philemon 19. However, the epistolary acrostic

may also refer to a portion of a letter; e.g. Galatians 6:11 (referring to vv 11-18), and I Corinthians 9:15 (referring to the verses in hand). But, there is still no certainty in I John 5:13 about the epistolary aorist, for John actually may have intended it to be understood as our English present tense.

26. Robertson, op. cit., p. 418.

27. Robert Law, The Tests of Life (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909), p. 405.

28. However, Huther thinks that 3:14f are addressed to the world and that ἀδελφὸν very likely refers to one's neighbor.

29. Westcott and Haupt hint at the theory that John may be referring to suicide: the spiritual slaying of oneself and not another. In 3:14 it is the murderer who is referred to as being devoid of life. If such is the meaning, then 3:16 would carry with it this implication: "Let us not slay our lives through hatred, but sacrifice our lives through love."

30. However, the word ἀνθρωποκτόνος found in 3:15, and elsewhere only in John 8:44, is not used figuratively for "soul-destroyer" but literally means "murderer" or "manslayer."

CHAPTER V

SIN

Matthew Henry once said, "The Christian religion is the religion of sinners." The author of I John was a forerunner of such thinking when he wrote his letter over eighteen hundred years ago. He saw everyone to be in need of redemption with absolutely no exceptions. His Epistle echoes the Psalmist who says, "They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt; there is none that does good, no, not one" (Psalm 14:3).

This is in contrast to the Gnostics who considered themselves to be incapable of sinning. In truth, the very condition of sin, in the Christian sense of being separated from God, could not even exist. The only separation from Deity consisted in the spark of the Divine that was encased in the human frame; the spark that someday would be reunited with God. The deeds of the Gnostics were inconsequential because there was no sense of a moral relationship with God.

I. SIN IS LAWLESSNESS AND EVERYONE IS A SINNER

(3:4) Everyone who does sin also does lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. (1:8) If we say that we do not have sin, we lead ourselves astray and the truth is not in us. (1:10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

In 3:4 we have what must certainly be considered as a definition of sin.¹ The transition into this verse comes by way of the concept of being pure in the preceding verse. In 3:3 the idea is of one living

out the Christian life, but here in verse four, there is the contrast of one who has turned his will against God. This same contrast can be seen if 3:4 is compared with 2:29. The "doing" of sins is thus set over against the "doing" of righteousness. It cannot be stressed too highly that this is a letter of "doing." John purposely evades the mystical realm of speculation, insisting instead that one's Christian Faith must be shown in definite acts in the Christian Life.

The second use of "sin" in 3:4 refers to the principle, whereas the first mention denotes the acts which result from the principle. When John says that the principle of sin is lawlessness, he does not imply that no law exists, but rather that there is a law which is being flagrantly disregarded.

There can be little doubt that the writer has the false prophets in mind, for it is they who find the law of love² to be non-essential even though they proclaim their identity with a Deity. But the ignoring of this law of God is not a practice confined to the heretics. In using the word $\pi\alpha\sigma$, John purposely includes the Christians. The writer never loses sight of the fact that his primary reason for writing this letter is not to inveigh against the false prophets, but to instruct the Christians in the basic tenets of their religion.

G. H. Dodd thinks that the writer is giving a definition of sin which consists merely of telling the Christians (with no reference to the Gnostics) that the ignoring of the ethical side of religion is sin.³ Dodd believes that this definition is inferior to Paul's treatment in Romans.⁴

However, Paul says that when man is freed from the Jewish law, he becomes a slave of God's moral law ("righteousness"), Romans 6:18. John goes even farther than Paul, by asserting that anyone who flouts this moral law by considering himself above it, by not loving the brethren, is a lawless person, for he has flouted very God Himself. Evidently Dodd understands "lawlessness" in 3:4 in the Old Testament sense of breaking certain precepts. He says, "This explicit equation of sin and lawlessness is quite in the spirit of the LXX, and is exceptional in the New Testament."⁵

This is not to say, however, that John did not get his idea for the word "law" from the Old Testament. Being a Jew he undoubtedly did. But there, all similarity stops. No concept of the Torah will possibly fit here. This law concerns the very essence of God's being which is Love.⁶

In describing the Johannine definition of sin as equation with lawlessness (but not "in the spirit of the LXX" as per Dodd), we are on solid ground grammatically.⁷ George Stevens takes the view, however, that this involves a "generic idea only," but that is because he believes, "the precise nature and scope of the law to which sin is contrary is not defined."⁸ However, verse 3:4 must be seen in its contextual surroundings. Even a cursory reading of the Epistle leaves no doubt that the nature of the law is Love and its scope includes first and foremost, the Christian community in addition to the false teachers who have left the Church.

This law of love is no one specific commandment, e.g. John 13:34, but is concerned with the very essence of the law-giver, God Himself.

For if God is Love (4:16) and the law is concerned with love, then God is essentially the law. Disobedience (with its roots in self-will) to the law is thus rebellion against very God Himself. What a great contrast to Stoicism where sin is simply a shortcoming or failure that can never be forgiven, but leaves only a hope that the future will bring better results.⁹

Verse 1:8 adds to the emphasis that everyone is a sinner, with no exceptions. John says, "If we say that we do not have sin, we lead ourselves astray. . . ." There can be little doubt that John is once again directing our attention with these words to that group of false prophets, the antichrists, who were undermining the faith of the Christians. It was they who claimed to belong to the world of spirit and not to its dualistic counterpart, the world of matter. Therefore, because of their esoteric mythical knowledge they made the boastful claim, "We have no sin."

If a Christian should ever succumb to the demonic temptations of the Gnostic religions and declare himself sinless, the author points out that he has only managed to lead himself astray. And even in such a small thing as the use of $\pi\lambda\alpha\nu\hat{\omega}\mu\epsilon\nu$, John illustrates his propensity for verbs of "doing."¹⁰ The idea connoted is that of misconduct rather than deception by means of false beliefs. In the latter case we should expect $\acute{\alpha}\pi\alpha\tau\hat{\omega}\mu\epsilon\nu$, a word never used by John.

There is much conjecture about what is meant by "truth" in 1:8. Rothe thinks it is "the inner truth, the veracity of self-examination and the knowledge of oneself."¹¹ But surely John is not saying that if

we fail to see that all of us are in a sinful state we are thereby giving evidence of a lack of knowing and admitting who we really are. This verse does not involve a Socratic concept. Rather, such declarations of sinlessness bespeak the very absence of God Himself within us. The One whom the heretics claimed to know, and through knowledge of whom they claimed to be placed above sin, is the very One they do not possess.

The truth must therefore be the whole Gospel. It is the testimony that God wills to bring all men into a relationship of love with Himself; the relationship of Fellowship-in-Union. In other words, it is the witness to God's purpose that all men should possess eternal life. This truth is manifested in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, John 14:6. In this Epistle John implies that the truth (1:8) and the word (1:10) embrace the incarnation of God's purpose in His Son.

When the Gnostics ignore the fact of sin, and place their trust in cosmological myths, they are in effect denying the very Incarnation of the one God. For if "the works of the devil" (sins) are denied, then it must be denied also that "the Son of God appeared . . . to destroy the works of the devil" (3:8b).

John reiterates his contention that everyone is a sinner in 1:10. But whereas in 1:8 the focus of attention is upon man, here it is upon God.

The kinetic nature of this Epistle is again aptly illustrated in John's employment of the word $\pi\lambda\lambda\acute{o}\lambda\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu$. This is used in the sense of an active assertion. God's very truth or "word" is to the

effect that man is in desperate need of redeeming, and anyone who denies this by proclaiming his nature to be free of sin is virtually shouting out, "God, you are a liar!"

In 1:8 it was the truth not in us; here in 1:10 it is the word not in us. These two words may be treated almost synonymously with perhaps a slightly different emphasis in each. In verse eight, the nuance involves our own waywardness and falsehood. Verse 1:10 which very likely has no reference to the personal Logos,¹² expresses God's declaration that every man commits deeds of sin. The refusal to accept this declaration is tantamount to hurling the epithet "libel" at God. In addition, such negation of God's word testifies that the one who puts himself above sin has no part of His Gospel or self-revelation.

In 1:10 it is very doubtful if antinomianism is being referred to, but as elsewhere in the First Epistle, no certainty can be adjudged one way or the other.¹³

II. ANYONE BORN OF GOD DOES NOT SIN

(3:6) No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him nor known Him. (3:9) No one who has been born of God does sin, because His seed abides in him; and he does not have power [is not able] to sin, because he has been born of God. (5:18) We know that everyone who has been born (perfect tense) of God does not sin, but He who was born (aorist) of God preserves him, and the evil one does not lay hold of him.

One of the most intellectually disconcerting aspects of I John lies in the fact that the writer goes to great lengths in asserting that

no one can consider himself a sinless being, and then, seemingly in the same breath and in utter disregard of what he has just said, declares that anyone who abides in or has known God cannot sin. How can such an apparent contradiction be resolved?¹⁴

Verse 3:6 is a good place to begin in the search for a solution to John's paradoxical assertions about sinlessness. The adherents of Gnosticism maintained that only a select few were capable of possessing the esoteric knowledge that unlocked the outer planetary spaces and allowed them access to the heavenly realm of light. In contrast, John uses $\pi\alpha\sigma\ \dots\ \acute{\omicron}\upsilon\chi$ to imply that God's eternal life is not an exclusive gift.

Although there are examples of seeing and knowing God in the Old Testament, the Rabbinic literature, and sectarian Judaism (e.g. the Qumran Community), John probably makes use of these two terms because of the theosophical speculations which were rampant in his immediate environment. The Gnostic movement had as the object of the various mystic rituals, the vision of God which betokened the removal of the initiate from the realm of matter into the realm of the spirit.¹⁵ To say that "I know God" was to assert that apotheosis had taken place.

John does not mean by $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\upsilon}\rho\alpha\kappa\epsilon\nu$ that he is giving credence to the beliefs of the false teachers. Nor does he imply that the Christians have seen Jesus Christ literally. Indeed, although the nomenclature may have been suggested by the heretics, it is very unlikely that the writer is referring solely to the antichrists. His letter is addressed to Christians and it is to them that he writes. So here he appears to

be saying that no one (i.e. Christians and Gnostics alike) who sins can make any claims for experiencing a spiritual vision of, or possessing fellowship with, Christ. The "knowing" appears syntactically to be consequent to the "seeing," but there is good reason for believing that John views these two verbs as two aspects of one act. He interrupts the parallelism, placing "seen" and "known" over against "abides in."

But the discomfiting question still confronts us. If no sinner can see or know God, and everyone is a sinner, then who can experience fellowship with God? The obvious answer seems to be, no one! But this is completely at variance with the thesis of the entire letter, and therefore scholars down through the centuries have pondered this exegetical difficulty in a determined attempt to fathom the mind of the author. Following are some of the more popular theories put forth.

(1) Reference is made to Romans 7:20 ("Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me."); that is, a Christian does not do sin, he suffers it. But this cannot be, for John is constantly battling against moral indifferentism by identifying man's faith and his deeds of life, not distinguishing between them.

(2) True fellowship with Christ is inconsistent with sin. This is a truism which unfortunately brings us no closer to a satisfying answer.

(3) John limits the sins to very grave sins. But as we saw above, the writer characterizes every sin as lawlessness.

(4) It is not really the Christian sinning, but the old man within. This is answered in the next section.

(5) When the Christian does sin, he is only at that moment not abiding in Christ. But how then do we explain the second clause: "no one who sins has seen Him nor known Him?"

(6) The author is pointing toward the ideal: the genuine Christian who positively cannot sin.¹⁶ However, John is too firmly rooted in the realities of life (1:8) to be accused of this. His letter is written to sinners and it is unthinkable that he would hold up before them a spiritual paragon of virtue to which he honestly knows they cannot attain.

(7) Robert Law believes that this is the writer's way of meeting "tenets of unqualified falsity" (that regardless of one's conduct one could see and know God) with "unqualified contradictions."¹⁷

There is yet an eighth explanation of 3:6 that perhaps has more to commend it than any of the others. This is the interpretation that calls attention to the use of the present tenses of *ἁμαρτάνει* and *μὴ ἐννύ*. John may intend the former to refer to the habitual sinner. On the other hand the latter indicates continuous human effort, since the principle of the Christian life is opposition to sin. If anyone persists in acts contrary to the will of God so that sinning characterizes that person's very life, he cannot know God nor abide in Him regardless of his boasting. His habitual life of sinning is a testimony to that fact.

This emphasis on the present tense may appear as "grammatical subtlety" to G. H. Dodd¹⁸ and others because we usually think of tenses in terms of "time." But to those using the Greek language, tenses denoted aktionsart (kinds of action) and as Robertson wisely cautions, "The Greek point of view affords the only sure basis of operation."¹⁹

After all the investigations into the grammar, syntax and text have been completed we cannot declare with certainty what John did mean. It is evident though, that he is placing great weight upon the fact that an unrighteous life is wholly inconsistent with faith in the Righteous God.

Verse 3:9 continues in the same vein by saying that "no one who has been born of God does sin. . . ." It is interesting to notice that John always uses the perfect participle in the Gospel and Epistles when he speaks of those who have received the spiritual transformation. The tense deftly explains that this action which had a definite beginning in the past is continuing on with present results. Perhaps the writer means that no one in whom God has begun a good work and who permits Him constantly to work out his purposes, can possibly be living his life turned away from God.

When John introduces the word *σπέρμα* into the letter he offers one of the biggest proofs that he is a man of his times. Numerous passages in the Old Testament refer to "seed"²⁰ but none of them is used to refer to an emanation of God's nature. Only by understanding the Gnostic concept of soteriology is light shed upon this verse.²¹ The mystery-religions believed that within select human beings there was a real spark of the Divine. This had been captured by the forces of evil when the heavenly sphere had been overpowered at the time of the Creation. Only because of these captured "seeds" of the Divine was there light and order in what otherwise would be chaotic darkness. Salvation resulted when at death this Divine seed was freed from its

material prison and made its way to eventual oneness with the Deity. The Gnostic illuminati possessing this spark, or seed, were thus saved de jure, if not de facto while on earth, and their subsequent conduct mattered not.²²

All this is absolutely false thinking says the writer of this Epistle. No one can actually believe this and be a Christian. John uses the word *σπέρμα* metaphorically to indicate the character of God's love within man which results from regeneration.²³ Only here in the New Testament is *σπέρμα* used in such a metaphorical sense. In I Peter 1:23-25 the word is *σπορά*. Elsewhere in the New Testament when *σπέρμα* is used it refers either metonymically to the offspring of men (Romans 9:7) or literally to seeds of plants (Matthew 13:24-30). It is not impossible that "seed" refers to the Holy Spirit²⁴ or even eternal life, but the interpretation put forth here seems to satisfy most fully the entire context of the letter.²⁵

John has thus drawn a sharp distinction between the Gnostics and the Christians. The heretics were unmindful of sin because of salvation through their superior gnosis. Only the divine seed, the soul, was real which perforce relegated all personal actions to the category of the inconsequential. John counteracts this false mystical piety by asserting that it is the Christians who possess God's transformation through union with Christ. The character of love, the seed, which results from this regeneration can have but one eventuality, and that is a righteous life.

It is true that we must not try to press 3:9 into a mold of

literalness, for it is certain that more will be squeezed out than was originally put in. An example of this is given by Westcott²⁶ and Rothe²⁷ who incorrectly maintain that man's real regenerate self cannot sin; that it is only when the personality is overcome by evil that sin occurs. This would seem to provide a Christian with a Janus-like soul. When he faces one way, he is perfectly pure and incapable of sin. When facing the other direction, sin holds sway. But the real personality is the one which is unable to sin.²⁸

We must remember that God's spirit of love which the Christian experiences through the relationship of Fellowship-in-Union finds expression in the single personality of the whole man. If this personality leads us to cry out from time to time, "Oh wretched man that I am," we cannot place the blame on spiritual schizophrenia.

But to admit all this is not to cast suspicion upon the Scriptural worth of 3:9. Many, such as E. F. Scott, have all but given it up as a lost cause: "A passage like this must not be pressed, for it is alien to the whole tenor of the New Testament and of the Epistle in which it stands."²⁹

In 5:18 there is nothing new added in regard to not sinning, except a reference to the fact that it is the Son ("He who was born of God") who enables the one born of God not to sin through the thwarting of the evil one.³⁰

The word $\sigma\delta\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu$ possibly indicates absolute and intuitive knowledge, rather than that gained by experience. But for all practical purposes there is no hard and fast distinction between it and $\gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{o}\sigma\theta\eta\kappa\epsilon\nu$.

The verb *τηρεῖ* does not connote safe custody but instead has the import of watchful regard from without. The flavor of this word is captured better by the Psalmist who said, "The Lord is near to all who call upon him. . . ." (Ps 145:18) than by the hymnist who wrote, "Safe in the arms of Jesus, safe on His gentle breast. . . ."

III. WORK OF CHRIST IN RELATION TO SIN

He Is Expiation

(2:1) My little children, I write these things to you in order that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an intercessor [pleader, advocate] with the Father, Jesus Christ (the) righteous (One). (2:2) And He Himself is (the) expiation on account of our sins, and not on account of ours only but also on account of the whole world. (4:10) In this is love, not that we [loved] have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son (as) expiation on account of our sins.

If the writer of the First Epistle of John leaves little doubt that everyone is a sinner, he just as firmly insists that there is only one exit from this seeming impasse; that is the Person of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. He it is who is both High Priest and the offering necessary for the expiation of all sin.³¹ If reconciliation to God is to be achieved it can come only through the channel of forgiveness in Christ. Nothing else will do, for only God's Son is righteous and sinless and worthy of being the sacrifice which is efficacious once and for all. It must have been such passages as these which led Luther to exclaim, "Thou, too, art a part of the whole world; so that thine heart cannot deceive itself, and think the Lord died for

Peter and Paul, but not for me."

In 2:1 John tells us about the Intercessor who is also the expiation for the sins of men. The writer acknowledges human imperfection by explaining that the purpose of his instructions is that Christians may live righteous lives, but he immediately adds that when³² anyone does sin he can rest assured that there is an Advocate who pleads his case before the throne of God.

When John says, "I write" it is his initial use of the first person singular and a refreshing change from the use of the first person plural in the preceding verses where a question must always exist concerning the writer's exact meaning.

The use of *παράκλητος* does not signify a comforter, but a helper. In military terms it is not the hospital nurse holding a soldier's hand, but rather the full strength of an army coming to the aid of a surrounded and beleaguered platoon.³³ There is no reason for believing that John borrowed the word from the heresiarch, Valentinus. This would make the date of the First Epistle far later than there is any reason to expect it to be. Furthermore, Valentinus uses *παράκλητος* as the personal name of one of his 30 aeons, but in the Johannine literature *παράκλητος* refers to an office and not a person.³⁴ It is more probable that Valentinus is the borrower.³⁵

Frank M. Cross believes that the figure of the paraclete or Advocate of John is derived from the complex of ideas found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.³⁶ However, he admits that, "The origin of the concept is found . . . in the Old Testament" (I Kings 22:19-24; Zech. 3; Job 16:19; 19:25). It is difficult to know how important a part the

Qumran Community played in providing a linguistic prefigurement for John. But regardless of how much John depended upon the Covenant Community for terminology, we must realize that the Paraclete concept was not limited to sectarian Judaism.³⁷

Some scholars maintain that one of the evidences for different authors of the Gospel and First Epistle is the fact that in the Gospel it is the Holy Spirit who is mentioned as the Paraclete, but in the Epistle it is Jesus Christ Himself.³⁸ Since, as pointed out above, Jesus says that the Spirit is "another" advocate, and since the term stands for an office in both the Gospel and Epistle, there is nothing here to substantiate the claim for different authors. It has been rightly stated however that in the Gospel the reference is to a friend from court while the First Epistle speaks of a friend at court. This is a natural difference, because the viewpoint in the Gospel is that of the Helper being sent from the Father and the Son; whereas in the Epistle, the Helper is the exalted Son Himself interceding with the Father. The difference between the Gospel and Epistle is thus not in the use of the word *παράκλητος*, but in the fact that two different Persons of the Godhead are made to occupy the same office.³⁹ Even this difference diminishes in size when we recognize that this office of "helper" is filled by the Holy Spirit in testimony to the Son, and filled by the Son in intercession before the Father.

Day and night our Jesus makes no pause,
Pleads His own fulfilment of all laws,
Veils with His perfections mortal flaws,
Clears the culprit, pleads the desperate cause,
Plucks the dead from death's devouring jaws
And the worm that gnaws.⁴⁰

In the last half of the second century we find the word *παράκλητος* used in the letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne. A young Christian, Vettius Epagathus, after begging to be heard in defense of the martyrs, himself received the martyr's crown: *παράκλητος χριστιανῶν χροματίσας, ἔχων δὲ τὸν παράκλητον ἐν ἑαυτῷ.*⁴¹

In 2:1, the same relationship between Father and Son is signified by the word *πρὸς* as in 1:2.⁴²

The full name, Jesus Christ, alludes both to the full humanity of the Lord by which He knows man's temptations and to His Deity as God's anointed.

The word *δικαίον* in 2:1 refers to Jesus' worthiness to plead our cause. The writer, "designates this advocate Jesus Christ (Of. John 17:3) as 'the righteous' because only a righteous one is able to plead effectively for the unrighteous. James 5:16; I Peter 3:18."⁴³ "Probably the author wants to establish how Jesus is able to be the helper of Christians to the throne of God, namely because he dies as the righteous for the unrighteous, to set us free, providing access to God."⁴⁴ It may be argued that this interpretation is fallible because of the absence of a definite article before "righteous." But this would seem to be putting an unduly heavy strain on a missing article.

The following verse, 2:2, says that this Righteous One, this Advocate, is the expiation for the sins of Christians and non-Christians alike. The word "sins" refers to individual acts of wrongdoing and not the principle of sin.

The key to this verse is the word *ἱλασμός*, expiation.⁴⁵ It

and its congeners are used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew כָּפַר with its root meaning, "covering of sin."⁴⁶ The word is used to convey the ideas of atonement, sin offering and forgiveness.⁴⁷

When paganism used the term expiation there was always the thought of appeasing an angry god and it is this concept which is found in classical Greek. However, when we turn to the Old Testament we discover that this meaning is never present. Here, expiation involves a sin offering which results in the forgiveness of sin. Man's moral stain of guilt is removed. God Himself (through direct intervention in Divine commandments) provides the offering and the subsequent forgiveness to man.⁴⁸ When God is the object it is only indirectly because then man is subject (offering the expiatory sacrifice, Cf. Lev 4:20), and the direct object is the restoration of God's favor and forgiveness of the worshiper. However, when God is the subject, then expiation concerns the pardoning of the object, viz. the worshiper or his offense, Deut. 21:8a. It is readily seen that expiation specifically denotes forgiveness rather than atonement.⁴⁹ The "at-one-ment" can only occur after expiation has taken place, and in the Old Testament expiation only takes place in the ritualistic environment of sacrifice.

When the idea of *ἱλασμός* is taken over into the New Testament, the Jewish ritual thought is in the background, while in the foreground the accent is upon the breaking down of the barrier of Sin; the forgiveness of man by God. However, just as in the Old Testament, some visible means of grace is necessary before God's forgiveness is made efficacious in expunging man's sin. God Himself provides this (as He

provides the sacrifice in the Old Testament) in the person of His own Son, Jesus Christ.

The ἱλαστήριον mentioned by Paul in Romans 3:25 is semantically related to ἰλασμός . In the Old Testament (Lev 16:13) the mercy-seat was sprinkled with blood by the high priest once a year and it was then enveloped in incense. At that moment this portion of the Tabernacle, this material object, became the symbolic means by which, or indeed the locus at which, man's sins were forgiven and he was allowed to stand before God. Jesus Christ is Himself the High Priest (Hebrews 9:5, 11-12) and the sacrifice, and in His life and death the entire expiatory drama is enacted with the results of permanent nullification of Sin. These results had only been adumbrated by the temporary Jewish law and sacrificial ritual.

In 2:2 our advocate is Himself the expiation. He who pleads for man before God is the very One who has destroyed the barrier separating man and God. When Jesus Christ is thus referred to as the expiation, it is not only His death which is meant. Rather, it is the entire being of Jesus as seen in His life, acts, words, death etc. who is our expiation.⁵⁰

It must be noticed that this expiation is not only for a select few such as the Christians. There was no superior class of illuminati gaining exclusive benefit from this act of Jesus Christ. John purposely says, "but also on account of the whole world."⁵¹ Every person on earth has forgiveness through Christ if he will but respond in faith upon hearing the Word.⁵²

The Pseudepigraphic Psalms of Solomon (3:3-4) of the first century B.C. relate that, "I should not have known how to love the Lord, if He had not loved me." And Paul explains in his letter to Rome (5:8) how God has demonstrated this love to man: "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." John capably carries on this prophetic line in his First Epistle, 4:10, as he tells his readers about the nature of God's love. It entails the sending of His own Son "to be the expiation for our sins."⁵³ The mortal, finite mind of man will never be able to comprehend fully the vast significance of this statement.

God's love⁵⁴ is made visible in His providing the sacrificial means whereby Sin is annulled.⁵⁵ The greatness of this love begins to take on its proper proportions of immensity when we realize that it is God's very own Son who is the means of forgiveness. No longer is God's grace mediated through ritual and the symbolic medium of the mercy seat. God's grace is now incarnate in a human personality. Symbolism in the act of expiation is left behind; this is God manifested in history. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, is Himself the efficacious act, the *ἱλασμός*. Therefore, it is He and He alone who has made it possible for us to possess eternal life (4:9) by His conquest of Sin.

The phrase, Christ "died for our sins" (I Cor 15:3) is variously explained as taking our sins upon Him, He became sin who knew no sin, etc. But I John 4:10 is best explained as Jesus dying because of our sins. That is, because Sin separates man from God, only a God-appointed expiation suffices to destroy the barrier, and if this is to be once and

for all then this expiation must needs involve the suffering of very God Himself. In this sense, the Son of God "died for our sin."

There is no article preceding *ἱλασμός* and, as Law says, this may be to bring out the qualitative or generic force of the word.⁵⁶ But in any case we must not translate it as "an expiation." If any article must be supplied, though none is really needed, then the definite article brings us closer to the truth.

Forgiveness and Cleansing Through Him

(2:12) I write to you, little children, because [that] your sins have been forgiven by reason of [for the sake of] His name. (1:9) If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us the sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1:7) But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every kind of sin.

The preceding section has demonstrated that the concept of expiation lays greater stress on forgiveness than on reconciliation (if we may be permitted to make such a fine distinction). John emphasizes this by specifically mentioning the forgiveness of sins in various passages of his letter now to be brought under discussion.

As seen in Luke 24:47 (" . . . repentance and forgiveness should be preached in his name. . . .") and Acts 13:38 (" . . . through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed. . . .") forgiveness resides at the very heart of the Gospel. The First Epistle of John points this out in 2:12, 1:9 and 1:7. Verse 2:12 more or less repeats the fact

that through His expiatory act, sins are forgiven. However, the other two verses speak of that which is required of man if he is to gain the benefits of that forgiveness. We must both confess our sins and walk in the light. Our words must declare that we have need of God's forgiveness and our behavior must show that we have permitted Christ's conquest of Sin to take effect in our lives. Calvin said, "Remission of sins cannot be sundered from penitence, nor can the peace of God belong to consciences where the fear of God does not reign." In 1:9 it is God who is mentioned as the One who cleanses man from his guilty stain, but in 1:7 John says that the cleansing is due to the blood of Jesus His Son. To the writer, of course, there is not one iota of difference.

"The blood and tears of the Divine Son are able to cleanse us from head to foot."⁵⁷

The opening words of 2:12, "I write," evidently refer to the entire letter and not just this particular passage.⁵⁸

John says that he writes his letter "ὅτι your sins are forgiven." The better translation of *ὅτι* is "because" rather than "that." The author is not writing to inform his readers that their sins have been forgiven. He assures them that as Christians they already know this. This is one of several places throughout the Epistle where John allows a facet of the kerygmatic jewel to flash in all its brilliance in order to dispel the increasing darkness of heresy.

The perfect tense must again be allowed to have its full force in the expression "have been forgiven." God's gracious forgiveness which acted in the past in the person of Jesus Christ to nullify sin

is even now continually effective in the lives of practicing Christians.

The author undoubtedly has the Old Testament use of "name" in mind when he refers to "his name."⁵⁹ Examples are found in Ezekiel 20:9; 36:22f where God's name alludes to His revealed character; i.e. all that He has revealed of His own essence to man.⁶⁰

Thus, in 2:12 John means the whole revealed person of Jesus Christ, not just the name as a proper noun or appellation. And the words "whole revealed person" are used advisedly, for John does not say that forgiveness comes solely through the death of Jesus. Forgiveness comes through the person of Jesus Christ, which includes all of who He is, what He did and what He said.

But having said this, it is now necessary to make reference to John's grammar. He writes "by reason of His name" in this fashion: $\delta\iota\alpha\ \tau\acute{o}\ \acute{o}\nu\omicron\mu\alpha\ \lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\upsilon;$ the $\delta\iota\alpha$ being followed by the accusative case. This is a rather unusual construction in the New Testament where $\delta\iota\alpha$ takes a genitive in the majority of instances. When the accusative is used, as here, the accent is on the ground or basis of Divine action. So in this verse the author is explaining that it is the work of Jesus Christ in His life, death and Resurrection which is the very ground, the very basis, on which God effects His forgiveness. If $\delta\iota\alpha$ had been used with the genitive, as in Acts 10:43 ("... receives forgiveness of sins through his name."), there would be a stronger emphasis on the person of Jesus Christ. For the name then represents Him as the instrument through whom forgiveness comes.

It certainly must be admitted that the difference is so subtle

and slight as to be almost non-existent. But it is interesting to observe that John who stresses Christ's life and death as an expiatory act, in this verse directs our attention by means of grammar to the act which serves as the basis of the permanent and universal forgiveness of sins. It is very difficult to believe that the writer did not have the Jewish atonement ritual in mind as he illuminates the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ that was performed once and for all.

In 1:9 we have no way of knowing if John means by *ὁμολογῶμεν* acknowledging one's sins to people, or to God, or to both. But since the context is dealing with sin against God and with God's forgiveness, it is more reasonable to assume that the writer signifies confession to God. There is this certainty however, that the present tense is used to denote a continuing acknowledgment of our sins. Confession is a part of the Christian's daily life.

God is described as *πίστως* and *δικαίως*. By describing Him as faithful⁶¹ it is meant that He is consistent in His character and being; that He is true to His promises and nature. In the Old Testament when God is spoken of as righteous, it is usually a judicial attribute which is signified.⁶² But here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, it expresses His nature and character of love operative in human history. In this verse God's being is seen in action as He forgives men their sins. The two words, *πίστως* and *δικαίως* are coordinate.

The *ἑκαρτίας* alludes to the guilt derived from individual acts of wrongdoing.

"Forgive" and "cleanse" are two results of God's initiative and

man's response, and may be separated for purposes of theological discussion. In the actual experience of Christian living however, they are so fused as to be indistinguishable. God forgives man (present tense shows its continuing nature) of those deeds that have been perpetrated against Him; acts of sin. He treats man as though sin had never occurred even though there is no denying the stain of guilt which continues to cling to man. Before full reconciliation is possible man stands in need of moral cleansing, because nothing unrighteous can approach the Holy God. God also provides this purging.⁶³ This act of overlooking man's rebellion and not holding it against him plus the act of granting moral purity to him is what John refers to as God's forgiving and cleansing. However, these two evidences of God's grace are all part of a whole and not subject to bifurcation.

The guilt resulting from our sins is spoken of by John as "unrighteousness." By putting it this way instead of saying, "cleanse us from all our sins," the writer draws a sharp contrast between God's nature of love in action, His righteousness,⁶⁴ and the Christian's failure to reflect that nature in his daily living situation; particularly his unrighteousness in failing to love his brethren.

The last one of the three verses which speak specifically of forgiveness and cleansing coming through Christ is 1:7. We find that it is not parallel with verse six for instead of saying "fellowship with Him,"⁶⁵ John says, "fellowship with one another." This is no doubt done to bring out the fact that fellowship with God cannot be separated from fellowship with men. The Gnostics declared that this was exactly what

could be done if one had achieved the proper spiritual status through mystic rites, ceremonies, and knowledge.

There may be a specific allusion to a heresy current in his day when John speaks of "the blood of Jesus His Son." Cerinthus⁶⁶ claimed that the Christ left Jesus at the Crucifixion and thus the Son did not suffer. The First Epistle declares that not only is this not true, but that the very death of Jesus Christ is a most integral part of God's saving act, I John 5:6. It is highly doubtful if 1:7 has any reference to the Lord's Supper. John is more concerned with history than with Sacrament.

C. H. Dodd points out⁶⁷ that the symbolism of light in 1:7 may be suggested by Luke 11:34-36 (and Matthew parallel); this symbolism is also found in John's Gospel. In the First Epistle, light stands for moral purity as exemplified in love.⁶⁸

For a proper understanding of "blood" the Old Testament sacrificial ritual is again our best starting point. Although the writer of this letter comprehended fully the terminology and beliefs of his own Hellenistic environment, he was above all else a Jew who saw the Law, Prophets, and Writings as precursors of God's Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. In Deut 12:23, Genesis 9:4, and Lev 17:14 it is expressly made clear that the blood is considered to be equivalent to the life. Therefore, in I John 1:7 the writer no doubt means to indicate that it is the entire life of Christ, climaxed and epitomized in His obedience unto death, that is the act of expiation by which cleansing from sin occurs.⁶⁹

Calvin makes note of the present tense of *καθαρίσει* when he

says, "This passage shows that the gratuitous pardon of sins is given us not only once, but that it is a benefit perpetually residing in the Church, and daily offered to the faithful." No one would disagree with this since the reference is clearly to daily cleansing and not to the original justification.

However, there is a division of scholarship over the exact connotation of the word, "cleanses," or as Calvin puts it: "the gratuitous pardon of sins." A. M. Brooke and Robert Law are typical proponents of the diverse opinions. Brooke says, "As ritual cleanness was the condition of approach to God under the Jewish sacrificial system, so the "blood" of Christ cleans men's consciences for God's service and fellowship."⁷⁰ But Law replies that in the Old Testament,

the object of sacrificial cleansing is never the character; but is moral or ceremonial offence, regarded as leaving upon the offender a stain which makes covenant relations with God impossible till it is removed.⁷¹

So the question is this: does καθαρίσει mean (1) cleansing the character, or (2) the removal of guilt?

Why must John be held only to one or the other? Do not the contents of his letter give evidence that both ideas must be involved? Certainly, as Law points out, the removal of guilt is of primary importance. The entire New Testament testifies to the forgiveness of sins through the efficacious person and work of Christ.⁷² John's First Epistle is no exception. And if we look at the Old Testament viewpoint⁷³ there is no doubt that the cleansing is from guilt.

But does not our author go beyond the Jewish Scriptures? He constantly reiterates that anyone born of God will not sin; that if one

possesses God's character of love (*σπείρα*) then it is impossible for him to sin. What else does this mean except that the expiatory offering provided by God in His own Son is the very source of forgiveness which enables the human character to have nothing to do with actions that are contrary to the will of God?

He is Sinless and Takes Away Sin

(3:5) And you know that He was made visible [manifest] in order that He might remove sins, and sin is not in Him. (3:7) Little children, let no one lead you astray; he who does righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous. (3:8) He who does sin is of the devil, because from (the) beginning the devil sins. For this the Son of God was made visible, in order that He might destroy the works of the devil.

George Stevens says that "the idea expressed in *ἀΐρεται* [in 3:5] is substantially the same as that . . . in *καταρτίσειν*".⁷⁴ In 3:5-7 Christ's victory over sin is explicitly attributed to His being sinless and righteous. He is thus the only one worthy to be the expiation for our sins. The very syntax itself in 3:5 stresses the fact of sinlessness: *ἁμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν*, "sin in Him there is not."⁷⁵

Rudolph Bultmann maintains that nowhere in the First Epistle does John interpret the death of Jesus as an atonement for sins.⁷⁶ This is rather a bold statement in the face of evidence to the contrary. It is true that John's argument is more in the atmosphere of expiation and forgiveness rather than atonement per se. But the very heart of the letter concerns Fellowship-in-Union which to John is nothing less than

a relationship of love between the Father (given through the Son) and men. Eternal life is thus the Johannine word for atonement. The Son, whose relationship of love with the Father is perfect and therefore the type of that relationship between God and men, is the One who destroyed Sin and thus makes eternal life possible. If there is no expiation there is no atonement.⁷⁷ Since the latter is the implicit core of the Epistle, John only refers to the former explicitly. It must not be forgotten that the author of the First Epistle is not primarily a theologian, he is a pastor.

Bultmann says that $\alpha\epsilon\gamma$ means "carry away" and not "take upon Himself." This is correct although in itself it offers no proof either for or against the belief that John views the death of Jesus as an atoning work. Verses such as 1:7, 2:2 and 4:10, which can only be interpreted as alluding to atonement in Christ, are attributed by Bultmann to redactional glosses.⁷⁸

The word $\alpha\epsilon\gamma$ is a translation of the Hebrew $\chi \frac{\psi}{\tau} \frac{\gamma}{\tau}$ which means both "taking away" and "bearing." To express the former, $\alpha\iota\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon\upsilon$ is used; to express the latter, $\phi\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon\upsilon$. Bultmann's explanation of $\alpha\epsilon\gamma$ is therefore to be preferred to Walter Grundmann's in Kittel's TWNT: "The Christ takes sin upon himself and removes it. The primary reference is to his death, and the defeat of sin is pictured in terms drawn from the Jewish sacrificial system."⁷⁹ It is easier to agree with Grundmann's second sentence than with the first.

The two different significations of "sin" in 3:5 are parallel to John's usage in the preceding verse. Here it is stated that Christ

came to expiate the guilt resulting from the acts we commit which show forth the principle of sin. He alone is worthy of this task for the latter is not in Him. He alone is sinless.

John uses the verb $\pi\lambda\alpha\nu\acute{\alpha}\omega$ three times in his First Epistle. A comparison of 3:7 with 1:8 demonstrates in what sense he uses it in connection with the subject of sin. In 1:8 he says that it is we who lead ourselves astray if we say that we have no sin. In 3:7 it is the false prophets who lead us astray if we believe their teaching that one's deeds are products of the flesh and therefore irrelevant, causing sin to be meaningless. The writer is attempting to make clear that the truly spiritual person, the one with the real gnosis, is he who demonstrates his fellowship with God by allowing God's nature to be expressed through him in love of men. To show haughty disdain, or even neutrality, toward one's brethren is to sin and this is proof of the lack of fellowship with God and not evidence for it.

Here again, there is definite reference to the Gnostics who always seem to be lurking back of the proscenium offstage while the transpiring didactic drama is capturing the center of attention. It is very doubtful however, that John has any one particular opponent in mind. The expression "let no one" is just his way of warning against those anti-christs who carry their dualistic separation of spirit and matter to the extreme of disclaiming belief in sin and the Incarnation.

Verse 3:7 is another apt example that John does not conceive of Christianity as a religion of passivism. As will be repeated time and again throughout this dissertation, I John is a "doing" epistle.

However, let us not misinterpret 3:7, as do the Roman Catholics, that John is saying that he who does righteous deeds is thereby made righteous. The author is declaring that only those who illustrate by their actions that they are producing fruit can legitimately make the claim to be a branch drawing nourishment from the Vine. As for the heretics, the producing of fruit was only the unspiritual concern of the ψευκτοί and had nothing whatever to do with the elite redemption enjoyed by the πνευματικοί.

John contrasts the sources of righteousness and sin in 3:7-8. In 3:7 (as in 2:1) Jesus Christ is characterized as righteous, the font of all righteousness. If sin that separates God and man is to be permanently abolished, then God's forgiveness and cleansing of man must be mediated through One who is sinless. If God's act of expiation is the supreme glorious act of His love, then He who is that expiation must Himself be the very incarnation of love in action; that is, He must be righteous. John leaves no doubts in his readers' minds that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of these Divine conditions par excellence.⁸⁰

James Moffatt gives an incisive summary of 3:7:

To practice righteousness is to share the divine nature, for He is Himself righteous or just; that is, it is a synonym for doing the divine will, at once the expression and the evidence of the regenerate nature. The term ["do righteousness"] is employed in quite an untechnical sense, for the older struggle against the Law in Paulinism had passed. When God is called just (John 17:25; I John 1:9), it is in connection with His faithfulness to His loving purpose and promises, and similarly the practice of righteousness or moral goodness among men at once suggests love for others in the community.⁸¹

In 3:8 the doing of sin is displayed in contrast to the doing of righteousness in the previous verse. John is striving to explain the

source and affiliation of both those who do righteousness and those who do sin. The former are shown to be intimately associated with the Righteous One. But those who perform deeds of unrighteousness can only point to the devil as the source of their moral life. Augustine once said: "The devil made no man, begat no man, created no man; but whoso imitates the devil, becomes a child of the devil as if begotten of him."

This is the first time in the Epistle (3:8) that the full title, "Son of God" is used. It indicates the magnitude of God's love for man, for He willed that the Godhead should take on human flesh in the Incarnation of the Son for the express reason ($\zeta\alpha$ with telic force) of doing away with the evil that keeps man from enjoying full fellowship with God. The prodigious proportions of God's love as seen in His forgiveness can only be faintly perceived this side of the heavenly life which is to come. But even this perception would be much fainter if we did not have a surmise of this love as it is set forth in the words: "the Son of God was made visible."

Bishop Westcott feels that the "sin" of 3:5 and "the works of the devil" of 3:8 are two different reasons for Christ's manifestation. He arrives at this conclusion by reasoning that "sin" is the offspring of "the works of the devil."⁸² It is more likely that John is saying precisely the same thing in both verses. Jesus Christ, as the Son of God Incarnate, appeared on earth before the eyes of men for the one object of revealing God as a loving Father who desires that all men respond to Him by the giving of their wills. In order to make possible this response, the guilty stain of sinful deeds must be expiated. These

unrighteous acts find their incentive in the devil and are described as "his works." Therefore, when John talks about the "sins" of men he means the same thing as when he uses the equivalent expression, "the works of the devil." The wall between God and man is set on a diabolic foundation. When the writer refers to the devil it may be that he is employing an argumentum ad hominem, but it is much more probable that he has a personal belief in demonic forces.⁸³ John sees the Incarnation as a soteriological necessity, because only when the satanic source and motivating force of man's ungodly living is conquered (2:13f) can men be forgiven and restored to God's fellowship.

Haupt construes λύσιν in 3:8 as meaning a mere loosening of the bonds which exist between the devil and man.⁸⁴ But if John's explanation of God's expiation is to remain faithful and homogeneous then λύσιν can only signify the total destruction or disintegration of sins. Nothing short of this enables men to approach God. Even in the Jewish atonement ritual, the shed blood of the sacrificial offering led to the complete expiation of sins, if only for a temporary period. Haupt mistakenly views sin as an attachment between the devil and man. John and the other New Testament writers always see it as the barrier between God and man.

Otto Piper also betrays the same misunderstanding as Haupt when he says of this particular passage:

It is not stated that Jesus came to 'dissolve' or to 'destroy' the works of the Devil, which during his earthly ministry and prior to the Parousia he never did, but rather to deprive Satan's works of their supernatural power, to break his spell, as far as the believers were concerned.⁸⁵

Even though John tacitly admits that Jesus did not bring about the destruction of the devil during His earthly ministry, the First Epistle triumphantly announces that Jesus did destroy the devil's works. To say, as Piper, that our Lord failed to accomplish the very task for which He was sent is to say that there is no foundation for the Church, and no Authority for the Word which is proclaimed in preaching and the Sacraments. Deductive logic may rightfully raise a query in seeking to discover how all the works of the devil may be destroyed but he, who is inextricably bound up with them, seems to survive. The author does nothing to help us escape this apparent contradiction. The solution may well lie in the answer to how John conceived of a personal devil. Of this we are not certain.

IV. INTERCESSORY PRAYER FOR SINS NOT MORTAL

(5:16) If anyone sees his brother sinning sin not pertaining to death, he will ask, and [he] will give him life, to them who sin not pertaining to death. There is sin pertaining to death; I say not that he ask concerning that. (5:17) All unrighteousness is sin, still there is sin not pertaining to death.

In 5:16-17 John confronts us with a dictum on intercessory prayer that leaves us with more questions on our lips than answers in our hearts. These are questions that have no perfect solution.

As usual in this letter, when the writer speaks of brother, as in 5:16, he is referring to a fellow Christian. Therefore, it must be kept in mind that John's advice regarding intercessory prayer is pertinent only within the Christian community. Charles Gore says,

". . . the intercessory prayers of the New Testament . . . are prayers for the perfecting of those already in correspondence with God."⁸⁶

The phrase *ἁμαρτάνοντα ἁμαρτίαν* "sinning sin," is unique in the New Testament. The very use of the Greek words makes it evident that the author is displaying the heinousness of sin in any form, whether or not it be pertaining to death.

Many scholars go to great lengths in distinguishing between *αἰτεῖν* and *ἐρωτᾶν*. It is claimed that the former has the meaning of "ask" whereas the latter has more the implication of "pray." This is to draw a fine line where one, for all intents and purposes, does not exist.⁸⁷ We simply cannot differentiate between *αἰτεῖν* and *ἐρωτᾶν*. They both mean "ask" or "request" and John uses them synonymously in the sense of prayer.

There are three favorite ways of interpreting *δώσει αὐτῷ ζωὴν*:

(1) "The intercessor will give his brother life, even to them that sin not unto death."⁸⁸ (2) "God will grant to him (the intercessor) life for them that sin not unto death."⁸⁹ (3) "God will give his brother life, even to them that sin not unto death."

This last interpretation seems to be the most satisfying on the whole.⁹⁰ The sudden change in subject from the interceder to God is more apparent than real. Both *ἀκούει* and *αὐτοῦ* in the preceding verse refer to God. The "to them . . ." is probably an enlarged appositional thought, an explicit answer to the problem of the proper interpretation of *αὐτῷ*. John says, "God will give to him life, that is, to all who have been prayed for and have not sinned the sin pertaining

to death."

But just exactly what is this *ἁμαρτία πρὸς θάνατον*? Does it have anything to do with the unforgivable sin spoken of by Jesus?⁹¹ Many think it has. But at best there is only an indirect application. In the Gospels our Lord is speaking about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which occurs when one attributes the real work of God's Spirit to evil powers. Such an attitude, if persisted in, brings about a situation wherein the sinner is incapable of repentance and ipso facto is unable to be forgiven by God.⁹² This teaching of the Gospels may be indirectly applied to the First Epistle at this point: the mortal sin is that which, because of its character, must eventuate in a permanent lack of repentance and thus result in a permanent separation from God which is spiritual death.⁹³ But having said this, we still have not probed deeply enough into this difficult passage.

In attempting to be more specific and exact, let us examine four different explications of the phrase "sin pertaining to death" (or "mortal sin" or "sin unto death"), each of which has its faithful scholastic adherents.

(1) John derives the expression "sin unto death" from the Old Testament⁹⁴ and Rabbinical writings,⁹⁵ in which the committing of sin is punished by death at the hands of the community. But John is speaking of sin that has death as the result of its very committing.

(2) Sin punished by death or sickness, Cf. James 5:15. However, for John life and death are always viewed spiritually. Indeed, this reason alone is sufficient to exclude (1) above from further

consideration.

(3) Sin punished by the Church with excommunication. Here again, this differs from John's concept of sin that has death as the very end of its own doing. Excommunication only recognizes that the sin has been committed. Besides, not every sin that brought excommunication in the Old Testament was "unto death."

(4) A state of sin wilfully chosen and persisted in. But John says that sin can be seen and it is difficult to imagine how a "state" can be observed.

Even so, this last interpretation must certainly be much closer to the mind of John than the other three. May we not conjecture that by the "sin pertaining to death" is meant visible acts of behavior forming a consistent course of action⁹⁶ which must ultimately result in spiritual death? Since the writer sent this letter to his readers fully intending that they understand what he was writing about, it seems reasonable to assume that the sin which fits these specifications must be evident in the Epistle itself. We find it in the wilful denial of the Incarnation by the antichrists.⁹⁷ They who had gone out from the fellowship of the Church were now part of that Gnostic environment which separated matter and spirit so that it was possible to teach that God's Christ could not be one with the man Jesus. This apostasy from the kerygma could only lead through continued and hardening stages of unrepentance until complete and final separation from God resulted. The spiritual death awaiting the antichrists was ineluctable.

It is true that the author does not literally forbid intercession for the false prophets and their followers who are poisoning the Church,

but his forthright discouragement of it can be understood as nothing less than declaring the futility of such intercession.⁹⁸ John believes that the antichrists have so turned their backs on God that it is of no avail to pray for them. He believes that because a man's actions are the utterances of his will, the Christians will be able to see which members of their Community are following this subtle theosophical doctrine. Intercession can be made only for those within the koinonia and since these heretics have now of their own accord withdrawn and turned against God, their ultimate goal is death which prevents any prayers on their behalf from being efficacious.

If the above interpretation is correct, then we must look with disfavor on the attitude of John. There never has been and never will be a sinful course of action with death as its end which must be persisted in until death is reached. It is certain that any sinful course of action, if consistently maintained will lead to spiritual nihilism. But there is no road of sin from which, when once entered, there is no turning back. Intercessory prayer must never be discouraged. When we fail to admit that John was in error by not advocating prayer for all situations, then we are apt to find ourselves making such an unbiblical statement as: "We can understand in some degree how such sins, either in men or in nations, must be left to God. Chastisement and not forgiveness is the one way to restoration."⁹⁹ It is difficult to believe that Bishop Westcott actually believed or preached this himself.

The following verse, 5:17, points out that "all unrighteousness is sin" and in doing so John probably has the heretics in the forefront

of his thinking again. He is re-emphasizing the erroneous nature of the Gnostic doctrine that does not recognize such a thing as sin. John does not want to leave the Christians with the idea that only the "sin pertaining to death" is really sin and all other moral failures can be explained merely as human weakness or frailty. No, says the writer, every action that represents an ungodly attitude is sin.

We must not associate "unrighteousness" with "lawlessness" (3:4) and label them as two different manifestations of sin.¹⁰⁰ In 3:4, lawlessness is equivalent to the principle of sin. But *ἁμαρτία* refers to definite deeds that represent the principle of sin in action by giving visible evidence to our rebellion against God's will. The Revised Standard Version gives a good translation of *ἁμαρτία* as "wrongdoing."¹⁰¹

Windisch recommends that 5:17 be placed immediately after 5:16a. This is an excellent idea for more easily capturing the thought of the writer. Unfortunately, there is no MS evidence for such a transposition. In any case, Law would seem to have hit on the reason for its present placement when he suggests that this verse serves as a transition to the next section. The subject of intercessory prayer is now laid aside in order to return to the idea of sin and the evil one.¹⁰²

As pointed out at the beginning of this discussion on the "mortal sin," there is no conclusive proof for any one solution. This must now be evident. But fortunately most of what John has to say about Sin is direct and to the point. Everyone rebels against God and therefore must be termed a sinner. The only way anyone can be forgiven of his sin is through the Person of Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God sent

by the Father to be the expiation that brings about our cleansing. Being thus a child of God, the Christian directs his will toward God and not away from Him. But to understand all this, and yet deny the Incarnation, is to suffer the unavoidable end of spiritual death.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER V

1. Richard Rothe, Der Erste Brief Johannis, p. 98. Rothe disagrees. He says that sin involves the quality of behavior and not the form it takes; whereas lawlessness has to do with the form in which sin appears and not quality as such.

2. The same thing as the law of God, for God is love. A lawless person is one who rebels against God Himself.

3. G. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 72.

4. Dodd's explanation may be due in part to his interpretation of Romans 3:23: the falling short of God's glory is the definition of sin ("Romans" in the Moffatt series, p. 50). We would interpret the "falling short" as the result of sin.

5. G. H. Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks, p. 80. In opposition to this statement, Haupt (The First Epistle of John, p. 172) says, "There were actually multitudes of *ἐμαρτυρία*, or moral delinquencies . . . which were not forbidden by the letter of the Mosaic law, and were not therefore *ἁμαρτία*."

6. Because this particular passage culminates in describing the practice of righteousness as the loving of one's brother, it is very questionable whether John has in mind the antinomianism of the Gnostics when he speaks of lawlessness. The disobedience of God's law of Love was being particularly exhibited within the Christian *koinonia*. John is not especially concerned with a polemic against Gnosticism, including its antinomian characteristic. He is primarily concerned that the life given to Christians in the Son of God be reflected in love for one another. His constant repetition of this admonition throughout the Epistle bears this out.

7. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 768. "When the article occurs with the subject and predicate, both are definite, treated as identical, one and the same and interchangeable." Also Cf. John 1:4.

8. George B. Stevens, The Johannine Theology, p. 128.

9. G. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 12. "[The Corpus Hermeticum] teaching presupposes the fusion of Platonic and Stoic doctrine. . . ." The Hermetica present many Gnostic ideas which must have been current at the time of John's writing.

10. Note the force of the active form of *πλανάω* with *ἑαυτοῦς*.

11. Rothe, op. cit., p. 36.

12. Cf. Chapter IV, p. 92.

13. Cf. footnote 6.

14. Theophylact, the archbishop of Bulgaria c. 1075 A.D., tells us that the antinomian Gnostics used 3:6 as a text to prove the indefectibility of grace and thus were provided with a ready-made excuse for lasciviousness.

15. Rudolph Bultmann, Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting, p. 171. "Gnosis, which in its initial stages stood for the knowledge of man's predicament, ends with the vision of God."

16. Frederic W. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity, p. 434. "And if the Stoic was allowed to set before himself his ideal, why may not the Christian do the same? Seneca said that the wise man was not only able to do right, but even could not do otherwise. . . . The Christian ideal is infinitely higher than the Stoic, and that is why the Christian knows that not even a saint can be absolutely sinless; yet he hates sin, and more and more wins the victory over it."

17. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 225.

18. C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 80.

19. Robertson, op. cit., p. 821.

20. E.g. Isaiah 6:13; Ezra 9:2; etc.

21. Dodd, op. cit., p. 76 for examples of the Gnostic use of "seed."

22. There were so many Gnostic sects with varying beliefs, that the salvation myth here referred to only points out the essential features of most of them.

23. Rothe, op. cit., p. 107. Not as Rothe who interprets "seed" as the Holy Spirit who brings about the rebirth.

24. John 3:5 cannot be used as proof that the Spirit is meant, for then "water" must also be considered as the seed and this line of thought proves fruitless.

25. Moffatt and the Revised Standard Version Mg render the meaning "God's offspring abide in Him." However, we must reject this rendering for two reasons: (1) Such a construction is never found in the New Testament to refer to the offspring of God. When posterity is referred to, it is the offspring of men. This is probably due to the knowledge that the only true offspring of God is Jesus Christ, Cf. I John 5:18. (2) The immediate use of a synonym would be unnecessary:

"the seed of God" for "no one who has been born of God." C. H. Dodd explains, "The meaning could in that case have been equally well given by writing, 'Anyone who is born of God does not commit sin, for he remains in Him and cannot sin.'" (The Johannine Epistles, p. 75).

26. Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 108.

27. Rothe, op. cit., p. 108. ". . . sein Sündigen nie ein Sündigen im eigentlichen und vollen Sinne dieses Wortes sein kann, sondern . . . immer nur Schwachheitssünde."

28. Paul recognizes that it is the justified personality that continues to sin: Romans 5:9.

29. Ernest F. Scott, Man and Society in the New Testament, p. 165.

30. Cf. Chapter VII for more details on regeneration and the meaning of "He who was born of God."

31. Cf. Hebrews 9:11-12.

32. *ἐάν* with the subjunctive expects fulfilment.

33. The term is found only here and John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7 in the New Testament.

34. Note that in John 14:16 the Lord calls the Holy Spirit "another advocate" implying that the office is His also. In all Fourth Gospel passages, the "advocate" is specifically identified as Jesus or the Holy Spirit. John thus identifies the office and the Person who fulfils it.

35. J. J. Lias, The Doctrinal System of St. John, p. 184.

36. Frank M. Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies, p. 159f.

37. Theo Preiss, Life in Christ, p. 19f. "If exegetes have not quite known what to make of the Spirit-Paraclete it is because it has not been realized that he has meaning only within the framework of the cosmic conflict. Even in Jewish thought a precise juridical role is assigned to the Spirit. The Testament of Judah (ch. 20) is quite clear on this point."

38. Cf. Chapter II, p. 13.

39. Preiss, op. cit., p. 23. "While Jesus was on the earth he was in a twofold sense the Paraclete of his own. . . . Now that he is exalted to heaven . . . the function of the earthly Paraclete has now devolved upon the One who is sent in the second place. . . . Thus in

every way the Spirit-Paraclete appears as closely linked to the figure and functions of the Son of Man. He is co-relative with the Son. . . ."

40. William Michael Rossetti, The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti, p. 229.

41. Euseb. H. E. V.1. "being called the Advocate of the Christians, but having the Advocate in himself."

42. Cf. Chapter IV, p. 93.

43. H. J. Holtzmann, Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament, Band IV, p. 331.

44. Rudolph Schnackenburg, Die Johannesbriefe, p. 79.

45. For a definitive discussion of *ἔλασμός*, Cf. Kittel's TWNT Band III pp. 300-324.

46. Kittel's TWNT Band III p. 318. "Only in the New Testament in I John 2:2; 4:10. . . . The construction corresponds to *ἔλασθεοσκι* in the LXX; John obviously connects it with the Old Testament."

47. Cf. Psalm 65:3; Ezekiel 44:27; Psalm 130:4.

48. Kittel, op. cit., p. 310. "Within the community the disturbed relation between God and the community is always established again through the fulfilment of Jaweh's given precepts of propitiation. . . ."

49. Kittel, op. cit., p. 318. "*ἔλασμός* is here the removal of sins as guilt in relation to God. . . ."

50. Kittel, loc. cit., "*ἔλασμός* does not depend one sidedly on the single act of death, but on the completeness of the mission and person of Jesus. . . ." Rothe (op. cit., p. 46) goes too far however in excluding any reference whatever to the death of Christ as a sacrificial death.

51. Kittel, op. cit., p. 310. "The necessary propitiation is for all afflicted with sin and impurity."

52. Cf. Appendix A.

53. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. I, Book II, Chapter XVII, Par. 2. "There is great force in this word propitiation; for in a manner which cannot be expressed, God, at the very time when he loved us, was hostile to us until reconciled in Christ." Also Cf. Vol. 1, Book III, Chapter IV, Par. 26 where Calvin explains Christ as the propitiation for sins by saying, "there is no other satisfaction by which an offended God can be propitiated or

appeased." There is no Biblical basis for seeing the expiatory act as one of appeasement. The New Testament teaching is that "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son . . . that the world might be saved. . . ." and not "God was hostile to the world until He was pacified by His Son."

54. Cf. Chapter X.

55. Gustaf Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 163. God is both the Reconciler and the Reconciled.

56. Law, op. cit., p. 398.

57. Catherine of Siena.

58. Cf. Appendix C for the explanation of ΤΕΚΝΙΚΑ and verses 12-14.

59. "His sake" as in the Revised Standard Version, or "his name's sake" in the Authorized Version.

60. G. Buchanan Gray, "Name," Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. III, p. 480. There is no evidence that the Bible ever employs the magical use of a name.

61. Cf. Deut. 7:9. ". . . the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love . . ."

62. Cf. Psalm 119:137-138. "Righteous art thou, O Lord . . ."

63. Cf. Ezek 36:25. ". . . you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses . . ."

64. Cf. 1:9a "He is . . . righteous."

65. Tertullian in the second century insisted that this was the correct rendering.

66. Arthur S. Peake, "Cerinthus and Cerinthians," Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. III, pp. 318-320.

67. Dodd, op. cit., p. 21.

68. A point of interest is John's statement that man walks in the light whereas God is in the light. Here again, we see the latter to be an epistle of doing. God's very nature is love, and it is only as men actively share that love in their daily lives that they will find fellowship with Him who is the source of that love. God is (1:5), but man walks!

69. Kittel, TWNT, Band I, p. 173. J. Behm puts much greater stress on the actual death itself. "'Blood of Christ' is like 'Cross', only another, clearer expression for the death of Christ in its salvation meaning." This interpretation is incorrect where the First Epistle of John is concerned.

70. A. E. Brooke, The Johannine Epistles (ICC), p. 15.

71. Law, op. cit., p. 165.

72. Cf. Rev. 1:5b. ". . . and has freed us from our sin . . ."

73. Leviticus 16:30. ". . . from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord."

74. Stevens, op. cit., p. 168.

75. Some short exegetical comments: John uses $\acute{\omicron}\acute{\varsigma}\acute{\alpha}\tau\epsilon$ for "you know" implying that the knowledge is self-evident because they are Christians. The last clause is not influenced by $\acute{\omicron}\acute{\varsigma}\acute{\alpha}\tau\epsilon$ but rather is juxtaposed to the previous coordinate clause in order to show why the Lord can carry out the purpose of His Incarnation.

Throughout the Epistle, $\acute{\epsilon}\tau\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ is a technical term which is applied only to Christ.

As in 1:2, $\acute{\epsilon}\phi\alpha\upsilon\epsilon\rho\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ refers to the historical life of Jesus which was visible to the senses. It implies that there was a previous existence that only now has been made visible to men.

76. Rudolph Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. II, p. 53f.

77. Rothe, op. cit., p. 46. "Propitiation indicates the means in virtue of which the Community is reconciled to the holy God, that is by which a positive relation with sinning men is (morally) possible. . . ."

78. Bultmann, op. cit., p. 54.

79. Kittel, TWNT, "Sin" (English Edition), p. 71.

80. Otto A. Piper, "I John and the Didache of the Primitive Church," Journal of Biblical Literature, 66:446, December, 1947.

" $\delta\acute{\varsigma}\acute{\kappa}\acute{\alpha}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ is not used in I John to characterize Jesus as the divine judge but rather designates in Jewish fashion the man who has fulfilled the law." The law of which John speaks is not that of the Old Testament, however, but must be the New Testament law of obedient love; that which fulfills the Old Testament Torah.

81. James Moffatt, Love in the New Testament, p. 287.

82. Westcott, op. cit., p. 107.

83. Cf. Appendix B.

84. Haupt, op. cit., p. 189.

85. Piper, op. cit., p. 444.

86. Charles Gore, The Epistles of St. John, p. 207. But what about Luke 23:34 and Jesus' great prayer of intercession from the Cross? In many ways it is the best example of such prayer ever recorded. Gore is correct in his statement, however, where only the Johannine literature is concerned; e.g. John 17:9 ("I am not praying for the world . . .").

87. The German translation uses "bitten" for both words.

88. Rothe, op. cit., p. 193.

89. Law, op. cit., p. 136 thinks that this entails a Christian coming to the rescue of a brother Christian and doing for him, "what he lacks the power or the will to do for himself--confess his sin and seek his restoration." This is not consistent with the New Testament teaching, Cf. Romans 10:9f. Perhaps Law accepts this interpretation because he recognizes that John says that every Christian request is granted (Cf. Appendix E), and therefore this intercessory petition must be granted even if it means by-passing the personality for whom the prayer is uttered.

90. The second interpretation may appear preferable because $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ and $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega$ would then refer to the same person. But this is not grammatically necessary.

91. Mark 3:28f and parallel passages.

92. Owen E. Evans, "The Unforgivable Sin," The Expository Times, 68:240ff, May, 1957, for an exposition of this explanation.

93. Ibid., p. 243. "The nature of the sin [in 5:16] in question is not specified, but the implication is that it is a sin for which repentance is not possible. This is the more likely in view of the author's earlier assertion in 1:9, that 'if we confess our sins' (i.e. repent), God 'is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sin.'"

94. Numbers 15:30, "the person who does anything with a high hand . . . shall be cut off . . ."

95. Midrash Tehillim on Psalm 1, cited by Moffatt, "Hebrews" (ICC series) p. 77, "He who is wholly given up to sin is unable to repent, and there is no forgiveness to him for ever."

96. Westcott, op. cit., p. 192, not "specific acts as such, but acts which have a certain character."

97. Cf. Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-31.

98. The clause may be interpreted as either, "I say not that he ask for it" or, "I say that he ask not for it." The former is correct with the οὐ taken in conjunction with λέγω. If οὐ were taken with ἐρωτήσῃ then the negative would be μή. Law prefers "Not for that, I say that you pray." This is a literal rendering, but it needs the addition of ἐστίν.

99. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 210. Italics are mine.

100. Brooke, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

101. In Romans 6:13, the Revised Standard Version translates ἡσυχία as "wickedness" when "wrongdoing" is more appropriate.

102. Law, *op. cit.*, p. 408. He also directs attention to 3:10b for a similar transition.

CHAPTER VI

BORN OF GOD

I. MEANING OF THE EXPRESSION AND THE REASON FOR ITS USE

Bonsirven explains that the expression to be born of God, "is never explained [in I John] and perhaps it is impossible to define it because of its richness."¹ It is true that no clear-cut definition is given in the First Epistle, but when one views the letter as a whole there can be little doubt about what the author means by "born of God" or "children of God" or being "of God."²

Before investigating the various passages to determine the meaning, it is first necessary to inquire into the author's reason for selecting such expressions as those mentioned above (3:9, 10 etc.). As we have repeatedly found throughout the study of this letter, three possibilities present themselves. The author may have derived the idea of regeneration from the Old Testament, from the Gnosticism of his immediate environment, or the concept may involve something new and original on the part of John himself.

Some scholars such as W. F. Howard, George Stevens, and Hans Windisch would attribute Johannine phraseology to the Gnostic mystery religions when the language of the epistle fails to have a literary counterpart in the Old Testament. An example would be the concept of being born of God. It is contended by these exegetes that the expression, "born of God," is never found in Judaism in the sense of spiritual renewal.³ We must be careful lest such rigidity of thinking completely

obfuscate the role played by the Old Testament in the unfolding idea of regeneration.

It is true that nowhere in the Old Testament do we find the concept and language concerning the spiritual birth to be exactly parallel with that found in John 3:1-15 where Jesus instructs Nicodemus. But certainly Psalm 51, the greatest of all penitential Psalms, cannot be hastily overlooked. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me" (Ps 51:10). Further echoes and adumbrations of regeneration are found in Ezekiel 36:25-27.

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.⁴

And the prophet Jeremiah says,

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jer 31:31ff)

When such passages in the Old Testament are given full cognizance, it must be concluded that the seed for the later Rabbinic and New Testament concepts of birth from God is not only well planted, but some shoots are already beginning to appear. This idea is later reflected in the Talmud's designation of a proselyte as a "newborn child."⁵ The Apostle Paul undoubtedly adopted the expression, "new creation" (II Cor. 5:17, *καὶ νῦν κτισθεις*), for his own purposes from the Midrashim. We can only conclude that the writer of the First Epistle would need to seek no further than the Old Testament and his Judaistic background for ideas regarding regeneration.

The numerous mystery religions that abounded in the Hellenistic environment of John cannot be ignored either, although in giving them their full due we dare not overemphasize their influence on first century Christianity, as do Bousset and Reitzenstein.⁶ The most important thing to observe in comparing the Gnostic and Johannine thoughts on regeneration is that Gnosticism used the precise term "born of God," an expression never literally found in the Old Testament. But no ethical or moral connotation is involved in this expression. When an initiate to a mystery religion was "born of God" he considered himself deified as the result of an initiatory rite. He possessed the very essence of God. Regeneration was thus looked upon as a metaphysical transformation.

When John refers to the spiritual birth he means the reflecting of God's nature in moral deeds due to an attitude of love. Regeneration comes about through the indwelling of the Father's nature of love and not by being clothed with the essence of the Supreme Being. The Christian is thus a wholly new creation from the standpoint of the ethical and spiritual. His aim in life is henceforth not to please himself but to please God. It is because he so frequently fails to please God that he stands in constant need of forgiveness, something unknown to the "sinless" Gnostic.⁷ Thus we find that there is a great difference between the Gnostic meaning of "born of God" and the Johannine usage.⁸

The foregoing facts would thus seem to point to one conclusion. The writer of the First Epistle was prompted to use the particular expression, "born of God," because it was being so misused in frequent

utterances by the devotees of the numerous speculative religions. If a proper Christian answer was to be forthcoming, then what better way to do this than to take the very words which were being distorted and employ them in a true and meaningful fashion. John does this, but not by borrowing the Gnostic metaphysical explanation of the term.⁹

II. A PERSON BORN OF GOD EXHIBITS CHRISTIAN FAITH

(5:1a) Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

John explains in 5:1a that the person who has been born of God can always be recognized by his faith.¹⁰ It is undoubtedly the author's intention to place in sharp contrast with the Christians, the antichrists, and perhaps more specifically the Cerinthians, who strongly contended that Jesus was not the Son of God incarnate. At the very most, the Cerinthians only believed that the Spirit of the Christ entered into the man Jesus at His Baptism and then left Him at the Crucifixion. And yet it was these very same people who made the claim to be born of God. John says that such an assertion is absurd if faith in Jesus Christ is denounced. The new life that comes as the result of a spiritual renewing can only be received through the Son (5:12). Here again, the writer is evidently attempting to buoy up the spirits of his readers who are fast becoming spiritually demoralized by the soteriological boasts of the Gnostics.

This belief in Jesus as the Christ does not stop at an intellectual assent. The entire contents of the letter show that John refers

to a faith that must be exemplified in action. The real "born-again" person is not only one who surrenders his intellect to the truth that Jesus is the God-Man, but one who surrenders his will to the God who imparts His nature of love. The reception of God's nature will result in the sharing of a loving life.

It should be noted that in 5:1a, John is not interested in whether faith is the cause or the result of the spiritual transformation. He accepts the "birth" as something already existing in a Christian's life, and only points out that one's belief in Jesus as the Son of God serves as evidence that one has been born of God. The writer is not saying that one's faith in Jesus Christ will bring about a spiritual birth.¹¹ Some scholars, such as Holtzmann, declare that faith is the condition of one's becoming a child of God.¹² Others, such as Robert Law, see in the tenses used positive proof that the begetting is antecedent to the believing.¹³ This is to go beyond the author's intention. John explains that when one believes in Jesus one thereby gives proof that one is enjoying the status of union with God. He hopes that his readers will draw the logical conclusions and infer that the Gnostics who deny the deity of Christ cannot possibly have been born of God as they claim. One of the basic tests for the spiritual birth is whether one believes in Jesus as the Christ.

III. A PERSON BORN OF GOD EXHIBITS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

He Loves the Brethren

(4:7) Beloved, let us love each other because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. (3:10) By

this is visible the children of God and the children of the devil; everyone who does not do righteousness is not of God, and whoever does not love his brother.

There is another test, however, which must also be applied in determining the trustworthiness of a person's claim to regeneration. Not only must he declare his faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, but his every-day life must illustrate his love for the brethren. Verses 4:7 and 3:10 emphasize that: (1) a Christian will love his brethren; (2) God is the source of love; (3) a life of love is proof of a Godly begetting.

The false prophets who were making claims about being "born of God" were notorious for their lack of love for others. This was for two reasons. First, their salvation through deification made them free from sin. No mortal action in this life upon earth could in any way alter their spiritual status. Since the deeds of the flesh could now be completely ignored it followed that there was no need to be concerned about how one treated one's neighbor. Secondly, there was a feeling of great disdain by the illuminati who were now "saved" for those who were incapable of receiving such spiritual experiences. This haughty attitude was the very antithesis of love.

John wants everyone to understand one point clearly. God is love and if anyone professes to have God's nature dwelling in him, then perforce his daily life must give evidence of it or else his profession is false. That is why the writer purposely uses $\pi\alpha\lambda\lambda\acute{o}\varsigma$ in 4:7. It is not meant to be so sweeping that it includes every heathen who has ever

had a kind thought run through his mind. He begins the verse by addressing the Christians, ἀγαπητοί,¹⁴ and when he says πᾶς he is likewise referring to Christians. Proof of this is in his saying that the person who loves, "has been born of God." This spiritual birth has only been experienced by Christians. It is only through this act of regeneration, given by God's grace, that one is invested with the title of "Christian."

John uses πᾶς in 3:10 in a different manner than in 4:7. In 3:10 he speaks of those who are not Christians. They do not do righteous acts nor do they love their brethren.¹⁵ He undoubtedly has the false teachers in mind, but the use of the negative adverb οὐ indicates that he is not specifically mentioning them. Rather, he is referring to anyone at all who does not reflect God's love.¹⁶

This love is always the effect and never the cause of the new birth. It is the result of regeneration and not that which brings it about. Stevens says, ". . . righteousness and love are regarded as tests of the divine impartation of life because they are its consequences."¹⁷

The expression "children of the devil" in 3:10 is unique in the New Testament.¹⁸ It is equivalent to "of the devil" in 3:8, referring to the evil one as the source and initiator of man's unrighteous nature. John is not alluding to any specific act of material creation. Throughout the letter, he speaks in terms of morals and ethics, and does not employ metaphysical concepts. Likewise, when the writer refers to "children of God" or being "of God," he is not pointing to God as

Creator. Rather, he is alluding to God the Redeemer; the One who is the Father of Jesus Christ, the fountainhead of man's righteous nature.¹⁹ It is the act of spiritual renewal that he has in mind.

One way to discover if a person has undergone such a transformation is to look at the way he lives his life and see if he is doing righteousness. In 3:10 John explains what he means by doing righteousness when he concludes with the expegetical clause, "and whoever does not love his brother."²⁰ Here, as throughout the letter, "brother" probably refers to a fellow Christian.

A person who is born of God will show that this God-given regeneration has taken place in his life by loving the brethren. If anyone does not exhibit a life of love, then there can be only one conclusion; he has not been born of God, regardless of what claims he may make personally. John exhorts his Christian readers to understand this, and to be diligent in reflecting God's nature of love which has been freely given to them.²¹

He Does Righteousness

(2:29) If you know that He is righteous, [you know] know (imperative) then that everyone who does righteousness has been born of Him. (3:10) By this is visible the children of God and the children of the devil; everyone who does not do righteousness is not of God, and whoever does not love his brother.

Verse 2:29 puts in a positive fashion much the same thing expressed negatively in 3:10. The latter has, "everyone who does not do righteousness is not of God," but 2:29 puts it this way, "everyone who does

righteousness has been born of Him." The writer thus omits no one in his sweeping declarations. The negative clause refers to the non-Christian who is unable to live out God's righteousness because God's nature of love has not been placed within him. The positive clause alludes to the Christian whose way of life is that of love and who is in possession of God's nature.²²

It is difficult to say whether *δικαίος ἔστιν* in 2:29 refers to God or to Christ. If John means for "He" to be the same as *αὐτοῦ* at the end of 2:29 then undoubtedly *ἔστιν* refers to God, for the New Testament never speaks of Christians being born of Christ. He is the Mediator, and not the source of life. Brooke explains that *αὐτοῦ* may have come to be almost a proper name for God as *ἐκεῖνος* was for Christ. It is more likely though, that *δικαίος ἔστιν* refers to Christ. Jesus has already been referred to as the Righteous One in 2:1. This means that there is a sudden transition at the end of 2:29 since *αὐτοῦ* refers to God, but it is not unusual for John to make sudden transitions from the Son to the Father in his letter.

Another problem arises over the question whether *γενώσθε* of 2:29 is imperative or indicative. The hortatory meaning would seem to be more compatible with the reason for writing. If this knowledge were already implicit in the readers' thinking then they would not have been so likely to be led astray by the false teachers. They would recognize the unrighteous lives of the antichrists as revealing a lack of a spiritual birth. But throughout this letter John clearly illustrates by his injunctions and admonitions that they do not understand this. And so here he resorts to exhortation.²³ Gore explains that, "these

rapid transitions from insistence on orthodoxy [Christian Faith] to insistence on character [Christian Life] as the one essential are characteristic of St. John.²⁴

The two words for "know," $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma\gamma\acute{\iota}\nu\omicron\kappa\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ and $\gamma\iota\upsilon\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\tau\epsilon$, are conspicuous by their contrast. It is believed by many that the former refers to intuitive knowledge whereas the latter refers to knowledge gained from experience.²⁵ This is a satisfactory explanation for 2:29, but there are instances in the Johannine literature when the two words can be exchanged with no difficulty. Therefore, no hard and fast rule can be formulated.

He Does Not Sin

(3:9) Everyone who has been born of God does not do sin, because His seed abides in him; and he does not have power [is not able] to sin, because he has been born of God. (5:18) We know that every one who has been born (perfect tense) of God does not sin, but He who was born (aorist) of God preserves him, and the evil one does not lay hold of him. (5:19) We know that we are of God, and the entire world lies in the evil one.

According to John, if anyone has experienced the birth from God then it can be said of him that he does not do sin. These three verses might seem to give three different reasons for this: first, because of God's indwelling seed; secondly, because of the indwelling Son; and finally, because of the indwelling Father. A hermeneutic temptation is to treat each verse from the standpoint of one Person of the Trinity, but closer examination precludes such a sermonic approach. A Christian

does not consistently sin²⁶ because of only one reason: God's gift of spiritual renewal. These verses simply approach this one fact from different directions.

Although many scholars believe that *σπέρμα* refers either to the Holy Spirit or the Word of God, it would seem to fit the contents of the letter more faithfully to interpret "seed" as being God's nature of love. Verse 3:9 explains that anyone who has been born of God has thereby been given God's nature. This nature is the source of a Christian's ability to love his brethren, and everyone who has experienced this regeneration will lead a life that tends habitually in the direction of loving deeds. The person who habitually sins, whose attitude is consistently turned away from God, thereby demonstrates that God's "seed" does not abide in him.

John is thus giving the lie to the followers of Gnosticism who professed to have the divine essence because of the possession of a "seed" (a divine spark) from God. The writer maintains that there is one standard for detecting whether a person has been renewed spiritually. His actions in life will boldly proclaim that love is his way of life. The Gnostics failed to measure up to such a standard.

In 5:18 the writer reiterates that a person, due to his transformation, does not sin, but a somewhat different reason for not sinning is given than in 3:9. He says that "he who was born of God preserves him" (or as some MSS, "preserves himself"). The proper interpretation of this verse lies in understanding the grammatical subtlety of "has been born," the perfect passive tense, and "was born," the aorist passive

tense. The former refers to the children of God who have been born of Him, while the latter directs our attention to the birth, life, and death of Jesus, the Son of God, who appeared on the plane of history at a specific time. Nowhere in the Johannine literature does the author use anything but the perfect tense in speaking of Christians being born of God. The regenerative act of God in the past has its continuing effects in the present life of the Christian who unceasingly strives after righteousness. It is therefore very highly unlikely that the aorist is used to designate Christians. When the aorist is seen as referring to Jesus Christ, then the meaning becomes clear.²⁷

Through the mediating power of the Son of God, who became incarnate and lived on earth at a specific time, the Christian is given the ability to live out his daily life in an attitude of love and not sin. His consistent goal and purpose is to be obedient to God's commandments and not to succumb to his selfish, carnal impulses. He is "preserved" by the Son because he has been given a spiritual renewal from the Father. But if anyone rejects the Son, as did the Gnostics, then it is evident that the birth from God is not within them. The false prophets boasted of regeneration, but their love-less lives declared them to be void of the presence of Christ. No one has been spiritually born of God who has not first declared his faith in the Son who is the only One who has ever truly been born of God and possessed His essence.

A. E. Brooke, in commenting on "of God" in 5:19, says that this expression denotes, "the state which is the consequence of the 'being born of God.'"²⁸ We might go further than this and say that it is

equivalent to the phrase "have been born of God" because it points to God as the source of one's spiritual power and thus the giver of the new birth.²⁹

He Purifies Himself

(3:2) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it was (has) not yet (been) made clear what we shall be. We know that when it [He] is made manifest (clear) we shall be the same as He, [because] that we shall see Him as He is. (3:3) And everyone who has this hope because [on the ground] of Him purifies himself as He is pure.

There is perhaps no more enigmatic verse in all of I John than 3:2. The first sentence may be interpreted in three ways: (1) we are now children of God, but what our future status will be we do not know except that we will be like Him;³⁰ (2) we are now children of God, and after the Judgment that status will be brought to perfection;³¹ (3) our future relationship will be new and yet somehow it will be but the completion and fulfilment of the old status.

The second sentence is even more difficult. Does $\phi\alpha\upsilon\epsilon\rho\upsilon\theta\eta$ mean "he is made manifest" or "it is made manifest?" Calvin, Rothe, and Westcott maintain the former position, but Haupt, Holtzmann, and Huther prefer the latter. Before we can arrive at a solution satisfactory to us, we must also consider the interpretation of $\delta\tau\iota$ which follows shortly after $\phi\alpha\upsilon\epsilon\rho\upsilon\theta\eta$. Is it a conjunction or a causal particle?

Four combinations present themselves: (1) "it . . . that" combination: "We know that when our future status is made clear (at the Judgment) that (at that time) we shall be the same as He; that we shall

see Him as He is." This interpretation describes two situations that will exist when "what we will be" has been made manifest. (2) "He . . . that" combination: "We know that when He has been made manifest, (etc. same as (1))." These two situations of vision and similarity of being will exist when Christ is made manifest. (3) "it . . . because" combination: "We know that when our future status is made clear, we shall be the same as He because we shall see Him as He is." Our seeing Him as He is makes us the same as He.³² (4) "He . . . because" combination: "We know that when He has been made manifest, (etc. same as (3))." At the time of Christ's Parousia our seeing Him as He is will make us the same as He.

It is readily seen that there are far too many variables present to prevent our giving an unequivocal statement such as Dodd's: "Our author is assuming principles which he held in common, not only with the Gnostic teachers whom he is combatting, but with the higher thought of the Hellenistic world in general."³³

In attempting to attain a satisfactory explanation of John's meaning in 3:2, the antithetical $\nu\hat{\upsilon}\nu$ and $\acute{\omicron}\hat{\upsilon}\pi\omega$ cannot be overlooked, because they show that the central thought of this verse concerns the status of believers as children of God now and their future status after the Judgment. This would seem to indicate that $\phi\alpha\nu\epsilon\rho\omega\theta\hat{\eta}$ should be translated "it" and not "he."³⁴ Furthermore, the following verse says "this hope on the ground of Him" or "this hope resting upon Him." "This hope" must refer to the manifestation of being like Christ, because if it referred to Christ Himself we would expect "this hope in

Him³⁵ with "hope" referring to Christ's manifestation.

The precise use of *ὅτι* is more difficult to discern. If it is treated as a causal particle, then the vision of Christ (or God) would be the reason for being "the same as He." There would be little, if any, difference between this idea and the Gnostic concept of deification through a mystical vision of God. Since John's method of illuminating the Christian faith is to underscore the weakness of the mystery religions, it would indeed be strange if he copied one of their main tenets. Nowhere else in the Epistle does he do this. It is therefore more faithful to the letter, and to the New Testament as well³⁶ to interpret *ὅτι* as a conjunction.

Verse 3:2b may thus be paraphrased: "We know that when our future status is made clear, that we shall be the same as He and that we shall see His glorified Self." John probably means by "we shall be the same as He" that we shall be in the same perfect relationship with the Father even as He is. It is most unlikely that the writer means that we shall bear the same heavenly essence as the Son.

The emphasis here and in 3:3 is definitely on the Christians' present status as God's children, and is not so much concerned with the eschatological status which the writer admits is beyond definition and description.³⁷ John says that everyone who is now a child of God (with a continuing hope that the future life will bring a perfect likeness to Christ) leads a life of righteousness even as Christ is righteous. This life of righteousness does not come about as the result of thinking of the future but rather is the result of being born of God.

Some scholars, such as Boussett and C. K. Barrett, do not agree with the above, but insist that this passage is thoroughly Hellenistic. But the distinction between Hellenism and Christianity is clear-cut. In Gnosticism the vision of God in this life brings about union with God, or deification. For Christians, fellowship with God in this life (although not perfect) is a prelude to the next life and perfect vision.

There can be little doubt that John has the Gnostic claims in mind, but his Christian answer to those claims must not be misconstrued as being equivalent to them. He makes no predictions concerning a precise description of the future life. He only says that when the time comes for Christians to take on the role of heavenly creatures, then our relationship of Fellowship-in-Union will be fully realized. This will far surpass our present relationship with God. As the next verse shows, John is more concerned with living a righteous life that befits one born of the Spirit of God than he is in prognosticating the future.³⁸

We must not interpret 3:3 as saying that if one imitates Christ in purity of living here and now that this will be the cause for bearing a likeness to Him hereafter. John says that the children of God, those spiritually born of Him, who will "see Him as He is" can even now be identified by their Christ-like living.

"And everyone who has this hope (the assurance that our future perfect relationship with God shall be made clear) based on the fact that we will share Christ's glory (not the vain hope of false teachers who feel that they can be united with deity here and now on the basis of a

mystical, esoteric initiation) lives a present life of righteousness even as He is righteous."³⁹

IV. A PERSON BORN OF GOD IN RELATION TO THE WORLD

He Overcomes the World

(3:1) See what sort of love the Father has given to us in order that we might be called children of God, and we are. For this cause the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (4:4) You are of God, little children, and have overcome them. . . . (5:4) for [because] everything [all] which has been born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory which (has overcome) overcame the world, our faith.

The ethical dualism propounded by John is clearly perceived in the distinction made between the children of God and the world. These two forces stand in opposition to each other; the one seeks to glorify God and attempts to live righteously, while the other force ignores God and is not concerned with a moral standard for daily living. According to the writer of this letter, the children of God and the world are in constant battle against one another, but the outcome of this fight is never in doubt. The forces of righteousness prove the victor.

There is no greater verse in all the First Epistle than 3:1, although its great significance may be easily overlooked. All of the Johannine soteriology is contained in it. God has given His love to men for the express purpose of bringing about a relationship of spiritual union between them and Him; this union being a filial fellowship within a spiritual family.⁴⁰ Such love from God is seen in the Incarnate

Christ and has been mediated through Him. John explains that the ungodly man is not in fellowship with the child of God because the world (the collective substantive for all who oppose God) "did not know Him." The "Him" undoubtedly refers to God in Christ. John is telling his readers that God's express purpose and will is to the end that every man be saved, and that God's salvation which makes men His children can only come about through faith in His Son.

John's emphasis on the great contrast between the Christians and the antichrists is seen in 4:4a when he uses the emphatic pronoun *ἐκ τῶν*. He wants the readers to understand that they are "of God," that is, that they are spiritually dependent upon God. He is the source of their spiritual birth and only by His grace have they experienced regeneration.

The Spirit of God indwelling the Christian enables him to defeat the ungodly forces of evil. It is difficult to ascertain with exactness what John precisely means by *νεκρῶν καὶ ζῶντων*. He may be referring to the expulsion of the false prophets from the Community, or the reference may be to the Christians remaining true to the Gospel which they were originally taught. It may be that both ideas are involved. In any case, the perfect tense is used which indicates that the results of the victory are still continuing.⁴¹

Erasmus said that *ἐκ τῶν* means "antichristum et mundum." This explanation is satisfactory if it is understood that antichrist and the world are epitomized in the false teachers of 4:1. The conquest is over "flesh and blood," not simply "principalities and powers." These false prophets who have left the koinonia and are now undermining the Christian

faith with erroneous concepts of salvation founded on a denial of the Incarnation, have suffered defeat in the ideological warfare with the Christians.

John speaks of this victory once again in 5:4. Only here, the verb is in the aorist tense instead of the perfect. Once more the exact meaning is uncertain. As in 4:4a, the choice lies between a spiritual or physical interpretation. Although John may be using the ingressive aorist to allude to the conversion experience of his readers,⁴² it is more likely that we have here an effective aorist which places the emphasis upon the end result of the action. The English idiom would express the idea by the phrase, "has overcome." John is writing about the Christians' belief in Jesus as the Christ with the end result being the overcoming of the ungodly forces.

The second word in 5:4 is $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ and scholars differ over why John uses a neuter instead of the masculine $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$. Plummer, Brooke and Law believe that the neuter form emphasizes the victorious power rather than victorious man. Westcott thinks that the abstract form is utilized by John in order to convey a universal truth. Rothe also feels that it expresses unconditional universality. Westcott and Rothe are probably closer to the truth, because in John 6:37 and 17:2 the neuter is also used to refer to persons. Here in I John 5:4 the writer explains that there are positively no exceptions to the rule that everyone who has been born of God prevails over the world. This knowledge would do much to encourage even the least confident of the Christians.

The exact means by which victory has come is characterized by John as "faith."⁴³ This is the only place in the Johannine literature

where the word $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ is found, whereas the verb $\pi\epsilon\tau\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota\nu$ is found 94 times in the Gospel and seven times in I John.⁴⁴

However, the aura of activity which accompanies the use of a verb is not lacking in the substantive $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ as it is used by the writer of this Epistle.⁴⁵ The faith that overcomes the evil forces is not just a simple trust on the part of Christians, but rather it involves participating in the very life of the One who was Christus Victor (John 16:33). As Bishop Gore puts it: "The victory of our faith depends upon the victory of Him in whom we have believed. It is His victory appropriated by us."⁴⁶

God is at the heart of all spiritual victories. It is He who has given the spiritual birth to those who have repented of their sins and have declared that Jesus is the Son of God. It is He who has overcome all ungodly forces of this world by working through those who believe in His Son. Man's victory is essentially God's victory. "And this is the victory which overcame the world, our faith."

He Heeds the Teaching of the Church

(4:5) They are of the world; therefore they speak of the world and the world listens to them. (4:6) We are of God; he who knows God listens to us, he who is not of God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

John says that it is easy to determine who has been born of God. He is the person who listens to the teaching of the Church. If anyone gives ear to the instructions of the false prophets (4:5, $\alpha\lambda\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota$), then that person must be accounted as part of the world. John's use of

ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου and ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ emphasizes his belief in an ethical dualism. These expressions refer to the spiritual sources of good and evil.⁴⁷ If he had meant that the false prophets speak "concerning the world" then he would have said, λέγειν περὶ .

There can be little doubt that the ungodly forces have already achieved a certain degree of success.⁴⁸ They vigorously deny that God has ever become incarnate in man and there are some people who are only too willing to believe such assertions. But John insists that all victims of such misinformation have not experienced the spiritual birth from God and can only be designated as "world;" that is, the evil forces on earth who are opposed to God.

On the other hand, there are those who have undergone a spiritual regeneration from God and are said to be "of God." When viewed corporately, these people comprise the fellowship known as the Church. John is including himself as a member of this fellowship when he uses the word ἡμεῖς in 4:6.⁴⁹

Everyone who has been born of God will listen to the Church and obey its teachings. This giving heed to the Church is evidence that a person is living a spiritual life that springs from God as the source. The doctrine of the Church is fundamentally this: Jesus is the Christ, the incarnate Son of God. A person who has been born of God will confess this to be true.

This is, indirectly, a call to increased loyalty on the part of Christians. They who are "of God," who have been born of Him and are now His children, must give active evidence of their "birth" by giving

heed to the Church's instruction. No credence must be given to the false tongues of the antichrists, because the source of their strength and teaching is the evil one as seen in their rejection of the Incarnation. When anyone wilfully rejects the kerygma of the Church, only one conclusion can be drawn: he has not been born of God.

CHAPTER VI FOOTNOTES

1. Joseph Bonsirven, Epîtres de Saint Jean, p. 140. However, Bonsirven goes on to say, "elle indique . . . que le seul moyen d'avoir part à la nature divine est une sorte de génération divine et que tout enfant de Dieu possède cette nature divine."

2. The investigation of John's meaning will be the contents of this chapter. But the difference between John's use of "children" and Paul's use of "sons" should be distinguished at the outset. W. F. Howard (Christianity According to St. John, p. 95) says, ". . . whereas St. Paul fell back upon Roman law and the widespread ritual of adoption to illustrate the indescribable honor of those who could now cry Abba, Father, St. John avoids the word 'son' and prefers the term 'child of God,' for he thinks not so much of status as of a new family relationship." Haupt (The First Epistle of St. John, p. 156) says much the same thing: "According to St. Paul, we receive for Christ's sake the rights of children; according to St. John we receive, through Christ, the children's nature." And MacDonald (The Life and Writings of St. John, p. 398) explains briefly the litigation involved in adoption. "To adopt a person, according to Roman Law, was to take him in the place and give him a right to all the privileges of a son. It was made a matter of public enactment; the reasons being formally drawn up, a bill was passed to make it valid. The parties appeared before a magistrate and entered into a solemn compact, the son assuming the name of his adopted father, and thenceforward becoming an heir to a share of his inheritance."

3. Stevens and Windisch find the only Old Testament analogy in Psalm 2:7.

4. Also Cf. Ezekiel 11:19.

5. Jebamoth the Mishnaic tractate deals with Levirate marriages (Deut. 25:5ff) and the forbidden degrees in marriage (Lev. 18f).

6. Cf. Bousset's Kyrios Christos and Reitzenstein's Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen.

7. John shows that the Christian's goal in life involves a continual striving after righteousness by employing the perfect tense when speaking about being "born of God" and in using the present tense when mentioning those who are "of God." The spiritual birth, as an occurrence in the past, is thus seen to have its continuing effects.

8. R. H. Strachan, The Fourth Gospel, p. 136. In the Hermetic and mystery religions the idea of a spiritual birth, "was a mystical and ecstatic experience, whereby the human mortal essence of the initiate was transformed into a divine immortal essence by communion with the

deity. . . . The new birth in the Johannine thought is far removed from any idea of deification. God remains God, and man remains man. . . . Jesus alone is both divine and human, and it is through Him alone that the gift of the new birth comes; not through magical formula or mystic initiation, but through His 'Word'. . . ."

9. Friedrich Büchsel (Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Ed. Gerhard Kittel, Vol. 1, p. 667 ff) explains that the Johannine expression "born of God" always refers to the source of a believer's spiritual life, and not to a physical procreation. It is a union-relationship through the Spirit with moral acts as consequences. We would agree with Büchsel that the meaning of *renasci*, $\acute{\alpha}\nu\gamma\epsilon\gamma\upsilon\acute{\alpha}\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$, $\mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\gamma\epsilon\gamma\upsilon\acute{\alpha}\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ in the mysteries and $\gamma\epsilon\gamma\upsilon\gamma\theta\eta\upsilon\alpha\iota$ in John are quite different. But Büchsel's contention that the mysteries did not have an expression "born of God" at the time of John is probably incorrect, inasmuch as it is undoubtedly this very expression on the lips of the false prophets and antichrists that impels John to give answer regarding the true birth from God. Büchsel insists so strongly on the separation of John and the mysteries that one is apt to overlook this fact. However, Büchsel has undoubtedly struck on the correct meaning of "born of God" for John when he points to Ps.2:7 and I John 5:18 as designating Jesus Christ as the One who has truly been born of God. It is only through Him that believers receive the birth of the Spirit. Union with God only comes about because of a spiritual union with the Son. We would not agree with Büchsel that this relationship is primarily eschatological. The perfection of the spiritual birth awaits the future, but we cannot say with certainty that John's emphasis is primarily on the future. The religio-moral implications of the present are very important to the writer.

10. Cf. Chapter IX, p. 266 for the presentation of 5:1 as a syllogistic scrites.

11. Erich Haupt, The First Epistle of St. John, p. 288. "It is only established that where faith, the act demanded on the part of man, is present, there certainly also the divine act, the impartation of the spirit, may be found also."

12. H. J. Holtzmann, Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament, Vol. IV Part 2, p. 353.

13. This leads Robert Law to say that this Epistle has a doctrine of predestination equivalent to the Pauline doctrine. "Belief or unbelief, when Christ is presented, depends upon antecedent spiritual predisposition" (Tests of Life, p. 271). Cf. footnote No. 7 for explanation of tenses.

14. "Beloved let us . . ." The hortatory subjunctive.

15. John frequently uses the same word with different meanings,

and we must be aware of this throughout the exposition of this letter lest we make his thinking too rigid and narrow.

16. But in using *οὐκ* three words later, John declares that there is no question that when a person does not do righteousness nor love his brother he has not been born of God.

17. George B. Stevens, The Johannine Theology, p. 245. We should note that it is natural for John to bring into juxtaposition "knowing" and "begetting" as he does in 4:7 because only when one has received God's nature in the spiritual birth is one able to have Fellowship-in-Union with Him and to exhibit this knowledge of God through a life of love.

18. But Cf. Mt. 13:38; 23:15; John 8:44; Acts 13:10; Eph. 2:3.

19. This ethical dualism is apparent throughout the First Epistle, but the author makes no effort to explain it.

20. A. Plummer, The Epistles of St. John, p. 128. "Love is righteousness in relation to others."

21. Haupt, op. cit., p. 196. "Our sonship is first considered as a divine gift, independent of all human act (3:1); in virtue of this gift, . . . God beholds us as His children. But what we now are as the result of a divine act, we must become as the result of our own deeds." Büchsel (Kittel's TWNT, Vol 1, p. 668) says, "It may not be understood as a bestowing of power . . . which belongs to man in his own right; the sonship of God . . . depends on the will of God."

22. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 87. ". . . the moral nature of God is a unity, not a duality. Righteousness is Love in the imperative mood; it is Love legislative and administrative. . . . The righteousness of God is that He makes Love the law of His own action. . . ."

23. John uses the future condition as expressed by *εἰ* with the subjunctive (wherein if the protasis is fulfilled, the apodasis follows) to enunciate that which they should know but are failing to recognize. This usage does not imply uncertainty as it does in classical Greek. "Since you know that Jesus is righteous, you should understand that only those who are likewise righteous are born of God."

24. Charles Gore, The Epistles of St. John, p. 133.

25. Law, op. cit., p. 68. "If ye know, as ye do absolutely know, that He is righteous, recognize (or, ye recognize), as implied in this, that everyone also, etc."

26. When speaking of a Christian's not sinning, John always uses the present tense to indicate an habitual state. In 3:9 he says

ἐμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ. This truth may be represented by the following syllogism:

A person born of God has been given God's Love as a way of life.
 A person whose way of life is Love cannot have sin as a way of life.
 Therefore, a person born of God cannot habitually sin.

27. This explanation also helps to solve the problem of whether the reading should be *ἐγὼς αὐτόν* or *ἐγὼς ἑαυτόν*. It is most unlikely that the reflexive is correct. But Cf. Robert Law's The Tests of Life, p. 408f for reasons why he believes the reflexive should be used.

28. A. E. Brooke, The Johannine Epistles, p. 150.

29. The emphatic *ἐγὼς* is not present in 5:19 with "we are of God" as in 4:6 because the contrast here is between God and the evil one and not between Christians and the world. Christians are said to be born of God but the emphasis is more properly upon God who is the source of Eternal Life.

30. This is held by Haupt and others.

31. Robert Law and others.

32. C. H. Dodd says that this is Hellenic mysticism; i.e. the vision or knowledge of God makes a man like God. On the other hand, Haupt declares that this concept is entirely Biblical.

33. C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 71.

34. The use of "it" or "He" amounts to about the same thing for what our future status will be will not be known until after the Parousia.

35. Cf. I Peter 1:21, *ἐλπίζω . . . εἰς*.

36. II Corinthians 3:18 is not equivalent to I John 3:2, because Paul is speaking of the present life and not that following the Parousia.

37. This statement by C. K. Barrett (The Gospel According to St. John, p. 51) must be considered inadequate: "Eschatological considerations are used as a motive for Christian ethics."

38. Gore, op. cit., p. 138. The silence of the New Testament regarding the world beyond, "is so marked that we are forced to conclude that it is intentional. We are not meant to know what the after-life is to be like, and it is probably inexpressible in terms of our present intellectual faculties. We must be content with childish figures and metaphors. Our present business is to show what the life of sonship can be on earth."

39. ἁγιασμοῦ in Exodus 19:10 and Numbers 8:21 pertains to ceremonial purification or consecration, but here it refers to an inward attitude and righteous character.

40. The ἡγάπη is used with the telic force, but not with the idea that God has loved men toward the end that they might have a particular title--"children of God"--but rather that they might possess a certain relationship with Him.

41. The victory spoken of here is probably a spiritual conquest rather than a literal physical act. The Truth possessed by the Christians is real and not to be compared with the speculative truths of mysticism which the Gnostics defend as the only approach to salvation. Here again, John is bolstering the sagging morale of his readers who are undoubtedly lagging in their zeal for Christ because of gnawing doubts concerning the superiority of their belief.

42. It may be that John is using a constative aorist that treats an act as punctiliar which is not in itself point action. The meaning may then be a belief in Christ instead of a definite conversion experience. Three examples of aktionsart in the aorist tense are found in John 1:14. The constative aorist is seen in ἐκτίνωσεν which refers to the whole earthly life of Jesus (also Cf. John 2:20; Romans 5:12; Hebrews 11:13). The ingressive aorist is found in ἐγένετο which accents the entrance of the Logos upon His life on earth. The effective aorist that accents the result is used in ἐθελομαθεῖν.

43. Law, op. cit., p. 276. "By a strong metonymy, the victory is identified with the means by which it is won."

44. W. F. Howard (Christianity According to St. John, p. 155) gives a good explanation of the reason. "It seems . . . likely that the tendency in post-Pauline Christian use, to think of faith as a fixed deposit of truth, led St. John to prefer the verb. This stands for the active exercise of the higher judgment, with a certain moral force, in so far as it involves the taking up of a personal attitude to Christ." Daniel Lamont (Studies in the Johannine Writings, p. 134) says somewhat the same thing. "In the confused age in which he wrote it seems as if the word was often without reference to the object of faith, Jesus Christ the Son of God. It is almost certain that this is the reason why he prefers the verb believe to the noun faith, for the verb requires an object more expressly than the noun does."

45. Faith in the First Epistle is not the faith of Hebrews 11:1 nor does it have the character of faith in the Pauline Epistles ("the faith that justifies and gives peace with God"). "It is belief in Jesus Christ, the belief that comes with regeneration" (Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. II p. 732).

46. Gore, op. cit., p. 195.

47. Howard, op. cit., p. 93. "The revelation of Jesus the Son of God confronts men with a crisis in which a decision is demanded. The response to that demand reveals the origin of the man, whether he is . . . of God, or of the world, from above or from below. On this side of his teaching, John's language seems to have been influenced by contemporary religious movements. The same kind of dualism is found among the Gnostics. But in the Gnostic myth . . . faith is not a genuine decision, but a recollection of one's mythical origin."

48. The present tense of ἀκούει in 4:5 testifies to this.

49. This is not to designate only the Apostles, as some scholars maintain. The "we" of 4:6 is the same as "you" of 4:4 only with the inclusion of John himself. There is no contrasting of Church and Apostles. The contrast is between the Church and the world. For further discussion of this, Cf. Chapter VII.

CHAPTER VII

KNOWING GOD

I. THE MEANING OF "KNOW"

We have but faith, we cannot know
For knowledge is of things we see.¹

For the Aristotelianism of the Scholastic Age or for the empiricism of the Nuclear Age, these thoughts of Tennyson would be understandable. But for the writer of the Fourth Gospel and the three Epistles they would be inadequate. The author John, for whom "the simple verb, $\gamma\kappa\upsilon\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu$, plays a bigger part . . . than [for] all the rest of early Christian literature . . .,"² has a unique meaning for the word "know." Unique in the sense that it differs from the meaning found in the Old Testament, Greek, Gnostic, Rabbinic, Pauline, and Synoptic Gospels' usages.

Old Testament Meaning of "Know"

In the Old Testament, $\gamma\kappa\upsilon\omega$ means perception in the course of ordinary experience.³ There are some exceptions to this, but they are few; e.g. Ps 94:11 ("The Lord knows the thoughts of man;" use of $\gamma\kappa\upsilon\omega$), and Prov. 2:6 ("From [the Lord's] mouth comes knowledge; use of $\gamma\kappa\upsilon\omega$) refer to the possession of accurate information. Generally, the Hebrew concept of "knowledge" stresses subjective apprehension of reality rather than the objective.

When the Jew spoke of knowing God he meant that God had revealed Himself in His mighty acts in history, and that man's will was to be

turned toward Him in a positive response.⁴ This was not a matter of mere intellectual activity, but rather it involved ethical decision on the part of man. Men's spirits were free to accept or reject the God who makes Himself known.

The part played by the will in the act of knowing ($\psi\tau\tau$) is specially clear when God is said to know, for it is His knowledge which first gives its meaning to that which is known, and this is equivalent to choosing or electing it as an object of attentive care.⁵

Thus, behind man's knowledge of God (the giving of his will in active response) in the Old Testament is God's knowledge (the active giving of Himself in man's history) of man.

Greek Meaning of "Know"

The Jew readily acknowledged that God could not be seen, but this invisibility was due to His holiness and moral transcendence. To the Greek however, divine invisibility meant something different: a metaphysical Being beyond all apprehension of the physical senses.

The Greeks only claimed to "know" something when they had given it close inspection with the senses, particularly with the eyes.

Since $\gamma\epsilon\nu\omega\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu$ denotes the knowing of what really is, it comes to mean verifying; and since the Greeks regard the eye as a more reliable witness than the ears . . . verification depends upon personal observation. . . .⁶

Bultmann says, "the Greek ideal of knowledge becomes clear when it is understood that knowing is a kind of seeing."⁷

The Jew thought about God's nature in terms of His acts, but the Greeks attempted to discern the very character, or essence, of deity.

It is the character of the thing as known which actually constitutes its reality. Therefore the knowledge of what really exists

may be regarded as man's highest possible achievement in this present life. . . .⁸

Gnostic Meaning of "Know"

The concept of "knowing" for the Gnostics differs in several ways from that of the earlier Greek idea. The primary concern of the main Gnostic schools, "was salvation, and it was for this purpose that they sought knowledge. By the way of knowledge they sought (a) to have the assurance of salvation, and (b) to know the way of salvation."⁹ In other words, the Gnostics always spoke of "knowing" with deity in mind.¹⁰

A dualistic universe existed for the Gnostic and gnosis was that ecstatic, mystical vision of God that would divorce him from the evil, material world. This vision culminated in perfect immortality, which was apotheosis.

For the Gnostic, gnosis was thus not pure activity of the mind, as it was for the earlier Greeks, but rather it was the gift of illumination from God to man; an illumination brought about through secret rites and a proper understanding of the mysteries of the universe.

Rabbinic Meaning of "Know"

For the Rabbis of Judaism, knowledge of God is equivalent to being acquainted with the Law. In the Old Testament, obedience (i.e. the wholehearted response to God's mighty acts that confront man) is the basis of knowing God. But the Rabbis said that the very opposite was true. If anyone were to be obedient, he must first be grounded in a secure knowledge of the Law and the tradition. For it was only in them that he knew what precepts God meant to be obeyed.

Synoptic Gospels' Meaning of "Know"

The Synoptic Gospels do not give $\gamma\acute{\nu}\omega\iota\varsigma$ or $\gamma\iota\upsilon\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\upsilon$ a technical significance. The verb $\gamma\iota\upsilon\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\upsilon$ has the following meanings:¹¹ feel, Mk 5:29; observe, Mt 26:10; perceive, recognize, Lk 7:39; learn, Lk 9:11; make certain, Mk 6:38; be aware of, Mt 24:50; be acquainted with, Mt 25:24; comprehend, Lk 18:34. When the verb $\epsilon\pi\iota\gamma\iota\upsilon\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\upsilon$ is used, it may be considered practically synonymous with $\gamma\iota\upsilon\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\upsilon$.

The only place in the Synoptics where there has been any dispute concerning the proper meaning of the word "know" is the Q passage of Matthew 11:27 (and parallel, Luke 10:22). No one can deny that a Johannine echo is present, and it may be that Bultmann is correct in saying, "it can hardly have been connected originally with its present context."¹² However, Bultmann goes too far in pressing his point when he says, "the verse thus presents us with Gnostic language."¹³ A Johannine affinity is not equivalent to Gnostic usage.

Paul's Meaning of "Know"

When we come to the writings of Paul we are in a situation similar to John, because Paul is combating an inchoate Gnosticism (although of a much more incipient type than that opposed by John). He does not hesitate to speak of "knowledge" but in doing so he shows that there is a sharp line between speculative Gnosticism and the true gnosis of Christianity.¹⁴

Following are some characteristics of Christian gnosis as presented by Paul: (1) it is not vague, theosophical speculation, but has for its content God's saving act in Jesus Christ; (2) it is not

esoteric, but ethical throughout; it is only genuine when accompanied by brotherly love (I Cor. 8:9ff); (3) it is not something which man brings about through a mystical or emotionalistic experience, but has its roots in God's knowledge of man;¹⁵ Cf. I Cor. 8:3; Gal. 4:9.

(4) It is not the perfection of deification here and now, but is that which must be continually striven for and renewed (Phil. 3:12ff); it is a fellowship with God that will be only fully realized when we have passed beyond earthly life (I Cor. 13:8ff); (5) it is not the belief in a dualistic cosmology wherein the chief aim is to flee from the evil, materialistic world into the ethereal realm of the heavens;

Christian gnosis is explained (Phil. 3:9f) as meaning 'to be found in Christ,' i.e. to be drawn into God's saving act through faith, which never possesses that which is its object, but looks on the one hand to what God has done, and on the other to the future. Knowing him (Phil. 3:10), therefore is not a withdrawal from historical earthly existence, but the experience of the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings in the very midst of historical life (Cf. II Cor. 4:7ff). . . .¹⁶

John's Meaning of "know"

Now, what does the writer of the First Epistle of John mean by knowing God? One of the most common conceptions is illustrated by Bishop Gore:

According to St. John right religion is . . . not a mere matter of our personal feeling or what we call our 'experience,' but depends upon facts outside ourselves, what Jesus was, what He taught about God, how He suffered and rose again. And those facts can be apprehended by the understanding and (within limits) can be expressed in propositions which, if they are justified by the facts, can, like the propositions which St. John uses, constitute a standard of orthodoxy or right thinking in religion.¹⁷

On the whole, no fault can be found with such a statement. It is only mentioned here to illustrate the emphasis that is often placed

on "the understanding" and "right thinking." But the First Epistle shows that for John "right religion" is dependent upon a proper relationship with God which is evidenced in right living, and not merely apprehending certain facts. It is certainly true that God has made this spiritual relationship possible by His acts in the historical Jesus, but man's religion does not consist in the intellectual assent to these acts, necessary as that is.¹⁸ For John, "right religion" has its being in a "right relationship" with God.

The superlative designation for this relationship with God is Eternal Life. Man has Fellowship-in-Union with God through spiritual faith-union (this aspect of reconciliation is dealt with more fully by Paul) with His Son, Jesus Christ. Eternal Life is given only through the Son because it is He who has perfectly enjoyed this relationship of love with the Father from the beginning (1:1). When John speaks of knowing God, it is to this relationship that he refers. When the writer says that one "knows" God, or is "in Him" or has "eternal life," he is saying one and the same thing.

How did such a usage evolve? First of all, John purposely makes use of "know" because it was a term employed so frequently and loosely by the Gnostics. He was determined to recast it and reshape it, for only in so doing would the Christians of his parish understand the falsity of Gnosticism as well as be shown that there is a true Christian knowledge of God.

Although it was the Gnostic usage of the word "know," and the consequent defection of Christians, that motivated John to bring

rebuttal, it was the Hebrew Old Testament that provided the conceptual foundation for the refashioning. One can only know God by His mighty acts and in responding affirmatively with one's will to them. But John is not here concerned with the Exodus from Egypt or the casuistic observance of the Mosaic Law, for God's mighty Act is seen in the expiatory death of His Incarnate Son. And the response demanded is that of faith in Him who alone can bring salvation, for only in union with Jesus Christ can one enter into Fellowship with God. To "know" God is thus to enjoy the Son-mediated relationship with God known as Eternal Life. How vastly different this is, not only from Judaism, but above all from the Gnostic doctrine. As C. H. Dodd explains,

. . . for [John] the knowledge of God which is union with God is not metaphysics, nor direct super-sensuous vision of the absolute, nor yet mystical ecstasy or 'enthusiasm.' Knowledge takes the form of faith, which is both an acceptance of the fact that Jesus Christ is the revelation of the eternal God, and a personal attachment to Him.¹⁹

A terse (and inadequate, without the above explanation) summary of the meaning of knowledge of God may be stated as follows: to the Jew it is a wholehearted response; to the Gnostic it is a mystic revelation; to the Christian (in the Johannine sense) it is a spiritual relationship.

II. KNOWING GOD THROUGH CHRIST

(5:20) And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given to us understanding, [in order] that we [might] know the True One; and we are in the True One, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

John's thought in 5:20 recalls to mind the words of Jesus in John 4:22-24 where He is speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well. It is as though the writer of the Epistle paraphrastically asserts, "You heretics worship what you do not know. The new Israel worships not false gods but the true God with whom we have fellowship through Christ Jesus. Such worship of the Father is in spirit and in truth, for God is Spirit and the Son is Truth."

The particle $\delta\epsilon$ in 5:20 is not an adversative particle and must be translated "and," not "but." Instead of contrasting this verse with the previous passage, John is continuing to build up his case by casting illumination on his subject from different vantage points.

Along with this, we must reject the contention by Robert Law and numerous other expositors who hold that "we know" introduces the last of three triumphant certainties (5:18,19,20).²⁰ All three verses herald but one mighty certainty, and that is: we know that we have spiritual union with God because of His initiative of reconciliation found in Christ who sanctifies us; whereas all who reject the Gospel are in the grip of the devil and thus unable to know the one redemptive God of creation.

The Johannine ethical dualism is evident in all three verses. Those who are born of the true God and have been given the capacity for righteous living through union with the Son, are placed over against those who have their source of unrighteous living in the devil. It is the latter who oppose the revelation of God in Christ preferring false gods as objects of their mythological and mystical speculations.

Dividing 5:18-20 into three "points" may be a tempting homiletic device, but the true hermeneutic value can only be gained by taking the overall view.

The perfect tense of "has come" indicates the Incarnation of the Son of God and His continuing presence with us. This linear aktionsart is presaged in 5:18 with the verb (in the present tense) "preserves" or "keeps."

The use of *ᾤδωκα* in 5:20 is unique in the Johannine literature.²¹ Elsewhere in the New Testament it is used in quotations from the LXX (Mt. 22:37 and parallel passages; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16) and in Lk.1:51; Eph. 4:18; Col. 1:21; I Peter 1:13; and II Peter 3:1 where it always refers to the faculty of knowing or discerning, or the capacity for receiving knowledge.

We must be cautious in considering this normal New Testament usage as a possibility for I John, because it definitely refers to the rational processes of the mind. We have seen that John takes the word "know" and injects a new meaning into it (one that, while it does not neglect the power of thought, does not primarily refer to intellectual ability), and thus it is doubtful that 5:20a has the following meaning: "and the Son has given us the faculty for intellectual knowledge so that we might come into the true spiritual relationship with the Father." This interpretation cannot be considered impossible, but in a Johannine writing it appears highly improbable.

The safer explanation is to admit that rational undertones are present in *ᾤδωκα*, (as they also are in "know"), but to recognize

the principal emphasis as being upon the spiritual connotation. The meaning then becomes: "and the Son has made possible the Fellowship-in-Union relationship with the Father." John is saying the same thing in 5:20 as in 5:11 only he is saying it by meeting the Gnostics on their own grounds. The true Christian "understanding" comes about through responding in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is He who provides the real gnosis of the Father; the gnosis of a communion relationship.

An excellent example of the special meaning of "know" as employed by John is found in his use of $\acute{\omicron}\acute{\iota}\delta\alpha\ \alpha$ 22 and $\gamma\iota\upsilon\omega\sigma\kappa\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu$ in 5:20. He begins with "we know" which refers to the intuitive knowledge, or intellectual comprehension, concerning the fact of Incarnation and its soteriological effect on men. But the following $\gamma\iota\upsilon\omega\sigma\kappa\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu$ can only apply to the relationship of eternal life. As if to make this entirely clear and beyond all doubt, John immediately follows with, "and we are in the True One." For John, being "in God" and "knowing God" are identical. The particular nomenclature is chosen in order to answer the Gnostics point blank.²³

John speaks of the "True One" to contrast the one God revealed in Jesus Christ to the false gods mentioned in 5:21. This is undoubtedly another use by the author of a term very familiar to the people of his generation in their Hellenistic environment. The God revealed by Christ is the one God deserving the epithet, "Real."²⁴

III. KNOWING GOD THROUGH ANOINTING

(2:20) And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all

know. (2:21) I did (do) not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that every lie is not (no lie is) of the truth.

Verses 2:20 and 5:20 present a trinitarian circle. In 2:20 the readers are assured that God has anointed them with the Holy Spirit in order that all of them, without exception, may know the truth of the Incarnation. Verse 5:20 explains that the Son of God became flesh so as to reveal the one true God in the Father.

It is apparent that the three uses of "you know" (οἶδατε) in 2:20-21 do not have the specialized Johannine meaning of fellowship with God. Rather, it refers to the mental assuredness given to the Christians by the indwelling Holy Spirit that Jesus of Galilee was truly the Son of God in the flesh, who even now makes intercession on their behalf before the Father.

In 2:20-21 John bolsters the weakened spirits of the Christians by impressing upon them what they already know. His use of applied psychology is excellent. By being reminded of what it is that they already know, the readers find themselves with thicker armor and increased ability to fend off the doubts created by those who have left their own fellowship. The meaning of the "truth" in 2:21 is brought out by implication in 2:22 where the "lie" is seen to be the denial of the Incarnation.²⁵

IV. A PERSON WHO KNOWS GOD

Is Among Those Referred to as "Children" and "Fathers"

(2:13) I write to you, fathers, because you have known (know)

the One who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have conquered the evil one. I [wrote] (write) to you, young children [lads], because you have known (know) the Father. (2:14) I [wrote] (write) to you, fathers, because you have known (know) the One who is from the beginning. I [wrote] (write) to you young men because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have conquered the evil one.

A more detailed discussion of these two verses is found in Appendix C. Our interest here is in observing that the Christians who possess the relationship of eternal life are designated both as children and fathers. The two uses of "you know" in 2:13 are in the specialized Johannine sense of fellowship. There is no distinction between knowing "the One who is from the beginning" (2:13a) and knowing "the Father" (2:13c). Both mean Fellowship-in-Union with God.

Verse 2:14 merely repeats that the fathers have known the One who is from the beginning. Westcott and others would bring out the full implications of the perfect tense of "have known," but as so often happens in the Greek language, the perfect may be aptly translated by the English present. Such an interpretation is more suitable here.

We should not overlook John's intentional use of the designations, children and fathers and young men. He may or may not be referring to chronological age. But one thing is certain. He has taken his terms from the family. He never uses the Pauline expression, "household of faith," but his Christian teaching takes it for granted. The one true Son of the Father gives to us the nature of sonship that we may share in His relationship of love with the Father. All

Christians who thus "know" God, i.e. share this relationship of spiritual union, are brethren.

Keeps God's Commandments

(2:3) And by this we [come to know] understand that we have known (know) Him, if we keep His commandments. (2:4) The one who says that (I) have known (know) Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in this (man). (2:5a) But whoever keeps His word, surely in him the love of [for] God has been brought to maturity [perfected].

George Findlay agrees with Erich Haupt that 1:5-2:2 is a unit and that 2:3-5 are parallel to 1:6-7. In this we concur.²⁶ "Fellowship with Him" (1:6) is parallel to "we know Him" (2:3), and "we walk in the light" (1:7) is equivalent to "we keep His commandments" (2:3) and "whoever keeps His word" (2:5).

It must be reiterated that the author of the Epistle chooses various methods of saying the same things. There is no "spiral" pattern to be found in this letter. John uses various modes of expression and terminology familiar to his readers in communicating his major theme, eternal life. His purpose is to fortify the faith of the Christians by restating the fact of their relationship to God (and how His Incarnation in Jesus Christ has made this relationship possible) and the importance of their actions that give proof of this fact.

"By this" of 2:3 points forward, so that John is saying that it is in the keeping of God's commandments that one may recognize that he is in fellowship with God. The Gnostics may claim a very

exclusive type of fellowship with God, but John says that the real test of the matter is in the living. If there are no deeds of love in life, then there simply cannot be any reality to faith.

John's two uses of "know" in 2:3 may at first capture our attention because of the differences in tenses. But to stop at this is to miss the writer's major emphasis.²⁷ We have here an outstanding example of the manner in which John utilizes the word "know" in a distinctly double fashion. The *γινώσκωμεν* can have none other than a cognitive reference. It is in the keeping of God's commandments that we understand, or come to recognize, that "we have known Him." But the *ἐγνώκαμεν* reveals the particularized Johannine signification.²⁸ This use of "know" connotes the spiritual Fellowship-in-Union which the Christians have with the Father. Such a reference to eternal life does not deny, of course, that there must be an intellectual acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Son of God. The writer's great stress throughout the Epistle on the Incarnation would certainly preclude such a denial.

In this Johannine play on words the writer is once again repeating his contention that one's faith cannot be separated from the life that is lived. Is any brother in doubt about whether he really is a Christian; whether he really is in fellowship with the true God? He has only to look at his own life. If his one desire is to keep God's commandments, and he loves the brethren, then he truly does "know" God. That is, he is "in Him" (notice that this equivalent expression for "know" follows only two verses later); he has eternal

life; he possesses Fellowship-in-Union. No man can keep God's commandments except God's Spirit is the directing influence of the man's spirit (4:13-15).²⁹

John's use of "commandments" in 2:3-4 and elsewhere in his writings shows a direct affinity to the Jewish background. The keeping of the Lord's commandments is a constantly recurring theme in the Old Testament. Even so, John goes beyond the Hebraic meaning of commandments for he is not referring to any specific precepts that might be found engraved on tablets of stone or anywhere else. This is the author's way of speaking about the Gospel of Love which became Incarnate in Jesus Christ (the same applies to "word" in 2:5). This is the new Torah for the New Israel. He who would keep God's commandments must exhibit his Christian faith in Godly living (Gal. 5:6, "faith working through love").

We must disagree with Robert Law who says that, "the 'commandments' are the clear, precise orders that God has laid down, dealing with conduct in detail, peremptory as military instructions."³⁰ This statement would be more suitable as applied to the commandments of God in the Old Testament. Under the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, God does not give specific injunctions, but rather the revelation of Himself in His Son and makes clear His desire that all men live lives of love which show that they are "being saved" (I Cor. 1:18). Although the writer of the First Epistle uses the word "commandments" he is following the way laid out by our Lord and not reverting to the legalism of the Old Testament.³¹

Here is the Johannine answer to the false teachers. The Gnostics may claim to have a supernatural spirituality that makes their actions totally irrelevant, but the Christian relationship with God is wholly inseparable from the deeds that result from such fellowship. Bultmann says, "Since the knowledge of Jesus and of God expresses itself in love, the keeping of the commandments (of which love is the content) can stand as a criterion of Christian gnosis."³²

Verse 2:3 may be paraphrased: "When our life habitually reflects God's love because of our faith in the Incarnate Christ, then we may be certain that we have Fellowship-in-Union with God."

John makes direct reference to the Gnostics and one of their watchwords at the very beginning of 2:4 with the words, "The one who says 'I know Him'. . . ." This recalls his previous allusions to the heretical beliefs in 1:6,8,10. Whenever the writer remarks "if we say" or "he who says," there can be little doubt that he is calling attention to the antichrists who are subverting the faith of the Christian community. In every case he says that such assertions are absolutely false and that he who makes them is a liar. In 1:8 the claim to sinlessness is a direct disavowal of God's recognition of man's sin in the sending of His Son as expiation, and thus equivalent to calling God a liar.

John evidently intends a play upon the word "truth" in 2:4b when he says "the truth is not in him." On the one hand anyone who professes to have an intimate relationship with God and yet exhibits no Godly activity in life must be looked upon as a liar. His statement

is false and in this sense the "truth" is not in him. On the other hand John goes beyond this apparent meaning and touches the very essence of God. He says that anyone who does not reflect God's nature of love in deeds cannot be said to have the gospel or word within (1:10), for there can be no "container" of God's self-giving nature that does not pour out the "contents" of Love. In this sense also, the "truth" is not in him.

The writer, in 2:5a, uses the singular "word" in order to contrast it with the plural of "commandments" in the preceding verse, but they are evidently meant to be equivalent. Thus, it is not likely that "word" refers to the personal Logos.

When John says "perfected" in 2:5a, he does not imply that the Christians are morally perfect in the sense of doing absolutely no wrong. Findlay misinterprets this and sees the idea as purely hypothetical. He probably confuses the verb here with ἐπιτελεσέν (Gal. 3:3) which has the idea of attaining a definite end (τέλος). In this verse the concept of maturity is present.³³ The author is re-emphasizing that God's love for man³⁴ is not given so that he can boast of a spiritual state superior to that of other men, but rather that this love can be put into active service in love of the brethren. When this occurs in a Christian's life, he may rest assured that the purpose for which God's love has been given him is being fulfilled. In other words, God's love is being brought to maturity.

We must not misunderstand this perfected love as being a reward for obedience. That is, if anyone keeps God's word then God will see

to it that as a reward that person has God's love perfected in him. The mature love mentioned here is rather the condition of one's spiritual life that exists when one is obedient, i.e. living out God's love. A person's obedience testifies to this condition of spiritual union with God. To put it more simply: loving deeds witness to the possession of eternal life, rather than eternal life being a reward for one's loving deeds.

Loves His Fellow Christians

(4:7) Beloved, let us love each other because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. (4:8) He who does not love (has never known God) did not know God, because God is love.

In spite of what the Gnostics had to say about their ability to know God in a fashion that was supposedly foreign to the uninitiated, John makes it clear that only those who love the brethren can truly say that they know God. Here again he is not using the word as the Gnostics did, but fills it full of the sense of relationship with God with no dependency on myths or deifying visions. A further contrast with the mystery religions is seen when the author uses $\pi\alpha\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ (4:7) to indicate that the Christian knowledge of God is open to all with no exceptions. There are no elite members of the Community who alone may qualify for the title, Christian.

The inseparability of the Christian faith and the Christian life is seen when John seems to veer abruptly from the topic of faith ("every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ . . ." 4:2) to that of life ("let

us love . . ." 4:7). Upon closer inspection however, we find that the author's transition is perhaps smoother than is at first apparent. Verses 4:7-8 may be paraphrased: ". . . and every spirit which loves is of God, and every spirit which does not love is not of God." In Johannine terms this says the very same thing as do verses 4:2-3. John's remarks concerning faith and life may be transposed anywhere in the Epistle and no mistaken concepts will arise.

We saw above that when a person knows God, in the Christian sense, he will keep God's commandments. We also saw that faith and life are the very substance of His commandments, and that John does not mean to indicate any particular "thou shalt do this." In 4:7-8, the writer selects the Christian life aspect of His commandments and pointedly declares that the only ones who know God are those who "love one another" (4:7).

It is very tempting at this juncture to leap to the conclusion that John is admonishing all people to love everybody else because whoever does this is born of God. But much as we might desire the writer to say this, it does not happen to be the case. The letter is written to Christians, and the word ἀλλήλους can only refer to fellow-Christians.

Therefore John is saying that a person who really knows God, namely the Christian who has that spiritual relationship with God which the Gnostic only thinks he has in a metaphysical fashion, will give evidence of this in his life by loving the other members of the koinonia who have the selfsame nature of sonship. In explaining that

"love is of God" (4:7) and "God is love" (4:8), he is causing them to remember that the very source of their spiritual life, their ability to love each other, is God the Father. To put it in modern terminology, John is saying, "You are Christians, now act the part." The Gnostics claimed to know God, but no deeds of love resulted. The Christians do know God and therefore acts of love will follow.

Just as in our own day, however, there were probably many at that time in the Church whose lives almost belied their Christian profession of faith. Their spiritual maturation had slowed down to almost a complete halt (Cf. Eph.4:15; Col.1:28). It is most likely that some of the heretical teaching had been the cause of this. In any case, here is a clarion call to rise up and live out the love which is of the very essence of God. Not to do so is to deny one's citizenship in the Kingdom.

A. E. Brooke presents an interpretation (along with Plummer and Westcott) that unfortunately fails to do justice to John's thinking. He says that the Biblical revelation, "suggests that whatever is best in man, is the reflection, under the limitations of finite human existence, of something in the nature of God."³⁵ As Plummer puts it, the love mentioned here can refer to the love shown by a heathen for his fellow-men.

To these assertions, John would probably say, in the first place, that no heathen possesses the true love of God. For John contends that if and when one does come into this intimate relationship with God so as to possess His love, then one is no longer a heathen,

but has been born of God. To say that a heathen exhibits God's nature of love is to say that he knows God. This entire Epistle constantly shows that it is only Christians who know God. Now it must be granted that there are many non-Christians who appear to be far more loving than many Christians. But is it the self-giving $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$ of God?³⁶ John would say it is impossible.

There is an interesting change of tense that may be significant. John says that "everyone who loves . . . knows God" (4:7), but "he who does not love did not know God" (4:8). It is only misleading to hold the aorist to its strict punctiliar force.³⁷ Westcott says, "His acknowledgment of God (as at Baptism) was based on no true recognition of His nature."³⁸ This certainly cannot be correct for Westcott is taking "know" as an act of recognition rather than a spiritual relationship, and in addition sees the aorist as designating a specific incident such as Baptism.

Both tenses must be viewed as a unit if the true meaning is to be understood. For once again John has the Gnostics in mind, and he is purposely contrasting them with the Christians as he does constantly throughout his letter. He says that anyone whose way of life consists in reflecting God's love has surely undergone a true regeneration and must possess eternal life, else he could not have such love to share. This side of the equation, of course, refers to the Christians who enjoy the Christ-mediated relationship with God. But then there are the false teachers who have gone out of the Church and turned their backs on Christ. Of these and their fellow heretics who demonstrate

that their way of life is not that of love, it must be said that they have never known God at any time (Cf. 2:19).³⁹ John stresses that God's very essence is that of love, and if anyone has ever experienced Fellowship-in-Union with Him, he will definitely illustrate this by the way he loves the brethren.

The perfect tense of "has been born" (4:7) in like manner testifies to the same thing. Those who have experienced God's act of transformation will demonstrate its continuing effects day by day as they "love each other." The word "born" is omitted in 4:8, but the use of the aorist "did not know" (which may be translated "has never known") undoubtedly implies that the particular act of regeneration has never taken place.⁴⁰

If we think of knowing God as "acquiring knowledge of God,"⁴¹ then we may safely say that the writer is not concerned about which is the cause or effect, the knowledge of God or the spiritual birth from God. But when we realize that knowledge of God is simply another way of describing the relationship of salvation given to man, then it will be seen that John has purposely arranged the words born and know in their proper order in 4:7. The continuing fellowship with God must be founded on an act of regeneration given by God in Christ.⁴²

John makes it perfectly apparent that if anyone is to declare that he "knows" God, the test of this assertion will be found in his acts. For the knowing of God must involve a person's faith and faith is always dynamically exhibited in life.⁴³ The Christian knows God as the Gnostic never can, and he will therefore be found loving his

brethren, something that the Gnostic never will. For those who may be ignoring the indissoluble bond between life and faith, John gives a rallying cry of remembrance when he says, "Beloved, let us love each other . . ."

Does Not Sin

(3:6) Every one (no one) who abides in Him (sins) does not sin; every one (no one) who sins has (seen Him or known Him) not seen Him nor known Him.

As we have been saying throughout, it is John's purpose to take the boastful phrases of the false teachers and to show that they are untrue because they are based on self-appreciation and not selfless living. He occasionally puts several of these terms together and annuls their meaning in one fell swoop.

Verse 3:6 is a good example of this. When he speaks of abiding, seeing, and knowing, he is not setting forth Christian doctrine in a brand new late-first century jargon. These are words used by those whom he repudiates.¹⁴¹ To show the utter simplicity of it we may paraphrase the verse and arrive at the heart of John's meaning: "Everyone who has eternal life does not sin; everyone who sins has not eternal life" (eternal life is a Johannine phrase, not Gnostic). The tautological character of such an expression is missing in the First Epistle itself because the author alternates the use of various synonymous phrases.

The Christians of the early Church observed the sinful lives of the adherents of the mystery religions and yet were also aware that

these Gnostics claimed a knowledge of God which the Christians doubted that they themselves possessed. John is now clarifying the situation as he tells his readers that anyone who sins (the present participle places emphasis upon the life of habitual, consistent sinning, indicative of the personality turned away from God) does not know God now and never has. That is, the antichrists do not know God in the Christian sense of know. Their lack of Fellowship-in-Union is proved conclusively by their unrighteous deeds. When a moral affinity with God is missing, then one cannot say, "I know Him."⁴⁵

Some scholars, such as A. E. Brooke,⁴⁶ believe that see and know are here placed in a determined order. But this is due to interpreting know in the Greek sense of apprehending the very essence of something. Not only does this not apply to the Christian knowledge of God, but even the Gnostics did not accept this as a definition of gnosis. The only way in which they were concerned with the essence of God was that through their mystical rites and resulting knowledge of cosmogony they might attain the vision of God which indicated that they were thus sharing His essence. They were more concerned with ultimate salvation than with intellectualism.

In 3:6 John puts see and know opposite abides in Him to show that they refer to the same thing. He means to explain that these are various expressions the Gnostics use in referring to their spiritual union with God. And his answer is that if one's life is consistently contrary to God's will, then that person is not in union with God. Whereas the person who possesses God's gift of Eternal Life through

Christ will show this by adopting a way of life that is righteous.

IV. THE WORLD DOES NOT KNOW GOD

(3:1b) For this cause the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (4:6) We are of God; he who knows God listens to us, he who is not of God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

John's delimited usage of the word know is clearly demonstrated in verses 3:1b and 4:6 where it is the world that does not know God. Verse 4:6 has no specific reference to the world, but "he who is not of God" has obvious allusions to 4:5, "they are of the world."⁴⁷

It is not surprising to find the writer of this Epistle saying that the world does not know God. When the world is understood to be all the forces opposing God, and the knowing of God to be a mutual relationship (of love) with God issuing in obedience, the antithetical position of these two forces is only too apparent. It is like saying, black is not white.

But John also goes out of his way to say that the world "does not know us." The forces opposing God are completely unenlightened regarding the concept of the Church, and they wholly fail to recognize and appreciate the faith of the Christians and their relation to God. But since the world has not had spiritual union with God through Christ, how can it be expected to understand those whose relationship to God is by means of faith in that same Christ?

By now it is apparent that we are distinguishing between

$\chi(\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota$ and $\epsilon\chi\upsilon\omega$ of 3:1b. The former means to come to understand or know, to recognize (although John may imply a relationship of fellowship and not simply intellectual awareness). The latter has the Johannine special connotation of fellowship, or spiritual union. The following English play upon words may help to clarify the truth of this passage: "the world does not know us because it 'no's' God;" or, "the opponents of God do not understand us because they fail to 'stand under' God." These simple illustrations may help to illuminate for us the mind of John who said, "For this cause the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."⁴⁸

C. H. Dodd believes that 4:6 (and 4:5), if taken literally, "would seem to imply that missions . . . have no chance of success."⁴⁹ He says,

Our author's immediate attention . . . is to reassure those who are perturbed by the success of semipagan teaching. That success . . . is limited by the fact that God has those who belong to Him, and they cannot be misled.⁵⁰

We do not believe that these words can be construed in any way to mean, or even to imply, that there are some who are born to be saved and some who are marked to be lost. Rather, John is saying that one may identify the person who is in fellowship with God (who "knows" God; who possesses "the spirit of truth") by the fact that he is of one mind with the Church and gives heed to its teaching. The person who is not in fellowship with God may be identified by his refusal to accept the Incarnation and by his teaching of doctrines contrary to those of the Church. John is constantly attempting to assure the Christians that it is they and not the antichrists who really know God.

The ἐκ τούτου has reference to the ways by which the spirits of truth and error are recognized.⁵¹

It is very difficult to ascertain what John means by "the spirit of truth" in 4:6b. If the Holy Spirit is referred to (John 14:17; 15:26; I Cor. 2:12) as many scholars maintain, then the genitive, "of truth," may express either the character (Eph. 1:3; Heb. 10:29) or the source of the Spirit (Romans 8:9,11). However, if we accept this interpretation that the Holy Spirit is being mentioned, then one of two alternatives presents itself: (1) John has likewise personified the unholy spirit ("the spirit of error") which follows, or (2) the writer is purposely contrasting the Holy Spirit ("the spirit of truth") with an attitude ("the spirit of error").

It would appear preferable to believe that there is no reference to the Holy Spirit at all. The spirit of truth and the spirit of error point back to 4:2,3 to "the spirit which confesses Jesus Christ," and "every spirit which does not confess Jesus Christ." The spirit in 4:6b would thus be the inner attitude that sums up and gives expression to one's religious beliefs.⁵²

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER VII

1. Tennyson's "In Memoriam," prologue.
2. Rudolph Bultmann (Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Ed. Gerhard Kittel) Vol. I, p. 711.
3. This discussion is based on Rudolph Bultmann's essay in Kittel's TWNT, Vol. I, p. 688ff.
4. Bultmann, op. cit., p. 697. "Above all $\int T^?$ is used to indicate recognition of the acts of God." Cf. Isaiah 41:20.
5. Ibid., p. 698.
6. Ibid., p. 690.
7. Ibid., p. 691.
8. Loc. cit.
9. Allan D. Galloway, The Cosmic Christ, p. 69f. We see this in Gnosticism as late as the third century. From Walter Scott's translation of Hermetica, Vol. I, p. 375: "For thou hast bestowed on us mind, and speech, and knowledge; Mind, that we may apprehend thee; Speech, that we may call upon thee; And knowledge, that having come to know thee, and found salvation in the light thou givest, we may be filled with gladness."
10. Bultmann, op. cit., p. 694. "The doctrine consists of cosmology and anthropology, viewed entirely from the standpoint of soteriology."
11. Bultmann, op. cit., pp. 702f.
12. Bultmann, op. cit., p. 713.
13. Loc. cit.
14. Bultmann, op. cit., p. 709. "In his opposition to [the Gnostics] Paul held fast to the special quality of genuine Christian knowledge, but at the same time appropriated to a certain degree Gnostic terms and ways of presenting problems. A good example is the absolute use of the word gnosis in I Cor. 8:1,7,10f; 13:8."
15. Loc. cit. Paul shows a dependence on the Old Testament. "God's knowledge is His gracious choice. . . . It is clear that 'to be known by God' can mean nothing but what is elsewhere called election or calling."

16. Bultmann, op. cit., p. 710.
17. Charles Gore, The Epistles of St. John, p. 218.
18. C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 177.
". . . even when the concept of knowledge of God is most fully intellectualized, it remains true that it involves a personal union with Christ, which goes beyond mere intellectual apprehension.
19. Dodd, op. cit., p. 201.
20. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 410.
21. Erich Haupt, The First Epistle of St. John, p. 342. The absent article shows that, "not the fulness of all spiritual ability had been imparted to man, but . . . the power to discern the true God, and to recognize . . . the false gods." This explanation cannot be accepted, because John believes that the "fulness of all spiritual ability" came with the ability to enjoy Eternal Life.
22. In the Epistle, $\acute{\omicron}\acute{\delta}\alpha$ is always used to designate the knowing of a fact concerning something. It is an intellectual comprehension. Sometimes $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\upsilon$ is also used in this sense, e.g. 2:18. However, when John wants to refer to the relationship of Fellowship-in-Union, he never uses $\acute{\omicron}\acute{\delta}\alpha$ but always $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\upsilon$. This generally applies to the Gospel also, except in 7:28,29; 8:19,55; 15:21 where $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\upsilon$ would be expected.
23. Nestle's "Novum Testamentum Graece" accepts the spelling as $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu$ rather than $\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu$. MSS χ , A, B, have the latter and A. E. Brooke accepts that reading with the explanation that we have here a vulgarism by John ($\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha$ with the present indicative) which was corrected in later MSS. Law, Westcott, and Robertson, however, prefer the weaker MS evidence pointing out that John originally wrote " ω ," not " \omicron ," but through corrupt pronunciation an early scribal error was introduced. This explanation can only be accepted as conjectural.
24. C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 140. Dodd probably goes too far in saying that John is here stating the Gospel in Platonic terms. The writer is not concerned with putting "the Real, over against the illusions of idolatry." He is contrasting the One Real God with the gods that were far from illusions to the heretics, but were most certainly false.
25. Cf. Appendix D.
26. Cf. Chapter II, Page 28, for a skeletal outline of 1:5 - 2:2 arrived at independently of Findlay and Haupt.

27. A. E. Brooke, The Johannine Epistles (ICC), p. 30. "We learn to perceive more and more clearly that our knowledge is genuine through its abiding results in a growing willingness to obey."

28. One might almost think that here is John's reply in kind to the esoteric character of the Gnostic nomenclature.

29. The "him" of 2:3 refers to God, not Christ.

30. Law, op. cit., p. 211.

31. Matthew 5:19 undoubtedly refers to specific commandments given by Jesus, but they involve a proper attitude which obeys the spirit of them. They are not legalistic procedures laid down as in the Torah. Note that Jesus tells the disciples that their righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and pharisees, Mt. 5:20.

32. Bultmann, op. cit., p. 711.

33. Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 50. "Idea of a continuous growth . . . an advance to maturity."

34. $\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ is probably a subjective genitive; i.e. it refers to God's love for man.

35. Brooke, op. cit., p. 117.

36. Cf. Nygren's Agape and Eros.

37. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 844. "The single point to note concerning the aorist in those examples where we use 'have' is that the Greeks did not care to use the perfect." Cf. Luke 5:32 and Matthew 9:13 which are "just two ways of regarding the same act." This "is different from saying that the aorist is used for the present tense."

38. Westcott, op. cit., p. 148.

39. Law, op. cit., p. 366. "The aorist gathers to one point the whole extent of the failure to perceive what God is (Cf. John 17:25)." Therefore, it is equivalent to "has never known God."

40. This is not the same as Westcott who looks for a specific observable incident such as Baptism. God's "wind" blows where it wills and how many people who recognize themselves as Christians can point to a definite second on a particular day and say, "This is when the Spirit of God seized me?"

41. Brooke, op. cit., p. 118.

42. George B. Stevens, The Johannine Theology, p. 67. "The knowledge of God is so blended with the idea of being begotten of God as to make it clear that this knowledge is grounded in a new direction of the will and affections."

43. The verb $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota\upsilon$ is found seven times in I John. In each instance the writer refers to an intellectual cognition of some fact. Five times (5:1,5,10,13; 3:23) John speaks of believing that Jesus is the Christ, or believing in the Son of God. In 4:16 there is also an indirect reference to the Incarnation, because it is through the Incarnation (Cf. 4:15) that we know God loves us. Verse 4:1 involves a warning not to accept intellectually everything that the false prophets have to say. Even the single Johannine use of the substantive $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ in 5:4 refers to the belief that Jesus is the Son of God (5:5). It is thus apparent that John uses the words faith and believe to indicate an intellectual acceptance of certain facts; usually that Jesus of Nazareth was God Incarnate. When the writer uses know, it is to indicate a soteriological relationship between God and man. A person indicates that he has been born of God and knows God when he testifies to the belief that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and is the Son of God. Cf. Chapter VI, pp. 170f for a discussion of $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota\upsilon$.

44. In John 15f the writer has in mind opposition from the Jews, an opposition apparently absent in I John. When John uses language of the Hellenistic Age in the Fourth Gospel, it is due to a desire to communicate more effectively with his readers who are non-Christians. But in I John he is writing to Christians and he uses some of the contemporary terminology being employed by Gnostics in order to illustrate its false religious usage.

45. W. F. Howard, Christianity According to St. John, p. 168. "Knowledge of God depends upon moral affinity with Him."

46. Brooke, op. cit., p. 87. Knowing stresses "subsequent subjective apprehension of what is grasped in the vision."

47. Cf. Appendix A.

48. The aorist may be taken with the force of an English perfect, "has not known Him." There may even be a subtle reference to the lack of a rebirth experience. It is improbable that the aorist alludes to the refusal to recognize Jesus Christ for who He was, because: (1) John never speaks of knowing Christ apart from the Father, and (2) God the Father is the center of discussion. The Incarnation cannot be omitted of course, for it is only through Jesus Christ, the Son, that one can have fellowship with God the Father. But here the emphasis is on "fellowship" and not "Incarnation" (Cf. 3:2 "we shall be like Him" where the pronoun does refer to Christ and the likeness is in the fellowship with the Father).

49. Dodd, op. cit., p. 100.

50. Ibid., p. 102.

51. The normal use is ἐν τούτῳ as in 2:3. The phrase ἐκ τούτου is found only here in the First Epistle and just twice in the Fourth Gospel, 6:22 and 19:12. It means, "now because of all these various or different reasons . . ." and not "here is one test for ascertaining something." The latter would be ἐν τούτῳ. Therefore, the ἐκ τούτου of 4:6 refers to 4:1-6.

52. It is much more likely that "the Spirit of God" in 4:2 and "His own Spirit" in 4:13 refer to the Person of the Holy Spirit, because His presence is seen in direct testimony to Jesus as the Incarnate Son of God. It should also be observed that "the spirit of error" is found only here in the New Testament, although "the seven spirits of error" have an important place in "The Testaments of the XII Patriarchs" (135-103 B.C.).

CHAPTER VIII

THE INCARNATION

I. BACKGROUND OF THE TITLE: "SON OF GOD"

Jesus is the Son of God. The writer of I John is clearly insistent on this truth throughout his letter. The title, "Son of God," is applied to Jesus 23 times in the First Epistle (more than all the Pauline epistles) and about 30 times in the Fourth Gospel.

If the major theme of this letter is fellowship with God (Eternal Life), then the chief criterion of such fellowship is that one believe in the Incarnation; that one believe that Jesus is the Son of God. To believe less than this is to be less than a Christian. The man Jesus, who was reticent to speak of Himself as the Son of God (reflected in the infrequent use of the title in the Synoptics), was hailed by the early Church as one who enjoyed a unique relationship with the Father; one who was indeed the Son of God. An adumbration of this later recognition is the dramatic climax in the Markan report of the Crucifixion when the Centurion proclaims Jesus to be a Son of God; Mk. 15:39.

What is meant by this title, Son of God? What is its background and how does it happen to find its way into the First Epistle of John? Some, such as Rudolph Bultmann, believe that its usage and meaning can be traced back to a Hellenistic environment. And what of the oriental and Jewish background of this designation which is applied so liberally to Jesus in the Johannine literature?¹

The appellation is not unheard of in ancient oriental religions. The kings and rulers were thought to be descended in a metaphysical way from the gods. Such countries as Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria held to this belief.

Within the Hellenistic milieu the concept of "the son of God" was not limited solely to the rulers and those with regal authority. In the Greek world there were those who believed themselves to be possessed of a kind of divine power so that they might work miracles. These miracle workers referred to themselves as "sons of God." Even in the New Testament period many such Hellenistic wonder workers went about applying this designation to themselves.

Bultmann, in agreement with Bousset, thinks that the title, Son of God,

can be traced back neither to Jesus himself, nor to the original Palestinian Church, but only to Hellenistic Christianity, which accepted the general meaning of the concept in the Hellenistic environment.²

We are in complete agreement with Oscar Cullmann when he says,

The Hellenistic concept is so deeply rooted in polytheistic thought that it can hardly be transferred to a monotheistic framework. It lacks Jesus' extremely intense consciousness of complete, unique unity of will with the one God in executing the divine linear plan of salvation. In the mystery religions, too, in which the initiate can become a 'son of God,' we find ourselves on a quite different level from that of the New Testament.³

It is when we enter the realm of Judaism and the Old Testament that we find ourselves in that area from which Jesus must have drawn the great inspiration for His self-designation, "Son of God." The Old Testament makes use of this expression in three ways. In passages such as Exodus 4:22, Hosea 11:1, Isaiah 1:2; 30:1, the title "Son of

God" is applied to the entire community of Israel. Elsewhere, such as in II Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:7, it is the kings who are so called. And finally, persons with a special commission from God, such as angels (and perhaps even the Messiah, although this is less certain), are called "sons of God;" e.g. Genesis 2:6; Job 1:6; 2:1.

The Old Testament and Jewish concept of the Son of God is essentially characterized, not by the gift of a particular power, nor by a substantial relationship with God by virtue of divine conception; but by the idea of election to participation in divine work through the execution of a particular commission, and by the idea of strict obedience to the God who elects.⁴

When we turn to the Synoptic Gospels, we see that Jesus is characterized as the Son of God, not because He is a miracle worker (which would indicate an Hellenistic origin of the designation), but precisely because He is obedient to the task delineated for Him by the Father: that of being the Suffering Servant.

Did the Synoptists and the early Church derive this title from the Old Testament conception of the Messiah? It is highly doubtful since (as we mentioned above) there is no proof that the Jews ever recognized an identity between the Messianic and Son of God concepts. Then from whence came the designation? The only obvious answer must be that Jesus called Himself by this name. Gullmann aptly points out that Jesus probably referred to Himself in this way only seldom and possibly reluctantly.⁵

In the First Epistle of John, the title Son of God is used in a sense not different from that of the rest of the New Testament. It has reference to Jesus' Person: He is in a unique relationship with the Father (one of Eternal Life, or Fellowship-in-Union) having a will

that is in complete unity with that of the Father. The title also has reference to Jesus' Work: revealing the love-relationship which is in the Godhead and offering this selfsame relationship to men through His conquest of Sin and His advocacy before the Father.

The one important designation for Jesus in I John is Son of God. The title Christ is used as a proper name, probably reflecting a later date in writing than much of the New Testament literature. The only passages where Christ is not used as a proper name are 5:1 and 2:22. But both of these exceptions are closely juxtaposed with the title Son of God, indicating that for the writer there is no distinction intended. Notice the flow of thought in 5:1ff: "Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God . . . Whatever is born of God overcomes the world . . . Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" In 2:22 the juxtaposition is even more evident: "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ: This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son."

Let us emphasize again, that with the exception of 5:1 and 2:22 (which as we have seen are not really exceptions), the major designation used by John in his First Epistle to refer to the Incarnation is Son of God.

The reason for this is quite clear. The unique spiritual relationship between the Father and the Son is an archetype of the relationship that exists between God and those whom He has called. Christians can be spoken of as "children of God" only because first of all there is one who is the "Son of God." Christians are "children"

only in so far as they possess a relationship of faith to the Incarnate Son, Cf. John 1:12.⁶

This is clearly seen in the First Epistle by the parallel way in which the children of God and the Son of God are spoken of. John shows the dependency of the "children" upon the "Son" when he says, "as he is so are we in this world" (4:17), and, "We know that any one born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him. . . ." (5:18).

"And every one who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure" (3:3).

"No one born of God commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God" (3:9), and, ". . . in Him there is no sin" (3:5b).

". . . our fellowship is with the Father" (1:3), and "we . . . proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father" (1:2). And, "God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (5:11).

"I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one" (2:13b), and, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (3:8b).

"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (3:16).

John believes that this archetypal relationship will carry on even into the eschaton. "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (3:2).

And thus, Christians can be children of God only because there

is a Son. Because of who He is, the children are pure, sinless, in union with God, victorious over evil, sacrificial in love, and given confidence for the Judgment.

II. GOD'S COMMANDMENT TO BELIEVE IN THE INCARNATION

(3:23) And this is His commandment, that we believe (aorist subj.) [in] the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another as He gave commandment to us.

God Himself has commanded the called-out-ones to believe that Jesus is indeed the Incarnate Son of God. The pre-existent Son, through whom and by whom all things were made, cannot be conceived of apart from the man Jesus. This Man is in a unique relationship with God. Men are called upon to yield their lives to this One who is the Son of God become visible to man.

But 3:23 goes on to add yet another part to God's commandment; for we do not have two commandments here, only one. God commands that His children love one another as a result of their belief in the Incarnation. If such love is missing, then there is evidently no belief in the Incarnation for these two aspects of a Christian's life can never be viewed apart from each other.

This is the first mention in the Epistle of *πιστεύειν*. Westcott explains that the subjunctive aorist shows that, "the decisive act of faith is treated as the foundation of the abiding work of love.⁷ John is stressing that faith must be the basis of a Christian life out of which flows brotherly love. Faith (i.e. the giving of one's self to God by acknowledging what He has done for man through the Incarnation)

and works of love are inseparable.

The first use of commandment in 3:23 probably does not refer to any particular precept to be found in the Scriptures. Its closest equivalent is *ἀγάπη* in John 6:40. God's will for man involves both faith and love. But John's second use of commandment undoubtedly has reference to John 13:34 and Jesus' specific injunction to "love one another, even as I have loved you."

Only the divine Son gives the command of brotherly love, and therefore the practice of this new command rests upon a conviction that Jesus is the Son of God; the inference is, that theories about a spiritual Jesus who was not truly incarnate, offer no basis for such brotherly love as the Church recognizes.⁸

III. GOD'S WITNESS TO THE INCARNATION

By Spirit, Water and Blood

(5:6) This is the One who came [by means of] through water and blood [and Spirit], Jesus Christ; not by [with, in] the water only, but by [with, in] the water and by [with, in] the blood; (5:7) and the Spirit is (He who) that which bears witness, because the Spirit is the Truth. (5:8) For they who witness are three, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three are unto the one (agree as one).

God never sends forth His Word without providing a witness to it. This is likewise true when the Word becomes Incarnate. Verses 5:6,7,8 explain that God's witness to the Incarnation is found in the Spirit, water and blood. That this witness is in reference to an historical event is emphasized in John's use of the full title "Jesus Christ." When this appellation is used, the full historical manhood

of the Son of God is brought into view.

The four likeliest interpretations of "water" and "blood" of 5:6 are these: (1) the baptism and death of Jesus; (2) the water and blood that flowed from Jesus' side at the time of His Crucifixion (John 19:34): Augustine held this view; (3) the symbol of purification and redemption; (4) the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Before explaining why we believe that the first interpretation is correct, let us see why the others are not acceptable. It is often said that only here and John 19:34 are water and blood placed in grammatical proximity. But this is not true; Cf. Leviticus 14:51-52 and Hebrews 9:19. Besides, in I John 5:6 it is the "blood" which is emphasized whereas in John 19:34 it is clearly evident that it is the "water" that is the unusual.⁹

To say that water and blood refer to purification and redemption respectively is to allegorize. As A. E. Brooke points out, allegorizing is not supported by the context.

If the Sacraments are referred to, then the author would probably have said *ὁ ἐρχόμενος* instead of *ὁ ἐλθών*. The latter refers to a definite historical act. It should be noted further that nowhere in the New Testament is "blood" used alone to refer to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Tertullian makes a vain attempt to show that John means to combine all these meanings. In De Baptismo XVI, he writes,

He had come by means of water and blood, just as John had written; that He might be baptized by the water, glorified by the blood; to make us in like manner called by water, chosen by blood. These two baptisms He sent out from the wound in His

pierced side, in order that they who believed in His blood might be bathed in the water; they who had been bathed in the water might likewise drink the blood.¹⁰

Westcott also follows in the train of Tertullian by taking the words water and blood of 5:6 and attempting to elicit historical and symbolical meanings from them. This is to extract more than the writer originally intended.

When John says "the One who came" in 5:6, there is good reason to believe that he is clearly referring to the concept of Christ's Messianic mission. This mission was officially begun when Jesus Christ received the power of the Spirit and identified Himself with all of humanity by receiving baptism (for remission of sins) by John in the Jordan. Now, being at-one with man, He obediently carried forth the message of His Father to the end that man might possess an at-one-ment with God. This reconciliation was consummated in the historical acts of being crucified and raised from the dead. Christ's complete identification with men enabled them to be identified with Him through faith and to die to Sin and be raised to Eternal Life. It can thus be seen clearly that God's soteriological purpose cannot be severed from the historical acts of Jesus' Baptism and death on the Cross.

Such doctrine cuts squarely across the docetic beliefs of many of the Gnostics, particularly the Cerinthians who claimed that the aeon Christ entered Jesus at His Baptism and then departed before His Passion.

John first uses $\delta\iota\alpha$ then $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ in 5:6 when speaking of how Jesus came. Brooke maintains that the difference between the two is not clear while Robert Law concludes that they mean about the same

thing. To go beyond the conclusions of these two scholars is to base weak conjectures on arbitrary judgments. We would only point out that the same problem is encountered in Hebrews 9:12 and 9:25.¹¹

In 5:7 John says that God has sent forth His Holy Spirit to witness to the fact that the man Jesus is the Son of God whose work of atonement involved Baptism and the Cross.¹² The Holy Spirit is a witness to the Incarnation of God's Word. "Spirit" undoubtedly refers to the Holy Spirit who is present now, and not just the Spirit who anointed Jesus at His Baptism as Bede maintains. It is the nature and office of the Holy Spirit to witness to the work of the Father in the Son, John 15:26, just as it is the nature and office of the Son to reveal the Father. Therefore ^{''}ὅτι in 5:7 should be translated "because" rather than "that." The Spirit never witnesses concerning the Spirit. The witness of the Spirit is always in connection with the Son because the Spirit is the truth.¹³

Both Weiss and Law believe that 5:7 proves the personality of the Holy Spirit. Such an interpretation is to read 20th century theology into a second century writing. This is not to say that John did not believe that the Holy Spirit is "He" and not "it." But this particular verse provides no proof of such a concept. In the New Testament when the definite article is used with both subject and predicate, as it is in 5:7, there is a connotation of identity. This means that Spirit is made the equivalent of a non-personal moral virtue. The Holy Spirit's personification is clear only where He is definitely linked with the Christ: e.g. John 15:26. I John 5:7 must be read in

the light of such a verse, but by itself it proves nothing concerning the personality of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

Robert Law and others maintain that the masculine participle of 5:8, "they who witness," indicates the personality of the Spirit. However, this participle also refers to the water and the blood and the writer has no reason to personalize them. Robert Law recognizes this point but he is willing to concede that the water and the blood are personalized.¹⁵ On the other hand, Huther believes that the masculine gender is used because the three "are concrete witnesses."¹⁶

It is very unlikely that the number three in 5:8 has any reference to the Trinity. Many who agree with this feel nevertheless that there is a reference to the Jewish Law, e.g. Deut. 19:15.¹⁷ But this letter is successful in not revealing explicitly its Jewish background (with the exception, of course, of the Cain and Abel reference in 3:12ff).

The present participle, "they who witness," indicates a present continuing act of witnessing. Because of this, many believe that John is referring to the Sacraments. However, if the water and the blood refer to historical acts in 5:6 there is no reason to believe that they would suddenly revert to a different connotation in 5:8. There is an even more important reason. Only an act of God can be used by Himself to witness to Himself. The Holy Spirit of God continually testifies to men of the present efficacy of the Baptism and Crucifixion of Jesus. Thus it is that the Spirit, Baptism and the Crucifixion are ever-present witnesses of God's redemptive love in His Son. The Sacraments cannot

be witnesses for they are but dramatic portrayals through which God points to the historic act of the Incarnation and in which His grace is brought to bear on human lives. God certainly is present in the Sacraments, but He is so only because He first was present in the Son.

It is not to be deduced from the present [tense] that [water and blood] are things at present still existing, and hence the Sacraments, for by means of the witness of the Spirit the whole redemptive life of Christ is permanently present, so that the baptism and death of Jesus--although belonging to the past--prove Him constantly to be the Messiah who makes atonement for the world.¹⁸

Verses 5:6-8 may be thus paraphrased: "This is the one who came to fulfill His Messianic mission by means of Baptism and Crucifixion, Jesus the Son of God. Not in the realm of the water only, but in the realms of water and the blood. And the Spirit is He who shows all this to be true because the Spirit is the Truth. This witnessing of the Spirit causes us to see today how two historical acts of yesterday are still relevant with their testimony:¹⁹ (1) the anointing by God of Jesus His Son in Baptism at the beginning of His active ministry; (2) the death of Jesus on the Cross as the Suffering Servant. The Spirit, Baptism and Crucifixion all testify that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

The above interpretation is clearly in accord with the concept that John is desirous of refuting the incipient Gnosticism with its docetic tendency. Wherever possible, the writer points to historical acts of God in the affairs of men. The greatest of these acts occur in the Baptism and Death of His Son, Jesus Christ. These acts, along with the Holy Spirit who ever makes them meaningful, are God's own witnesses to the Incarnation.

God's witness to the Incarnation is thus a spiritual witness. Man's comprehension of the initiative taken by God in reconciling man to Himself can only come about through an inward perception. God's grace is understood and accepted only by a sensitized spirit. It is not accomplished solely through reason and/or initiatory rites.

Is Within Man

(5:9) If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for (because) this is the witness of God, that He has witnessed concerning His Son. (5:10) He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in him(self). He who does not believe (in) God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness which God has witnessed on behalf of His Son.

In 5:9 John says, "In everyday life we receive the testimony of men concerning worldly things. How much greater is God's witness which concerns His Son." In other words, the witness of men is of the world, whereas the witness of God is in the realm of the "heavenly places."

With the acceptance of this interpretation, it must be conceded that *ἐν* of 5:9b does not refer to the preceding water, blood and Spirit. Rather, it looks forward to the next clause which explains what the witness concerns, but not what its contents are. The exact contents of God's witness is not stated till 5:11. In 5:9 John is merely trying to show why God's testimony is greater than man's (the first *ὅτι* being a causal particle). God's testimony involves the Incarnation of the Son of God whose redemptive mission is clearly revealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and the Passion. No testimony

given by man, regardless of the occasion, can possibly approach this testimony by God.²⁰

Although it is readily recognized that there is no systematic doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament, we have within the short compass of 5:9 adequate evidence of the Trinity. The witness that is within man is a trinitarian witness. The Father testifies to the Son by means of the Spirit. This is far more reliable from the standpoint of doctrine than trying to make the word "three" in 5:8 refer to the Trinity.

There is a maxim that says, "Die Wahrheit bezeugt nur sich selber und nicht ihren Autor." But verse 5:9 shows that Truth testifies not only to itself but also to its author when God is both Author and Truth. God testifies to Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the message of the Incarnation.²¹

Robert Law and others feel that when men respond positively to God's witness and thus have the testimony in themselves (5:10a), that this denotes a moral regeneration. That such a regeneration will result cannot be denied. But it is highly doubtful whether the writer has moral regeneration uppermost in mind. Rather, reference is made here to the work of the Spirit within man as He opens the believer's eyes to the meaning of the Incarnation through the historic acts of Baptism and death on the Cross.

The false prophets must perforce be placed in the category of those who make God a liar, for they deny the Incarnation. They have boasted of secret knowledge, highly prized and carefully guarded, but

the plain facts are that the Word of God, the God whom they claim to know intimately, finds no lodging within them. They could never have sung truthfully such a hymn as:

"In joy of inward peace, or sense
Of sorrow over sin,
He is His own best evidence;
His witness is within."²²

IV. GOD'S PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION

That We Might Have Life

(4:9) By this the love of God was made visible in [among] us, that God has sent His only Son into the world in order that we might live through Him.

This verse is very reminiscent of John 3:16. Both I John 4:9 and John 3:16 proclaim the fact that God's love for man is seen in the Incarnation.

The ἐφανερώσθαι keeps the full force of the aorist and thus refers to a certain time, that is, the time of the Son's incarnation.

The word μονογενής as applied to Jesus Christ is found only in the Johannine literature in the New Testament. It connotes the idea of "only one of its kind."

[The word] is employed to add emphasis to the idea of Christ's unique relation to God as the perfect object of the divine love and the perfect representative of the divine will.²³

The Son is unique in that He alone possesses perfect fellowship with the Father. The relationship of love is only perfected between the Father and the Son. In fact, "μονογενής is . . . not essentially different from ἕνα πνεῦμα, especially since both words

occur as translations of $\tau \tau / \tau \tau$.²⁴

Man's fellowship with his Heavenly Father can only come about because of spiritual union with the Son who has perfect fellowship with the Father. Faith in the Son thus results in Eternal Life. The Son of God became Incarnate in Jesus Christ to the end that man might possess this abundant life. In this redemptive act, God's great love for man took visible form.

To Expiate Our Sins

(4:10) In this is love, not that we [loved] have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son (as) expiation on account of our sins.

Verse 4:10 appears to parallel 4:9. Love's nature is spoken of and we see it involves the very nature of God. Man can know what love is only because God's love for man has taken the form of Incarnation. If John is actually maintaining a parallel thought, then the final clause of 4:10 is an explication of how men have life through Christ, referred to in 4:9b.

Eternal Life is possible only because the Son has Himself been the expiation for the sins of the world. And thus we find ourselves in the realm of atonement. Howard may be correct when he says that, "there is no clear doctrine of the Atonement in any of the Johannine writings,"²⁵ but that doctrinal portion which is present is quite clear. John is very explicit in declaring that it is through Christ's sacrificial death that we are reconciled to God. The giving up of His life has made Fellowship-in-Union possible.²⁶

In 4:10 the words "sent His Son" refer to the entire life of

Jesus, but especially His death and Resurrection. This act, climaxing the Messianic mission, nullifies man's sins so that man, now possessing the possibility of forgiveness and cleansing, may approach God, not because of his own goodness, but through the righteousness of the Son who was obedient even unto death.

The word expiation²⁷ serves to remind us that God's wrath is active against all unrighteousness, but that His forgiving love is seen in the sending of Christ His Son.

To Save The World

(4:14) And we have looked upon and we testify that the Father has sent the Son (as) Savior of the world.

God has purposed in the Incarnation to give to man eternal life, to expiate his sins, and now in 4:14 we find that there is still another purpose, to save the world.²⁸

In order for this verse to be understood properly, it must be determined whether the writer has in mind the Apostles, the writer who represents the Church, or the Church when he uses *ἡμεῖς*.

The *ἡμεῖς* *τεθεωμεθα* probably refers to the later Church and its spiritual vision rather than to the eye-witness of the Apostles who saw Jesus Christ in the flesh. This is the same verb used in 1:1 only here it is an intensive present perfect.²⁹ It is very unlikely that this verb points to an historical appearance.

One reason for this is that when the writer says "the Father has sent the Son" he is not alluding to a definite historical appearance as he does in 4:10. Rather, we have here a reference to

Christ's permanent presence in the world, the same presence referred to in 4:9.

To substantiate further the view that the author is referring to the Church rather than immediate eye-witnesses it should be noticed that the same word *ἐκκλησία* is used in 4:16 to mean the Church.

Perhaps the main reason for understanding the writer to be designating the Church and not the Apostles contemporary with Jesus is found in the context. John is making every effort to explain that it is through God's Spirit that testimony to Christ is given. The Advocate was not given by God while the Bridegroom was still with His followers, but rather only after He had been glorified. This letter is written in that period of the early Church when the Spirit has now come (Cf. 4:3) and enables men, not only to testify to Christ, but also to "see" Him.

"Savior" is found only here in 4:14 and in John 3:17 and 4:42 in the Johannine literature. In this instance it may be either taken in apposition and interpreted "as the Savior" or as expressing the object with the interpretation, "to be the Savior." The former is preferred because it is more consistent with the writer's view that the Son is pre-existent with the Father and became incarnate in Jesus with a mission of salvation already inherent in His office.

John does not attempt to go into detail concerning the meaning of "Savior of the world." We can only refer to other places in the letter for amplification where it is stated that the Son of God was the expiation for our sins, that through Him we have eternal life, that He has defeated the evil one, and that He has revealed the true God.³⁰

Oscar Cullmann says that the concept of atonement is present in 4:14. He draws this conclusion on the basis of investigating other New Testament passages, e.g. Phil. 2:9; Mt. 1:21 etc. There is no reason to dispute this judgment.³¹

To Reveal The True God

(5:20) And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given to us understanding, [in order] that we [may] know the True One; and we are in the True One, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. (5:21) Little children, guard yourselves from false gods.

There is yet another purpose for God's incarnation in Jesus Christ. According to I John 5:20, the Son has come into the world (the perfect tense of "has come" indicates that He is still present) so that men might be enabled to recognize and have fellowship with the one true God. Here is the real God as opposed to the false gods which do not exist. "The God who fulfils the highest conception of Godhead can only be known through the faculty of discernment given to men by his own Son, by means of His historic appearance on earth."³²

G. H. Dodd believes that we have here a use of Platonic terms. "The revelation of God which they found in Jesus Christ was a revelation of the Real, over against the illusions of idolatry."³³ If this is a Platonic reference, and it cannot be proved one way or the other, then it must be an indirect reference. For Platonism would say that the concrete individual of Jesus Christ is but the reflection or copy of the ultimate Reality. In this sense it would be He who is the illusion.

It may be that John is deliberately re-fashioning Platonic terms to suit his own purposes. "Truth is not a correct conception of God to be apprehended by the intellect so much as a revelation of reality to be received in a personal relationship."³⁴

The "idols" referred to in 5:21 are probably not the material heathen objects of worship, since the author has nowhere else in his Epistle alluded to them. Rather, these idols are those false concepts of God, especially such concepts held by the Gnostic antichrists, which indicate that He may be known in any other way except through His Son, Jesus Christ (Cf. Col. 3:5 and Ephesians 5:5 where idolatry is also given a broader meaning). Haupt says "God revealed in Christ is alone the true God, all else is an εἰδωλόν."³⁵

The one true God has witnessed by the Holy Spirit to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son become flesh. False teachers have gone from the Church and now declare a god reached intellectually through intermediary aeons and who has no unique connection with Jesus. This is not God, says the writer, this is an idol. The whole idea of the Epistle is to raise high for all to see the one true God and the resultant life issuing from fellowship with Him. The writer ends his letter by saying, if you have not presented your bodies a living sacrifice to this God, your worship is being diverted to an idol, that which usurps the real God's place. And so he concludes with the thought, "Whatever you do, watch out! Keep up your guard, so that you do not fall into such a trap!"³⁶

V. THE STATUS OF HIM WHO BELIEVES IN THE INCARNATION

He Is A Child of God

(5:1) Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and every one who loves the One who gave birth [bore] loves the one who has been born of Him.

And now, what about the person who believes in the Incarnation? What does the writer have to say about him? One thing that he asserts is that the person "who believes that Jesus is the Christ," 5:1, is a child of God; i.e. he "has been born of God." We must not misunderstand John to say that when any one declares that he believes in the Incarnation, he is at that moment made a child of God. It is rather the other way around. A child of God gives evidence of the fact that he enjoys the gift of the Divine birth by proclaiming his belief in the Incarnation.

This statement by John completely undercuts the position of the Gnostics. They claimed to be born of God and yet they were at the same time denying the Incarnation.³⁷ To the writer of this Epistle, such a denial is sufficient proof that no spiritual birth has occurred; it is evidence that the antichrists have no right to boast of a relationship with God which is either filial or metaphysical.

"The Christ" is used in 5:1 as an appellative and not as a proper name.³⁸ John uses the title in much the same way that he uses "the Son of God" (the transposition of titles in 5:5 indicates equivalence). The chief difference being that when "the Christ" is used, emphasis is placed upon God's anointing of Jesus for a specific

mission and declaring Him to be equipped with divine power for the accomplishment of that task. In short, when the two titles are found in close association, "Christ" refers to His mission; "Son" refers to His nature by reason of a unique relationship with the Father.

The phrase "every one who believes" refers to something more than intellectual assent. There is involved a spiritual relationship between the believer and the Christ. C. H. Dodd says that believing in Him, "means to have confidence in [Jesus] based upon an intellectual acceptance of the claims made for his person."³⁹ It might be better to say that it means an intellectual acceptance of the claims made for His person based upon a spiritual relationship.

He Has Fellowship With God

(4:15) If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him and He in God. (4:16a) And we have (come to know) known and have believed the love which God has in (for) us. (2:23) He (no one) who disowns the Son does not have (has) the Father. He who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

Man's fellowship with God is at the heart of everything John has to say in this letter. In 4:15,16a; 2:23 John is saying that he who believes in the Incarnate Son enjoys the status of being in fellowship with God. He speaks of God abiding in man and man abiding in God. Here again in the background of the author's thinking are the antichrists who denied that Jesus was the Son of God, but nevertheless maintained that they were in union with God.

The writer of the letter does not mean to imply that a confession

of faith will be rewarded with the gift of the Spirit. Stevens illustrates such a misunderstanding when he says, "The Apostle is clearly speaking of a faith which is the condition of the new spiritual birth."⁴⁰ Man's faith is not the "condition," but rather the evidence of the spiritual birth. Because the Gnostics fail to confess Jesus as the Son of God, they therefore lack the evidence of being possessed of the Holy Spirit. Only he whose faith is centered in the One who is both Deity and Man may be referred to as having fellowship with God.

The heavy emphasis placed by John throughout his letter upon man's relationship to God, and the Son's relationship to the Father has led McGiffert to an erroneous conclusion. He says,

The fact upon which faith lays hold [for John] is not Christ's work for the sinner [as for Paul], but Christ's relation to God, which makes Him a manifestation of the Father. [Thus faith] tended to become more of an intellectual act and to lose something of its religious significance.⁴¹

It must be clearly understood that this is a very small letter and that no full theology presented in a systematic order was intended nor preferred. However, there are enough indications to show that John is fully aware of Christ's work for the sinner and the need for the sinner to be aware of that work: 1:7-9; 3:16; 4:10; 5:6. John's particular emphasis on who Jesus is comes about because of the denial by the false prophets that He is the Son of God. But this does not perforce mean that faith for John has lost anything of its religious significance by the ignoring of what Jesus did. For John it would be impossible for anyone to confess Jesus as the Son of God and at the same time to minimize the Messianic mission which the Son was sent to

perform. Believing in the Incarnate Son is tantamount to acknowledging His salvation-work among men. Neither side of the equation is minimized in I John. But the person of Christ is emphasized. This stress on the intellectual side of faith is very natural when one considers that the false prophets being refuted maintained that their salvation came about through an esoteric knowledge of God.

In 4:16a "we know" probably refers back to 4:14 where it is said that "the Father has sent His Son." The love of God is thus discerned in the Incarnation. The "we believe" of 4:16a refers to 4:15 and the confessing of Jesus as the Son of God. The "know" points to God's act, and "believe" has reference to man's response to that act.

We must be careful not to interpret 4:16a as a statement that knowledge must precede faith. This is no more the case than in John 6:69 where the order is reversed, faith and knowledge. On the one hand, belief or faith is not the result of a mystical, visionary trance but rather accompanies an increasing understanding of God's purposive works. On the other hand, the growing knowledge of God's mighty acts in history (the use of know in 4:16a is in the sense of understanding, not in the unique Johannine usage of "fellowship") accompanies belief or faith, if such knowledge is to result in spiritual discernment and not merely be an academic rendering of events. In one combined action, knowledge provides the light, however small, which faith focuses. This single action is the work of God.⁴²

John uses various expressions to signify fellowship between man and God. One such expression found in 4:15 is "abiding in." Another

one is found in 2:23 where the author speaks of the person who "has the Father." Moffatt's interpretation of this expression as meaning "to possess the Father" cannot be accepted. Westcott's explanation is more preferable: "lives in conscious communion with Him." This is a matter of relationship, not spiritual acquisition.

In 2:23 John does not go into any details regarding what he means by acknowledging or confessing the Son, but 4:15 indicates that involved in such a confession is the recognition that Jesus is the Son of God. A disciple testifies to the reality of the Incarnation. Oscar Gullmann, in speaking of 4:15, says "the writer . . . is clearly quoting here an ancient creed of the Church. . . . It seems to epitomize for him the perfect expression of all confession."⁴³

If anyone denies the existence of the Son, i.e. that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, then it is impossible for that person to have an intimate spiritual relationship with the Father, because God the Father only reveals Himself through God the Son. This revelation is made perfect, not in nature, nor in the ceaseless cycle of meaningless events in the course of history, but through the Incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth. This is the focal point of Heilsgeschichte.

Haupt correctly points out that the heretics who are in the mind of John throughout the writing of this letter, were in essence denying the trinitarian God, for the Gnostics did not say that another besides Jesus was the Son of God. They denied the very existence of the Son. But having said this, we cannot go on to say that the false prophets were actually denying the absolute being of God. The real

point in question stems from the Gnostic belief in the hierarchical system of semi-divine intermediaries between man and God. John maintains that such a belief forces God to remain transcendent and incapable of having a union-relationship with man. This relation of fellowship is made possible only through one intermediary and that One is the Son through whom the Father has revealed Himself.

Any teaching which denied the reality of the Incarnation, either by relieving the Son of God of the actual suffering of the sacrifice of love upon the cross, or else by refusing to him the relationship which alone gives validity to his claim to reveal the Father, is ultimately destructive of the Christian way of life.⁴⁴

It is interesting to note that in 2:23 we have a similarity to Matthew 10:32-33 due to the same two verbs being used: "deny" or "disown" and "acknowledge" or "confess." G. H. Dodd believes, and there is no reason to doubt this, that this shows the author "basing himself upon the common tradition of early Christianity; incorporating the teaching of Jesus Himself."⁴⁵

He Overcomes The World

(5:5) And who is the one who conquers the world if not the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

A person who believes in the Incarnation is a child of God, has fellowship with God and overcomes the world.⁴⁶ This victory has not been wrought personally by each Christian, but rather belongs to him because of his faith in Christ, who is the real Victor. "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:57).⁴⁷

John moves from the abstract idea of God as the source of victorious power in 5:4 (born of God) through the means by which this power is actively utilized (faith), and then in 5:5 comes to the very personal level which summarizes the preceding. The present tense of "conquers" indicates the Christian's day by day living experience that is made victorious by (1) the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ the Son, and (2) man's intellectual and spiritual acceptance of the Incarnation.

As mentioned above, when John refers to Jesus as "Son of God" in 5:5, he means the same thing as when he speaks of "the Christ" in 5:1; Cf. 2:22 where Christ and Son are used interchangeably.

VI. THE INCARNATION REVEALS THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

(4:1) Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (2:18) Children, it is (the) last hour, and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen. Therefore we know that it is (the) last hour. (2:19) They went out from us but they were not (of) [from] us; for if they were (had been) (of) [from] us, they (would have) had (pluperfect) remained with us; but in order that they may be made known that all they are not (of) [from] us. (4:2) By this you know [know] the Spirit of God; every spirit which confesses Jesus (as) Christ come in (the) flesh is from God, (4:3) and every spirit which does not confess Jesus, is not from God; and this is the (spirit) of antichrist, which you have heard

that it [he] is coming, and now is already in the world. (2:22) Who is the liar if not the one who (falsely asserts) that "Jesus is not the Christ?"^(u) This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. (2:26) These things I wrote (write) to you about those who deceive you.

Just as definite statements can be made about the status of those who believe in the Incarnation, so it is possible to state that those who refuse to accept Jesus as Son of God in the flesh possess the spirit of antichrist. It is the Incarnation which has revealed that spirit.

In 4:1 John warns the Christians not to believe everything that they hear because much of it comes from unchristian hearts. Scholars are not agreed on the meaning of "spirits." Westcott defines the word as having reference to ambition, power, honor and knowledge. The simplest explanation would seem to be that "spirits" is the plural of the preceding "spirit." And "spirit" probably refers, not to the false prophets, but to Christians and non-Christians alike with heavy emphasis being placed on the spiritual source of inspiration. The false prophets (Cf. Mt. 24:24), if they are inspired, receive their inspiration from a source other than God (Cf. I John 3:8,10 where the devil is given as the source of spiritual evil). The major criterion for true Christian prophecy is that which is based on the recognition that God became incarnate in Jesus Christ.⁴⁸

Plummer believes that the "false prophets" of 4:1 include more than the antichrists mentioned in 2:18 who have left the Christian

fellowship. He says that also included are some who have never been Christian and others who are still in the Church professing to be members. However, since John is speaking to the Christian Church, reference is probably being made to 2:19 and the antichrists who have gone out from the Church.⁴⁹ As C. H. Dodd says, "The forerunners of second century Gnosticism have only just declared themselves and left the Church."⁵⁰ John probably uses the term "antichrist" in 2:18 because it was well known to his readers ("just as you heard that antichrist is coming") and because he feels that the designation is apt for those who oppose the Son of God by denying the Incarnation.⁵¹

When we ask the questions: where did the idea of the antichrist originate, and what does the writer mean when he uses it here, we must admit that there is no final answer. The expression is found in Scriptures only in I John 2:18,22; 4:3 and II John 7.

It is most likely that the idea springs from Jewish apocalyptic thought which in turn goes back to a Babylonian origin.⁵² The Jews originally looked upon the primeval monster as symbolizing all that opposed the God of Israel. This general opposition eventually became concentrated, in Jewish thinking, in one individual.

It was characteristic of Israelite thought to pass from the collective to the individual . . . and to represent the group by the single figure and then go on to treat this as a real individual. [So began the concepts of the Messiah, Son of Man, Suffering Servant.] . In the same way, it is not surprising that the hostility to the divine will and the divine kingdom should be concentrated in a single figure. [e.g. Gog, Ezek. 38f; King of Babylon, Isaiah 14; Antiochus Epiphanes ("little horn"), Daniel 7:8,25]⁵³

With the coming of Christ and the supreme revelation of God by

means of Incarnation, a new name is given to the force opposing God. Since the knowledge of God can no longer be separated from a knowledge of His Christ, the anti-God force is referred to an antichrist. The prototype of antichrist is found in Daniel in Antiochus Epiphanes. In "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" Beliar corresponds to the antichrist.⁵⁴

The expression antichrist is mentioned in "Ascension of Isaiah" (c. 175 A.D.), and in Revelation 19:11-21 the reference to the Beast denotes a collective antichrist. The Roman Empire and its emperor became the embodiment of the antichrist in opposing and deposing the Christ of God.

In the First Epistle it may be that John believes in one antichrist and thinks that the false prophets so possess his spirit that they are meant to herald his immediate appearance. However, he may be spiritualizing instead of condoning the current antichrist belief held by many Christians. Thus, instead of believing in one antichrist, John may be referring to the opposition to Christ that is found in the false teachers, and which announces the coming Judgment of the world by the Son of God.

In support of the latter concept, we should notice that the writer of this letter never indicates that he is thinking in terms of one person when he refers to the antichrist. In fact when we take the four verses in which the antichrist idea appears, we can only conclude that John is concerned more with an idea or principle of evil that finds its incarnation in all those who deny the Incarnation. John

is probably using an apocalyptic container to enclose the contents of spiritual truth.

The small word ^{1/}γσζ in 4:3 may provide an important clue to John's concept of antichrist. This word has no English or Germanic equivalent and cannot be translated perfectly. It has a sense of climax or clarity. The writer very likely has chosen it to mean that the antichrist which has long been expected is now clearly perceived in the characteristic actions of those denying the Incarnation. The climax is reached, not in any one person, but in many persons with attitudes of antichristian nature.

But again, we must repeat that we cannot be positive of John's thinking either one way or the other. A statement such as this by W. F. Howard is too strong for the evidence at hand, "The writer has abandoned all the mythical and apocalyptic conceptions that clustered round the antichrist legend."⁵⁵

The most we can say is that John has probably spiritualized the idea of antichrist and is not thinking in terms of an individual person such as the Apostle Paul may have in mind in II Thess. 2:3.⁵⁶

Verse 2:19 declares that these antichrists, the false prophets, "went out from us." John does not say whether they were excommunicated or left of their own accord. It may be that both manners of exit were involved. But if the method of their leaving is in doubt, the reason for their going out is crystal clear. They were apostate from the Christian faith because they refused to acknowledge God's Incarnation (Cf. *Infra* 4:2,3).

Such apostasy, says John, indicates that these false teachers never had been in intimate spiritual fellowship with Christians. If their source of fellowship and faith had been God, they would still be members of the Church.⁵⁷ The writer can be paraphrased, "If they had shared our fellowship with Christ and one another, they would have continued in that fellowship." John finds it difficult to believe that a true Christian ever becomes apostate. He can conceive of a falling away due to sin (1:8-10), but not a complete rupture of the fellowship established by Christ. This would seem to be as impossible as a person born of God committing sin (3:9).

When the antichrists leave the Church this is part of God's purpose to reveal the fact that they never have been participants in Christ's fellowship. John does not say that God causes them to defect, but rather that God uses the defection to reveal the true character of the antichrists.

C. H. Dodd, with others, maintains that this is part of God's design to demonstrate "that not all Church members are of us." "Formal membership is no guarantee that a man belongs to Christ and not to antichrist."⁵⁸ However, Westcott and Robertson point out that the separation of $\sigma\upsilon$ and $\pi\alpha\varsigma$ in the New Testament is best translated, "they all are not of us" (in the English idiom: "none is of us") rather than "not all are of us." Since John has been speaking of the antichrists, it would seem strange for him suddenly to change the subject of the verb $\epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\nu$ to make it refer to Church members.⁵⁹

In 4:2,3 the writer explicitly states that the denial of the

Incarnation is the distinguishing characteristic of the antichrists who have gone out from the Church.⁶⁰ Verse 4:2 may be interpreted in three ways: (1) "that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (which would be a direct refutation of Docetism); (2) "confesses Jesus-Christ-come-in-flesh" (3) "confesses Jesus (as) the Christ come in the flesh."

The last one of these three would appear to be preferable. It is coordinate with the following verse, 4:3, where "Jesus" stands alone as the object. The whole purpose of this section of the letter is to declare that the criterion of judgment and decision is what one believes about the Incarnation. Verse 4:2 is the equivalent of John's saying, "everyone who confesses Jesus (as the Son) come in the flesh." John puts this idea in similar terms a few verses farther on in 4:15. In commenting on the word Christ, Ramsay says,

It is to be remembered that "Christ" does not in the apostle's vocabulary mean the Messiah, but the Divine pre-existent personality of Jesus. It bears the same significance as "Son of God." The Gnostics meant by "Christ" the emanation from the Godhead, and the apostle takes up this sense of the word in its Christian significance.⁶¹

John has deliberately used the expression $\epsilon\upsilon(\sigma\alpha\rho\chi\iota)$ instead of $\epsilon\chi\sigma$ in 4:2 because the Gnostics (particularly the Cerinthians) would have agreed with the latter. As Robert Law says, John does not speak of one person in two natures but, "of one Person in two states, a pre-incarnate and an incarnate state of being."⁶²

In 4:3 the word "spirit" refers to the non-Christian who looks elsewhere than God for the source of his spiritual loyalties. The second use of "spirit" as found in the English translation does not occur in the original Greek. The literal reading of the Greek is,

"and this is the . . . of antichrist." The reader is probably meant to understand this phrase as describing the identifying attitude of those who gain spiritual generation from an evil source.⁶³

Verse 4:3 has an interesting alternate reading. Instead of "does not confess," the Vulgate (probably from Tertullian and Irenaeus) has "solvit," i.e. "severs" or "destroys," as a translation of $\lambda\upsilon\epsilon\epsilon$. As A. E. Brooke and B. F. Westcott say, this is probably a case of an early explanatory gloss eventually displacing the reading it was originally meant to explain. Scholars such as Haupt and Piper who believe that $\lambda\upsilon\epsilon\epsilon$ is correct, find that this theory helps to substantiate the position that Cerinthus and Cerinthianism is being specifically combated in this letter. The dissolution of Jesus is the separating of Him from the Christ.

However, even without accepting $\lambda\upsilon\epsilon\epsilon$, there is abundant evidence to show that John is placing heavy emphasis upon the validity of the Incarnation. The definite article before "Jesus" in 4:3 is one such piece of evidence. "The Jesus" in 4:3 refers back to the One who is "Christ come in flesh" in the preceding verse.

When one denies the Incarnation he is likewise denying very God Himself. John makes this quite clear in 2:22b. It is the nature of the Godhead that the Son reveals the Father. Whenever the writer of the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles uses "Father" to refer to God, he always uses it in close connection with "Son" or the equivalent, "Jesus Christ."

The liar (2:22a) is the antichrist who says that Jesus is not

the Christ and thus denies the Son. In denying the Son he is also denying the Father. The main emphasis here is on the lie of denying the Incarnation rather than on any particular person known as the Antichrist.

Christians believe that God is revealed in Christ whereas the Gnostics believe in an "absolute being" or "eternal Reason." This abstraction, says Dodd, "might be held to be mediated to the world by an 'emanation' or 'aeon' described as His 'Son,' or even as 'Christ.' The Gospel speaks of 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'"⁶⁴ John teaches that anyone who does not recognize Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, cannot possibly know the God who is Father, regardless of any esoteric knowledge of God they may claim to possess.

It is sometimes felt that the words "those who deceive" in 2:26 denote a certain degree of success on the part of the false teachers. However, the present participle merely shows conative action with no explanation implied concerning the goal achieved. Nevertheless, a good guess would be that some degree of success had been attained in subverting the minds of the Christians. If such had not been the case, this little letter may never have been written.⁶⁵

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER VIII

1. The following discussion makes use of the excellent research of Oscar Cullmann in Christology of the New Testament.

2. Oscar Cullmann, Christology of the New Testament, p. 271.

3. Ibid., p. 272.

4. Ibid., p. 275.

5. Ibid., p. 282.

6. The Apostle Paul speaks of Christians as sons, but he too sees that we are sons only because Jesus Christ is the unique Son. As Cullmann points out, this is the very opposite of W. Grundmann's thesis in which Jesus was a child of God in a general sense and only later became a unique Son (Die Gotteskindschaft in der Geschichte Jesu und ihre religionsgeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen). "The goal of reconciliation toward which the 'Son' leads us is his making us to be 'Sons.'" (Cullmann, Christology of the New Testament, p. 293).

7. Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 120.

8. James Moffatt, Love in the New Testament, p. 294.

9. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 96.

10. Uenerat enim per aquam et sanguinem, sicut Ioannes scripsit, ut aqua tingeretur, sanguine glorificaretur, proinde nos facere aqua uocatos, sanguine electos. Hos duos baptismos de uulnere perfossi lateris emisit, quatenus qui in sanguinem eius crederent, aqua lauarentur, qui aqua lauissent, etiam sanguinem potarent.

11. Manuscripts show three variations in the wording of 5:6. (1) "who came by water and spirit" (John 3:5). Weakly supported by a minuscule MS (thus after the 9th century) and only a few others of even less importance. (2) "by water and blood and spirit"--Codices Sinaiticus (4th century) and Alexandrinus (5th century); the word order is changed in a papyrus MS (before the 4th century); a 7th century revision of the old Syriac translation. (3) "by water and blood"--codex Vaticanus (4th century); uncial MSS of 8th to 10th centuries; 7th century Latin translation; 4th century Vulgate; 5th century revision of Syriac translation (Peshito). The second of these has much to commend it as C. H. Dodd points out in Moffatt's Commentary, p. 128. Note the use of "spirit" in John 3:5 and I John 5:7,8.

12. It should be noticed that whenever our Lord spoke of His Baptism, it was always in connection with the Cross. His Baptism is His Passion.

13. T. W. Manson, "Entry Into Membership of the Early Church," The Journal of Theological Studies, 48:28, 1947. Manson believes that ^{87c} introduces the content of the testimony. His theory is that the original text may have been, "and the Spirit is the witness that He is the truth." "Then the Christus of Vg [et Spiritus est qui testificatur, quoniam Christus est ueritas] and τὸ πνεῦμα of the other witnesses are both attempts to provide an explicit subject for εἰς τὸν, the former being the right guess."

14. It is now generally accepted that the reading of the Textus Receptus of 5:7-8 is a spurious gloss: "For there are three witnesses in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three agree. And there are three witnesses on earth, the Spirit and the water and the blood." For a thorough discussion of this gloss, see A. E. Brooke, The Johannine Epistles (ICC), pp. 154-165.

15. Law, op. cit., p. 404.

16. J. E. Ruther, Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistles of James and John, p. 466.

17. But note that in Deuteronomy 19:15 mention is made of two or three witnesses.

18. Ruther, loc. cit.

19. The expression εἰς τὸ ἓν εἶσεν is found nowhere else in the New Testament and is difficult to translate. "The three are in the one" or "for the one." A. E. Brooke says, "Are for the one thing, tend in the same direction, exist for the same object. They all work towards the same result, the establishing of the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (Brooke, The Johannine Epistles, p. 137). Luther must be incorrect when he translates: "and these three are one."

20. Verse 5:9 would perhaps be more lucid if the writer had used "word" where the noun is called for and "witness" where the verb is needed. As it now stands, the same word, "witness," is used throughout. The Revised Standard Version attempts to get around this by using "testimony" for the noun. It may be that John purposely refrained from using λόγος so as not to encourage the Hellenistic philosophy that revolved about the λόγος theory. G. H. Dodd tacitly admits that "word" might well have been used when he equates "word of God" with "testimony." (Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 133).

21. Gullmann, op. cit., p. 302. "While witnesses can and must be produced to support other assertions, there can be no question of human witness for Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. God Himself is the only possible competent witness. Only he can validate this claim of oneness with himself."

22. John Greenleaf Whittier, Immortal Love, Forever Full.

23. George B. Stevens, The Johannine Theology, p. 125. W. F. Howard in Christianity According to St. John, p. 69, says, "Four times in [the] Gospel [John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18] and once in the First Epistle we find the word *καταργεῖς* applied to Jesus. . . . Nowhere else in the New Testament is the word used of Jesus, but the three occurrences in Luke [7:12; 8:42; 9:38] and the passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews [11:17] warn us against reading any metaphysical significance into the word."

24. Cullmann, op. cit., p. 298.

25. W. F. Howard, "The Common Authorship of the Johannine Gospel and Epistles," The Journal of Theological Studies, 48:24, 1947.

26. Stevens, op. cit., p. 185. "It is true that John has not developed the idea of expiation for sin by the suffering and death of Christ, but it is none the less true that he several times alludes to it in such a way as to show that it was an underlying assumption of his teaching." (I John 2:1,2,12; 3:16; 4:10; John 1:29,36; 11:51; 15:13; 3:14; 12:32).

27. C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932), pp. 54f. In connection with Romans 3:25, "The more proper translation would be 'to make expiation.' This meaning holds good wherever the subject of the verb is a man. But, as religious thought advanced, it came to be felt that, where the defilement was moral, God alone could annul it; and so the same verb is used with God as subject in the sense 'to forgive.' . . . The rendering propitiation is therefore misleading, for it suggests the placating of an angry God. . . . In the present passage it is God who puts forward the means whereby the guilt of sin is removed by sending Christ. The sending of Christ, therefore, is the divine method of forgiveness."

28. It must be understood, however, that all of these individual "purposes" are but facets of the one great soteriological purpose.

29. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 894. An intensive perfect is, "where the punctiliar force is dropped and only the durative remains."

30. Cf. Appendix A for the different meanings intended by the author.

31. Cullmann, op. cit., p. 244. "This application of Soter formally sounds quite like the formulas applied, for instance, to Hadrian. But one can by no means decide with certainty whether the author [John] was conscious of a parallel to these formulas, or whether here also he was only unconsciously influenced by them." Elsewhere (p. 241) Cullmann says, "But just as the original source of the Kyrios title for Jesus lies primarily in Judaism, so it is more likely that his designation as Soter is connected with the Jewish and

the Old Testament concept [the deliverance of God's people from sin and death] rather than with the Hellenistic one [ruler worship]. However late their date, the early Christian texts which call Jesus 'Saviour' nowhere exhibit a view of the Soter related to the Hellenistic concept."

32. A. E. Brooke, The Johannine Epistles, p. 151.

33. C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 139.

34. W. F. Howard, Christianity According to St. John, p. 185.

35. Erich Haupt, The First Epistle of St. John, p. 344.

36. The reflexive pronoun $\acute{\epsilon}\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ is used with a verb in the active instead of middle voice to emphasize the personal effort that must go into a maturing Christian's life. Although Jesus "keeps him," yet paradoxically, he must "keep himself;" Cf. 3:3.

37. Cf. 2:22--"Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist . . ."

38. For clear, concise treatments of the term "The Christ" Cf. Gullmann's Christology of the New Testament, pp. 111-137, and Westcott's The Epistles of St. John, pp. 198-200.

39. Dodd, op. cit., p. 183.

40. Stevens, op. cit., p. 234.

41. Arthur C. McGiffert, A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age, p. 498.

42. Stevens, op. cit., p. 239. "Faith and knowledge are seen to be, in John's mind, essentially one."

43. Gullmann, op. cit., p. 298.

44. Howard, op. cit., p. 181.

45. Dodd, op. cit., p. 57.

46. H. R. Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, p. 121. "Christ's advent in the flesh is that on which hangs everything that can be called salvation; victory belongs only to those who receive Him as the Son of God."

47. A fuller treatment of what it means to "overcome the world" is given in Appendix A.

48. Cf. Didache XI. 8, οὐ πᾶς δὲ ὁ λαλῶν ἐν πνεύματι προφήτης ἐστίν, ἀλλ' ἐὰν ἔχη τοὺς τρόπους κυρίου, ἀπὸ οὗν τῶν τρόπων γνωσθήσεται ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης καὶ ὁ προφήτης.

49. There is no allusion here to the false prophets "going out" from the evil world of darkness. The writer is concerned, not with demonology, but with the historical situation of the heretics who have gone out of the Church.

50. Dodd, op. cit., p. 98. The word *δοκιμάζειτε* is one of the two New Testament words which mean "try," "test," or "prove;" often used when speaking of testing metals, and with the hope that whatever is being tested will successfully stand up. Another word for test is *πείραξις* which usually carries with it the hope that the object being tested will fail. Both words are found in II Cor. 13:5. This is the only place in the Johannine literature where *δοκιμάζειν* is found. (Cf. I Cor. 12:10). E/

51. There may also be an additional meaning of one who assumes the position of the rightful Christ, in addition to the act of opposing Him. The preposition *ἀντί* can mean both. Otto Piper ("I John and the Didache of the Primitive Church," Journal of Biblical Literature, 66:445, December 1947) says that "opposition" is a Semitic concept whereas "assuming the place" is Hellenistic thinking.

52. Brooke, op. cit., pp. 69f. "The researches of Bousset and others have demonstrated the existence of a more or less definite Antichrist legend, independent of the New Testament, and common to Jewish and Christian apocalyptic expectation, of which use is made in several New Testament writings. Its origin is probably to be traced to the widespread myth of a primeval monster, consisting of, or inhabiting, the waters and the darkness, which was subdued by the God of creation, but not destroyed, and which would again raise its power against the God of heaven in a final conflict before the end of all things." (pp. 78f) "The writer finds in the false teaching which is growing apace the fulfilment of the popular expectation of the coming of the great antagonist who is to lead the last and final opposition of the powers of the world to the kingdom of the Christ. Whether this opposition is seen to culminate in the work of a single opponent he leaves uncertain. . . . The writer's business is with the reality to which the legend points; with the legend itself he has but little to do."

53. H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic (London: Lutterworth Press, 1944), p. 31.

54. "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" was written in Hebrew by a Pharisee c. 109-106 B.C. and shows loyalty to the Pharisaic party and admiration for the Maccabean dynasty (Hyrchanus). The main value of this writing is in its ethical teaching.

55. Howard, op. cit., p. 125.

56. Cf. II Thess. 2:3 and "the man of lawlessness." Subsequent Christian history chose to side with Paul rather than with John.

57. The ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ of 4:2 indicates that God is the sole source of the Christian faith. Augustine and Bede said, "ipse est spiritus Dei qui dicit Jesum in carne venisse; qui non dicit lingua sed factis; qui dicit non sonando sed amando."

58. Dodd, op. cit., p. 53.

59. The teaching of the parable of Mt. 13:47ff may be that not all who are in the Church are born of God, but such is not the teaching in I John 2:19.

60. The initial verb in 4:2 is probably indicative rather than imperative. A. T. Robertson points out (pp. 94lf) that the imperative mode was late in arriving on the grammatical scene, suffered a short, rocky career, and very seldom makes an unambiguous appearance. "The imperative forms in modern Greek present a wreck, if indeed they were ever much else." (p. 94l) We are safer in staying with the indicative mode in 4:2 if we recognize the meaning to be, "The way you may know the Spirit of God is this . . ." John is instructing his readers in knowledge which they do not evidently possess. He wants them to know how to recognize the Spirit of God at work in men. Concerning the indicative mode, Robertson says, "The indicative does state a thing as true, but does not guarantee reality of the thing. . . . The speaker presents something as true. . . . Whether it is true or not is another matter." The function of the indicative mode is, "to make a definite, positive assertion." (p. 915).

61. Ramsay, op. cit., p. 300.

62. Law, op. cit., p. 100. The verb ἐκλυθότα indicates the pre-existence of Christ because it is used in the sense of arriving from somewhere else. It would never be used of human birth.

63. The spirit of antichrist is not a counterpart to the Holy Spirit of God. The neuter relative δ instead of the masculine $\delta\upsilon$ helps to emphasize this.

64. Dodd, op. cit., p. 56.

65. The epistolary aorist, "I wrote," of 2:26 looks at the immediately preceding section of the letter from the same temporal standpoint as the recipient of the letter will. This aorist is common in Latin as well as in the older Greek, but it is not so prevalent in the later Greek.

CHAPTER IX

LOVE FOR GOD AND BRETHREN

I. THE MEANING OF LOVE IN BIBLICAL AND EXTRA-BIBLICAL CONTEXTS

Leo Tolstoy once wrote to the Countess Alexandra, "I know Drummond's sermon and like it very much but all this is nothing compared to the Epistle of St. John." The great Russian writer was referring to Henry Drummond's exposition of Paul's hymn of Love, I Corinthians 13, as compared to John's letter of Love.

The Fellowship-In-Union which John discusses either directly or indirectly throughout his letter is founded on the ἀγάπη of God and is manifested by the continual reflecting of that ἀγάπη to the brethren. "Love scarcely admits of accurate and exhaustive definition,"¹ but John probably comes nearer to such a definition than any other writer in the New Testament.

Before undertaking a discussion of what John means by love in I John, it will be of value to trace the meaning of this word in other Biblical and extra-Biblical contexts.²

In the Old Testament love (most commonly אהבה and its derivatives) is spoken of in terms of physical, sexual passion (Hos. 2:7; 3:1; Jer. 22:20,22), in matters of relations within the family and among friends (I Sam. 20:17), and as the norm of societal living for humanity (Lev. 19:18). Of course, for the Jews, "society" was fellow-nationals and resident aliens.

The Old Testament also uses love in a religious sense. The whole Covenant theory, so fundamental to the Jewish race and nation, is based on the idea of love (Deut. 10:14-16). There is also man's love to God that is spoken of. "To love God means to enjoy Him and seek him instinctively" (Jer. 2:2).³ But strangely enough, the Old Testament has little to say about God loving particular individuals. His love is generally not thought of in this way in the Old Testament. Rather, He is found loving His people, the nation which He has called out. This idea is particularly developed by Hosea (3:1), Jeremiah (31:20), and Deutero-Isaiah (43:3f). In Deuteronomy the idea of love develops into a dogma in which there seems to be a bargaining for God's love in return for loyalty to the Covenant (7:12f).

There are three words for love in pre-Biblical Greek:

$\acute{\epsilon}\rho\acute{\alpha}\nu$ means passionate yearning after another person. The Greeks have always sung glowing hymns to sensual demonic Eros, the uncontrollable all-controlling god. He played a great part in the cultus, became the last word in philosophy, after the time of Plato, for the uplifting and fulfilment of life, and was sublimated in the mysticism of Plotinus, becoming purely spiritual and meaning the overwhelming desire for union with the One.⁴

The word $\phi\iota\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\tau\acute{\iota}\nu$ generally means the kind of love that one has for a friend. It refers to the way one cares for fellow human beings.

The verb $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ has a variety of meanings and is quite indefinite. The noun $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta$ scarcely occurs in pre-Biblical Greek. However, a papyrus from the early second century A.D. containing an ancient Isis-liturgy leads us to believe that Agape was one of the cult-names of Isis.

The Hebrew term [אֱלֹהִים] comprises all the wealth of the three Greek ideas. The one feature that is missing is religious eroticism; Old Testament religion thus differs not only from what is so typical of the Greeks but also from the fertility cults of its environment.⁵

The Hebrew אֱלֹהִים is almost always translated by ἁγία πνεύματι
in the LXX.

When Jesus came onto the scene of human history He brought a demand for absolute loyalty and obedience to God. Love for God is to transcend love for mammon and loyalty to God is to negate any selfish pride. The passionate love for God is even to continue throughout times of persecution.

One's neighbor is not merely another member of one's own race or nation, but is to be anyone to whom one proves to be neighbor (Lk. 10:29ff).

One's enemies are to be loved through the giving of mercy and forgiveness. Jesus explains that the enmity of mankind for the Father has been met with God's mercy and forgiveness. Jesus is Himself the incarnation of this Godly love. And therefore, if one is to reflect God's love to fellow men, it is necessary to make a positive, personal response to the Son of Man.

What does the Apostle Paul mean by the love of God?

It is the directing of God's sovereign will towards this world and its salvation. Love in action is the goal toward which God has been striving from the very beginning.⁶

Paul sees the real purpose for God's loving man to be the love which man then has for his neighbor. This love is to be expressed in service (Gal. 5:13).

[Brotherly love] is willingness to serve and sacrifice, to forgive and make allowances, to share and sympathize, to lift up the fallen and restore the erring in a community which owes its whole existence to the mercy of God and the sacrificial death of his Christ.⁷

What does John mean when he speaks of love? Like most other writers of the New Testament, when he says that a Christian should love his brother, he has in mind a fellow-Christian. Tertullian described the pagans as saying about the Christians, "See how Christians love one another, how ready they are to die for one another."⁸

In brotherly love the circle which consists of the Father and the Son and those who belong to him becomes a fellowship which is not of this world. God's love is life's ultimate reality for this fellowship, and to abide in his love is the law of its life.⁹

Nygren describes this Johannine conception of Agape as "doubleness."¹⁰ He explains "doubleness" by admitting that love is given a warmth of spirituality in the Johannine works which is found nowhere else, but yet this love is limited to Christian brethren. According to Nygren, this "doubleness" weakens the idea of Agape.¹¹

John does not limit ἀγάπη to the Christian brethren even though his use of the word in the First Epistle is apparently applied exclusively in that fashion. The author of I John is deeply concerned that his readers understand that God's love must work itself out within the elect community. If the redeemed koinonia does not reflect the nature of God among members of the fellowship, how can the Church be expected to carry out her redemptive mission in and for the world?

II. IT IS GOD'S COMMANDMENT TO LOVE ONE'S BROTHER

(3:23) And this is His commandment, that we believe (aorist subj.)

[in] the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another as He gave commandment to us. (4:21) And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God also loves his brother. (3:11) For this is the message which you heard from (the) beginning, [in order] that we [might] love each other; (3:12) not as Cain (who) was from the evil one and murdered his brother; and because of what did he murder him? Because his deeds were evil, and (deeds) of his brother (were) righteous. (5:2) By this we know that we love the children of God, whenever we love God and do His commandments. (5:3) For this is the love of God, that we preserve [guard] His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

There is but one command involved in 3:23. The phrase, "and love one another" is not epexegetic, but rather denotes that when one confesses the Incarnation then his life will be one of love. "Love in the region of action corresponds to the confession of the Incarnation in the region of thought."¹² Huther puts it this way, "While faith is the fundamental condition of the Christian life, brotherly love is the active proof of the living character of the faith: the two things cannot be separated."¹³

God does indeed command that Christians love their brethren, but this love can only be based on the firm conviction that Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Son of God for it is through the Son that God's love has been made known. No Christian would be able to love his brother if the Christ who founded the Church had not first called the members into a fellowship of love, and actively demonstrated this sacrificial love by His death.

It is thus readily apparent that the followers of Gnosticism who saw Christ as a mystical aeon and not as a historical person were in an impossible position to know what is the true love of God and therefore unable to display it. This was quite apparent from the lofty and haughty attitude displayed by the Gnostics toward others.

Jesus Christ not only was a living witness to the love of God, but the Father made His commandment by direct verbal appeal through the Son that men should love their brothers. The verb $\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\omega\kappa\epsilon\nu$ in 3:23, with Jesus Christ as subject, probably refers to John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

Verse 4:21 also points to the Son who specifically commanded men to love their brothers. John is probably referring to Mark 12:28-31 where Jesus is found quoting Deut. 6:4-5, "You shall love the Lord your God . . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is nothing in 4:21 or surrounding verses to indicate that the author had heard these words personally. Rather, the preceding verse is a strong statement and the author is desirous of substantiating it in 4:21 with the authority of the Master.

The clause following $\epsilon\iota\omega$ in 4:21 contains both hortatory and declarative ideas. Jesus not only commands that he who loves God should love his brother, but primarily the command of Christ contains the assertion that he who loves God will ipso facto love his brother. This latter concept is borne out by the present subjunctive of $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\pi\acute{\alpha}\omega$ that carries with it the idea of a spiritual fact.

God's commandment to love the brethren is thus seen to come to man directly through the Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. John also points out that this commandment is at the very heart of the Gospel which his readers have heard "from the beginning," 3:11. The Gospel is referred to in 1:5 and 3:11 as the "message" and in 2:7 as the "commandment." The expression, "from the beginning," in 3:11 and 2:7 refers to the time when the readers became Christian and received the Gospel. There is no reference here to the Old Testament and the time before the Gospel as Brocke tries to maintain, even though Cain happens to be mentioned in 3:12.

A strong contrast to the Gospel of love is mentioned in 3:12 with the murderous act of Cain. The elliptical sentence may be understood in this way to eliminate the anacoluthon, "And not be as Cain who was of the evil one. . . ."

Most scholars put the emphasis on the motive that led to Cain's evil deed such as jealousy or, as Augustine put it, envy. But may it not be that the writer is pointing to the original source that motivated the deed? Cain's jealousy and envy are clearly evident in the Old Testament, but John here points out that Cain's spiritual source was the Evil One and therefore the resulting deeds were perforce evil.¹⁴ One such evil deed is the murder of Abel.

John's implication in 3:12b is that when one is "of God" his deeds will be works of love. Cain does not murder Abel because he is jealous that his brother's deeds are righteous and his deeds are evil. Rather, the murder¹⁵ is committed because Cain's spiritual source is

the Evil One who gives rise to evil deeds. Among these evil deeds is that of murder. Abel's deeds are mentioned as being righteous to show that Abel's source of life is God and thus his life gives evidence of this.¹⁶

John draws a strong parallel between Abel and Cain, and the Church and her persecutors (3:13). The Church is persecuted, not because evil men are jealous of the Christians' good deeds, but because they have their source in the Evil One. Their evil lives testify to this.

The readers of this Epistle are thus informed that God's command to love the brethren has come to them through the Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Gospel which they have heard from the beginning. In 5:2-3 John uses the words "do"¹⁷ and "preserve" to describe obedience to this command.¹⁸ As Westcott points out, this is a continuous and watchful endeavor.

Contrary to Brooke and Moffatt, the writer in 5:2 is not giving a rule of thumb guide whereby one may test the reality or non-reality of his feelings toward others. John is saying that whoever bends his will to the will of God and loves Him by obeying Him, increasingly gains the conviction and recognizes the truth that $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$ is not experienced solely as a vertical relationship but is reproduced on the horizontal plane also.

In verses 5:3-4a the writer is not saying that God's requirements are not demanding and difficult to perform, but that the Source of all love lives within His own and gives to them the power to fulfill His

commandments.¹⁹ Haupt gives a good statement of a spiritual "theory of relativity" when he says, "strictly speaking, nothing is easy and nothing difficult of itself; all difficulty lies simply in the relation between the thing concerned and the power of the person concerned."²⁰

Whenever we love God, it must follow that we will love the brethren. The reason for this being that true love for God involves obedience to His commandments. These commandments may include many moral precepts, but above all, they are epitomized in the two-fold faith and life interaction of belief in the Incarnation and love of the brethren.

III. WHEN WE LOVE THE BRETHREN WE ARE FOLLOWING

GOD'S EXAMPLE SEEN IN THE INCARNATION

(4:19) We love [let us love] because He first loved us. (4:9) By this the love of God was made visible in [among] us, that God has sent His only Son into the world in order that we might live through Him. (4:10) In this is love, not that we [loved] have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son (as) expiation on account of our sins. (4:11) Beloved, if God loved us in this way, [and] we also ought to love each other. (3:16) By this we (know) have known love, that He layed down His life on behalf of us; and we are obliged to lay down (our) lives on behalf of the brothers.

Even when Christians love the brethren they are in no position to accept credit for it. John points out in 4:19 that ἀγάπη is not self-generated, but comes from a Divine source. It is not, as Westcott believes, that God gives freely to us of His love, and therefore we

must be as free to love others ungrudgingly who do not invite it or deserve it. The writer of the Epistle is speaking here of the heavenly source from which the ability comes to love others ungrudgingly. This interpretation is derived from the use of *ἀγαπᾶμεν* as indicative rather than the hortatory subjunctive.

There is an interesting comparison in Psalm 116:6, "I love because the Lord has heard my voice and my supplications." However, the Psalmist is probably referring to love for the Lord rather than speaking of the Lord as the source of man's love for his fellow-men.

Our act of love has for its genesis Him who took the initiative in loving us. The quality and type of love that comes from God is perfectly seen in the sending of His Son on a redemptive mission. As 4:9 says, God's love "was made visible in us" when He sent His only Son into the world.²¹

Verse 4:10 does not say that we do not love God, but that the true nature of love is revealed in God's reason for the giving of Himself and the method utilized. The Odes of Solomon (3:3,4) declares, "I should not have known how to love the Lord, if He had not loved me."

Aulén in "Christus Victor" says this of Ritschl's "Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung,"

The central point for Ritschl is that man gives up his mistrust of God, which had been based on a misunderstanding of God's character, and is dissipated by the sight of Christ's faithfulness to His vocation even unto death. This human faithfulness is a revelation of the Divine Love.²²

Verse 4:10 declares that no human faithfulness, not even that of the human Jesus (as Anselm in "Cur Deus Homo"), can effect atonement.

But rather God, the Reconciler and the Reconciled, reveals divine love by taking the initiative through the Incarnation of the Son in Jesus Christ to restore man to Himself.

Since we now know what true love is and have seen it demonstrated on earth, it becomes the lot of God's chosen people to emulate that love in their relationship with the brethren. The few words of 4:11 contain the call to the members of the New Israel to live out their lives as the incarnation of God's love, to be the servant-people of the Servant-Lord. Since God has loved us by giving us His only Son, we ought to love the brethren in like fashion; i.e. in a completely self-sacrificing manner.

It must be stressed that this does not involve the subjective "example" theory of atonement. The emphasis is upon the objectivity of redemption. It is God who expiates sin on His own initiative in a manner chosen by Himself. Only after this is established are the Christians reminded that their obligation is to permit His love to work through them for others. For only in so doing is evidence given that "God abides in us."

It must be noted that the word "ought" in 4:11 involving obligation goes beyond its normal English meaning. John is not saying, "Since God has shown us love by forgiving our sins, let us see that we are thus under obligation to Him to love the brethren." God never wants us to love due to a sense of obligation, for such is not Christian love.²³ In Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt. 18:23-35) the king does not want the servant to forgive his debtor merely to

fulfill an obligation to the king who forgave him. Rather, the servant's forgiveness was to be performed in emulation of the king's mercy. Jesus' final words of the passage are apropos to I John 4:11, "So also my Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."²⁴

Christians have thus been told that they are to love the brethren in a certain manner. The nature of this love and the manner of its manifestation can be found first of all only in God who has sent His Son on a saving mission.

Verse 3:16 is even more definitive of the nature of this love. It is a self-sacrificial type of love that is epitomized in the life of Jesus Christ (just as the brother—sacrificing hate is epitomized in Cain). The expression "we have known" indicates an experiential knowledge resulting from the observation of the divine lesson in Christ.

The ἑξῆς of God received its perfect demonstration when the Son layed down His life. It is very unlikely that the verb ἐθῆκεν²¹ has any reference to Isaiah 53:10. Likewise John is not thinking of Jesus as having paid His life as a ransom or offering for sin, because the Christians are told to do the same thing and it is abhorrent that any Christian would think of himself as a ransom for Sin.²⁵

This verb means to lay aside, or put off, and thus 3:16 means to lay down one's life. It is found only in the Johannine literature: Cf. John 10:11,15,17,18; 13:37-38; 15:13; 13:4.

The preposition ὑπὲρ in 3:16 carries with it no idea of substitution, for once again we notice that Christians are called upon

to do the same thing for the brethren.²⁶ The emphasis here is upon the love that constrains such action; the love that is founded in denial of self. The preposition means for one's benefit, advantage or good, on behalf of. It can be understood only in the light of 4:9,10; "that we might live through Him;" "as expiation on account of our sins."

Outside the actual narration of the passion in the [Gospel], John does not even use the word death in connection with the Christ. Yet, if we put Gospel and epistle together, there are three expressions, each of which he uses more than once: propitiation, the blood of Jesus, and the laying down of His life. These seem to show that for John too our reconciliation is through Christ's death; that behind his few words lies the more elaborate and more difficult view of the cross which we find elsewhere in the New Testament.²⁷

Christ's life was lived in a selfless manner, even unto death, because of the Father's love that motivated His every action. The person who truly knows God, who abides in Him, who has been freed from the I-centered life of sin, will likewise live out his life with no thought of self. His sole motivation will be God's love that permeates his personality because of faith in Him who was the Incarnation of God's love.

IV. THERE ARE VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIPS IN BROTHERLY LOVE

Love For Brother Accompanies Love For God

(5:1) Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and every one who loves the One who gave birth [bore] loves the one who has been born of Him. (4:20) If anyone says that ("I love God,^(u) and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does

not love his brother whom he has seen, is not able to love God whom he has not seen.

Every Christian loves God the Father
 Every one who loves the parent loves the child
 Therefore, every Christian loves the children of God.

Every Christian loves the children of God
 Every Christian is a child of God
 Therefore, every Christian loves his fellow-Christian.

Verse 5:1 may thus be stated as a syllogistic sorites. Holtzmann puts it in a more succinct fashion by saying that brotherly love, "can only be where God is known and loved as Father."²⁸ But this is not to go as far as many commentators who say, "Fraternal love follows by psychological necessity from filial love."²⁹ This is not necessarily true on the human level and can only be true here if Law's statement is paraphrased to read, "Fraternal love follows by spiritual necessity from the reflection of filial love."

Before discussing further the vertical relationship involved in brotherly love, attention must be called to the way John indicates the inseparability of faith and love in 5:1. The faith that is based on belief in the Incarnation is seen to work itself out in the Christian life of love.³⁰ In 5:1b John examines the vertical relationship in brotherly love from the top down, and declares that if anyone really loves God there will then follow a love for all those who have been born of the same Father.

In 4:20, the writer of the First Epistle looks at the same relationship from the bottom upwards. When we realize this, we are then better able to understand the explanation that, "in John, love

to God or Christ takes second place after love to the brethren, which springs from God and has its prototype in Christ."³¹ It is true that 4:20 is the first place in the Epistle where love for God is mentioned, but the writer is tilting lances with those adherents of Gnosticism who "talk" a good religion, but who show little or no evidence of working it out in their own lives.³² God's love for man and man's love for God is in the background of John's thinking whenever he refers to one's love of the brethren. He goes to great lengths to show that if one truly loves God the Father, then there will be evidence of this in the way one loves the brethren. If the latter is lacking, the former must be also.³³

Calvin, Rothe, Huther, Weiss, Ebrard and Westcott would put it this way, "If we do not reflect God's nature in acts to those who bear the image of God on earth, it is unthinkable that we can love the invisible God who is in heaven."

Law and Haupt put the emphasis on the opportunity and method of showing our love for God rather than on the reality of the love itself. This is probably due to the Codex Alexandrinus that has $\pi\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ instead of $\omicron\acute{\upsilon}$ in 4:20b. The meaning thus becomes, "how else can we show our love to God the invisible except through men the visible?" Law says, "Visibility and invisibility signify the presence or absence . . . of opportunity for loving."³⁴

That the idea of "opportunity" may well be in the writer's mind cannot be denied, but it is unlikely that it occupies first place in John's thinking. For that would involve the possibility of love for

God whereas John is concerned with the actuality. It is not, "how else can we show our love to God?" but rather, "when we do not love those who have been born of God we give evidence that we do not love God." John is not concerned primarily with the one and only method of declaring our love for God, but rather with the existence or non-existence of that love. When Christians love their brethren, no further proof is needed that they love God. When someone declares that he loves God, but his life utterly lacks a relationship of love for others on the horizontal plane, then his actions give the lie to his words.³⁵

A Brother Is Loved In Deeds

(3:17) But if anyone has the (wherewithal) means of the world and beholds (looks at with understanding) his brother having need and shuts his heart (compassionate kindness) from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (3:18) Little children let us not love (with) word nor (with) the tongue (speech), but with action and truth.

(3:19) By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and we shall (convince) win over our heart[s] in His presence (3:20) (in whatever) [because if] [that] our heart condemns (us), [that] because God is greater than our heart and He knows everything.

Verse 3:17 shows that this relationship of love on the horizontal plane is not an abstract theory finely spun out of gossamer, but is a living situation in which practical help, aid and assistance is rendered to another who has need. "This downright concreteness, almost crudity, in stating the moral requirements of religion, belongs to the genius

of New Testament Christianity in general."³⁶

John is not reluctant to state what the moral requirements are. In 3:17 he says that if anyone has sufficient means in this world and sees another who does not have such means then it is his duty to share. Not to do so is to admit tacitly that God's nature of love does not dwell within him.³⁷

This didactic injunction was necessary because of the inroads being made upon the Christian fellowship by the heretical teachers. Haughty superiority in the realm of religious morals and truth was Gnostic practice and was fast infiltrating the thinking of Christians. John hastens to assure his readers that the Christian life is a life of "doing." The profession to know God and to be born of Him must be set aside as invalid if the love which is of the very essence of God's nature is not made evident in actions on behalf of one's brethren.³⁸

Mark those who have heterodox opinions about the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and notice how contrary they are to the mind of God; they have no interest in love, no care for widows or orphans, for people in distress, for prisoners or discharged prisoners, for those who are hungry or thirsty.³⁹

Verse 3:18 persists in the same manner of thinking that is established in the preceding verse. John says that true love is not that which is merely talked about, but that which is acted out. "The two ideas of each clause express together one idea, and these two ideas are contrasted with one another."⁴⁰ "The tongue" is an explanation of "word" indicating merely the outward profession of love. The instrumental case helps to amplify this. John does not mean that Christians are not to use words to express love, for then he would have written ἐν λόγῳ. "In deed and in truth" means that the

only true love is that which is seen in action (also Cf. James 2:15, 16).

John admonishes the "little children," the readers of the letter, to let the love of God within them work itself out in selfless action for others. When a Christian responds in faith to the grace of God seen in the Incarnation, his life gives evidence of that faith in deeds of love. When one rejects the Incarnation and leads a life devoid of loving deeds, then one cannot be considered to be in union with God.

The "little children" addressed in 3:18 are given new strength and courage in the next two verses. The writer knows that the Church has been infiltrated by subversive elements (2:18) and that many of the Christians are beginning to have doubts and fall away. Their consciences are asking, "Do we really know the one true God, and did the Incarnation ever occur?"

John hastens to calm their consciences ("hearts").⁴¹ In 3:19-20 he says, "If you are not completely confident that you have a "knowledge" of God, that you are "in Him," that you possess the Holy Spirit, rest assured that a life of brotherly love testifies to all this."⁴² In other words, the reality of our fellowship with God is based on a life of love and not on feelings, intentions, or occult experiences. This passage does not mean, as some have suggested, that regardless of a conscience that may make a person believe that he is of the truth because of love for the brethren, God is far greater than the conscience and He knows our evil ways and condemns them.

Those who truly love God and men thereby know that they belong to the truth, and have this comfort, that the faults for which their own hearts condemn them, God will freely forgive, since he is greater in mercy than their own conscience is.⁴³

A. E. Brooke explains 3:19-20 in this way:

We can appease our heart, can still the qualms of conscience, with the knowledge that God who knows all has admitted us to His fellowship and love, a fact of which we are assured by the active love for others which His love has kindled in our hearts.⁴⁴

It is plain that the writer is clearly aware that one's conscience is often one's most bitter critic and foe. But thanks be to God that the Creator and Redeemer overrides any shallow and finite judgment of the human conscience by His sovereign mercy. Luther said, "The conscience is but a water drop, whereas God is a deep sea of compassion."⁴⁵

It would be misleading to believe that the writer of the Epistle is indicating that the conscience is the voice of God. William Temple says that the conscience may be considered to be the voice of the Holy Spirit "in a certain sense."⁴⁶ The conscience never is the voice of the Holy Spirit although it may be trained to be receptive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. In his "Paradise Lost," John Milton calls the conscience "the umpire of the soul." It must be pointed out that an umpire needs to be educated in the rules of the game or else he will be in error.

This passage, 3:19-20, is written by John to inspire confidence in the hearts of his fellow-Christians. He tells them to take courage for "God is the ruler yet."

This tender passage is written for Bunyan's Mr. Fearing and all his over-scrupulous, self-tormenting kindred. If these

deeds of love are found in the life, . . . let no man trouble him; let him not needlessly disquiet his own soul.⁴⁷

V. THE STATUS OF CHRISTIANS WHO LOVE THE BRETHREN

They Are Born Of God

(4:7) Beloved, let us love each other because love is from God, and every one who loves has been born of God and knows God. (3:10) By this is visible the children of God and the children of the devil; every one who does not do righteousness is not of God, and whoever does not love his brother.

The soul not only need not be disquieted, but on the contrary, when a Christian loves his brethren this indicates that he has been truly born of God. The attitude of love that is shared with another has its source in God Himself whose very nature is Love. A spiritual regeneration involving fellowship with God must take place before the love of God can be reflected in one's life. Verse 4:7 explains this in a positive fashion whereas 3:10 says much the same thing in a negative way.

In 3:10 the expression "does not love his brother" is exegetical following "does not do righteousness." Plummer says that, "love is righteousness in relation to others."⁴⁸ The "others" in this instance must be defined as one's fellow-Christians, with some scholars believing that this illustrates "the necessity of charity beginning at home."⁴⁹ However, John always perceives love as a triangular relationship. There is the love between God and the individual Christian; between the individual Christian and his

fellow-Christians; and between fellow-Christians and God.⁵⁰ This triangle must remain a "closed circuit" because it is the only perfect conductor of the Agape of God. If one does not reflect God's love toward fellow members of the Household of Faith, then such love will never go beyond the triangular bounds to those outside. John is concerned with the witness of the community of light as over against the deeds of the children of darkness. The writer never strays from the concept of the Church and her source of power and love.

Verse 3:10 does not explicitly use the phrase, "born of God," but it is clear from the expressions "children of God" and "of God" that the author has this spiritual status in mind. The $\pi\alpha\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ may be used as an indirect reference to the Gnostics who claimed to possess a superior knowledge of God but did not feel it necessary to love their brethren. John declares here that regardless of their speculative claims, the Gnostics have not been born of God. Their lack of love is proof of this fact. The negative $\mu\eta$ is used in its usual conditional sense to help bring out the meaning of "whoever;" that is, whoever it may be that does not do righteousness. The $\acute{o}\upsilon$ is purposely used to conclude the clause, because here is a definite fact, that if someone does not do righteousness then he positively has not been born of God.

They Know God

(4:8) He who does not love did not know God (has never known God), because God is love.

John makes three statements about the nature of God: one in the

Gospel, John 4:24, and two in the First Epistle, 1:5 and 4:8. When the author says that "God is Spirit" (John 4:24) he is using a metaphysical concept, whereas the expressions "God is Love" (I John 4:8) and "God is Light" (I John 1:5) refer to the moral essence of God. The Fourth Gospel indicates that God is self-revealing, "The Word became flesh." The First Epistle demonstrates that God reveals Himself in a self-giving relationship within the Godhead and with man, "We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us."

Others had taught that God is Spirit [I Kings 8:27]. Contemporary theosophies declared that God is Light. It was for Christianity, and especially St. John, to tell the world a higher truth, without which religion may not rise above metaphysics, or may sink into mythology.⁵¹

Nygren agrees with this when he says, "that the Johannine equation of God and Agape places the copingstone on the edifice of the New Testament doctrine of Agape."⁵²

St. Bernard said, "Let it not be supposed that I here account Love as an attribute or accident, but as the Divine essence." In 4:8 John is definitely referring to the essence of God. But he injects this Hellenistic type of thinking with a Hebraic concept which declares that God's being is Personality of self-giving nature. God's personal actions give evidence to and declare His being. That is to say, God is both loving and love.

Robert Law says that Love is the content of all moral excellence and that Righteousness is the imparting of this summum bonum from God to man on the plane of history as the law of the universe. This

imparting of love is found not only in a vertical relationship, it is also displayed on the horizontal plane. Just as John emphasizes the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, he also goes to great lengths in pointing out that God's love finds its incarnation in the Christian life.

Indeed, says John, if anyone is boastful about enjoying an intimate spiritual relationship with God and yet his life fails to reflect the nature of God which is love, then it is highly unlikely that the announced relationship has ever existed. This is what the letter is saying in 4:8.

It has been customary for the Christian Church to pluck out the last clause of this verse and dwell upon its greatness, but John looked with equal favor upon the significance of the first part of the verse.⁵³ If anyone does not have Agape for his neighbor, then the relationship of Fellowship-In-Union with God, the possession of which is described as "knowing" God, is unknown in his life. The reason for this being that Love is the very nature of God and no one can have fellowship with Him without reflecting that nature to his brethren.

They Are In The Light

(2:9) He who says he is in the light and (yet) hates his brother is in the darkness even to this moment. (2:10) He who loves his brother abides in the light and that which causes sin [a stumbling block] is not in him [it]. (2:11) But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know to what place he is drifting, because the darkness (has) blinded his eyes.

John, who paints his verbal picture in broad strokes, would have agreed with Bengal^e who says, "Ubi non est amor, odium est; cor enim non est vacuum." And yet his picture is different from that of the other writers of Scripture because it does not consist of multi-colored hues, but simply of black and white. Verses 2:9,10,11 are good examples of this. He speaks of love versus hatred; light versus darkness. This is similar to 2:4 where truth versus lie. There are no intermediate shades of gray.

The major question to be answered in this passage is the meaning of "light" and "darkness." C. H. Dodd says that the phrase, "in the light" means "to be within that 'newness of life' which Christ has brought to the world."⁵⁴ Huther would agree with this insofar as he believes that light refers neither to Christ nor to the Church.

It is very likely that when John speaks of light he is referring to that spiritual disposition described as fellowship with God. It is possessing the status of Eternal Life. Since God is light (1:5), when one is "in the light" one is thus enjoying Fellowship-In-Union with God. Dodd is correct in saying that Christ has brought this "newness of life" to the world for without the Son, who has enjoyed this relationship with the Father from the beginning, it would be impossible for men to have fellowship with the Father. The darkness mentioned in 2:11 is the total lack of such fellowship. The intimate spiritual relationship with God is missing.

The sole test of whether one is in the light or in the darkness is whether or not one loves one's brother. In this passage, as

elsewhere in the Epistle, John probably uses "brother" as a synonym for fellow-Christian.

Those who walk in darkness are the Christians who have been duped by the mystery religions, some of whom have already left the Christian fold. The exponents of such mysticism had given themselves the designation of illuminati or pneumatikoi, but these Gnostics who gloried in speculative enlightenment neglected love. This fact was sufficient proof that they were not "in the light."⁵⁵

In 2:10 John says that a man who abides in the light as shown by his brotherly love does not encounter a stumbling block. It is evident from the context that the reference is to the placing of a stumbling block before one's self rather than putting a temptation in another's path.⁵⁶ If a Christian's heart is full of love he will find no cause to sin. The Psalmist of 119:165 would have much in common with John if he meant the "law" of brotherly love: "Great peace have those who love thy law; nothing can make them stumble."

Verse 2:11 says that this is not true of the person who hates his brother. When a Christian ceases to reflect God's love to his brethren, his pathway is then obscured and he walks in darkness. He does not know what he is doing or the way he is taking.⁵⁷ Not only is his attitude opposed to God as shown by the hatred in his life, but his actions stemming from this attitude are carried out to ungodly conclusions and results.

Ruther puts it this way, "He who lives in Sin is blinded by sin, and therefore does not know whither his sin is leading him."⁵⁸

It is much like the experience of the prisoners who were incarcerated in the Bottle Dungeon of St. Andrew's Castle in Scotland over 400 years ago. This tenebrous hole was hewn out of solid rock and when a prisoner remained within its inky confines for three months he became totally blind. The writer of Proverbs 4:19 has a word that appropriately bears on this subject, "The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble."

Verse 2:11 echoes the words of Jesus in John 12:35 where the last four Greek words are identical with the wording of the First Epistle. "Jesus said to them, 'The light is with you a little longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.'"

When one does not possess fellowship with God, one is blinded by sin and one's darkened life consists of aimless wandering with its sole motivation being concern for self and disregard for others.

They Have Passed From Death Into Life

(3:14) We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death.

When John moves from the metaphors of light and darkness in 2:11 to that of life and death in 3:14 to describe the spiritual life with and without God, his doctrine of Sin becomes more definitive. The lack of Fellowship-In-Union, such lack being due to Sin, is man's original status.

The writer explains that when one does not love he "remains in death." Death is human life that exists apart from fellowship with

God. He uses this particular figure of speech because he has been telling how Cain murdered his brother. Verse 2:11 also speaks of being apart from God, but the figure of darkness is used because in the opening passages of the letter John says that God is light and our fellowship with Him is referred to as walking in the light.

The emphatic *ἡμεῖς* in 3:14 is used to contrast the Christians who have an assurance of fellowship with God due to their love of the brethren with the Gnostics who constantly talk about being one with God but provide no active evidence.⁵⁹ When one loves the brethren he may be positive that such love has its inception in God. The ability to reflect God's love in love of the brethren comes about by means of a divine-initiated fellowship with God. Such Fellowship-In-Union is eternal life. Either one abides in eternal life or remains in the original state of death. When anyone does not love his brethren, this is proof positive that he is still in such a state of death. If he were in union with God, this fact would be quite apparent by his love.⁶⁰

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER IX

1. George B. Stevens, The Johannine Theology, p. 274.
2. The basis of this outline is found in Gerhard Kittel's TWNT, Vol. I, pp. 20-55.
3. Gerhard Kittel, Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Vol. I, pp. 27f. (article ἀγάπη by Gottfried Quell & Ethelbert Stauffer)
4. Ibid., pp. 34f.
5. Ibid., p. 38.
6. Ibid., p. 50.
7. Ibid., p. 51.
8. Tertullian, Apol. 39.
9. Kittel, op. cit., p. 53.
10. Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, p. 110.
11. Leonard Hodgson ably answers Nygren in The Grace of God in Faith and Philosophy, pp. 35-42.
12. Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 147.
13. J. E. Huther, Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistles of James and John, p. 419. Also Cf. Galatians 5:6 where Paul speaks of faith being worked out, or put into operation, by love.
14. John uses Genesis 4:8ff to suit his own purposes as does the writer of Hebrews 11:4.
15. ἑσφραγισεν, found only in 3:12 and Revelation 5:6,9,12; 6:4,9; 13:3,8; 18:24, originally meant to cut the throat, especially of a victim for sacrifice; in later Greek it came to mean to slay with violence.
16. This is the last reference to "righteousness" in the Epistle. From this point on, the sole emphasis is upon "love."
17. The phrase "do His commandments" is found nowhere else in Scripture.
18. The plural "commandments" may refer to the inseparable facets of the Christian Faith and Life: belief in the Incarnation and love

of the brethren (as mentioned above in 3:23). Robert Law says that John uses "commandments" to refer to moral precepts, and "commandment" to refer to the commandment of love. But Haupt explains that, "All the commandments of God in the end are gathered up in that one focus of brotherly love." Erich Haupt, The First Epistle of St. John, p. 290.

19. Robert Law is correct in placing a comma after verse 3 and not a period as in the Revised Standard Version, so that verse 4 gives the reason why the commandments are not burdensome and exhausting.

20. Erich Haupt, The First Epistle of St. John, p. 292.

21. The $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ may mean "among" in the sense of the Church being the recipient of the manifestation, but the full force of the preposition is also maintained when it points to a spiritual revelation perceived by man's inward eye.

22. Gustaf Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 154.

23. Cf. Kittel's TWNT, Vol. I, p. 29 for the Deuteronomic legalistic approach to love.

24. Huther, op. cit., p. 433. "The obligatory force lies not merely in the example given by God's act of love, but also in this, that we by means of it have become the children of God and as such love as He loves."

25. Otto Piper must be considered to be incorrect in stating that a parallel saying is found in Mark 10:45.

26. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 630. Robertson points out that when one acts in behalf of another it does not follow that he necessarily takes his place. The idea of substitution depends on the nature of the action and not on any particular word.

27. W. F. Lofthouse, The Father and the Son, p. 125. Also Cf. Kittel's TWNT, Vol. I., p. 53, "God's love reaches the human world through the Son. But this love is at the same time glorified and set free through His death. Through the death of the Son, God fulfilled His purposes of salvation for the world."

28. H. J. Holtzmann, Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament, Vol. IV, p. 353.

29. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 253.

30. Augustine remarked about the connection between faith and love, "cum dilectiones, fides Christiani; sine dilectione, fides daemonis."

31. Kittel, op. cit., p. 53.

32. In 4:20 the expression "if anyone says" probably alludes to those who succumbed to Gnosticism and have left the fellowship of the Church.

33. The syntax of 4:20 points up the close relationship between one's fellow Christians and God.

34. Law, op. cit., p. 252.

35. Philo, de Decalogo par. 23, chapter 2, p. 204 M, says that parents may be regarded as "visible gods" and "it is impossible that the Invisible should be revered by those who have no reverence for the visible."

36. C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 86.

37. $\beta\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$; the means of life; subsistence. $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\acute{\eta}$; to see long enough to appreciate and understand the circumstance of the case. (Brooke, The Johannine Epistles, p. 97).

38. James Moffatt, Love in the New Testament, p. 285. "There may have been in the Johannine environment a special inducement to disparage brotherly love, owing to imperfect [docetic] views about the person of Christ." If Jesus Christ were not the Incarnate Son of God raised from the dead in power then no example of sacrificial love has ever existed.

39. Ignatius, Smyrn. 6.

40. Luther, op. cit., p. 407.

41. $\sigma\upsilon\nu\epsilon\iota\delta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ is not found in the Johannine writings. It refers to the conscience as faculty of self-judgment and moral discernment.

42. $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\acute{\omicron}\upsilon\tau\eta$, contrary to normal use, refers to the preceding; $\pi\epsilon\iota\sigma\theta\eta\mu\epsilon\nu$ means to convince someone of the truth of something; "in his presence" has no reference to the eschaton, but rather denotes a spirit of prayer wherein we sense God's presence; $\delta\tau\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\alpha\nu$ is best translated as representing $\delta\tau\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\nu$.

43. Stevens, op. cit., p. 69. Also Cf. Psalm 103:14, "For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust."

44. A. E. Brooke, The Johannine Epistles, p. 99.

45. This passage in I John goes far beyond Jeremiah 17:9-10, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who

can understand it? I the Lord search the mind and try the heart, to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruits of his doings."

46. William Temple, Christian Faith and Life, p. 62.

47. Alexander Ramsay, The Revelation and the Johannine Epistles, p. 296.

48. A. Plummer, The Epistles of St. John, p. 128.

49. Brooke, op. cit., p. 91.

50. Kittel, op. cit., pp. 43f. "The love of which the Rabbis speak is neither love between God and man alone, nor love between man and man alone, nor both side by side, but both inseparably together. . . . Love is the principle divinely ordained for the relation between God, I and Thou; unless it is in constant control the relation is ruined."

51. W. F. Howard, Christianity According to St. John, p. 63.

52. Nygren, op. cit., p. 109.

53. Augustine perhaps overemphasizes the statement that "God is love" when he says that if the entire Bible said nothing more than this in praise of love it would be sufficient. It is only because the many facets of this truth are reflected throughout the Bible in the acts of God, with the eventual climax manifested in the giving of the Son in the flesh, that the Holy Spirit enlightens our mind to the meaning of this particular phrase.

54. Dodd, op. cit., p. 35.

55. Robertson, op. cit., p. 1036. Commenting on $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\lambda\lambda$ ³ in 2:9 he says, "In the Old Greek the infinitive was the favorite construction in indirect discourse."

56. The word $\alpha\kappa\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\alpha\lambda\omicron\nu$ is not found elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel or Johannine Epistles.

57. No eschatological idea of a punitive goal is involved. Cyprian is incorrect in saying, "it nescius in gehennam, ignarus et caecus praecipitatur in poenam."

58. Ruther, op. cit., p. 328.

59. $\acute{\omicron}\lambda\delta\gamma\mu\epsilon\nu$ refers to the innate consciousness of a Christian. Robert Law takes the position that it is the same as $\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\omega\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu$ but heightened by exultant emotion.

60. Kittel, op. cit., p. 53. "The verb ["love" in 3:14b] is used without a direct object, and not only in this verse. This absolute use, which in Luke 7:47 is exceptional, is quite regular in I John (3:18; 4:7f, 19). This love is a movement of life, a form of existence, a realization of God in this world."

CHAPTER X

GOD ABIDES IN HIM AND HE IN GOD

I. THE JOHANNINE MEANING OF ABIDE

If there is one word in the Johannine writings that sums up and characterizes the message of the First Epistle it is the word, "abide." The verb *μῆνεεν* occurs more frequently (26 times) in the Johannine Epistles than in all other New Testament epistles combined.

Before we discuss the unique use to which John puts this word, it will be well to investigate its other meanings as found in the New Testament.¹

When found in the New Testament epistles, *μῆνεεν* refers to something that endures, remains or is permanent. For example, God's purpose of election (Romans 9:11), the Word of God in contrast to mortal humanity (I Peter 1:23,25), the New Covenant in contrast to the Old Covenant (II Cor. 3:11), and the famous triad of Christian characteristics, faith, hope and love (I Cor. 13:13).

There are also passages in the Johannine writings where abide is used in this way. In John 12:34 the crowd tells Jesus, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever." In John 1:32,

the abiding of the Spirit on the Christ is superior to that which came on the prophets which is thought of only as a passing inspiration and elevates the filling of the Spirit of Christ--and next to Him--of the Christians, above the ecstatic pagan situations.²

Elsewhere in the New Testament epistles, "abiding in" refers to the mental and spiritual attitude of a Christian who adheres to the way

of salvation and exhibits its virtues in living. I Timothy 2:15 speaks of the salvation of women if they will but abide "in faith and love and holiness, with modesty." Paul admonishes Timothy (II Tim. 3:14) to continue in the Gospel and the sacred writings which "instruct you for salvation."

John occasionally uses $\mu\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\ \epsilon\nu$ in conjunction with words that are almost synonymous with God or God's salvation. John speaks of Christians who have abiding in them the Word of God (I John 2:14), life (I John 3:15), love (I John 3:17), truth (II John 2) and anointing (I John 2:27). Likewise, Christians are said to abide in love (John 15:9f), light (I John 2:10), and doctrine (II John 9). In these instances we sense that John is speaking of a certain relationship in which the Christian stands to God. And thus we have arrived at the unique Johannine usage of $\mu\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\lambda\upsilon$.

Friedrich Hauck sees this uniqueness as an Immanenzverhältniss which is between God and man. Although we would agree with this, we would disagree that John uses $\mu\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\lambda\upsilon$, "to express the unchangeableness and tranquility" of this relation.³ When John speaks of "abiding in" he is not referring to an irenic, statical status but rather to a dynamic, kinetic relationship. This is John's way of speaking of that spiritual bond or union between God and man which transcends a metaphysical fusion of essence. It is the relationship that he speaks of elsewhere as "eternal life." We have referred to it also as Fellowship-In-Union. This union is of a moral nature and because it is, John "elevates the Christian religion above that of Hellenistic ecstasy."⁴

John also uses "abide in" to refer to the relationship within the Godhead, and in these instances an identity of substance is implied. It is this relationship that has made possible salvation for man.

John writes of God abiding in Christ (John 14:10), Christians abiding in Christ (John 6:56; 15:4-7; I John 2:6,27f; 3:6,24), Christ abiding in Christians (John 15:4,7; I John 3:24), God abiding in Christians (I John 4:16), and Christians abiding in God (I John 2:24; 4:16).

This spiritual union-relationship between man and God is characterized by a belief in Jesus Christ as Son of God and by love for one's brother. It is these facets of the relationship that distinguish the Johannine concept from the Gnostic use of "abide." "By holding the expression 'abiding in' to the Biblical theistic concept John avoids the identical statement of the Hellenistic mysteries."⁵ Perhaps the Apostle Paul feared that confusion with Hellenistic usage would result if such use were made of *μῆνεν* so the closest expression we find in his writings to this concept is *ἐν Χριστῷ*.

A spiritual relationship is even noted in those passages where John speaks of unbelievers abiding in darkness (John 12:46) and in death (I John 3:14). In such instances the source of spiritual generation lies in the evil one.

We may summarize by saying that for John the present spiritual relationship with God designated as "abiding in" is equivalent to very salvation itself; that which has been communicated to man through the Incarnate Son.

II. OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

Christian Fellowship is the Basis of Full Christian Joy

(1:3) (That) which we have seen and heard, we declare also to you, in order that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship (is) with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1:4) And these things we write in order that our joy may be completed.

A Johannine synonym for "abiding in" is *κοινωνία*. Before discussing John's use of it in 1:3 (where we find two of the four appearances of *κοινωνία* in this Epistle; the other two being located in 1:6,7) we will first investigate its etymological background.

The Greek word *κοινωνία* expressed the thought of sharing, but it also carried the meaning of an inward union.

In classical Greek the abstract noun derived from it, through the verb *κοινωνεῖν* --that is to say, *κοινωνία* --came to indicate the partnership of an intimate friendship or of a lifebond of matrimony. Yet the idea of fellowship which the word implied was able to advance to that sublimer implication which it attained in the teaching of Plato, wherein it came to express that divine union which involved the existence not only of the individual but of the entire *κόσμος* composed of gods and men. We may, therefore, confidently accept the conclusion that the fellowship-relation between God and man as a complete unity was a Greek conception.⁶

Such a relationship between man and God was unheard of in the Jewish religion. To the Jew, man stood before God not in an ontological union but in a moral unity. Man was utterly dependent upon God and his reaction to the Holy One was to be that of service. As a result, he had security and confidence in knowing that the justice and power of God would preserve him from destruction.

The Hebrew word $\aleph \aleph \aleph$ indicates the relationship between

man and man.⁷ Nowhere does this word and its cognates (or the corresponding Greek *κοινωνός* and derivatives) refer to a man-God relationship.⁸

About the beginning of our Christian era the Hebrew word קָוֵן acquired a technical sense. The Pharisees especially employed קָוֵן as a distinctive name for their own fraternity so as to mark themselves off from $\text{בְּנֵי אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל}$, "the people of the land." Likewise, later on, קָוֵן was used in the general sense of "association" or "companionship."⁹

Turning to the New Testament, we find that the *κοινων* group is used in slightly different ways by the various writers. There are those instances which speak of participating or sharing in something. It may be a legal partnership of work (Lk. 5:10), sharing the divine nature (II Peter 1:4), a grafted branch sharing in the life of a tree (Romans 11:17), the sharing of humanity's flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14), or the sharing of worldly goods with others (Galatians 6:6).

Most of the Pauline passages wherein we find *κοινωνός* and its derivatives are filled with a definite spiritual content. However, it should be noted that Paul does not veer from the Hebraic concept mentioned above, for nowhere does he speak of a direct fellowship with God. He uses *κοινωνία* to speak of having fellowship with Christ and the Holy Spirit, and having fellowship with other Christians.

First of all, let us see how Paul uses *κοινωνία* in the context of a spiritual relationship between the Christian and Christ.¹⁰ Man is called in the fellowship of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:9), he shares the blessings of the Gospel of Christ (I Cor. 9:23), and he shares his faith in Christ (Philemon 6).

The Christian is also a partner in the redemptive elements of

the life of Jesus Christ: in His death and Resurrection (Rom. 6:8; Gal. 2:19), His Crucifixion (Rom. 6:6), and His suffering (Rom. 8:17).

In II Corinthians 13:14, Paul indicates that the Christian also participates in the Holy Spirit.

We are not surprised to find Paul leading on from this fellowship with Christ and the Spirit to a concomitant fellowship among Christians: the *κοινωνία* is seen in Paul's being a partner with Philemon (Phil 17) and with Titus (II Cor. 8:23); an expression of this common bond in Christ among Christians is seen in "the right hand of fellowship" (Gal. 2:9); the new converts immediately recognized this union with its centripetal force in Christ (Acts 2:42); and the spiritual unity in the Church was nowhere better seen than in the fellowship about the Table (I Cor. 10:16ff).

I Corinthians 10:16 was the statement of the apostle's conception of what the Lord's Supper manifested for him. It included for all the members of the Church the realization of a fraternal or communal "sharing together" in Christ. . . .¹¹

In the First Epistle of John, and elsewhere in the Johannine writings, the writer goes beyond Paul in the use of *κοινωνία*. He fills this word with a meaning of a direct spiritual union between man and God. Paul speaks of sharing, or participating in, or being in a partnership, but never with God the Father. John, on the other hand, leaves no doubt that *κοινωνία* is a spiritual union that the Christians have with the Father and the Son (1:3,6) and with each other (1:3,7). It may not lend itself to a full rational explanation, but it cannot be gainsaid.

Elsewhere in I John the writer uses the expression "abiding in"

to denote the same thing. The mutual abiding of God in man and man in God (I John 3:24; 4:13) clearly sets forth the concept of a vital religious union. This fellowship with the Father and the Son is fulfilled on an earthly plane when Christians are bound together in the Spirit and are in fellowship with one another through love.

"[κοινωνία] was a word borrowed from Greek classical literature, and fundamentally it ever retained its original meaning."¹²

This is seen to be true particularly in the Johannine literature. The highest concept of the relationship between man and God, and the resulting relationship between man and man, is expressed by John. John did not fear that his readers would interpret the use of this word in a strictly Hellenistic sense, nor did he fear that they might see it as Gnostic metaphysical union. Fellowship with God is possible only because it has come through the Incarnate Son; this One who has known such fellowship from the beginning.

The first two verses of the First Epistle refer to the prototype of all fellowship among men, that which has always existed between the Father and the Son. Verse 1:3b then declares that all Christians share this primordial fellowship that was pre-existent between the Father and the Son. Verse 1:3a expresses the thought that this fellowship must be worked out among fellow-Christians.

John is thus not far into his letter before he broaches the subject to which he alludes constantly throughout the Epistle, that the vertical relationship must be evidenced on a horizontal plane. The writer is probably referring to the re-establishment of fellowship

between himself (or the writer plus a few faithful churches) and the churches that are slipping away to speculative theosophy. The exhortations of John further on in his letter leave little doubt that Christian fellowship needs renewing.

John declares in 1:4 that the letter is being written in order that the joy of all Christians, that is the Church, may be completed. The completion of this joy can only occur with the renewing of fellowship among Christians.¹³

The writer of I John uses "we" in three different ways: (1) the "we" of authorship, 1:3-4; (2) to include both author and readers, 3:1-2; (3) to include all Christians, 1:1-2; 2:2; 5:19. It is highly doubtful that John ever uses "we" to refer to the Apostles alone. Any member of the Christian community could say "we" when speaking of the Church without implying that he was necessarily an eye-witness of, or a participant in, the events related (Cf. Psalms 137:1-4; Joshua 24:7; Amos 2:10; Deut. 26:6-9).

He speaks not exclusively for himself or for a restricted group, but for the whole Church to which the apostolic witness belongs by virtue of its koinonia, over against the world, which being outside the koinonia has no knowledge of the incarnate Son. . . .¹⁴

Christians are Assured that They are in The Father and The Son Even Now

(2:27) And (as for you) the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; [but] as His anointing teaches you about everything, and it [He] is true and not a lie, [;] and just as it [He] taught you, you abide [abide (imperative)] in Him. (5:20) And we know that the Son of God has come,

and has given to us understanding, [in order] that we [might] know the True One; and we are in the True One, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Fellowship among Christians is the basic determinant of Christian joy. But such fellowship only exists as a correlary to the fellowship between man and God. And John hastens to assure his readers that all Christians possess such fellowship. He refers to it as being "in the Father."

In 2:27b there is a question whether to interpret "abide" in an imperative or indicative sense. The Revised Standard Version prefers the former. However, in this context the writer is declaring that Christians have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is more consistent with John's thinking elsewhere in the Epistle, e.g. 4:13, to understand the Spirit's anointing as instructing and encouraging the Christians concerning their present relationship with God rather than exhorting Christians to bring such a relationship into existence.¹⁵

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is a continuing source of knowledge ("as His anointing teaches you") regarding the life in God just as it was a source of instruction at the very beginning of the Christian's life ("as it taught you, you abide in Him"). When a man is reconciled to God the first thing he recognizes as a Christian is his fellowship with God. The Holy Spirit informs him that he has absolute forgiveness of sins through God's grace. He is "in God," not because he has become deified with the very nature of the Supreme being, but because of a new moral relationship with God whereby his

will more nearly approximate the Father's will. The false teachers did not understand this moral relationship, but taught that one must undergo certain initiatory rites and a mystical, spiritual experience of a metaphysical nature before one could be considered to be "in God." John instructs the Christians not to give heed to such false teachings for they have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit and with it a knowledge of the true "abiding."

The writer points out in 5:20 that the only way to be in the Father, that is to have fellowship with God, is to be in the Son. And according to John, all Christians have the assurance that they are in the "True One," because they are in His Son, Jesus Christ. In this same verse, the juxtaposition of "know the True One" and "in the True One" should not go unnoticed. "To 'know God' and to 'be in Him' are for John one and the same thing."¹⁶ In other words, John is saying, "we know that the Son of God has come and enables us to be in the True One." Fellowship-In-Union with God only comes about through the Son who has possessed this relationship with the Father from the beginning. Eternal Life is Son-mediated. Whoever has spiritual union with the Son is also in fellowship with the Father; that is, He "knows" the Father. Every Christian possesses this true gnosis.

III. CONFESSING THE INCARNATION IS A PROOF OF FELLOWSHIP

The Holy Spirit's Presence Gives Proof of Mutual Indwelling

(3:24b) And by this we know that He abides in us, from the Spirit which He gave us. (4:13) By this we know that we abide in Him

and He in us because He has given to us of [from] His Spirit.

In these two verses John attempts to bring more positive proof to bear upon his assurance that every Christian is in the Father because he is in the Son through a new moral-spiritual relationship. Such an assurance is made doubly secure in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 3:24 may be interpreted in three ways: (1) "We know that God abides in us because the Holy Spirit teaches us this is true;" (2) "The Spirit teaches that when we keep God's commandments by loving one another that God thus abides in us" (this makes ἐν τούτοις refer to the preceding sentence and is preferred by Westcott, Lücke, Ebrard and Rothe); (3) "We know that God abides in us because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives."

The last paraphrase is the best interpretation because the emphasis is placed upon the gift of the Spirit of God. C. H. Dodd speaks of, "the gift of the Spirit, which is (as in Galatians 3:2) a datum of experience from which an inference can be drawn."¹⁷ This inference is fellowship with God that is characterized by regeneration and indwelling. The aorist verb, "gave," helps to confirm this interpretation by indicating that the Holy Spirit was given at a definite time. The author has in mind either Pentecost or the time of regeneration.¹⁸

At this point let there be a word of caution. In 3:24b and throughout the letter there is no clearly defined doctrine of the Trinity. In 3:24b the gift of the Spirit is mentioned and not who the Holy Spirit is or what He does. Some believe that this signifies that John's thinking is closer to the level of primitive Christianity.

However, the evidence of silence is always tenuous and the only definite statement that can be made is that there is no articulate doctrine of the Trinity present in I John.

Verse 4:13 says much the same thing as 3:24b with the one noticeable difference being that the former refers to "we abide in Him and He in us," whereas the latter says only, "He abides in us." Robert Law explains,

As the abiding of God in us is the persistent and purposeful action by which the Divine nature influences ours, so our abiding in God is the persistent and purposeful submission of ourselves to that action.¹⁹

How does a Christian know that he abides in God and that God abides in Him? There can be only one answer to this, it is in the presence of God's Spirit.²⁰ When He is present, then fellowship with the Father is a fact. When He is absent, there is no mutual indwelling regardless of any boasts by individuals to the contrary.

But is not such proof of fellowship with God too subjective? Who is to say whether or not the Spirit is present in one's life? According to John, the pragmatic evidence of the mutual indwelling is found in the confession that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. "The Spirit gives objective evidence [that God dwelleth in us] by prompting the confession that Jesus is the Christ."²¹

Confessing Jesus as Son of God is Proof of the Presence of the Holy Spirit

(4:2) By this you know [know (imperative)] the Spirit of God; every spirit which confesses Jesus (as) Christ come in (the) flesh is from God, (4:3a) and every (no) spirit which does not confess Jesus (,)

is not (is) from God; (4:14) And we have looked upon and testify that the Father has sent the Son (as) Savior of the world. (4:15) If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him and he in God.

Verses 4:2 and 4:15 point to the response of the Church to the kerygma. Only when one possesses the Holy Spirit is one able to confess the redemptive work that God has accomplished for man's salvation in the sending of His Son in the flesh, Jesus of Nazareth. "The test of the presence of the Divine Spirit is the confession . . . of the Incarnate Savior."²² Verse 4:3a presents the reverse side of the matter whereby anyone who fails to confess Jesus provides ample evidence of the absence of God's Holy Spirit.

We have already indicated (Chapter VIII, footnote 60) that the verb in 4:2 is indicative rather than imperative. The author is instructing his readers how to recognize the Spirit of God at work in men.²³ If they were already in possession of such knowledge, much of the reason for writing this letter would be missing.

The Holy Spirit is the instigator of man's profession of faith. When a Christian confesses that Jesus is the Son of God he is presenting indisputable evidence that the Holy Spirit dwells within him. And when a Christian has the Holy Spirit within him, he may be assured that he has fellowship with God. That is, "God abides in him, and he in God."

The initiative for the spiritual transformation is entirely on God's side. John does not imply that it is man's decision to believe in Christ that suddenly brings him a spiritual renewal. John is not

concerned with the problem of grace versus works, but in stating the fact that where faith is present, mutual indwelling with the Father is also present. Here is evidence of the presence of God's Spirit.

IV. LOVE IS A PROOF OF FELLOWSHIP

(4:12) No one has ever yet looked upon God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love [the love of Him] is matured in us. (4:16b) God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.

In addition to confessing the Incarnation, a life of love is further proof that a Christian is living in fellowship with God.

The characteristic feature in the Johannine teaching is that . . . loving union with God or 'knowledge' of Him is not only mediated through Jesus Christ His Son, but also expressed in brotherly love, so that mystical piety is freed from the unwholesome tendency . . . to regard the supreme object of the soul as a union with God at the expense of human relationships, as though the fewer ties one had with God's creatures the nearer one might come to God Himself.²⁴

Verse 4:12 might be paraphrased in this manner, "No one has ever been in union with God so as to see Him visibly, but when we love one another this is proof of His presence with us, because our natures are become more like His."

The verb "abide" in 4:12 refers to a spiritual union with the self-revealing God. This is the author's reply to the votaries of the mystery cults who spoke of their "vision of God" due to a sharing of His very nature.

The phrase $\eta' \alphaγαπη \alphaυτου$ may be interpreted in three ways: (1) as an objective genitive, our love for God is developed and

completed by our loving the brethren; this position is held by Plummer and Dodd; (2) as a subjective genitive, God's love for men; this is the preference of A. M. Brooke; (3) neither objective nor subjective but rather the love which answers to God's nature; this is the viewpoint held by Westcott and Haupt.

Since nowhere in this passage does the writer speak of our love for God but rather speaks of our love for each other, and since God's love for men has been already perfected in Christ and does not need demonstration or proof by brotherly love to bring it to such perfection, the interpretation of Westcott and Haupt must be accepted. It is best, "to exclude from the expression every objective or subjective reference of agape and . . . take it simply as the love which God has and which He is."²⁵ The absence of an article with $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\upsilon$ provides further emphasis of God's nature and character which is love.

The spiritual oneness with God, spoken of by John, is not a metaphysical union as the mystics declared. Rather, it is a moral and spiritual union whereby God's essence of love is imparted to men through His incarnate Son. As a consequence of this Fellowship-In-Union men show love for each other thereby demonstrating that God's nature has been brought to maturity within their own lives. This maturity is not synonymous with perfection, but indicates that the human personality is serving to transmit and communicate the essence of God, the very task that man was created to perform. Love for men is thus proof of fellowship with God.

In 4:16 there is even greater emphasis upon the nature of God

for the second sentence of the verse begins, "God is love." This passage has been called, "The high-water mark of the thought of the Epistle;"²⁶ and in many respects this is an apt description. The writer is not philosophizing or theorizing by attempting to equate the Creative Being with an abstract principle. God is Person; One whose nature it is to give of Himself on behalf of His creation. The greatest example of His activity of self-giving is seen in the Incarnation of the Son. Such perfect concern for others at the expense of oneself is love.

Grammar also substantiates this interpretation because in the expression, "God is love," the predicate is without an article. Thus, the terms "God" and "love" are no more convertible than "God" and "Logos" in John 1:1, or "Logos" and "flesh" in John 1:14.

Moffatt explains that,

this is not an abstract reflection upon the divine nature, much less an intuition of some inward light of an eternal unity, but a deduction from the revelation of God in the life and career of Jesus Christ.²⁷

Dodd concurs in this by saying that being "in God" refers to, "a personal relation with a living God, mediated through a concrete, historical personality, in whom the relation is original and perfect."²⁸

Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them," and that is what John is writing when he speaks of men abiding in God and God abiding in men. When the context of life within which a Christian lives is that of love for God and the reflection of God's nature in love for one's brother, then it is quite evident that a mutual fellowship exists between God and man. This fellowship is on a finite,

imperfect scale in contrast to the perfect fellowship that exists between the Father and the Son. But regardless of its microcosmic nature it is nevertheless real. Indeed, it is the only true relationship of which it may be said that one "abides in God." Any claim to fellowship with the Creator that is based on something less than a response of faith to the grace of God seen in Jesus Christ is false.

V. AN ACTIVE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS PROOF OF FELLOWSHIP

Walk in the Light as He is in the Light

(1:5) And this is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and (absolutely) no darkness is in Him. (1:6) If we say that we have fellowship with Him and we walk in the darkness, we lie and we do not (live out) the truth. (1:7) But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every kind of sin.

Elsewhere in his First Epistle, John points out that there is yet further proof that one "abides in," or has fellowship, with God. This involves the kind of life one leads in general. John insists that no one can claim to have fellowship with God and continue to lead a life that is contrary to the very nature of God. Some of the Gnostics of that day declared that if anyone wished to gain the peak of spiritual illumination it was necessary for him to undergo every manner of experience in order to gain his freedom from the worldly powers. Many of these deeds were of a crassly immoral character.²⁹

In 1:5 John insists that the God with whom the Christian has fellowship "is light and absolutely no darkness is in Him." C. K. Barrett believes that John's use of "light" is thoroughly Hellenistic,³⁰ but it is highly doubtful that such an interpretation is correct. The study of this letter indicates that the author writes from a definite Judaistic background and that his style is consistent in the way he treats the abstracts, "light" and "darkness."

If John followed the Greek way of thinking, then "light" would refer to the metaphysical nature of God, but the First Epistle is much closer to the Old Testament where light is a symbol of life, happiness, salvation, and moral purity (Cf. Psalm 36:9; 43:3; 56:13; Micah 7:8). J. Wellhausen remarks that, "The dualism between light and darkness is synonymous with the distinction of good and evil, and has nothing in common with the opposition between God and matter in Philo."³¹ Gore is also in agreement with this when he says, "On the whole, the New Testament conception of the divine light and of human enlightenment . . . is markedly ethical."³²

This is not to say, however, that John did not deliberately choose a term that the false prophets were successfully using in luring the Christians into the realm of "knowledge, falsely so-called." It is highly probable that he takes a contemporary, metaphysical term which is definitive of an ethereal, abstract thought and pours it into a new Christian mold.

In using the expression, "light," John refers to God's essential revelation.³³ That is, God's very essence is the self-revelation that

His Being is moral; God is love. This truth is not capable of withstanding dichotomous treatment. To give undue emphasis to either the moral essence or the self-revelation (Robert Law attempts the latter) is to invalidate and distort the whole. God's nature of love cannot be known apart from His self-revelation. On the other hand, His continuous revealing of who He is would not be possible apart from an essence of love. To attempt to divide these two aspects of God's nature is to engage in theosophical striving after metaphysical knowledge. Love always involves giving of self. Ignorance of this leads to a search for the Holy through mystical and pious exercises of the soul without sacrificial demands on the personality in its intercourse with others. Perfect love and absolute self-revealing find their nexus in God.

There is no extant evidence that Jesus ever said, "God is light." But John does not claim to have heard the Master say these words Himself. He says the message was heard $\acute{\alpha}\pi\prime\ \acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ and not $\pi\alpha\rho\prime\ \acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$; the latter "suggests that one has been by the side of the one from whom he (or it) comes."³⁴ The $\acute{\alpha}\pi\prime\ \acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ refers to the ultimate source which, in this instance, is the Incarnation. The author believes that "the Word became flesh" is a living message describing who God is and that this message can only be described as "God is light." Jesus Christ is also the ultimate source for the statement that "God is love" although John does not speak of this as "a message we have heard from Him."

In 1:6 John says that anyone who dares to declare that he has

fellowship with God³⁵ and yet fails to live a life that reflects the moral reality of God's being of light, is lying.

The expressions "we do not the truth" and "we walk in the darkness" parallel each other. They have reference to lives that are devoid of love and not imitative of the essence of God. The LXX renders $\aleph \aleph \aleph \aleph \aleph$ (steadfastness, faithfulness) by $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ only three times when referring to God, and at all other times by $\alpha\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$. When referring to men, this Hebrew word is translated, as a rule, by $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$. John is saying, "We do not live out the nature of God." The word "darkness" does not mean the world itself or sins per se but living without giving a response to the revelation of God's Being. "Darkness" is the state in which sin reigns and in which the world exists.

This verse brings to mind Isaiah 59:9: "Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; We look for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom."

John does not complete the parallelism in 1:7. Instead of saying "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with God," he says, "we have fellowship with one another," referring of course to fellow Christians. This fellowship is one of the two coextensive aspects of walking in the light. The other is the continual cleansing of all sin through Christ.

Verse 1:7 can be paraphrased in this fashion: "If we live up to our moral image of God we shall reflect our fellowship with God through fellowship with the brethren, and by the act of the Son of God we are

constantly kept fit to reflect God's image by His forgiveness of our ungodly attitude and resulting guilty deeds."

Stevens points out that for John, religion is fellowship with God, and this fellowship involves likeness to God. "The saving efficacy of Christ's blood is experienced only by those who walk in the light, that is, those who desire and strive to be pure and Godlike."³⁶

The expression "He is in the light" should be taken as the equivalent of "God is light" found in 1:5. It is altered here to produce a more even grammatical flow from the preceding, "if we walk in the light." It is the same idea of reflecting God's nature that we find in the preceding two verses. When anyone is in union with God's nature of love, that is to say, has fellowship with Him, then he will inevitably reflect this union through fellowship with others, and will enjoy the complete forgiveness of all his sins. The Book of Enoch says, "The righteous . . . will live in goodness and righteousness and will walk in eternal light" (92:4).

Walk in the Way He Walked

(2:5b) By this we come to know that we are in Him. (2:6) The one who says he abides in Him is bound [obliged] also to walk [in this way] even as He walked.

Elsewhere in the First Epistle, John also writes about the Christian's daily walk. In 2:5b,6 he is speaking of imitating the life of Christ, whereas in 1:5-7 reference is made to the Christian's life being a reflection of God's nature.

The expressions "in Him" (2:5b) and "abides in Him" (2:6) refer

to God but the words immediately following, "even as He walked" point to Jesus Christ. This is a good example of John's tendency to fuse the concepts of Father and Son so that they are often difficult to distinguish.

When the Christian walks as Jesus walked he gives evidence that a saving relationship between God and himself is established. It must be observed that a Christian's moral obedience is never so superior that it brings this fellowship into being. Indeed, such behavior is something that a disciple who already enjoys this fellowship must always be striving to improve; Cf. Eph. 5:2, I Peter 2:21. Regardless of the labor involved, he knows that it is but his duty to press on for perfection.³⁷

The assertion is not only that he who makes this profession incurs this obligation, but that the obligation is of such a nature that its fulfillment or nonfulfillment is decisive of the truth or the falsehood of the profession.³⁸

In 2:6 the opening phrase, "the one who says" brings to mind the subjunctive expression in 1:6, "if we say." John is thinking of the superlative claims of the false teachers regarding their absorption into the Godhead. But the author is here, as elsewhere in his letter, challenging their claims because their actions are not demonstratively supporting. "Any experience of God which is valid has an ethical quality defined by what we know of Christ."³⁹ Since the Gnostics refused to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God and their lives could not in the least be considered as walking as He walked, then certainly their professed experiences with God must be counted as invalid. "By this touchstone St. John exposed the grandiose pretensions

of contemporary Gnosticism."⁴⁰

Bengel's idea concerning a progression of thought in verses 2:3, 5,6 (cognitio, γινώσκει v.3; communico, ἐπίκειναι, v.5; constantia, μένειν, v.6) is too artificial and forced. These are three different ways of saying that true fellowship with God must be exhibited in a Christlike life.

A Christian Life is Sinless

(3:6) Everyone (no one) who abides in Him (sins) does not sin; everyone (no one) who sins has (seen) not seen Him or known Him.

In verse 3:6 John is again stressing the fact that an active Christian life is proof of fellowship between God and man. He uses three verbs to describe the activity of such a life: abide, see, and know. They refer to that relationship between God and His children which we call Fellowship-In-Union. Their equivalence is indicated by the break in parallelism, with "see" and "know" set over against "abide." Why does the writer use three such words in juxtaposition? Undoubtedly because they were key words in the vocabulary of the sectaries of the mystery religions. John says that if the prevailing habit of one's life indicates unconcern for righteousness and moral living, then any boasting about absorption in the Godhead, ecstatic vision, and esoteric knowledge must be discounted.

The author declares that we must look to the deeds in a man's life in order to see his consistent spiritual aim. Where this continuous striving after righteousness is not the supreme goal in a person's life, he cannot be said to abide in God.

A Christian Keeps His Commandments

(3:24a) And he who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him.

In 3:24a the reference to striving after righteousness is also present. The present tenses indicate that when obedience to God's commandments (Cf. 3:22-23) is the present continuing state of a person, then that person is in fellowship with God. "In simple obedience to the commands of God we recognize the reality of the intimate union between God and His children which is described as a mutual indwelling."⁴¹

A Christian Lives Out The Gospel

(2:24) That which you have heard from the beginning, let (it) abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also abide in the Son and [in] the Father.

As mentioned in Chapter IV (page 87), when John writes about "that which you have heard from the beginning," he is referring to the Gospel. In 2:24 he is saying, let the Gospel abide in you (note the repetitive use of *μὲνε(ν)*). What he does not explicitly say, but what is implied, is that if the Gospel abides in you, then this will be seen in the way it is worked out. And when it is thus worked out, there is ample evidence that a mystical, spiritual union with God exists.

The Gospel referred to is the message from God, incarnate in Jesus, that the key to all of life's existence is love and that this love can nowhere be comprehended apart from the Son of God. The

necessity for the mediation of the Son is further emphasized in 2:24 by the word order, "in the Son and the Father." Fellowship-In-Union with the Father always has been, and always must be, mediated through the Son.

There is clear evidence of man's free will in this verse. The imperative, "let it abide," indicates that the Christian is no automaton electronically controlled from a master computer panel in heaven. On the contrary, the Christian is free at all times to refute the will of God and to negate His Gospel of love that came to earth in the Incarnation. But John inveighs against so doing. He urges his readers to be in spiritual oneness with this Gospel, because it is only when this occurs that one can be certain that spiritual oneness with God is a reality. If the indwelling of the Gospel is missing, so then is this mystical union with the Father.

Verse 2:24 may be paraphrased: "When the Gospel regarding the Sonship of Christ takes firm root in your life and leads to acts of love, it is evident that you are in intimate fellowship with God through faith in Christ."

VI. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD ASSURES CONFIDENCE AT JUDGMENT

(4:17) By this, love has been completed with us, in order that we may have confidence in (for) the day of the judgment, because as He is we are also in this world. (2:28) And now, little children, abide in Him, in order that when He is made visible we might have (acrist) confidence and not be ashamed (shrink back in shame) of (from) Him at

His coming.

At first glance it would appear that verses 4:17 and 2:28, although both referring to Judgment, refer to Fellowship with God in two ways. Verse 4:17 seems to assume that the mutual indwelling which issues in confidence at Christ's return already exists between God and man. But 2:28 presents the hortatory, "abide in him" implying that before there can be any confidence at the time of Judgment, man has work to be performed on his part in order to demonstrate his fellowship with God.⁴²

A closer inspection of 4:17 reveals that the ἐν τούτῳ refers to the mutual indwelling mentioned in the preceding verse. (It can hardly refer to what follows since this would mean that love is perfected in the confidence at the day of judgment) This is a fellowship which is testified to by the Christian abiding in love (4:16). The person who is striving to love his brother is the one who has heard the exhortation to "abide in him." And thus in both 4:17 and 2:28 the abiding in God is seen to involve the activity of love. In 2:28 the Christian is being called to exhibit this love (or as 2:29 says, to do righteousness).

"Love has been completed (perfected) with us" implies that God's nature of love has been communicated to man and freely received by him. There is no connotation here of man assisting God in order to perfect His love. This would be synergism and nowhere in the First Epistle, or in the entire Bible, is such cooperation between man and God mentioned. Rather, the meaning here is that God's nature of love is

communicated completely to us and worked out within our living situation by our love of the brethren.

This is further emphasized at the conclusion of 4:17, "because as He is we are also in this world." Even as Christ is in fellowship with the Father and perfectly reflects His love, so must we, who are in fellowship with God, reflect His nature in our relationship with others. It is not our love for others, however, that causes God's nature of love to be completely communicated to us. Rather, our love for the brethren is the primary result of the communication of God's nature to us through our fellowship with Him, Cf. 2:5; 4:12.

The Christian faith which perceives the love of God in the Incarnation results in the Christian life which is an incarnation of God's love. When our eyes are opened to what God has done in Christ there will forthwith follow acts of God in our own lives. And these will be acts of love in relation to others.

Brooke has rightly said, "Those who are like their judge, can wait with confidence the result of His decrees."⁴³ When we have fellowship with the Father, as does the Son, there is no anxiety about the eternal verdict. The Son reveals the nature of God as love, and we reflect that nature in our associations with others. There is thus no need to worry about the judgment, for we are doing that which God intends us to do.

Verse 4:17 may be paraphrased: "By means of this mutual indwelling (Cf. 4:16), God's nature of love is completely communicated to us for our present earthly condition in order that we may have no

fear when an Accounting is called for. This is so because even as Christ reflects perfectly the love of God the Father through eternal fellowship with Him, so we too reveal the indwelling character of Christ by reflecting God's nature in our social intercourse with men."

In 2:28 and 4:17 John uses the word *παρρησία* in referring to the bold attitude that the Christian will possess when his Master comes to assert His perfect authority over all the world (the "appearing" of 2:28 and the "judgment" of 4:17 are equivalent terms). This expression is also found in 3:21 and 5:14.

Verses 3:21 and 5:14 refer to the Christian's present status or standing before God. It is a confidence brought about by the lack of a condemning conscience. The reason that the conscience does not condemn is because the Christian is doing God's commandments: believing in Jesus Christ as Lord, and loving the brethren, 3:23. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that testifies to all this, 3:24.

Such present confidence before God is expressed in the openness shown by the Christian in praying to God, 3:22. In 5:14 John also indicates that *παρρησία* in the present age refers to the freedom to approach God in prayer without fear. Such praying, of course, has reference to that which is "according to His will."

Returning to verses 2:28 and 4:17 we find that "confidence" points to the future status of the Christian. Here *παρρησία* refers to the boldness of approach in the Day of Judgment when Christ shall return and God shall be the Judge and Righteous *Δεσπόζης*.⁴⁴ It is doubtful that "confidence" in these two verses includes the free

and unrepressed speech that is involved in the charge and exculpation at the scene of Judgment. The idea of speaking freely to God is found more clearly in 3:21 and 5:14 where the context is that of prayer in the present life. Plummer has well defined the *παρρησία* which the Christian will experience at the future Judgment as, "the fearless trust with which the faithful soul meets God."⁴⁵

Although 3:21 and 5:14 refer to the present and 2:28 and 4:17 look forward to the future, all four verses have one thing in common. They are all predicated on the mutual indwelling with God. In 3:21 we are told that we have confidence because our consciences do not condemn us. But our consciences do not condemn us because we keep His commandments, and "all who keep His commandments abide in Him, and He in them" (3:24a).

In 5:14, "the confidence which we have in Him" follows immediately after "you have eternal life" (5:13), and in the Johannine writings, "eternal life" and "abiding in Him" are synonymous.

Verse 2:28 makes the connection extremely evident with "abide in Him, so that when he appears we may have confidence. . . ."

And finally, in 4:17 the confidence that the Christian will have at Judgment will be solely due to the fact that "he . . . abides in God, and God abides in him" (4:16b).

The *ἀποχρυσάμεν* implies the shrinking back from a sense of guilt. John says that the Holy Spirit instructs all Christians that they are in fellowship with God, that is, they "abide" in God, 2:27. And now they must act the part. They must endeavor to "abide

in Him" (in Christ), 2:28, which means that they must reflect God's nature of love on an earthly level. When a Christian spends his life in such pursuits there will be no need to feel ashamed and slink away when Jesus comes in Judgment. Rather, the Christian will have boldness in worship of his Lord for he has spent his life being about the Lord's business.

Does the author of the First Epistle of John expect Jesus to return soon? We cannot say with certainty. However, the four passages 2:18,28; 3:2; and 4:17 would lead us to believe that John is among those Christians who feels that the Lord may appear at any time. The word $\epsilon\lambda\upsilon$ in 2:28 casts no shadow of doubt on the probability of the $\pi\alpha\rho\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$.⁴⁶

But even though John may expect the $\pi\alpha\rho\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$ of Jesus at any time, he is not emphasizing the eschaton in 2:28, but rather the "abiding in." Regardless of when Jesus returns, it is the duty of each Christian to be found living out the fellowship that has been worked in. A Christian need never be ashamed of his life if his whole bent in living is toward loving his brethren. The use of $\nu\upsilon\nu$ with $\kappa\alpha\iota$ in 2:28 sharpens John's emotional appeal and indicates that he feels very deeply what he is writing.⁴⁷

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER X

1. Cf. Kittel's TWNT, Vol. IV, s.v. *μὲν*, pp. 578-593.
2. Ibid., p. 580.
3. Loc. cit.
4. Loc. cit.
5. Loc. cit.
6. George V. Jourdan, "Koinonia in I Corinthians 10:16," Journal of Biblical Literature, 67:111, June 1948.
7. Loc. cit.
8. Ibid., p. 112.
9. Loc. cit.
10. Gerhard Kittel, TWNT, Vol. III, s.v. *κοινός*, pp. 789-810. "Relationship to God, in the Old Testament, was established through the altar (I Cor. 10:18); St. Paul represents it as mediated through Christ." (p.804).
11. Jourdan, op. cit., pp. 123f.
12. Ibid., p. 124.
13. Exegetical notes on 1:3-4: The *καὶ...δὲ*, double conjunction in 1:3b ("yea, and our fellowship") denotes a continuation of thought, not contrast or opposition.
 John uses *ἔχειν* with the substantive in 1:3a for "have fellowship" in order to intensify the meaning of the verb. He does this with other substantives also, such as *ἐμπροσθεν* and *παρρησία*. Brooke and Westcott think that this construction emphasizes the joy of fellowship.
 The "also" of "we declare also" in 1:3a does not necessarily refer to remarks previously made in the Fourth Gospel. Rather, it has reference to the fact that the same things have been declared to others besides the present readers.
 The Vulgate, Augustine, Luther and Calvin are probably incorrect in saying that both clauses in 1:3 are dependent upon *ἵνα*. They insert *ἵνα* in the second clause to make it read, "that our fellowship may be." The fellowship between God and His children has already been established by the grace of God and is not brought about by the proclamation of the Gospel. Furthermore, from a grammatical viewpoint, the verb could not be omitted if the second clause were dependent upon *ἵνα*.

The question concerning why "looked upon" and "touched with our hands" of 1:1 are omitted in verse three and why "heard" and "seen" of 1:1 are reversed in verse three must go unanswered. It is probably futile to strive to find a deep theological reason. The writer simply desires to continue his emphasis on the sensuous perception and he does so in an abbreviated form.

In 1:4 $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$ refers to the whole Epistle.

14. G. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 16. This discussion of the "we" passages is based on the excellent arguments of G. H. Dodd.

15. The following verse 2:28 may seem to contradict this interpretation because the imperative "abide in Him" is definitely used. But whereas 2:27 speaks of abiding in God, the next verse refers to abiding in Christ. John is again employing the idea, "You are in God, now act the part!" The absence of a smooth transition must be admitted, but this is not unusual in the First Epistle. Cf. Appendix D, pp. 382 f.

16. James Moffatt, Love in the New Testament, p. 290.

17. Dodd, op. cit., p. 96.

18. This is in contrast to 4:13 where the verb is present perfect indicating the continuous effects of the gift of the Spirit. These continuous effects are the confessing Jesus as Son of God, and loving one's brethren.

19. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 200.

20. "Of His Spirit" is a partitive genitive signifying that a part and not all of God's Spirit is given to the Christian.

21. Law, op. cit., p. 396.

22. Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 140.

23. This is the only place in the Johannine literature where the expression, "The Spirit of God," is found.

24. Moffatt, op. cit., p. 298.

25. Erich Haupt, The First Epistle of St. John, p. 267.

26. Dodd, op. cit., p. 118.

27. Moffatt, op. cit., p. 253.

28. G. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 197.

29. Cf. Eusebius H. E. IV, 7:9.

30. C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 51.

31. Julius Wellhausen, Das Evang. Johannis, p. 123.

32. Charles Gore, The Epistles of St. John, p. 78.

33. Scholars do not agree on the meaning of the expression, "God is light." They say it shows God to be unapproachable, infinite, omnipresent, unchangeable, source of life, safety, absolutely holy, self-revealing; also suggesting intelligence, purity, happiness, brightness, and truth.

34. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 578.

35. A. E. Broeke, The Johannine Epistles (IGG), p. 13. This is a reference to a direct assertion by the Gnostics, for the writer, "is not wasting his weapons on purely hypothetical situations."

36. Stevens, op. cit., p. 166.

37. Cf. Luke 17:10 where $\omega\phi\epsilon\iota\lambda\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu$ refers to a personal obligation or debt. The word $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$ is not found in the Epistles as in John 20:9 where the obligation is "in the nature of things," as Westcott puts it.

38. Law, op. cit., p. 214.

39. G. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 32.

40. George G. Findlay, Fellowship in the Life Eternal, p. 149.

41. Dodd, op. cit., p. 94.

42. Cf. 3:3 where the same thought exists. The assuming of a Christ-like character is carried out through acts of living here and now, i.e. purifying oneself. Also, Cf. 2:6.

43. Broeke, op. cit., p. 124.

44. Gerhard Kittel (Ed.), TWNT, Vol. V, s.v. $\pi\alpha\rho\rho\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$.
p. 879.

45. A. Plummer, The Epistles of St. John, p. 117.

46. G. H. Dodd believes that the writer expected the advent of Christ shortly, but when the Lord did not appear, the Fourth Evangelist (different from the writer of the First Epistle) brought forth a realized eschatology.

At any moment the shame of denial may cause us to shrink from Him; at any moment, remaining in Him, we may have confidence in His presence. The Last Judgment, in all its solemnity and decisiveness, waits upon us in the midst of time. (The Johannine Epistles, p. 65)

Dodd's belief that "the author of the Epistle was a disciple of the Evangelist and a student of his work" (p. lvi), would seem to be in contradiction to his implication that the work of the "disciple" has preceded that of the Evangelist in matters of eschatology. See Appendix G.

47. Viteau, Etude Sur Le Grec, (1896), p. ii. "The historical books of the New Testament, and especially their dialogues and discourses, are only fully and truly intelligible to us in reading them in high voice in the original Greek text, and in supplying the intonation, the gestures, the movement, that is to say, in reconstituting by the imagination the scene itself."

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, we have found that John takes certain key Gnostic watchwords, fills them full of fresh Christian content and uses them to advance the cause of the Church.

Before discussing these refashioned concepts, let us survey some preliminary findings. The internal evidence favors a common authorship of I John and the Fourth Gospel, although there is no conclusive proof that the writer is the Apostle John. It may be that the author was one called John the Presbyter.

The exact date of writing is also uncertain, although we have reason to believe that the letter may have been written between 90 A.D. and 110 A.D. Whether it preceded or followed the composition of the Fourth Gospel must remain a question mark.

Recent research, particularly with the Dead Sea Scrolls, leads us to believe that the place of writing may have been Palestine instead of Ephesus where tradition has steadfastly maintained the letter was written.

Although we speak of I John as a letter, it is not in the customary epistolary form but appears more like a tract or pamphlet. The author sets down his thoughts as they come to mind. This "stream of consciousness" results in a lack of systematic presentation and the absence of smooth, logical progression.

The element in the historical environment that had the greatest influence upon the incentive for writing the letter and accounted for

many of its semantic connotations was Gnosticism; this, rather than Hellenistic Judaism or Greek philosophy. The eclectic beliefs of religio-philosophical Gnosticism were undermining the confidence of the Christians. The "certainty" of theosophical speculation was increasingly assuming a higher priority in the minds of many Christians than the hope of revelation.

John may have been particularly concerned about the heresy of Cerinthus although he nowhere mentions any one specific Gnostic sect by name. Gnosticism was a syncretism of religious and philosophical speculation that sought to gain apotheosis. Originally it was not a Christian heresy, although the name Gnostic and the characteristics by which we now know Gnosticism may have originated contemporaneously with Christianity. It became a heresy when Christians attempted to adapt Gnostic beliefs to the Christian revelation.

The major influence of Gnosticism upon Christianity was not, as most scholars believe, that writers like Paul, John etc. accommodated some of the contemporary ideas to Christian theology. Rather, it was the lack of confidence that crept into Christian circles because of the haughty, boastful attitude of pagan speculation. It is true that the Church did adapt itself to its environment, as it has had to do in every age since. But the Johannine writings were not created to inveigh against Gnosticism or to proclaim an existential adjustment or modus vivendi between Christianity and its first century environment. John seeks instead to assert the positive relationship that a Christian has with God through faith in Jesus Christ, and to describe the kind of

life that will be the result of such a relationship. In so doing he hopes to bolster the sagging confidence of the Church. It is also his desire to heal the breach which has appeared in the Christian fellowship because of the divisiveness of the mystery religions.

The destination of I John may have been the Churches in Asia Minor, but this is only speculation since we have no positive way of knowing to whom the letter was written.

The writer of I John was not a Gnostic but a Jew who realized that the Gospel must be interpreted anew for each succeeding generation. Thus he takes Gnostic watchwords and concepts such as "born of God," "know God," "abiding in God," and clothes them with fresh Christian meaning. He successfully demonstrates what each Christian generation must come to realize, that the new wine must ever be poured into new wineskins.

The rather recent excitement over the Dead Sea Scrolls has led to the assertion by some scholars that there is an organic relationship between the Johannine literature and the Qumran community. This cannot be substantiated! Most of the areas where similarities are said to exist are in the watchwords and concepts with which John takes issue. But John's polemic is against Gnosticism and not the Qumran Covenanters who cannot be classified as Gnostics in the strict sense. It is not surprising that some of the concepts of I John and the Dead Sea Scrolls are similar, although nowhere identical, since most of them have their basic roots in the Old Testament. We cannot emphasize too strongly that the seedbed for Johannine theology was Judaism and not the Qumran

community. Even so, there is a continuing need for further research to determine the comparative degrees of influence exerted by the Qumran Community and Gnosticism upon the Johannine literature.

The major theme of this little letter is eternal life. John is not speaking quantitatively in terms of length of time. He is speaking qualitatively of a spiritual relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ the Incarnate Son. This relationship, which we refer to in this dissertation as Fellowship-in-Union, enjoys a primal existence between the Father and the Son. It is not possessed by the Gnostics who boast of attaining to it, but it is given to men who respond in faith to the Son who alone is capable of mediating this union-relationship. The evidence of the gift of eternal life is the reflection of God's nature of love in the daily living of Christians.

In contrast to the Gnostics who ignore Sin, John emphatically declares that no one is sinless. Everyone is guilty of disobeying the law of love by substituting self for the God who is love and who demands perfect obedience. But the author strangely follows this pronouncement with a paradoxical concept that no one born of God can sin. John presumably means that whoever has the regenerate nature of God's love within him is not capable of pursuing Godless goals as a way of life. The Christian's persistent way of life leads toward Christ, not away from Him, even though he may stumble and fall from time to time.

The only one who is able to rescue man from the abyss of Sin is Jesus Christ the sinless one, the Son of God. Because He is wholly

righteous, He alone is qualified to be the perfect sacrifice for the expiation of sins. Only He is worthy to plead for the unrighteous in order that they may be forgiven and approach the Holy God.

John admonishes his readers to pray for all sinners, but he specifically does not encourage prayer for the apostates who have left the Church for Gnosticism and deny the Incarnation. He feels that such a heretical attitude can have but one certain, ultimate end: spiritual death!

The Gnostics used the watchword "born of God" in the sense of being deified through an occult experience. John seizes upon this speculative shibboleth and restores to it a true and proper interpretation. He takes it to mean the receiving of the Spirit of God and His nature of love. The Christian is a new being spiritually and not metaphysically.

Proof of the fact that one has been "born of God" is seen in belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and in living the Christian life. A person is living a Christian life when he loves the brethren, consistently pursues the goal of obeying God's commandments, and lives in a righteous, Christ-like manner. Further evidence that one has been "born of God" is revealed in one's listening to the teaching of the Church, particularly as that teaching is epitomized in the Incarnation. To deny this teaching, as did the Gnostics, is to prove that one has not been "born of God."

All who have been "born of God" with their spiritual source in the Creator and Redeemer, have proved to be victorious over the world.

The unrighteous forces of the world find their source in the evil one.

The Gnostics claimed to "know" God by virtue of a mystic revelation resulting in deification. When the Jew spoke of knowing God he was referring to the way in which he responded to the mighty acts of God. John states that a Christian knows God because he is in a unique spiritual relationship with the One who has been revealed by Jesus Christ and testified to by the Holy Spirit.

When one has faith in Jesus Christ and lives a life of love in obedience to the commandments of God, it may be said that one knows God; that is, one has Fellowship-in-Union. The ungodly forces professed to know God, but the exacting Johannine definition stamped all such claims as false.

The favorite designation of Jesus in I John is Son of God. This is not used in an oriental or Hellenistic sense but is derived from the Old Testament. Jesus evidently applied this title to Himself because He was obedient to God as the suffering servant. There is no evidence that the Jews themselves ever thought of the Messiah as the Son of God. John is anxious to point out that persons become children of God only as they are in fellowship with the true Son of God.

The writer of I John is insistent on giving major emphasis to the Incarnation. God has commanded men to believe in the Incarnation and assists them in their belief by providing His own witness. This witness comes through the historical acts of Baptism and Death in the redemptive life of Christ. The Holy Spirit reveals the continuing soteriological implications of this witness to the spirit of

contemporary man.

The reason God came in the flesh was to give man the same fellowship with Him which the Father and the Son enjoy. This is accomplished through the forgiving of sins. The only way in which the world can be saved is through the Incarnate Son who manifests the true God of creation and salvation.

John declares that anyone who denies the Incarnation is possessed of the spirit of antichrist. The writer may or may not expect the momentary appearing of one, all-powerful antichrist. We have no way of knowing, although there is reason to believe that he does not.

The Fellowship-in-Union relationship is founded on God's love for man and is reflected in brotherly love. The example to be followed in brotherly love is seen in the Incarnation and the self-giving, sacrificial life of Jesus Christ. The love of one Christian for another is to take the concrete form of deeds and actions, not mere words.

Love for one's brother testifies to the fact that one is born of God, knows God, is in the light, and has passed from death to life. One's love for others does not create such a Fellowship-in-Union relationship but witnesses to its existence. The haughty attitude of the Gnostics toward others and lack of compassion and love was sufficient evidence that they did not possess the spiritual relationship with God which they so frequently boasted about.

Another expression for eternal life is "abiding in." When the Gnostics used such terminology they were speaking of a metaphysical

fusion of man with Deity. But when John speaks of man abiding in God and God abiding in man he is referring to the fellowship between man's spirit and God's Spirit. Indeed, it is only this writer among all the others in the New Testament who uses the expression "fellowship" to denote a spiritual relationship extending from man to God the Father. Because the Gnostics do not confess Jesus Christ as Lord or live a life of love for the brethren, it may be categorically stated that they do not "abide in" God regardless of their boasts. John confirms to the Christians that it is they and not the Gnostics who possess this fellowship.

When God dwells in man and man in God there is a confidence that one has, both in the present in times of prayer, and in the future when the Judgment shall come. There need be no fear of the Final Accounting for the person who has fellowship with God and displays that fellowship in an active Christian life.

Our major conclusion is this. The writer, whoever he may have been, was a man of his times. He saw the Church endangered by divisiveness from without and indecisiveness from within. He went into action using his pen as a sword. The result of his brilliant efforts was the successful dialogue between the Church and the world, with the Church retaining belief in the heart of the Christian faith, the Incarnation.

The Church of Christ in the Twentieth Century is facing many of the same problems as the Church in the days of John. Religious eclecticism is encouraged by the "tolerance" of the Western nations.

The unique Incarnation, incapable of being empirically analyzed, is often diffused if not displaced by rational syncretism. God's answer to this creeping heresy as presented by the author of I John for his age is still valid for our own.

The answer is found in the dual rhythm of the epistle's heartbeat in the areas of Christian faith and the Christian life. According to John, the Christian faith which perceives the love of God in the Incarnation, results in the Christian life which is an incarnation of God's love. Only those who manifest such faith and life can be considered to be in a soteriological relationship with God.

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APPENDIX A

THE WORLD

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THE WORLD

I. GOD'S CREATION AND MAN'S ENVIRONMENT

An Area of Anti-Christian Activity

(4:1) Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (4:3) And every spirit which does not confess Jesus (,) is not from God; and this is the (spirit) of antichrist, which you have heard that it [he] is coming, and now is already in the world.

One of the secrets of properly interpreting I John is in understanding that the writer does not always mean the same thing by the same word. The dual way in which he uses "world" is a good example. In some instances "world" refers to our present earthly surroundings, our daily living situation. It includes all people, creatures, all natural creations, and the transpiring events of societal intercourse; in short, it is all of God's creation and man's environment. In other passages the writer has in mind all the forces opposed to God; the devil-inspired ungodly elements characterized by the denial of the Incarnation and loveless lives.

Verses 4:1,3,17; 3:17; 4:9,14 illustrate John's use of "world" in the sense of God's creation and man's environment. In 4:1 he says that the false prophets have gone out into the world. That is to say, the antichrists (Cf. 2:18) have gone out from the Church (Cf. 2:19), not from the demonic world, into many areas of the inhabited creation

to proclaim their false doctrine. As Haupt says, John uses "world" in its widest meaning, signifying the scene of the activity of the false prophets.

In 4:3 the writer also speaks of the "world" as the area of antichristian activity when he says that the spirit of antichrist "now is already in the world."¹ The antichrist is not present in man's environment as a personal being, but rather as the abstract characteristic of ungodliness which is loosed in the sphere of mankind's existence and is free to impinge upon every personality. John tells his readers that this reference to antichrist should be no surprise to them for this has been part of their pedagogical instruction from the beginning; "you have heard that it is coming."

An Area of Christian Activity

(4:17) By this, love has been completed with us, in order that we may have confidence in (for) the day of judgment, because as He is we are also in this world. (3:17) But if anyone has the (wherewithal) means of the world and beholds (looks at with understanding) his brother having need and shuts his heart (compassionate kindness) from him, how does the love of God abide in Him?

The "world" as God's creation and man's environment, in addition to being an area for antichristian activities, is also an area for Christian activity (4:17). There is no area of God's creation which is not a proper locale for the Christian to witness to his fellowship with the Father by displaying love for the brethren. Because the glorified Christ is in perfect fellowship and love with the Father

("as He is"), the Christian, whose faith is in Christ, will conduct himself in his daily life upon earth as one who has Fellowship-in-Union with the Father. Such conduct, to be real, will be evidenced as love for the brethren.

What form this love must take is clearly defined in 3:17 when John explains that physical succor must be given to those in need (Cf. James 2:15-16, "If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?"). The expression "means of the world" refers to the creature comforts of life that are derived from God's natural gifts and any derivative products conceived by the ingenuity of man.

An Area of Soteriological Activity

(4:9) By this the love of God was made visible in [among] us, that God has sent His only Son into the world in order that we might live through Him. (4:14) And we have looked upon and we testify that the Father has sent the Son (as) Savior of the world.

Verse 4:9 concerns God's love for man that was displayed by the sending of His Son into man's environment as a man. God, in the Son, thus confronted man in a communicative way by being clothed in humanity and engaging in comprehensible dialogue. This was for the whole purpose of making possible eternal life.

The "world" in 4:9 is the theater of operations where the Divine-human confrontation occurs which has eternal repercussions. The God-Man lives with man in order that man might live with God. In 4:14 John

uses "world" in a slightly different way. It is definitely an area of soteriological activity, but it is particularly the human area made up of all men who respond to the overtures of God. In 4:9 the reference is to a place whereas in 4:14 the reference is more to persons.

This latter verse continues to emphasize the fact that God must share in the world in order to save it. The Holy Spirit moves the Church to witness to the fact that God the Father has sent the Son to perform the ministry of reconciliation for all who have rebelled against the imago dei within them.

This human area of Godly activity is not limited to a select group, in strong contrast to the pneumatikoi of the Gnostic mystery religions. The only pre-requisite is that of being made in the image of God and no man can properly deny such an origin. The Word of restoration is given to all men with no special intellectual or initiatory requirements to be met in advance.

The "world" to be saved is the sum total of all human personalities (there is no evidence that John has in mind the Pauline cosmological soteriology, Col. 1:1-20). This Fellowship-in-Union with the Father is only possible through the Incarnate Son.

II. FORCES OPPOSED TO GOD

The Relation of Jesus Christ to the World

(2:2) And He Himself is (the) (propitiation) expiation on account of our sins, and not on account of ours only but also on account of the whole world.

Just as John says in 4:14 that the Son has come as Savior of the world, he says much the same thing in 2:2: the saving act is necessary because of the sins of all people. But in 2:2 he uses two expressions to denote the encompassing of all people, "our sins" and "the whole world."

The use of "world" in 2:2 designates all those who are alienated from God, the unbelievers who are opposed to God (whereas in 4:14 "world" refers to all persons). John is thus saying that Christ is the expiation because of the sins of the Christians ("on account of our sins") and also because of the ungodly element in society ("the whole world"). He evidently feels that it is superfluous to say "sins of the whole world" (which the RSV has paraphrased) because the whole way of life of the world, when "world" is used in the sense of those forces opposed to God, is that of sin.

Forgiveness for the Christian who stumbles and falls in his daily walk toward God, as well as forgiveness for those whose every step takes them farther away from God, comes only through the Son. It is He who has been sent by God as the sacrificial offering which alone makes possible forgiveness and atonement.

The Relation of Christians to the World

(3:1) See what sort of love the Father has given to us in order that we might be called children of God, and we are. For this cause the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (3:13) Do not wonder, brethren, if the world hates you. (5:19) We know that we are of God, and the entire world lies in the evil one.

(2:15) Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of [for] the Father is not in him.

(2:16) Because everything which is in the world, the lustful desire of the flesh, and the lustful desire of the eyes and the boastfulness of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. (2:17) And the world is passing away (middle voice) and its lustful desire.

But he who does the will of God remains forever.

(4:4) You are of God, little children, and have overcome them because greater is the One in you than the one in the world. (5:4) for [because] everything [all] which has been born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory which (has overcome) overcame the world, our faith. (5:5) And who is the one who conquers the world if not the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Throughout his First Epistle John, from time to time, gives a description of the relationship between the Christian and the ungodly forces known as the "world." The writer's views can be outlined as follows: (1) the world hates the Christians because it is in the power of the evil one (3:1,13; 5:19); (2) the world is not to be loved by the Christians because it has its source in all that opposes the Father and therefore is of a temporal nature (2:15-17); (3) the world has been conquered by the Christians due to the indwelling of God, and belief in the Incarnation (4:4; 5:4-5).

In this letter John is attempting to provide moral and spiritual courage in the lives of the Christians. One of the greatest destroyers of self-confidence in any person's life is to be misunderstood by

others. If this continues for any length of time, one begins to suspect that perhaps one is wrong and the reasons for being misunderstood may be quite valid. It is just this attitude which John assails in 3:1 as he reminds his readers that it is only natural that the forces which oppose God should not understand His witnesses (Cf. Chapter VII for the special Johannine uses of the word "know").

When one has truly been born of God and enjoys the relationship of a child to the Father, there will be conflict with all those who have not been reborn. The primary reason being that the world (all the ungodly elements) has never entered into a faith-union relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ. When anyone lacks such a relationship, he is unable to appreciate the position of all others who have entered into such a Fellowship-in-Union.

John is careful to point out in 3:13 that the lack of empathy and rapport between the world and the Church does not stop at the innocent stage of misunderstanding. This lack of knowledge has assumed the full proportion of hatred. The very word order itself in 3:13 stresses the hatred.

John explains that this should come as no surprise. "Do not wonder, brethren," he says.² This warning takes place within the Cain and Abel passage implying that the world finds its source of hatred and malice in the evil one just as Cain did. Cain was a murderer and all who belong to the world at the present time are murderers too for "any one who hates his brother is a murderer" (3:15a).

The use of εἰ with the indicative tense after θαυμάζειτε

instead of $\acute{\omicron}\tilde{\iota}$ does not imply doubt, but on the contrary, stresses the emotion involved in the certainty of the situation. The translation of the RSV accurately expresses the meaning: "Do not wonder, brethren, that the world hates you."

In 5:19 John reiterates his position that everyone belonging to the world is dependent upon and has his spiritual source in the evil one. This is further proof why the Christians should not be surprised when the forces which oppose God also oppose them to the extent of hatred.³

If the world hates the Church, then what is to be the response of the Church to the world? John does not enjoin a return of hatred, but he does explicitly direct in 2:15 that Christians should not love the world. Whether this is to result in hate or a state of neutral detachment the writer does not say.

It is difficult not to believe that John would have all Christians love the pagans into the Kingdom. But throughout his letter he is speaking of relationships. And his use of $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta$ also involves relationship, just as "abide," "know," "eternal life" etc. The danger to the Church due to the schismatic heresy of Gnosticism with its docetic emphasis has become so acute that John uses the greatest New Testament word $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta$ to warn the Christians against attaching themselves spiritually to the pagan forces opposing God.

It is thus easy to see why we should interpret $\eta\acute{\iota}\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta$ $\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\alpha\tau\rho\acute{\sigma}$ as "the Father's love" and not as "love for the Father" as Plummer, the RSV and others. When one is attached to the devil,

then perforce one cannot have the very nature of God, viz. love, within one. This same idea is captured in James 4:4, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

A choice is thus to be made. As Dodd says, "[John] sees the Christian life as one which demands a clear choice between God and the 'world.'"⁴ We are reminded of Deuteronomy 30:19, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life. . . ." A person shows that the "seed" of God is within himself by displaying deeds of love which have their source in God.

In 2:16 John says that "lustful desires" and "boastfulness" "is not from the Father, but is from the world." Everything in life which is connected with person-centered egoism has its inception and affinity with a source other than God.

In an attempt to be specific John uses the expressions "lustful desire of the flesh," "lustful desire of the eyes," and "the boastfulness of life." It is not certain what he means by them. We can only be general in our attempt to define them.

The difficulty encountered by various scholars in explaining "lust of the flesh" is seen in the following: the desire for unlawful pleasures of sense (Plummer); sensuality deeply rooted and widespread in the Graeco-Roman society (Dodd); all desires which involve the appropriation of the object to which they are directed (Westcott); human nature corrupted by sin (Brooke); all corrupt bodily desires (Findlay); the soul, no longer God-directed gives way to natural

appetite and sensuous gratification (Law); whatever seeks the satisfaction of the natural instincts at the expense of all else (Moffatt).

Moffatt's and Law's definitions are probably as close as we can come. Man is born with certain drives, instincts and natural motivations. None of these is bad in itself, but when the human personality becomes I-centered, all the natural elements begin existing only for personal exploitation and the resulting sensuous gratification. It would not be contrary to the teaching of this passage if the writer were referring to antinomianism. We have no way of knowing whether he is, but we cannot be as certain as Brooke seems to be that there is no reference here to transgression of the moral law.

Commentators are also hard-pressed to find a general ground for unity when explaining John's use of "lust of the eyes;" a reference to the circus games and the prurient curiosity of the amphitheater (Plummer); a tendency to be captivated by the outward show of things without inquiring into their real values (Dodd); all personal, vicious indulgences satisfied by contemplation (Westcott); a desire for everything gratifying the sense of vision (Brooke); the phrase includes every variety of gratification of which sight is the instrument (Law); it refers to art, music, fashion and all aesthetic sensibilities. Art for art's sake (Findlay); lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes are differing aspects of the same attitude (Moffatt).

Since John uses the word "eyes" we can only conclude that he is thinking of the natural and sensual elements of the human personality which receive egoistic motivation and gratification through the

sense of vision.

As for "the pride of life," the scholars have these interpretative remarks: ostentatious pride in the possession of worldly resources (Plummer); conceited, pretentious humbug and illustrative of the irresponsible, acquisitive, self-glorifying spirit (Dodd); false view of our possessions (Westcott); love of display by means of external possessions (Brooke); the fatuous pride of worldly possessions and success, the vain sense of security that is based upon a false estimate of the worth of worldly things (Law); the disposition to 'show off' and to make other people look small (Findlay); the love of display, evinced in pluming oneself on possessions of any kind (Moffatt).

We agree with Brooke that "life" as used by John is life in its external aspect, or the means of supporting life. Worldly possessions, whether they be of a material or human nature, when seized upon for selfish purposes constitute the basis of the "boastfulness of life."

In summary, John is anxious to show his readers (2:16) that the I-centered sensuous gratification, especially that which is egoistically motivated through the sense of vision and which is evidenced in personal possession, has its origin in an ungodly source. God the Father is not directly responsible for such an attitude, and none of the adherents of the mystery religions who exhibits such an attitude has any right to claim spiritual motivation from God.⁵

The writer points out in 2:17 that everyone who associates himself with the world is connected with that which is temporal. In fact, says John, even now "the world is passing away." The *παράγεται*

is in the middle voice which puts emphasis on the subject. This signifies that this act of judgment, though of God, is brought on by a free act of will. The world is thus responsible for its own dissolution.⁶

The handwriting is even now on the wall for the forces of evil and time is running out. As the world passes away so too do all the "wrong principles, . . . characterized by base desires, false values, egoism."⁷ The lust and pride mentioned in the preceding verse cannot continue forever.

The only one who abides forever is "he who does the will of God." But what does John mean by *μὲνεν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα* ("he abides unto the ages;" "he abides forever")? It is evident that John is contrasting the world, which is of a temporal nature and is even now disappearing, to the Christian whose longevity will somehow be greater. It is thus clear that the element of time cannot be completely ignored. But this is not of primary importance to John. For the writer is always more interested in ontology than chronology.

John speaks of time here as a continuous relationship with God. For *αἰῶνα* refers to both world time and the eternity of God (who cannot be fully contained within time).⁸

In 2:17 John is not speaking of persons who will never die and will continue on throughout time. Rather he means that even when a Christian dies physically, his spiritual fellowship with God, which exists even now, does not cease. This is a continuation of the relationship spoken of in 3:24a, "all who keep His commandments abide in Him and He in them."

John thus gives very good reasons for not loving the world. The spiritual source and sustaining power of all ungodly elements lies in the evil one and everyone who shows an affinity for ungodly ways indicates an alliance with the evil one, not with the Father. When one is allied with the evil one he is connected with that which is of a temporary nature. It cannot long endure and is even now dissolving.

As we have already mentioned, one of the major tasks confronting John in the writing of the Epistle is that of bring encouragement to his readers. One method that he uses is to tell them what has already been accomplished. In 4:4 he assures them that the false prophets have already been conquered by them because the Spirit of God within them is so much greater than the spirit of antichrist within the false prophets. The antichrist (or "devil" or "evil one" meaning the spiritual force of ungodly character, the source of unrighteousness and sin) is the spiritual progenitor of the false prophets. John uses the expression "in the world" rather than the expected "in them" to show that there is such an intimate association between the false prophets and the world that they may be used interchangeably.

How has this victory come about? John says that it is through faith; 5:4. "By a strong metonymy, the victory is identified with the means by which it is won."⁹

And what is the substance of this faith? Verse 5:5 explains that it is the acceptance of the Incarnation. If Jesus is not the Son of God, then there is no Spirit of God within the Christians to bring victory over the world (4:4). It is only as one recognizes that God has clothed Himself in flesh and declares this God as Lord that victory

prevails over the forces of sin and evil. This victory cannot be dissociated from the Christ Himself who is the Victor.

The Relation of False Prophets to the World

(4:5) They are of the world; therefore they speak of the world and the world listens to them.

When one denies the Incarnation this is evidence of an alliance with those ungodly forces known as the "world." The false prophets who have gone out into the world (4:1) do deny the Incarnation, therefore they are in opposition to everything Godly and the evil forces give heed to them (Cf. John 3:31 for a similar thought, although $\delta\hat{\eta}\varsigma$ is not quite equivalent to $\kappa\acute{o}\sigma\mu\omicron\upsilon$).

All the adherents of the Gnostic mystery religions, particularly those who have defected from Christ's Church, now preach a message which is contrary to the Gospel. This message is listened to by all who deny the Incarnation.

FOOTNOTES APPENDIX A

1. Luther and the English versions before 1611 based their translations on the Vulgate which has "antichrist" for "spirit of antichrist" and thus they translated "that he cometh."

2. This form of address is found nowhere else in the First Epistle. Westcott gives the following explanations of addresses: "brethren"--expresses the idea of Christian equality in virtue of the common life; *τεχνικα* --spiritual dependence with the prospect of growth; *παιδικα* --refers to subordination and immaturity; "beloved" --merely a personal manifestation of feeling.

3. George B. Stevens, The Johannine Theology, p. 135. ". . . the dualism which is involved in the opposition between God and the world is not metaphysical but ethical." W. F. Howard (Christianity According to St. John, p. 83) agrees with Stevens in saying, "The Johannine dualism is practical, not metaphysical. . . . The Gospel and Epistle conspicuously set before us a series of opposites, light and darkness, truth and falsehood, spirit and flesh, life and death, righteousness and sin. The entire conflict is summed up in the antithesis between God and the world." We would only refer to Appendix B, pp. 357f. where we maintain that John borders closely on the concept of a metaphysical dualism between God and the devil. We are safe in saying that he definitely sets forth an ethical dualism, which he does. But one cannot read this Epistle and not detect the feeling that when John uses such terms as darkness, falsehood, flesh, death, and sin, he has something more concrete in mind than abstract symbols.

4. G. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 41.

5. Ibid., p. 43. "It may be . . . that the teachers whom the author is attacking had no conscious intention of lowering the ethical standards of the Church; but their willingness . . . to accommodate Christian doctrine to current ideas went with a general desire to minimize the difference between Christianity and the ordinary life and thought of the time." This can be said of many within the Church today whose "broadmindedness" and "tolerance" helps to jeopardize more than evangelize.

6. Westcott interprets the middle voice to mean that the world is being overcome "in the face of the Church." Law disagrees, preferring to take the middle voice as indicative, not of the speedy conquest of the world by Christianity, but rather the nearness of Christ's Advent (Cf. 2:18). Robertson (p.804) says, "The only difference between the active and middle voices is that the middle calls especial attention to the subject. . . . In the middle (voice) the subject is acting in relation to himself somehow. What the precise relation is the middle voice does not say."

7. Dodd, op. cit., p. 44.
8. Cf. Chapter IV, p. 78.
9. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 276.

APPENDIX B

THE DEVIL

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THE DEVIL

I. THE NATURE OF THE DEVIL

The Source of Unrighteousness and Hatred

(3:10) By this is visible the children of God and the children of the devil; everyone who does not do righteousness is not of God, and whoever does not love his brother. (3:11) For this is the message which you heard from (the) beginning, [in order] that we [might] love each other; (3:12) not as Cain (who) was from the evil one and murdered his brother; and because of what did he murder him? Because his deeds were evil, and the (deeds) of his brother (were) righteous.

In 3:10 we have the expression, "children of the devil,"¹ and in 3:12 there is the phrase "of (from) the evil one." Are these references to an ethico-moral or a spiritual, quasi-metaphysical relationship? This is dependent upon John's concept of the devil. Plummer says, "Here [in 3:12], as elsewhere in the Epistle (2:13,14; 5:18-19) St. John uses 'the evil one' as a term with which his readers are quite familiar. He gives no explanation."²

If there is just an ethical likeness, then the children of the devil lead lives of darkness and sin in imitation of the devil who is devoid of light and is the source of all unrighteousness. However, if there is a spiritual relationship the unrighteous man has something of the devil's spirit within him and the bent of his personality is attributable to the evil one.

Most of John's references to the devil in his Epistle leave little doubt that he believes in a being who is the chief adversary of God, being the source and originator of all things evil. Nowhere does John intimate that he attributes the actual creation of man to the devil. But when he uses the word $\epsilon\kappa$ he is speaking of a spiritual source and point of origination.³ It would seem that this goes considerably beyond an ethical likeness. There must be something of the source and originator in the person who exhibits the actions of love or hatred. Verse 3:9 is very clear that at least in the Godward relationship, "God's nature [essence of love] abides in him." John is evidently saying that those who are "of God" are linked in a spiritual sense, just as those who are "children of the devil" have more than a mere likeness but a spiritual attachment to the devil.

This is contrary to the thinking of Haupt who believes that the metaphysical relation to God is present in 3:1-4 but from 3:4 on the emphasis is upon man's ethical relationship to God. Thus, in 3:10 "children" refers to an ethical likeness to God and the devil. Robert Law meets the problem by making $\epsilon\kappa$ refer to a metaphysical relationship when applied to God but having it take on an ethical meaning when used in conjunction with the devil. He says that "of the devil" need not express more than moral affinity. George Stevens contends that John's writings,

are characterized by a species of dualism,—not the metaphysical dualism which makes evil an essential and eternal principle of the universe, but a moral dualism which, as a matter of fact, finds illustration in human history from the beginning of the race.⁴

In spite of scholarly disagreement over the qualitative relationship between man and the devil, John leaves no doubt that where there are persons who do not do righteousness and who hate, then the devil is the source of this unrighteousness and hatred. Such persons are referred to as being "children of the devil." John is contrasting in 3:10 the members of the Christian community with the false prophets who have gone after theosophical Gnosticism and have become totally unconcerned with love and righteousness.

In 3:12 John uses the expression "of the evil one" (Cf. 5:19) and in so doing approaches the Rabbinical view that sees Cain as the son of the tempter. The relationship goes beyond a moral affiliation. Because the devil is the very fountainhead of all Cain's misdeeds, and because the devil's nature is that of unrighteousness and hatred, this can only result in Cain's deeds being evil. Why was Abel murdered? According to John, not because of jealousy or envy, but primarily as the direct result of evil deeds having their inception in the evil one, the spiritual progenitor of Cain. Being linked to the devil can only result in an unrighteous life, whereas the Christian who has truly been born of God will love his brethren and live a righteous life.

The Source of Sin

(3:8a) He who does sin is of the devil, because from (the) beginning the devil sins.

In speaking of this verse Plummer says, ". . . these closing words of (the) New Testament . . . mark with singular precision the

personality of Satan. . . ."⁵ Such a statement is somewhat of an exaggeration, since we are only told that the devil is intimately associated with sin and very little else. Indeed, if all we knew of Jesus Christ was that He was intimately associated with the source of righteousness we would hardly have a singularly precise description of His personality.

The major problem in 3:8a is the proper interpretation of $\acute{\alpha}\pi\prime\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\acute{s}$. In Johannine usage this expression varies and is not consistent. In I John 1:1 it has a pre-historical reference. In I John 2:7 there is a reference to the time of conversion. In John 8:44 it probably refers to the creation of man. Haupt says, "The idea of $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta$ is applied in such manifold ways, that it must in every individual case be explained by the context."⁶

The various interpretations of $\acute{\alpha}\pi\prime\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\acute{s}$ in this verse may be classified in two categories: the one in which the temporal aspect of the expression is emphasized; the other, which stresses the diabolical inception and activity. Under the temporal emphasis we find $\acute{\alpha}\pi\prime\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\acute{s}$ meaning, (1) from the beginning of the human race (Plummer), (2) from the beginning of the world (Brooke and possibly Westcott), (3) from the beginning of human history (Law and Stevens).

The diabolical emphasis may be construed as being, (1) from the beginning of the devil; "This comes very near to asserting the Gnostic and Manichæan error of two coeternal principles or Creators, one good and one evil;"⁷ (2) from the time of his becoming the devil (with

reference to the fallen angel theory; see below); (3) from the beginning of his activity; not much different from (1) or (2) (Huther).

The writer undoubtedly intends ἀπ' ἀρχῆς to be relative to time; to the history of humanity of which his readers are a part and which they will be able to comprehend. Nowhere does John show an undue interest in the origination of the devil. He is concerned with Christians and how it is that they happen to sin.

It is thus our opinion that John means by ἀπ' ἀρχῆς that from the very first appearance of the human personality upon earth with the choice of doing good or doing bad confronting him (that is, possessing a moral consciousness), he has been incited to do evil by the devil.

Although most scholars agree that the temporal connotation is correct, there are some like Robert Law who feel that a theory of satanic origination lies in the background of John's thinking.⁸

Robert Law admits that,

there is in the Epistle no attempt to account for the existence of the wicked One or for his power, [but] underlying all the Apostle's utterances on the subject, there is the ordinary assumption that he is a fallen angel.⁹

The concept of fallen angels is originally based on Genesis 6:1-4 where we find the pre-historic myth of the sons of the gods having unlawful intercourse with the daughters of men. This Biblical myth in its bare details says nothing about the fall of the angels. Such embellishments were garnered from I Enoch 6-11, Jubilees 5:4-9 (135-105 B.C.) and other Apocalyptic literature.

The Bible defines the result of such sexual promiscuity in terms

of the flood and the near-eradication of man from the face of the earth. The Pseudepigraphic account is more descriptive explaining that the Bene Elohim are angels who suffer punishment for their misdeeds by being cast out of heaven. In Enoch such punishment comes at the hands of four archangels acting on orders from the Almighty.

The devil enters into this picture because he is considered to be the supreme head of the fallen angels. Space is not available, nor is it appropriate here, to discuss in detail the development of Hebrew demonology. Suffice it to say that the word "devil" is but the latest in a long succession of titles for this chief adversary of God. Some of the appellations are "Satan" (Zech. 3:1), "Sammael" (Apoc. of Baruch 4:9), "Azazel" (Lev. 16:7-28), and "Beliar" (II Cor. 6:14f).

Is it possible that John has the concept of the "fallen angel" in mind when he writes of the devil? We might begin by investigating which theory of the Fall was being held by men at the time John wrote his Epistle: that which said sin entered into the life-stream of mankind due to Adam's falling prey to temptation (the Pauline interpretation), or the belief that rebellion against God had a demonic inception and entered into humanity via the sex act. We find that both ideas were being concurrently held. The Adamic (Genesis 3) and the fallen angels (Genesis 6) theories of the origination of sin were coeval until the canonization of the New Testament at which time the former became the accepted belief of the Church.¹⁰

If the fallen angel theory was extant at the time of John, what possibility is there that he might have adhered to it personally? This

cannot be answered with any degree of finality for John's letter concerns soteriology rather than demonology.

Nevertheless we might briefly investigate some of the reasons why John may have believed that the devil is chief of the fallen angels. Brooke is undoubtedly correct when he says, "It is manifest that [the writer] believed in a personal Tempter."¹¹ From every indication John is a man of his times and conceives of the existence of a real adversary of God.¹² That others hold to this same belief is seen in II Peter 1:4; 2:4 and Jude 6,7. There can be little if any doubt that these passages allude to the fallen angels. In summary we may say: (1) there was existent at the time of John a belief in the fallen angel theory of the Fall; (2) John undoubtedly believed in a personal tempter; (3) there are other places in the New Testament which refer to the fallen angels and these writings probably came into existence about the same time as I John.

Now, what are some reasons against John's maintaining the fallen angels concept of the fall? First, there is no reference to one main fallen angel in any of the Biblical or Pseudepigraphic passages which refer to the external imposition of sin upon man. It is always angels in the plural. Second, there are only four verses (II Peter 1:4; 2:4; Jude 6,7) in the New Testament which refer to the fallen angels. Such a few number may indicate that there was no general wide-spread acceptance of the belief in the devil as the leader of the fallen angels.

In any case we must admit that if there is any one doctrine of the origination of sin which is taught in the New Testament (and the

Old Testament too, for that matter), it must be the fall of man in Adam. Sin comes onto the stage when man makes his entrance, and both man and sin enter from the same proscenium.

II. JESUS CHRIST OPPOSES THE DEVIL

He Came to Destroy the Works of the Devil

(3:8b) For this the Son of God was made visible, in order that He might destroy the works of the devil.

The full title, "Son of God," is used for the first time in I John with verse 3:8b. It is brought in at an appropriate place because sin in all its horribleness can only be defeated by the God-Man in all His holiness.

Here John refers to "the works of the devil" but this expression is synonymous with "sins" in 3:5 ("He appeared to take away sins"). Westcott views 3:5 and 3:8 as describing "the two objects of the manifestation of Christ,"¹³ but they are certainly one and the same thing. To John, man's sins find their ultimate root in the devil and thus can be properly referred to as "the works of the devil."¹⁴

Haupt believes that 3:8b refers to something different than 3:5 because he thinks λύσει refers to the devil having bound men and that Christ unbinds or "looses" them. But the more reasonable interpretation of λύσει, as Law, Plummer and others point out, is "dissolve" or "destroy." This passage in I John is discussing the sin of man and its source in the devil. Before man can come to God this sin of separation must be obliterated and the only one capable of

destroying sin is the Son of God (cf. John 2:19; 5:18; 7:23; 10:35; II Peter 3:10-12 where *λύω* is used in the sense of "destroy"). Paul is saying much the same thing, only on a more positive note when he says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. . . ." II Cor. 5:19a).

Nowhere does John say that Jesus Christ came to destroy the devil, but rather to destroy the works of the devil. This may be a tacit implication that John does not have a hard and fast concept of the being of the devil, but rather alludes to him whenever necessary to illuminate the main issue at hand.

He Keeps Christians From the Devil's Grasp

(5:18) We know that everyone who has been born (perfect tense) of God does not sin, but He who was born (aorist) of God preserves him, and the evil one does not lay hold of him.

The expression "He who was born of God" refers to the Son of God and not the Christian who has received the Holy Spirit. It is Jesus Christ who maintains a watchful regard from without so that the children of God cannot be grasped by the evil one. We are reminded of Jesus' words to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. . . ." (Lk 22:31f).

We thus see Jesus opposing the devil by destroying his works of sin and guiding the Christians away from the evil one in order not to come near his deadly embrace.

III. THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANS TO THE DEVIL

They are Diametrically Opposed to the Devil

(5:19) We know that we are of God, and the entire world lies in the evil one.

The Christian has been born of God and bends every effort towards glorifying Him. On the other hand, there are all the ungodly forces making up "the world" that are under the sway of the evil one. The phrase "lies in the evil one" indicates that the devil is the directing power of the ungodly ones.¹⁵ This is in contrast to the Christians who are "in Him who is true" (5:20).

They are Victors Over the Devil

(2:13) I write to you, fathers, because you have known (know) the One who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have conquered the evil one. I [wrote] (write) to you, young children [lads] because you have known (know) the Father. (2:14) I [wrote] (write) to you, father, because you have known (know) the One who is from the beginning. I [wrote] (write) to you young men because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have conquered the evil one.

In these two verses the young men are referred to as conquering the evil one. John is probably encouraging the Christians by telling them that not only do they know God and their sins are forgiven, but that they have been made victorious over the devil.

The victory of the Christians is never achieved alone, but only

by means of the Son of God and through faith in Him. Such news would be most encouraging to the readers of this letter whose ranks have been infiltrated by the false prophets.

FOOTNOTES APPENDIX B

1. The expression "child of the devil" is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Cf. Acts 13:10--"son of the devil;" Eph. 2:3--"children of wrath;" John 8:44--"of your father the devil." Also Cf. Mt. 13:38; 23:15.
2. A. Plummer, The Epistles of St. John, p. 129.
3. G. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 66. Dodd says that $\epsilon\kappa$ (3:10b), "means 'out of' and is used to indicate the point of origin or departure." He thinks that the writer may mean it as, "originating out of God" and intends it, "as a briefer synonym for 'born of God,' or 'children of God,' and if so, then $\epsilon\kappa$ τοῦ διαβόλου in v.8 would mean 'born of the devil' and would be the equivalent of 'children of the devil' in v. 10."
4. George B. Stevens, The Johannine Theology, p. 12.
5. Plummer, op. cit., p. 126.
6. Erich Haupt, The First Epistle of St. John, p. 186.
7. Plummer, loc. cit.
8. Stevens, op. cit., p. 145. "So far as the Johannine writings bear upon the idea of the nature and origin of the devil . . . all the passages assume the personality of Satan, but do not state or imply anything as to his origin."
9. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 144.
10. Norman P. Williams, The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin, p. 184. The acceptance of the Adamic theory was spurred on by the inroads made by Gnosticism. Williams, who contends that the only origin-of-sin doctrine in the New Testament is the Pauline Adamic concept, says that when Christianity was confronted by Gnosticism it immediately took up Paul's doctrine as the Christian polemical reply, "the doctrine that evil is not eternal or necessary, but traceable to a primitive self-perversion of finite wills."
11. A. E. Brooke, The Johannine Epistles, p. 88.
12. These references from Westcott: (1) "the devil," John 8:44; 13:2; I John 3:8,10; (2) "the false accuser," John 6:70; (3) "Satan," John 13:27; (4) "the evil one," John 17:15; I John 2:13f; 3:12; 5:18f; (5) "ruler of this world," John 12:31; 16:11; 14:30.
13. Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 107.

14. *Law, op. cit.*, p. 158.

15. Nowhere else in the New Testament do we find a similar use of κείσθαι ἐν . Cf. Sophocles Oed, Col. 248 where Antigone refers to the Athenians: ἐν ὑμῖν ὡς θεῷ κείσθαι τλήμονες.

APPENDIX C

CHILDREN, FATHERS AND YOUNG MEN

APPENDIX C

CHILDREN, FATHERS AND YOUNG MEN

(2:12) I write to you, little children, because [that] your sins have been forgiven by reason of [for the sake of] His name. (2:13) I write to you fathers, because you have known (know) the One who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have conquered the evil one. I [wrote] (write) to you, young children [lads], because you have known (know) the Father. (2:14) I wrote (write) to you, fathers, because you have known (know) the One who is from the beginning. I [wrote] (write) to you young men because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have conquered the evil one.

This passage is enigmatic with no obvious explanation readily apparent for why the writer chose to place it where he has. When Robert Law refers to these three verses as "parenthetical" he is probably coming as close to the truth as one can get. He explains that the passage is used by John to remind the readers of what they are so that, "he can spur them to fuller achievements."¹

The big question confronting us is this: how does John mean for the reader to interpret "little children," "fathers," and "young men?" He says that he is writing to all three. In fact, he repeats himself, saying essentially the same thing in 2:13c-14 as in 2:12-13b.²

The most popular explications of this passage are found in four theories, each of which has its advocates. (1) Brooke, Law and Huther believe that "little children" refers to all the readers, whereas the

"fathers" and "young men" have reference to the chronological age of everyone in the Christian community. The arguments against this hypothesis are as follows: first, nowhere else in the Epistle are age groups referred to separately; secondly, would women and girls of the Christian community be referred to as fathers and young men?³ This would not be inconsistent with Hebrew history where women were always subordinated to the men, but Christianity had brought the incipient stages of female emancipation.

(2) Westcott and others understand John to use "children" in referring to all the readers, but the "fathers" and "young men" designate believers according to the length of their Christian experience.

(3) Augustine, Bishop Gore and C. H. Dodd see John addressing all the readers by describing their Christian life as analagous to youth, manhood and age. As Dodd explains, this three-fold arrangement is a rhetorical figure. All Christians are children dependent on the Father, they are young men in strength and fathers in experience.⁴ Dodd says that the writer may have used this way of putting it because non-Christian religious writers of the period said that the true mystic had, "experience of all grades and stages of existence at once."⁵ Law objects to such an explanation as "a gratuitous subtlety"⁶ and bolsters his contention by insisting that, "conflict is not characteristic of age. . . ."⁷ But this is not true since John is speaking about the spiritual battle which must be waged against evil. This contest is one that grows more fierce as fellowship with God increases with

Christian maturity. Just as the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 describe just one citizen of the Kingdom and not eight, so it may be that here we have a triple description applicable to any one Christian.

(4) Calvin is the leader of a very small contingent holding down a lonely position, for he maintains that what we have in 2:12-14 should be taken in a literal sense. That is, John is addressing the little children, young men and elders in the Christian community.

None of the above explanations is wholly adequate nor certain. But number three would seem to be the most satisfactory interpretation for the reasons given.

FOOTNOTES APPENDIX C

1. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 308.

2. The notable exception in the repetition is the replacing of $\epsilon\chi\rho\alpha\psi\alpha$ for $\chi\rho\acute{\alpha}\phi\omega$. Ingenious ideas have been presented to explain this strange use of grammar, but none is entirely satisfactory. There are suggestions that $\epsilon\chi\rho\alpha\psi\alpha$ may refer to the Fourth Gospel previously written, or to another Epistle, or this Epistle from 1:1 to 2:11, or used as an epistolary acrostic taking the readers' viewpoint, or, as Law believes, the writer was interrupted and used the acrostic when he picked up his pen again.

3. Cf. Titus 2:1-8 where reference is made to older and younger men, older and younger women.

4. Cf. I John 4:4 where "little children" are referred to as "overcoming" the false prophets who possess the spirit of antichrist. Thus, the reader is referred to as a "child" who has the strength of a "young man."

5. C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 39. Also Cf. Corpus Hermeticum 11:20; 13:11.

6. Law, op. cit., p. 309.

7. Ibid., p. 313.

APPENDIX D

ANointing

APPENDIX D

ANOINTING

(2:20) And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. (2:21) I did (do) not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that every lie is not (no lie is) of the truth. (2:22a) Who is the liar if not the one who (falsely asserts) that ^(#)Jesus is not the Christ?^(#) (2:27) And (as for you) the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; [but] as His anointing teaches you about everything, and it [He] is true and is not a lie, [;] and just as it [He] taught you, you abide [abide (imperative)] in Him.

In 2:20-22,27, #it may be doubted whether Saint John . . . makes any allusion to the anointing which was a feature in some Gnostic systems.^{#1} So say some scholars. But it is more than likely that John makes mention of anointing because such was part of the Gnostic ritual.²

. . . in Gnostic communities, mystic consecrations and symbolic rites of the utmost variety were customary alike at the beginning and end of religious services: such as . . . baptism with water, fire and spirit, anointing, celebration of communion, unction of the dying, etc.³

It is true, of course, that the ritual of the second and third century Gnostics was not always identical with that of the incipient Gnosticism of the first century.⁴ But it is only natural to expect that when John suddenly interrupts his warning against the antichrists to bring in the subject of anointing, and uses the emphatic pronoun *ὁμοῦς* (2:20) to indicate a contrast, he probably does so because

the Gnostics practiced anointing as part of their speculative religion.

Although, "we know far less about the actual rites and doctrines of the Mystery-Religions in the Graeco-Roman world than we do of their wide diffusion and potent influence,"⁵ we are not completely destitute of information. Irenaeus⁶ explains that some Gnostics in their initiatory rites brought the candidates to the water and baptized them along with the incantation of magical gibberish which was often composed of Hebrew words in a meaningless sequence.

Then they anoint the initiate with balsam, for they say that this ointment is a type of the sweetness which is above all things. Some of them say that it is superfluous to lead men to the water, but mixing oil and water together, with utterances like those which I have quoted, they pour it on the head of those being initiated. They also anoint them with balsam. Others omit all these things, and say that the mystery of the ineffable and invisible should not be performed by means of visible and corruptible things . . . but the perfect redemption is the knowledge of the ineffable Greatness itself.⁷

We thus see that when an anointing was present at all in the Gnostic rite of initiation, it was of a physical nature and intended to bring the initiate into a metaphysical union (knowledge) with the ineffable deity.

John is concerned to point out to his readers that the anointing they have is in great contrast to that of the Gnostics. This is undoubtedly the reason why he begins 2:27 with "as for you."

Several differences are immediately apparent. The Christian anointing cannot be purely physical for it "abides in" them. It is not performed at the hands of men, but comes from "the Holy One." It provides the true gnosis, whereas John implies in 2:22 that the Gnostic anointing is associated with the master liar, "in whom

falsehood finds its most complete expression."⁸ This Christian gnosis is not of a metaphysical nature, but is that which instructs the Christian in the truth of the Incarnation and fellowship with God.

What is this anointing that the Christians receive?⁹ Is it spiritual or a combination of both physical and spiritual? It will be helpful to summarize the development in the Biblical meaning of *χρῖσμα* as outlined by Robert Law.¹⁰

(1) Anointing of the body with oil practiced as a means of invigoration, Cf. Ezek. 16:9; James 5:14.

(2) An act of courteous hospitality, showing favor towards the guest, Cf. Psalm 23:5.

(3) Symbolically used to indicate, "the actual transfer of Divine powers to the person anointed. . . ."¹¹ (a) anointing of prophets, Cf. I Kings 19:16; Ps. 105:15; Isaiah 61:1. (b) anointing of priests, Cf. Ex. 29:7; Lev. 6:22; 8:12,30; Ps. 133:2. (c) anointing of kings, Cf. I Sam. 9:16; 10:1; I Kings 19:15f. (d) specific title, "Anointed," which as applied to the kings of David's line, eventually "becomes the title of the expected Deliverer and Redeemer of Israel,"¹² Cf. Daniel 9:25f; John 4:25; 7:27,31.

(4) This title of Messiah, or Christ is accepted by Jesus, Cf. Mt. 16:16,20; John 6:69; 11:27; Lk 24:26 etc.

(5) The *χρῖσμα* of Jesus is the Holy Spirit, Cf. Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18; John 3:34.

(6) This is the *χρῖσμα* which is later given to the Church, Cf. John 16:13; Acts 2:32.

It would appear that if the Christians are to receive an anointing which is an antitype of that received by their Lord, then the emphasis is upon a spiritual rather than a physical anointing. The Holy One (undoubtedly referring to God; although Windisch thinks it can be God or Christ, and Law, Rothe, and Westcott believe that it refers to Christ) has sent the Spirit into the lives of the disciples that they might discern the truth.¹³

But was there no physical anointing to accompany the spiritual act? We do not know. This "tunnel period" of Church history leaves us with no certainty on the matter.

T. W. Manson hints that perhaps a physical act was present.

I John presents us with a picture of initiation into church membership, in which the unction of the Holy Spirit brings knowledge of the Truth, which is expressed in the confession of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. The sequel to this is 'the water and the blood' or, as we might say, the laver and the chalice. We may reasonably ask whether, supposing that 'the water and the blood' correspond to the laver and the chalice, 'the Spirit' does not likewise point to a ritual anointing, a physical *χρῖσμα*. We may ask; but we can only guess the answer.¹⁴

We would only point out here that the "water and the blood" (5:6) undoubtedly have historical rather than sacramental significance, which means that it is highly unlikely that "the laver and the chalice" are involved.

Bishop Gore thinks that oil was used for Christian anointing but only in the years after John did his writing; in fact, Gore believes that the Christian usage received its motivation from the words of John. He thinks that the anointing in I John refers, "to what we call Confirmation or 'laying on of hands.'"¹⁵ But he does

admit that, "the gift of the Spirit . . . has been from the first sacramentally conceived."

Tertullian, in 200 A.D., indicates that Christians were anointed with oil immediately after baptism, at which time there was the laying on of hands and the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

When we come up out of the font we are anointed with the blessed unction which comes from the discipline of the old covenant under which they used to be anointed with oil to the priesthood. . . . Afterwards the hand is laid upon us by benediction invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit.

But this was 100 or more years after the time of John and we cannot be certain which of these acts were involved in the anointing that John describes.

What is it that the Christians "all know" because of their anointing?¹⁶ John leaves no doubt in the readers' minds that the knowledge of the truth given them by their anointing concerns the Incarnation. The Christians have been given the insight that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Even though the Gnostics boast of their anointing, nevertheless it is they who deny the Incarnation and thus must be classified as liars. John goes so far as to say that such a denial of the Incarnation can only come from the antichrist.

One of the witnesses to the Incarnation is the Spirit (5:7), therefore it is most natural for John to speak of the Spirit by implication when he mentions the Christian anointing. This anointing is not teaching the Christians something new, but rather confirming that which they learned in the beginning (2:21).¹⁷

The Christian's anointing also impresses upon him something else

that he already knows, and that is, that he has fellowship with God. We take *μὲν* to be indicative instead of imperative in 2:27 because the gift of the Spirit does not come with the injunction, "go have eternal life" (the words "abide in Him" always refer to eternal life in I John). It is the witness of the Spirit that the Christians already possess eternal life (5:13).¹⁵

Verse 2:27 may be paraphrased: "As for you, the anointing which you received at the first from Him is continually abiding within you and you do not need any human being to give you so-called higher spiritual knowledge; for His Holy Spirit gives you true teaching and not falsehood; and this anointing taught you, and continues to teach you, that you have fellowship with God."

In summary, we may say that John encourages his Christian readers by telling them that their anointing, in contrast with that of the heretics, is true. The pseudo-illuminati undergo a mere physical anointing and put their trust in speculative reasoning, but since they deny that Jesus is the Christ, they must be labeled as liars. God's gift of His Spirit, the only valid anointing worthy of the name, brings gnosis that is not esoterically intellectual, but involves redemption itself. The dwelling of God within man illumines the heart to the highest revelatory act of God, the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, the One whom we know as Jesus the Christ. He is the Anointed One who has made possible man's anointing by the Spirit.

The true gnosis imparted by the Christian anointing also brings the good news that the children of God enjoy a unique relationship

with Him. This is referred to as being "in Him." It is the spiritual status which John often refers to as eternal life wherein emphasis is placed upon man's fellowship with God. The readers are warned not to lend an ear to the syncretistic religion then in vogue, for its adherents were in no position to teach them anything about attaining this fellowship. Only God Himself could bring this about, by anointing with His Spirit.

FOOTNOTES APPENDIX D

1. A. Plummer, The Epistles of St. John, p. 111.
2. It is highly unlikely that Judaistic sects, such as the one at Qumran, were directly responsible for John's reference to anointing. He is contrasting the anointing of the Christians with that of the antichrists, and the antichrists are not adherents of sectarian Judaism. Furthermore, as Burrows points out (Millar Burrows, More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 372), the cisterns of Qumran only offer an archaeological "possibility" for ritual baths or lustrations and not positive evidence. He believes that the baths were no more a sacramental mediation of divine forgiveness of sin than atonement rites of the Old Testament. Also Cf. Schlatter's The Church in the New Testament Period, p. 31.
3. Samuel M. Jackson, Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. IV, p. 499.
4. H. A. A. Kennedy, St. Paul and the Mystery-Religions, p. 70.
5. Ibid., p. 68.
6. Refutation and Overthrow of the Knowledge Falsely So Called (more commonly referred to as, "Against the Heresies") I.21:3,4.
7. Cyril C. Richardson, Editor, Early Christian Fathers, p. 366.
8. A. E. Brooke, The Johannine Epistles (ICC), p. 58.
9. John's use of $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ in referring to that which Christians have $\lambda\acute{\alpha}\beta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ is unique in the New Testament. It is found only in I John 2:20,27. In II Cor. 1:21 Christ's witnesses are described as anointed, but the word is $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\upsilon\varsigma$, a verb.
10. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 127.
11. Morris Jastrow, Jr., "Anointing (Semitic)," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. I, p. 556.
12. Law, loc. cit.
13. C. H. Dodd believes that the $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ was the Word or Gospel and not the Spirit (The Johannine Epistles, p. 62).
14. T. W. Manson, "Entry into Membership of the Early Church," The Journal of Theological Studies, 48:29, 1947.
15. Charles Gore, The Epistles of St. John, p. 131.

16. $\pi\lambda\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ ("you all know") of B and χ MSS is to be preferred to $\pi\lambda\nu\tau\alpha$ ("you know all things").

17. Law, op. cit., p. 100.

18. The use of the imperative that follows in 2:28 may seem strange, yet this is the style of John; Cf. 1:10 and 2:1. He seems to be saying, "You do abide in Him; then act the part!"

APPENDIX B

PRAYER

APPENDIX E

PRAYER

APPENDIX E

PRAYER

I. WE RECEIVE OUR REQUESTS

Because We Keep His Commandments

(3:21) Beloved, if [when] the heart does not condemn, we have confidence towards God, (3:22) and that which (whatever) we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and we do pleasing (things) in His sight. (3:23) And this is His commandment, that we believe (aorist subj.) [in] the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another as He gave commandment to us.

It is the opinion of C. H. Dodd that the normal state of the Christian life is not that of condemnation of conscience. This would seem to be an overstatement because the average Christian is very self-critical and only too ready to cry out in the words of Paul, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24).

But normal state or not, John does deal with the state of non-condemnation. He says that in this state, "we have confidence towards God." The word *πρὸς* implies relationship (Cf. John 1:1; Acts 24:16; Rom. 4:2; 5:1; I Cor. 3:4; Phil. 4:6) and in this instance the relationship is one of being in God's presence in prayer.¹ That John has prayer in mind is seen in his use of *ἐμπροσθεν* in 3:19 in the forensic sense, and in 3:22 his use of "whatever we ask we receive from Him."

The *παρρησία* that the writer speaks of implies boldness.

The background of this word contains the concept of freedom of speech and here the emphasis is placed upon the ability to ask of God anything in prayer that might be desired.² There is no reference here to the confidence possessed by the Christian as he awaits the verdict of the Judge on the Last Day.

In the state of non-condemnation, Christians have confidence before God in prayer that "whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments. . . ."

Here is a hard statement and scholars have not always been intellectually fair in assessing the true meaning. The tactics of circumlocution have been employed instead of a head-on frontal assault whereby the truth is encountered if not fully comprehended.

There can be little doubt that what John is saying is this: if a Christian has faith in Jesus Christ and evidences that faith in a life of love, in other words, keeps God's commandments (or "commandment" as in 3:23), then whatever he asks of God in prayer he will receive.³

Christians have never found it to be an existential experience that whatever they ask in prayer they receive. But John is not alone in such an assertion. Following are examples found in the Synoptic Gospels:

Matthew 7:7f (Lk 11:9-13) - "Ask, and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."

Matthew 18:19 - "Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven."

Matthew 21:22 (Mark 11:24) - "And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

When we turn to the Fourth Gospel we find that our writer, who was also undoubtedly the author of the First Epistle, records the same idea in several places that "if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name," Cf. John 11:22; 15:7,16; 14:13f; 16:23f.

Frank honesty demands our admission that such passages as the above explicitly say that whatever a person requests of God in prayer, if in faith and in the name of Christ (i.e. if His commandments are kept), it will be granted. Let us see how the scholars have treated I John 3:22.

Plummer says, "children in such relations to their heavenly Father cannot ask anything which He will refuse."⁴ But who was ever in a more intimate relationship with the Father than the Son, and yet recall the scene in Gethsemane: "Father if thou art willing, remove this cup from me;" but the cup was not removed. Westcott states that, "The answer to prayer is given . . . because the prayer itself rightly understood coincides with God's will."⁵ But John says nothing about rightly understanding God's will. He speaks of keeping His commandments: believing in Jesus Christ as Son of God and loving the brethren. Whoever does these things, says John, will receive whatever

he requests in prayer. Brooke takes the position that, "the conditions which make [the granting of all requests] possible are obedience to the Divine commands, and willing and active serving in doing whatever is known to be according to His will."⁶ Exception must be taken to this position because the last two clauses of 3:22 are not the causa meritoria for God's answering prayer. These clauses are nearly synonymous (not distinct as per Brooke) and express obedience.⁷ The matrix within which God gives "whatever we ask" is the belief in Jesus as the Incarnate Son of God and a life of love for the brethren. Finally, there is Haupt who says that the answer to prayer rests, "upon the fact that my will is one with the divine."⁸ But, again, Jesus had a will that was "one with the divine," and He did not receive an affirmative answer to all His prayers.

Let us look at Jesus' prayer life more closely. See how He prayed and wept over Jerusalem, and yet the citizenry would not give Him heed (Lk. 19:41; Mt. 23:37). He certainly must have prayed much for His home town of Nazareth, but see how He was violently rejected, almost being thrown over a cliff (Lk. 4:29). The aftermath of His prayers was a situation in which He could do no great work and could only wonder at their unbelief. And then again, as mentioned above, there was the occasion in Gethsemane when He sought to have the bitter dregs of death removed from Him, but such was not to be.

Next, we turn to the Apostle Paul who besought the Lord in importunate prayer to have the thorn in his flesh removed. "Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but

he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you. . . .' It is evident from Scripture however that God's grace in this instance was not seen in the removal of the thorn.

In our own day there are untold numbers of instances in which maturing Christians of sound faith pray for definite results in utmost confidence that it must be God's will (e.g. the victory of health over disease; the turning of a man from Sin to a new life in Christ), and yet the results are not forthcoming.

Such Biblical and current examples as these would seem to indicate that all who keep God's commandments and do pleasing things in His sight do not always receive whatever they ask of Him!

Why then do we find a statement in the First Epistle of John that would lead us to believe otherwise? Two alternatives present themselves: (1) the writer has a propensity for making things black or white, inevitably declining to seek out a via media. Here it would be that a Christian has all his prayers answered or else he has none of them answered; or, (2) John is referring to the sayings of Jesus in the Synoptic tradition. The latter is undoubtedly correct because the author must be recalling some original source of authority for his statements.⁹

The question confronting us then is this, how do we account for such statements regarding answered prayer in the Synoptics? It may be: (1) they are not the ipsissima verba of Jesus;¹⁰ (2) or, Jesus was overstating His case to emphasize the presence of God in prayer, the necessity of perseverance,¹¹ the need for faith etc.;

hyperbole was not unknown to Jesus; (3) or, for some unknown reason the Lord put forward a goal attained in theory only. As William Manson says, "the early Church must have realized that the sayings of Jesus which it repeated to itself and which it taught to the world proclaimed a high and unattained, if not unattainable, measure of life."¹²

It cannot be said with certainty which of the above three reasons is the correct one, if any. We believe that the second explanation is nearer to the true answer, if not the very answer itself.

Because We Ask According to His Will

(5:14) And this is the confidence which we have with [towards] Him, that [when] if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. (5:15) And if we know that He hears us what we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked of Him.

In 5:14-15 John reiterates that the Christian is confident of receiving that for which he asks. This time the environment within which God responds is the discerning of His will whereas in 3:21-23 it was the keeping of His commandments. Westcott says that, "The 'hearing' of God, like the 'knowledge' of God, carries with it every perfect consequence."¹³ The "perfect consequence" in this passage is the granting of the requests which have been asked of Him. For God to hear is tantamount to his granting. Law is undoubtedly correct in pointing out that, "this sense of ἀκουεῖν is peculiar to St. John"¹⁴ but as mentioned above the concept of receiving whatever one prays for is not unique with the Johannine literature.

Verse 5:14 may be taken in two ways: either the praying of a prayer in a spiritual attitude that it be God's will, or the praying of a prayer which is positively in line with the will of God. The correlary to the latter would then be that if someone were to pray and did not receive his request, it must be that it was not according to the will of God and therefore God did not hear.

In keeping with his concept of prayer found elsewhere, John probably has in mind any prayer which is uttered with the desire that it be God's will. And so again we encounter the difficult assertion, "we have the requests which we have asked of Him." William Temple circumvents this hard saying in this manner,

Your confidence in praying ought not to be chiefly confidence that you are going to get what you ask, because that will be confidence as much in your own judgment as in God. It has to be a real surrender to Him. You must pass from faith that God will give you what you ask, to faith that what He gives is better than what you asked.¹⁵

But this is not what John says. He says, not that God will give what is best, but that "we have the requests which we have asked of Him."

Westcott resorts to what would seem to be contradiction in seeking an explanation of 5:14-15. He says that the believer "has all he truly seeks in immediate and present possession--Mark 11:24--though the visible fulfilment may be delayed."¹⁶ Brooke is even more circumlocutory when he says, "In the certainty of anticipation there is a kind of possession of that which has been granted, though our actual entering upon possession may be indefinitely delayed."¹⁷ Haupt, too, has evaded the core of the problem by saying that the

παρανοία "does not rest so much upon the having as upon the

possibility of future having. . . ."18 Law presents a Platonic answer which is unsuitable for such a pragmatic letter when he says, "Though the fulfilment may not yet be apparent, it exists in the sphere of Divine Thought and Will, which is the sphere of reality, and only awaits manifestation."19

The above explanations are futile in their attempts to discern the mind of the author. For in the words of C. H. Dodd, "The Greek . . . says literally--'We know that we possess the requests we have made.'"20 The present tense of ἔχομεν precludes a reference to any future "entering upon possession." Huther is most forthright in his statement that, "The present . . . is to be kept in its proper meaning; the believer always has that for which he has asked God."21 But Huther immediately follows this with a very weak statement which testifies to the fact that he too has difficulty reconciling this hard saying of John with real-life situations. Huther says, "He has God, and in Him all things."22

A. E. Brooke seems to suspect the inadequacy of his explanation about "a kind of possession" when he says that it may be that the writer, "thought of true prayer as including only requests for knowledge of . . . the will of God in the matter with which the prayer is concerned, rather than as a statement of the supplicant's wish. . . ."23 This idea appeals to Law also who says, "This defines, not the manner of asking, but its object. . . ."24 Dodd also finds this explanation to his liking as he explains, "Prayer rightly considered is not a device for employing the resources of omnipotence to fulfil our own

desires, but a means by which our desires may be redirected according to the mind of God, and made into channels for the forces of His will. Granted this one condition, our assurance is absolute."²⁵

Such explanations by Brooke, Law and Dodd would limit the Christian to one prayer only, and that is to know God's will. But verse 5:15 specifically says, "that he hears us in whatever [italics mine] we ask. . . ." (RSV) with no delimitation implied.

The foregoing illustrations of the scholarly approach to this subject is not meant to be wholly negative. Rather, it is meant to show that we have here a problem for which there is no easy solution, nor indeed is there any one absolute solution at the present time. It is therefore misleading for anyone to present as final, an answer based on thin grammatical or syntactical reasoning or slipshod inductive thinking.

Our answers found on pp. 392 ff. must be referred to as also being pertinent for 5:14-15 as well as for 3:21-23.

FOOTNOTES APPENDIX E

1. A. E. Brooke, The Johannine Epistles, p. 143. "In describing relations $\pi\rho\acute{o}s$ generally denotes that which 'goes out towards,' a relation realized in active intercourse and fellowship."

2. W. F. Howard, Christianity According to St. John, p. 171. "One of the most characteristic words of the vocabulary of early Christianity is $\pi\alpha\rho\rho\eta\sigma\iota\alpha$. Originally meaning 'readiness to say anything,' it came to mean that confidence in which perfect candor is possible."

3. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age, p. 495. McGiffert is almost certainly incorrect in believing that the reference to "commandments" implies that Christians were subject to law, "due, in part at least to the influence of the legal conception of Christianity, which was so widely prevalent in the Church at large."

4. A. Plummer, The Epistles of St. John, p. 137.

5. Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 119.

6. Brooke, op. cit., p. 102.

7. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 300. Law points out that the Roman Catholics, "distinguish the two as obedience to what is enjoined (*praecepta*) and good works voluntarily undertaken (*consilia evangelica*)"

8. Erich Haupt, The First Epistle of St. John, p. 231.

9. C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 93. This is contrary to Dodd who says, "The assurance that our requests to God will be granted upon this condition finds its justification (as is usual in this epistle) in statements of the Fourth Gospel."

10. Rudolph Bultmann, Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition, p. 84. Bultmann thinks that Mark 11:24 bears, "the form and the substance of the proverbial type of piety."

11. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 850. I John 3:22 would be in keeping with this because $\lambda\iota\tau\acute{\upsilon}\nu\sigma\upsilon$ is present subjunctive. As Robertson points out, "John makes the sharp distinction between the aorist and present subjunctive that is common between the aorist and imperfect indicative." In this verse the linear action of constant asking is stressed.

12. William Manson, Jesus the Messiah, p. 57.
13. Westcott, op. cit., p. 190.
14. Law, op. cit., p. 406.
15. William Temple, Christian Faith and Life, p. 113. This echoes Shakespeare who said; "We, ignorant of ourselves, Beg often our own harms, which the wise Powers deny us for our good. So gain we profit by losing of our prayers."
16. Westcott, loc. cit.
17. Brooks, op. cit., p. 144.
18. Haupt, op. cit., p. 324.
19. Law, op. cit., p. 302.
20. Dodd, op. cit., p. 135.
21. J. E. Huther, Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistles of James and John, p. 473.
22. Loc. cit.
23. Brooke, loc. cit.
24. Law, op. cit., p. 406.
25. Dodd, op. cit., p. 134.

APPENDIX F

OLD AND NEW COMMANDMENT

APPENDIX F

OLD AND NEW COMMANDMENT

(2:7) Beloved, I write to you no new commandment but an old commandment which you (have had) from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard. (2:8) On the other hand I write you a new commandment, which is true in Him and in you, for the darkness is passing away (Middle voice) and the true light is shining now. (3:23) And this is His commandment, that we believe (aorist subj.) [in] the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another as He gave commandment to us. (4:21) And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God also loves his brother.

One of the paradoxes of the Johannine literature is found in these four verses. The First Epistle of John speaks of a commandment that is old and not new, and yet ultimately must be conceived of as new. This apparent contradiction is not explained by the writer who evidently assumes that his readers will have sufficient background to comprehend his remarks.

What does he mean by the "old commandment" which "you have had (imperfect tense) from the beginning?" The internal evidence indicates that it is equivalent to the "word" which the readers "heard" (aorist tense, indicating a particular time). Brooke thinks that this refers to the Mosaic legislation, but not all readers were Jewish Christians. The lack of Old Testament references in I John may even indicate that a majority of the readers were not Jewish Christians. Huther and

others believe that the word which was heard is the personal *λόγος*, but this is not likely since no reference to the personal Word in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel speaks of sensuous perception. He is only "known" or "received" or His glory "beheld." Besides, as we have seen in Chapter IV, the "word" in the prologue to I John is not identical to the personal Logos in the Fourth Gospel. Brooke probably comes closer to the true interpretation when he suggests that the "old commandment" is a whole message rather than one precept.

But why is it labeled as "old" and having been heard "from the beginning?" Various theories have been put forward. The commandment is old because it has become separated from Jesus' time by many years. Or, as mentioned above, there is a reference to the Jewish background and the giving of the Mosaic law. Piper imputes a more academic connotation in explaining that emphasis is being placed on the originality of oral traditions "as contrasted with teachings introduced at a later date."¹ The Greek commentators Oecumenius and Theophylact interpret "from the beginning" to mean that the commandment was "written from the very beginning in the heart of man." Others believe that it is old because the Christian readers heard of it long ago. Then there is Lietzmann who says that the writer may refer to the commandment as old because, "It derives from God's being and is eternal."²

The contextual conditions are best satisfied if we understand "old commandment" to mean the Gospel, the preached word, which the Christian readers received at the beginning of their regenerate lives.

The Gospel remains old in the sense that it contains the perfect revelation of the redeeming God and nothing new needs to be added to bring it up to date.

As old as the commandment may be, John points out in 2:8 that it also must be seen as something new; new in the sense that it must constantly be applied to present-day living situations in love of the brethren. This selfless $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$ which is the very nature of the Father and is reflected in the Son, must be continuously worked out in the lives of Christians. This is a "new commandment which is true in Him and in you." (The writer may well have John 13:34 in mind just as he does in 3:23).

Helping to bear out this interpretation is II John 5: "And now I beg you, lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning, that we love one another." Only here we notice that love of the brethren is treated as an old commandment. This is in keeping with I John 2:7 where the old commandment is the Gospel that stresses love as the result of faith in Jesus Christ.

Verse 2:8 provides an example of the familiar Johannine use of parataxis. The independent second clause is introduced by $\delta\tau\tau$ which is translated by most commentators as "because." However, this clause does not give the reason for writing the new commandment. Nor should it be translated "that" because the clause does not give the contents of the new commandment. In this case, $\delta\tau\tau$ is the equivalent of $\gamma\alpha\rho$ just as it is in I Corinthians 1:25.³ The true light of God's love

has come into the world through the Son and is perpetuated through His people. In the so doing, the darkness of evil and sin is being dissipated by this light.

There is but one commandment given in 3:23 and not two. "Love in the region of action corresponds to the confession of the Incarnation in the region of thought."⁴ Or as Huther puts it, "While faith is the fundamental condition of the Christian life, brotherly love is the active proof of the living character of the faith: the two cannot be separated from one another."⁵

The $\epsilon\upsilon\lambda$ of 3:23 is in apposition to the substantive $\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\omicron\lambda\eta$ giving the content and not the purpose of the commandment. The correct meaning is perhaps more clearly seen if $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta\mu\alpha$ is substituted for $\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\omicron\lambda\eta$.

The expression "believe the name" signifies believing the truth that the person of Jesus is the Son of God. It means believing all that the name signifies Him to be, whereas in John 6:29 the $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\upsilon\eta\tau\epsilon \epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ indicates personal trust and devotion.⁶

As mentioned above, the expression, "as He gave commandment to us" probably refers to John 13:34.

There may be a further allusion to the words of Jesus when in 4:21 there is a reference to "this commandment we have from him." It may be that John is pointing to Mark 12:28-31 (and parallel passages) where Jesus is found quoting Deuteronomy 6:4f and Leviticus 19:18. As in 2:23, the substance of the commandment follows $\epsilon\upsilon\lambda$. The interconnectedness of Christian faith and the Christian life is clearly

seen in this paraphrase of 4:21: "And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God will demonstrate that fact in the way he shows love to his brethren."

FOOTNOTES APPENDIX F

1. Otto A. Piper, "I John and the Didache of the Primitive Church," Journal of Biblical Literature, 66:440, December, 1947.
2. Hans Lietzmann, The Beginnings of the Christian Church, p. 230.
3. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 962.
4. Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 147.
5. J. E. Huther, Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistles of James and John, p. 419.
6. Robert Law thinks that it is pedantry to divorce the two concepts. He contends that I John 2:23 ("believe the name") and I John 5:13 ("believe in the name") say the same thing.

APPENDIX G
THE PAROUSIA

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THE PAROUSIA

I. THE LAST HOUR IS HERALDED BY THE COMING OF THE ANTICHRISTS

(2:18) Children, it is (the) last hour, and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen. Therefore we know that it is (the) last hour.

Eschatology has been defined as, "the group of ideas which is concerned with the catastrophe, or series of catastrophes, which ushers in and accompanies the end of the world."¹ When John writes about the "last hour" he is dealing with an eschatological concept, and nowhere else in the New Testament, except here, do we find this concept referred to as the "last hour."

This expression is "one of a family of phrases descended from the $\square' \square' \square' \square' \square' \square' \square' \square' \square' \square'$ of the Old Testament."² This Old Testament phrase means "in the after days" and is used in three different ways: (1) in referring to the Messianic period which is coming on the "Day of Jehovah" (Isaiah 2:2; Ezek. 38:16; Daniel 10:14; Hosea 3:5; Micah 4:1); (2) in referring to the settlement of the tribes in Canaan (Genesis 49:1); (3) indefinitely of future time (Deut. 4:30; 31:29; Jeremiah 23:20).

In the New Testament the phrase "the last hour" may also be found expressed as "the last day(s)," or "the last time(s)." As in the Old Testament, the usage is not consistent and inflexible. The concept may refer to: (1) the Messianic Age, either as (a) heralded

by Jesus' appearing and consummating all preceding history with no particular day of judgment or terminal point in view (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2; I Peter 1:20), or (b) preparatory to a definite judgment beyond with woes as harbingers (II Tim. 3:1; II Peter 3:3-4; Jude 18; I John 2:18); (2) Judgment administered by the Christ (I Peter 1:5; John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48; James 5:3).

The *ἑσχατὴν ὥραν* of 2:18 may be interpreted in two ways: either as meaning the Christian dispensation or the period of time immediately preceding the end of worldly existence and the second advent of Christ. Cullmann and Westcott are the two outstanding scholars who feel that this expression goes no farther than a reference to the history which follows the Incarnation.

According to Cullmann, "it is the final time before the end, because . . . the mid-point [the coming of Christ] has been passed."³ He would overlook the apparent shortness implied in the word "hour" (or "time") and expand it to be equivalent to "age:" "It is the action of the Holy Spirit which testifies that from now on we are living in the last age of the time."⁴ In other words, there is no reference to the short time left before the eschaton, since "the New Testament sets aside all the impatient and indiscreet inquiries into the *χρονος* and the *καιρος* as unsound."⁵

Westcott has a similar interpretation, "In this passage the anarthrous phrase . . . seems to mark the general character of the period and not its specific relation to 'the end.' It was a period of critical change,"⁶ 'a last hour,' but not definitely 'the last hour.'

If there is any difference between Cullmann and Westcott it is

that Cullmann takes Christ as a mid-point after which all else is "the last hour (age)," whereas Westcott sees the Church in "the last hour (days)" because they are days of travail and fierce trial preceding yet another of "the successive partial dawns of 'the age to come.'"⁷

Contrary to Westcott and Cullmann we prefer to believe with the majority of scholars that in 3:18 John is writing about the nearness of the world's end. When we investigate all the Johannine passages that speak of the last hour, or times, we find that every one has reference to the eschaton or the judgment which follows close upon it.

"In I John the primitive Christian eschatological hope is fully alive."⁸

"There is no other sentence in the New Testament which projects the end into the present with such clarity as this."⁹

"It cannot well be doubted that by 'the last hour' the apostle means the period immediately preceding the coming of Christ and the end of the world."¹⁰

"He calls that 'the last time' in which all things are being so completed that nothing is left except the last revelation of Christ."¹¹

John is referring to the "time immediately preceding the return of Christ to judge the world."¹²

"When he uses the phrase 'the last hour' he clearly means the short period, as he conceived it to be, which still remained before the final manifestation of the last day."¹³

"He alludes to the traditional belief [regarding the age of the antichrist] only for the purpose of conveying more pointedly his own conviction, that the end of all things is at hand, and of dispelling

the notion that some more sensational development is to be looked for before 'the last hour' shall actually have arrived."¹⁴

"Our author . . . thought . . . quite literally, that the world was coming to an end. That was an illusion."¹⁵

As the centuries have passed, the Church has realized that John was indeed mistaken. But there are those like Plummer who would rationalize this mistake and soften it by saying,

what [are two-thousand years of the Christian epoch] compared with the many thousands of years since the creation of man, and the limitless geological periods which preceded the creation of man?"¹⁶

There is good and substantial reason for believing that John feels the time is short before the Second Advent. For one thing, this passage is concerned with the concept of the antichrist. This concept very likely has a legendary source in a Babylonian myth (wherein the God of creation battles a primeval monster), is then carried over into Old Testament literature, first with nations then with an individual as the monster, and then through the intertestamental period and finally into the Christian era when the concept is spiritualized.¹⁷

The Christian Church fell heir to this myth by reason of its Jewish lineage, and although the legend has become spiritualized, there is evidently still a strong belief that the antichrist will appear as a presage to the final battle between God and evil and the permanent establishment of God's Kingdom. "This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already" (4:3). "So now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour" (2:18).

In opposition to Cullmann it must be pointed out that John is referring to the antichrist legend which designates the appearance of the antichrist as the beginning of the "last hour," and has no reference to the coming of Christ and the Christian dispensation.

Westcott's reference to the anarthrous phrase carries little weight because there are other places in the New Testament where the definite article must be supplied.

II. THE STATUS OF THE CHRISTIAN AT CHRIST'S COMING

He Possesses Confidence

(4:16b) God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him. (4:17) By this, love has been completed with us, in order that we may have confidence in (for) the day of the judgment, because as He is we are also in this world. (4:18) Fear is not in love, but complete [mature] love throws out fear, because fear (involves) has punishment, and whoever fears has not been completed in love. (2:28) And now, little children, abide in Him, in order that when He is made visible we might have (acrist) confidence and not be ashamed (shrink back in shame) of (from) Him at His coming.

One of the major tasks confronting the writer of I John is to instill confidence in the Christians to whom he is writing. Throughout the letter he tells them that they already know God, that they already possess eternal life, that they really do abide in God. In 4:16b-18 he again speaks of confidence, but this time he is looking ahead to the time when the consummation of history, the denouement of the earthly

drama, will be completed in the appearance of Christ and the Judgment.

He tells his readers that they may be confident at Judgment in only one way, and that is through the present relationship of Fellowship-in-Union. The mutual indwelling which constitutes such a fellowship results in a maturing love. And it is this maturing love that assures confidence and not fear at Judgment. Why should one fear God at Judgment when one has been in an intimate love-relationship with Him during the earthly life?

This love-relationship is not one that stops at love for God, but rather is seen in love for the brethren (Cf. 3:18-20) due to the indwelling nature of God. "Our dread of the last day may be said to be in proportion to our defects in this brotherly love."¹⁸

The "dread" or "fear" in 4:18 must certainly refer to the emotion of terror, and not "a sense of awe, of submission to the will of God."¹⁹ This is evident when John says, "Fear is not in love." In the sense in which "fear" is used in the Synoptics, reverence and awe, fear is in love. Love for the Father is incomplete without reverence and awe. But whenever *φόβος* is found in the Johannine literature it "is invariably used in a bad sense."²⁰

Philo's position in which fear may be a possible alternative as an attitude toward God is completely out of line; "if you cannot rise to the level of loving God as the beneficent *θεός*, at least fear Him as the authoritative ruler or *κύριος*."²¹

To indicate that there is no place for terror and the ever-present consequence of punishment, John uses the more vivid and

vigorous expression $\epsilon\gamma\omega \beta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota$ in place of $\epsilon\kappa\beta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota$

This is what love does to fear.

The Christian is not to live in fear of punishment at the day of Judgment. Indeed, such fear would be an ever present punishment even during the sojourn of the Christian upon this earth. But such fear which "has punishment"²² is not involved in the relationship between God and the person who is "in Him."

The opposite of fear is confidence, and it is this which the Church will have at Judgment. We must disagree with Brooke and Westcott who maintain that punishment due to fear has a place in the divine discipline. John is not speaking about the fact that those whom God loves He chastens, but rather those whom He loves are in a peculiar relationship to Him.²³ When one lacks confidence and fears God, this is not indicative of God's divine discipline, but rather it shows the lack of a spiritual relationship between that person and God. Or, as John puts it, it shows that that person "has not been completed in love."²⁴

Verse 2:28 is the only place where John uses the word $\pi\alpha\rho\omicron\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ and here he repeats that any person who is not in the proper relationship with God ("in Him") will not have confidence when Jesus Christ is manifested. At the $\pi\alpha\rho\omicron\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ everyone who has followed the false teachings of the world will "shrink back in shame" before the Son of God. On the other hand, all members of the Church who have placed their trust in the Incarnation of God in Christ and have given of themselves in love to others need have no fear at the Advent of their King.

The word *παρουσία* was used in the secular world from the Ptolemaic period on to refer to the coming of the King or Emperor.²⁵

"Many of the words and titles which Christians loved to use of their Lord had a special significance as protests against the blasphemy of the popular Emperor Worship."²⁶

The Christian Shall be the Same as He

(3:2) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it was (has) not yet (been) made clear what we shall be. We know that when it [He] is made manifest (clear) we shall be the same as He, [because] that we shall see Him as He is.

At the *παρουσία* not only will the Christian possess great confidence at the sight of his Lord, but he will attain a spiritual resemblance to the Savior. This resemblance may be in reference to the glorified body (I Cor. 15:44) as the last clause intimates, or it may refer to the perfected fellowship with the Father which the Son possesses (and which the Christian only imperfectly reflects in this world; Cf. 4:17). John's great stress on fellowship in this Epistle forces us to choose the latter.

One thing is quite clear and that is that John is not attempting a precise description of life after death. In fact, he admits that in this life it must remain uncertain what the Christian's ontological status in the eschaton will be. In writing to Christians John is only certain that those who have shared Christ's death will also share His life of Resurrection. The Resurrection promises to surpass by far our present relationship with God. ok

We do not know whether he means that this earthly relationship as "children" will only then come to fruition and be fully manifested or whether we shall be hereafter something different as children of God from what we now are. But it really does not matter. John's main point seems quite clear. At the time of the *παρουσία* the Christian will confidently greet his glorified Lord and begin to enjoy the perfect relationship of Fellowship-in-Union with the Father as does the Son.

This hope cannot fail to inspire confidence in the readers of the First Epistle because it completely eliminates all the esoteric teachings of Gnosticism which involve passwords, aeons, and the eventual loss of personal identity in deification.

FOOTNOTES APPENDIX G

1. William Sanday, The Life of Christ in Recent Research, p. 46.
2. Robert Law, The Tests of Life, p. 317. The following discussion is based on Law's arguments. For a detailed examination of $\epsilon\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\tau\eta\ \acute{\upsilon}\rho\alpha$ as related to $\sigma\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ Cf. Haupt, The First Epistle of St. John, pp. 107ff. Also see Kittel's TWNT Vol. II s.v. $\epsilon\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\varsigma$, pp. 694f.
3. Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time, p. 89.
4. Oscar Cullmann, The Early Church, p. 155.
5. Loc. cit.
6. Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p. 69.
7. Loc. cit.
8. C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 51.
9. Adolph Schlatter, The Church in the New Testament Period, p. 291.
10. Alexander Ramsay, The Revelation and the Johannine Epistles, p. 272.
11. John Calvin.
12. A. Plummer, The Epistles of St. John, p. 105.
13. A. E. Brooke, The Johannine Epistles, p. 51.
14. Law, op. cit., p. 320.
15. C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles, p. 51.
16. Plummer, op. cit., p. 106.
17. Brooke, op. cit., pp. 69-79 for a detailed explanation.
18. James Moffatt, Love in the New Testament, p. 305.
19. Rudolph Bultmann, Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting, p. 25.
20. Moffatt, op. cit., p. 303.

21. Moffatt, op. cit., pp. 302f. "In second century rabbinism, the problem [of love and fear] was discussed (Sota, 5:5) in connection with the book of Job. When Joshua ben Hyrcanus argued that Job served God from love, another rabbi indignantly protested that his master, Jochanan ben Zakkai, had always taught, from Job 1:9, that Job merely served God from fear. Plainly the question had been raised about the very time when the Johannine writings were composed."

22. Joseph Bonsirven, Epitres de Saint Jean, p. 213. "We understand $\epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\upsilon$ in the sense of: convey, include, shut up. Some have proposed the meaning: fear involves punishment."

23. Ibid., p. 214. "Children do not serve their father for fear of punishment but in serving him they fear that they will not accomplish all his will; that they will not do sufficiently well."

24. P. J. Du Plessis, The Idea of Perfection in the New Testament, 1959, passim. According to Du Plessis there are four popular interpretations of "perfection": moral connotation (as seen in love of God and neighbor; this interpretation held by John Wesley); eschatological interpretation (perfection to be realized only in the age to come); formal interpretation (equivalent to "mature"); mystical interpretation (describing an initiate who received secret, esoteric knowledge). The Hebrew words translated by $\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ in the LXX refer to one in a right relationship with God and obedient to His will. In the New Testament, Christ Himself is the $\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$. In the Pauline literature "perfect" is applied to all Christians who are in a Christ-mediated redemptive relationship with God and who strive to be in accordance with His will. Full perfection is still ahead in the age to come. Such is the view of Du Plessis. But we believe that John's concept is also very similar. The person who has been "perfected in love" is the one who is in that spiritual relationship with God which we refer to as Fellowship-in-Union.

25. Adolph Deissmann, Light From the Ancient East, passim.

26. Brooke, op. cit., p. 67.