

Special Studies in the Johannine Epistles

Dr. Thomas M. Strouse

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Much about the three *Epistles of John* is an enigma, but internal evidence seems to corroborate that the same author of the *Gospel of John* wrote these three *Epistles*. The three *Epistles* are part of the NT canon¹ and presumably written to one or more of the Lord's assemblies. The pastoral element in the *Epistles* indicates that *First John* especially was more than a theological treatise against the Garden Gnosticism² of the day. Although many modern biblical "scholars" posit that first century Christianity was on the cusp of fully developed Gnosticism of the later centuries, they fail to see that Garden Gnosticism had been around since the Garden, and label John's opponents advocating "pre-gnosticism."³ In fact, Marshall avers, saying:

These false teachers were forerunners of the heretics who were responsible for the developed Gnostic sects of the second century. The seeds of Gnosticism were already to be found in the New Testament period, although it is misleading to use the actual term "Gnosticism" to describe the incipient Gnosticism or "pre-gnosticism" of this period. It is still not proved that Gnosticism properly so called existed in the first century.⁴

The full attack of "antichrist" against Christ began in the first century when the Lord Jesus Christ came in the fulness of time (Gal. 4:4), as the Apostle John declared (I Jn. 2:18). The fulfillment of the Seed Promise (Gen. 3:15) began with the First Coming of Christ and will culminate with the Second Coming of Christ (cf. especially Rev. 12-13).

¹The acceptance of the canonicity of I John experienced early and broad reception by the Patristics such as Papias, Polycarp, Tertullian and the Muratorian Canon. The shorter Epistles of II and III John were doubted as authentic by some and not included in the official canon of the Roman Catholic Church until the Council Carthage in AD 397. Cf. Robert Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 381.

²Satan presented to Adam and Eve a Pantheistic World View that they are deity since he has given them special knowledge to reveal the deathlessness and deification of man. Satan wants man to follow his teaching and to move up the *pleroma* to spirit-hood (angels) and then to god-hood, becoming dis-embodied through numerous reincarnations. The resultant theology of Garden Gnosticism teaches that man is locked in an evil fleshly body and he must go through numerous reincarnations moving up the *pleroma* until he is completely absorbed into godhood. Garden Gnosticism teaches that flesh is evil and man must go through many reincarnations for ultimate salvation. Paul repudiated this system in Col. 2:8-10. He also shredded Gnostic theology with the one line: "God was manifest in the flesh" (I Tim 3:16).

³E. M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidences* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1973), pp. 10 ff.

⁴I. Howard Marshall. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament. The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1978), p.15.

AUTHORSHIP, AUDIENCE, AND DATE

The early external evidence existed by the Patristics who averred that the Apostle John had written the *First Epistle*. These church fathers included Polycarp, a disciple of John, Papias, Irenaeus, the Muratorian Canon, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian, all who affirmed the Johannine authorship of *First John*. Later Patristics combined all three *Epistles* coming from John. Although some have espoused the “two John” theory, several have debunked this theory.⁵ These *Epistles* were probably written after the *Gospel* and before the Domitian persecution of AD 95. Again, early tradition states that John spent his latter days in Ephesus (Cf. Rev. 2:1). The internal evidence of the *Epistles* recognizes the similarity in the grammar and theology with the vocabulary, style, and syntax of the *Gospel*. The Apostle John, “the apostle of love” (cf. Jn. 21:20), was the writer of the *Gospel*, the *Johannine Epistles* and the *Apocalypse*. His emphasis on the verb “to love” and the noun “love,” as well as leaning on the Lord’s bosom (Jn. 13:23) seemed to demonstrate that he had the gift of “showing mercy” (Rom. 12:8).

The fact that the writer of *Second* and *Third John* calls himself “the elder” strengthens the argument that the Apostle John wrote these because apostles were also bishops and elders (Acts 1:20; I Pet. 5:1-4). Therefore, nothing contradicts the tradition that the Apostle John wrote his *Gospel*, *I, II, II John*, and *Revelation* to the Ephesian Baptist Church sometime after AD 70, and probably in AD 90’s of the first century.⁶

Here are some comparisons of *First John* with *Gospel of John*:

PURPOSE

The *First Epistle* dealt with Garden Gnosticism that was permeating the Lord’s assemblies. Gnosticism had to respond to the biblical claims about the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Docetism” said Jesus only “seemed” (*dokeo*) to be in the flesh but was really a phantom (cf. *contra* I Jn. 2:2). “Adoptionism” taught that the “Christ” Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism and left at His death; Jesus had been “adopted” but was not God manifest in the flesh (cf. *contra* I Jn. 4:3). In order to avoid Garden Gnosticism the believer needed to have fellowship with the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ which fellowship would bring joy. This subjective joy would come through three objective tests, namely the **Moral Test** (keep the commandments), the **Social Test** (love the brethren), and the **Doctrinal Test** (believe in the true God—the Lord Jesus Christ).⁷ Since there had been Gnostics in the membership and had left (I Jn. 2:19), they had impacted the true believers to such a degree that some questioned their salvation, having the lack of assurance (I Jn. 5:11-13). Therefore, John began to take the church audience through several cycles of tests of their fruit of salvation. The joy that comes from having fellowship with the Father comes through obeying the Lord’s commandments, loving the Lord’s

⁵See Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Vol. II (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, 1997 reprint), p. 452, and Alfred Plummer, *The Epistles of S. John* (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges). (Cambridge: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1900), pp. 213-216.

⁶Cf. Marshall for discussion on late date. Marshall, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament. The Epistles of John*, pp. 47-48.

⁷For the Moral Test the verb “keep” (*tereo*) occurs 8x, for the Social Test the noun “love” (*agape*) occurs 18x and the verb “love” (*agapao*) occurs 27x, and for the Doctrinal Test, the noun “faith” (*pistis*) occurs 1x and the verb “believe” (*pisteuo*) occurs 10x in I Jn.

church members, and believing in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Trusting in the Gnostic Christ and working up the *pleroma* to spirit deity never gives assurance and thus gives no joyful relationship with the Triune God the Bible. Paul cinched the argument against Garden Gnosticism that permeated the NT churches, saying to the Colossians, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:8-10).

Since the *First Epistle* warned about the reality of **Gnostic church members**, the *Second Epistle* expanded on and warned about the reality of **Gnostic church missionaries**. Finally, the *Third Epistle* warned about the reality of **Gnostic church ministers**.

THE OUTLINE OF FIRST JOHN

I. The Purpose: Joy because of Fellowship (1:1-4)

II. The Parameters for Fellowship (1:5-2:27)

- A. The Parameter of Fellowship with Saviour (1:5-2:2)
- B. The Parameter of Fellowship with Saviour and Saints (2:3-27)
 - 1. The Parameter of the Moral Test (2:3-6)
 - 2. The Parameter of the Social Test (2:7-17)
 - 3. The Parameter of the Doctrinal Test (2:18-27)

III. The Practice of Tests (2:28-4:6)

- A. The Practice of the Moral Test (2:28-3:10)
- B. The Practice of the Social Test (3:11-24)
- C. The Practice of the Doctrinal Test (4:1-6)

IV. The Profit of the Tests (4:7-5:21)

- A. The Profit of the Social Test (4:7-12)
- B. The Profit of the Doctrinal and Social Tests (4:13-21)
- C. The Profit of the Doctrinal, Social, and Moral Tests (5:1-21)

THE OUTLINE II JOHN

I. The Audience (vv. 1-3)

II. The Approval (v. 4)

III. The Admonition (vv. 5-6)

IV. The Adversaries (vv. 7-11)

V. The Aspiration (vv. 12-13)

THE OUTLINE OF III JOHN

I. The Introduction (v. 1)

II. The Impact of Gaius (v. 2-8)

III. The Inveiglement of Diotrephes (vv. 9-11)

IV. The Installment of Demetrius (v. 12)

V. The Inking of John (vv. 13-14)

THE Gnostic ATTACK UPON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The teaching of Garden Gnosticism concerning the Lord Jesus Christ denied his true Personhood. For instance, the Apostle John repudiated Adoptionism (that the “Christ Spirit” adopted Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the Cross), saying, “*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*” (I Jn. 2:22). Again, John denounced the error of Docetism (that Jesus Christ was a mere phantom and not an actual physical man), saying, “*And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world*” (I Jn. 4:3). Garden Gnosticism taught the appeal of works salvation through the pride of man who must move upward in the *pleroma* (“fulness”) with the help of the *aeons* (demons) to reach ultimately the realm of angels and then return to full spirit-deity. Paul countered this Greek philosophical heresy that came into the church at Colosse, saying, “*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power*” (Col. 2:8-10). Christ is the only emanation of the Godhead and therefore He is the One and only *Pleroma* Who has established believers complete in Him. Christians do not need the help of teachers, swamis, or shamans for their salvation since He is the Head of all angelic beings, and Christians are complete in Him.

Garden Gnosticism in the New Testament

While denying the biblical teaching that “*God was manifest in the flesh*” (I Tim. 3:16)⁸ in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Gnosticism promoted the necessity of following Gnostic teachers such as Epicurus and Zeno of Citium for advancement in the *pleroma*. Paul warned about the “*endless genealogies*” (I Tim. 1:4; Tit. 3:9) of gurus up and down the *pleroma*. Basically, Epicurus taught that self-enjoyment of the evil flesh would not hinder advancement and consequently he promoted Epicureanism or Hedonism. Zeno on the other hand promoted self-denial that would indeed enhance one’s advancement and thus Stoicism. The mantra of the Stoicks was the denial of the physical, saying, “*Touch not; taste not; handle not*” (Col. 2:21). Further up the *pleroma* were the angels, and Paul warned, saying, “*Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind*” (Col. 2:18) and “*Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh*” (Col. 2:23). The Stoicks rejected the biblical truths of marriage and animal consummation with celibacy and veganism, respectively, and Paul soundly repudiated these demonic doctrines, saying, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.*”

⁸The Greek Critical Text betrays its preference for Gnostic-laced Greek manuscripts (ⲛ and B) and reads ὁς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί *hos ephanerothe en sarki* (“**he who** was manifest in the flesh”), removing θεός *theos* from the text and omitting the essential truth that “**God was manifest in the flesh.**”

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (I Tim. 4:1-5).

Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul asserted that there is a place for self-denial, affirming *“But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (I Tim. 4:7-8).* He revealed elsewhere about the “little profit in godly bodily exercise,” saying, *“Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency” (I Cor. 7:5).*

Since all varieties of Garden Gnosticism advocate that spirit-deity is locked in physical bodies and needs permanent release, ultimate deliverance is for only the spirit-deity and there is no salvation for the evil flesh. “Flesh is evil” is their mantra! This heresy lends itself to reincarnation. As the spirit-deity moves through various bodies in history, the Hindu term *karma* becomes significant to teach that evil behaviour in past lives results in evil results in present life. The Lord’s disciples had to learn to reject the doctrine of bad karma, as they couched their question around this heresy, saying, *“And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” (Jn. 9:2).* At least two of Paul’s churches denied the resurrection doctrine and promoted the alternative. Paul said to the Corinthian Baptist Church, saying, *“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (I Cor. 15:12),* and to the Ephesian Baptist Church, saying, *“And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (II Tim. 2:17-18).* Not only did Garden Gnosticism permeate the pagan world, but also it penetrated the Jewish world especially through the Sadducees of which Paul was aware. Luke recorded, saying, *“For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both” (Acts 23:8; see also Mt. 22:23 et al).* As well, in the context of Garden Gnosticism Paul gave warnings about *“Jewish fables” (Tit. 1:14; I Tim. 1:4).*

From the old nature of man evinces pride. It started with Satan and in his pride he wanted more (I Tim. 6:10) and fell because of pride. Proudful Lucifer appealed to the potential pride in untested Adam and Eve and discovered that they would seek knowledge without obedience to God. Thus began their effort to advance through knowledge to being *“as gods.”* The LORD stopped them short and condemned them as they tried their effort of covering in the presence of Jehovah. Through repentance and faith, they received Jehovah’s blood-sacrifice covering and anticipated the fulfillment of the Seed Promise (Gen. 3:7, 15, 20-21). The ego of fallen man was ripe for Garden Gnosticism that offered to his pride superiority through knowledge and some sort of spiritual advancement. The proud heart seeks validation through externalism that manifests to others the desired superiority in advancement. Thus, this is the nature of all men, who have pride in the heart and have the desire to manifest their self-superiority in some external fashion. Self-righteous advancement in this life and beyond is the religious nature of the human race. Pagan mankind opted for one of the multitude of repackaging schemes of Garden Gnosticism, including the Egyptian religion, the Canaanite religion, Assyrian religion, the Babylonian religion, the Medo-Persian religion, the Hindu religion, the Buddhism religion, and the mystery religions of the Greco-Roman world.

Verse 2:18

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

The loving John again addressed his beloved flock with compassion and concern using a Semitic chiasmic structure:

- A. Last time (18a)
- B. Antichrists (18b)
- A.' Last time (18c)

The first literary stich consisted of his addressees and the *eschaton*, saying, “*Little children, it is the last time*” (Παιδία,⁹ ἐσχάτη¹⁰ ὥρα¹¹ ἐστὶ¹² *Paidia, eschate hora esti*). The focus of the chiasm was upon “*antichrists*” coming in the last days of the first century to counter the true Christ!

Obviously, John had a developed and defined eschatology from the prophecy of Daniel about the four hundred and ninety years relating to the Israelites (Dan. 9:24-27). Beginning with the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah (445 BC) to the crucifixion (AD 30) was four hundred and eighty-three years. When Jesus of Nazareth came claiming to be the King of the Jews, He offered the Kingdom of Heaven, the Davidic Dynasty of the Millennium to the Jews. When they rejected the Lord as King, He postponed his Kingdom. From the inspired history recorded in Scripture, the finalization of history started when the King came in the first century. The First Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ ushered in the “*last days*.”¹³

Other biblical authors averred that the last days began with the presence of God manifest in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16; Gal. 4:4). Peter declared, saying, “*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams*” (Acts 2:16-17). Paul prophesied, saying, “*Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*” (Heb. 1:2). Peter as well, revealed, saying, “*Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*” (I Pet. 1:20; see also Jam. 5:3). Furthermore, Paul wrote to Timothy about the increasing intensity of apostasy from the first century forward, saying, “*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come*” (II Tim. 3:1). It is biblically evident that the “*last days*,” “*last times*,” or “*last hour*” began with the First Coming of Christ.

⁹See extended note on v. 13.

¹⁰The adjective ἐσχάτος *eschatos* (54x) means “*last*.” It is also used as “*last time*” καιρῶ ἐσχάτῳ *kairo eschato* (I Pet. 1:5) and ἐσχάτῳ χρόνῳ *eschato chrono* (Jude 1:18). The KJV followed Tyndale with “*last tyme*.”

¹¹The noun ὥρα *hora* (108x) means “*time*,” “*season*,” or “*hour*.”

¹²The present form of εἰμί *eimi* denoted that John declared that the “*last time*” was present in his lifetime!

¹³Many “*prophecy experts*” of the 20th century within Fundamentalism taught that the “*last days*” began in their generation. They postulated that the “*imminency*” doctrine applied only to the 20th and now 21st centuries, maintaining certain “*signs*” such as the inventions of the internet and of microchip implants, the prominence of China and Russia, the threat of nuclear war, earthquake activity, etc., all demanded the imminent Rapture! Nevertheless, Paul had the expectation of the imminent Rapture (I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thes. 4:15-17).

With the coming of the “*last time*” in the first century when the King came with His Kingdom (cf. Dan. 2:44), Satan intensified the conflict of the Seed Promise (see Gen. 3:15) with his “*antichrists.*” The apostle revealed, saying, “*and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists*” (καὶ καθὼς¹⁴ ἠκούσατε¹⁵ ὅτι ὁ ἀντίχριστος¹⁶ ἔρχεται,¹⁷ καὶ νῦν¹⁸ ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγονάσιν¹⁹ *kai kathos ekousate hoti ho antichristos erchetai, kai nun antichristoi polloi gegonasin*). Satan the great imposter, imitated the Lord by sending “*false Christs, and false prophets,*” (Mt. 24:24; Mk. 13:22), “*false teachers*” (II Pet. 2:1), and “*false apostles*” (II Cor. 11:13). His “*many antichrists*” have a long lineage of spiritual destruction throughout time.

In the first century, Satan mimicked the signs of an apostle (II Cor. 12:12), as the Lord warned, saying, “*For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many...For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect*” (Mt. 24:5, 24). For instance, the seven sons of Sceva were involved in casting out demons and were mightily rebuked for this supernatural activity (Acts 19:13-16). The Apostle John stated later that the spirit of Antichrist was already prevalent in the world (I Jn. 4:3). The Seed Promise “*enmity*” escalated in the first century and will culminate at the end of the Tribulation (II Thes. 2:8).

John moved to the last literary stich which paralleled the first, saying, “*whereby we know that it is the last time*” (ὅθεν²⁰ γινώσκομεν²¹ ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν *hothen ginoskomen hoti eschate hora estin*). Apparently, the audience of the apostle had biblical knowledge of the Seed Promise (Gen. 3:15), of the prophecy of the coming beast (Dan. 7:24 ff.), of his efforts (Dan. 11:36-39), and of his ultimate overthrow (Dan. 11:45-12:2; II Thes. 2:3-8). Although the term “*antichrist*” has no equivalent in the *Tanak*, believers instructed in eschatology could and would connect Satan’s Seed against the woman’s Seed (Gen. 3:15) as the “*anti-Seed,*” the “*anti-Messiah,*” or the “*Anti-Christ.*” Therefore, John concluded, “*the antichrist*” will come in the “*last time*” and will have forerunners or “*antichrists*” preparing the way before his appearance. The “*spirit of antichrist*” (I Jn. 4:3) is the personage and power behind the increasing apostasy (II Tim. 3:13), culminating in the ultimate Apostasy with the ultimate Antichrist (II Thes. 2:3).

¹⁴See v. 6 for this adverb.

¹⁵Cf. v. 7 for the *aorist* form.

¹⁶The articular noun ἀντίχριστος *antichristos* (5x) and refers to the arch-adversary against Christ. The prefix ἀντί *anti* (x) means “against” and “in the place of” Christ, as Paul revealed, saying, “...*that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*” (II Thes. 3b-4). The noun occurs also in I Jn. 2:22; 4:3; II Jn. 1:7. Tyndale rendered the Greek as “Antichrist,” Luther as *Widerchrist*, and the *Vulgate* as *antichristus*. The antichrist will be empowered by Satan as the “*beast*” (Rev. 13:1-8).

¹⁷The present form from ἔρχομαι *erchomai* (642x) denoted that he “is coming.”

¹⁸The adverb νῦν *nun* (143x) means “now” or contextually in John’s day.

¹⁹The perfect form comes from γίνομαι *ginomai* (676x) which means “to become.” The perfect verb connoted that many antichrists had come and were still coming.

²⁰The adverb ὅθεν *hothen* (15) means “whereby” or “whence.”

²¹*Vide* 2:3. Recognizing the reality of “*antichrists*” caused the church members to know experientially the reality of the “*last time.*”

Verse 2:19

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Having developed the eschatological expectation for his audience, the pastor addressed the fact that the false teachers, the Gnostic deceivers, the antichrists, had been present but now had left.²² He emphasized the plural pronoun “us” (ἡμῶν *hemon*) five times to affirm that the “false Christians” or “antichrists” never were legitimate church members because they never belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ through a redemptive relationship. First, John observed their departure, saying, “*They went out from us*” (ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθον²³ *ex hemon exelthon*). He gave no details to their departure, but no doubt, they received church discipline in accordance to the requirements that the Apostle John heard the Lord enumerate and command (Mt. 18:15-18).²⁴ For instance, the Apostle Paul understood the responsibility of keeping the assembly pure and disciplining unrepentant sinners from the assembly. He said about the fornicator, “*To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (I Cor. 5:5). He informed about his oversight of the church discipline of two Ephesian rebels, saying, “*Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme*” (I Tim. 1:20). Paul instructed Titus to reject heretics, saying, “*A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject*” (Tit. 3:10). Moreover, the Apostle John recognized that the unsaved pastor Diotrephes disciplined the followers of John out of the assembly and called for the former’s corresponding ouster (II Jn. 1:10).

John the apostle gave the reason for the removal of the antichrists, saying, “*but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us*” (ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν· εἰ²⁵ γὰρ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν, μεμενήκεισαν²⁶ ἅν μεθ’ ἡμῶν *all’ ouk esan ex hemon. ei gar esan ex hemon, memenekeisan an meth’ hemon*). The antichrists projected one of two heresies about the Lord Jesus Christ as John revealed later in his *First Epistle*. John named them well since the two Gnostic versions of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. I Jn. 2:22; 4:3) were offering “*false Christs*” or “*idols,*” or a “*christ*” who was not the true Christ, and therefore they were “*antichrists.*”

Doctrine divides! When the Gnostics discovered that church members recognized that their heresy undermined the Person and work of the precious Lord, the false teachers “*went out.*” In their exit, they received the biblical escort from membership *via* church discipline. This procedure demonstrated publicly the heretics’ heresies, as John stated, saying, “*but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of*

²²Ecclesiologically, Christians continue; apostates abandon!

²³The *aorist* form comes from the verb ἐξέρχομαι *exerchomai* (222x) which means “to go out.” The verb intensified the action with the independent preposition ἐξ *ex* in the primary syntactical position of the sentence.

²⁴Kistemaker conjectured about the antichrists’ absence, saying, “They left, presumably, on their own accord.” Simon Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary. Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), p. 277. Church members do not have the privilege just “to leave” an assembly in which the Lord “set” them (I Cor. 12:18). Theologians do not always know this truth. Pastors do!

²⁵The conditional particle εἰ *ei* (290x) means “if” or “whether.”

²⁶This *hapax* pluperfect form comes from the verb μένω *meno* (120x) which means “to abide.” The pluperfect verb connoted that the antichrists had not “*continued with*” the assembly for some time.

us” (ἀλλ’ ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν²⁷ ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶ πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν *all’ hina phanerothosin hoti ouk eisi pantes ex hemon*). The church discipline manifested the heretics and their Gnosticism as a public form of disciplining false teachers from assemblies. Although church discipline has the goal of restoration, the disciplined sinner needs to repent of public sin that brought on the third step of ex-communication. John likened those disciplined out of a NT assembly as “antichrists”! With the polar opposites from the perspective of the writing of John, one is either pro-Christ or anti-Christ!

Verse 2:20

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

The Apostle John contrasted the “*antichrists*” who were opposed to the Anointed One, the Christ, with those “pro-Christ” who received the Lord Jesus Christ and His anointing! Succinctly, the writer declared the truth about his congregation, saying, “*But ye have an unction²⁸ from the Holy One, and ye know all things*” (καὶ ὑμεῖς χρίσμα²⁹ ἔχετε³⁰ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου,³¹ καὶ οἴδατε³² πάντα³³ *kai humeis chrisma echete apo tou hagiou, kai oidate panta*). He mentioned the spiritual blessing, the divine source, and the consequent knowledge. First, John averred about the great spiritual blessing Christians have received at salvation. The “*unction*” or “*anointing*” does not come upon the believer but indwells the Christian, as the Apostle John later revealed (I Jn. 2:27). Whereas the *Tanak* referred to the ritual of anointing of oil for the ordination of priests (Ex. 29:7 *et al*), of kings (I Sam. 16:13), and of prophets (I Ki. 19:16), and James encouraged the anointing of oil for the healing of sick church members (Jam. 5:14), the anointing of the believer is spiritual and internal! The Scriptures teach that all Christians are priests (I Pet 2:5, 9) and therefore receive their anointing not externally but internally.

Second, the divine source for the anointing is the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of God anointed Jesus, as Scripture revealed, saying, “*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who*

²⁷See 1:2 for the verb of this *aorist* subjunctive form.

²⁸The root of the *KJV* word “*unction*” comes from the Latin *Vulgate unctionem* which means “anointing (as a religious rite).” *Tyndale* gave the reading “oyntment.”

²⁹The noun χρίσμα *chrisma* (3x) means “anointing.” It means literally “what has been spread upon” or “anointment.” The Hebrew equivalent is מָשַׁח *mashchah* (25x). It is related to the noun מָשִׁיחַ *mashiyach* (39x) which means “*anointed one*” or “*Messiah*” (Dan. 9:25-26). The cognate verb is מָשַׁח *mashach* (70x) which means “to anoint.”

³⁰See 1:3.

³¹The adjective ἅγιος *hagios* (240x) means “*holy*” or “set a part.” See I Jn. 5:7. The articular form τοῦ ἁγίου *tu hagiou* (15x) means “the holy (One)” referring to deity.

³²Cf. v. 11. The is the 1st of 6x for the second person plural, perfect form of the verb οἶδα *oida* in the *Johannine Epistles* (see also I Jn. 2:21[2x]; 3:5, 15; II Jn. 1:12). The form connoted that the audience knew and continue to know about “*all things*.”

³³The noun πάντα *panta* from πᾶς *pas* (cf. 1:7) is in the accusative case, the object of the verb. The CT incorrectly changed the accusative case to the nominative case πάντες *pantes* and rendered it as the subject, “you all know.” The “*darling*” Manuscripts (MSS) of the Gnostic-text- influenced “*scholars*” are \aleph and B. *Tyndale* rendered the TR as “ye knowe all thynges.” Interestingly, the ASV gave the TR rendering “*ye know all the things*.”

went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38)³⁴ in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, who predicted, saying, “*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*”³⁵ (Isa. 61:1; cf. also Lk. 4:18). Albeit, it is true that the Lord Jesus Christ was entitled the “*Holy One*” (cf. Acts 2:27), the aforementioned passages suggest the ministry of the Spirit as the source. In actuality, the Triune Godhead indwells the believer (Jn. 14:17, 20, and 23; see also I Jn. 2:27).

Third, John stated that consequent knowledge of all truth follows from the indwelling of the Spirit of truth in the Christian. He said to the believing church membership, not the departed heretics, “*ye know*” (absolutely) all things. Because the Author of Scripture indwells the believer, the Christian has the scriptural capacity of knowing “*all things*.” Contextually, the “*all things*” refer to “*the truth*” (I Jn. 2:21). Certainly, John was not suggesting that the saint would have an encyclopedic knowledge of all the facts of the world, including science, history, literature, mathematics, etc.³⁶ Instead, the Author of Scripture wants to teach the truth of God to the saint of God. The Lord God is the writer of Scripture Who indwells the Christian and wants the Christian to know all of the Scripture completely and perfectly! The apostle of love had already recorded the Lord’s words, Who said, “*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you*” (Jn. 14:26; cf. also Jn. 16:13).³⁷ Of course, the Teacher of Truth indwells the saint of Truth and wants to teach him/her the word of Truth in the place of Truth, the NT assembly.

The believer then has the responsibility to receive the truth from oral and then later from the written revelation of the complete Canon of Scripture. Paul commanded Timothy, saying, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (II Tim. 2:15). Summarily, the Lord is the Teacher, the believer is the student, the Scripture is the textbook, the classroom is the NT assembly, the duration of the course is this lifetime, and the award is the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Verse 2:21

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

³⁴Thomas M. Strouse, *The Lord Added to the Church. A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Volume Two (Cromwell, CT: Bible Baptist Theological Press, 2021), pp. 721-722.

³⁵Thomas M. Strouse, *Jehovah Saves. A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah* (Cromwell, CT: Bible Baptist Theological Press, 2016), pp. 451-453.

³⁶Because of his preference for the CT, Kistemaker missed John’s point about knowing all truth, saying, “The latter reading (TR) leaves the impression that, because of the gift of the Holy Spirit, Christians are able to know everything.” Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary. James, Epistles of John, Peter and Jude*, p. 279.

³⁷At the outset of the Millennium, all will know the Lord, as Jeremiah predicted, saying, “*And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*” (Jer. 31:34).

The Apostle John knew the Person of Truth (Jn. 14:6), and had received His word of truth (Jn. 17:17). He was an apostle, preacher, and teacher of truth and he wrote about truth. Pastor John had taught his congregation about truth. He affirmed these assertions, saying, “*I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth*” (οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν,³⁸ ἀλλ’ ὅτι οἴδατε αὐτήν, καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος³⁹ ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστι *ouk egrapsa humin, hoti ouk oidate ten aletheian, all’ hoti oidate auten, kai hoti pan pseudos ek tes aletheias ouk esti*). Presumably, the Apostle John referred to his *Gospel* in which he had taught the congregation about the truth of the Person and work of Christ.

Now, he indicated that his *First Epistle* was unnecessary to reveal truth because the Baptist assembly had already received the inspired written revelation. Nevertheless, he wrote so that the congregation understood the polar opposites between truth and a lie, as well as between Christ and antichrists. There was no common ground that the congregation had with heretics and there is no common ground between truth and a lie. For the tenth time the apostle affirmed that he was writing to the congregation, demonstrating his intimate concern and love for the church members. The Lies of the Garden are easily detectable and are not intermixable with the biblical worldview of Scripture. He assured them with the gnomic observation that deceit and truth are polar opposites.

Verses 2:22-23

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

John continued to develop the Doctrinal Test, harking back to the antichrists that were in the assembly and then received expulsion. What did these heretics teach within the assembly? Because of the apostle’s love for the Lord Jesus and for his congregation, this son of thunder (Mk. 3:17) was unflinching in his excoriation of the Gnostics. He had cited the obvious “*that no lie is of the truth*” and now he gave examples. The antichrists had attacked the Personhood of his Saviour and so he responded, saying, “*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?*” (τίς ἐστιν ὁ ψεύστης,⁴⁰ εἰ μὴ⁴¹ ὁ ἀρνούμενος⁴² ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός;⁴³ *tis estin ho pseustes, ei me ho arnoumenos hoti Iesous ouk estin ho Christos;*). The Gnostic heresy of Adoptionism taught that the “Christ Spirit” came upon Jesus at his baptism (Mt. 3:16) and left Him at his death (Jn. 19:30).

³⁸Vide note on 1:6.

³⁹The noun ψεῦδος *pseudos* (9x) means “a deceit,” “lying,” or “a lie.” The context of Rom. 1:27 revealed that man chose “*the lie*” of Satan and embraced Garden Gnosticism (Gen. 3:4-5; cf. also II Thes. 2:9, 11).

⁴⁰For the 3rd time John exposed the ψεύστης *pseustes* (10x) or “*liar*” as one who charged God as a “*liar*” (1:10), one who disobeyed God’s commandments (2:4), and now one who denied the deity of Jesus.

⁴¹The negative particle μὴ *me* (1044x) coupled with the negative οὐκ *ouk* (1632x) is an example of a double negative, which in Greek is intensive positive.

⁴²The present participle form comes from ἀρνέομαι *arneomai* (31x) which means “to deny.”

⁴³The articular noun ὁ Χριστός *ho christos* (60x) is the Greek title for the divine Messiah, the Anointed One (see v. 20). The *Tanak* taught that Jehovah would have His מָשִׁיחַ *mashiyach* (39x) or Messiah, Who was also King and Son (cf. Ps. 2:2, 6, 12). The NT Greek equivalent noun is *christos*.

According to them, the “divine spirit” adopted the mere mortal man Jesus during his lifetime, and then abandoned Jesus. Jesus was not deity but merely a man adopted by deity! He was Jesus but He was not “*the Christ*” (see Mt. 16:16).

Of course this teaching was a lie. Three times John had declared in his *Gospel* that Jesus was the Christ, saying, “*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*” (Jn. 1:17), “*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*” (Jn. 17:3), and “*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*” (Jn. 20:31). Furthermore, John declared, saying, “*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him*” (I Jn. 5:1).⁴⁴ Consequently, the apostle designated the heretics appropriately, saying, “*He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*” (οὐτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος,⁴⁵ ὁ ἀρνούμενος⁴⁶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν *houtos estin ho antichristos, ho arnoumenos ton patera kai ton huion*). Further, he expanded on the result of denying that Jesus is the Christ because it led to denying the Father. To the Gnostic, the Unknown God was the unfathomable entity with no gender: “a thing,” “a mind,” “an it.”

The biblical teaching of the Godhead revealed the Triune Members including God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Certainly the prophet Isaiah revealed the Trinity, saying, “*Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the **LORD GOD**, and his **Spirit**, hath sent me. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; **I am the LORD thy God** which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go*” (Isa. 48:16-17). In this *Epistle*, the Apostle John referred to the close relationship of two Members of the Godhead, namely the Father and the Son (I Jn. 1:2, 3; 2:1, 23, 24; 4:3, 14, 15; 5:9, 10, 11, 12, 20). Furthermore, in his *Gospel*, the apostle declared, saying, “*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*” (Jn. 1:18). Therefore, the apostle of love followed the argument, saying, “*Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father*” (πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει⁴⁷ *pas ho arnoumenos ton huion oude ton patera echei*). In other words, to deny the Son is to deny the Father.

Following Semitic poetry, the Apostle John expressed the positive contrast to the satanically inspired denial about the Son and Father. He said, “*(but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also*” (ὁ ὁμολογῶν⁴⁸ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει *ho homologon ton huion kai ton patera echei*). Simply put, those believers who acknowledge the Son have the Father; those Gnostics who deny the Son have not the Father. The *KJV* translators followed Beza’s *Textus Receptus* Greek text (1598) and retained the inspired Greek words of this clause, albeit italicized in English. The Greek words were omitted in the Byzantine Greek text and in the Greek text of Stephanus (1550). The Greek text is surely true and is not a lie, as Solomon warned, saying, “*Add*

⁴⁴The name and title “*Jesus Christ*” occurs in the *Johannine Epistles* (10x), namely also in 1:3, 7; 2:1; 3:23; 4:2, 3; 5:6, 20; II Jn. 1:3 and 7.

⁴⁵This is the 3rd of 5x that the apostle used ἀντίχριστος *antichristos* (see also v. 18).

⁴⁶The present participle, masculine singular form from ἀρνεόμαι *arneomai* (31x) singled out a certain man who had been in the assembly.

⁴⁷The present form of the verb ἔχω *echo* (cf. 1:3) denoted the present reality.

⁴⁸See 1:9 for the verb of this articular present participle form.

thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov. 30:6). Beza and Scrivener were not found to be liars.

Verses 2:24-25

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

The circuitous writing of John appeared again, repeating truths from verses 1:1, 3, 5 and 2:7. With the strong command, their pastor said to his congregation, “*Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning*” (ὁμεῖς οὖν ὃ ἠκούσατε⁴⁹ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς⁵⁰ ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω⁵¹ *humeis oun ho ekousate ap’ arches en humin meneto*). The truth that these believers received for their conversion has changed their lives, and they must continue to abide in them. He continued with a condition and then its result, saying, “*If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you*” (ἐάν⁵² ἐν ὑμῖν μείνη⁵³ ὃ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε *ean en humin meine ho ap’ arches ekousate*). Abiding in Christ comes from abiding in the word of God (Col. 3:16). The fruit of regeneration is obeying the word and abiding in Jesus Christ. For instance, Peter assured, saying, “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*” (I Pet. 1:23). The eternal word of God gives eternal redemption that includes abiding eternally in Christ.

The result of meeting the condition of abiding in Christ demands that the result occurs, as John averred, saying, “*ye also shall continue in the Son,*⁵⁴ *and in the Father*” (καὶ ὁμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε⁵⁵ *kai humeis en to huio kai en to patri meneite*). Abiding in Christ means being a member of the Family of God, obviously with God the Father as well as with God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Once born into the Family of God, one stays eternally in the Family of God (I Jn. 5:11-12). The Lord Jesus had promised this eternal life, John declared, saying, “*And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*” (καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία⁵⁶ ἣν αὐτὸς ἐπηγγείλατο⁵⁷ ἡμῖν, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον *kai haute estin he epaggelia hen autos*

⁴⁹See 1:1 ff.

⁵⁰Cf. 1:1; 2:7, 13-14.

⁵¹The present imperative form comes from μένω *meno* (120x) which mean “to abide.” The verse contains 2 other forms, namely the subjunctive *aorist* (μείνη *meine*) and the future (μενεῖτε *meneite*).

⁵²This conditional conjunctive particle introduces the *aorist* subjunctive. Cf. 1:6.

⁵³The *aorist* subjunctive form of μένω *meno* (9x) occurs 7x in John’s writings: Jn. 12:46; 15: 4, 5, 6, 11; 19:31 and I Jn. 2:24.

⁵⁴To have fellowship with the Father, one must come through the Son (Jn. 16:23-24), and thus the apostle thrust the Son forward in his expression.

⁵⁵For the 3rd time the writer employed the μένω *meno* verb in the verse, using the future form which occurs also in Jn. 15:10 and I Jn. 2:27.

⁵⁶This is John’s only use of the noun ἐπαγγελία *epaggelia* (52x) in the *Johannine Epistles* which means “promise.”

⁵⁷The *aorist* form comes from the verb ἐπαγγέλλομαι *epaggellomai* (15x) which means “to promise.” The apostle employed the verb only here in all of his writings.

epeggeilato hemin, ten zone ten aioniov). In numerous passages, the Lord has promised eternal life, saying, “*That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (Jn. 3:15-16), “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (Jn. 3:36), and “*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*” (Jn. 17:3).

Verses 2:26-27

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

Again, the Apostle John expressed his personal interest in and desire for the congregation to recognize his love for them with his “epistle of reassurance.” His focus was upon those that had left and on other Gnostics who may still be in the assembly. He said, “*These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you*” (ταῦτα ἔγραψα⁵⁸ ὑμῖν περὶ τῶν πλανώντων⁵⁹ ὑμᾶς *tauta egrapsa humin peri ton planonton humas*). His *Epistle* is an apologetic against Gnostic infiltration into Baptist assemblies as well as an *Epistle* of love to saints for their encouragement. Those who left were subtle seducers and had failed the Moral, Social, and now Doctrinal Test. Those remaining in the assembly needed to continue in the practice of these tests and to continue to gauge those who seemingly fail one or all of the tests authenticating truth.

The Gnostics were influential and insidious in their subtle teaching, attacking the Personhood of the precious Saviour. Jude warned about seducers in the biblical assembly, saying, “*For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Jude 1:4; cf. also II Pet. 2:1). Nevertheless, the apostle averred that his church members had the superior Teacher. First, he revealed the presence of the “*Anointing*,” saying, “*But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you*” (καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ χρίσμα ὃ ἐλάβετε⁶⁰ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν⁶¹ μένει⁶² *kai humeis to chrisma ho elabete ap’ autou en humin menei*). The repentant sinner received the indwelling Spirit of God at salvation Who permanently and positionally abides in the believer (I Cor. 6). Christ abides in the believer as the Christian abides in Christ. Abiding in Christ is an eternal position for the believer.

Repeating the truth about the supernatural “*unction*” or “*anointing*” that the believer has (v. 20), John advanced additional truth about the Person of Unction, the Spirit of God, Who lives within the believer.

⁵⁸This is John’s 4th use of the *aorist* form (vv. 14[2x] and 21).

⁵⁹See extended note on 1:8.

⁶⁰This initial use of the *aorist form* of the verb λαμβάνω (262x) in the *Johannine Epistles* demonstrated the punctiliar reception of the Lord at the time of conversion, as the Apostle John declared previously, saying, “*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*” (Jn. 1:12).

⁶¹See v. 8 for the prepositional phrase.

⁶²The present tense revealed the reality of the perpetual abiding (v. 14). This is the Christian’s position.

Whereas the anointing in the *Tanak* was external and impersonal, the Anointing in the current dispensation is internal and personal (see commentary on v. 20).

Second, the spiritual advantage that the church members had, John expounded, was that they were indwelt with the Author and Teacher of the Scriptures. They had the writings of John, which were indeed Scripture, and they had the indwelling Spirit of God. The Apostle John affirmed, saying, “*But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie*” (καὶ οὐ χρειάν⁶³ ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκη⁶⁴ ὑμᾶς· ἀλλ’ ὡς τὸ αὐτὸ χρίσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων,⁶⁵ καὶ ἀληθές⁶⁶ ἐστὶ, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι ψεῦδος⁶⁷ *kai ou chreian echete hin tis didaske humas. all’ hos to auto chrisma didaskei humas peri panton, kai alethes esti, kai ouk esti pseudos*). John’s theological point was that his church members did not need the seductive Gnostic teachers to instruct them about the Person and nature of Jesus Christ since they had the Triune Spirit of God indwelling them as the Author of Scripture. The Scripture was their textbook and their Instructor was the Author of the textbook, the Holy Ghost.

Third, Pastor John came back to his theme of abiding, saying, “*and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him*” (καὶ καθὼς ἐδίδαξεν ὑμᾶς, μενεῖτε⁶⁸ ἐν αὐτῷ *kai kathos edidaxen humas, meneite en auto*). Obviously, the Teacher was the Lord in Whom the believers were to abide. The Apostle John warned about listening to these Gnostic heretics whose teaching contradicted the illumination of the Spirit of God Who guided the church members in all truth (Jn. 16:13). In balanced contradistinction, the Apostle Paul revealed that the Lord Jesus Christ gave gifted instructors to the Baptist assemblies, saying, “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers*” (Eph. 4:9).⁶⁹ The Lord has given gifted leaders to instruct the congregation, complementing the members’ own private study of Scripture. Certainly, the Lord did not lead John to encourage his church members to stay at home and study. The Lord uses the two witnesses of private study and public study to confirm truth. All study of the Scripture (II Tim. 2:15) must be consentient with the Spirit of God Who guides in all truth (Jn. 16:13).⁷⁰

⁶³The noun *χρεία chrei* (49x) means “necessity,” “lack” or “need.”

⁶⁴This present subjunctive form comes from the verb *didasko* (97x) which means “to teach.” In the Johannine Epistles, the writer employed the verb thrice, all in this verse, using three forms including this present subjunctive form, the present indicative form *διδάσκει didaskei* (“teacheth”), and the *aorist* indicative form *ἐδίδαξεν edidaxen* (“hath taught”).

⁶⁵The adjective *πάντων panton* (“all things”) connected back to the “all things” of Scripture (v. 20).

⁶⁶*Vide* v. 8.

⁶⁷Cf. v. 21.

⁶⁸See note on v. 24. The CT changed the future tense form into the imperative form *μένετε menete*, and rendered it “you abide” (NAS). The *KJV* gives the comforting future reality from the Greek Text to those who had been rattled by the seducers, which truth corresponds to John’s compassionate comfort for the members of the assembly.

⁶⁹Once the NT canon finalized, the remaining church office was the pastorate along with men and women teachers in the assembly. There is currently no office of the Apostle, the Prophet, and the Evangelist (cf. II Tim. 4:5). The deaconate is not an office of leadership but of service. Women may teach children and other women. See Strouse, *En Epheso. An Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, pp. 194-201.

⁷⁰Cf. “*Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after*

The biblical teaching of the Apostle John was that all believers have the privilege of knowing all scriptural truth when the following conditions are met: they have the indwelling Spirit of Truth (Jn. 14:17; I Jn. 4:6), with the Word of Truth (Jn. 17:17), in the Church of Truth (I Tim. 3:15), under the Man of Truth (Eph. 4:11). With this four-fold assurance of Truth, the church members have no need for Gnostic seducers who lack this four-dimensional construct to their own spiritual and theological destruction.⁷¹

THE JOHANNINE COMMA (I Jn. 5:7-8)

The Verification of the Person of the Three Tests (5:6-12)

Verses 5:6-8

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The Apostle John began his *Epistle* with the strong biblical declaration about the Lord Jesus Christ, Whose Person received constant deceptive attacks by the Gnostic heretics to eviscerate the truth that He is God manifest in the flesh (I Jn. 1:1-3; Jn. 1:1; I Tim. 3:16). John had inclined his head upon the bosom of Jesus (Jn. 13:23) and saw Him fulfill messianic prophecy (Isa. 6:1-2; Lk. 4:18 ff.). Pastor John knew that Jesus was no adoptionistic “Christ” or docetic phantom “Jesus Christ,” and instructed his church with irrefutable argumentation.

John the Apostle verified to his church members about the public ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a personal witness, the apostle of the Lord declared, “*This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood*” (οὗτός⁷² ἐστὶν ὁ ἐλθὼν⁷³ δι’ ὕδατος⁷⁴ καὶ αἵματος,⁷⁵ Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός· οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι μόνον,⁷⁶ ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι καὶ τῷ αἵματι *houtos estin ho elthon di’ hudatos kai*

the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him” (Dt. 13:3-4).

⁷¹For instance, the textual critics who argue for the superiority of the CT fail in one or more of the four categories, either, not having the Spirit of Truth, or the Word of Truth, or the Church of Truth, or the Man of Truth. Many of these critics are in liberal denominations, using the Gnostic-laced \aleph and B reconstructed Greek Text, members of para-church organization, and under no biblical pastor. They are void of the Lord’s truth!

⁷²The demonstrative pronoun οὗτος *houtos* (1415x) is the postcedent to ὁ Χριστός *ho christos*.

⁷³The *aorist* participle form comes from the verb ἔρχομαι *erchomai* (see 2:18) which connoted the historical public arrival of the God-Man.

⁷⁴The noun ὕδωρ *hudor* (79x) means “water.” The English word “hydration” comes from this source.

⁷⁵Cf. note on 1:7.

⁷⁶See 2:2 for the adverb.

haimatos, Iesous ho Christos. ouk en to hudati monon, all' en to hudati kai to haimati). John alluded to beginning and end of the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord began His earthly ministry by submitting to the baptism of His forerunner John the Baptist (cf. Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1). The Baptist recognized that Jesus was the Messiah. The Apostle John reported the account, saying, “*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God*” (Jn. 1:29-34). Apparently, the son of Zebedee saw the baptism of Jesus (cf. Jn. 1:28-40 and Mt. 4:18-22).

The Lord Jesus Christ ended His public ministry on the Cross shedding His precious blood. The Apostle John recorded his eyewitness account, saying, “*And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst...When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home...When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost*” (Jn. 19:17-18, 26-27, 30).⁷⁷

The eyewitness account of John the Apostle repudiated the Gnostic notion of Adoptionism that the divine Spirit “adopted” the mere man Jesus, whereas in fact He was “*the Son of God*” (Jn. 1:32-24). Furthermore, the eyewitness apostle saw the shed blood of the Messiah, repudiating the Docetic heresy that Jesus Christ was a mere phantom, because phantoms do not bleed!⁷⁸

In addition, the Spirit appeared as a dove and publicly verified that Jesus was the “*beloved son*” of God. Matthew recorded the divine inauguration, saying, “*And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Mt. 3:15-17). The Lord Jesus Christ vindicated the Father’s will by fulfilling all righteousness and submitting to the baptism of John (cf. Lk. 7:29). The Apostle Paul confirmed the verification of the Holy Ghost, saying, “*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory***” (I Tim. 3:16).

⁷⁷Cf. “*And, having made peace through **the blood of his cross**, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven*” (Col. 1:20).

⁷⁸Cf. “*But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out **blood and water***” (Jn. 19:34). The Apostle John included this event in his *Gospel* account as an unbiased testimony against Docetism. Perhaps as well he symbolized the reference to water for the Spirit of God (cf. Jn. 7:38-39).

Thus, the apostle continued, saying, “*And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.*” (καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμά ἐστι τὸ μαρτυροῦν,⁷⁹ ὅτι τὸ Πνεῦμά ἐστὶν ἡ ἀλήθεια⁸⁰ *kai to Pneuma esti to marturoun, hoti to Pneuma estin he aletheia*). The Lord Jesus informed the apostles including John, saying, “*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me*” (Jn. 15:26). The Spirit of God, Who indwells believers, testifies to the truth. He has testified about the truth of Jesus, that He is the incarnate God. Therefore, John had prepared his readership about their spiritual privilege, saying, “*Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error*” (I Jn. 4:6).

Literally and theologically, John gave the three-fold earthly testimony of verification, namely, the water, the blood, and the Spirit of God. With his following chiasmic structure, he acknowledged the Triadic Earthly Verification (v. 6), then declared the Triadic Heavenly Verification (v. 7), and then returned to the Triadic Earthly Verification again (v. 8). Structurally, the focus of the chiasm is on the Trinity doctrine, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost (v. 7).

A. The Triadic Earthly Verification (v. 6)

B. The Triadic Heavenly Verification (v. 7)

A.’ The Triadic Earthly Verification (v. 8)⁸¹

The apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ gave the most powerful argumentation for the divine-human nature of “Jesus the Christ” and against the Gnostic heresies of the Adoptionistic and Docetic “Jesus Christ,” giving the three-fold earthly and the three-fold heavenly verifications. John followed the Scripture verification requirement which declared, “*One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established*” (Dt. 19:15). The Apostle John had written earlier about witnesses, citing the Lord Who said, “*If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*” (Jn. 3:12).

He expanded on the superiority of the heavenly witness of the Triune God, saying, “*He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom **God** hath sent speaketh the **words** of God: for God giveth not the **Spirit** by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all*

⁷⁹The present participle comes from the verb μαρτυρέω *martureo* (Cf. 1:2). The present tense indicated the ongoing Spirit ministry of verification of the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸⁰Vide 4:6.

⁸¹The chiasmic parallelism of Triadic Verification is destroyed in the NAS:

A. Water and blood (v. 6)

B. Spirit (v. 7)

A.’ Spirit, water, blood (v. 8)

things into his hand. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (Jn. 3:31-36).

Following his Triadic Earthly Verification, John revealed the biblically authoritative Triadic Heavenly Verification, saying, "*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*"⁸² (ὅτι τρεῖς⁸³ εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες⁸⁴ ἐν⁸⁵ τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ,⁸⁶ ὁ λόγος,⁸⁷ καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα.⁸⁸ καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι⁸⁹ *hoti treis eisin hoi martuountes en to ourano, ho pater, ho logos, kai to Hagion Pneuma. kai houtoi hoi treis hen eisi*).

John's expression of the Trinity is unique and definitive. It is unique because he employed the term "*the Word*" instead of the normative expression "*the Son*" or "*Christ*."⁹⁰ It is definitive because it refers to the "*logosmatic*" theme of John (cf. Jn. 1:1, *et al*). For instance, in the initial and standard rendering of the Trinitarian Formula, Matthew expressed thusly, "*the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*" (Mt. 28:19). Paul employed the Trinitarian formula in several ways, namely, "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*" (Acts 20:28), "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen*" (II Cor. 13:14), "*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love*" (Eph. 3:14-17), and "*How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*" (Heb. 9:14). Peter gave expression to the Trinitarian Formula, "*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied*" (I Pet. 1:2). Finally, the Lord's half-brother Jude averred, saying, "*But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on*

⁸²Tyndale (1534) followed the TR and rendered the Greek as "(For ther are thre which beare recorde in heuen the father the worde and the wholy goost. And these three are one)." Likewise, the *Luther Translation* (1545) gave the rendering *Denn drei sind, die da zeugen im Himmel: der Vater, das Wort und der Heilige Geist; und diese drei sind eins*.

⁸³This is the 1st of four references to the numeral τρεῖς *treis* (68x). See I Jn. 5:7 (2x) and 8 (2x).

⁸⁴The nominative **masculine** plural present participle from μαρτυρέω *martureo* (cf. 1:2) demands a **masculine** plural postcedent; ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα *ho pater, ho logos, kai to Hagion Pneuma*. If this postcedent is excised, the grammatically incongruent postcedent would be the **neuter** expression τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα *to Pneuma, kai to hudor, kai to haima* of the CT!

⁸⁵The expression τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν *treis eisin hoi martuountes en* occurs twice in the Johannine parallelism (vv. 7 and 8).

⁸⁶Cf. 1:2.

⁸⁷In John's writing the λόγος *logos* refers to "*the only begotten Son*" (Jn. 1:1, 14, and 18).

⁸⁸The rare Greek form τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα *to Hagion Pneuma* for the 3rd member of the Triune Godhead occurs only here and in Lk. 12:10.

⁸⁹The Greek expression οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι *houtoi hoi treis hen eisi* has as its antecedent ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα *ho pater, ho logos, kai to Hagion Pneuma* and declares the Triune Godhead or Trinity doctrine!

⁹⁰If the *Johannine Comma* was an inserted forgery or "pious" scribe entry, its uniqueness would have failed to convince any knowledgeable believer!

your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” (Jude 1:20-21).

The Trinitarian Formula culminated the “Logos” theology of the Apostle John. He had expressed that “the Word” was eternal, distinct from God (the Father), and co-equal with God (Jn. 1:1). John expanded his teaching by revealing that the apostles had heard, seen, and touched “the Word of life,” Jesus the Christ (I Jn. 1:1). Now, the apostle declared the Trinity doctrine and included that “the Word” is co-equal with God the Father and with the Holy Ghost (I Jn. 5:7).⁹¹

The Apostle John concluded the parallel chiasmic form (v. 8) with his Triadic Earthly Verification (v. 6). In contrast with the Triadic Heavenly Verification (v. 7) but repeating and expanding on his Triadic Earthly Verification (v. 8), John confirmed his irrefragable defense of the true nature of “Jesus the Christ.” He attested, saying, “And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one” (καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες⁹² ἐν τῇ γῆ,⁹³ τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα· καὶ⁹⁴ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσὶν *kai treis eisin hoi marturountes en te ge, to Pneuma, kai to hudor, kai to haima. kai hoi treis eis to en eisin*). The three earthly triads “agreed with the one” or with the Trinitarian unity of the three heavenly triads. John paralleled the three witnesses on earth (“the Spirit, and the water, and the blood”) with the three witnesses in heaven (“the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost”), connecting the two triadic groupings with the conjunction καὶ *kai* (“and”):

καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι (v. 7)
with
καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν (v. 8)

In conclusion, John revealed that the two sets of three witnesses testified to the Triune Godhead that obviously included “the Word,” the God-Man, “God was manifest in the flesh,” “Jesus the Christ”! With great biblical and revelatory dogmatism and literary skill under the inspiration of God, John declared that the Lord Jesus Christ affirmed along with the other members of the Triune Godhead that He was indeed true deity and true man, the eternal Saviour of the world. The writing style of John is simple yet biblically exquisite, and gives a clear and balanced defence of the true God Jesus Christ,⁹⁵ which any change in writing would cause irretrievable damage to his desired defense for his assembly.⁹⁶ The doctrine of the Trinity is “hard to be understood” by Gnostics (cf. II Pet. 3:16). The un-regenerated cannot understand truth until they obey Truth by

⁹¹The apostle also prepared his readership for the blanket theological truth, “...we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (I Jn. 5:20).

⁹²See v. 7.

⁹³This is the only reference in the *Johannine Epistles* for the noun γῆ *ge* (252x) which means “earth.”

⁹⁴Significantly, the conjunction καί *kai* connected the following phrase of “the three” with the previous phrase of “the three.”

⁹⁵Cf. “I and my Father are one” (Jn. 10:30).

⁹⁶The reading of the modern versions is severally truncated! Cf. the rendering of the *NET*: “Jesus Christ is the one who came by water and blood— not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth (v. 6). **For there are three that testify (v. 7).** And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one” (v. 8)!

faith (II Cor. 2:14). On the other hand, those indwelt with the Spirit of Truth through the centuries have received by faith the inscripturation of the so-called “*Johannine Comma*”⁹⁷ passage that clearly refutes all idols of the Gnostics’ Adoptionistic and Docetic “Christ.”

Nevertheless, the Gnostics of the first century attacked the canon of Scripture and the text of Scripture. For instance, some Gnostic attacked the authoritative Canon of the NT by writing a forged letter as if from Paul. The apostle revealed, saying, “*That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand*” (II Thes. 2:2). Peter averred that Gnostic heretics assailed the Scriptures of Paul by twisting the Greek text, saying, “*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction*” (II Pet. 3:15-16).⁹⁸

Copies of these wrested texts perpetuated through the centuries and ultimately identified as *Textus Criticus* or Critical Text (CT). The elite members of the coalition of the scholars of the modern textual critics⁹⁹ believe that they have put forth the formidable manuscript evidence argument against the inclusion of the *Comma Johanneum*.¹⁰⁰ After all, they posit that only nine “late” (after 10th century)¹⁰¹ and therefore inferior Mss. include the *Johannine Comma* (Mss. 221, 2318, 2473, 61, 88, 429, 629, 636, and 918). Of course, they fail to mention that there are only twelve Mss. before the 10th century that testify to the omission of I Jn. 5:7, namely, Mss. 01, A, B, K, L, P, Φ, 048, 049, 056, 0142, and 0296. Certainly, the number of “early” Mss.

⁹⁷The name “*Johannine*” derives from the verse I Jn. 5:7 that is in *First John* and the term “*comma*” refers to a portion of a written statement set off by the punctuation mark comma. The so-called *Johanneum Comma* is the biblical text “*in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth.*” The Gnostic-laced CT omits these words.

⁹⁸The proponents of excising the *Johannine Comma* have attempted to refute the defenders of the *KJV* reading by giving heretical reasons for removing the biblical text. For instance, Daniel Wallace, editor of the New Testament *NET* posits, “In reality, the issue is history, not heresy... Faith must be rooted in history.” See note in the *NET*, *loc. cit.* Apparently, he rejects the truth of heretical textual criticism revealed by Peter (II Pet. 3:15-16).

⁹⁹The “scholarly experts” of the *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (NY: United Bible Society, 1971), included the editors Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce Metzger, and Allen Wikgrin, all of which were associated with apostate churches and denominations and had no credible testimony of the new birth. The psalmist quoted the query of Jehovah, saying, “*But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee*” (Ps. 50:16-17).

¹⁰⁰Several beneficial works have responded to the scholars of *academia* who have attempted to recover the mirage of the non-preserved Greek text of the NT. The exhaustive work by the late Michael Maynard, *A History of the Debate over I John 5:7-8: A Tracing of the Longevity of the Comma Johanneum* (Tempe, AZ: Comma Publ., 1995) is invaluable. Also, those of Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended!* (Des Moines: The Christian Research Press, 1973), Donald A. Waite, *Defending the King James Version* (Collingswood, NJ: The Bible for Today Press, 1992), and Jack A. Moorman, *Early Manuscripts, Church Fathers, and the Authorized Version* (Collingswood, NJ The Bible for Today Press, 2005), will edify the Christian.

¹⁰¹The contrived textual criticism mantra that “oldest is best” is feckless because doctrinal deviation in textual changes occurred in the first century (cf. II Pet. 3:15-16). Error followed on the heels of truth!

omitting the *Comma Johanneum* (12x) is not overwhelming considering that some 480 Greek Mss. of *First John* exist.¹⁰² In fact, there is historical testimony that Greek Texts existed in the past that did contain the *Johannine Comma*. One point of fact occurs in the work of the president of St. John's College, Oxford (1648-1650), Francis Cheynell, who made several telling affirmations about the disputed verse I Jn. 5:7:

“But it is objected by some that the words, ‘These three are one’ I Joh.5.7 are not to be found in some ancient Copies, and therefore it will not be safe to build a point of such weight and consequence upon such a weak foundation. To which we answer, It is true that these words are not to be found in the Syriack Edition, but they who speake most modestly, do acknowledge that the Syriack Edition is not Authentick”...“But then it is farther objected, that these words ‘These three are one’ are wanting in some other Greek copies; for answer I proceed with my observations”...“8. These words, I Ioh.5.7. are to be found in copies of great antiquity and best credit.”¹⁰³

The Latin patristic Cyprian (AD 210-258) referenced the disputed passage, saying, “*Dicit Dominus, Ego et Pater unum sumus; et iterum de Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto scriptum est: ‘Et tres unum sunt.’*” Translated, the references to Jn. 10:30 and I Jn. 5:7 read as the following: “The Lord says, ‘I and the Father are one;’ and again it is written of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, ‘And these three are one.’”¹⁰⁴ Cyprian the Gnostic knew of the existence of these references whether he believed them or not.

The *Johannine Comma* has an unbroken trail from the first century to the present, albeit found in Latin texts as well as Greek texts. Although some may balk at the textual lineage going through Latin Mss., one should remember the profound gnomic that “all granddaughters have grandmothers.” In other words, later ancient translations (i.e, Latin texts) came ultimately from the first century Greek texts. The preservation of the *Comma Johanneum* came through the Western Latin texts following this lineage of citations, texts, and translations: Old Latin, Cyprian, Priscillian, the African patristics, Codex Fuldensis, Cassiodorus, Codex Legionensis, 635 margin, Lateran Council, 629, Wyclif, Erasmus *Textus Receptus* (1622), Clementine *Vulgate*, the Tyndale translation (1534), the *Geneva Bible* (1560), the *Bishops’ Bible* (1599), the *KJV* (1611), Mt. Athos Patriarchal Text (1904), and the *NKJV* (1982).¹⁰⁵

The idol of modern textual criticism is “the manuscript evidence” based on human postulations. Scripture easily destroys this man-made idol of Christian scholarship. Whereas textual criticism avows the scientific approach “to restore” the Greek text that the Lord purposefully did not preserve, its goal is obviously impossible. For them the Lord never promised to preserve His words but only the concepts. Therefore, the words are expendable because only the concepts matter for theological truth, including the truth about the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and His promise of eternal salvation. For the believer, the Lord Jesus Christ did

¹⁰²Arguments from “majority” and “antiquity” are not how truth is established for church members. They have the Spirit of God indwelling who guides into all truth. The “office” of textual critics is unbiblical and therefore worthless!

¹⁰³Francis Cheynell, *The Divine Trinitie of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Or, the Blessed Doctrine of the Three Coessential Subsistents in the Eternall Godhead Without any Confusion or Division of the Distinct Subsistencies, or Multiplication of the Most Single and Entire Godhead* (London: T.R. and E. M., 1650), pp. 251-255.

¹⁰⁴A. Cleveland Coxe, Revised Editor, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Translations of the Writing of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, Volume V, Cyprian I:6, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1951), p. 423.

¹⁰⁵See the good reference, <https://www.kjvtoday.com/johannine-comma-1-john-57/>. Accessed 11-25-22.

indeed promise to preserve His words, saying, “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*” (Mt. 24:35; cf. also Ps. 12:6-7).¹⁰⁶

The preserved Greek text of the NT that the Scriptures predicted was the text in the Received Bible Movement. The Lord Jesus received words from the Father and gave them to His disciples who received them, along with other regenerated sinners. Scripture gives the Received Bible Movement in the following passages. 1) “*For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and **they have received** them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me*” (Jn. 17:8). 2) “*Then **they that gladly received his word** were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls*” (Acts 2:41). 3) “*Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that **Samaria had received the word of God**, they sent unto them Peter and John*” (Acts 8:14). 4) “*And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles **had also received the word of God***” (Acts 11:1). 5) “*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that **they received the word** with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*” (Acts 17:11). 6) “*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye **received the word of God** which ye heard of us, ye **received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*” (I Thes. 2:13). Eventually, the Greek text of the Received Bible Movement received the term *Textus Receptus* coming from the Elzevir brothers entitling it *Textum...nunc ab omnibus receptum* (the text now received by all) in 1633.

Has the *Johannine Comma* been added to the authentic Greek text of First John as commonly argued? Solomon said, “*Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar*” (Prov. 30:5-6). Does the teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ is God and a member of the Triune Godhead make the proponent a liar? The precious Lord Jesus Christ averred, “*My sheep hear my voice*” (Jn. 10:27). Bible believers through the centuries have heard the Lord’s voice of confirmation that the *Johannine Comma* is inspired Scripture. The church audience of John received the truth that he declared, saying, “*But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things*” (I Jn. 2:20), “*But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him*” (I Jn. 2:27), and “*We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error*” (I Jn. 4:6). Christians have the indwelling Spirit of God to teach them to discern between truth and error, ministering in the pillar and ground of truth church, the immersionist assembly of God, with the Word of truth, so that they do not need text critic scholars to pontificate on what words belong and what words should be excised from the Greek text. This commentator has put his spiritual ear to the text of I Jn. 5:7 and heard the affirming voice of his precious Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. His gracious voice *sufficeth* me!¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶Cf. Thomas M. Strouse, *The Lord GOD Hath Spoken. A Guide to Bibliology*, Revised and Expanded (Cromwell, CT: Bible Baptist Theological Press, 2018), pp. 15-36, 113-285 and Kent Brandenburg, ed. *Thou Shalt Keep Them: A Biblical Theology of the Perfect Preservation of Scripture*. El Sobrante, CA: Pillar & Ground Publ. 2003.

¹⁰⁷As a biblical commentator, I recognize that my purpose summarizes Paul’s declaration, saying, “*For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth*” (II Cor. 13:8).

WHEN SHOULD CORPORATE PRAYER NOT BE OFFERED?

The Discernment in Prayer from the Three Tests (5:14-17)

Verses 5:14-15

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

More profitability comes to the congregation that has employed the Doctrinal, Moral, and Social Tests. The writing style of John allowed him to revisit revelatory truth and expand on it. He had stated earlier, declaring, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (3:21-22). The divinely indwelt church member has great confidence that corporate prayer will result in heavenly answers. He assured the congregation, saying, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” (καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ παρρησία¹⁰⁸ ἣν ἔχομεν πρὸς αὐτόν, ὅτι ἐὰν τι αἰτώμεθα¹⁰⁹ κατὰ τὸ θέλημα¹¹⁰ αὐτοῦ, ἀκούει¹¹¹ ἡμῶν¹¹² *kai aute estin he parresia hen echomen pros auton, hoti ean ti aitometha kata to thelema autou, akouei hemon*).

The one condition to this great promise is the will of God. For instance, the Lord Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, saying, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mt. 26:39). Biblical prayer includes the believer and the Triune Godhead. Paul disclosed the persons of the transaction of prayer, saying, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom.8:26-27). It seems that Paul taught that God spoke to Himself through the believer’s prayer!

The biblical church has great power in corporate prayer. The biblical assembly is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15), that exalts Him as “God manifest in the flesh” (I Tim. 3:16), that recognizes Christ is her “Head” (Col. 1:18), her “chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20), is His “Body” (Eph. 1:22-23), and that He meets in the midst of her (Mt. 18:20). Based on the biblical nature of the NT assembly, John asserted, saying, “And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (καὶ ἐὰν οἴδαμεν¹¹³ ὅτι ἀκούει ἡμῶν, ὃ ἂν αἰτώμεθα, οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἔχομεν τὰ αἰτήματα¹¹⁴ ἃ ἠτήκαμεν¹¹⁵ παρ’ αὐτοῦ

¹⁰⁸Vide note on 2:28.

¹⁰⁹The present subjunctive form comes from the verb αἰτέω *aiteo* (71x) which means “to ask (in prayer).”

¹¹⁰This is the 2nd time that the apostle mentioned the will of God (cf. 2:17).

¹¹¹John used the present form from the verb ἀκούω *akouo* (cf. note on 1:1) to reveal that God presently hears the request.

¹¹²The apostle used the person plural pronoun to reveal that he was involved in corporate prayer.

¹¹³See note on 3:2 for the perfect form of the 1st person plural verb οἶδα *oida* (320).

¹¹⁴The *tris legomena* noun αἴτημα *aitema* means “petition.” Cf. also Lk. 23:24 and Phil. 4:6.

kai ean oidamen hoti akouei hemon, ho an aitometha, oidamen hoti echomen ta aitemata ha etekamen par' autou). The absolute knowledge that God will answer came from the Lord Jesus, Who said to His Baptist assembly the night before His crucifixion, saying, “*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*” (Jn. 14:13-14; cf. also 15:7, 16; 16:23, 24, and 26).

Verses 5:16-17

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

The corporate prayers of the Baptist assembly are so powerful and so receive the promise of fulfillment that the church members need to pray within the parameters of the will of God. The apostle categorized two types of sin. He expanded on the only objectively known “*sin unto death*” for the assembly. This would be the unconfessed sin of an unrepentant church member turned over to Satan for destruction. Paul elaborated on the Lord’s instruction about church discipline (Mt. 18:15-18) and applied it to the fornicating man at Corinth. The apostle taught the assembly, saying, “*In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (I Cor. 5:4-5). Whatever is the unconfessed sin that leads to church discipline, the disciplined church member is headed for death *via* the instrumentality of Satan. When the disciplined member faces the destruction of the flesh, church members **are not to pray** for the healing of the dying member, but only for his repentance that would lead to spiritual restoration. John prohibited prayer for the healing of unrepentant and disciplined members. With this truth as a backdrop of John’s instructions, scriptural clarification of the prohibition occurs.¹¹⁶

Pastor John, stated, saying, “*If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it*” (ἐάν τις ἴδῃ¹¹⁷ τὸν ἀδελφὸν¹¹⁸ αὐτοῦ ἀμαρτάνοντα¹¹⁹ ἀμαρτίαν μὴ πρὸς θάνατον,¹²⁰ αἰτήσῃ, καὶ δώσει¹²¹ αὐτῷ ζωήν, τοῖς ἀμαρτάνουσι μὴ πρὸς θάνατον. ἔστιν ἀμαρτία πρὸς θάνατον· οὐ περὶ ἐκείνης λέγω

¹¹⁵The perfect form comes from the cognate verb αἰτέω *aiteo* (see v. 14). Literally, John said “...we have the petitions we petitioned...”

¹¹⁶Glenn Barker exclaimed about the interpretation of the verse; “This is puzzling.” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary. Hebrews – Revelation*, Volume 12. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House), p. 355.

¹¹⁷The *aorist* subjunctive form from the verb ὁράω *horao* (457x) connoted the potential of seeing.

¹¹⁸In the 17x that John employed the noun ἀδελφός *adelphos* in the *Epistle* he always referred to a professed believer within the assembly with the exception of Cain’s brother (3:12).

¹¹⁹The present participle form comes from the verb ἀμαρτάνω *hamartano* (cf. 1:10) which means “to sin.”

¹²⁰Cf. 3:14. John contrasted physical death with physical life.

¹²¹This is the rare future form (18x) from the verb δίδωμι *didomi* (see 3:1).

ἵνα ἐρωτήσῃ¹²² *ean tis ide ton adelphon autou hamartanonta hamartian me pros thanaton, aitesei, kai dosei auto zoen, tois haratanousi me pros thanaton. estin hamartia pros thanon. ou periekeines lego hina erotese*). Three times John alluded to the “*sin not unto death*” and once to the “*sin unto death*.” Since the writer did not define the dual types of sin, the sin must public and unconfessed. Obviously, repentance by the sinner must occur before forgiveness and prayer (Lk.17:3). When repentance, forgiveness, and prayer occur, the Lord gives physical life to the restored brother. The disciplined church members were those who “*went out from us*” (2:19) because of their Gnostic claims about Christ. If any were true believers in Christ but persuaded by the Gnostics, and thus turned over to Satan for destruction, the church members were not to pray for the deceived former members. The goal of church discipline for the member is restoration into the church from whence he received discipline, and upon repentance, received into membership with forgiveness, comfort, and love (II Cor. 2:7-8). No longer would the restored church member be dying under the destructive hand of Satan, but now in fellowship with the assembly members and God under the protective headship of Christ (I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 4:15).

The apostle did not dismiss or demean the nature of sin. He declared, saying, “*All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death*” (πᾶσα ἀδικία¹²³ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶ· καὶ ἔστιν ἁμαρτία οὐ πρὸς θάνατον *pasa adikia hamartia esti. Kai estin hamartia ou pros thanaton*). The Lord hates all sin, but gives the advocate Jesus Christ for the Christian who sins and repents (2:1-2). Paul affirmed universal sin and death, saying, “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23) and “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Rom. 6:23). The Johannine passage has a specific context referring disciplined Gnostics for whom church members should not pray for the healing of the destruction of the flesh.

GNOSTIC MISSIONARIES

The Adversaries (vv. 7-11)

Verses 1:7-11

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

The enemy of the faith is vigilant in his attack upon the Lord’s assemblies. Paul had warned the Corinthian church, saying, “*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another*

¹²²The *aorist* subjunctive form comes from the only employment in *First John* of the verb ἐρωτάω *erotao* (58x) which means “to entreat” or “to ask.”

¹²³Cf. 1:9.

Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (II Cor. 11:3-4). The apostle had cautioned the Ephesian church likewise, saying, “*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Eph. 6:11-12). John had written his *First Epistle* to the members of the church who had received the attempted deception by the Gnostic heretics. These heretics posited one of two versions of Jesus Christ, either the Adoptionistic or the Docetic version, and caused great instability within the assembly (I Jn. 2:22; 4:3). Some professed believers received the influence of the heretics and some lost the assurance of salvation (I Jn. 2:28; 3:21; and 5:14). Finally, the church disciplined the heretics and cast them out (I Jn. 2:19).

The Apostle John had to re-address the possibility of Gnostic infiltration, this time with visiting missionaries, some of whom taught Gnosticism. Apparently, there were many peripatetic preachers, missionaries, and even “apostles” (II Cor. 11:13) going from church to church for preaching/teaching opportunities and support. The Apostle John now revisited the Doctrinal Test, saying, “*For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist*” (ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι¹²⁴ εἰσῆλθόν¹²⁵ εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες¹²⁶ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον¹²⁷ ἐν σαρκί.¹²⁸ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος¹²⁹ *hoti polloi planoi eiselthon eis ton kosmon, hoi me homologountes Iesoun Christon erchomenon en sarki. houtos estin ho planos kai ho antichristos*). John defined their doctrine and denominated their character. The Gnostics refused to confess the incarnation of Jesus Christ but instead confessed His phantom-hood. Their heresy was the Docetic “Christ” Who only seemed to be physical. The apostle declared that each one was a deceiver and an antichrist, perpetuating “*the spirit of antichrist*” (I Jn. 4:3). Although the members of the church were to love the brethren, they needed doctrinal guidelines to help them not to love heretics.

The Apostle Peter had warned about the arrival of false prophets who attempt to infiltrate the assemblies of the Lord, saying, “*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction*” (II Pet. 2:1). The Apostle Paul cautioned that the Gnostics come to the homes of believers, saying, “*For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (II Tim. 3:6-7). Jude defined the Gnostics thusly, saying, “*For there are certain men crept in unawares,*

¹²⁴John employed the adjective πλάνος *planos* (5x) twice, referring to “the wandering around (like a planet)” deceitful imposters. They attempted to lead astray the Christians about the Person of Jesus Christ. Cf. also Mt. 27:63; II Cor. 6:8; and I Tim. 4:1.

¹²⁵The *aorist* form comes from the verb εἰσέρχομαι *eiserchomai* (197x) which means “to go into.”

¹²⁶The present participle comes from the verb ὁμολογέω *homologeō* (24x) which means “to say the same.” Cf. I Jn. 1:9; 2:23, 4:2, 3, and 15.

¹²⁷The present participle form comes from ἔρχομαι *erchomai* (642x) which means “to come.”

¹²⁸The prepositional phrase ἐν σαρκί *en sarki* is vital to Christianity because it demands the incarnation of God (I Tim. 3:16). To deny to incarnation is to deny the God-Man mediator Who provided redemption for man. Gnostics did not need a redeemer since they rejected the concept or practice of sin (I Jn. 1:8, 10).

¹²⁹See extended note on I Jn. 2:18.

who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:4).

Spiritual danger lurked for the present and the future, Pastor John warned. The pastor had vested interest in the spiritual protection of the flock, as he admonished, saying, “*Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward*” (βλέπετε¹³⁰ ἑαυτούς,¹³¹ ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσωμεν¹³² ἃ ἐίργασάμεθα,¹³³ ἀλλὰ μισθὸν¹³⁴ πλήρη¹³⁵ ἀπολάβωμεν¹³⁶ *blepete heautous, hina me apolesomen ha eirgasametha, alla misthon plere apolabomen*). Scripture teaches that the pastor of a biblical assembly has the desire to present the church body perfect and complete before the Lord (cf. Col. 4:12; I Thes. 3:10). Again, the Apostle Paul exhorted the church members at Philippi to faithfulness that would impact them and him at the *Bema* in the Day of Christ, saying, “*That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain*” (Phil. 2:15-16). The assembly is the Body of Christ, and as Paul instructed, the Body of Christ at Corinth was united, saying, “*And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*” (I Cor. 12:26-27).

John did not want church members to succumb to the Gnostics again and warned them about losing their full reward at the *Bema* in the Day of Christ. Furthermore, he did not want to lose his reward as their pastor, so he encouraged them about their mutual faithfulness that would bring mutual rewards. Once again, the CT changed the Greek text of the 1st person plural “*we lose*” (ἀπολέσωμεν *apolesomen*) to read for the 2nd person plural “*you lose*” (ἀπολέσητε *apolesete*).¹³⁷ The TR reading holds the pastor accountable to and with his congregation whereas the CT does not hold the bishop accountable. The ancient architects of the CT presumably were uncomfortable with holding the pastor accountable because their churches were filled pedobaptist unregenerates!

The members of the Lord’s churches must examine the doctrine of visiting teachers, John warned. The core to Christianity is the doctrine of Christ that true Christians maintain. The foundation and parameters about the doctrine of Christ receives explanation within the context. The context explained the true view of the

¹³⁰The present imperative form comes from the verb βλέπω *blepo* (135x) which means “to look” or “to see.” The present aspect of the imperative required constant looking or watching out.

¹³¹John also used this reflexive pronoun also in I Jn. 1:8 and 5:21 in his *Epistles*. Cf. also the similar idiom in I Tim. 4:16.

¹³²The *aurist* subjunctive form comes from the verb ἀπόλλυμι *apollumi* (92x) which means “to destroy,” “to ruin,” or “to kill.” The strength of the verb demonstrates the complete loss. The subjunctive connoted the potential complete loss.

¹³³The *aurist* form comes from the verb ἐργάζομαι *ergazomai* (39x) which means “to work.” See III Jn. 1:5.

¹³⁴The noun μισθός *misthos* (29x) means “wages” or “reward.” Cf. John’s other uses in Jn. 4:36; Rev. 11:18; and 22:12.

¹³⁵The adjective πλήρης *pleres* (17x) means “full” or “complete.” Cf. Jn. 1:14.

¹³⁶The *aurist* subjunctive form comes from the verb ἀπολαμβάνω *apolambano* (12x) which means “to receive” or “to get back.” It occasionally is used in commercial contexts (cf. Lk. 16:25).

¹³⁷The CT also changed the 1st person plural ἀπολάβωμεν *apolabomen* “we receive” for the 2nd person plural ἀπολάβητε *apolabete* “you receive.”

doctrine of Christ and negated the false view of the doctrine of Christ. Does the teacher confess the incarnation of the God-Man Jesus Christ? If not he is a deceiver and antichrist, and now a transgressor. John declared, saying, “*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son*” (πᾶς ὁ παραβαίνω¹³⁸ καὶ μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ¹³⁹ τοῦ Χριστοῦ,¹⁴⁰ Θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει· ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει¹⁴¹ *pas ho parabaino kai me menon en te didache tou Christou, Theon ouk echei. ho menon en te didache tou Christou, houtos kai ton patera kai ton huion echei*). Pastor John explained the biblical and simple differentiation between a false prophet and true teacher. If Jesus Christ is in the flesh then those that espouse the Adoptionistic or Docetic “Christ” are false.

Being an apostle, John received the command from the Lord to evangelize the lost sheep of Israel in cities and houses beginning in the region of Galilee (Mt. 10:1 ff.). These “missionaries” needed support and should expect hospitality. The Lord said, “*And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet*” (Mt. 10:14). John had recognized that there were itinerant preachers spreading their messages. He knew there were false apostles as well and gave a stern warning. The apostle expressed the concern, saying, “*If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds*” (εἴ τις ἔρχεται¹⁴² πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ ταύτην τὴν διδαχὴν οὐ φέρει,¹⁴³ μὴ λαμβάνετε¹⁴⁴ αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν,¹⁴⁵ καὶ χαίρειν¹⁴⁶ αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε· ὁ γὰρ λέγων αὐτῷ χαίρειν, κοινωνεῖ¹⁴⁷ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς¹⁴⁸ *ei tis erchetai pros humas, kai tauten ten didachen ou pherei, me lambanete auton eis oikian, kai chairein auto me legete. ho gar legon auto chairein, koinonei tois ergois autou tois poneris*).

Pastor John knew the possibility of false teachers approaching the assembly and gave his conditional warning. The apostle of love taught that love must find its base on truth (I Jn. 3:18). The Gnostics may visit the homes of church members to avoid immediate detection by more mature believers. Again, the injunction by

¹³⁸The present participle comes from the *tetrakis legomena* verb παραβαίνω *parabaino* which means “to go over” or “to transgress.” It occurs also in Mt. 15:2, 3; and Acts 1:25. The transgressor goes beyond the boundaries of established doctrine.

¹³⁹The noun διδαχή *didache* (30x) means “teaching” or “doctrine.” The Lord’s doctrine came from the Father (Jn. 7:16).

¹⁴⁰Grammatically, the title τοῦ Χριστοῦ *tu Christos* stands next to Θεὸν *Theon* to demonstrate deity.

¹⁴¹See note on I Jn. 5:12.

¹⁴²Cf. v. 7 for the present form of ἔρχομαι *erchomai*.

¹⁴³The present form comes from the verb φέρω *phero* (64x) which means “to bring.”

¹⁴⁴The present imperative form from λαμβάνω *lambano* (262x) is negated and connoted “continue not to receive.”

¹⁴⁵The noun οἰκία *oikia* (95x) means “house.”

¹⁴⁶This present infinitive form comes from χαίρω *chairō* (74x) which means “to rejoice” (see v. 4). The *KJV* rendered the greeting as “*God speed*” following the earlier English translations such as *Tyndale* (“*God spede*”), *Geneva* (“*God speede*”), and *Bishops’* (“*God speede*”). *Young’s Literal Translation* rendered it with uncomely “*Hail*” and the *NASV* with the sterile “*a greeting*.” The expression “*God speed*” still is in use in English presently.

¹⁴⁷The present form comes from the verb κοινωνέω *koinoneo* (8x) which means “to have fellowship” or “to be partaker.”

¹⁴⁸See note on I Jn. 2:13.

Paul of the subtlety of the false teachers to tempt carnal believers with hedonism and the corresponding heretical teaching is appropriate to recognize (II Tim. 3:6). The Apostle John had already informed the assembly members about their capability of spiritual discernment, saying, “*We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error*” (I Jn. 4:6). He continued to alert against receiving a false prophet into one’s home. Furthermore, John informed the church members that to encourage the heretics on their way with even a blessing encourages them with the furtherance of the work of antichrist. The church members would then be in fellowship with the wicked Gnostic heresy! Receiving and encouraging heretics would cause the pastor and the people to lose a full reward. John had already exhorted the Christians to avoid the idolatry of a false Christ, and here was another way to “*keep yourselves from idols*” (I Jn. 5:21).

HOW TO DEAL WITH AN UNSAVED PASTOR

The Inveiglement of Diotrephes (vv. 9-11)

Verse 1:9

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

While Pastor Gaius was sick and handicapped at home, a Gnostic minister filled the void. Previously, John had to deal with the Infiltration of Gnosticism within the Members (I Jn.), and then Influence of Gnosticism among the Missionaries (II Jn.), and now the Inveiglement of Gnosticism in the Ministers (III Jn.).¹⁴⁹ Gnosticism comes from various sources to destroy the Lord’s assemblies. The usurper quickly ascended to power and began to eviscerate the Lord’s assembly. John knew details about this miscreant, saying to Gaius, “*I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not*” (“Εγγραψά¹⁵⁰ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ¹⁵¹ ἀλλ’ ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων¹⁵² αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης¹⁵³ οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται¹⁵⁴ ἡμᾶς *Egrapsa te ekklesia. All’ ho philoproteuon auton Diotrephes ouk epidechetai hemas*).

¹⁴⁹Paul had warned the Ephesian Baptist Church elders about false ministers among them, saying, “*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them*” (Acts 20:29-30).

¹⁵⁰The *aorist* form comes from the verb γράφω *grapho* (207x) which means “to write.” Contextually he referred to the *Second Epistle*.

¹⁵¹This is the 2nd of three times he referred to ἐκκλησία *ekklesia* (115x) in this short *Third Epistle*. Satan attacks assemblies because they are “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (I Tim. 3:15).

¹⁵²The articular present participle form comes from the *hapax* verb φιλοπρωτεύω *philoproteuo* and means literally “to strive to be first place in rank or position.” Although, the Apostle Paul employed a similar *hapax* verb πρωτεύω *proteuo*, he nevertheless revealed that only Christ may have “*preeminence*” in the assembly (Col. 1:18).

¹⁵³The *hapax* personal noun means something like “nourished by Jove (Roman deity) or by Zeus (Greek deity).”

¹⁵⁴The present form comes from the *dis legomena* compound verb ἐπιδέχομαι *epidechomai* (cf. III Jn. 1:9) which means “to receive” or “to take along.” When negated, the verb means “to reject emphatically.”

Pastor John had written to the assembly the *Second Epistle* that warned about allowing Gnostic teachers in the assembly, using the test concerning “*the doctrine of Christ*” (II Jn. 1:9).¹⁵⁵ Gnosticism is the religion of pride that advances the deceived sinner up the *Pleroma*. Paul declared that Satan’s pride received condemnation by which he fell (I Tim. 3:6). Diotrophes displaced Pastor Gaius by default through the illness of the latter. In replacing the biblical pastor, Diotrophes also usurped the preeminence of Christ over the assembly. Apparently, the deceiver became influential over the church and rejected the Apostle John. Of course, the Gnostic pastor was opposed to John because he denounced the Gnostic heresy of Diotrophes. False pastor Diotrophes emphatically rejected the Apostle John.

Verse 1:10

Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

Pastor Gaius was sick and at home, and could not confront Diotrephes about his heresy. The Apostle John recognized that he needed to come in person and deal with the antichrist “pastor.” He laid out his proposed plan to deal with this antichrist. The deeds of Diotrophes came under two strategies: he thwarted and he threatened. John recognized the diabolical effort to take over and make over the church. A church split was in the making. He shared his plan with Gaius who no doubt would pray for John and inform the brethren. The Apostle John declared, saying, “*Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth*” (διὰ τοῦτο,¹⁵⁶ ἐὰν ἔλθω,¹⁵⁷ ὑπομνήσω¹⁵⁸ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα¹⁵⁹ ἃ ποιεῖ *dia touto, ean eltho, hupomneso autou ta erga ha poiei*). Obviously, the proposed trip was a priority to the apostle, but he recognized that the future was in the hands of the Lord (Jam. 4:14-15) and that Satan may attempt to hinder him (I Thes. 2:17-18). Nevertheless, the deliverance of one of the candlesticks of the Lord Jesus Christ required direct confrontation with the enemy.

¹⁵⁵The non-pastoral theologians who have attempted to understand the *Johannine Epistles* interpret detachment between the three. For instance, Kistemaker admitted this disconnect, saying, “We are unable to ascertain whether the letter which John mentions is his second epistle. We surmise that in addition to the three Johannine Epistles that are extant, John wrote at least one other letter. This letter, however, has not been preserved. If John indeed refers to the second epistle, then the contents of these two documents do not correspond (*sic*).” Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary. James, Epistles of John, Peter and Jude*, p. 396. Misguided commentators seem to want to chase the mirage of non-canonical letters similar to looking for Document “Q,” or discovering the earliest and most authoritative Greek text! We have the inspired Scriptures and they alone are profitable, and they complete the interpretation of the Bible for the man of God (II Tim. 3:16-17)!

¹⁵⁶Cf. I Jn. 3:1

¹⁵⁷This *aorist* subjunctive followed the conditional conjunction and connoted John’s desire and effort to come (ἔρχομαι *erchomai* [“to come”]).

¹⁵⁸The future form comes from the compound verb ὑπομνήσκω *hupomimnesko* (7x) which means “to remind.” Cf. Jn. 14:26.

¹⁵⁹See note on I Jn. 3:8.

The first satanic strategy was to thwart the truth and threatened the true Christians. First, Diotrophes repudiated the words of John, then he resisted the church members, then he refused the members from helping the missionaries, and finally he rejected brethren from the church membership. John summarized the thwarts and threats, saying, “*prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church*” (λόγους ποιηροῖς¹⁶⁰ φλυαρῶν¹⁶¹ ἡμᾶς· καὶ μὴ ἀρκούμενος¹⁶² ἐπὶ τούτοις, οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐπιδέχεται¹⁶³ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς, καὶ τοὺς βουλομένους¹⁶⁴ κωλύει,¹⁶⁵ καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας¹⁶⁶ ἐκβάλλει¹⁶⁷ *logois ponerois phluaron hemas. Kai me arkoumenos epi toutois, oute autos epidechetai tous adelphous, kai tous boulomenous koluei, kai ek tes ekklesias ekballei*).

John had completely excoriated the satanic nature and teaching of Gnosticism in his *First Epistle*. The deceiver Diotrophes had no biblical and therefore rational defense for his Gnostic heresy. He could only “*prate*” against the man of God with empty and meaningless words of religious gobbledygook. Second, the pastoral woof resisted the brethren, presumably the church members who opposed his efforts after consulting with John (v. 3), and did not want any concerned biblical counsel or dialogue. Moreover, he refused the church members from helping any Christian missionaries with support (see vv. 5-6). He wanted his Gnostic missionaries supported (cf. II Jn. 1:7-11). Any church members who promoted Christian truth and practice received church discipline. Basically, Diotrophes was “cleaning house” as it were, eliminating the biblical truth of John, usurping the pastoral position of sick Gaius, resisting the disciples of John, refusing the support of Christian missionaries, and expelling all Johannine “troublemakers” through church discipline. The church was rapidly becoming a Gnostic “church.” This assembly was on the verge of “being removed from its place,” since the Lord would soon eliminate her status as “*candlestick*” (Rev. 2:5). Soon the question would arise, where is the biblical “*candlestick*”?

Verse 1:11

Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

¹⁶⁰Cf. II Jn. 1:11.

¹⁶¹The present participle form comes from the Johannine *hapax legomena* verb φλυαρέω *phluareo* which means literally “to bubble up” or “to talk nonsense.”

¹⁶²This present participle form comes from the verb ἀρκέω *arkeo* (8x) which means “to be enough” or “to suffice.” Cf. Jn. 6:7 and 14:8.

¹⁶³Vide footnote on v. 9.

¹⁶⁴See II Jn. 1:12.

¹⁶⁵This present form comes from the verb κωλύω *koluo* (23x) which means “to forbid” or “to prevent.” Cf. I Thes. 2:16.

¹⁶⁶The 3rd reference to ἐκκλησία *ekklesia* in this small *Epistle*.

¹⁶⁷The present form comes from the verb ἐκβάλλω *ekballo* (82x) which means literally “to throw out.” In this context, it refers to church discipline. Cf. Jn. 9:34-35.

The counsel of the Apostle John was authoritative and decisive. He had an answer to the reality of the Lord's "candlestick." For the fourth time Pastor John addressed his good friend in the Lord as "beloved" (cf. also vv. 1, 2, and 5). With apostolic authority, John commanded Pastor Gaius, saying, "*Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God*" (ἀγαπητέ,¹⁶⁸ μὴ μιμοῦ¹⁶⁹ τὸ κακὸν,¹⁷⁰ ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν.¹⁷¹ ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν¹⁷² ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ κακοποιῶν¹⁷³ οὐχ ἑώρακε¹⁷⁴ τὸν Θεόν *agapate, me mimou to kakon, alla to agathon. ho agathopoion ek tou theou estin. ho de kakopoion ouch heorake ton Theon*). John needed to be forthright and blunt.

The writer employed the polar opposites, contrasting darkness and light, lies and truth, sin and perfection, hate and love, and now evil and good. Both Gaius and the assembly members needed to follow the good, that is, the one doing good. Opposing the Lord's apostle helped define contextually "doing evil." The Apostle John obliquely asserted that Diotrophes had not seen God. With the gift of shewing mercy, John's indirect manner declared that the one doing evil had not seen God, and Diotrophes had done evil, therefore Diotrophes had not seen God. The apostle's statement echoed his earlier assertion, saying, "*Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him*" (I Jn. 3:6). Diotrophes had not seen or known the precious Saviour. Whereas, Peter with the gift of prophecy was very direct with the charlatan Simon, who received the pointed condemnation of the apostle, saying, "*Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*" (Acts 8:21-23). Nevertheless, the counsel of John was clear; stop following a phony pastor who behaves like an unregenerate Gnostic!

The Installment of Demetrius (v. 12)

Verse 1:12

Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

¹⁶⁸Cf. vv. 1, 2, and 5.

¹⁶⁹The present imperative form comes from the verb μιμέομαι *mimeomai* (4x) which means "to follow." The negated imperative means "stop following." Cf. also II Thes. 3:7, 9; and Heb. 13:7. The English word "mime" finds its source from the Greek.

¹⁷⁰The adjective κακός *kakos* (51x) means "evil," "harm," or "wicked." See Jn. 18:23.

¹⁷¹The adjective ἀγαθός *agathos* (102x) means "good" or "evil."

¹⁷²The articular present participle form comes from the verb ἀγαθοποιέω *agathopoieo* (11x) which mean literally "to do good."

¹⁷³In contrast to the previous articular present participle, this articular present participle form comes from the *tetrakis legomena* verb κακοποιέω *kakopoieo* (cf. also Mk. 3:4; Lk. 6:9; and I Pet. 3:17) which means literally "to do evil."

¹⁷⁴The perfect form comes from the verb ὁράω *oraō* (457x) which means "to see (spiritually)." Diotrophes had never seen/known the Lord and still had not (cf. Heb. 11:27)!

Nevertheless, Pastor John had the biblical solution. One of two options needed to occur. Since Diotrophes was the illegitimate “pastor” who usurped the authority of ill Gaius, a biblically qualified pastor needed to replace infirm Gaius. The other option would be for the replacement to start another assembly with the true Christians who are submissive to biblical truth. The Apostle John proposed the qualified man, saying, “*Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true*” (Δημητρίῳ¹⁷⁵ μεμαρτύρηται¹⁷⁶ ὑπὸ πάντων, καὶ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας¹⁷⁷ καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν,¹⁷⁸ καὶ οἴδατε¹⁷⁹ ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθῆς ἐστὶ *Demetrio memarturetai hupo panton, kai hup’ autes tes aletheias. kai hemeis de martuoumen, kai oidate hoti he marturia hemon alethes esti*). John focused on the words “testimony” and “truth” twice each. Demetrius had a biblical report among all in his purview. The Apostle John obviously vetted Demetrius who came with an authoritative recommendation and sterling testimony. Under the direction of the ill but still shepherd of the flock, Gaius needed to remove Diotrophes and replace with Demetrius, or start another assembly under the leadership of Demetrius. The true “candlestick” would continue through the Apostle John, through Gaius, and to Demetrius

How much Gnosticism is in Your Church?

Pride originated with Satan (Isa. 14:12-14; I Tim. 3:6) and felled man. Eve in her pride became the human authority and added to Scripture about not touching the tree (Gen. 3:3). Adam submitted to her and brought the adamic curse upon mankind (Rom. 5:12; I Tim. 3:14). Since then prideful man has attempted to add to the Lord’s simple requirement of obedience something tangible for a form of work’s salvation that would contribute to some sort of advancement. This pride resulted in moral advantage that manifests in pride of position (my career/your career, white collar/blue collar; rich/poor), pride of place (my country/your country, city/farm, rural/urban), or pride of possessions (my bank account, my house, my car, my clothes, etc.). More specifically, the abnormal focus on superheroes, evolution, science, psychology, angelology, eastern religions, social and racial issues, linear authority of genealogies such as church or text authority, and the proclivity for new age, mystical, and hip hop music. Pastors need to self-exam themselves, as Paul enjoined Timothy, saying, “*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*” (I Tim. 4:16). Paul challenged the Corinthian Baptist Church members, saying, “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that *Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*” (II Cor. 13:5). Pastors and churches need to stopped priding themselves on how sanctified they are, especially in comparison to the liberal churches down the road, and examine their respective hearts with regard to their walk in the Spirit!

¹⁷⁵The proper name means “belonging to Ceres (Roman goddess of fertility)” and also referred to a pagan silversmith at Ephesus (Acts 19:24, 38). The vulgate rendered his name *Demetrio*.

¹⁷⁶ The perfect passive form comes from the verb μαρτυρέω *martureo* (79x) which means “to testify.” The perfect tense denoted that he had and still had a “good report.”

¹⁷⁷Cf. note on v. 1.

¹⁷⁸ See the other reference in this verse for the verb of the present form.

¹⁷⁹John used the perfect form for *oida*, denoting that the testimony had been known and was based on absolute truth of Scripture. Cf. I Jn. 2:11.

CONCLUSION

Satan's religion of Gnosticism, which started in the Garden, is alive today and masqueraded in many deceptive ways. It is based on pride that desires more. Satan in his pride (I Tim. 3:6; Ezk. 28:12-15) desired more than what the LORD gave him (Isa. 14:12-14; I Tim. 6:10). This Gnosticism has deceived the nations for six thousand years as well as God's people Israel and New Testament assembly members. It is the manifestation of "*the spirit of antichrist*" (I Jn. 4:3) that attempts to enter into the Lord's candlesticks through members and pastors. At the termination of the first century, the Apostle John repudiated the encroachment of Gnosticism in NT assemblies, as the satanic attack was and still is against the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. While Christianity as a whole and many independent Baptist churches singularly are "*ignorant of his [Satan's] devices*" (II Cor. 2:11), we need to defend the Person and truth of "*God was manifest in the flesh*" (I Tim. 3:16).