

Verse 13. The promise referred to is in Matthew 5: 5 where the meek are promised to inherit the earth. The future state of the saved will be spiritual, hence the only way man can be given a foresight of it is by likening it to what he understands and enjoys while living in a material home. The present abode is on the earth with its two heavens, the atmosphere and starry region. Genesis 1: 14-16 says the planets were made to give light upon the earth, hence it is proper to mention those heavens in connection with the earth when referring to the home of mankind. But while the form of language is based upon man's present abode, in reality his eternal home will be spiritual and one wherein shall dwell righteousness.

Verse 14. With such a prospect as this it should be an incentive for us to live in view of it. To do so we should be diligent (thoughtfully active) and maintain ourselves in the peace that is according to the wisdom from above (James 3: 17). Since that wisdom is pure (unmixed) it will make those *without spot* who follow it.

Verse 15. *Longsuffering is salvation* is the same as mentioned in verse 9, hence Christians should not fret over the seeming delay of His coming. Peter says that Paul wrote to these people on the same matters as the present epistle. Peter wrote both of his epistles to the same brethren for he calls this one the second one he had written to them (verse 1). In the first epistle he mentions brethren in Galatia and Asia, and we know that Paul wrote to brethren in those same regions (Galatians and Ephesians). Peter says that Paul wrote *according to the wisdom given unto him*. This refers to his inspiration for he tells us himself that his preaching was "In demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2: 4).

Verse 16. Peter here makes a more general reference to the epistles of Paul, and says that in all of them he speaks of the same things that the present letter treats. This shows that Peter was familiar with the Pauline writings and that he had great respect for them. Since both apostles wrote about so many items that pertain to the kingdom of God, it would be unnecessary to try pointing out which Peter means by *these things*. All of the words *hard to be understood* are from the one Greek word *DUSNOETOS*, which Thayer defines with the same four words.

Robinson defines it, "difficult of perception." We should note it does not say that it is impossible to understand them, hence the expression does not contradict the general idea of the simplicity of the Gospel. Moreover, it merely says there are *some things* like this, which would not be surprising in documents that have to do with performances of both God and man and of both bad men and Satan. Besides, the only ones who had any serious trouble were those who were *unlearned* (uninformed) and *unstable* (unsettled in their convictions). But even these are not to be excused for they could do better, since they *wrest* (twist) the scriptures which means to force them out of their obvious meaning. And since they wilfully misuse the sacred writings Peter says it will be *unto their own destruction*.

Verse 17. The foregoing remarks are said for the warning of the better class of disciples to whom Peter is sending this epistle. They should beware and not be led astray by designing false teachers who are "walking after their own lusts." No person can be on both sides of a subject at the same time, hence in order to be steadfast in the faith one must turn away from such evil characters.

Verse 18. *Grow in grace* means to grow (or increase) in the favor of the Lord. Note that this exhortation is coupled with the *knowledge* of Him. Hence our favor with the Lord will increase as our knowledge of Him increases, which we may obtain only by becoming familiar with the Gospel. *To him be glory* means that all honor and dignity should be ascribed to the Lord, and that such respect will be due Him for ever. *Amen* is ascribed as an expression of emphasis; its uses and meaning are explained in the comments at Romans 16: 24 in first volume of the New Testament Commentary.

1 John 1

Verse 1. This verse is equivalent to the first verse of John's account of the Gospel. When the words *the beginning* are used as an abstract term, that is one without any qualifying context, they always have the same meaning. The popular notion is that they mean "the beginning of time." That is wrong because time (which merely means duration) had no beginning and of course will have no end. The means by which we measure time, such as the movements of the earth and other

planets, will come to an end, but that does not mean that time will end then. It would be like saying that if the clocks all stopped that time would stop also. Not so; the means we were using to measure it only have stopped. The term *the beginning* means the beginning of the material creation. The reader should see the comments on this subject at John 1: 1 in the first volume of the New Testament Commentary. In our present verse John comes to a later period and refers to the circumstance when the word took upon himself that form which could be seen and handled by fleshly man.

Verse 2. This verse gives some more details of the general truths that are stated in the preceding one. *The life* is the same as "Word of life" above which was with the Father before the inhabitants of the earth ever heard about it. It was manifested to the extent that it could be seen with human eyes as well as be "handled" as stated in the first verse. The manner in which this was done is expressed somewhat more directly by this same writer in John 1: 14 which says that "the Word was made flesh." Everyone will understand this refers to the fact of the life of Christ in a fleshly body on the earth. *Show unto you that eternal life.* Such a life is spiritual and thus cannot literally be shown, but John means that when a man sees Christ he is seeing eternal life in that He is the one who gives us the hope of eternal life.

Verse 3. John was especially concerned with the divinity of Christ, that although He dwelt among men in the flesh (in order that they might see and hear Him), yet he was (and is) the divine Son of God. *Have fellowship with us* denotes having a share in or being partakers with the apostles in the relationship between God and Christ and their faithful disciples.

Verse 4. *That your joy may be full.* The last word is where the emphasis of thought should be placed. Small or partial joy may be possible from many different sources, but the joy that can come from a faith in the only divine Son of God is *full* both in the sense of being complete in its extent, and perfect in its quality. It will leave nothing that can reasonably be desired further by a firm believer.

Verse 5. The message which *we* (the apostles and others through them) have heard of *him* (the Son of God). The subject of the message is *light*,

brought into the world by Christ which he received from his Father. God not only has light (spiritual truth) but He has nothing else; no darkness at all. Good men and angels have some light but it is limited, while with God it is light unmodified.

Verse 6. The Lord is all light and truth which is the opposite of darkness. For this reason no man can possibly be a partaker (have fellowship) with Him whose life is one of darkness which is a figurative name for that which is not the truth. Hence it is a logical conclusion that if a man claims to be on both sides of this proposition at the same time he is lying.

Verse 7. *Walk in the light.* No man lives who does not make some mistakes and commit sin incidentally. But this phrase means a man whose general life is one of godliness and whose motive principle is the light of the New Testament. This man can truly be said to be walking with the Lord because he is in the pathway that Jesus laid out for him. Being in the fellowship with God the source of all light, is like being constantly in the stream of the blood of His son. That blood is constantly flowing (figuratively) through the body or church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the natural body of a man whose blood stream is healthy, if germs slip into the person that blood, being always present, will be like a disinfectant that will destroy the germ. Likewise the blood of Christ is ever present to cleanse away the mistakes and incidental sins that a true Christian does. Hence if a man is a worker in the Lord's vineyard and his life as a whole is one of obedience to the law of Christ, he does not need to worry about the mistakes he might make which he does not realize, for the blood of Christ will take care of it and wash them away. They will be cleansed by the "fountain opened to the house of David . . . for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13: 1). "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins; And sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains."

Verse 8. This verse does not contradict the preceding one or the comments made on it. To say we *have no sin* would be like saying we do not have any need for the blood of Christ. Hence even a faithful disciple should admit his weaknesses and understand his dependence upon the blood of Christ for his cleansing.

Verse 9. *Confess our sins.* This does not say that we are to confess that we have sins for that would be so general that it would be virtually no confession at all; the sins themselves is what we are to confess. Sometimes persons will come forward in a meeting saying they wish to make a confession, and when given the opportunity will say, "I have not been living as I should." That does not confess any sin as our verse requires. It may be replied that David made that sort of confession to the prophet because all he said was, "I have sinned." That is true but it was after his sin had been pointed out so that his statement was an acknowledgment of the specific sin. It was like the action of a jury that says, "We find the defendant guilty as charged" without naming any particular misdeed. If a disciple does not know of anything wrong he has done then he has none to confess. Should he have some faults of which he is not aware, verse 7 of this chapter will take care of them. If he has committed sins which only he and the Lord know about, then he needs only to make his confession to Him. *Faithful and just.* The first word means He will keep his promise to forgive the sins of the penitent, and it is *just* for Him to do so since the sacrifice of Christ makes it possible for God to be merciful and just at the same time (Romans 3: 26).

Verse 10. *Have not sinned* differs from *have no sin* in verse 8 because it goes back over the past of our lives. When the two are considered together they mean that there never has been a time since we were old enough to be responsible, that we were "as free from sin as the angels" as it is sometimes expressed; hence man has needed a Saviour all the years of his life. *Make him a liar.* If a person makes an assertion that contradicts what another has said, it is equivalent to calling him a liar even though no direct reference is made to him. God has said in his word that all men are sinners (Ecclesiastes 7: 20), therefore if a man says he has not sinned he contradicts the Lord and that is why John says such a man will *make him a liar.* *His word is not in us* because that word declares that all men have sinned.

1 John 2

Verse 1. *My little children* is a fatherly address to the disciples since John was an old man when he wrote this epistle. Furthermore, notwith-

standing his strong language when treating of definite sins, he is known in history to have been a man of tender sentiments, so much so that he won a like feeling from Jesus, for it is said that he was the disciple "whom Jesus loved" John 13: 23; 19: 26; 20: 2, 21: 7, 20, 24). Thus we have a number of endearing terms in the writings of this apostle. *That ye sin not; if any man sin.* These phrases do not conflict with each other although they may seem to. The disciples of Christ are expected to oppose sin and be constantly "striving against sin" (Hebrews 12: 4), and to help them in their struggles the apostles have written instructions on the right ways of life. But in spite of all this they are going to make mistakes. (See the comments on verses 6-8 in the preceding chapter.) Hence the second phrase *if any man sin* is inserted to explain why the provision has been made for an *advocate*. That is from PARAKLETOS, which Thayer defines as follows: "One who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor."

Verse 2. *Propitiation* means something that appeases or satisfies one who is (justly) making strong demands. God is violated by the sins of mankind and His justice demands the eternal condemnation of the offenders. Man was unable to furnish what was rightly required to pay the debt, but Jesus was able and willing to do so. That is what he did when He shed his blood as was shown in chapter 1: 7. *Not for ours only but also*, etc. The pronoun stands for disciples who have already made use of the cleansing blood by obedience to the Gospel. But the blood is sufficient to cleanse the whole world if all will accept it on the same terms as the present disciples. (See the familiar passage in John 3: 16.)

Verse 3. *Know* is not used in view of some technical distinction between faith and knowledge. The thought is that *if we keep his commandments* (and we may *know* whether we have done so or not), then we may be sure or have the assurance that we have a saving knowledge of Him.

Verse 4. A knowledge of having kept the commandments is necessary to a knowledge of Him (see preceding verse). Therefore if a man asserts that he knows the Lord when he has not kept the commandments (and he may know whether he has or not), he is rightly classed with liars as the apostle here states.

Verse 5. *The love of God perfected* has virtually the same thought as Jesus expressed in John 14: 21. To be perfected means to be made complete, and that will be accomplished when a man proves his love for God by keeping the commandments. On the same principle a man cannot truly claim to love the Lord who does not obey His word, even though he may sing "O how I love Jesus" as vigorously as anyone. *Know that we are in him.* For comments on the word *know* see those at verse 3.

Verse 6. To abide in Christ is equivalent to walking with Him, for Christ is an active being and no person can continue with Him and not walk in the same way. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3: 3.)

Verse 7. The word *new* may mean with reference to its age or date. In that sense the divine law is not new because God has placed governing law before man ever since he has existed. On that basis it is *the old commandment* and they had heard it *from the beginning*.

Verse 8. The commandments of the Lord are *new* in the sense of being fresh and vigorous (not infirm as with old age). The newness or liveliness of the laws of the Lord is manifested in their being able to dispel the darkness of ignorance, and shed the light of knowledge in the Lord.

Verse 9. This is the same in thought as several preceding verses, namely, that true love is manifested by showing an obedient spirit toward the law of God, and that law requires a disciple to love his brother.

Verse 10. *Occasion of stumbling* denotes ~~being~~ the cause of another's stumbling or committing error. If a man loves his brother he will not put any stumbling block in his way (Romans 14: 13).

Verse 11. *Darkness is figurative* and means the absence of truth. The truth of God requires that the brethren love each other, hence if one brother hates another he is not walking according to the word of God but is *walking in darkness*.

Verse 12. In this and the two verses following the writer uses the different age groups in a natural family to compare the ones with different talents and experiences in the family of God. *Little children*, therefore, cannot mean those usually designated by the term, since they do not have sins to be forgiven. It is used in view of some of

them who were recent additions to the divine family by the spiritual birth.

Verse 13. As *fathers* in the natural family would be mature and ripe with the experience of age, so there are those in the church who have that qualification over other brethren. *Young men* are more mature than little children and have lived long enough to have demonstrated their strength in the contests of life. In the preceding verse the *little children* are given mention because of their purification from sins. Now they are named because of their knowledge of the Father from whom they have received the forgiveness of their sins.

Verse 14. This verse adds no special thoughts to the preceding two, except to indicate their importance by the repetition for emphasis.

Verse 15. *World* is from a word that means the inhabitants of the earth. Other passages require us to love our enemies and John 3: 16 says God loved the world. The apparent difficulty is explained by the words *things that are in the world*. We should understand that Christians are not to love the things that the people in the world possess and use for their lustful pleasures. Of course no man can love such things and love the Father also, for He has condemned them and commanded His children to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2: 11).

Verse 16. The things named in this verse the apostle says are *all that is in the world*. That is not merely an arbitrary declaration made just because the apostle chose to sum it all up that way, but upon examination it will be seen that it is historically and logically true. In Genesis 3: 6 we read; "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food [lust of the flesh], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [lust of the eyes], and a tree to be desired to make one wise [pride of life]," etc. Next we shall consider Luke 4: 1-13. Satan suggested to Jesus a way to get food, which was an appeal to the lust of the flesh. (The obtaining of food was no sin if done by lawful means.) Satan showed Christ the kingdoms of the world which was an appeal to the lust of the eyes. Next he challenged Him to cast himself from the roof of the temple to show the greatness of His power, which was an attempt to get Jesus to yield on a point that would have shown the spirit of

pride. Luke says after these three items that "the devil had ended all the temptations," which agrees with John that the three classes of evil are *all that is in the world*.

Verse 17. *World* is still from the word that means the inhabitants of the earth, and the *lusts* are the practices of the same which confirms the comments on the preceding verse. Since this world and its practices are to pass away, it is great folly for a disciple to let his affections be attached thereto. But the doer of God's will *abideth for ever* and hence that is the proper subject to receive our sincere interests.

Verse 18. *Little children* is used in the sense that is explained at the first verse of the chapter. *Last time* could have a number of definitions on account of the second word, hence the thought must be gathered from the use that is made of it. The doctrine of Christ is not directly taught in the Old Testament while He is the central figure in the New. The verse speaks of *antichrists* (which means against Christ) so we understand John means we are living in the last Dispensation. Such is a logical conclusion because the basis of the whole system is belief in Christ (not Moses).

Verse 19. *Went out from us* signifies the antichrists were once associated with the true believers but apostatized from the faith. All this pertains to their outward movements only, for John says that *they were not of us*. Church workers are not mind readers, and if unconverted persons go through the motion of obedience to the Gospel there is no way to detect or avoid it. They obeyed the *form of doctrine* but not "from the heart" (Romans 6: 17). Such persons will wait until some pretext appears when they will show their true sentiments by turning against the church and making false accusations. It is true that John is writing directly about *antichrists* which means those who oppose Christ. The principle is the same, for whoever opposes the church of Christ is an enemy of Him. At heart they are disbelievers in Christ but show their spite against Him by turning against his church.

Verse 20. *Unction* is used figuratively from the ancient custom of pouring oil on the heads of those who were to act in the service of the Lord. In its spiritual sense it refers to the enlightening that the Lord bestowed on the apostles, enabling them to impart the necessary information to the members of the body

of Christ. *Ye know all things* means they know all that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1: 3).

Verse 21. Not all inspired writing was done to give new information but also to supplement what had been given (2 Peter 1: 12, 13; 3: 1). Another consideration is that people who have already shown an interest in the truth are glad to have it repeated to them. *No lie is of the truth*. Anything that denies a truth is bound to be a lie, and John was particularly concerned about the truth of the divinity of Christ.

Verse 22. This verse is virtually the same as verse 18.

Verse 23. God and Christ are two distinct persons but are one in divinity, hence to reject the one is the same as rejecting the other. The last half of this verse is not found in some copies of the Greek text and for that reason some translations leave it out. However, it does not add anything that disagrees with the rest of the New Testament, hence no harm is done by retaining it at least to the extent of endorsing it.

Verse 24. *Heard from the beginning* refers to the truth given to the world through Him who is "from the beginning" (chapter 1: 1). If this truth remains in us we will be in fellowship with both the Father and the Son.

Verse 25. The reward for being in fellowship with God and his Son is not of a temporal nature; it is eternal life. That reward will be given to those who are faithful until death, since it will not come in this world but in the next which will be "when earthly things have ceased to be."

Verse 26. To *seduce* a person means to mislead him or cause him to stray from the truth. There were many deceivers in the world who were so expert in their false reasoning that the uninformed were easy victims. For this reason the apostle was writing the warning information to the disciples.

Verse 27. *Anointing* is from the same word as "unction" in verse 20. *Need not that any man should teach you*. This means that no uninspired man should be depended upon for teaching on the great story of Christ. They had the enlightening that had come to them from Christ through the inspired teachers. With such divine guidance they were able to *abide in him* who is Christ.

Verse 28. *Little children* is general and is the same endearing term that

John uses in the beginning of the chapter. With the advantage of the spiritual enlightenment the disciples are exhorted to *abide in him*. This means more than merely being in Christ at times but it should be always. No man knows when Jesus is coming hence it is important always to be in His favor. In that case the disciple will not be taken unawares and be made ashamed, but will be confidently looking for Him.

Verse 29. The Lord is righteous and hence can beget righteous offspring only. The exhortation is for the disciples to honor their family reputation by being righteous.

1 John 3

Verse 1. *Behold* is a term used as a call to attention, directing the minds of the readers to a matter the apostle regards as of special importance. It is the *manner* (sort, kind or quality) of love that the writer wishes to emphasize. God's love was so great that He was willing to demonstrate it by giving us the highest possible honor, namely, taking us into the divine family as children. It is like a very wealthy king who takes a poor man from the depths of poverty and humility, and makes him an heir to the royal estate, only the illustration but faintly compares the circumstance. Since the world knew not the Father it would not recognize those who have been redeemed from the regions of sin, and adopted into the family of the Heavenly King.

Verse 2. In beginning this verse with the word *beloved*, the apostle does so in the same sentiment that caused him to use the term *little children*; it is a term of endearment. *Now* signifies he is speaking of the condition in this life before *he shall appear*. Being a son of God is a spiritual relationship which does not make any change in our personal appearance. That is because we must retain our fleshly body while we live in this world. *What we shall be* pertains to what can be seen as the connection in the verse shows, and John is referring to what our appearance will be after the coming of Christ. He says what that will be *doth not yet appear*. Yet he does know (by inspiration) that when Jesus comes *we shall be like him*. But the apostle did know even as he was writing, what the appearance of Jesus was when he was on the earth, for he appeared as a man with a fleshly body. Hence He will be

changed and John was not instructed as to what the new form would be in appearance. Another thing of which he was certain was that *when he shall appear we shall be like him*. If that is the case then we shall be alike since "things equal to the same thing are equal to each other." Then if the saved ones are all alike there will be no distinction between them. This is fatal to the carnal notion that we will recognize our "loved ones" (family relations) in heaven. There will be no male nor female nor other personal distinctions and hence no recognition of one person as to whether he is my father or your brother or the husband of this or that woman: all bodily or personal distinctions are for this life only.

Verse 3. *Hath this hope* means the hope of seeing Jesus and being like him. With such an incentive it is expected that all who have become the sons of God will cleanse themselves of impurity in life and strive to be like his Son.

Verse 4. Since *committeth* is a key word in verse 9 I shall leave my comments on it until that verse is reached. *Sin is the transgression of the law*. It should be observed that John does not say transgression is the only thing that constitutes sin; it is the only phase of the subject being considered at this place.

Verse 5. *In him is no sin*. This is what is meant in John 14: 30 where Jesus says the prince of this world (Satan) cometh "and hath nothing in me." No sacrifice could have atoned for the sins of the world if attempted by a person who was himself tainted with sin.

Verse 6. *Abideth* signifies a continuous life in Christ and not a wavering from side to side. Such a person *sinneth* not which is akin to the word *committeth* as to its ending which will be explained at verse 9. A person cannot *abide in Christ* until he first comes into Him, then if he continues in that relation it can be said that he is abiding in Him. By the same token if a man *sinneth* it is proof that such a person has not yet made his acquaintance with Christ.

Verse 7. *Little children* is general and is used as explained at chapter 2: 1. They are again warned against being deceived which evidently refers to the antichrists who are mentioned in the preceding chapter. The first *he*

stands for the faithful follower of Christ and the second *he* means Christ himself. *Doeth* and *is righteous* are related and will receive some more light at verse 9.

Verse 8. *Committeth* and *sinneth* will be explained by the comments on the next verse. *Is of the devil* refers to the practice of sin which was introduced into the world by the devil. *From the beginning* means the beginning of mankind on the earth. Not that he had not sinned before that, for he had, by reason of which he was cast out of heaven (Luke 10: 18). But John is here concerned only with the devil's first attack upon man as the rest of the verse indicates. We know that the Son of God *was manifested* in the world to destroy the works of the devil, therefore the word *beginning* can apply only to the beginning of man on the earth.

Verse 9. The two key words in this verse are *commit* and *cannot*. Words, like people, "Are known by the company they keep," which is another way of saying that the meaning of words may be learned by their connection or by the use that is made of them. The first word is from POIEO and Thayer uses three pages of his lexicon with definitions and explanations, which indicates the wide scope of its meaning. Among his comments on the word are, "To follow some method in expressing by deeds the feelings and thoughts of the mind; carry on; describing a plan or course of action." Robinson gives as one explanation, "What one does repeatedly, continuedly, habitually." One of Webster's definitions is, "To pledge; to bind; as, to commit oneself to a certain course." The Englishman's Greek New Testament translates the word by "practice." All of these definitions and translations show the word has no reference to what a man does occasionally or incidentally, but it means what he makes a practice of. The term "practicing physician" does not mean a man who occasionally gives a dose of medicine to a friend. If a man "retires" from the occupation of a carpenter he may occasionally drive a nail or saw a board, yet we would not say he has gone into the occupation again. Likewise a man who becomes a child of God ceases to *commit* sin as a "practice," but that does not mean he will never do anything that is wrong. (See the comments at chapter 1: 7, 8.) We are certain an inspired man would not contradict himself, so John would

not use the word *commit* in this verse to mean an occasional sin, when he taught in chapter 1: 7 that even a man who "walks in the light" needs to be cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ.

Cannot is from OU-DUNAMAI, which means morally unable and not that it is physically impossible. We will consider some other passages where the same word is used. Matthew 5: 14 says "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." Yet all of us know that during the war many cities and other important places were actually hid by camouflage. In Mark 2: 19 Jesus says of certain persons that "they cannot fast"; does this mean they actually could not refrain from eating? Luke 11: 7 says the man who had retired but was asked to give a friend some bread replied, "I cannot rise and give thee." We know the man did not lack the physical ability of getting out of bed. And so the word in our verse does not mean that the child of God has come to the place where he is physically unable to do any wrong, but that he is morally restrained from it, just as a good man who is asked to join another in some crime would reply, "O no, I couldn't do anything like that." Besides, to say a man has reached a condition where it is impossible for him to do anything wrong, would be like taking from him the necessity of watching his step, and would also make it unnecessary for him to seek the services of the Intercessor. The principle on which all these things are said of the child of God is the truth that he is born (begotten) of God. He has been conceived and born of a parentage that is spiritual and hence that holy characteristic is constantly in his spiritual person to urge him in the right course of life.

Verse 10. *In this* refers to the practice of sin as explained in the preceding verse. *Doeth* is used in the same sense as the word *commit* (or *committeth*), meaning the continual or general manner of life. The children of the devil may occasionally perform some act that is good in itself but their life as a whole is devoted to the service of Satan.

Verse 11. *From the beginning* means from the start of man's existence on the earth. The message is the teaching that we should love each other.

Verse 12. This verse confirms the comments on the preceding one as to

when *the beginning* occurred. The case of Cain and Abel is the first one in the divine record that pertains to the subject of love. Cain would not have slain his brother had he loved him. John's explanation of the cause of the lack of love is that his own works were evil while those of his brother were righteous. It seems strange that such a circumstance would cause the hatred. The basic or remote cause actually was envy which gave him a feeling of spite.

Verse 13. *Marvel not* means not to be surprised or wonder at it, because such an attitude is to be expected. Jesus taught the same thing as recorded in John 15: 18, 19, and it is also taught in 1 Peter 4: 12. The world will hate a faithful disciple of Christ on the same principle that Cain hated his brother. The righteous life is a constant rebuke to the unrighteous ways of the world and causes it to hate the righteous people.

Verse 14. The absence of love for the brethren is proof of one's being still out of the body of Christ. Those who actually enter the spiritual body will necessarily have a fellow feeling for the members. The act of entering the body is equivalent to passing from death unto life. John says *we know* in the sense that we have the direct evidence, namely, our mutual relation to each other in Christ. The last sentence of the verse is merely the reverse of the forepart. With this verse before us we may conclude that genuine evidence of brotherly love is not just the sentimental feeling, but it can be claimed only after a person has passed from death unto life. There will be more said on this subject when we come to chapter 5: 2.

Verse 15. Cain slew his brother because he hated him, so that the poison of murder was in his mind before he talked with him. Others may have the same kind of hatred in their heart but do not have the opportunity of carrying it out. The Lord can read such a mind and hence will regard that man as a murderer. *Ye know that no murderer*, etc. The Old Testament condemned a murderer and required that he be punished with death (Genesis 9: 6 and many other passages). John is repeating the same condemnation except that he applies it to murderous intent as well as the actual deed.

Verse 16. The words *of God* have been supplied by the translators. The passage means that the Lord gave direct evidence of His love in that he

laid down his life for us. This is a beautiful contrast with the man who hates his brother. Such a person not only does not make any sacrifice for another, but takes the other man's life from him. *We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*. This cannot necessarily mean that we can literally die for the sake of another, except where the other person's life is in danger and we might lose ours in protecting him. The passage refers to the interest or devotion we would manifest for our brethren even to the extent of making great and trying sacrifices. (See Romans 16: 4.)

Verse 17. In this verse the apostle gives a simple example (on the negative side) of what it means to be devoted to the interests of others. *Bowels* is used figuratively because people in old times thought that was the seat of the finer sentiments of the mind. John uses it to mean that when a man closes his sentiments of compassion against such an unfortunate creature as this, he cannot truly claim the love of God.

Verse 18. This verse means for our love to go farther than words; to be proven by our actions. It is a summing up of the preceding verse.

Verse 19. Nothing can give a disciple any stronger confidence than to know that he is proving his love by actions that benefit the brethren. He thereby manifests his relationship with the truth of the Lord which requires us to show practical love.

Verse 20. *Our heart* refers to our mind with its various attributes. Having been instructed to show our love by helpful works, if we do so we will feel assured in connection with the subject. If we fail to do our known duty we will have "a guilty conscience" and be self-condemned. If our own knowledge of neglect causes us to feel condemned, we may be sure that God will condemn us also because He knows our hearts.

Verse 21. This verse is virtually a repetition of the preceding one, except that it is considering a person who has carried out the teaching of practical love.

Verse 22. *Because we keep his commandments* is the condition on which we will receive what we ask. Keeping the commandments includes the obligation of consulting the scriptures to learn what would be right for us to

receive. It also includes our doing the things that please Him.

Verse 23. Believing on Christ and loving the brethren (with practical love) sums up the qualities of an obedient child of God. That is because belief in Christ means more than a mere profession. It includes a working faith that will carry out the teaching in James 2: 18, to show our faith by our works.

Verse 24. *Dwelleth in him, and he in him.* The matter of dwelling is a mutual affair between the Lord and his people. Since the subject is a spiritual one it is possible for "two persons to be at the same place at the same time"; it means they are dwelling with each other. *Spirit which he hath given us* enabled the apostles to speak with knowledge on the affairs of the kingdom.

1 John 4

Verse 1. The *spirits* means those men who profess to be speaking by inspiration, such as John mentions in the closing verse of the preceding chapter. The false teachers used that claim to obtain attention from the uninformed. The brethren are warned not to believe every man who makes such a claim, but first *try* them which means to test and examine them by the rule that is given in the next verse.

Verse 2. Nobody denied that a person lived on earth by the name of Jesus Christ, but some denied that He was divine in a body of flesh. That was equivalent to saying that He was not the divine Son of God. That would also mean that Christ had no authority or saving virtue. It was generally known that a person was predicted to come into the world to fulfill the law and the prophets, and to effect a plan of salvation on the merits of His blood. But it was denied by some that the person known as Jesus Christ was the expected one. Hence if a man acknowledged the divinity of Christ it was evidence that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Paul teaches this also in 1 Corinthians 12: 3 where he says, "No man can say Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" or Spirit.

Verse 3. This verse merely sets forth the opposite of the preceding one, and completes the rule by which the brethren may *try the spirits*, thus avoiding the misfortune of being misled by the antichrists and other false teachers.

Verse 4. The disciples had *overcome*

them (the antichrists) because they were the children of God. He will care for those who trust in Him, and that will insure them the victory over the enemy because God who is in them is greater than the "wise men" of the world who were trying to seduce them.

Verse 5. *They* (the antichrists) *are of the world*, which means they are interested in worldly practices. That is why they are opposing Christ because he condemns their evil ways. But the people of the world will hear their false teaching because it encourages their unrighteous life.

Verse 6. We have special reference to John and the other apostles because they had been inspired to write the truth. To *know God* means to have come into close fellowship with Him by obedience to the word that was given by the Spirit. All such persons would logically be inclined to hear the apostles. The conflict between truth and error still is the concern of the apostle. That conflict is determined by whether a man is of God or of the world.

Verse 7. The apostle again comes to the subject of love which seems to have been very near to him. He has a sound reason for such interest in that subject, namely, love and God are inseparable. For that reason if a man is born (begotten) of God he is sure to exhibit love also since it is the family trait of God's children.

Verse 8. On the basis of the affirmative as shown in the preceding verse, if a man does not have love as a predominant factor in his life, it is proof that he has not yet become acquainted with God.

Verse 9. This verse corresponds with John 3: 16.

Verse 10. The example of love was set by the Father and not by man. That is why we have the brief but comprehensive statement in verse 19.

Verse 11. If God was willing to love us first even when we were in sin, we ought to love each other since no one of us is any more worthy than another.

Verse 12. *No man hath seen God* literally, but we may exhibit evidences of spiritual knowledge of Him by having love for the brethren. If we do so it will cause God to *dwell in us* or in our midst spiritually. His love is *perfected* or made complete in us when we follow His example of loving the children of God.

Verse 13. This is the same in thought as chapter 3: 24; see the comments there.

Verse 14. John and the other apostles could testify, because they *had seen* the evidences that the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

Verse 15. See the comments at verses 1-3.

Verse 16. *Known and believed.* There is no conflict between these words as might be concluded because of the difference technically between them. The things that were *known* were the evidences, and what they *believed* was based on those evidences, namely, that God had a great love for man. The latter part of the verse has been explained in a number of the preceding verses.

Verse 17. *Love made perfect* means it is complete, and God made it possible for man to have that perfect (or complete) love, to give them *boldness* in view of the judgment day. *As he is, so are we.* To be confident with reference to the judgment, we must be on good terms with God in this world. That can be accomplished only by manifesting that unselfish love that was first shown by the Lord for us.

Verse 18. The Bible does not contradict itself, and when it appears that it does there is always an explanation for it. We know we are commanded to fear God (1 Peter 2: 17), but our present verse says that perfect love will cast out fear. The explanation is very simple which depends on the meanings of the original Greek word *phobos*. Thayer gives us two definitions of the word as follows: "1. fear, dread, terror," and "2. reverence, respect." As we have seen frequently before, the particular meaning of any word must be determined by the connection in which it is used. The connection here shows John is using it in its bad sense which would make it read, "There is no dread or terror in love." If we love God and manifest it by loving our brother, we will not have any dread at the thought of meeting God in the judgment.

Verse 19. This is commented on at verse 10.

Verse 20. John has previously made this same charge, but he adds a logical reason for it here. It certainly is as easy to love a brother who is with us and whose fellowship we can enjoy, as it is to love God whom we cannot

see now and must love on the basis of faith.

Verse 21. On the basis of the reasoning in the preceding verse, John commands the disciples not to attempt loving God if they will not love the brethren also, for their profession of love will be rejected.

1 John 5

Verse 1. In the New Testament there is only one original word for either *born* or *begotten* which is *gennao*, hence the connection has to be depended upon in each case to determine which is the proper translation. Since the act of begetting is that of the father, it should be the proper translation in passages where the connection shows that he is the parent being spoken of. On that ground the word *born* in this verse should have been translated "begotten" just as it is in the others. The seed of reproduction is the word of God and it tells us that Jesus is the Christ. Whenever a man believes that truth, he is begotten of the Father. Therefore it says that everyone who loves him who begat (who is the Father) loveth him also who is begotten (and that is the child). All this is logical, for if we love a man we should love his children.

Verse 2. In chapter 3: 14 it is stated that we know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. But that passage does not deal with the question of how to know that we actually do love the brethren, while the present verse does tell us how, namely, that we love God *and keep his commandments*. And so a man's mere assertion that he loves the brethren is not to be accepted. He cannot truthfully make the claim unless he has obeyed the commandments, including repentance, baptism and the others which God has given in the New Testament.

Verse 3. Our love for God is proved only by keeping His commandments. *Grievous* means heavy or burdensome and it certainly should not seem burdensome to obey the commands of the One whom we love.

Verse 4. The *world* means the evil practices of mankind. (See the comments on chapter 2: 15.) If a man truly loves God of whom he was *begotten*, the love he has for his Father will induce him to overcome the evil practices of the world. That is because his love is directed by his faith that was produced by the word of God.

Verse 5. This is the same as the preceding verse except it states how and when one is *born* (begotten) of God. That is when he believes in Jesus as the Son of God as was stated in verse 1.

Verse 6. The pronouns *this* and *he* refer to Jesus as the Son of God. The verse deals with three items that testified to that claim. *He came* means his introduction to the world especially into the public ministry. The *water* refers to his baptism because it was then John the Baptist said he learned that Jesus was the one who was to come after him. The *Spirit* also is mentioned because he appeared in the form of a dove in connection with the voice of God that acknowledged the Son. The *blood* was in evidence when Jesus shed it on the cross, thus concluding the long blood line that began with Adam and ran down through the ages. (Read Luke chapter 3.)

Verse 7. Most translations omit this verse on the ground that it is not in the oldest Greek manuscripts. I will make remarks similar to what were said at chapter 2: 23. The passage does not add anything that is different from the other passages on the same subject, nor will anything be lost if it is left out. With these comments I shall proceed with the next verse.

Verse 8. This verse differs from verse 6 as to date only; each has to do with the threefold testimony for the divinity of Christ. However, verse 6 pertains to the time of His stay on the earth, while this one is continuous and applies to what has been going on since Christ left the earth. The testimony of the *Spirit* is that which is recorded in the New Testament and written by the inspired men. The *water* is in evidence every time a person is baptized, because there is no way to account for the continuation of this plain ordinance other than the fact that it originated in the time of Christ. The *blood* testifies every time the Lord's supper is observed in which is the fruit of the vine, for Paul says (1 Corinthians 11: 26), "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." *Three agree in one* means they all bear testimony to one fact, namely, Jesus is the divine Son of God.

Verse 9. *If we receive the witness of men* means that we do receive such witness. It is as if he said "since we receive such witness," etc. It is true that human testimony when confirmed

is an established rule of mankind in dealing with each other. The apostle is making the point that we should receive the testimony of God, for it is much greater than mere human testimony. That which God gives establishes the fact that Jesus is His Son.

Verse 10. *Hath the witness in himself*. Not that he produced it by his own mind, but it is testimony that can be received by the mind and hence can be retained there. (See Hebrews 8: 10.) *Made him a liar*. When a man rejects a statement made by another he thereby makes that man out a liar. Otherwise if the other person is not regarded as a liar, there would be no pretext for the first one to disbelieve him. All of this pertains to the declaration of God that Christ is his Son.

Verse 11. *Record* is from the same word as "evidence." John means that in giving to us the evidence of the Sonship of Christ, we are thereby given assurance that we may have eternal life through Him.

Verse 12. The foregoing important truths are summed up in the conclusion that to have life one must have the Son by sincere belief in Him as the source of that life.

Verse 13. *Written unto you that believe* again sets forth the idea that not all of the apostolic writings are given as new information. The purpose for repeating it is stated *that ye may know* or that they may have their faith for eternal life confirmed.

Verse 14. The proviso *according to his will* is important and shows that we are not at liberty to make just any kind of wild request and expect God to grant it.

Verse 15. This verse explains what it means to be heard for our prayers. When we *have the petitions* (granted) then we know that they were scriptural or God would not have granted them.

Verse 16. *Sin unto death*. Not that the man has reached the state of eternal death but is healed *unto* it; his conduct is in that direction. The condition described in Hebrews 6: 4-6 is a clear case of this kind of sin; let the reader see the comments at that place. Paul says it is impossible for another person to renew that kind of sinner to repentance. It would therefore be inconsistent to engage in a prayer service with a brother who has gone so far in deliberate sin that he could not be induced to repent by anyone else.

John says he would not ask anyone to pray for such a brother. The kind of sin that is *not unto death* would be like that mentioned in Galatians 6: 1 where the brethren are told to work for the restoration of the one overtaken. *He shall ask* sounds as if John means for the brother discovering sin in another to do the praying for him, when Peter told Simon to pray for himself. That it true but it is also true that brethren can pray together on behalf of the erring one. Then if he repents the Lord will grant him *life* (forgiveness) for his sins. (See James 5: 15, 16.) The pronouns may be a little confusing the way they are used. The first *he* means the man who sees his brother sin, and the second *he* means the Lord from whom all forgiveness must come. (See Ephesians 4: 32 as to the source of forgiveness.)

Verse 17. *All unrighteousness is sin.* (See the comments at chapter 3: 4.) John makes this statement that it might not seem he is underestimating the seriousness of any sin. He wishes only to show that not all sins are as fatal as others; that there is such a sin *not unto death*.

Verse 18. See the comments at verse 1 for the meaning of *born* and *begotten*. For the verse in general see the comments on chapter 3: 9.

Verse 19. *We* means those who have been begotten of God. *Whole world lieth in wickedness.* *World* means the inhabitants of the earth as it does in chapter 2: 15. The italicized words mean the same as "all that is in the world" in chapter 2: 16, which explains why the world is said to lie in wickedness.

Verse 20. The word *know* is frequently used by inspired writers to mean a strong assurance, not that it is intended to take the place of faith. It is true that the apostle John could use the word in its technical sense concerning Christ. That is because he was with Him in person during all of his personal ministry. He also knew that Christ had given him the (inspired) understanding which he promised, for just before leaving this world Jesus told his apostles he would send the Spirit upon them which would guide them into all truth (John 16: 13). The *true God* is said in contrast with the false ones that were worshiped by many people. He also is the source of eternal life in that He gave his only begotten Son into the world for that purpose.

Verse 21. *Little children* is explained at chapter 2: 1. Even the best of disciples need to be cautioned against evils that we would not ordinarily expect them to commit. John tells his readers to *keep themselves from idols* which is one of such warnings. Paul told the brethren in Corinth to "flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10: 14).

2 John

Verse 1. John and Peter each called himself an elder. It is not merely an allusion to their age, because they both use an article before it which would make a noun out of the word. *Lady* is from the Greek word KURIA, which Thayer says means "Cyria," and then gives us the explanation, "A Christian woman to whom the second epistle of John is addressed." Robinson defines it, "Mistress, lady," and then adds an explanation much like that of Thayer. In the early days of the Gospel the church in some localities was contained in one family and had its regular assemblies in their house. This woman named Cyria and her children constituted the group to which John wrote this epistle. She is called *elect* which means a person chosen of the Lord through obedience to the Gospel. *Love in the truth* is said because John is using his favorite subject from a religious standpoint. *All they that have known the truth* indicates further that the apostle is speaking of "brotherly love."

Verse 2. *For the truth's sake* denotes that John loves this woman and her children because of their devotion to the truth. This truth *shall be with us for ever*, hence a love that is based on it will be permanent.

Verse 3. This is a form of friendly salutation which many of the writers of the New Testament used. Aside from the brotherly sentiments it expresses, the important principle is set forth that such blessings as grace, mercy and peace are to come from God and Christ if they are to be lasting.

Verse 4. *I found of thy children.* We do not have definite information as to how many of her children John had seen nor just where it was. The important thing is that in conversing with them he found them devoted to the truth for which he greatly rejoiced. This truth in which her children were walking had come by commandment from the Father, so that their lives were not moulded by their own sentiments.