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Lester Behnken

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_behnkenl@csl.edu

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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE ACCORDING TO
THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of New Testament Exegetical Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
Lester Lloyd Behnken
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Approved by:

J. E. Kreyman
Advisor

Louis J. Lick Reader

FOREWORD

It was during my vicarage, while preparing a sermon on John 4, 16-21, that the question came to my mind, "What if a man were to have nothing of God's Word to guide him along the road to salvation but John's epistles? Would he be able to find salvation there? Would he be able to live in this life in accord with God's wishes?" I think he could. The three great sections of Christian Dogmatics which deal with men's lives here on the earth are well developed in John's epistles. Man's damnation (sinfulness), man's justification, and man's sanctification are treated in such a beautiful way by John's inspired hand that anyone can set up for himself a system of Christian life on the basis of these three short letters.

I came to love the epistles of John, particularly, of course, the first of the three. They are the source of strong and pertinent texts which many a minister would do well to study personally and deliver to his congregation. When one begins to wonder about the character of the Christianity of his flock, he must first question his own handling of the flock. Jolting rebukes and harangues against sins and vices prevalent

in the day certainly are not characteristic of John's preaching! Soft-hearted and pussy-footing messages of fearful pastors who are hesitant about stepping on the toes of their hearers would also be far from the characteristic straightforwardness of John. If in the past, as some contend, the Missouri Synod has so jealously and scrupulously guarded the doctrine of justification by faith alone that it has neglected the preaching of a true Christian life, then something has been wrong even with our guarding of the cornerstone of salvation, justification by faith, for they certainly can't be separated.

But one thing is certain. The first epistle of John has too long been overlooked. It links up so conclusively the love of God for man and the love of man for God and his fellow man that the pastor could hardly go wrong in his preaching if he would merely take the statements of John the Apostle and present them to his flock.

When I had completed the preparation of the sermon mentioned above, I read the entire epistle again. My search for a field of study for a B.D. thesis was over. But more than that, I began at long last to see the true meaning and true importance of the preaching of the Christian life to one's hearers.

As I undertake this work, this far deeper and far greater value, the benefit for my ministry in the Church of Christ, is uppermost in my mind. I know that the study of John's words as well as his methods and language and style will prove of lasting value. May the Holy Spirit lend His full power to aid in this endeavor.

Before beginning the thesis proper, in which only exegetical and doctrinal matters will be set forth and authenticated on the basis of the text of the three inspired epistles and such other texts as necessarily are drawn into the picture, it is entirely fitting, yes necessary, that certain historical matters be investigated and the isagogical material on the three epistles of John be studied and briefly set forth.

This is not an easy task. There are very few actual dependable facts known concerning the circumstances of the writing of these three epistles.

The first problem is that of the author and the addressee. In the case of all three epistles no proper name heads the introduction, as is the case in Paul's epistles and as usually was the custom in those days. Merely the letter itself is given us. In the case of the first epistle not even an addressee is mentioned. In the first epistle, however, we have proof of the authorship of John, due to the similarity to the Gospel of John, and also to a certain extent to some passages in John's Revelation, though the nature of that book would make the presentation, style, and language slightly different than that of the epistles or gospels.

First, their style resembles the Gospels a great deal. There is in both the characteristic repetition of the number three in the arrangement of his material; there is the same "meagerness of connecting particles"¹; there is the strange fact that "the same noun is repeated, instead of being replaced by the pronoun"² as in the very first verse of the Gospel and in the second chapter, the eleventh verse of the epistle; there is the same simplicity of language; there is the same natural use of sharp contrasts, such as Christ and Antichrist, love of God and love of the world, hope and fear, darkness and light, etc; and there is the same preference by the author for the use of abstract terms such as "to have life, to be in God, to abide in truth," etc.

Second, their doctrines are fundamentally the same. The most striking example of this is the fact that Jesus is called the only begotten Son in these two books alone.³

Thirdly, the same personal characteristics of the author are apparent in these two books. The name does not appear in either; he is forthright and

1. Hayes, D. A., John and His Writings, p. 163.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid, p. 166 - cf. John 1,18; 3,16; 3,18; and I John 4,9.

courageous in both books in calling a lie a lie and condemning all who are victims of Satan's wiles; he is absolutely sure of the truth in both books, never halting or hesitating or compromising, but ever firm and sure and strong!

Fourthly, the thoughts of the epistles and the Gospel are at times so parallel that only a bigoted and blinded theologian would fail to see them.⁴

There is no doubt at all that the three epistles were written by the same man, who in the second and third epistles calls himself δ πρεσβύτερος. As Dana says "That he (δ πρεσβύτερος) was the author of all three epistles we may conclude with perfect assurance, because any competent Greek scholar must recognize that the first epistle is written by the same hand as the two shorter ones."⁵

To go into the intricate arguments pro and con of traditional designation of this πρεσβύτερος as John the Apostle and the Evangelist would be far from the realm of this paper. Suffice it to say that ancient tradition does agree very well that John was the author of the three epistles. "Polycarp and Papias quote from it. The Muratorian Fragment bears

4. cf. B.D. Thesis - Marvin Kamprath, 1940 - Vol. 2.

"The Internal Relationship Linguistic and Theological, Between the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John."

5. Dana, H. E., The Epistles and Apocalypse of John, p. 13.

its testimony to the authorship of the Apostle John. The Peshito and the Itala recognize it. Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Origen, Cyprian, and others among the church fathers use it and witness to its composition by John."⁶

The addressee of the first epistle is another matter of intricate study. Most authorities agree that John was writing a letter to friends of his in and near Ephesus. This is well attested to by the fact that John must have known his addressee very well. "He uses the term 'little children' six times, 'beloved' six times, and 'you' thirty-six times. He knows them as little children, young men, and fathers."⁷ It is also probably most likely that this was an encyclical letter to the churches of the vicinity in which John lived at the time, and was written for the purpose of being read to the assembled congregations. It might well be that he is addressing as a whole the seven churches to which he in his Apocalypse addresses separate letters.⁸ The second and the third epistles are addressed to "the elect lady and her children" and "to Gaius" and offer us no difficulty whatever due to the fact that they are

6. Hayes, Op. Cit., p. 172-173.

7. Tidwell, J. B., John and His Five Books, p. 89.

8. cf. Use of term "love" throughout with Revelation
2,4.

of a different nature entirely from the first epistle.

The time of the writing of the epistles also cannot definitely be determined. The best chronological data available seem to point to the fact that John lived to a ripe old age and almost reached into the second century. A.D. Dana suggests that the chronological order is the reverse of the way they appear in our English Bibles. After the writing of the second and third epistles, and before the first epistle was written would fall the writing of the Gospel.⁹ Thus the first epistle is somewhat complementary to the Gospel. All of his books were probably written after the year 80 and Dana states that we might assume that they were written between 95 and 105 A.D.

One more thing must occupy our minds before proceeding. Why were these epistles written? What occasion prompted them? If it were heresies, what heresis prevailed in Ephesus?

The second and third epistles again present no problem but are merely brief personal notes which offer no new doctrine or new ideas but are of general interest to the church in general and are thus included in the canon of inspired writings. Only in II John 10.11 and in III John 9.10 are any distinctive statements made.

9. Dana, Op. Cit., p. 17.

But in the case of First John we have a different purpose. It seems that John was worried about his Christian congregations. He wanted to give them something to combat heresies which had sprung up in their midst. The epistle handles heresies not by picking them out, naming them, and refuting them, but by putting forth such an abundance of positive light that all the heresies are illuminated and clearly seen. "All the heresies of history are anticipated and answered here."¹⁰ However, we can recognize from John's approach that the problem was with antinomian Gnostics. It was a syncretism of Graeco-Roman philosophy with Oriental embellishments and also an admixture of Jewish theology. This false teaching is in the background of several of the New Testament books. It was a combination of Oriental Dualism, which held that matter was essentially evil and spirit essentially good, Greek Intellectualism, which trusted knowledge for salvation, and Greek Docetism, which first brought forth the teaching that Christ's human being and the divine Christ were essentially separate existences.

Tradition tells us that one Cerinthus, a Jew, who had entered Christian circles and taught extreme

10. Hayes, Op. Cit., p. 175.

Gnosticism, was John's chief enemy. The doctrines brought out by John would seem to point to the fact that he was writing this encyclical with the many false teachings of Cerinthus in mind.

Thus we have accumulated a bit of information on the author, the addressee, the genuineness, the date, and the purpose of the three epistles. With this background we may proceed to a more searching discussion of the Christian Life according to the Three Epistles of John.

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It was the night Christ was betrayed. Around Him at the table in the upper room sat eleven disciples. One had forsaken Him for the fleeting gain of the moment. Jesus had told them that one of them would betray Him. Shock and amazement clouded the faces of the Eleven. Shame led the twelfth, Judas, to seek out company more suited to his mood at the moment, to bargain with the High Priest and his cohorts for the betrayal. Next to Jesus, with his head close to the Master's, was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved.¹ He was close to the Master. More than mere friendship held him to Christ. There was a deep mutual love and affection between John and Jesus. John was with Him constantly. Whenever any of the disciples were with Jesus, John was sure to be among them.

Some sixty years later, an elderly man settles himself to a small writing desk in a house in the city of Ephesus. He picks up his stylus, unrolls a section of parchment, and begins a letter to a group of his friends. Love---Love---Love---he can't get the word out of his mind. What great love the Master had shown toward him! What knowing love had been the dominating force of his own long life! These friends of his, they were in danger of being drawn away from the first love.² He had to write to them. He

1. John 13,23 ff.

2. cf. Revelation 2,4.

had to tell them of the love of the Master with whom he had walked and talked, whom he had served so faithfully, who had first taught him the real meaning of love those many years ago. He had to convince them that his Master also loved them, that as a result they should also follow Him and serve Him and love Him and their neighbor. John writes. The Spirit of God gives him utterance. An inspired apostle records God's scheme of Christian life for the Christians whom he had served as bishop for many years. Thus the Epistles of John were written.³ In the church around Ephesus, to whom the first epistle was directed, there had arisen false teachers and leaders who claimed to have a message more attractive, a truth more authentic than that which had been proclaimed since Paul first preached in the streets of that heathen city. Now the elder, ὁ πρεσβύτερος, the Apostolic overseer of the churches, the shepherd of the souls placed under his care by God Himself, must warn his sheep about these dangers and must build them up so that they will be able both to discern the false and choose the true!

John had spent much time with his people. He had recorded for all the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now he was writing what may be considered a companion

3. This account claims no historic fact. However, it is not contrary to known facts about the history of the apostle John.

work. In his Gospel he had shown his sheep with the inspiration of God that the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, was true God, the eternal λόγος who existed before the world began. Now in his encyclical he was pointing out for them the fact that Jesus was at the same time true man, that the Gnostics were wrong when they said He was only a phantom which "seemed" to exist.

From especially this first masterful epistle, and also from the two shorter works, the sheep, under John's care, received pertinent instruction. They were steeled against the savages of falsehood and error; they were encouraged in their convictions; but above all they were strengthened in Christian love.

That was the high spot of John's thinking. His Gospel repeatedly uses the term "love", ἀγάπε, and throughout, the love of God for the world as exemplified in the love of Christ is the constant theme. This is shown conclusively by such beautiful Gospel passages as "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son....."; "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"; or "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for

his friends."⁴ This theme is not lost in his epistle. It is called by some the "Epistle of Love." The word love and its derivatives occurs more often in this first epistle than in any other book of the New Testament. Six times John calls his readers ἀγαπητοί, well-beloved. Twelve times the noun ἀγαπῶν is used. The verb appears twenty-seven times. In all there are some fifty-one instances in this book of five short chapters where the word ἀγαπή or its equivalent is used. Is it any wonder that we may call it the epistle of love?

"Augustine said, 'Locutus est multa, et prope omnia de caritate', - 'He has said many things, and almost all about love.' Luther said, 'The main substance of this epistle related to love.'"⁵

Thus from this "Epistle of Love" we will set up the system of Christian life with its divine motive, the love of God, its human basis, faith, and its manifestations in true practice of Christian love.

4. John 3,16; John 13,34-35; John 15,13.

5. Hayes, D. A., John and His Writings, p. 177.

THE DIVINE MOTIVE, THE LOVE OF GOD

In his original state of perfection, man led a perfect and sinless life. "In the image of God," man was created perfect and holy. God and man were on friendly terms. It was the pleasure and privilege of man always to do God's will, for being sinless there was nothing in man with which God could find fault.

But something happened to spoil this friendly relationship. Satan, in the form of the serpent, beguiled Adam and Eve into sinning. They began to doubt the command of God not to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. With this breaking of the command of God, sin came into the world. Man then lost the "image of God" in which he had been created. Thereafter man was helpless. He was driven from the Garden of Eden and was condemned to eternal death. He couldn't help himself, couldn't restore himself again to that former state of perfection and holiness. But the just and righteous God who expelled man from Paradise, was also loving and merciful. He at once promised man a Savior. He told the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise His heel."⁶

6. Genesis 3,15.

Thus God's plan of salvation, the sending of His only begotten Son into the world to become man's substitute, was first promised to mankind.

In his epistles John speaks several times of the sin which caused man's need of salvation. We will pick out these references and see how John points out 1) The universality of sin; 2) The damnable-ness of sin; and 3) The inevitability of sin.

The doctrine of the universality of sin is presented very clearly in Scripture. "All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God."⁷ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."⁸ "But we are all as an unclean thing; and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags..."⁹ In John's first epistle we have particularly three passages speaking more or less directly of the universality of sin.

The first of these passages occurs toward the end of the first chapter. John had been speaking to the Christians he was addressing, of Christ as the light which has no darkness in Him at all. He had told his readers that the person who says he has

7. Romans 3,23.

8. Isaiah 53,6.

9. Isaiah 64,6.

fellowship with Christ, the Light, and yet walks in darkness, lies and does not do the truth. He classes himself among them. He uses the first person throughout his discussion. Then comes the passage which has long been considered a clear reference to the universality of sin. "If we say that we do not have sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us the sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."¹⁰

Before we enter upon a detailed investigation of John's statement, we notice that from the entire connection, John is pointing out that the Light, Christ, when compared with us, immediately shows up our sinfulness. Any argument which the reader might bring up for his own merits rapidly fades to nothingness when viewed in the Light of Christ's perfection. Sinfulness becomes an established fact. As McClaren says, "If He is light, two things will follow in those who are in union with Him; they will walk in light and they will in His light see their own evil."¹¹

But John puts down a conclusive statement. He

10. I John 1,8-10 - Literal Translation.

11. McClaren, Alexander, Expositions of Holy Scripture,
Ephesians, Peter, John I-IV, p. 249.

says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.." We are fooling ourselves if we consider ourselves to be without sin. John probably had the Gnostics in mind at the time of writing. They denied responsibility for sin. "The Gnostics claimed that sin was an essential quality of matter: John knew it was violation of God's holiness. They claimed that the spirit, the essential ego, was inherently good, and therefore they could say, 'I have no sin, it is only my material body which sins.'"¹² At any rate, John answers such a statement as that by telling them they are merely deceiving themselves if they really believe they have no sin.

But John is addressing Christian people who had learned how to pray-- "forgive us our trespasses." Clearly John also speaks to these people and includes himself when he says it is self-deception if "we say we have no sin." As Muller says, they are "clearly the sins they commit in their present state as Christians."¹³

John continues with the statement "the truth is not in us." The truth, ἡ ἀλήθεια, refers to the message of the Gospel as received by the

12. Dana, H. B., Op. Cit., p. 25.

13. Muller, Julius, Christian Doctrine of Sin, Vol. 2.
p. 258.

believing heart. Jesus Himself said, "I am....the truth."¹⁴ In verse six John had said, "we do not have the truth." In verse eight here John says, "the truth is not in us." In verse ten John brings the matter out more clearly when he says, "His word is not in us." What John means is that the person who thinks he, as a Christian, has no sin in him, in reality has not benefited at all from his study of the truth and has been in error all the while. Barnes states, "The object of the Apostle is to show that it is implied in the very nature of the Gospel that we are sinners and that if on any pretense we denied that fact, we utterly deceived ourselves."¹⁵ There is a rising pitch of decisiveness here as there is also in the three statements "we lie," in verse six; "we deceive ourselves," in verse eight; and "we make Him a liar," in verse ten. These two sets of three statements are conclusive to all ears that sin exists in the heart of all men, even those who have accepted Christ into their hearts by faith.

John continued his discourse with the statement, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful (πιστός) and just (δίκαιος) to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Realizing that he is a sinner, a man must be man enough to

14. John 14,6.

15. Barnes, Albert, Notes on the New Testament, Vol. 10, p. 285.

confess it before God. Only on the basis of this confession of sin can the just and righteous and faithful God forgive the sins. By $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ John refers to the fact that God will keep His promise, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,"¹⁶ and "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake and will not remember thy sins."¹⁷ By $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\varsigma$ John refers to the justice of God in declaring sinners righteous and the debt of sin paid, on the strength of Christ's substitutionary suffering and death. Thus John urges his readers to confess their sins before God and receive forgiveness through their faith in Christ.

But in the last part of John's statement on the universality we note a slightly different approach. Here John says, "If we say we have not sinned." He uses the verb $\eta\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu$ whereas in the former case he used the term $\eta\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\delta\upsilon\ \epsilon\acute{\chi}\epsilon\iota\nu$ to have sin. David Smith points out that this shows that John was speaking in verse eight of original sin, the inherent corruption which man has by nature and now in verse ten he is speaking of the actual sins which occur in the lives of men, particularly the falls

16. Matthew 6,14.

17. Isaiah 43,25.

of the believer.¹⁸ And now in verse ten John very strongly closes his argument with the statement, "We make Him a liar and His word is not in us." As Lenski shows us, denying sin would be tantamount to saying that God's decree to send Christ into the world to shed his blood for man was useless and would be calling God a liar.¹⁹ Furthermore, it would be denying a clear statement of Scripture inspired by God Himself. And furthermore, God's word, the message of both sin and grace would not be in us, and we would be in error completely, as anyone without God's word would be in error regarding sin and grace.

The second passage which we consider in this matter of universality is in the second chapter, the second verse, "and He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the whole world." Obviously this is not a sedes doctrinae for the doctrine of the universality of sin but from this passage we see that John regards the entire world as benefiting from Christ's atonement, not only the believers, but also the whole world. As Muller says, "The declarations, moreover, which describe the design and power of Redemption to be

18. Smith, David, Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. 5, p. 172.

19. Lenski, R. C. H., Interpretation of Peter, John, Jude, Vol. 10, p. 404.

for the salvation of the WORLD (I John 2,2) imply the same universality of sin, for man needs a Savior and an Atonement only in so far as he is afflicted with sin and laden with guilt."²⁰ Just as Christ's salvation was for the whole world, so the whole world was in sin and needed this salvation. As Dana says, "The salvation preached by the Gnostics was a caste, or class, salvation, the salvation of a favored few. The true salvation is cosmopolitan and universal."²¹ Thus from the universality of the world's salvation we deduce the universality of the world's need of salvation, sin.

The third passage alluded to before occurs at the very end of the epistle in the fifth chapter, the nineteenth verse. "And we know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in wickedness." The context of this passage shows us that here John distinguishes between the believers, who are in God's hands, and the unbelievers, who are in the hands of the world and lie in wickedness. This passage can be used to support the two discussed previously. Both believers and unbelievers are sinful, the former, however, being controlled by the love of

20. Muller, Julius, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 257.

21. Dana, H. E., Op. Cit., p. 28.

God, the latter by the wickedness of the world. The matter of the difference here will be discussed in connection with the inevitability of sins. But suffice it to say that here too John alludes to the fact of universality when he uses the term δ κόσμος δ 'λος .

Thus John presents to his readers the universality of sin.

But John likewise presents his readers a glimpse of the damnability of sin. In three passages particularly John points out the fact that mankind has been declared guilty and must as a result suffer the punishment which God inflicted on all those who transgress the law of God.

Throughout the Old and New Testament the penalty of sin is described as being death. "...For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."²² "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord..."²³ "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."²⁴ "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."²⁵ "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal

22. Genesis 3,19.

23. I Chronicles 10,13.

24. Ezekiel 18,4.

25. Romans 5,12.

life through Jesus Christ our Lord."²⁶ But here in John's epistles we have only a few references to the damnability and seriousness of sin.

The first of these is, "Everyone who does the sin also does the lawlessness, and the sin is the lawlessness."²⁷

Here John points out that sin and lawlessness, or breaking of the law, are one and the same thing. He says, "πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν (deliberately does, or is in the habit of doing.)" This strengthens John's argument quite a bit since the word πᾶς has a prominent position at the beginning of the sentence. Everyone who sins is guilty of breaking the law. The term ἁμαρτία is used as a synonym for ἀνομία and thus John shows what sin really is. Sin in the last analysis is rebellion against God's law. John goes on in the second part to connect these two terms merely by using the copula - ἐστίν, thus identifying the two terms as one in meaning. As David Smith points out, "ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστίν ἡ ἀνομία. The article in both the subject and the predicate make 'sin' and 'lawlessness' convertible and co-extensive terms."²⁸

26. Romans 6,2 3.

27. I John 3,4. - Literal Translation.

28. Smith, David, Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. 5, p. 185.

So John, in our text, gives us a definition of sin. "His intention, certainly (in repeating the last phrase) is to define the conception of sin thus: 'and herein consists the nature of sin, sin is a repudiation or violation of the law.'²⁹ Melancton, Gerhard, Baier, and others of the old dogmaticians, were in the habit of using this passage to define sin. Melancton defined it as "defectus vel inclinatio vel actio pugnans cum lege Dei (revolt or inclination or action fighting with the law of God.)"³⁰ So John is pointing out that sin is revolt against the righteous law of God. "It is the assertion of the selfish will against a paramount authority. He who sins, breaks, not only by accident, or in an isolated detail, but essentially, the law which he was created to fulfill."³¹

Thus sin is in direct contradiction to all that is righteous and holy and, in fact, is a direct rebellion against the righteous God. As Lenski so aptly points out, "...the least 'unrighteousness' would compel the 'righteous' God to pronounce on us the verdict of damnation."³² So the very nature

29. Muller, Julius, Op. Cit., Vol. 1, p. 43.

30. Quoted by Muller, Julius, Op. Cit., Vol. 1, p. 44.

31. Wescott, Quoted in Pulpit Commentary - Vol. Peter, John, Jude, p. 79.

32. Lenski, R. C. H., Op. Cit., Vol. 20, p. 402.

of sin, that it is rebellion against the righteous God, precludes the fact that the righteous God will, because of His Holy Nature, be compelled to punish the transgressor. Thus the seriousness and damnability of sin is brought home to us by the very definition of sin as the transgression of the law of God.

The second passage is "He who does the sin is of the devil, for the devil sins from the beginning."³³

Here John points out that anyone who sins (and he had just pointed out that sin is a rebellion against God) is in reality of the devil, for the devil is the father of sin, who has sinned from the very beginning of sin. When the father of sin rebelled against God and desired to be equal with God, he was cast into outer darkness and forever condemned to eternal damnation. So the person that sins is in reality of the realm of Satan, and shares also in the punishment which was inflicted upon Satan. Christ himself declares this when he says to "those Jews which believed on him"....."ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father will ye do."³⁴ Barnes points out in this connection, "...what the

33. I John 3,8.

34. John 8,31 and 44.

Apostle says here is true in two senses -1.) that all who commit sin, even true believers, so far as they are imperfect, in this respect resemble Satan. -2.) All who habitually and characteristically sin are of the devil."³⁵ This mark which John puts on all those who sin, points out again to us the damnability and utter seriousness of sin in the eyes of God.

The third passage we will consider very briefly. "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that every murderer does not have eternal life abiding in him."³⁶ Here John picks out particularly one sin, the sin of hatred, and concludes that this sin of hatred, which is a breach of the Fifth Commandment, results in the loss of eternal life. From the part to the whole we may conclude from this that sin in general is punishable in the same respect. Of course, distinction in sin is made by Scripture, such as the catalogues of sin in I Corinthians and other of Paul's epistles. However, it would be too much of a digression to discuss such a distinction at this time. Suffice it to say that John here points out the seriousness of sin and its resulting loss of eternal life when he speaks of the individual sin of hatred.

35. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 318.

36. I John 3,15.

When we speak of the inevitability of sin (under ordinary conditions) it is self-evident that we are, to a certain extent, retreading some ground covered in the discussion of the universality of sin. However, a discussion of the inevitability of sin with regard to the theory of perfectionism would be required by the nature of John's epistles.

There are statements in John's first epistle which seem to indicate at first glance that John envisions a condition which men could reach as Christians in which they would no longer be guilty of sin. But this is only an apparent contradiction with real Scriptural teaching and not a real one.

An example of such a statement of John is the first verse of the second chapter. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not." Does he mean to say here, after his discussion of chapter one, verses eight to ten, that after the blood of Christ has washed away our sins there is a possibility that we may be in a condition where we are able not to sin? The contradiction seems to arise in the fact that John is here considering the believer from the viewpoint of his sanctification by the power of God through faith and is not considering the entire man, with also the

other nature, the old sinful flesh. Man at best is two-faced even after conversion. He has the new man, which has been born in him, but he also retains the old sinful flesh. It is very true, as Schleiermacher says, "Sin in the life of the redeemed no longer exercises a penetrating power."³⁷ The Christian is not a slave of sin or he is not a true Christian. The Christian's life is guided by love, love for God and man which flows from faith. But this does not mean that perfection is the only result eventually. As long as man lives upon earth he will be dual in nature, his new man being the servant of God and his old man being the tool of Satan. As Muller says, "It is, however, a fact which will not be denied, at least by the regenerate themselves, that those who are partakers of Christ's renewing grace, are never wholly free from sin during their earthly development. They have ever a battle to fight, a careful watch to keep, lest the divine principle within (what I have called, 'the new man') should imperceptibly decline, and the opposite selfish tendency (what I have called, 'the old man') should grow, so as to produce an inner discord difficult

37. Quoted in Muller, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 272.

to remove, or even the extinction of their spiritual life."³⁸ Or even as Lenski says, "To find any type of perfectionism in the tense (of chapter two, verse one, 'that ye sin not') runs counter to all John has already said in chapter one, verses seven to ten, as well as to what he now writes."³⁹ Thus such seeming contradictions can easily be ironed out when one considers man's dual nature and the fact that both sides of man are not always in the picture when John or other Scriptural writers mention man's attempts by God's grace to lead a life of conformity to the will of God.

Scripture abounds with passages mentioning the total depravity of man and the sinful nature of man. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me."⁴⁰ "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one!"⁴¹ (Muller says, "This passage alludes not only to an inborn, but to an inherited uncleanness."⁴² "That which is born of flesh is flesh."⁴³ (Muller says, "σάρξ (is) human nature itself as alien from God and the servant

38. Muller, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 272.

39. Lenski, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 404.

40. Psalm 51,5.

41. Job 14,4.

42. Muller, Op. Cit., Vol 2, p. 276.

43. John 3,6.

of what is worldly."⁴⁴) "We were by nature the children of wrath."⁴⁵ (φύσει , by nature, shows that the effect still presents itself because the regenerate man doesn't receive an entirely new being but the old nature lingers on.) We also may include in this such confessions as that of Paul, who speaks as a regenerate man, "The good that I would, that I do not!"⁴⁶

Thus we see the Scriptural attitude toward Perfectionism. In John's first epistle we briefly mention two passages which treat this problem. The first is I John 1,7-10, which has been treated exhaustively above in connection with the universality of sin. The second is "If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death."⁴⁷ With this we want to compare the next verse, "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."⁴⁸

It is evident that John is speaking of the sins which do not condemn man to death because they have been committed in weakness and are committed by

44. Muller, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 277.

45. Ephesians 2,3.

46. Romans 7,18-19.

47. I John 5,16.

48. I John 5,17.

Christian people who immediately repent of this weakness and receive God's forgiveness for the sake of Christ's atonement.⁴⁹ Also, it is evident that John is writing to Christian people and tells them that their brethren, their fellow Christians, may be overtaken in such sins not unto death. It is true that John does not here make a categorical statement that Christians also are victims of sin, but sound hermeneutical principles still allow us to draw the inference that John has in mind here the fact that also Christians fall into sin and have faults because of the presence of the sinful nature in their heart.

Thus we have discussed, on the basis of sample passages from John's epistles, substantiated and explained by the whole body of Scripture, the three points regarding man's need of salvation, the universality, the damnability, and the inevitability of sin.

We hasten, therefore, to a discussion of the passages which speak directly of God's plan of salvation, of the redemption wrought by His Son Jesus Christ.

49. cf. I John 1,9.

The epistles of John also point out the other side of the picture of the divine motive for the Christian life, namely, the love of God in the redemption of Christ. We will see how John points out particularly the deity of Christ, Christ's obedientia activa and obedientia passiva, and finally our adoption as sons of God.

Concerning the deity of Christ, John is very clear. We will point out ten passages in which the matter is definitely stated. First we deal with seven passages which use the phrase, "Son of God."

"And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."⁵⁰ "...And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sins."⁵¹ "He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son."⁵² "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."⁵³ "And we

50. I John 1,36.

51. I John 1,76.

52. I John 2,22.

53. I John 4,9-10.

have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God."⁵⁴ "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"⁵⁵ "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love."⁵⁶

There are four ways of proving the deity of Christ. As every catechumen class is taught, we may call Christ God "because Scripture ascribes to Him divine names, divine attributes, divine works, and divine honor and glory."⁵⁷ In these passages divine names are ascribed to Jesus. He is directly called the Son of God or the Son of the Father. This divine Sonship can not for one moment be doubted when one picks up the epistles of John. It runs throughout the entire thought as these sample passages indicate. Commentaries and critics are silent on this point in their reports on these passages. It seems to be a point that is frequently taken for granted. Of these passages, however, it is sufficient

54. I John 4,14-15.

55. I John 5,5.

56. II John 3.

57. Luther's Small Catechism, p. 103-104.

if we dwell on the one which is peculiar to John.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him."⁵⁸ The phrase

τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ speaks very plainly. "No words can be plainer than these and

need less explanation to anyone acquainted with

St. John."⁵⁹ The phrase literally means, "His Son, the only child." It is used only by John as a

reference to Jesus the Messiah and the word μονογενῆ is used three times by Luke referring to only-children

of human parents and once by Paul in referring to

Isaac as the only son of Abraham. John uses the term four times in his Gospel referring to Christ

and once here in the first epistle.⁶⁰ Barnes says concerning this term, "As He was eminently the Son

of God, sustaining a peculiar relation to Him in His divine nature, exalted above all men and angels,

and thus worthy to be called by way of eminence His only Son,"⁶¹ this term is bestowed on Him by John.

Thus we leave these passages in which divine names are accorded to Jesus, proving His deity.

58. I John 4,9.

59. Alford, Henry, Greek Testament, Vol. 4, p. 489.

60. cf. John 1,14; 1,18; 3,16; 3,18; Luke 7,12;

8,42; 9,38; Hebrews 11,17; I John 4,9.

61. Barnes, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 184.

Divine attributes are also attributed to Jesus by John when he speaks of Jesus as being the eternal $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \tau\eta\varsigma \zeta\omega\eta\varsigma$. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)"⁶²

That this passage refers to Jesus Christ becomes clear when we compare this statement with others of John, like that in his Gospel, "In the beginning was the word ($\delta \lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$).....and the word ($\delta \lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$) was made flesh and dwelt among us."⁶³

Or again when we compare this statement with John's statement in Revelation, "And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called, The Word of God ($\delta \lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \tau\omicron\upsilon \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$)."⁶⁴

As Alford says, "I regard then $\delta \lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \tau\eta\varsigma \zeta\omega\eta\varsigma$ as the designation of our Lord Himself. He is the $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$, and is the $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \tau\eta\varsigma \zeta\omega\eta\varsigma$, this genitive being one of apposition, as He describes Himself as being the $\zeta\omega\eta$, John 11,25;

62. I John 1,1-2.

63. John 1,1 & 14.

64. Revelation 19,13.

John 14,6...⁶⁵ Thus John refers to Jesus as the "Word of Life" being consistent in carrying out this figure also in his Gospel and the Apocalypse. But the important thing is that he connects with this thought in verse two the two words, τὴν ζωὴν, the eternal life, the eternal word of life. Thus John ascribes to Jesus the attribute of eternity, also thereby ascribing further to the deity of Christ.

Divine works also are attributed to Jesus by John in his epistles. He speaks many times of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world and His works of redemption. Of these we shall pick out two which particularly point out this fact.

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ."⁶⁶ "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...."⁶⁷ The word used in these two passages by John, ὁ Χριστός, means literally, the anointed, thus referring to the Messiah. "In the New Testament it (ὁ Χριστός) is used -- of the Messiah, viewed in his generic aspects (the word, that is to say, being used as an appellative rather than a proper name.)"⁶⁸

65. Alford, Op. Cit., Vol. 4, p. 422.

66. I John 2,22a

67. I John 5,1a

68. Thayer, Joseph Henry, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 672.

Thus in these two passages the Messianic office of Jesus, the fact that He was the fulfillment of the many Old Testament passages regarding the Messiah who was to redeem His people, is definitely spoken of, thus adding another proof to his deity.

As to the fourth proof for Christ's deity, divine honor and glory, we have of course no definite passages to point out, but the general tenor of John's writing bears this out well. John points out both in his Gospel and here in the epistles that the *λόγος*, the Word, is a part of the Trinity and thus equal to the Father and the Holy Ghost, thus according Jesus a place of divine honor and glory.

But we hasten on to point out passages speaking of the obedientia activa of Christ. By the obedientia activa we mean the obedience, "by which our divine Substitute placed Himself under the obligation of the divine Law, fulfilling it in our stead by His perfectly holy life."⁶⁹ In his epistles John refers to this sinless perfection of Christ several times. "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."⁷⁰ "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him

69. Mueller, J. T., Christian Dogmatics, p. 306-307.

70. I John 3,3.

is no sin."⁷¹ "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."⁷² "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."⁷³ In these passages John declares that this only begotten Son which was sent into the world by God was perfect and pure and sinless. Being sinless, He always fulfilled the law of God under which He voluntarily placed Himself when He assumed the form of man. These passages need no particular explanation. It is evident by Christ's life that He was perfect and sinless, yes, John goes so far as to say that sin was impossible for Him if He were to retain that great confidence God placed in Him to carry out the redemption of the world. He came to destroy the works of the devil, who is the father of sin, and as such a destroyer, He Himself would have to remain untainted from the world. Thus Christ fulfilled God's Holy Law for us through His perfect life here on earth. Since the fall of man into sin no one had been able to keep

71. I John 3,5.

72. I John 3,8.

73. I John 2,6.

77. Romans 13,10.

78. Matthew 23,1-28.

God's Law. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."⁷⁴ But yet God's Law was binding upon man. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."⁷⁵ "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you that ye also love one another,"⁷⁶ compared with "love is the fulfilling of the Law."⁷⁷ So man needed help in this demand of God. Christ offered Himself as our Substitute in fulfilling God's Law for us by leading a sinless life. This truth John also points out in his epistles when he speaks of the sinlessness of Christ.

Christ's obedientia passiva is also clearly brought out by John. By the obedientia passiva we mean the obedience "by which He placed Himself under the curse of the Law and suffered and died for the sins of the world."⁷⁸ This passive obedience John refers to in three ways. First, he gives us passages concerning the general redemption of Christ. Then, secondly, we find passages referring particularly to the suffering and death and, thirdly, we have passages referring in general to the forgiveness of sins wrought by Christ's passive obedience.

74. Romans 3,23.

75. Ezekiel 18,4 & 20.

76. John 13,34.

77. Romans 13,10.

78. Mueller, J. T., Op. Cit., p. 307.

In the first case we have such passages as these. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him,"⁷⁹ "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."⁸⁰ "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."⁸¹ In these passages John speaks generally of the redemptive work of Christ. He calls Him the Savior, σωτήρ. "In the New Testament (σωτήρ) is applied to.... the Messiah, and Jesus as the Messiah, through whom God gives salvation."⁸² Thus John speaks of man having life through Christ, the Savior, for He it is whom God has sent into the world to bring to man salvation.

But, secondly, John speaks more particularly of the suffering and death of Christ in such passages as these. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, be-

79. I John 4,9.

80. I John 4,14.

81. I John 5,11-12.

82. Thayer, Joseph Henry, Op. Cit., p. 612.

cause He laid down His life for us."⁸³ "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood."⁸⁴ The first of these two passages is simple enough to understand. God had decreed that all men must die for the tremendous debt of sin which everyone had contracted and was still contracting daily, for every person daily sins much and deserves nothing but punishment. Christ, however, became our Substitute also in this that He came into the world and offered His life to the justice of God in payment for our debt of sin. This was universal - He did this for all men - He was truly the σωτήρ τοῦ κόσμου, the Savior of the world. The second passage presents the fact that Christ is the Savior of the world through His shedding of blood. Thus He is definitely linked up with the "suffering servant" of Isaiah 53. Kretzmann says of this second passage, "Here the two principal events in the life of Jesus are set before our eyes, namely, His baptism, by which He entered upon His public ministry, and His suffering and death, through which He crowned His work of redemption. These two events

83. I John 3,16.

84. I John 5,6.

prove with special force that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world,"⁸⁵ Thus John pictures Christ as the suffering and dying Lamb of God who through this death paid the penalty and endured the punishment for the sins of all the world.

But John, likewise, presents thirdly, passages treating the forgiveness of sins as received by man from the death of Christ.

"And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."⁸⁶ "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake."⁸⁷ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."⁸⁸ "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."⁸⁹ "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."⁹⁰

85. Kretzmann, P. E., Popular Commentary, Vol. 4, p. 576.

86. I John 2,2.

87. I John 2,12.

88. I John 4,10.

89. I John 1,7.

90. I John 1,9.

In these passages John pictures the redemption of Christ, particularly His suffering and death, from the viewpoint of the sinner receiving forgiveness for his sins because of the merits of Christ. One interesting matter must control our attention. Twice John uses the word ἱλασμὸν. He alone uses the word in this form though ἱλαστήριον is used in Paul's Epistle to the Romans and in the Epistle to the Hebrews.⁹¹ Luke also uses the verb ἱλάσκομαι and the writer to the Hebrews likewise uses the form of the verb.⁹² The word is full of meaning and the English rendering "propitiation" does not do the Greek justice. It refers particularly to the Old Testament usage of the blood of beasts sprinkled on the cover of the Ark of the Covenant in token that God was appeased and His justice satisfied by this sacrifice which pointed toward the one great sacrifice which the Christ was to make. The lid of the Ark of the Covenant began to be known as the ἱλαστήριον as the Septuagint uses it in such passages as Leviticus 16,2; Exodus 25,17; and Exodus 38.⁹³ At any rate, John, in using this word, makes it very clear what he means by propitiation. He refers to

91. Romans 3,25 and Hebrews 9,5.

92. Luke 18,13 and Hebrews 2,17-cf. Moulton-Geden, Concordance to the Greek Testament, p. 486.

93. cf. Thayer, Op. Cit.; p. 301.

the fact that it is Christ's blood which cleanses us from sin and unrighteousness and it is because of Christ's meritorious suffering and death that God's wrath is appeased and His justice satisfied once and for all, and forgiveness of sins thus offered to all mankind the world over, for it was a universal redemption which Christ accomplished through His suffering and death. As David Smith says, "Our Advocate does not plead that we are innocent or adduce extenuating circumstances. He acknowledges our guilt and presents His vicarious works as the ground of our acquittal. He stands in the Court of Heaven, ἁρνίου ὡς ἐσφραγισμένον (as a Lamb that was slain), and the marks of His sore Passion are a mute but eloquent appeal: 'I suffered all this for sinners, and shall it go for naught?'"⁹⁴

But fourthly, in connection with the love of God shown forth in the redemption of Christ, John speaks of our adoption as sons. In two passages particularly, John alludes to this result of Christ's active and passive obedience. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the

94. Smith, David, Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. 4, p. 173-174.

world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."⁹⁵ "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."⁹⁶

John uses this phrase "sons of God" also in his Gospel where he says, "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."⁹⁷ Paul, in Galatians, carries out this picture also when he says, "Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."⁹⁸ What John means by the use of this picture is that as a result of Christ's redemptive work God and man are no longer separated and alienated, but they have once more become friends, and have once more become His children. Because of Christ, the only begotten Son of God, we who through faith accept Christ as our brother and accept His redemption as our own, become

95. I John 3,1-2.

96. I John 3,10.

97. John 1,12.

98. Galatians 4,7.

the children of God. Now we may plead with God as a child pleads with a father. We may approach Him "with all boldness and confidence, as dear children ask their dear father."⁹⁹ All is forgiven and peace and harmony between God and man has been restored. Being sons of God also makes us heirs of God, heirs of His kingdom, joint-heirs with Christ. That, in its full meaning, is the adoption as sons of God.

Thus we see how John has pictured for us the divine motive for the Christian life, the love of God for lost and condemned mankind in the person of Jesus the Savior, His only begotten Son.

99. Martin Luther, Small Catechism, p. 12.

THE HUMAN BASIS-FAITH

We turn now to a discussion of the human basis of the Christian life-the faith in the heart of the believer which accepts Christ as his Savior. We see that John in several passages presents this human basis of the Christian life in two parts. The first is the work of the Holy Spirit and the means used by the Spirit, the Word of God, and the second is that faith is the foundation of our life.

Concerning the Spirit, John speaks in two ways. He says in three passages that the Spirit bears witness to the spiritual adoption of believers and secondly, he says in two other passages the Spirit teaches us.

First, concerning the Spirit's witness to the spiritual adoption of the believers, John has this to say, "And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us."¹⁰⁰ "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit."¹⁰¹ "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."¹⁰²

100. I John 3,24.

101. I John 4,13.

102. I John 5,6.

Before we begin an explanation it would be well to see what Paul says on this point in two of his epistles. He says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God."¹⁰³ And Paul also says, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."¹⁰⁴

John is here pointing out that because of the work of the Spirit in our hearts we may be perfectly confident that we have been received as the sons of God. Without the presence of the Spirit in us, we would not ever have been able to become the children of God. As Kretzmann states, "If it had not been for this fact, that God imparted to us of His Spirit, gave us some of His life and power, thus enabling us also to feel true brotherly love toward one another, then we could not be sure of our state as Christians. But our confidence rests upon the work of the Spirit in the Word; in this way we have gained the knowledge that we remain in God and God in us."¹⁰⁵ This phase of the Spirit's work is essential, for through the presence of the Spirit in our hearts we are brought to faith in Christ, and made confident that we are

103. Romans 8,16.

104. Galatians 4,6.

105. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., p. 573.

the children of God. While the Spirit of God works in the heart we may rest assured that we are God's children and heirs. If through our sins we drive the Spirit from our hearts, we become hopeless and doubting.

But John is equally clear when he speaks in two passages of the Spirit as our teacher. This work of the Spirit is precluded by that just mentioned. This is the foremost and most vital work of the Spirit, if we may speak in comparatives and superlatives. John says, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."¹⁰⁶ "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."¹⁰⁷

John presents to us here the fact that all we know of God, all we believe concerning God, all we have as the fruits of our faith, has been taught us by the Spirit which "teacheth you of all things." He describes this Spirit in the first passage as "An unction from the Holy One." *Χρίσμα*, the word used by John literally means "ointment." It is used only by John in the New Testament and refers

106. I John 2,20.

107. I John 2,27.

to the Old Testament custom of anointing kings, priests, and in some cases prophets when they took office. This supposedly gave them the power to do a good job in their office. "They were regarded as endued with the Holy Spirit and divine gifts (I Samuel 16,13; Isaiah 61,1)"¹⁰⁸ Thus John uses this term for the anointing of us Christians, who are the kings and priests of the New Testament, with the power and energy of the Holy Spirit. This will enable us to learn all things, will endow us with grace to carry on successfully our office as priests of God, our work as children of God in this world, and in the world to come. As Barnes says, "The phrase, 'the Holy One' refers here, doubtless, to the Holy Spirit, that Spirit whose influences are imparted to the people of God, to enlighten, to sanctify, and to comfort them in their trials. The particular reference here is to the influences of that Spirit as giving them clear and just views of the nature of religion and thus securing them from error and apostasy."¹⁰⁹ Thus John says this unction, this anointing of the Spirit teaches us all things. It brings us to a knowledge of God and of His Son

108. Thayer, Op. Cit., p. 672.

109. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 305.

Jesus Christ as the only Savior from sin, death, and the devil, and it keeps us in that faith, pure and undefiled by untruth, error, and apostasy, through constantly working our hearts. John alludes to that when he says, "the anointing....abideth in you." It is something which becomes a part of us and continues its work in our hearts. Thus the Spirit is presented by John as the teacher of the truth, the way of salvation through the suffering and death of the Savior and works faith in our hearts to accept this great truth. It is just as John says in his Gospel, "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."¹¹⁰

But we see secondly in John's epistles many references to the means which the Spirit uses to work faith in man.

First we examine two passages in which John declares that the people to whom he is writing have access to the truth. "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning."¹¹¹

110. John 14,26.

111. I John 2,7.

"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."¹¹² Here John points out that the Word, the Truth, has been theirs from the beginning. All the words which had been preached to them by Paul first, then by Timothy and others of Paul's helpers, and now by John, had been with them from the beginning. This Truth they have heard and have accepted. They have been shown the way of salvation thereby and through this Word they have come to faith in Christ as their Savior. This is John's testimony to the fact that what he is now writing is based on the truth which they already know. The Word which they have learned still applies and what John is telling them now concerning false teachers and the Christian way of life is based on the immutable and unchangeable Word which God had given them from the beginning. As Kretzmann states, "The complete and careful instruction which the apostle was here giving was not intended to convey to them any mistrust on his part, as though they had not yet come to the proper knowledge of the truth. They had learned what all Christians should know with regard to the divine and saving

112. I John 2,21.

doctrines. He knew that the truth of God's Word was the force which governed and controlled their lives."¹¹³ Thus John explains to them and to us the fact that the eternal Word of God has been in our possession and that thereby we know the truth, God's saving plan of redemption through Christ.

But in the next four passages we will consider, John points out further that this Word abides in them. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us."¹¹⁴ "I have written unto you, fathers, because you have know Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."¹¹⁵ "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 the Father."¹¹⁶ What John says here is very much related to the former passages. It harks back to the statement of God to the children of Israel, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart,"¹¹⁷

113. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 564.

114. I John 1,10.

115. I John 2,14.

116. I John 2,24.

117. Deuteronomy 6,6.

and it also brings to mind the statement of Luke regarding the Virgin Mary, "...but His mother kept all these sayings in heart heart."¹¹⁸ John is here speaking of the Word of God abiding with the Christian at all times. In the first passage he points out the negative side, saying that the person who says he has not sinned does not have God's Word abiding in him. In the second passage he tells the young men that they are strong, that the Word of God abides in them, and that they have overcome the wicked one, making the last three statements mean about the same thing. If the Word abides in them, they are strong and they are able to overcome the devil. Thus, likewise, is it with us. If the Word of God abides in our heart, the faith in Christ which is necessary to combat all trials and tribulations and temptations will also be present there. In the third passage he says the abiding of the Christian in the Son and in the Father is conditioned by the abiding of the Word, which he has heard from the beginning in his heart. The fourth passage is taken from John's second epistle, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of

118. Luke 2,51.

Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."¹¹⁹
In this passage John continues the thought of the connection between abiding in Christ and abiding in His Word, or the Word abiding in the heart of the Christian. Here he says the person who abides in this Word, this teaching of Christ (τῆ διδασχῆ τοῦ Χριστοῦ), will have both the Father and the Son. Concerning the phrase τῆ διδασχῆ τοῦ Χριστοῦ David Smith says, "...the teaching which recognizes Jesus as the Christ...i.e., the Messiah, the Savior."¹²⁰ Thus he would have us translate it as an objective genitive, "the teaching concerning Christ." Thayer groups this passage with others which point out "the doctrine which has God, Christ, the Lord for its author and supporter."¹²¹ The two opinions are not hard to reconcile, however. It is in this case both the teaching of Christ and the teaching concerning Christ. As Kretzmann states, "No teaching is true, no teaching has a right to exist, which eliminates the redemption or obscures the glory of the Cross. On the other hand, every teacher, every believer, that clings to that old doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ, to the fact that God the Father sent His Son into the world that men should live

119. II John 9.

120. Smith, David, Op. Cit., Vol. 5, p. 202.

121. Thayer, Op. Cit., p. 144.

through Him, has both the Father and the Son, is united with them by the bonds of the closest union in faith."¹²² But at any rate, John here emphasizes the importance of abiding in the Truth, for through this Truth, we abide in Christ. In his Gospel, John very often uses this picture of the Christian, believing in Christ as his Savior and Redeemer, abiding in Christ! He reports these words of Christ. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me....He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing...If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you."¹²³ Elsewhere in this same epistle John says, "And now, little children, abide in Him."¹²⁴ "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither know Him."¹²⁵

Thus John points out the necessity of abiding in God's Word, in the Truth which Christ taught concerning Himself, for through this Truth we receive

122. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 581.

123. John 15,4.5.7.

124. I John 2,28.

125. I John 3,6.

faith which makes us one with Christ and helps us to abide in Him and in the Father.

But there are two other passages which we must briefly mention. "But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him."¹²⁶ "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not, God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son."¹²⁷ Here John speaks in particular about the faith which follows the hearing or reading or pondering of the Word. The person who keeps Christ's Word, he is the person in whom God's love is perfected. The person that believes God's record which He has given us concerning His Son Christ, the Gospel message of salvation through the blood of the Lamb, he has the truth and has witness of it in himself and is the opposite of a liar, the name which God Himself gives to the person who does not believe the record He has given concerning His Son.

But we hasten on to see further that John points out secondly, concerning this human basis of the Christian life - faith, that it is the foundation of life. He shows us this by pointing out that it gives us victory over the world and it gives us

126. I John 2,5.

127. I John 5,10.

eternal life.

Concerning the victory over the world, John tells us, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"¹²⁸ What does John mean by "overcoming the world?" The world is here used in contradistinction to the Kingdom of God. As Calvin said, the world is.... "quicquid adversum est Dei spiritui, (whatever is against the Spirit of God.)"¹²⁹ Barnes explains "world" as the "maxims, precepts, and customs"¹³⁰ which rule those not of Christ. He goes on to explain that the Christian is not ruled thus but has overcome these things. Kretzmann says, ".....the believer is able to conquer the world, all the forces in this world that are opposed to the spiritual life in him, the entire kingdom of sin and evil."¹³¹ But the important thing is that through faith, through believing that Christ is the Son of God, we are able to overcome all of this force of evil around us which seeks our harm. John is very forceful when he declares that only such a person,

128. I John 5, 4-5.

129. Quoted from Alford, Greek Testament, Vol. 4, p. 498.

130. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 337.

131. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 576.

one who believes in Christ as his Savior, can hope to overcome the world. As Barnes says, "Where is there one who can pretend to have obtained a victory over the world, except he who believes in the Savior? All else are worldly and are governed by worldly aims and principles. It is true that a man may gain a victory over one worldly passion; he may subdue some one evil propensity; he may abandon the gay circle; may break away from habits of profaneness; may leave the company of the unprinciples and polluted; but still, unless he has faith in the Son of God, the spirit of the world will reign supreme in his soul in some form."¹³² Note also that John uses a very wide term at the beginning of verse four, πάντες τὸ γεγενημένον ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ. In its literal meaning this would be, "everyone begotten of God." It is all inclusive and shows us that every person who wholly gives himself over to the faith which accepts Christ as the Son of God and his personal Savior, overcomes the world, and remains true to Christ regardless of the temptations and allurements and ridicule and hardship and trial and tribulation brought on him by the forces of Satan, the controller and ruler of all who are of the world. This faith then is the victory-giving principle which enables us to overcome the world!

132. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., p. 338.

But this faith, secondly, gives us eternal life. This is a direct result of our overcoming the world. If we are able to keep our faith in Christ against all the obstacles thrown in our way by the world, then this faith will be rewarded with eternal life in heaven. John says, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."¹³³ "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."¹³⁴ Here John enters upon the discussion of the eternal life in heaven. In the second passage he simply and in a straight-forward manner declares that the person who does not love his brother or who hates his brother (and love of the brother he has shown in the verses preceding as coming from the love of God which proceeds from our

133. I John 5,11-13.

134. I John 3,14-15.

adoption as sons of God) does not have eternal life. In the other passage John brings up the fact that the person who believes the record that God gave concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, and the eternal life which we have in Him, has the Son of God and he that has the Son of God, hath life. Note how he points out the fact that life and Christ are identical. In his Gospel, John carries out this idea of Christ being the life throughout. We find such passages as "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men."¹³⁵ "For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."¹³⁶ "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."¹³⁷ "Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."¹³⁸ "Jesus said unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."¹³⁹ In this connection

135. John 1,4.

136. John 5,26.

137. John 10,10.

138. John 11,25-26.

139. John 14,6.

we must also consider what John says in the very first verses of his first epistle, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."¹⁴⁰ How can Christ be called "the Life" or "the Word of Life?" Kretzmann sums up the matter when he says, "He is the 'Word of Life' because He, as the true God, has the fulness of true, everlasting life in Himself, because He is the source and fountain of all true life, and because He gives eternal life to all those that come to Him in truth."¹⁴¹ Lenski also presents the matter in clear concise statements, "Here John binds everything together. God's testimony brings us His Son: eternal life is in His Son, is in Him for us; it is given us in and by this testimony; to believe it is to have the Son, and to have Him is to have this life; not to believe it is not to have the Son and this life. It is all as simple and as lucid as these brief statements make it."¹⁴² So John's picture of Christ as the life merely is a manner of stating in three short words what it would take

140. I John 1,2.

141. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 557.

142. Lenski, R. C. H., Op. Cit., Vol. Peter, John, Jude, p. 541.

several sentences to say otherwise. All the meaning is there, that Christ is eternal, that Christ is true God, that Christ is the Redeemer who gave His life a ransom for many, that Christ is the conqueror of death, that Christ can and will give His life to all who believe in Him. Christ is life and whoever believes in Him shall never perish. That is how faith gives us eternal life.

Before closing this section, however, we must consider. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."¹⁴³ This general statement of John sums up well the entire thought of this section. God has promised us eternal life. This promise has been given to all men, and the only "if" attached is that we must believe on Him. Kretzmann very nicely presents in his discussion of I John 5,9-12 several statements with which we may close this section on the human basis of the Christian life-faith. "Everyone that believes in the Son of God has the trust, the conviction, the confidence that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son of God and the Savior of the world, and that this salvation applies to the believer himself. The Holy Spirit who lives in the heart of the believer, assures him of this fact, seals this fact in his heart through

143. I John 2,25.

the Word of the Gospel. Just as sure as the Holy Spirit is the Truth, and cannot lie, just that surely we may accept the message of our redemption through Christ. #144

144. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 577.

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

In John's epistles there is a decided emphasis on Christian living, the practise of Christian principles in living, and the adherence to the commandments of Christ - "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."¹⁴⁵ Upon this manifestation of the Christian life we now center our attention. It is a direct result of both of the former sections we have treated. First, man is, by nature, a condemned sinner. The love of God, however, sends Christ to be his substitute in the punishment and through Christ's atonement, God and the sinner become reconciled. Then through the work of the Holy Spirit, through the means of God's Word which declares this redemption to the world, the sinner is brought to faith. This faith in the sinner who has become a child of God then bears fruit in a truly Christian life, the manifestations of which we shall proceed to study as John presents them in his three epistles.

We will first consider those passages which deal with the battle between the sinful nature of the Christian and the regenerate nature of the Christian. John speaks of this battle in seven different ways,

145. Matthew 22, 37. 39.

- 1) The Christian's love to God; 2) Walking with God;
- 3) Abstaining from evil; 4) New obedience; 5) Purity of doctrine; 6) The confidence of the Christian;
- 7) The joy of the Christian.

In two passages in particular, John speaks of the love which the Christian has for God and for Christ as a result of the faith which is in his heart. "We love Him, because He first loved us."¹⁴⁶ "Who-soever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and everyone that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."¹⁴⁷

In these two passages John tells us in effect what God had commanded back in the days of Adam and Eve and had given to the Children of Israel through Moses. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might."¹⁴⁸ Here John expresses it in a different manner. In the first passage he gives the reason for our love of God. We love God because God first loved us. Love to God would be an impossibility for man who is thoroughly sinful and striving against God if it were not for the love of God for man which is

146. I John 4,19.

147. I John 5,1-3.

148. Deuteronomy 6,5.

the spark which kindles the responding love in our hearts. It would not be straining the text too much to say that this means that the love of God manifested in sending Christ and also manifested in bringing us to faith in Christ through the Means of Grace and the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, is the cause of the corresponding love in our hearts for God. God Himself puts the love into our hearts through His Spirit and His Holy Word. It is true likewise that, as most commentaries suggest, this love for God is merely the thankful response on the part of the Christian to the great display of love on the part of God. "God is the $\pi\rho\acute{\omega}\tau\omicron\varsigma$, 'the first one', who did the loving," as Lenski says;¹⁴⁹ or as Barnes says, "It was His love manifested to us by sending His Son to redeem us, which will explain the fact that we now love Him; but still the real ground or reason why we love Him is the infinite excellence of His own character."¹⁵⁰ Sawtelle in his American Commentary on the New Testament, states, "His love to us preceded our love. It was the cause or reason of ours, which implies in the Apostle's thought, that it furnished the model or type of ours."¹⁵¹ David Smith says, "The thought is that

149. Lenski, R. C. H., Op. Cit., p. 525.

150. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 335.

151. Sawtelle, Henry, American Commentary on the New Testament., Vol. 7, p. 53.

the amazing love of God in Christ is the inspiration of all the love that stirs in our hearts. It awakens within us an answering love---a grateful love for Him manifesting itself in love for our brethren."¹⁵²

Both the opinion of these commentators and the thought of the working of God's love in our hearts through the means of Grace could be held, however. Our love to God is the result of God's love to us.

In the second passage John proceeds to explain what the love of the Christian for God means. He declares that if the Christian loves God who begat Christ, he will also love Christ whom God has begotten. It was the love of God which sent Christ and thus we love God for His great mercy. But it was Christ's love for us which led Him to a voluntary submission to the law and the penalties and punishments God had inflicted upon man, and for this we too love Christ, even as we love God, His Father. It is strange to speak of loving them separately, but that is how the human mind functions. To say we love God would at one and the same time include our love to Christ, who is part of the eternal Godhead. Incidentally, John adds the little statement that when we love God, we know that we love the

152. Smith, David, Op. Cit., Vol. 5, p. 192.

brethren, those who are one in faith and love of God with us, for we both have the same love for God in our hearts and we both have been the recipients of the divine love of God. But John adds an interesting note in verse three of chapter five when he says that keeping His commandments is equivalent to the love of God. As Alford points out, "the $\delta\acute{\upsilon}\tau\eta$ is the demonstrative pronoun and the $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$ introduces not a purpose clause but the apodosis to the $\delta\acute{\upsilon}\tau\eta$, much the same as in chapter four, verse seventeen."¹⁵³ This is the love of God, that we do everything which he wishes and in all that we do please Him and glorify Him. Of course John is speaking of the case of perfect love which is impossible to man while here on the earth. This is the first phase of the battle between the regenerate Christian heart and the old sinful flesh, that we love God so much that we fulfill all of His commandments. Therefore it is the aim of every Christian to constantly grow in this manifestation of the Christian life—that he loves God with his entire being and fulfills all of God's commands. As Kretzmann states, "Love to God is not a matter of sentimental feelings and

153. Alford, Henry, Op. Cit., Vol. 4, p. 497. of.

Ibid, p. 493-494.

consists still less in the sanctimonious talk that it is our duty to love the heavenly Father. There must be concrete evidence, also for our own satisfaction, namely, keeping of God's commandments, living in accordance with His holy will."¹⁵⁴

But we proceed further to the second point under the discussion of the battle between the old and the new man in the Christian. John speaks in two sections of "walking with God." He says, "If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."¹⁵⁵

"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."¹⁵⁶

Walking with God or with Christ (as these passages refer particularly to Christ) reminds one of the most striking example used in Scripture, that of Enoch about whom we are told "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."¹⁵⁷

John here gives us a beautiful description of what "walking with God" really means. He proceeds from

154. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 575.

155. I John 1,5-6.

156. I John 2,6.

157. Genesis 5,24.

the negative to the positive and compares our walking with Christ to walking in the light, for Christ is the light. First he says that if we walk in darkness and claim to have fellowship with Christ, we lie and do not the truth, for light and darkness never have fellowship with one another. Then he proceeds to show that if we walk in the light as Christ is in the light we have fellowship with one another and Christ's blood cleanses us from all sins, for through our faith in Christ and our walking with Christ, we receive the benefits of Christ's suffering and death. This is another phase of the battle in man between the old and the new man. The old sinful flesh loves darkness; the new man loves the light of Christ. The old sinful flesh loves to walk with Satan; the new man walks with Christ.

Throughout Scripture this picture of light and darkness is used. Isaiah prophesied concerning Christ, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light."¹⁵⁸ John in his Gospel speaks of Christ as the life, and adds, "And the life was the light of men."¹⁵⁹ But even more concise and clear is John's statement, "Then spake Jesus again

158. Isaiah 9,2.

159. John 1,4.

unto them saying, 'I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'"160 Paul uses the same figure when he writes to the Corinthians, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."161 John again, speaking of the future kingdom of the blessed in heaven says, "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."162 Thus this symbol of Christ being the Light refers to the fact that He is perfect, pure, happy, holy, and sinless. Darkness always has the connotation of evil and imperfection and sadness, as Barnes points out.163 Light, on the other hand, is just the opposite. If we walk in the light as Christ is the light we will be walking paths of purity, holiness, and virtue. The shadows of the darkness of sin and imperfection will be around us constantly threatening us and trying to envelope us, but walking with

160. John 8,12.

161. II Corinthians 4,6.

162. Revelation 21,33.

163. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 2 83.

Christ; the Light, holding firmly to His guiding hand, and following His footsteps, we will in the end reach the coveted goal of perfect light in heaven.

The other passage which we quoted refers to the same matter in a different way. It tells us that the person who says he abides in Christ ought also to walk as Christ walked. Abiding in Christ means believing in Him and through that faith being united with Him. If one abides in Christ with that firm faith he ought also to "imitate Him in all things."¹⁶⁴ I am reminded particularly of the beautiful hymn verse which so aptly fits as application and conclusion to this section.

I am the light, I light the way,
A godly life displaying,
I bid you walk as in the day,
I keep your feet from straying.
I am the way, and well I show
How you must sojourn here below.¹⁶⁵

Truly, this walking with God and with Christ in the steps of Enoch and the saints of the ages is a difficult task which manifests plainly the Christian faith in our hearts and shows the battle which constantly is being fought in our hearts between the new and old man.

The third evidence of this battle centers around the discussion which John enters when he admonishes his readers to abstain from evil. John brings this

164. Ibid, p. 293.

165. Lutheran Hymnal, No. 421, verse 2.

point out most clearly in his third epistle when he says, "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."¹⁶⁶ In his first epistle he has these parallels. "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him."¹⁶⁷ "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."¹⁶⁸ More pointedly John has these statements: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."¹⁶⁹ "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lusts thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."¹⁷⁰

166. III John, 11.

167. I John 2, 29.

168. I John 3, 10.

169. I John 2, 1.

170. I John 2, 15-17.

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure."¹⁷¹ "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him."¹⁷² "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."¹⁷³

These passages all refer to the conflict in man's heart between the evil and the good, between Christ and Satan. John is here exhorting all Christians to keep from sinning, to abstain from evil, to stay close by the Savior, so that all the sinful pleasures of the world may not distract us from our great eternal quest of salvation. Sawtelle gives a good description of this battle in man to abstain from evil and cling to the good. He says, "They are indeed washed from their sins, are in continuous divine fellowship, are victorious over the wicked one, have the Word of God abiding in them, but they are still surrounded with evil, and the remains of a lustful, covetous, proud nature, are still within them. Forgiven are they, but not yet away from the scene or danger of sin."¹⁷⁴ So man constantly battles enemies from without and from within and the truly Christian life is manifested when in this battle the

171. I John 3,3.

172. I John 3,6.

173. I John 5,19.

174. Sawtelle, H. A., Op. Cit., Vol. 7, p. 23.

new man emerges victorious and enable the christian to put away those lusts of power, and pride, and possessions which the world offers, enables him to heed the apostle's warning and admonition to flee the works of the devil and the world and our flesh and hide ourselves in the sacred wounds of Christ. Then the Christian life will be manifest. Then the Christian shows that he knows God, that he has seen Him and believed Him and come under His loving guidance. Then the Christian shows he is a member of God's family, not a member of Satan's kingdom.

Alford enters a long discussion of what John means by *κοσμός*. The discussion, of course, is important. By *κοσμός* John here refers to the entire animate and personal world, in contradistinction to that of God, as being sinful, against God, and in league with Satan. It would hardly mean the material world, matter itself as opposed to God, for we thus would fall into a dualism, with God being good and all matter evil.¹⁷⁵ Instead the entire context seems to present the personal or animate side of the picture, the world thus being controlled by Satan and the opposite, the kingdom of God, being guided by the holy and righteous God.

175. cf. Alford, Henry, Op. Cit., Vol. 4, p. 443-444.

At any rate, this is the battle between the good and evil in man. The good is the faith we have in Christ. The evil is our own sinful flesh and the evil world about us. Manifestation of our faith in a Christian life demands of us that we abstain from evil and follow that which is good.

The fourth manifestation of the Christian life in its battle with the old man is the new obedience of the Christian to the precepts of God.

This spoken of by John when he says, "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep his commandments."¹⁷⁶ "But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him."¹⁷⁷ "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."¹⁷⁸ "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."¹⁷⁹ "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth as we have received a commandment from the Father."¹⁸⁰ "And this is

176. I John 2,3.

177. I John 2,5.

178. I John 3,9.

179. I John 5,3.

180. II John 4.

love, that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."¹⁸¹

The matter of new obedience, of course, brings us to that section of John's thought in his three epistles which deals with the new man as far as he is in power in the heart of man over the old man, the sinful nature. Without this daily drowning of the old sinful nature through repentance and receiving forgiveness through faith in Christ, which is part of the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, there could be no new obedience to the law of God, for the thoughts of the old man, the sinful nature, are in direct opposition to what God would have us do. Thus John here speaks of the Christian in whom the Spirit has worked faith to accept Christ as His Savior from sin. He is a redeemed and saved person, and in his heart the Spirit of Christ, working through the Word of God which he hears and reads and studies, brings about the victory of the new man over the old sinful flesh. This enables the Christian to lead a godly life and to abound in good works. In so far as his new being, the new man in the Christian, is concerned, his life is perfect and holy. But

181. II John 6.

this victory is never complete because the old man constantly remains to harass the spiritual security of the Christian. Thus when John speaks here of "keeping His Commandments" and "walking in the Truth" and of being "born of God....he cannot sin, because he is born of God," he is speaking of the new spiritual side of man's dual nature, of his obedience to the precepts of God and his desire to please God with a life of devotion and service and is not including in the picture the old sinful flesh which hates God and the things pertaining to God. Weidner sums matters up very well when he says in connection with 3,9, "John here has in mind the Pauline distinction between 'the old man' and 'the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him' (Ephesians 4,22-24; Colossians 3,9-10)There is an absolute antagonism between the new man born of God and committing sin. The new man cannot sin, --when the believer commits sin it is the work of 'the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit.'" (Ephesians 4,22)¹⁸² Or as Kretzmann states, "When this regeneration this new birth, has been achieved, then it is true that such a child of God, according to the new, divine

182. Weidner, R. F., Lutheran Commentary, Vol. 11,
p. 307.

nature which he has in himself, cannot sin, cannot be forced back into the slavery of sin."¹⁸³ The other passages, like 3,9, speak of the same matter, using slightly different approaches and twists. However, all revolve around this passage which is the main point of discussion.

How is this new obedience worked? We have discussed thoroughly the working of the Spirit through the means of grace, the Word of God. Suffice it to say here that when John says, "for His seed remaineth in him," he is referring most probably to the Word of God as God's seed in the heart of the Christian. Most commentators adopt this interpretation of σπέρμα and those who disagree do so only to apply it to the Spirit itself¹⁸⁴ or else because they believe it applies to all who have been born of God abiding in God now.¹⁸⁵ Barnes has this to say: "The word seed (σπέρμα) means properly seed sown, as of grain, plants, trees-----It is applied in the New Testament to the Word of God, or the Gospel, as that which produces effects in the heart and life similar to what seed that is sown does."¹⁸⁶ The seed of the

183. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 568.

184. Weidner, Op. Cit., Vol. 11, p. 307.

185. Alexander, in Speaker's Commentary, cf. Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. 5, p. 185.

186. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 319.

Word of God, then, which produces and preserves faith in the Christian's heart brings about this condition of obedience to the law of God in which the new man, since it is "born of God," cannot sin! That is what John says concerning the new obedience of the Christian as a manifestation of the Christian life.

Fifthly, John speaks to us also of purity of doctrine in his thoughts on the battle between the evil and the good in man after his conversion. He says, "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. 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."¹⁸⁷ "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: he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also."¹⁸⁸ Likewise in chapter four John says, "Beloved, believe

187. I John 2,18-19.

188. I John 2,22-23.

not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God! Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 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. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world and the world heareth them. 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."¹⁸⁹

Also in his second and third epistles this matter receives the attention of the inspired apostle.

"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

189. I John 4,1-6.

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."¹⁹⁰ "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 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."¹⁹¹

What John says here of the false teaching, both from within the church, as in the case of the proud Diotrephes, and from without, as in the case of the Gnostic philosophers, is another phase of the conflict between the new and the old man. The new spiritual being is always ready to accept only the true and good. The old sinful flesh is easily swayed into unbelief, falsehood, and error.

But the matters which John treats here are vital to all Christians of all ages, not only to those of the time in which he was writing. He speaks

190. II John 7-11

191. III John 9-10.

of far reaching principles by which all Christians may judge the truth. John tells his readers that they had been warned, just as we also have been warned, that Antichrists would appear in the church and without the church in the latter days. He says of them that they went out from them but were not of them. Although once members of the same body of Christians, they had changed in mind and heart and went out of the church to show the world that they were not one with them. Then John proceeds to call those people liars who deny that Jesus Christ was born in the flesh. He might have been referring here to the error of Cerinthus, referred to in the discussion of Gnosticism above,¹⁹² or even to Gnosticism in general. At any rate, the readers to whom John addressed these words knew which errorists he meant. They denied the deity of Christ. They refused to accept Jesus of Nazareth whom Paul and Timothy and now John had preached to them, as the Messiah, the Christ, and in doing this they denied even the Father and made liars out of themselves. Likewise, in the second passage, John speaks of those spirits who are not of God and who are false prophets. Again the special form of error is the denial of the divine nature in

192. cf. Above, Introductory Material, pp. 5-7.

Christ, of the fact that God came into the world in the flesh. This may have been written against the Docetae particularly which matter also has been discussed above.¹⁹³ They believed particularly that Jesus was not a real person but that He just seemed to exist. But in this connection John brings out the fact that God, in the Christian, overcomes the evil and the error because He is stronger than the error. In pointing this out, John shows particularly well the fact that those Christians who are of God are in direct opposition to the world and in this way the Christian can easily discern the spirit of truth, from the spirit of error. As long as we are of God and as long as we abide in Him and let His Word be the guide of our knowledge and life, we will be sure of being of the spirit of truth and will "try the spirits, whether they are of God." In the passage from Second John, he points out the additional thought that we who have the truth must not accept any of those who come to us preaching error, must not tolerate them in our homes, must not support them in any way, but must on the other hand remain aloof from them and testify to the truth, thus refuting

193. cf. Above, Introduction, p. 5-7. also cf. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 328.

the falsehoods they are trying to disseminate. The apostle has likewise, in this case, warned them against those who do not accept the fact that Jesus Christ the Son of God actually came in the flesh in the form of Jesus of Nazareth. He tells them to look to themselves lest they lose everything which they already had by accepting this error which was being taught among them. In the fourth passage John points out to a certain Gaius, to whom he is writing in the third epistle, that even within the church there are those who are errorists and mislead the Christians. He speaks of Diotrephes who had worldly ambition and pride as his main draw-backs. He liked to be first among the Christians and as a result, any of the Christians who received John and his representatives as their leaders were put out of the church by this man who evidently attempted to usurp authority over the affairs of the church without due warrant for this authority. All of this discussion by John merely points out one important fact. That is, that any errorist, from within or without, great or small, is dangerous and is to be avoided if at all possible. The spirit of error has nothing in common with the spirit of truth and therefore the two should never

be mingled and can never be mingled without the loss of the truth. Error has nothing to lose, truth has. For the Christians of today this is pertinent and very important and all of us must think carefully on these points and remember the admonition of the apostle, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.....For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."¹⁹⁴

Thus John discusses the problem of the battle between the false and the pure in doctrine. The Christian must ever be on guard against error in doctrine, for like in the battle of sin itself, the old sinful reason and flesh of man is always willing to listen to any and every aberration of the truth of God's Word. So we must keep ourselves strong in the truth which God has given us and always, with the Spirit's help, seek the good and true concerning Christ and forsake the evil and those that teach falsely.

The sixth phase of the battle between the new and the old man which we will discuss from John's epistles is the confidence of the Christian. John speaks of this in several places in particular when

194. II John 8 and 11.

195. I John 2, 28.

197. I John 3, 21-22.

198. I John 5, 21-22.

he says, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement: because, as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."¹⁹⁵ "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."¹⁹⁶ "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."¹⁹⁷ "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything 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."¹⁹⁸

The first two passages speak particularly about the holy boldness and confidence which we as Christians have in the day of judgement when the Lord, the righteous Judge shall come to the earth to separate the good from the evil and bring the inheritance of eternal life to all His servants. In all four passages the word *παρρησία* is used which means,

195. I John 4,17-18.

196. I John 2,28.

197. I John 3,21-22.

198. I John 5,14-15.

"free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance."¹⁹⁹ The particular boldness and confidence spoken of in the first two passages results from perfect love of God. As Barnes says, "The idea is, that he who has true love to God will have nothing to fear in the day of judgement, and may even approach the awful tribunal where he is to receive the sentence which shall determine his everlasting destiny without alarm."²⁰⁰ So this perfect love which the new man of the Christian has to God fills him with firm reliance on Christ's merits to gain him an everlasting crown in heaven, for perfect love can only be present where there is firm faith in Christ as the Savior and Redeemer. Again John is speaking exclusively of the new man. To the mortal human being, with both a new spiritual being and an old sinful flesh, such a perfect love is impossible. But though the boldness of the Christian may be less in degree than that of which John speaks here, nevertheless, the Christian with faith in Christ and love to God may be confident of an eternal reward because of the atonement of Christ and thus may look forward to death and the final

199. Thayer, Op. Cit., p. 491.

200. Barnes, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 334.

judgement with boldness and courage of conviction, even though the old sinful flesh causes us to tremble and be afraid when death faces us. John adds in this connection that we shall "not be ashamed before Him at His coming." The Christian with firm faith and love to God need never be ashamed before God, for, although he himself is still worthless and vile, he nevertheless relies altogether on the love of God in Christ and Christ's perfect atonement. We need not be ashamed because through our faith in Christ we present to God the work of Christ as our own work. In the first passage quoted, John adds two other thoughts which beg our attention. "There is no fear in love; perfect love casteth out fear," and also "Because as He is, so are we in this world." By stating that perfect love casts out any idea of fear because fear has torment or punishment, John means to say that the Christian who loves God knows that his sins are forgiven for Christ's sake and thus this love has no room for the fear and dread of punishment. As Kretzmann states, "Thus the love of God, as it becomes perfect in our hearts, casts out all slavish dread, since it proves to us that we no longer have any punishment to fear. The punishment has been borne, and therefore fear simply cannot exist any

longer."²⁰¹ When he says, "Because as He is, so are we in this world," John points out that Christ is the reason the Christian has such boldness and confidence in the day of judgement. As Weidner says, "If we are perfect in love we know that we are in Christ, and that Christ is in us, and as His nature is love, and we are like Him, we need not fear His judgement."²⁰² This similarity between Christ and us, though we are still in this world, makes us confident that we will not be condemned. The similarity is the fact that God's love in Christ has given us the same righteousness which Christ Himself had earned and therefore, with the same righteousness as Christ, we cannot be condemned. As Alford says, "...wherein is the likeness spoken of to be found? Not in.....but in that we are righteous as He is righteous, 2,29; 3,3ff; 3,10; 3,22."²⁰³ Thus John in these two passages points out the boldness, courage, and fearlessness even in the face of the eternal judgement which every Christian has as the result of his faith in Christ and his love to God.

In the other two passages which use the word *παρρησία*, a different kind of boldness and

201. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 574.

202. Weidner, R. F., Op. Cit., Vol. 11, p. 320.

203. Alford, Op. Cit., Vol. 4, p. 494.

confidence is spoken of. It is a confidence which comes from the knowledge of the forgiveness of our sins through the merits of Christ. As a result of this knowledge we have boldness and confidence again in our relations to God, because as a result of Christ's redemptive work, peace once more has been established between God and man. In the two passages cited, the particular display of this confidence in God is in the form of petitions and requests placed at His throne. Our heart does not condemn us because our conscience is clear in the knowledge that God has forgiven us our sins. We ask, and we receive of Him. Of course the asking must be done according to His will, as the other passage points out. As Barnes remarks, "The declaration here made must be understood with these limitations: 1) That we ask in a proper manner, James 4,3; and 2) That the thing asked shall be such as will be consistent for God to give; that is, such as He shall see to be best for us, I John 5,14."²⁰⁴ We have this confidence because we know we are God's children and as God's children "keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." It is not because we do these things that we are confident of being

204. Barnes, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 325.

heard in our petitions, but because we do these things we know we are God's children and as a loving Father, God hears the petitions and requests of His obedient children. As Alford says, "They (good works) are the measure of our Christian life: according to their abundance, so is our access to God, so is our reward from God: for they are the steps of our likeness to God. Whatever is attributed to them as an efficient cause, is attributed not to us, but to Him whose fruits they are. Because Christ is thus manifested in us, God hears our prayers, which He only hears for Christ's sake: because His Spirit works thus abundantly in us, He listens to our prayer, which in that measure has become the voice of His Spirit. So that no degree of efficacy attributed to the good works of the child of God need surprise us: it is God recognizing, God vindicating, God multiplying, God glorifying, His own work in us."²⁰⁵ Thus this boldness and confidence in the matter of prayer likewise rests on the fact that Christ is our Savior and Redeemer and through His righteousness the Christian is heard at the throne of God when he asks with a strong and true faith, "strong because he asks with boldness and

205. Alford, Op. Cit., Vol. 4, p. 482.

confidence, and true because he gives evidence of it by doing the will of God."²⁰⁶

But we see in the seventh place how John likewise points out the joy of the Christian as a manifestation of the Christian life. He says in three passages, "And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full."²⁰⁷ "For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."²⁰⁸ "...but I trust to come to you, and speak face to face that our joy may be full."²⁰⁹ When John wrote these passages, and particularly the first one, he undoubtedly recalled the words of Jesus which he himself recorded in his Gospel, "these things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."²¹⁰ How Christ's words had come true! Through the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, the disciples had been filled with joy which carried them through the deepest human sorrows. Now John writes to his beloved

206. Weidner, Op. Cit., Vol. 11, p. 312.

207. I John 1,4.

208. III John 3.4.

209. II John 12.

210. John 15,11.

little children in the faith that their joy too might be full. Fellowship with Christ, about which John speaks in the verses preceding, results in happiness and joy. "Their joy would be complete if they had that; for their real happiness was to be found in their Savior."²¹¹ This fellowship with Christ, being sure that man, for Christ's sake, was reconciled again with God, this assurance of forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, this knowledge that Christ is our brother and God is our Father, "will ever have the same effect upon the Christians, namely, that of making their joy in faith complete and perfect, of causing them to rest their salvation in Christ and their heavenly Father without the slightest hesitation or doubt, of imparting to them that inexpressible happiness of faith which no man can take from the believers, which they retain in the very midst of misery and tribulation."²¹² That is the joy of the Christian! The message of Christmas, the message of Good Friday, the message of Easter morning, the message of Ascension Day, yes, the message of the great triumphal Judgement Day - that is the joy of the Christian for it is the message of Christ's

211. Barnes, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 282. cf. Barnes, Vol. 2, p. 356.

212. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 558.

love for us. Just as Paul exclaimed, "For me to live is Christ,"²¹³ so everything which for the Christian is joyful and happiness is centered in Christ, in living for Him and to Him alone! John rejoiced in Christ. He rejoiced in the fact that soon he might be able to see his fellow Christians face to face. He rejoiced in the fact that Gaius, whom he had evidently instructed in the faith, was remaining true to Christ in all things. I am reminded here strongly of the well known poem which so beautifully illustrates the joy of the Christian in Christ the Savior--

Good Christian men, rejoice!
With heart and soul and voice.
Give ye heed to what we say!
News! News!
Jesus Christ is born today
Ox and ass before Him bow
And He is in the manger now
Christ is born today!

Good Christian men, rejoice!
With heart and soul and voice.
Now ye hear of endless bliss
Joy! Joy!
Jesus Christ was born for this.
He hath op'ed the heavenly door
And man is blessed evermore.
Christ was born for this!

Good Christian men, rejoice!
With heart and soul and voice.
Now ye need not fear the grave
Peace! Peace!
Jesus Christ was born to save.
Calls you one, and calls you all
To His everlasting hall
Christ was born to save!

213. Philipians 1,21.

Thus John pictures for us the manifestations of the Christian life in the battle between the new and the old man in us. But we proceed to discuss John's thoughts concerning the manifestation of the Christian life in the relation of the Christian with his fellowmen.

As a second manifestation of the Christian life, John points out the entire field of the Christian's relation to his fellowman.

First John shows us in many beautiful passages that as the result of the love of God for sinful mankind in sending Christ Jesus into the world as the Savior and Redeemer; and as the result of the gracious working of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man instilling faith and trust in Christ as the Savior from sin, there will be enkindled in man by the power of the same Spirit working through the Word, a burning love for one's fellowmen.

It all goes back to the giving of the Law of God first in man's heart and then on the tables of stone on Mount Sinai. The second table dealt with man's relation to his neighbor. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,"²¹⁴ is the way Christ repeated this second part of the Law of God. Since

214. Matthew 22,39 of. Leviticus 19,18.

man is a sinful being, this law has never been kept perfectly. But Christ kept it perfectly for us. With the conversion of a person to faith in Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost, Christ begins to dwell in the Hearts of the individual, making him a Christian, God-fearing man. With the aid of this indwelling Spirit working through the means of grace, the Christian, according to the new man, loves his neighbor and his brethren as himself.

First John speaks in several places of love for one another. "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."²¹⁵ "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment."²¹⁶ Then in the fourth chapter John has a long and particularly beautiful passage on love for one's neighbor when he says, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifest the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live

215. I John 3,11.

216. I John 3,23.

through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."²¹⁷ In the second and third epistles John likewise has two references. He says, "and now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another."²¹⁸ "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers."²¹⁹

John is here speaking of the trait which sets apart all Christian people everywhere from the

217. I John 4, 7-16.

218. II John 5.

219. III John 5.

people in the world about them. Love is the essential thing in the religion of the Christian. This love in the heart of the Christian, which has been kindled there by the renewing and renovating work of the Holy Spirit, sets him apart from the surroundings in which he lives. It makes him a different person entirely. As Barnes says, "In none of these cases had love for each other been the distinguishing and peculiar badge by which they were known. (He had spoken of the distinguishing marks of Jews, philosophers, and military men, etc.)

But in the case of the Christians, they were not to be known by distinctions of wealth, or learning, or fame; they were not to aspire to earthly distinction; but they were to be distinguished by tender and constant attachment to each other. This was to surmount all distinction of country, of color, of rank, of office, of sect. Here they were to feel that they were on a level, that they had common wants, were redeemed by the same sacred blood, and going to the same heaven. They were to befriend each other in trials, be careful of each other's feelings and reputation, and deny themselves to promote each others welfare."²²⁰ The fact that a

220. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 337.

person loves his neighbor as himself was the distinguishing mark in those days and is still today. A Christian is known to be such because he loves his neighbor. His life of love is a legible "epistle of Christ -- written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."²²¹

In the first of our passages John advises his readers that this is nothing new but is a message which they have heard from the beginning, since the Gospel of Christ came to their midst. Again in the second passage the idea of this admonition to love being not a new thing which John was urging upon them, but the commandment of God Himself, is brought out. This is the ἐντολή of God. Many times in Scripture this is referred to. Barnes says, "In all these places the command of Jesus is repeated or referred to, and it shows that the first disciples considered this indeed as the peculiar law of Christ."²²² It is a commandment of God and of Christ that we should love our neighbor as ourselves.

In the lengthy passage quoted from the fourth chapter, John enters upon a detailed picture of love, love of God to man, love of man to God, and love of man for his fellowman.

221. II Corinthians 3,3.

222. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 337-338.

He seems to be pointing out specifically in these passages love for those who believe in Christ with us. If it is love for "one another" "it is returned as soon as it is bestowed."²²³ This is brought out still more clearly when we see that John speaks of this love exhibiting the fellowship we have with God. He says we have been "born from God." Our love for one another shows that we have been made a member of God's family through our adoption as children of God.²²⁴ But indirectly all men are included in this. As Lenski points out, "There is no need to worry about our loving also our neighbor, who is not a Christian. God loves all men, and yet He loves His children by bestowing all manner of loving gifts on them. He loves them in a way in which He cannot love the wicked. This is also true with regard to us."²²⁵

The high spot of this entire passage comes in verse eleven when John sums up the entire matter with, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Notice that he himself offers them his own example. He introduces his words here

223. Lenski, R. C. H., Op. Cit., p. 505.

224. cf. I John 3,1 ff.

225. Lenski, R. C. H., Op. Cit., p. 505.

and in verse seven with the familiar, "Beloved." Then, as Lenski points out, the conditional sentences "is one of reality. To think of putting an uncertainty into it, to speak of difficulty in rendering it into English, to let this 'if' mean: 'if it be true' (English subjunctive,) is to misunderstand the Greek condition of reality. 'If thus God did love us' means: God did thus love us, and I submit this fact to you who will not, like the Antichrist, for one moment deny that thus he loved us. The emphasis is on ^cοὕτως, 'thus,' sending His Son, the Only Begotten, that we may live through Him, in order that His Son might shed His blood in expiation for our sins, so that, cleansed from them, we live indeed."²²⁶

Therefore the second part of John's statement is like a conclusion to this condition of reality, "we ought also to love one another." It would be well here to point out that this love is not merely prompted from a spirit of return for something given us, or a spirit of fair play and sportsmanship on our part. Since God so loved us, we on our part now out of fairness ought to return this love and

226. Lenski, R. C. H., Op. Cit., p. 513-514.

also love our neighbor as He would have us do. No, this passage, as others of Scripture clearly indicate that what is meant is the fact that the love of God is the motivating power which has been placed at our disposal through the work of renovation and renewing accomplished by the Spirit of God through His Word. This is the motivating principle of love to our neighbor, the Gospel of Christ, the good news of His atonement for us which makes us new creatures, born again in Christ Jesus, dedicated anew to the task of fulfilling the desires of God. This is love for one's fellowman, prompted by the love of God which has taken possession of our hearts.

In the other two passages mentioned before from Second and Third John we have reference again to the thought of the love which John is urging being a commandment of God and also the new thought of love manifest upon strangers as well as on brethren.

John compliments Gaius and tells him that those good things which Gaius does to the brethren as well as to strangers have been brought to his attention and he says that he is doing these things "faithfully." Acts of love which Gaius was performing were to be commended highly and his example to be followed by all men.

A second group of passages which we will consider use a slightly different terminology but mean about the same thing. "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."²²⁷ "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."²²⁸ "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."²²⁹ "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments."²³⁰

227. I John 2,8-11.

228. I John 3,14.

229. I John 4,20-21

230. I John 5,2.

"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth."²³¹

Here John uses the term ἀδελφός . It seems to point particularly to the people of the same faith. As Barnes says, "The word brother seems here to refer to those who professed the same religion. The word is indeed sometimes used in a larger sense, but the reference here appears to be to that which is properly brotherly love among Christians."²³² Thayer is even more explicit in saying, "(ἀδελφός) a fellow-believer, united to another by the bond of affection; so most frequently of Christians, constituting as it were but a single family:.....yet in the phraseology of John it has reference to the new life unto which men are begotten again by the efficiency of a common father, even God."²³³ So John is here speaking particularly of love to those who are children of the Father in heaven just as we also are sons of God.

In the first passage John points out that hatred is synonymous with being in darkness and love is the same as walking in light. By this comparison John seeks to show that the person who thinks he is a

231. II John 1.

232. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 294.

233. Thayer, Op. Cit., p. 11.

true Christian and walks in the light and yet hates his brother, is in reality in darkness and the error of his blindness shows that the true Christian spirit is not in him. One who loves his brethren has received the spirit of true religion which is light. One who hates his brethren is blinded by the darkness of error and false conceptions regarding Christianity and is made to stumble and fall over stumbling-blocks just as a man gropes in darkness not being certain whether his next step is safe or not. Barnes gives us a fine statement regarding this when he says, "The ancient systems of error, under which men hated each other, have passed away, and you are brought unto the light of the true religion. Once you were in darkness like others; not the light of the pure Gospel shines around you, and that requires as its distinguishing characteristic, love. Religion is often represented as light; and Christ spoke of Himself, and was spoken of, as the light of the world."²³⁴ Or as Barnes states further, "The command to love one another was one of the most solemn and earnest which Christ ever enjoined; He made it the peculiar badge of discipleship, or that by which His followers were to be everywhere known, and it is, therefore, impossible to have any true religion without love to those

234. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 294.

who are sincerely and truly His followers."²³⁵ Weidner says, "For where hatred is there can be no fellowship, and where there is no light there is darkness."²³⁶

In the second passage John speaks of love of the brethren as proof of the fact that we have passed from death into life. By "death" and "life" John means, of course, spiritual death and spiritual life. Lenski points this out by saying, "God's grace, His Spirit, His Word led us out of the one into the other; being spiritually dead, we were made spiritually alive."²³⁷ The evidence of the fact that we are now spiritually alive is that we love the brethren. If there is the working of God's Spirit in our heart through the Word and the acceptance of this gracious working then we have been brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. What John means by spiritual death we can see from what he writes to the church at Sardis in his Revelation, ".....I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."²³⁸ What John means by spiritual life we see from his reporting of Christ's statement, "He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me,

235. Ibid, p. 294.

236. Weidner, R. F., Lutheran Commentary, Vol. 11, p. 288.

237. Lenski, R. C. H., Op. Cit., P. 477.

238. Revelation 3,1.

hath everlasting life, and shall not come unto condemnation but is passed from death unto life."²³⁹ Or as Paul says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."²⁴⁰ Thus John here speaks of spiritual life and love as running hand in hand. If one has been renewed and re-born under the influence of God's grace, Christian love will also be present.

In the third passage John becomes very forceful and dynamic. He minces no words in telling his readers that the person who thinks he can love God and hate his brother at the same time, is a liar! His argumentation is simple and direct. How can a person say he loves God whom he has never seen and yet hate his brother whom he has seen. Alford says, "Put in a brief form, the argument.....is this: His love has begotten us anew in love: in this 'us' are included our brethren, objects of our daily sight: if therefore we do not love them, we do not love Him."²⁴¹ Alford likewise points to the connection between this verse and the fourth verse quoted above when he shows that in the latter the argumentation

239. John 5,24.

240. II Corinthians 5,17.

241. Alford, Henry, Op. Cit., Vol. 4, p. 496.

is just reversed and the love of the brethren is used as evidence of the love of God. The love of God and the love of the brethren go hand in hand. Alford says, "And indeed so inseparable are the two, that as before, chapter four, verse twenty, our love to our brethren was made a sign and necessary condition of our love to God, so conversely, our love to God, ascertained by our keeping His commandments, is itself the measure of our love to the children of God. Either of the two being found to be present, the presence of the other follows."²⁴² Kretzmann also sums up these two matters well when he points out, "It is a comparatively easy matter to love people whom we see. If we therefore do not love or are indifferent toward someone whom we ought to love, namely all our brethren, then all our pious protestations regarding our love toward God are vain, and we are deceiving ourselves. The main reason why love toward God cannot exist without love toward the brethren is given in the words: And this command have we from Him, that he who loves God should love also his brother. This is a clear command of our Lord Jesus Christ, Matthew 22, 37-40.

242. Ibid, p. 497.

The one commandment cannot be without the other, for the law of God is a unit, His will is only one. To transgress the precept regarding brotherly love is to transgress the commandment to love God."²⁴³ Thus the second part of John's argument is also clear and simple. First he argues from the smaller, (love of the brethren whom we see) to the greater, (love of God whom we have not seen) and secondly, he argues from the very commandment of God through Christ. As Kretzmann states in the same discussion, "Our obligation is clear."

The last passage mentioned from Second John is brought forth merely to show John's own very fine example in this matter. He is writing to "the elect lady" and her children and he says of them that he loves them in the truth and not only he but also all of those that have known the truth. All this elect ladies' fellow Christians are included here. All love her as John himself loves her in true brotherly Christian love. This exemplary trait on the part of the apostle must have been a great influence upon those with whom he came into contact. Not only does he preach love, but he practices what he preaches.

243. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 575.

The second manifestation of the Christian life in the relation of a Christian to his fellowmen is shown in the Christian's sacrifice and unselfishness as a result of this love for all men. This John refers to when he says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whose hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue: but in deed and in truth."²⁴⁴

John shows here that love involves sacrifice. It isn't mere philosophical speculation. It isn't mere high-sounding talk and beautiful sentiment, though sentiment has its definite place. It is more than that. It gets down to cases. It is life itself. It is practical selflessness, sacrifice, and service.

John points out here particularly the idea that since Christ has loved us so much that He was willing to lay down His life for us, we ought also to love our brother sufficiently that we too would be willing to give up our life for him. It brings to mind Christ's own statement, "Greater love hath no man

244. I John 3,16-18.

than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."²⁴⁵ Love for our neighbor, desire for his safety and welfare, affection for him in all forms and in all possible situations should be so great that we would be willing to lay down our life, if need be, for our love is the reflection of the great divine love of Christ which showed itself in his enduring the cross for our salvation.

But John adds another example in the verse before us. If a person has an abundance of this world's good and sees a brother who is in need and refuses to give even of his abundance for the welfare of the brother, John very dubiously asks, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" One can almost see the aged "Apostle of Love" writing this phrase, his head shaking back and forth in sorrow over the impossibility of such a thing. Yes, not only of our abundance of this world's goods are we to minister to the needs of those among our brethren, yes, even strangers, who require aid, but also we are to sacrifice, if need be. We are to give up comforts and pleasures if we see that thereby we could aid one of the brethren. Love demands that. Yes, love wants to do that very thing. Scripture abounds with examples of such

245. John 15,13.

worthy self-sacrifice and selflessness. There are the twelve who forsook everything and followed Christ.²⁴⁶ There is Paul who gave up possible wealth and position for the Gospel of Christ and the souls of his brethren.²⁴⁷ There is Ruth who left her homeland and friends to care for Naomi, her mother-in-law.²⁴⁸ There is Moses who left the pomp and comfort and pleasure of Pharaoh's court for the wilderness because of the sufferings of his brethren.²⁴⁹ And so numerous other examples could be given. But John, in his typical love and affection and gentleness, calm and unruffled, yet firm and exact, adds the admonition, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." Little children in the faith, whom I have nourished with my teaching of God's Word to you, John is saying, let us not merely say we love our brethren, but let us show our love in deeds and actions and let us love truly, sacrificing for the brethren, being selfless and full of service at all times. Thus John shows us that love involves sacrifice. Alexander, in Expositor's Bible, quotes from Paulus Flagius an old Rabbinical saying with which I would close this

246. Mark 10,28.

247. cf. The account of Paul's early life in Acts.

248. Ruth 2,11.

249. Exodus 32,32. cf. Hebrews 11,25.

section, "He that saith, mine is thine, and thine is mine, is an idiot; he that saith, mine is mine, and thine is thine, is moderate; he that saith, mine is thine, and thine is thine, is charitable; but he that saith, thine is mine, and mine is mine, is wicked; even though it be only saying it in his heart, to wish it were so."²⁵⁰

The third point which we wish to bring out in the discussion of the Christian's relation to his fellowmen is the Christian as an example. John speaks of this when he says, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."²⁵¹ "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church....."²⁵² "Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself."²⁵³ Here John points out by two examples and one general statement of a negative point that the Christian is constantly to be an example to the people of the world about him of the principles which Christianity maintains.

In the first passage John speaks of the negative side, the hatred of the world. The world and all it

250. Alexander, William, Expositor's Bible, Vol. 48, p. 201-202.

251. I John 3,13.

252. III John 5 and 6.

253. III John 12.

stands for is opposed to Christianity and Christian principles. A Christian who practices love and charity and by his actions shows the world he is a Christian may expect the hatred and scorn and ridicule of the world. As Barnes points out, "In enjoining the duty of brotherly love on His disciples, He averts to the fact that they must expect to be hated by the world, and tells them to remember that the world hated Him before it hated them."²⁵⁴ From the very nature of the world and the nature of the Christian this will be the case. However, this hatred need not surprise the Christian. In fact, this hatred is a fine testimony to the Christian life of the individual Christian. He is leading an exemplary Christian life, one that the world does not like, to be sure, but nevertheless one that is a living testimony to the work of God's Holy Spirit in the heart of man, transforming and renewing the heart so that it becomes the abode of Christ. One must be able to look at a Christian and observe his life and thereby see Christ and His merciful goodness.

In the second passage John is commending Gaius for his works of charity which have flowed from his heart filled with faith in Christ. He says that the

254. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 320.

strangers whom Gaius had befriended, testified and bare witness of his charity before the church. Gaius, through his exemplary Christian charity, caused glory to come to Christ's church. This brings out also the fact that the church's best publicity and advertisement is the Christian member. So John here commends Gaius highly for being a fine example both to the brethren and to strangers.

In the third passage Demetrius is mentioned. Little is known of him, but John states that all men hear a good report concerning Demetrius and he evidently had a fine reputation both on the part of people who knew him and of fact, of the truth itself. It was a reputation founded on reality. His deeds and his life agreed with the report which was spread about him.²⁵⁵ Thus he is another example of what it means for the Christian to lead an exemplary Christian life which will cause other people to notice his principles and immediately identify him as being a disciple of Christ.

Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, brings this point out well. He says, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world."²⁵⁶ "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men; I am glad

255. cf. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 377.

256. Romans 1,8.

therefore on your behalf...."257 Luke, in reporting of Paul's journey to Lystra where he found Timothy, speaks of Timothy as one that was "well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium."258 Thus we see further the importance of the Christian life as an example to brethren and to strangers alike.

The fourth point which we shall discuss is Christian hospitality as it is evident in a Christian's relation to his fellowmen. John says in a passage which we discussed above from slightly different point of view, "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well."259

John is here writing to Gaius about missionaries and emissaries whom he will send to the vicinity in which Gaius lived. Gaius' reputation for walking in the truth and being exemplary in good Christian living also carried over into the sphere of hospitality to believers and strangers, those whom he

257. Romans 16,19.

258. Acts 16,2.

259. III John 5-6.

happened to know and those with whom he was not very well acquainted, if at all. Even these strangers were received with joy in Gaius' household. His resources were placed at their disposal. He not only kept them while they were in his home village, but also, as the text indicates, saw to it that when they resumed their journey they were well-equipped and prepared. Scripture often speaks of such hospitality both to believers and strangers, those with whom we are not acquainted. Paul writes, "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality."²⁶⁰ To Timothy, Paul describes it in this way, "Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work."²⁶¹ In Hebrews the inspired writer says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."²⁶² Peter writes, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging."²⁶³ The word used for hospitality in these instances is φιλοξενία which, Thayer

260. Romans 12,13.

261. I Timothy 5,10.

262. Hebrews 13,2.

263. I Peter 4,9.

points out, means "love to strangers, hospitality."²⁶⁴ Barnes has this to say on the verses under discussion: "In the previous verses the writer had commended Gaius for his attachment to truth..... He now speaks more particularly of his acts of generous hospitality, and says that he had fully, in this respect, done his duty as a Christian."²⁶⁵ John here points out that this duty of hospitality to the brethren and strangers also falls upon us today. He does this when he adds the phrases "after a godly sort" and "thou shalt do well." Barnes explains these two phrases as "After a godly sort! Margin, as in Greek, 'worthy of God.' The meaning is, as becomes those who serve God; or as becomes those who are professors of His religion. 'Thou shalt do well.' You will do that which religion requires in these circumstances."²⁶⁶ So the Christian who walks worthy of God and serves Him and does what the Christian principles he believes in requires in those circumstances in which he finds himself, will be given to Christian hospitality.

But the last point we wish to consider is brought out by John in the same epistle, the next two verses,

264. Thayer, Op. Cit., p. 654.

265. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 372.

266. Ibid, p. 373.

when he says, "Because that for His name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers of the truth."²⁶⁷ Here John points out particularly the mission-mindedness which should be the characteristic of the Christian in his relation to his fellowmen. In all situations we are to think of ourselves as helpers of those who bring the truth of God to other people, even if we cannot be the leaders and spokesmen who preach God's Word to the heathen and unchurched. In this instance Gaius became a "fellow-helper to the truth" through his hospitality and benevolence with earthly possessions toward those who were missionaries of the truth, sent out by John. Barnes comments, "The work in which they are engaged is one of pure benevolence. They have no selfish aims and ends in it. They do not even look for the supplies of their wants among the people to whom they go to minister; and we ought, therefore, to aid them in their works and to contribute to their support."²⁶⁸ Kretzmann very pointedly says, "They were preaching without receiving any compensation from the heathen, probably in order

267. III John 7-8

268. Barnes, Albert, Op. Cit., Vol. 10, p. 374.

not to bring suspicion upon their office as though they were merely in the business of preaching for the sake of the money they might make that way. This being the case: We, therefore, are under obligation to support such men, that we may prove fellow-workers with the truth. That is the duty of the Christians at all times and in all places, to provide for the bodily necessities of men that are going forth to preach the Gospel. In this way the Christians perform their share with the truth and for the truth of the Gospel, they assist in spreading the glorious news of salvation through the redemption of Jesus Christ.²⁶⁹ Thus the Christian is always to think of others in need of the saving truth which he by God's grace has received. Though he may not be able to be on the front lines of the Gospel-army for many and varied reasons, he still is able to be a fellow-helper of the truth through constantly remaining mission-minded.

This brings to a close our study of the Christian life in its manifestations of love toward the fellowman. It also brings to a close the study of the whole system of the Christian life in the three epistles of John. It has amounted to a study of

269. Kretzmann, P. E., Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 583.

the Biblical Theology of John's epistles as regards anthropology, soteriology, pneumatology, and the entire field of sanctification.

May this study under God's grace prove to be an abiding blessing to all who read it as well as to its author. May the thoughts of the "Apostle of Love" fill our hearts with love for the brethren which will make us worthy to be called children of God.

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