

# **A Community of Love and Truth**

*by*  
**JONATHAN CLARK**

# A COMMUNITY OF LOVE AND TRUTH



*An Exegetical Commentary  
on  
2nd John 1:1-11*



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# Introduction

Second John is one of the shortest books in the Bible, and is thus subject to a unique set of questions, both exegetical and hermeneutic. The first major question is authorship. Starting with Eusebius in the 4th century, questions have surrounded genuine Johannine authorship, where the shadow of Eusebius' doubt extends today.<sup>1</sup> Brevity is the first question. The best solution here is (1) not impose an a priori expectation of length based on other New Testament books and (2) recognize that personal letters were often short enough to fit onto a single piece of papyrus. More substantially, Bultmann, Strecker, and Schackenburg

press the question into the 20th century, denying the Apostle John's authorship and emphasizing that the author of 2-3 John must be different from John's Gospel and 1 John on both theological and linguistic grounds.<sup>2</sup> There is, however, good evidence for single authorship of all four works.<sup>3</sup> Scholars today who deny Johannine authorship of 2-3 John rely on literary style differences and unprovable skepticism when historical evidence and accepted tradition are "heavier" for single authorship of 1-3 John and the fourth gospel.<sup>4</sup> There is both strong external and internal evidence for Johannine authorship.<sup>5</sup>

Currently, data points for occasion and setting of the letter are thin at best. The simplest conclusion is this is a 1st century personal letter to an ecclesial community (not a woman addressee) exhorting them to godliness through prudent hospitality. They are to "walk in love" with the faithful, but not associate with the "deceivers."<sup>6</sup> There is some ambiguity about the identity of the "lady" (ver. 1). The better evidence leans toward a figurative use.<sup>7</sup> The best guess of a location is around Asia Minor, where John was located, and where 1 John was likely directed. The best date is early, probably in the late 1st century.<sup>8</sup> The themes re-

volve around classic Johannine words: love, commandment, walking, and truth, all with an implicit but strong Christology.

## Translation

1 The elder to [the] elect lady and to her children, whom I myself love with respect to the truth, and not I only, but all the ones who have known the truth, 2 because the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever. 3 With us will be grace, mercy, and peace from God [the] Father and from<sup>9</sup> Jesus Christ the Father's son in truth and love. 4 I rejoiced exceedingly that I find some of your children are walking in the truth, just as [the] commandment we received from the Father. 5 And now, I ask you, [dear]<sup>10</sup> lady, not as [though] a new command I am writing to you but which we had from the beginning, that we may love

one another. 6 And this is the love: that we may walk according to his commandments. This is the command, just as you heard from the beginning, that in it you may walk. 7 Because many deceivers went out into the world, ones who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh. This is the deceiver and the anti-Christ. 8 Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose that which we worked [for] but a full reward you may receive. 9 Each one who goes beyond and not remaining in the teaching of Christ does not have God. The one who remains in the teaching, this [one] has the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and this teaching does not bring, receive not him into house and say not to him “Hail.” 11 For the one who speaks to him “Hail,” shares his evil works.



## Commentary

### VERSE 1

The identity of the elder is a major question, briefly addressed above. This is a nominative absolute, indicating a title of some sort, perhaps an office within the early church.<sup>11</sup> Most scholars take *ἐκλεκτῆς κυρίας* figuratively, that is, a personification of the church on both grammatical and historical grounds.<sup>12</sup> The main evidence for this is (1) a proper name “Elect” is un-

likely, and (2) more significantly, verse 13's reference to an elect sister's children, which is clearly not proper, and (3) the second plural used through the rest of the verse. This indicates that this is a circular letter.<sup>13</sup> *ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ* is an intensive pronoun which is both common in 1 John and contextually emphasizes the strong, intimate affection of the author to the recipients.<sup>14</sup> "In truth," *ἐν ἀληθείᾳ* may be either referential or in manner. The former seems preferable because the next two clauses clearly refer to "the truth" more as objective and external than the quality of the author's sentiment.<sup>15</sup>

## VERSE 2

The subject continues to be *πάντες οἱ ἐγνωκότες* and the object (in the accus.) remains "the truth." The *διὰ* clause is causal, explaining the reason for his love. *τὴν μένουσαν* is a third position attributive participle modifying the truth; it is a truth that remains, which is of course the collision of two major themes in 1 John ("truth" and "abide"). The difference is that in 2 John, the truth is that which remains "in us," rather than in 1 John where the recipients are exhorted to remain in

the truth. The verb *ἔσται* is future, which in context is almost certainly eschatological (see comments on verse 8). *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα* supports this as an idiom for eternal future. In this verse, John expresses both confidence and hope that this truth is cosmically true, and therefore worthy of trust for the future.

### VERSE 3

Curiously, there is a close structural repetition with verses 2-3: *μεθ' ἡμῶν ἔσται* (ver. 2) and *ἔσται μεθ' ἡμῶν* (ver. 3), with the attributes placed after the verb, which emphasizes John's confidence—the wording is peculiar at least, and rhetorically elegant at best.<sup>16</sup> A dittography<sup>17</sup> is unlikely because (1) no manuscript witness shows otherwise, and (2) more importantly, *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα* is between them, so it must be intentional. Regardless, the message is clear: the church can anticipate great blessings together in the coming age. The three attributes are Pauline, but the etiology is likely social graces more than inter-author connection.<sup>18</sup> *παρὰ θεοῦ πατρὸς* and *παρὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* are both genitives of source<sup>19</sup> which makes a strong implication of the divinity of Jesus as both are equal

dispensers of blessings.<sup>20</sup> This is an implied Christology and Trinitarian theology, indicating that the community does not need doctrinal instruction (probably settled by 1 John) but a briefer, more practical letter.<sup>21</sup> *τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς* is certainly a genitive of relationship because of the father/son relationship. Whether *ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ* are consequences or conditions of God's blessing is unclear, and Brown names several options.<sup>22</sup> The context leans toward consequences since grace, peace, mercy also come from above. Regardless, they are essential to the Christian common life.<sup>23</sup>

## VERSE 4

After his introduction, John moves into the body of his epistle. He is joyful that the church has remained in the faith. This verse is stylistically and thematically summative of 1 John. The author has learned that the church is obeying the gospel they had heard. The *ὅτι* is expegetical, where the content completes and clarifies John's rejoicing.<sup>24</sup> *εὔρηκα* is difficult to translate. It is perfect, likely a perfect with present force. The meaning between perfect and present is essentially the

same here.<sup>25</sup> *ἐκ τῶν τέκνων* is partitive, so that a selection of the children are walking truthfully, though perhaps not all.<sup>26</sup> “Walking” is the dominant way 2-3 John describe the faithful Christian life, and has an Old Testament lineage.<sup>27</sup> “The commandment” must be definite because it is the direct object *ἐλάβομεν*.<sup>28</sup> This is a fortiori by the testimony’s source: *παρὰ τοῦ πατρός*, from the father, from whom all commandments come—as from the Old Testament too. Technically, we know it came from the apostolic witness (1 John 1:1-3), so John is implying that the Apostles’ testimony and authority is a conduit of the divine witness and authority.<sup>29</sup> Strecker assumes that this mutual “love commandment” has neither Old Testament nor even synoptic reference, but is a Johannine commandment (especially in the epistles).<sup>30</sup> But verses 5-6 disagree, for this is not (with emphatic *οὐχ*) a new commandment, but “from the beginning.” (See below on *ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς*.)

## VERSE 5

What should strike us about this verse is its remarkable similarity to 1 John 2:7. John is consistent that

the content of the “new commandment” he writes now is equal with the commandment “from the beginning.” John here moves to the meat of his message to the church with *καὶ νῦν*, speaking to this particular community. That John must emphasize this is not a *ἐντολὴν καινὴν*, but the one “you had from beginning” may indicate that the threat to the community was both a chronologically newer commandment and one that deviated from the old’s content and history.<sup>31</sup>

Brown says *ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς* (also used in 1 John 1:1; 2:7; 3:11; 24) is John’s way of saying, “since Jesus’ own self-revelation of the commandment,”<sup>32</sup> but Yarbrough is closer to the truth when he says the commandment is older, stretching back to Moses, and even pre-creation, into perichoretic Triune love.<sup>33</sup> Judith Lieu agrees, saying that this phrase points to larger hermeneutical approach to John’s whole use of Old Testament theology and history.<sup>34</sup> More than only Hellenistic, John was highly influenced by Jewish Old Testament trajectories, but he presented them differently from, say, Paul or Hebrews’ author (i.e., John does not quote or exposit the Old Testament). While Lieu looks only at 1 John, it is safe to say that John saw himself in a “struggle between interpretation and

present experience—interpretation shaping the understanding of experience, experience seeking for new possibilities of interpretation.”<sup>35</sup> This phrase *ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς* may be a nod toward the Jewish context from which John, Jesus, and the whole Christian faith derived.<sup>36</sup>

John uses the imperfect in the aorist sense in *εἶχομεν*, which is significant only in that it does not carry the extended time period of the imperfect.<sup>37</sup> The structural core of the sentence is, “But now, I ask you . . . that we love one another” fully aligns with 1 John.<sup>38</sup> This makes the *ἵνα*-clause a clear purpose clause.<sup>39</sup> What John asks is mutual love within the community, which is classic Johannine, both in content and style.<sup>40</sup> The consistency from 1 John continues in the close connection John establishes between “walking in the truth” (ver. 4) and “love one another” (ver. 5), so that the one requires the other.<sup>41</sup> Alignment with truth must and will entail moral actions and affectionate relations.

## VERSE 6

Akin’s previous point is clear now as John links

“love” and “walking,” this time in reverse order.<sup>42</sup> While the grammar and vocabulary here is elementary, Brown is correct on this verse when he says that it contains challenging questions that cannot be fully answered.<sup>43</sup> The first *ἵνα*-clause is epexegetical.<sup>44</sup> What is the content of love? First it is a definite (that is, arthrous) love (*ἡ ἀγάπη*), a particular love which they should know something about. Contrary to some Greek ephemeral emotion, this specific love has “legs” in acts of hospitality. Also, John is entirely consistent to his Jewish heritage where obedience to the law/“commandments” and neighbor love are in a symbiotic relationship. The *αὐτοῦ* is a source genitive with the Father (ver. 4) as the referent. John is emphatic to connect love and obedience with two predicate nominatives in the verse “*αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη . . . αὕτη ἡ ἐντολή ἐστίν.*” This structure repetition solidifies that in John’s universe, love, commandment, and “walking”/obedience are essentially equal.<sup>45</sup> This second *ἵνα*-clause could be either purpose (thus exhortation) “you should walk in it” or epexegetical “that you may walk in it.”<sup>46</sup> Significantly, verb change from 1st plural to 2nd plural which (1) supports the communal addressee and (2) shifts to a more imperatival tone:

“you have heard this; *you* should walk in it.”<sup>47</sup> The context of walking in commandments leans toward an exhortation.

## VERSE 7

From this, John shifts suddenly to a seemingly new negative topic about the *πλάνοι*, “deceivers,” the threat to the community and its doctrine. The source of their threat is that they deny the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The *ὅτι* is a challenge; it is causal, but what is the causal link between verse 6 obedience and verse 7 deceivers? Brown makes little of it.<sup>48</sup> But if Yarbrough is correct that this is probably the core of the letter and the occasion for writing, then this is a significant question. The causal link is that the community of love described above is uniquely founded upon the historical belief in the “Christ event,”<sup>49</sup> and those who deny that are a special threat to the community. They must guard (ver. 8) the received commandments because of the deceivers’ lies in their midst. In this, John does emphasize the dualism found in John’s Gospel (chapters 15-16) and 1 John.<sup>50</sup> The word *πλάνος* has a long history of use within both the

Jewish/LXX tradition (to be led into idolatry) and the Hellenistic philosophical, apocalyptic, and mystical thought (spiritual powers leading into darkness).<sup>51</sup> John's meaning here is tricky. He could use it either in a LXX sense (sliding into religious idolatry like Old Testament Israel; cf 1 John 5:21) or a more Hellenistic sense (dualist metaphysics against dark powers). Since he is in Asia Minor, but also likely writing to a mix of Jew and Gentiles, it is safe to assume a broad usage of the word, so that these deceivers are the 1st century manifestations of Old Testament-type pagan idolaters who lead God's people astray from the light of truth into darkness.<sup>52</sup> These are ones who do not confess (a substantive participle) "Jesus Christ coming in the flesh." This phrase is a metonymy for the whole gospel: "Jesus" is a human male; "Christ" is the divine Messiah, complete with kingly and sacrificial roles; "in the flesh" (a dative of manner) is the offense of the gospel, the incarnation mystery, a total affront to proto-gnosticism.<sup>53</sup>

The meaning of *ἐρχόμενον* is highly contested because verse 8 (*Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί*) is almost identical with 1 John 4:2 (*Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα*), but for the present, rather than per-

fect, participle. Matthew Jensen compares the present and perfect aspects, looking at five contemporary understandings of verbal aspect in Biblical Greek. He concludes that present and perfect tense sometimes are relatively equal, with the perfect slightly emphasizing “an enhanced version of the present” so that the two claims are semantically equivalent.<sup>54</sup> Thus the present participle does not refer to the eschatological coming/Parousia nor carry sacramental connotations (contra Strecker),<sup>55</sup> but refers to the past event of the incarnation.<sup>56</sup> From a different angle but similar conclusion, Wallace argues an anarthrous accusative participle may indicate indirect discourse.<sup>57</sup>

John then switches from plural to singular. Here he agrees with 1 John 1:22, 26. Such a person opposes who both the humanity of Jesus is a deceiver, and the deity as Christ is a literal antichrist. The article in front of both shows these are a category of people. Once again, John uses the predicate nominative, a simple sentence structure to make an emphatic point.<sup>58</sup>

## **VERSE 8**

With a threat this real, John issues what can only be

an imperative of command, “Watch yourselves!” Interestingly, the pronoun is reflexive, so he commands them not to watch the antichrist, but themselves. But the *ἵνα* purpose clause explains. While certainly a present concern, John’s ultimate concern is eschatological.<sup>59</sup> He switches to 1st person plural, creating a you-we-you pattern. Brown cites a text critical question, but this is the harder reading with moderately more manuscript weight.<sup>60</sup> Lieu says John uses this structure say that the addressee community exists in a larger network which would be harmed by their compromising.<sup>61</sup> It would also make sense that the apostles and first missionaries worked to share the gospel, converting, discipling, and establishing this community.<sup>62</sup> Some argue *ἡ εἰργασάμεθα* is actually the salvation itself (read: “justification”), so salvation could be lost (and therefore gained “by works”).<sup>63</sup> But the contrasting conjunction *ἀλλὰ* shows the converse (*μισθὸν πλήρη*); it is not a salvation matter per se. *μισθός* has a specific meaning here. In theological contexts, it means a recompense for quality moral action.<sup>64</sup> Second John assumes a gospel of grace through Christ which John describes elsewhere in his corpus; here he builds on 1 John’s foundation, anticipating Revela-

tion's future. In 1 John, salvation is by confessing in Jesus as the *ἰλασμός* for sin. In Revelation, "reward" is the eschatological blessing for a faithful life upon entering paradise. It is not justification itself.<sup>65</sup> In other words, this is John's own way of calling for perseverance, like other biblical authors. The church must guard itself from deceivers who compromise the gospel and as such may threaten its eternal reward, but not its salvation.

## VERSE 9

John both further explains his current point and sets up a polarity between two groups of people (demonstrated by the *πᾶς ὁ* construction), those who "have God" and those who do not. Central to this is an ambiguous phrase "teaching of Christ." First, scholars conflict over translating *πᾶς ὁ προάγων*, a substantive participle. The question is between a more conservative translation "one who goes ahead" or if a nuance of innovation/advancement should be added, hence, "one who innovates/goes beyond."<sup>66</sup> Terry Griffith lays out the scope translators have taken, and says the innovating tradition lacks lexical support.<sup>67</sup> Griffith

concludes that a motion metaphor is better than an innovating one, that John envisions two groups, one constituted by people who have “gone outside” of the teaching of Christ, and another of those who “remained.”<sup>68</sup> Yarbrough favors the innovating nuance because of the historical tendency for “deceivers” to add to and thus pervert the teachings of Christ.<sup>69</sup> Really, the disagreement is small: both agree the teachings of Christ are compromised through deception. I have chosen a *via media* translation to capture this nuance. The opposite is remaining (*μένω*), a favorite concept for John. This is also a substantive participle governed by the same *ὁ* pronoun, so this is the converse of the *προάγων*. This means to abide in Christ is to settle into his work and teaching so that it transforms the self and community. A bigger question is what is the *τῆ διδαχῆ τοῦ Χριστοῦ*? An objective (teaching about Christ), subjective (Christ’s teaching), or plenary genitive (Christ’s teaching about himself) could each make sense and scholars have arguments for each. That it is “Christ,” not “Jesus” indicates perhaps a lean toward the objective side, a creedal confession.<sup>70</sup> Yarbrough seems right when he says the question is irrelevant if 1 John 1:1-3 is true, if John

walked with, touched, heard, and experienced Jesus, which would lean toward a plenary genitive.<sup>71</sup> “Teaching” is an important word. In it is the whole body of *credo* that the church should cling to: the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus both from his own mouth and the apostolic testimony.<sup>72</sup> Therefore to leave this is tantamount to apostasy.

The result of remaining is to “have” the Father and the Son. There is a strong Christology here, where the Father and the Son are listed together as equal and the same reward for faithfulness. This is even in the word order *τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει*, which places the accusative next to Christ, a not-so-subtle hint. The sincere reader cannot come away from this doubting Jesus’ divinity.

## VERSE 10

John finally gives a practical application in the form of a first-class conditional with a two-pronged apodosis.<sup>73</sup> The specificity here suggests that this may have been a major reason John wrote. The present tense may be either gnomic or future, but it is not hypothetical. John fully expects someone to come into

(even invade) the community not carrying the teaching of verse 9. He is clear that it must be the specific teaching with *ταύτην*. *Φέρει* here means to “bring a thought of idea into circulation.”<sup>74</sup> The first apodosis is to not receive him into a house, reminding us of 1 Corinthians 5:11-12, where the church is to not associate with sinners who claim the name of Christ. It is curious that *οικίαν* is anarthrous and a more specific form, *οικία* from *οικοσ*. *οικία* may be a structure or dwelling, but also may be a social unit.<sup>75</sup> John may refer to the house of worship, i.e., church, especially the fellowship of faith. While often masculine when referring to the church, the word is feminine here, which may align with the figurative lady and her sisters, that is, the church, along with a plural *you/ὐμᾶς* and 2nd person plural imperatives.<sup>76</sup>

This does not mean the Christian should shun friendship and earnest discussion with non-Christians pertaining to spiritual matters. This verse describes an individual who explicitly denies the creed of Christianity, and then seeks to enter into the church in a way that would undercut that creed.<sup>77</sup> This agrees with Paul’s command to not associate with the sexually immoral who bears the name of brother. Plummer says

the message is “Refuse him the hospitality which as a matter of course you would shew (sic) to a faithful Christian.”<sup>78</sup> The second part of the imperative is *καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε*, literally, “Do not greet him.” If literal (and nothing indicates otherwise), this is one of the strongest injunctions in the New Testament, and it does clearly continue the duality set in 1 John.

## VERSE 11

The result of failure to spurn the deceiver is dire. *γὰρ* functions as a logical explanatory conjunction.<sup>79</sup> The reason for this disassociation is that this person taints the Christian. *Κοινωνεῖ* is present tense, which indicates a continuous action, so they are currently sharing in evil. This *χαίρειν-greeting* expresses “mutual acceptance and affection on the basis of shared conviction regard and commitment to the apostolic Christ.”<sup>80</sup> It is agreement in *koinoneia*, or true fellowship. In this, John agrees with the meaning and usage in 1 Timothy 5:22.

False teaching is affiliated with evil works. Interestingly, John does not say the one who greets shares in “bad theology.” Instead, he says he shares his evil

works, implying there is a close connection between wrong theology and evil moral actions.<sup>81</sup> Strecker disagrees and says the deceivers only “error” is that their teaching does not align with the presbyter’s personal convictions and his Johannine community, and the threat is only a split within what he calls the “agape-community.”<sup>82</sup> But this fails to account for (1) the metaphysical priority of the person of Christ and (2) foundation of agape on mutual acceptance of the “Christ event.” Diotrephes of 3 John 10-11 would seem to be just such a deceiver. If Jesus is God incarnate, then denial of this must mean exclusion from the fellowship of true Christian faith.



## Conclusion

While all biblical books have pastoral purposes, 2 John's are more apparent than say, Numbers. John has two main goals in writing this letter.<sup>83</sup> First, he wants to exhort a church community to remain or continue in the faith by both mutual love for each other and guarding the doctrinal purity. The length of the letter indicates its very specific purpose. If 2 John had to be distilled into three words, they would be "truth and love." But John does not leave the church with an eso-

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teric “vibe” of love and truth.<sup>84</sup> Truth and love here means obeying the commandments they received “from the beginning,” which have always been neighbor love in response to God’s self revelation. It also means defending the doctrinal purity of the church from deceivers who first deny the core doctrines of the gospel and then infiltrate the community. It is clear that as the New Testament canon was being formed, the threat of heresy and doctrine shift was felt in the late 1st century. In this world, John’s message was clear: Do not budge from what first I told you.

This is a necessity word for today’s church. As Christianity is no longer a majority religion, and as the tenor of global and religious pluralism increases, the situation becomes more like the 1st century surrounded by paganism, mysticism, philosophy religions, along with other threats. The church is never immune to these threats, as Yarbrough shows in his excursus,<sup>85</sup> and often fails to “guard the deposit” entrusted to it. At the same time, the church also neglects the command to love one another, fragmented by debates that are probably more Romans 14 *adiaphora* than compromised orthodoxy. Throughout this book, John calls his audience to unity around the

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Godhead, specifically the Father and Son. If this is the source of the church, then other versions are truly sisters (ver. 13), not enemies.

Preaching 2 John would probably involve preaching the whole letter in one sermon, maybe two (divided at ver. 7). The concepts are abstract (truth, love, remain/abide, teachings of Christ, etc.), so clear examples and illustrations would be essential to ground the text for the congregations. For some evangelical conservative audiences, it would be particularly important to delineate the difference between not receiving threatening “deceivers” but to receive non-Christians who are interested in our faith. The major push of a sermon must be the cosmic Lordship of Jesus as the Christ, and the implications for society and the local congregation.

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius. *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*. Trans. G.A. Williamson. Ed. Andrew Louth. New York: Penguin Books, 1989. 102.

<sup>2</sup> Strecker, Georg. *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John*; Hermeneia. *A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*. Trans. Linda M. Maloney. Ed. Harold Attridge. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996. 217, 221. Their main complaint is the “dualism” of 1 John and the Gospel is absent from 2-3 John. This paper will show otherwise. Schnackenburg concludes the same author for the epistles, but not the Gospel (Schnackenburg, Rudolf. *The Johannine Epistles: A Commentary*. Trans. Reginald and Ilse Fuller. New York: Crossroad, 1992. 273). Brown agrees, but says the question is unprovable (Brown, Raymond. *The Epistles of John, The Anchor Bible*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1982. 69).

<sup>3</sup> A secondary aim of this paper will be to demonstrate consistent thematic overlap between 1 John and 2 John.

<sup>4</sup> “There is no compelling exegetical reason to go along with the spin Eusebius tries to put on this, making the ‘elders’ people different from the apostles.” (Yarbrough, Robert W. “1-3 John.” *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008. 331)

## Footnotes

<sup>5</sup> “There is no compelling exegetical reason to go along with the spin Eusebius tries to put on this, making the ‘elders’ people different from the apostles.” (Yarbrough, Robert W. “1-3 John.” *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008. 331)

<sup>6</sup> Schnackenburg, 267.

<sup>7</sup> Derickson, 579-80. Also see comments on verse 1.

<sup>8</sup> Derickson, 582.

<sup>9</sup> There is a slight text critical issue where  $\kappa$  (among other MSS) inserts *κυριου*. But because A, B, and others reject this, along with the shorter reading, it is probably not original.

<sup>10</sup> *κυρία* is a vocative. Akin, 225.

<sup>11</sup> Culy, Martin M. *1, 2, 3 John: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004. 141. There is much debate between Eusebius’ two Johns, and whether this is the Elder John or not. It is safe to assume it is, and many scholars do, saying that the “elder” is either/and (1) a technical term for church leadership, or (2) an older man in the church. Both would include John the Apostle.

<sup>12</sup> Strecker, 220; Yarbrough, 334; Stott, 203; Brown, 655.

<sup>13</sup> Culy, 142.

<sup>14</sup> Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996. 249.

## Footnotes

<sup>15</sup> Stott agrees, saying that the context's next two subsequent reference to the truth justify this (205).

<sup>16</sup> Yarbrough, 334-5; Stott, 206.

<sup>17</sup> A manuscript error where the copyist repeats the previous word or phrase.

<sup>18</sup> All Pauline letters have *χάρις* and *εἰρήνη*, and 1-2 Timothy have *ἔλεος* too (Wallace, 51). This prompts the (unprovable but tantalizing) question of whether John had access to Paul's letter, or if (more obviously and likely) these were simply common greetings in letters or among Christians.

<sup>19</sup> Wallace 378, 109.

<sup>20</sup> Stott, 206.

<sup>21</sup> Still, Brown (659) points out that this is the only place where Jesus Christ is designated "son of the Father" in the New Testament, so perhaps it is not so implicit after all!

<sup>22</sup> Brown (660) notes that some have seen it as the literary conclusion for the opening, which started thematically with *ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ*.

<sup>23</sup> Brown, 206-7.

<sup>24</sup> Wallace, 459; BDAD, 873a.

<sup>25</sup> Wallace. 579. Thus the ESV and NASB translate into the present. I have kept it finite rather than their infinite.

## Footnotes

<sup>26</sup> Brown, 661; Culy, 144; Yarbrough, 340. It is a common Semitic method to use partitives substantivally.

<sup>27</sup> The “way of righteousness” or the walking in God’s commandments is consistently used across the Old Testament to describe the godly implementation of God’s laws into daily life. Brown, 662, Jobes, 261 (cf. 3 John 3).

<sup>28</sup> Strecker, 228. Interestingly, Strecker himself translates “just as we have been commanded” which converts the noun into a passive verb. But he is right that the noun is definite by context.

<sup>29</sup> This is in the Old Testament tradition of the prophets serving as the voice of God. Throughout this verse, John is not setting a new trajectory for religion instruction or devotion, but sees himself and his message in close sequence with the Old Testament.

<sup>30</sup> By this, he means the “Johannine community” developed their own emphasis and terminology on the “love-commandment.” Strecker builds most of his commentary around the uniqueness of the “love-commandment” in 2 John, independent of 1 John and John’s Gospel. Overall, this is unjustified because the command to love is replete in those books (John 13:31-35; I John 2:7-11; 3:11-24; 4:7-21).

<sup>31</sup> *ὅτι . . . ἀλλ* establishes two contrasting clauses (BDAG, 591). This commandment is not new, but long-established.

## Footnotes

<sup>32</sup> Brown, 265, 664. This is technically correct, from John 13:34. Jesus gives a “new commandment” only to the extent that he phrases and embodies the commandment in a new way; the content remains the same, since Jesus as the Word incarnate cannot change.

<sup>33</sup> Yarbrough, 97. From a biblical perspective, this is warranted. The Mosaic Law is summarized in God-love and neighbor-love (Deut 6:5, Lev 19:18). Yarbrough thus rightly contends against Strecker who says that the Johannine meaning for ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς does not refer to anything older than Jesus’ own commandment. John, a Jew, would certainly have thought of commandment and law entirely through an Old Testament lens, and to suggest a strong break from this education, cultural tradition, and theological continuity is unwarranted.

<sup>34</sup> Lieu, Judith M. “What Was From the Beginning: Scripture and Tradition in the Johannine Epistles.” *New Testament Studies* 39. 1993: 458.

<sup>35</sup> Lieu, 447.

<sup>36</sup> This is a topic beyond the present scope. I merely wish to present the “rabbit hole” as particularly attractive.

<sup>37</sup> Wallace, 549. While rare, this makes the most sense and does the most justice to the context. Brown (664), Stott (210), Strecker (228), and Jobes (261) all agree.

## Footnotes

<sup>38</sup> For this reason, Akin (with some warrant) translates the verse “I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another” (Akin, Daniel L. “1, 2, 3 John.” *The New American Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001. 225).

<sup>39</sup> Wallace cites the converse of this verse, 1 John 2:1 (*ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ ἀμάρτητε*), as an example of this purpose ἵνα clause (472). This (1) is indicative of John’s use of it, but also (2) shows that John prefers to use the subjunctive as a mix of imperative and purpose. In this, there may be strong elements of a hortative subjunctive; Yarbrough says this (plus ver. 6) is a double use of an exhortation subjunctive (342).

<sup>40</sup> Schnackenburg, 282.

<sup>41</sup> Akin, 226.

<sup>42</sup> Many have pointed out the chiasmic structure of this (A-command, B-Love, B1-Love, A1-Commands) thus placing a structural emphasis on love as contained in commands (Akin, 226; Yarbrough, 341). Derickson says such small chiasm’s are common in Hebrew literature for rhetorical purposes (608). Yarbrough also see another one (walk-command-command1-walk1) within verse 6.

<sup>43</sup> Brown, 668.

<sup>44</sup> While it could be another exhortation, all commentators agree otherwise.

## Footnotes

<sup>45</sup> Stott is particularly helpful: “This, then, is the threefold Christian ‘walk.’ Unselfconsciously John alludes again to the three tests (truth, love and obedience) which he has been applying throughout his first letter . . . The freedom with which Christ has made us free is not freedom to break the law, but freedom to keep it” (210).

<sup>46</sup> Brown (667), Yarbrough (339), Jobes (262) are ultimately unsure, and go with a safe “that.” Schnackeburg (281), Strecker (228) are sure it is exhortation (281). Generally, the evangelical leans purpose, the critical leans epexegetical here. Lieu is among the stronger exhortation (251).

<sup>47</sup> Lieu, Judith M. *1, 2, & 3 John: A Commentary. The New Testament Library*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008. 252.

<sup>48</sup> Brown, 668.

<sup>49</sup> I use this not as liberal scholars (i.e., Conzelmann), but attempt to retrieve a helpful term to describe the entire life, identity, and work of Jesus Christ as the pinnacle and pivot point of history.

<sup>50</sup> The dualism in 1 John is well-known: 1:18-27; 2:15-17; 4:1-6; 5:1-5. In John’s Gospel, it is more subtle (“the Jews” vs. Jesus and his disciples).

<sup>51</sup> Kittel, Gerhard; Bromiley, Geoffrey W.; and Friedrich, Gerhard. Eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964. 6:233-7.

## Footnotes

<sup>52</sup> Jobes says this is broader than just an anti-docetist or anti-gnostic diatribe, but a broader cosmic bifurcation against any thought system which counters the most fundamental truth in the gospel, the incarnation (264-5). In this, 2 John 7 parallels 1 John closely.

<sup>53</sup> It is important to note that this is not complete Gnosticism of the 2nd century, but the incipient forms.

<sup>54</sup> Jenson, Matthew David. “Jesus ‘Coming’ in the Flesh.” *Novum Testamentum* 56. 2014: 322. Yarbrough agrees that the present participle is “sufficiently elastic” to allow past activity (343-4).

<sup>55</sup> Strecker, 233.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Lieu (*1, 2, 3 John*), 254; Akin, 229; Schnackenburg, 284. All agree that the present participle both grammatically and thematically aligns with 1 John’s (and even John’s Gospel) understanding of the historical incarnation rather than some other Christ “coming.” Stott helps too: “since we know of no early controversy as to whether Jesus Christ would come again in the flesh, whereas these letters are concerned to assert that his first coming was in the flesh, [the first] is almost certainly in mind here” (212).

<sup>57</sup> So translated: “Those who do not confess, ‘Jesus Christ came in the flesh.’” Wallace, 646; Culy, 147.

## Footnotes

<sup>58</sup> There is one predicate (*οὐτός*) for two nominative subjects (Bultmann, Rudolf. “The Johannine Epistles.” *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*. Trans. R. Philip O’Hara with Lane C. McGaughey and Robert W. Funk. Ed. Robert W. Funk. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. 112).

<sup>59</sup> Schnackenburg, 284; Lieu, 256; both cite Mark 13:9 as the precedent for this.

<sup>60</sup> Brown, 671. Metzger’s Committee prefers the you-we-you because of difficulty, and gives it a B rating (Metzger, Bruce M. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. 2nd Ed. Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Society, 1994. 653).

<sup>61</sup> Brown, 256.

<sup>62</sup> This cannot refer to salvation itself, which we know from other scripture is only from God.

<sup>63</sup> Schnackenburg, 314; Brown 672.

<sup>64</sup> Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Revised. Ed. Frederick W. Danker. 3rd Ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. 653. Hereafter, BDAG.

## Footnotes

<sup>65</sup> Yarbrough, 345. Kittel describes “Because this life has appeared (1 John 1:2), all moral volition and capacity are simply an outworking of its impartation by God, which all those have and demonstrate who believe in Him whom God has sent. This is consequently an ethos of the fulness (sic) of power which Jesus Himself had (John 1:12). This clear and radical outlook leaves no place for the concept of reward or merit, and Jn. has eliminated all formulae even remotely reminiscent of this concept” (4.725).

<sup>66</sup> Many scholars then say that this “innovation” here is Gnosticism, which may not be historically warranted.

<sup>67</sup> Griffith, Terry. “The Translation of *O IPOATΩN* in 2 John 9.” *Tyndale Bulletin* 67. No. 1. 2016: 138.

<sup>68</sup> “The opposite of remaining in the teaching of Christ would then be to go outside the boundaries of the group that we defined by the Johannine confession. A person deemed guilty of ‘going outside’ seems thus to be described by the Elder as *ὁ προάγων*” (143).

<sup>69</sup> Yarbrough has an excursus on *ὁ προάγων* where he describes the Western Church’s innovating tendency from medieval scholasticism to Reformation polemics to 19th century Liberalism to 21st century Liberation Theology. This is a historical argument, albeit his expertise, but it not purely exegetical or lexical.

<sup>70</sup> Schnackenburg, 286.

## Footnotes

<sup>71</sup> Yarbrough, 350. Derickson too leans this way, and discusses the spectrum of options (626-27).

<sup>72</sup> Stott, 214.

<sup>73</sup> Wallace, 689; Derickson, 630-1.

<sup>74</sup> BDAG, 1052.

<sup>75</sup> BDAG, 695.

<sup>76</sup> Derickson, 633.

<sup>77</sup> Lieu, 260; Yarbrough, 351.

<sup>78</sup> Plummer, A. *The Epistles of St. John*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1886. 139.

<sup>79</sup> Wallace, 658.

<sup>80</sup> Yarbrough, 352.

<sup>81</sup> Bultmann, 114. The converse was clearly shown in vv. 5-6.

<sup>82</sup> Strecker, 244.

<sup>83</sup> This conclusion leans heavily on Jobes, 278-80.

## Footnotes

<sup>84</sup> This confronts our world today, which champions “truth and love,” while leaving the definitions of these words so vapid as to suck dry any meaning at all. “Truth” is whatever the individual finds personally self-actualizing and “love” is unquestioning celebration of another’s choice or lifestyle, regardless of consequences, rationale, or moral support. John could not disagree more.

<sup>85</sup> See footnote 69.