

# 1 JOHN

## THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

### INTRODUCTION

#### The incarnate Word

- 1 **1** Something which has existed since the beginning,  
that we have heard,  
and we have seen with our own eyes;  
that we have watched  
and touched with our hands:  
the Word, who is life—  
this is our subject.
- 2 That life was made visible:  
we saw it and we are giving our testimony,  
telling you of the eternal life  
which was with the Father and has been made visible to us.
- 3 What we have seen and heard  
we are telling you  
so that you too may be in union<sup>a</sup> with us,  
as we are in union  
with the Father  
and with his Son Jesus Christ.
- 4 We are writing this to you to make our own<sup>b</sup> joy complete.
- 2:13  
Jn 1:1-5  
Ac 22:15+  
Jn 20:20,25,  
27  
Lk 24:39  
Jn 1:1+; 3:  
11+  
Jn 1:14+;  
15:27  
5:20  
2:3,19,24,29  
Ac 4:20; 26:  
16  
Ac 2:42f  
1 Co 1:9  
Jn 15:11;  
16:22-24  
2 Jn 12

### I. WALK IN THE LIGHT

- 5 This is what we have heard from him,  
and the message that we are announcing to you:  
God is light; there is no darkness in him at all.
- 6 If we say that we are in union with God<sup>c</sup>  
while we are living in darkness,  
we are lying because we are not living the truth.
- 7 But if we live our lives in the light,  
as he is in the light,  
we are in union with one another,<sup>d</sup>
- 3:11  
Dn 2:22  
Jn 8:12+  
1 Tm 6:16  
Jm 1:17  
Jn 3:21

1 a. Lit. 'have fellowship' (so also in v. 7). This union is the idea most central to John's mysticism, Jn 14:20; 15:1-6; 17:11,20-26; union between all Christians results from the union created by Christ between each Christian and God. This union is referred to in different ways: a Christian lives 'in' God and God lives 'in' him, 1 Jn 2:5,6,24,27; 3:6,24; 4:12,13,15,16; a Christian is begotten by God, has new life from him, 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,18; the Christian is from God, is his child, 2:16; 3:10; 4:4-6; 5:19; the Christian knows God, 2:3,13,14; 3:6; 4:7,8 (on knowledge and presence cf. Jn 14:17; 2 Jn 1-2). This union with God shows itself in a person's faith and in his love for the brothers,

cf. 1:7+.

b. 'our own', var. (Vulg.) 'your'.

c. Lit. 'him'. In this translation the pronoun has been rendered 'God', or 'Christ', where it seemed necessary for the sense.

d. God is in Christians, 1:3+, as the principle of their new life. Since God is light, 1:5, virtue, 2:29, and love, 4:8,16, whoever lives in union with God must live a life of light, virtue and love, and keep God's commandments, especially the commandment to love all human beings, 2:10,11; 3:10; 4:8,16. Faith and love are thus the visible evidence of true union with God, 1:6,7; 2:3,6; 3:6,10,17,24; 4:6,8,13,16,20.

Mt 26:28p  
Rm 3:24-  
25+  
Rv 1:5

and the blood of Jesus, his Son,  
purifies us from all sin.

### First condition: break with sin

Pr 20:9 Qo 7:30 Si 8:5	If we say we have no sin in us, we are deceiving ourselves and refusing to admit the truth; <sup>a</sup>	8
Pr 28:13+ Jm 5:16+	but if we acknowledge our sins, then God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and purify us from everything that is wrong.	9
Ps 32:1+ Mt 6:12p	To say that we have never sinned is to call God a liar and to show that his word is not in us.	10
3:6+ 2	I am writing this, my children, to stop you sinning; but if anyone should sin, we have our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is just;	1
Heb 7:25; 8:6+ Jn 14:16 Ac 3:14+ 4:10 Rm 3:25+	he is the sacrifice that takes our sins away, and not only ours, but the whole world's.	2
Jn 4:42+		

### Second condition: keep the commandments, especially the law of love

1:3+, 7+ Jn 10:14+	We can be sure that we know God only by keeping his commandments.	3
4:20	Anyone who says, 'I know him', and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, refusing to admit the truth. <sup>a</sup>	4
Jn 14:21,23 3:17	But when anyone does obey what he has said, God's love comes to perfection in him. <sup>b</sup> We can be sure that we are in God	5
Jn 13:15,34 Ep 5:2 2 Th 3:7+	only when the one who claims to be living in him is living the same kind of life as Christ <sup>c</sup> lived.	6
3:11 Dt 6:5 Mt 22:37-40 2 Jn 5	My dear people, this is not a new commandment that I am writing to tell you, but an old commandment that you were given from the beginning, the original commandment which was the message brought to you.	7
Jn 13:34+	Yet in another way, what I am writing to you, and what is being carried out in your lives as it was in his, is a new commandment;	8
Rm 13:12 Jn 1:5; 8:12	because the night is over and the real light is already shining.	
	Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the dark.	9
Jn 12:35-36 Pr 4:19 Qo 2:14	But anyone who loves his brother is living in the light and need not be afraid of stumbling;	10
	unlike the man who hates his brother and is in the darkness, not knowing where he is going, because it is too dark to see.	11
Mt 15:14p		

**Third condition: detachment from the world**

- 12 I am writing to you, my own children,  
whose sins have already been forgiven through his name;  
13 I am writing to you, fathers,  
who have come to know the one  
who has existed since the beginning;  
I am writing to you, young men,  
who have already overcome the Evil One;  
14 I have written<sup>d</sup> to you, children,  
because you already know the Father;  
I have written to you, fathers,  
because you have come to know the one  
who has existed since the beginning;  
I have written to you, young men,  
because you are strong and God's word has made its home in you,  
and you have overcome the Evil One.<sup>e</sup>  
15 You must not love this passing world  
or anything that is in the world.  
The love of the Father cannot be  
in any man who loves the world,  
16 because nothing the world has to offer  
—the sensual body,  
the lustful eye,  
pride in possessions—  
could ever come from the Father  
but only from the world;  
17 and the world, with all it craves for,  
is coming to an end;  
but anyone who does the will of God  
remains for ever.
- 1 P 5:5+  
1:7; 2:2  
Ac 3:16+  
1 Co 6:11  
1:1  
Jn 1:1  
Ep 6:16  
Jn 3:11+  
Mt 6:14+  
Jn 5:38  
Jn 1:10+  
Jn 5:42+  
Rm 8:7-8  
2 P 1:4+  
Mt 6:24p  
Jm 4:4  
Pr 27:20  
Jm 4:16  
1 Co 7:31  
1 P 4:2  
Pr 10:25  
Is 40:8  
Mt 7:21

**Fourth condition: be on guard against the enemies of Christ**

- 18 Children, these are the last days;  
you were told that an Antichrist<sup>f</sup> must come,  
and now several antichrists have already appeared;  
we know from this that these are the last days.  
19 Those rivals of Christ came out of our own number, but they had  
never really belonged;<sup>h</sup>  
if they had belonged, they would have stayed with us;  
but they left us, to prove that not one of them  
ever belonged to us.  
20 But you have been anointed<sup>i</sup> by the Holy One,  
and have all received the knowledge.<sup>j</sup>
- 1 Tm 4:1+  
2 Th 2:4+  
4:1  
2 Jn 7  
2 Co 6:14-18  
1:3+  
Lv 17:1+  
Is 63:4  
Jn 14:26+  
2 Co 1:21

e. This is possibly an allusion to the sect that called themselves 'spirituals', *pneumatikoi*, and who were the forerunners of the Gnostics of the 2nd c. who looked down on other people as being either *psychikoi* or *hylikoi*, i.e. either incompletely or not at all liberated from matter.

2 a. Add. 'of God'.

b. Lit. 'in him the love of God has been perfected (reached its goal)'; this refers more to God's love for us than to our love for him.

c. Lit. 'as That One': Jesus is repeatedly referred to in this way. 3:3, 5, 7, 16; 4:17, cf. Jn 2:21; 19:35.

d. Var. (Vulg.) 'I am writing to you (now)'. The second clause ('I have written to you, fathers ... beginning') is omitted by Vulg.

e. The devil is still the Tempter as in Gn 3:1-6;

Jb 1:6+, who incites human beings to wickedness, 1 Jn 3:8+. Christians, however, having 'known' the Son, the Son lives in them, 1:3+, and 'clothes' them in light, virtue and love, 1:7+; and as this protects them from the devil, 5:18; Jn 17:15, and prevents them from sinning, 3:6, 9, it constitutes their victory over the devil, 2:13, 14, and over this transient world, 4:4; 5:4, 5; cf. Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:33; Mt 6:13.

f. Lit. 'the ostentation of living'.

g. 'an Antichrist' var. 'The Antichrist'.

h. Though they seemed to belong to the community, they lacked the spirit of Christ.

i. In the O.T. the chrism that was to anoint the Messiah (the 'anointed') was identified, Is 11:2; 61:1, with the (holy) Spirit or Breath of Yahweh. Christians share in this anointing that teaches them the true *gnosis* or knowledge.

j. Var. 'you know all things'.

2 P 1:12	It is not because you do not know the truth that I am writing to you	21
2 Jn 1:2	but rather because you know it already	
3:19+	and know that no lie can come from the truth. <sup>k</sup>	
	The man who denies that Jesus is the Christ—	22
	he is the liar,	
2 Th 2:4+	he is Antichrist;	
2 Jn 7	and he is denying the Father as well as the Son, <sup>l</sup>	
	because no one who has the Father can deny the Son,	23
Jn 14:7-9:	and to acknowledge the Son is to have the Father as well.	
17:6+	Keep alive in yourselves what you were taught in the beginning: <sup>m</sup>	24
	as long as what you were taught in the beginning is alive in you,	
1:3+	you will live in the Son	
	and in the Father;	
Jn 5:24; 6:	and what is promised to you by his own promise	25
40,68; 17:2	is eternal life.	
	This is all that I am writing to you about the people who are	26
	trying to lead you astray.	
22:20	But you have not lost the anointing that he gave you,	27
	and you do not need anyone to teach you; <sup>n</sup>	
Jr 31:34	the anointing he gave teaches you everything;	
Jn 14:26+	you are anointed with truth, not with a lie,	
	and as it has taught you, so you must stay in him.	
4:17	Live in Christ, then, my children,	28
	so that if he appears, we may have full confidence,	
2 Th 1:9	and not turn from him in shame	
Mt 24:3+	at his coming.	
1Co 15:23+	You know that God is righteous—	29
1:3+, 7+	then you must recognise that everyone whose life is righteous	
	has been begotten by him.	

## II. LIVE AS GOD'S CHILDREN

3	Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us,	1
Jn 1:12	by letting us be called God's children;	
Rm 8:14-17,	and that is what we are. <sup>a</sup>	
37-39		
Ep 1:5	Because the world refused to acknowledge him,	
Jn 15:21; 16:	therefore it does not acknowledge us.	
3; 17:25	My dear people, we are already the children of God	2
	but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed;	
Rm 8:29	all we know is, that when it is revealed	
Ph 3:21	we shall be like him	
Col 3:4	because we shall see him as he really is.	

### First condition: break with sin

	Surely everyone who entertains this hope	3
2:6	must purify himself, must try to be as pure as Christ. <sup>b</sup>	
Mt 5:48+	Anyone who sins at all	4
	breaks the law,	
	because to sin is to break the law.	
Jn 1:29+	Now you know that he appeared in order to abolish sin, <sup>c</sup>	5
Jn 8:46	and that in him there is no sin;	
Heb 7:26	anyone who lives in God does not sin, <sup>d</sup>	6
1:3+; 2:14+	and anyone who sins	
Mt 7:18	has never seen him or known him.	
	My children, do not let anyone lead you astray:	7

- to live a holy life  
 is to be holy just as he is holy;  
 8 to lead a sinful life is to belong to the devil,<sup>e</sup>  
 since the devil was a sinner from the beginning.  
 It was to undo all that the devil has done  
 that the Son of God appeared.  
 9 No one who has been begotten by God sins;  
 because God's seed<sup>f</sup> remains inside him,  
 he cannot sin when he has been begotten by God.

3:12  
 Gn 3:15  
 Jn 8:44  
 3:5  
 Jn 12:31-32  
 3:6+  
 2:14+

**Second condition: keep the commandments, especially the law of love**

- 10 In this way we distinguish the children of God  
 from the children of the devil:  
 anybody not living a holy life  
 and not loving his brother  
 is no child of God's.  
 11 This is the message  
 as you heard it from the beginning:  
 that we are to love one another;  
 12 not to be like Cain, who belonged to the Evil One  
 and cut his brother's throat;  
 cut his brother's throat simply for this reason,  
 that his own life was evil and his brother lived a good life.  
 13 You must not be surprised, brothers, when the world hates you;  
 14 we have passed out of death and into life,  
 and of this we can be sure  
 because we love our brothers.  
 15 If you refuse to love, you must remain dead;  
 to hate your brother is to be a murderer,  
 and murderers, as you know, do not have eternal life in them.  
 16 This has taught us love—  
 that he gave up his life for us;  
 and we, too, ought to give up our lives for our brothers.  
 17 If a man who was rich enough in this world's goods  
 saw that one of his brothers was in need,  
 but closed his heart to him,  
 how could the love of God be living in him?  
 18 My children,  
 our love is not to be just words or mere talk,  
 but something real and active;  
 19 only by this can we be certain<sup>g</sup>

1:7+; 4:6  
 3:8+  
 3:23  
 1:5  
 2:7  
 Jn 13:34  
 3:8+  
 Gn 4:8  
 Jn 8:44  
 Jude 11  
 Mt 24:9  
 Jn 15:18-21  
 Jn 5:24;  
 11:26  
 Heb 6:1+  
 2:6  
 Mt 20:28  
 Jn 15:12-13  
 Ep 5:2  
 Dt 15:7,11  
 Jm 2:16  
 2:5; 4:12  
 Jn 5:42  
 Mt 7:21  
 Jm 1:22

k. Or 'and because you know that the lies cannot have come from truth'.

l. Probably a reference to Cerinthus who taught that Jesus was an ordinary human being who was 'possessed' by the Messiah at his baptism in the Jordan; this Messiah ascended before the Passion of Jesus. Another possible reference to his teaching is in 5:6—the belief in baptism ('water') but not the sacrificial death ('blood').

m. The apostolic teaching concerning the mystery of Christ.

n. Christians are taught by the apostles, 1:3,5; 2:7,24, but merely hearing what is said is not enough, the message must penetrate them and this it cannot do except through the grace of the Holy Spirit, cf. 2:20+.

3 a. Om. 'and that is what we are'; var. (Vulg.) 'and may we become precisely that'.

b. Lit. 'as That One'.

c. Lit. 'sins'; var. 'our sins'.

d. Because God, living in the Christian, is present with all his divine power for life, John is talking in general terms, ignoring people's momentary lapses, 1:7—2:1; all he is giving is a schematic contrast between the two 'worlds', cf. 3:9; 5:18.

e. Having used expressions like: of God, from Truth, child of God, to show how a Christian lives under the influence of God living in him, John now uses expressions like: of the devil, 3:8; of the Evil One, 3:12, from, or of, the impermanent world, 2:16; 4:5, children of the devil, to indicate those who live under the influence of the devil and allow themselves to be seduced by him.

f. The 'seed' of God could be a reference to Christ, cf. Ga 3:16; 1 Jn 5:13, but some commentators take it as a reference to the Spirit, cf. 2:20-27, or to the seed of divine life introduced into us by God.

g. Lit. 'we shall be certain'; var. (Vulg.) 'we are certain'.

2:21 + Jn 18:37 2 Jn 4	that we are children of the truth <sup>a</sup>	
	and be able to quieten our conscience in his presence,	
4:4	whatever accusations it may raise against us,	20
	because God is greater than our conscience and he knows everything. <sup>c</sup>	
	My dear people,	21
	if we cannot be condemned by our own conscience,	
	we need not be afraid in God's presence,	
5:15 Mt 7:7-11p Jn 14:13-14	and whatever we ask him,	22
	we shall receive,	
	because we keep his commandments	
Jn 8:29	and live the kind of life that he wants.	
	His commandments are these:	23
	that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ	
5:3	and that we love one another	
Jn 13:34: 15:17	as he told us to.	
	Whoever keeps his commandments	24
1:3 +	lives in God and God lives in him.	
1:7 + Jn 14:21-23 4:13	We know that he lives in us	
	by the Spirit that he has given us.	

**Third condition: be on guard against the enemies of Christ  
and against the world**

1 Co 12:10 +	<b>4</b>	It is not every spirit, my dear people, that you can trust;	1
2:18 Mt 24:24 1 Tm 4:1 + Jude 4 1 Co 12:3 1 Th 5:21		test them, to see if they come from God,	
		there are many false prophets, now, in the world.	
		You can tell the spirits that come from God by this:	2
		every spirit which acknowledges that Jesus the Christ has come	
		in the flesh	
		is from God;	
		but any spirit which will not say this of Jesus <sup>a</sup>	3
		is not from God,	
2:22 2 Th 2:4 +		but is the spirit of Antichrist,	
		whose coming you were warned about.	
		Well, now he is here, in the world.	
		Children,	4
2:14 +		you have already overcome these false prophets,	
		because you are from God and you have in you	
3:20		one who is greater than anyone in this world;	
3:8 +		as for them, they are of the world,	5
		and so they speak the language of the world	
		and the world listens to them.	
1:3 + Jn 8:47; 10: 26 +		But we <sup>b</sup> are children of God,	6
		and those who know God listen to us;	
		those who are not of God refuse to listen to us.	
3:10 Jn 14:17		This is how we can tell	
		the spirit of truth from the spirit of falsehood. <sup>c</sup>	

### III. LOVE AND FAITH

#### Love

	My dear people,	7
	let us love one another	
1 Th 4:9	since love comes from God	
1:3 +	and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.	
1:7 +	Anyone who fails to love can never have known God,	8

- because God is love.<sup>d</sup> 4:16
- 9 God's love for us was revealed  
when God sent into the world his only Son  
so that we could have life through him;  
10 this is the love I mean:  
not our love for God,  
but God's love for us when he sent his Son  
to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away.  
11 My dear people,  
since God has loved us so much,  
we too should love one another.  
12 No one has ever seen God;<sup>e</sup>  
but as long as we love one another  
God will live in us  
and his love will be complete in us.  
13 We can know that we are living in him  
and he is living in us  
because he lets us share his Spirit.<sup>f</sup> 3:24  
14 We ourselves saw and we testify  
that the Father sent his Son  
as saviour of the world. Rm 5:5+  
15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God,  
God lives in him, and he in God. Jn 3:17  
16 We ourselves have known and put our faith in  
God's love towards ourselves. Jn 4:42+  
God is love 4:7-8  
and anyone who lives in love lives in God,  
and God lives in him. 1:3+
- 17 Love will come to its perfection in us  
when we can face the day of Judgement without fear;  
because even in this world  
we have become as he is. 2:28  
18 In love there can be no fear, Rm 8:15  
but fear is driven out by perfect love; Jm 2:13  
because to fear is to expect punishment, 2:6+; 3:2-3  
and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love.<sup>g</sup> 2 Th 3:7+  
19 We are to love, then, 2 Tm 1:7  
because he loved us first. 4:9-10  
20 Anyone who says, 'I love God', 2:4  
and hates his brother,

h. In the O.T. 'truth' (contrasting with unrighteousness and evil) often means the rightness of a life morally well lived in accordance with the will of Yahweh, in fidelity to Yahweh. This is the way John uses the word. As there is a double commandment to fidelity and love, 3:23, people are said to 'belong to truth' if they believe, 2:21,22, and love, 3:19; they are said to live 'in union with (walk according to) truth' 2 Jn 4-6, 3 Jn 3-6, to 'do the truth', Jn 3:21 (to perform or act it, as opposed to committing sin, doing wrong), cf. Jn 18:37; 4:24.

i. The person whose conscience (lit. 'heart') reproaches him will find that God as a Judge is both more acute and more lenient than his conscience, providing (it is understood) that charity has been practised. Another translation could be 'In the presence of God we shall prove to our conscience, if it has been accusing us, that God is greater than our conscience is, and that he knows everything'.

4 a. Var. (Vulg.) and strongly supported 'which dissolves (or breaks, splits, divides) Jesus'.

b. 'we' i.e. the authorised preachers, and

particularly the apostles.

c. Lit. 'From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error'; the theme of the two spirits, which also occurs in Essene (Qumran) literature, was destined to have a considerable influence on early Christian thought. All people are torn between the two 'worlds', cf. 3:8+; 3:19+, and in varying degrees all are inspired by the spirit of each of these 'worlds'. For John the spirit of truth comes from God, 3:24; 4:13, cf. Jn 14:26+.

d. The idea that God loves Israel was one of the great poetic inspirations of the O.T., cf. Is 54:8+. The fact that God sent his only Son to save the world proves that God is love.

e. This is directed against the *pneumatikoi* who held that by intuition a human being can 'reach' God.

f. It is God himself who through his Spirit produces charity in us.

g. It is impossible to combine the love of a son with the fear of a slave.

1 P 1:8  
Mt 22:36-40  
Jn 14:15,21;  
15:17

is a liar,  
since a man who does not love the brother that he can see  
cannot love God, whom he has never seen.  
So this is the commandment that he has given us,  
that anyone who loves God must also love his brother.

21

1:3 +  
Jn 8:42  
1 P 1:23

5

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ  
has been begotten by God;  
and whoever loves the Father that begot him  
loves the child whom he begets.<sup>a</sup>

1

Rm 13:9  
Ga 5:14

We can be sure that we love God's children  
if we love God himself and do what he has commanded us;  
this is what loving God is—

2

3:23  
2 Jn 6  
Dt 30:17  
Mt 11:30

keeping his commandments;  
and his commandments are not difficult,  
because anyone who has been begotten by God  
has already overcome the world;

3

Jn 16:33  
2 14+

this is the victory over the world—  
our faith.

4

### Faith

Jn 19:34

Who can overcome the world?  
Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God;<sup>b</sup>  
Jesus Christ who came by water and blood,<sup>c</sup>

5

Jn 4:1 +

not with water only,  
but with water and blood;  
with the Spirit as another witness—  
since the Spirit is the truth—

6

Jn 1:33 +  
2:20,27  
Jn 14:26 +

so that there are three witnesses,<sup>d</sup>  
the Spirit, the water and the blood,  
and all three of them agree.<sup>e</sup>

7

8

Jn 5:32,37

We accept the testimony of human witnesses,  
but God's testimony is much greater,  
and this is God's testimony,  
given as evidence for his Son.

9

Jn 3:33

Everybody who believes in the Son of God  
has this testimony inside him;

10

and anyone who will not believe God  
is making God out to be a liar,  
because he has not trusted  
the testimony God has given about his Son.

Jn 3:11 +

This is the testimony:

11

1:2; 5:20  
Jn 1:4; 5:  
21,26

God has given us eternal life  
and this life is in his Son;

anyone who has the Son has life,  
anyone who does not have the Son does not have life.

12

### Conclusion

Jn 1:12;  
20:31

I have written all this to you  
so that you who believe in the name of the Son of God  
may be sure that you have eternal life.

13

### ENDING'

#### Prayer for sinners

Mt 7:7p

We are quite confident that if we ask him for anything,

14



- and it is in accordance with his will,  
 he will hear us;  
 15 and, knowing that whatever we may ask, he hears us,  
 we know that we have already been granted what we asked of him.  
 16 If anybody sees his brother commit a sin  
 that is not a deadly sin,  
 he has only to pray, and God will give life to the sinner  
 —not those who commit a deadly sin;  
 for there is a sin that is death,<sup>g</sup>  
 and I will not say that you must pray about that.  
 17 Every kind of wrong-doing is sin,  
 but not all sin is deadly.<sup>h</sup>

3:22  
 Jn 14:13-14;  
 15:7

Jn 15:22-24

Mt 12:31

### Summary of the letter

- 18 We know that anyone who has been begotten by God  
 does not sin,  
 because the begotten Son of God<sup>i</sup> protects him,  
 and the Evil One does not touch him.  
 19 We know that we belong to God,  
 but the whole world lies in the power of the Evil One.  
 20 We know, too, that the Son of God has come,  
 and has given us the power  
 to know the true God.<sup>j</sup>  
 We are in the true God,  
 as we are in his Son, Jesus Christ.  
 This is the true God,  
 this is eternal life.  
 21 Children, be on your guard against false gods.<sup>k</sup>

1:3 + 13 +

3:6 +

Jn 1:13

2:14 +  
 Jn 17:15

Jr 24:7  
 Ep 1:17

Jn 17:3

5:12

1:2

5 a. To believe the truth is to be begotten by God and to love God as Father and so also to love all God's other children.

b. This argument is based on two previous ones; whoever believes is begotten by God, v. 1, and to be begotten by God is to be the conqueror of the 'world', v. 4.

c. The water and the blood that came from his side when Jesus was pierced on the cross, cf. Jn 19:34 and note. These were the 'evidence', for the original eyewitnesses, but they are also the witness for all Christians as the type of the baptism and the sacrificial death of Jesus which are operative in their own lives. The three components of the new life 'in Christ' are: the death (the blood), the resurrection, baptism (the water) and the gift of the Spirit.

d. Vulg. vv. 7-8 read as follows 'There are three witnesses in heaven: the Father the Word and the Spirit, and these three are one; there are three witnesses on earth: the Spirit the water and the blood'. The words in italics (not in any of the early Greek MSS, or any of the early translations, or in the best MSS of the Vulg. itself) are probably a gloss that has crept into

the text.

e. See note c on v. 6. The three witnesses support each other; the water of baptism is accompanied by the Spirit, and the Spirit came through the 'blood' of the death of Jesus. The writer probably intends another warning here, against the doctrine of Cerinthus—that the Spirit which came on Jesus at his baptism (water) left him before his death (blood).

f. As in the gospel, cf. Jn 21, the conclusion is followed by a postscript.

g. The sin against the Spirit, against truth, cf. Mt 12:31 +.

h. Lit. 'and there is a sin that is not to death'; Vulg. omits 'not'.

i. Jesus, cf. Jn 1:13, 18.

j. Lit. 'the True'; he is the only true God and the only one known for what he is in truth, i.e. Life and Love.

k. Lit. 'idols', as in paganism, but also the 'idols of the heart' (Qumran) that deflect human beings from their faith and true love. Vulg. adds 'Amen'.

# 2 JOHN

## THE SECOND LETTER OF JOHN

1 P 5:13 From the Elder:<sup>a</sup> my greetings to the Lady, the chosen one,<sup>b</sup> and to her 1  
3 Jn 1 children, she whom I love in the truth—and I am not the only one, for so do all 2  
1 Jn 2:21 who have come to know the truth—•because of the truth that lives in us and will 3  
Jn 14:17 be with us for ever. •In our life of truth and love, we shall have grace, mercy and 3  
peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.

### The law of love

Phm 7 It has given me great joy to find that your children have been living the life of 4  
3 Jn 3 truth<sup>c</sup> as we were commanded by the Father. •I am writing now, dear lady, not to 5  
1 Jn 3:19+ give you any new commandment, but the one which we were given at the begin-  
1 Jn 2:7-11 ning, and to plead: let us love one another.  
1 Jn 5:3 To love is to live according to his commandments: this is the commandment 6  
which you have heard since the beginning,<sup>d</sup> to live a life of love.

### The enemies of Christ

1 Jn 2:18 There are many deceivers about in the world, refusing to admit that Jesus 7  
1 Jn 4:2-3 Christ has come in the flesh. They are the Deceiver; they are the Antichrist.  
1 Jn 2:22 Watch yourselves, or all our work<sup>e</sup> will be lost and not get the reward it deserves. 8  
If anybody does not keep within the teaching of Christ<sup>f</sup> but goes beyond it,<sup>g</sup> he 9  
1 Jn 2:23-24 cannot have God with him: only those who keep to what he taught can have the  
Jude 4 Father and the Son with them. •If anyone comes to you bringing a different 10  
doctrine, you must not receive him in your house or even give him a greeting.  
To greet him would make you a partner in his wicked work. 11  
3 Jn 13f There are several things I have to tell you, but I have thought it best not to 12  
trust them to paper and ink. I hope instead to visit you and talk to you personally,  
1 Jn 1:4 so that our joy<sup>h</sup> may be complete.  
Greetings to you from the children of your sister,<sup>i</sup> the chosen one. 13

a. The elders were the leaders in each community, cf. Tt 1:5+. Here the title refers to John the apostle, the outstanding leader of the communities of Asia Minor.

b. The 'Chosen Lady' or 'Sovereign Lady', figurative reference to one of the local churches under the jurisdiction of the Elder.

c. Lit. 'walk in the truth'.

d. Or 'you must obey that commandment as you

learnt it at the beginning'.

e. Var. (Vulg.) 'your work'.

f. Teaching either by, or about, Christ.

g. Teaching pure speculation as apostolic doctrine, cf. Tt 3:9; 1 Tm 2:16, etc.

h. Var. (Vulg.) 'your joy'.

i. The church (perhaps Ephesus) from which the letter is being written.