

THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

{*This General Letter or, General Epistle is described as a sermon since it lacks the usual features of a letter. Scholars debate whether it was written by the writer of the Gospel, the Apostle, or some other person named John. The aim was to recall the readers to their basic Christian loyalties and to counter the distorted form of Christianity that was being proclaimed by some "false prophets" within the church itself (4:1-6).*}

INSCRIPTION

{*"First John" Aleph, A & B. "The First Epistle of John" Psi & many minuscules. "The Catholic Epistle of John" minuscules 323 & 614. "The Epistle of the Evangelist (or, Theologian) and Apostle John" P.*}

CHAPTER I THE WORD OF LIFE

<I John 1:1-4>

¹ What existed from the beginning we announce to you: the Word of Life. We have heard! We have seen with our own eyes! What we once looked at we touched with our own hands! ² Life has been revealed and we have seen and are bearing witness to it. We are announcing to you the life which is eternal, which was with the Father and has been revealed to us. We saw Him! ³ We also are telling you that you might join us in our fellowship for our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing this to [you] ¹ that [our] ² joy might be complete. <*The Greek word "πεπληρωμενη" gives the thought of that which is almost beyond attainment. Another Greek word, "τελειωω" gives the concept of being readily obtainable.*>

GOD IS LIGHT

<I John 1:5-10>

⁵ The message we heard from Him and make known to you is this: God is light. In Him there is no darkness whatsoever. ⁶ If, while we are living in darkness, we declare that we have fellowship with Him we are telling a falsehood and are not practicing the truth! ⁷ However, if we live in the light as He, Himself, is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of His Son Jesus cleanses us of all of our sins. ⁸ If we claim to be without sin (*or, If we say, 'We do not have sin'*) this is self deception and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, <*This practice was common in the Old Testament. cf. Leviticus 16:21; Psalm 32:5; Proverbs 28:13, Daniel 9:20. It in no way implies that the Church is God's intermediary in forgiving sins that are confessed by individuals.*> He is faithful (*or, dependable*) and just. He will forgive us of our sins and cleanse <*The Greek word "καθαριζω" is the basis for our word catharsis.*> us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we deny that we have sinned (*or, If we say, 'We have not sinned'*) we are making Him out to be a liar and His word (*or, message*) is not in us.

1 {C} Minor variants occur.

2 {C} So: Aleph, B, Psi, 049, several minuscules, Old Latin, & Sahidic Coptic. "your" A, C in the second corrective hand, K, P, 056, 0142, a number of minuscules, Harclean & Palestinian Syriac, Bohairic Coptic, Armenian and Ethiopic. Other variants occur.

CHAPTER II
CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE

<I John 2:1-6>

1 My children, <The form used is a diminutive, ergo, "small children". It would be considered to be an affectionate form of address.> I write this to you so that you might not sin and, if anyone does sin we have an intercessor (*or, one who pleads our cause*) with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one. 2 He, Himself, is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not simply ours but also for the sins of the entire world. 3 It is by this test that we have learned to know Him, that we obey His commands. 4 Whoever says, 'I know Him' and does not obey His commands is telling a falsehood (*or, is a liar*) and the truth is not to be found in him. 5 Whoever obeys His Word, in him the love of God has certainly attained perfection. It is in this way that we are enabled to learn that we are in unison with Him. 6 Anyone who makes the claim of remaining in Him ought to live as He (*literally, that one*) <*i.e. Jesus*> lived.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

<I John 2:7-17>

7 My dear [friends]³ it is not a new commandment that I am writing to you, but an old one which you have possessed from the beginning. By the old commandment I mean the message you have heard from the beginning. 8 Yet, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you as far as both He and you are concerned, in so far that darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. 9 Whoever claims to be in the light and yet hates his brother is still (*literally, now*) in the dark. 10 Whoever loves his brother is living in the light and there is nothing to make that person stumble (*or, there is no stumbling block in him*). 11 Whoever hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness. That person does not know where he is going for the darkness has caused his eyes to be blinded.

12 I am writing to you, my dear friends (*literally, children*)
because your sins are forgiven you for His sake.

13 I am writing to you, fathers,
because you have known Him who is from the very beginning (*or, is eternal*).
I am writing to you young men,
because you have conquered the evil one.

<From this point the words "I am writing" through verse 14, grammatically, could be translated, "I wrote to you".>

I am writing to you, children,
because you have come to have knowledge of the Father.

14 I am writing to you, fathers,
because you have learned to know Him who was from the very beginning
<*i.e. eternal*>.

I am writing to you, young men,
because you are vigorous.

God's message (*literally, the Word of God*) remains in you
and you have conquered the evil one.

15 Do not love the world nor the things of the world! Anyone who loves the world has no love within him of the Father. 16 Everything in the world: the passions of the flesh, the desires of the eye

3 {D} K, L, 049, 69 & the Majority Text use the word "brothers".

(*or, lusts*), the secular pride of life (*or, braggadocio*), is not derived from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world, with all [its] ⁴ lust is passing away but those who do the will of God will continue forever.

THE ANTICHRIST

<I John 2:18-27>

¹⁸ Children, the final hour is here. As you have heard, 'The antichrist is coming.' As a matter of fact, many antichrists have arisen. From this we may be aware that the last hour has arrived. ¹⁹ They left our midst <*i.e. the community of believers*> for they did not belong to us. If they had been ours, they would have remained with us. However, they left us that it might become clear that these believers (*albeit not everyone*) belong to us. ²⁰ As for you: hold fast to the anointing you have received from the Holy One and you [all] ⁵ have a knowledge of it (*or, know all about it*). <*There is a possible play on words in verse 20.*> ²¹ I have written to you, not because you do not know the truth but rather that you might know it and that no falsehood <*i.e. no heresy*> originates from the truth. ²² Who is the liar? It is the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ. It is he who disowns the Father and the Son, who is the antichrist. ²³ No one who disowns the Son is able to have the Father. Whoever acknowledges the Son also has the Father. ²⁴ As for yourselves, let that which you have been taught (*literally, you have heard*) from the beginning stay (*or, continue*) with you for then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ This is the promise which He, Himself, has promised [us,] ⁶ that is eternal life.

²⁶ I have written these things about those who try to mislead you. ²⁷ As for you: the anointing which you have received from Him remains with you, and you have no need to have anyone teach you! His anointing provides (*literally, gives*) you instruction about everything. It is true! It is no falsehood! Therefore, stay united in Him even as it was taught you!

CHILDREN OF GOD

<I John 2:28-3:10>

²⁸ My dear children, remain united (*or, abide*) in Him, so that when He appears (*literally, revealed*) <*i.e. the invisible becomes visible*>, we will have confidence <*The Greek word "παρρησια" originally meant "the right of the citizen to publicly express his opinion".*> so that we will not shrink from Him in shame. ²⁹ Since you know that He is righteous, you are well aware that it is He who is righteous. Be assured that everyone who practices righteousness is His child.

CHAPTER III

¹ See what glorious love the father has lavished upon us so that we should be called His children and [that is exactly what we are.] ⁷ <*The idea being, we are not God's children in name only, but in reality.*> It is for this reason that the world does not know (*or, recognize*) Him. ² My dear loved ones, now we are God's children but what we are to become has yet to become evident (*or, has not been revealed*). We know that if He appears (*or, manifests Himself*) we will come to be like Him (*or, resemble Him*) for we will see Him as He is. ³ Everyone who possesses this hope in Him, purifies himself as He is pure. <*Without hope life is empty.*>

⁴ Everyone who commits sin is a law breaker, for sin is breaking the law (*literally,*

4 {C} So: Aleph, B, C, K, Psi, 049, 056, 0142, many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac, Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic & Armenian. Omitted by A, P, several minuscules, Old Latin & Coptic manuscripts.

5 {D} So: Aleph, B, Psi, Sahidic Coptic & with slight variants A, C, K & many minuscules. "you know everyone" Peshitta Syriac. Omitted by one Old Latin.

6 {B} The word varies in the manuscripts but has the same meaning.

7 {B} So: P74, Aleph, A, B, C, P, Psi, many minuscules Peshitta & Harclean Syriac, Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic, Aramaic & Ethiopic. Omitted by K, 049, 056, 0142 & a number of minuscules.

lawlessness) <which in this case is to oppose Christ>. 5 You also know that He took on human form (literally, appeared) that He might take away (or, remove) [our]⁸ sins and that in Him there is no sin.

6 Everyone who remains in Him (or, has a faith relationship with Him) has no sin. No one who sins (or, keeps on sinning) has truly seen Him nor truly known Him. 7 My dear children, do not permit anyone to lead you astray (or, deceive you). Whoever acts in a righteous manner is righteous in the manner in which He <i.e. Christ> is righteous. 8 The person who goes on sinning (or, who commits sin) belongs to the devil because from the very beginning the devil has been sinning. It is for this purpose that the Son of God took on human form (literally, appeared) to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who has God for a Father will continue to sin. The divine presence (literally, sperm) remains within. <Reminiscent of the "holy remnant" concept in the Old Testament.> Having been born of God he cannot go on sinning. 10 It is by this that the children of God and the children of the devil are clearly distinguished from one another. Anyone who does not practice righteousness or fails to love his brother is not a child of God.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

<I John 3:11-18>

11 This is the message <The Greek word for "message" "αγγελια" could almost be understood as "command".> you have heard from the beginning, that you are to love one another,

12 not as did Cain <The name means "smith" or "spear". One of the sons of Adam, cf. Genesis 4:8> who was a child of the evil one and murdered his brother. For what reason did he kill him? It was because his own actions were evil while the actions of his brother were righteous. 13 [Also]⁹ do not be astonished (or, surprised) my brothers (so, literally) if the world has hatred toward you. 14 We know that we have crossed over (or, transferred) from death into life because we love our fellow human beings (literally, brothers). Anyone who does not [continue loving]¹⁰ (or, who does not possess love) remains in death. 15 Whoever continues hating his fellow human beings is a murderer and you are well aware (or, know) that no murderer has eternal life dwelling in him. <The attitude is the same. Hatred is incompatible with spiritual life.> 16 This is how we are able to understand the meaning of love, in that He laid down His life on our behalf and that we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of our fellow human beings. 17 Whoever is a possessor of wealth (literally, worldly goods) and sees that his brother is in need, and yet locks his heart (so, literally) against him -- how is it possible for the love of God to dwell with him? <The need of the world today is not for heroic acts of martyrdom but for heroic acts of material sacrifice.> 18 My dear children, let us not love merely with words and language <i.e. insincere expressions of caring> but in action and in truth (or, sincerity).

CONFIDENCE BEFORE GOD

<I John 3:19-24>

19 It is in this way that we are going to be able to become fully loyal toward the truth to which we owe our lives. In His presence our hearts are at peace 20 for should our hearts <The Hebraic

8 {C} So: Aleph, C, K, Psi, 049., 056, 0142, many minuscules, Peshitta Syriac, Sahidic & Fayyumic Coptic. Omitted by A, B, P, six minuscule, Old Latin, Herculian Syriac, Bohairic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic.

9 {D} So: Aleph, C, P, Psi, several minuscules, Peshitta Syriac, Armenian & Ethiopic. Omitted by A, B, K, 049, 056, 0142 many minuscules, Herculian Syriac, Sahidic, Bohairic & Fayyumic Coptic.

10 {C} So: Aleph, A, B, many minuscules, Old Latin, Bohairic & Fayyumic Coptic & Armenian. "loving your brothers" P, 056, 0142, some minuscules, Peshitta & Herculian Syriac, Sahidic Coptic & Ethiopic. "loving the brothers" C, K, Psi, 049 & several minuscules.

concept of "heart" is virtually equal to our concept of "conscience".> condemn us, it is God who is greater than our hearts and He is omniscient <i.e. knows everything>. 21 My beloved, if [our] 11 hearts do not condemn [us] 12 <i.e. consciences do not condemn us> we are able to approach God with confidence and whatever we might request 22 we will receive from Him for we obey His commands and do what is pleasing in the sight of God. 23 This is the command, that we are to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and that we love one another just as He has commanded us. 24 Those who keep His commandments remain in Him and He in them (or, dwell in God and God in them) and through His Holy Spirit which He has given us we know that He has entered into us.

CHAPTER IV

THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST

<I John 4:1-6.

1 My beloved, do not believe every so called spirit but test the claims of the spirits to see whether they are of God, for many false prophets have gone forth into the world. 2 The way we recognize the Spirit of God is: All Spirits that acknowledge that Jesus Christ has become incarnate (or, in bodily form) are from God. <This could also be translated, "All Spirits that acknowledge Jesus Christ's having become incarnate (or, in bodily form), are from God." The reality of the incarnation is the point of emphasis.> 3 Additionally, any spirit that does not [declare (or, acknowledge)] 13 [Jesus] 14 is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist about whose coming you have heard. This spirit is now already in the world. 4 You are from God, dear children, and you have gained mastery over them because the one who is greater than you is in you and is greater than the one who is in the world <i.e. the antichrist>. 5 They are from the world, therefore their language is worldly (or, secular) and the world listens to them. 6 We, by contrast, are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us. Whoever does not know God does not listen to us. It is by this means (or, this test) that we can distinguish the Spirit of Truth from the spirit of error (or, falsehood).

GOD IS LOVE

<I John 4:7-21>

7 My dear friends, let us love one another, because love has its source in God and whoever is loving is a child of God and knows God. 8 Whoever is not loving does not know God because God is love. 9 As far as we are concerned, the love of God has been revealed through God's sending His only Son into the world in order that through Him we might have life (or, live). 10 Herein is love (or, This is love): It is not that we loved God but that God has loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation (or, sin offering) for our sins. 11 My dear friends, if God has loved us in this manner, ought we not also love one another? 12 No one has beheld God. If we love one another, God exists in us and His love is made perfect in us.

13 We can know that we remain in God and He in us by virtue of the fact that He has imparted His Spirit to us 14 and we ourselves have seen and bear testimony that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God -- God continues in him (or, lives in him) and he continues (or, lives) in God. 16 We ourselves have come to know and put our faith in the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever continues in love continues in God and God continues in Him. 17 It is

11 {C} So: Aleph, C, K, P, Psi, 049, many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta Syriac, Sahidic Coptic Aramaic & Ethiopic.

12 {C} Omitted by B in the original hand. Other insignificant variants occur.

13 {B} Manuscripts vary in the word used for "declare".

14 {B} So: A, B, several minuscules, Old Latin & Bohairic Coptic. "Jesus Christ" minuscule 629. "Jesus who came in the flesh" with variants several manuscripts. Other variants occur.

by this that love comes into completion within us -- when we face the Judgment Day we are able to be fearless (*or, confident*) because our relationship to the world is like His. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. Instead perfect love expels fear because fear involves punishment. <*The Greek word for "punishment" "κολασις" is no doubt an eschatological term.*> Because of this anyone who fears has not attained perfection in love. ¹⁹ We love [Him] ¹⁵ because He first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, 'I love God' but at the same time hates his neighbor, that person is a liar, for he who does not love his fellow human beings whom he has seen surely cannot love God whom he [is not able to see.] ¹⁶ ²¹ Additionally, the command we have been given from Him is that the one who loves God must also love his fellow human beings.

CHAPTER V

FAITH IS VICTORY OVER THE WORLD

<I John 5:1-5>

¹ Everyone who has faith that Jesus is the Christ (*or, Messiah, Anointed One*) has been born of God (*or, is a child of God*) and everyone who loves the Father [also] ¹⁷ loves (*or, ought to love*) the Father's other children. ² It is in this way that we know that we love God and obey His commands: When we love God and [do (*or, practice*)]¹⁸ what He commands. ³ This becomes the means by which we know that we love God's children for His commands are not burdensome. ⁴ Everyone who is born of God conquers the world and this is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. ⁵ Who is the victor of the world? Only the person (*literally, man*) who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

THE WITNESS CONCERNING THE SON

<I John 5:6-12>

⁶ This is the one who came by water and [blood] ¹⁹ Jesus Christ (*or, the Messiah, Anointed One*) not with water only but with water and blood. ^{7,8} Additionally the Spirit testifies because the Spirit is truth. These are three who bear witness: [the Spirit and the water and the blood.] ²⁰ and these three are one (*or agree*). ⁹ If we accept the testimony of persons, God's testimony is even greater! God has testified concerning His Son. ¹⁰ Anyone who believes in the Son of God possesses the witness [within himself.] ²¹ Anyone who does not believe in [God,] ²² that person has not placed faith in the testimony (*or, evidence*) God has given us regarding His Son. ¹¹ This is the evidence: God has granted us eternal life and this life is in His Son. Whoever has (*or, possesses*) this has life. ¹² Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have (*or, possess*) this life.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF ETERNAL LIFE

15 {B} So: K Psi, 049, 056, 0142, many minuscules. Omitted by A, B, several minuscules, Ethiopic (Pell Platt). "love God" Aleph, 048, several minuscules, a few Old Latin, Peshitta & Hareclean Syriac, Bohairic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic (Rome).

16 {B} Minor variants occur.

17 {C} So: Aleph, A, K, P, 048,33, 326, Old Latin, Peshitta & Hareclean Syriac, Bohairic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic. Omitted by B, Psi, 048, several minuscules, Old Latin & Sahidic Coptic.

18 {C} So: B, Psi, several minuscules, Peshitta & Hareclean Syriac, Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic. Omitted by B, Psi, 048, some minuscules & Old Latin.

19 {B} So: B, K, Psi, 049, 056,0142, several minuscules, Old Latin & Peshitta Syriac. "spirit" 945. 1241 & 1877. "blood and spirit" Aleph, A, many minuscules, Hareclean Syriac & Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic.

20 {A} So: Aleph, 048, 049, 056, 0142 & many minuscules. Late manuscripts and the Vulgate add: "testify in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit and these three are one (*or, agree*). These are three that testify on earth: The Spirit and the water and the blood." Only Greek manuscripts of late origin have this gloss in the margin by another hand. The source thereof no doubt is the Latin Vulgate where it is included in the regular text.

21 {B} Words vary in the manuscripts.

22 {B} Late manuscripts along with A & 081 have these variants: "the Son" or "the Son of God".

<I John 5:13-21>

13 I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you might be assured that you already have eternal life. 14 We have this confidence resting in Him, that if we ask him for anything in conformity with His will, He hears <*The Greek word "ακουω" implies "to hear favorably".*> us 15 and since we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that this is assured us.

16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin which is not mortal (*or, deadly*), he will ask <*i.e. pray on that person's behalf*> and he will have life granted him, presuming that it is not mortal (*or, deadly*) sin. 17 Every wrongdoing is sin and there are sins that are not mortal (*or, deadly*).

18 We know that everyone who is a child of God does not keep on sinning but whoever was born of God <*i.e. the Son of God*> keeps [him]²³ safe (*or, protects them*) and the evil one is unable to harm (*or, touch*) that person. 19 We also understand that we are the children of God and that the entire world lies under the domination of the evil one. 20 We further know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding to know the [True One]²⁴ and we are in union with the True One and in union with His Son, Jesus Christ (*or, the Anointed One, Messiah*). This is the true God and this is Eternal Life. 21 My children, guard yourselves against [idols.]²⁵

23 So: some manuscripts. Others say "them".

24 So: Aleph in corrective hand, B, K, P, 049, 056, 0142, many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac & Bohairic Coptic. "The True God" A, Psi, minuscules, other Old Latin & Bohairic Coptic.

25 So: Aleph, A, B, Psi, many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac, Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopian. "Amen" is added by K, P, 049, 056, 0142 & many minuscules.