

# Show of Love

## 1 John 4:7-10

### Dr. Pierre Cannings

#### I. Show Love vs. 7-8

##### a. Love One Another

###### i. Love - of special devotion

1. The true nature of love cannot be appreciated unless it is recognized that its origin must be sought beyond human nature.

###### ii. From God

1. in fact, it is because (*hoti*) love is from God (*hē agapē ek tou theou estin*). Love flows from or out of (*ek*) God and has God as its spring or source

###### iii. Born of God - 1 John 2:29 - by exercising the role of a parental figure

###### iv. Knows God **to arrive at a knowledge of someone or something know, know about, make acquaintance** a tree by its fruit **Mt 12:33; Lk 6:44; 1J 4:6**

1. But John's claim that everyone who loves is born of God and knows (*ginōskei*) God does not include these incomplete expressions of love. He is referring to a particular kind of love that is found only in those who have been regenerated by Christ. The perfect tense of "born" would include the initial rebirth of the individual and the continuing effects this would have in their life, and the present tense of "know" emphasizes that the individual is continuing to grow in knowledge of God. In other words, it is not the person's ability to love that causes the new birth, but his ability to love flows from his regeneration in Christ.
2. He who loves shows thereby that he has experienced the new birth from God which is the beginning of Christian life, and that its effects are permanent and abiding. He also shows that he has entered upon that life which consists in the gradual acquiring of the knowledge of God

##### b. Does Not Love

###### i. Does not know God

1. John now turns from the positive expression of truth to its negative expression. He adds emphasis to the point in v. 7 by now stating the converse. Those who do not love do not know God.

2. The one who does not love is a stranger to God. He never even began to have a relationship with God; that is, there was never a time when this person could have legitimately claimed that he knew God
- ii. God is Love
  1. Since **God is love**, intimate acquaintance with Him will produce love. Like light (1:5), love is intrinsic to the character and nature of God, and one who is intimately acquainted with God walks in His light (1:7).
  2. John has already stated that God is Spirit (John 4:24) and that God is light (1 John 1:5), and now he gives one more encompassing statement regarding the nature of God. In this context John is saying that to know the love of God is to manifest his love. Without this manifestation one could not possibly know, or ever have known, God or his love
  3. Love is not merely an attribute of God, it is His very Nature and Being; or rather, the word expresses the highest conception which we can form of that Nature.

## II. Love Shown vs. 9-10

- a. Manifested in Us
  - i. **to cause to become known, *disclose, show, make known*.** The work of Jesus is described as revelation in 1 Jn. 3:5, 8. It is the revelation of God's love in 4:9, cf. Jn. 3:16. If the goal is that we may have life (4:9), the whole revelation can also be summed up in ζωή, 1:2
  - ii. In the light of such a manifestation of God's love there can be no question about the obligation to mutual love among those who have experienced it. True knowledge always finds expression in action. The true nature of God cannot be made visible to the eye. His presence cannot be seen. But it is known in its results. Where love is, there we know that God abides in men. His abiding in men is the most complete expression of His love
  - iii. The true nature of God's love has now been shown, in a way which men can understand and appreciate, in the fact and the purpose of the Incarnation. God gave His best, that men might be enabled to live the life of God.
- b. God sent His only begotten Son
  - i. Begotten
    1. The sentence structure accentuates the nature and uniqueness of Christ. The word *monogenēs* occurs nine times in the New Testament (Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; Heb 11:17; and in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). Only John uses the term *monogenēs*

(translated “one and only”) to refer to Christ. emphasizes the uniqueness and deity of Christ

2. It emphasizes the completeness of the revelation of God which He is able to give, as well as the uniqueness of the gift.

ii. Live through Him

1. The verb “live” (*zēsōmen*) implies that those to whom the Son was sent were in a condition of spiritual death, and his mission was to impart life to them. This life only occurs through (*dia*) him since he is the true and only mediating agent between God and man (cf. 1 Tim 2:5).
2. The preposition has its full force. God sent His Son that men might live. The manifestation of His love is made *in* those who have entered upon the life which He sent His Son to give

c. That’s Love

i. We didn’t Love God

1. The origin of love lies beyond human effort and initiative. Left to ourselves, we would not love him. We would hate him and oppose him. It took his boundless, sacrificial love to break our hearts of stone and bring us to himself.
2. Odes of Solomon, iii. 3, 4, “I should not have known how to love the Lord, if He had not loved me. For who is able to distinguish love, except the one that is loved?”

ii. He Love us

1. Love is always demonstrated by actions. It is not abstract; it is never complacent or static. John has already given the purpose for this demonstration of love: (1) to take away our sins (1 John 3:5) and (2) to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). This marvelous act was prompted not by man’s love for God but God’s love for man, so that “the sending of God’s Son was both the revelation of his love (This is how God showed his love ... 9) and, indeed, the very essence of love itself (this is love ... 10). It is not our love that is primary, but God’s (10), free, uncaused and spontaneous. All our love is but a reflection of his and a response to it.
2. John states that believers are to love first, because love is the very nature of the God (v. 8) to whom they belong and of whom they are partakers and second (v. 9), because of the incredible manner in which God’s love was displayed. This verse is clearly reminiscent of his magnificent statement found in John 3:16 (cf. also 1 John 3:16).

iii. Sent His Son as Propitiation

1. Sent

- a. Life through and in the Son is a subject that greatly interests John. He refers to it no fewer than six times in vv. 9–16. The perfect tense of “sent” emphasizes the permanent consequences of this act
  - b. True love is selfless. It is not a mere response. It gives itself. The sending of God’s Son was not the answer of God to something in man. It was the outcome of the very Nature of God.
- 2. Propitiation - Propitiation - **appeasement necessitated by sin, *expiation***
  - a. In this verse the purpose in sending the Son is not the incarnation but the atonement. God sent his Son to die. Further, God’s love is primary, not ours. The death of Christ is extolled, not the birth. John, in concluding the verse with the phrase “our sin” (*tōn hamartiōn hēmōn*), is keenly aware of his own need as well as ours for this propitiatory act. Our act was to sin. God’s was to love and send.
  - b. Nothing less than God’s love in Christ is the model for the **love** Christians should have toward **one another**.
  - c. God could not give Himself while men’s sins formed a barrier between them and Him. True love must sweep away the hindrances to the fulfilment of the law of its being.

## Word Studies

Love-a broad range of persons, apart from recipients of special devotion, for which see<sup>1</sup>

Born – 1 John 2:29 - by exercising the role of a parental figure<sup>2</sup>

Knows God – 1 John 2:3- **to arrive at a knowledge of someone or someth., *know, know about, make acquaintance***<sup>3</sup>a tree by its fruit **Mt 12:33; Lk 6:44; 1J 4:6**<sup>4</sup>

**Manifested - to cause to become known, *disclose, show, make known***<sup>5</sup>The work of Jesus is described as revelation in 1 Jn. 3:5, 8. It is the revelation of God's love in 4:9, cf. Jn. 3:16. If the goal is that we may have life (4:9), the whole revelation can also be summed up in ζωή, 1:2.<sup>6</sup>

Propitiation - **appeasement necessitated by sin, *expiation***<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 5.

<sup>2</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 193.

**someth. someth.** = something

<sup>3</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 199.

<sup>4</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 199.

<sup>5</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1048.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Bultmann and Dieter Lührmann, “[Φαίνω, Φανερός, Φανερώω, Φανέρωσις, Φαντάζω, Φάντασμα, Ἐμφανίζω, Ἐπιφαίνω, Ἐπιφανής, Ἐπιφάνεια](#),” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 5.

<sup>7</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 474.

## Commentary Study

7. ἀγαπητοί] One of the writer's favourite words. It occurs ten times in the Epistles, though not in the Gospel. It is his usual method of address when he wishes to appeal to the better thoughts and feelings of his readers, or, to use S. Paul's phrase, to "open the eyes of their hearts." It emphasizes the natural grounds of appeal for mutual love, which can most readily be called out among those who are loved or lovable.

ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστίν] The whole of the Biblical revelation of God emphasizes the fact that man is made in the image of God, not God in the image of man, however much our conceptions of God are necessarily conditioned by human limitations. It suggests that whatever is best in man is the reflection, under the limitations of finite human existence, of something in the nature of God. The true nature of love cannot be appreciated unless it is recognized that its origin must be sought beyond human nature. We may compare the doctrine of "Fatherhood" insisted upon in Eph. 3:15.

πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν] It is generally recognized that love is here presented, not as the cause of the new birth from God or of the knowledge of God, but as their effect. The presence of love is the test by which the reality of their presence in any man may be known. The discussion of the question whether the writer intends to present the relation of the being born of God to the knowledge of God as one of cause and effect, or of effect and cause, is perhaps idle. He who loves shows thereby that he has experienced the new birth from God which is the beginning of Christian life, and that its effects are permanent and abiding. He also shows that he has entered

upon that life which consists in the gradual acquiring of the knowledge of God. Whether this process of acquiring knowledge begins before, and leads to, the new birth, or only begins after that has been experienced and is its consequence, is not stated. The question was probably not present to the writer's mind.

η αγαπη] post εστιν <sup>175</sup> (319).

του (? <sup>175</sup>) om. <sup>116</sup> (-).

ο αγαπων] + τον θεον A: + *fratrem* demid. tol. Fulg.: + *fratrem suum*. Did.: cf. *omnes qui diligunt se inuicem* sah<sup>d</sup>.

και 1°—(8) εστιν] om. syr<sup>p</sup>.

γεγεννηται] γεγενηται 99. 177\*. 180 j<sup>scr</sup> l<sup>scr</sup> Dam.

8. The negative counterpart of ver. 7, the statement being made, as usual, with a slight difference.

οὐκ ἔγνω] He shows by his want of love that the process of knowledge never even began in him.

ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν] Love is not merely an attribute of God, it is His very Nature and Being; or rather, the word expresses the highest conception which we can form of that Nature. Holtzmann's note is worth quoting. "Even the false gnosis realized that God is light and spirit. But when here and in ver. 16 love is put forward as the truest presentation of God, this is the highest expression of the conception of God. It passes entirely beyond the limitations of natural religion. It does not come within the category of Substance, but only those of Power and Activity. It opens the way for an altogether new presentation of religion based on the facts of moral life."

~ 1°—θεον] post εστιν syr<sup>sch</sup>: om. <sup>192</sup> d<sup>scr</sup> arm-cdd. aeth.: ο μη αγαπων ουκ εγνωκεν <sup>c</sup>.

ο 1°] pr. οτι <sup>174</sup> (252): + δε <sup>258</sup> (56).

ουκ εγνω] om. εγνωκεν <sup>c</sup> 31: ου γινωσκει A 3. 5. 13 al.<sup>4</sup> arm. Or. cf. Lcif. Did. Fulg.: *non cognoscit* sah.

9. ἐν τούτῳ] The true nature of God's love has now been shown, in a way which men can understand and appreciate, in the fact and the purpose of the Incarnation. God gave His best, that men might be enabled to live the life of God.

ἐν ἡμῖν] Not "among us," still less "to us." If the writer had meant "God's love to us," he would doubtless have used the Greek words which would convey that meaning, ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ (ἡ) εἰς ἡμᾶς. The preposition has its full force. God sent His Son that men might live. The

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Ⲭ 52. Codex Sinaiticus. Petersburg (iv.).

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A 54. Codex Alexandrinus. London. Brit. Mus. Royal Libr. I. D. v.–viii. (v.).

13 13 (= 33<sup>gosp.</sup>). 548. Paris. Bibl. Nat. Gr. 14 (ix.–x.).

manifestation of His love is made *in* those who have entered upon the life which He sent His Son to give.

τὸν μονογενῆ] The idea presented by μονογενής in the Johannine books would seem to be that of the one and only Son who completely reproduces the nature and character of His Father, which is concentrated in one, and is not, so to speak, divided up among many brethren. It emphasizes the completeness of the revelation of God which He is able to give, as well as the uniqueness of the gift.

ἵνα ζήσωμεν] Cf. the note on ἐν ἡμῖν. The love was manifested in a definite act with a definite object.

ἐν 1<sup>ο</sup>] pr. καὶ οὕτως <sup>1a 200f. 254. 502</sup> (83) <sup>1b 78–157</sup> (–): pr. καὶ <sup>1c 114</sup> (335).  
τοῦ θεοῦ] *eius* arm-codd.  
ἐν ἡμῖν] om. <sup>1b 253–559</sup> (2).  
ἀπεσταλκεν] ἀπεστείλεν K 29. 38. 42. 57 al. plus<sup>12</sup> Ath.  
ὁ θεός] om. 15. 18. 25. 98. 100 al.<sup>b</sup> arm. aeth. Aug.  
ζήσωμεν] ζῶμεν κ\*.

10. True love is selfless. It is not a mere response. It gives itself. The sending of God's Son was not the answer of God to something in man. It was the outcome of the very Nature of God. Cf. Odes of Solomon, iii. 3, 4, "I should not have known how to love the Lord, if He had not loved me. For who is able to distinguish love, except the one that is loved?"

ἰλασμόν] Cf. 2:2. God could not give Himself while men's sins formed a barrier between them and Him. True love must sweep away the hindrances to the fulfilment of the law of its being. While Vulg. has *propitiatio*, Aug. has *litator*, and Lucif. *expiator*, emphasizing the fact that that which reconciles is a person.

ἡ ἀγάπη] + τοῦ θεοῦ κ sah. cop.  
ἠγαπήσαμεν] ἠγαπηκαμεν B | ἠγαπήσεν] pr. πρῶτος <sup>K<sup>6364</sup></sup> (51).  
αὐτός] ἐκεῖνος A: pr. Deus sah<sup>w</sup>.  
ἀπεστείλεν] ἀπεσταλκεν κ.  
περὶ] ὑπὲρ <sup>1a 200</sup> (83): om. <sup>1c 174</sup> (252).

(b) 11, 12. Love of the Brethren the test of Fellowship.

In the light of such a manifestation of God's love there can be no question about the obligation to mutual love among those who have experienced it. True knowledge always finds expression in action. The true nature of God cannot be made visible to the eye. His presence

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κ 52. Codex Sinaiticus. Petersburg (iv.).

κ 52. Codex Sinaiticus. Petersburg (iv.).

B 51. Codex Vaticanus. Rome. Vat. Gr. 1209 (iv.).

A 54. Codex Alexandrinus. London. Brit. Mus. Royal Libr. I. D. v.–viii. (v.).

κ 52. Codex Sinaiticus. Petersburg (iv.).



cannot be seen. But it is known in its results. Where love is, there we know that God abides in men. His abiding in men is the most complete expression of His love.<sup>8</sup>

**4:7** This is the third and final time John appeals to the subject of brotherly love.<sup>97</sup> He first mentioned it in 2:7–11, where it is given as an indicator of one who is walking in the light. The second occurrence comes in 3:11–18 (or even 3:10–24) and is mentioned as evidence that one is a child of God. “Dear friends” introduces a new subject, and it reestablishes warmth and affection following a very pointed and direct discussion. There is a pastoral warmth in the word (*agapētoi*) that would be welcomed. He loves them and will now challenge them to love others as well. The reflexive phrase “let us love one another” (*agapōmen*) occurs three times in this passage. Here in v. 7 it is an exhortation; in v. 11 it is a statement of duty, and in v. 12 it is a hypothesis.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Alan England Brooke, [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles\*](#), International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1912), 117–120.

<sup>97</sup> Plummer contends that although it may appear at first glance that this section is unrelated to the former section, there are some links. First, the power to love one another and confess Christ as coming in the flesh “is the gift of the Spirit (vv. 2, 12, 13). Second, the selfishness of the antichristian spirit in vv. 1–6 is the same type of characteristic that would keep one from obeying the admonitions in this section. Still an obvious change in subject has occurred” (*Epistles of S. John*, 100).

<sup>98</sup> Stott, *Letters of John*, 162.

John's exhortation is for Christians to love Christians, although the importance of loving non-Christians is not to be excluded.<sup>99</sup> The basis for this love is God and his love;<sup>100</sup> in fact, it is because (*hoti*) love is from God (*hē agapē ek tou theou estin*). Love flows from or out of (*ek*) God and has God as its spring or source.<sup>101</sup> Not only is this true of God, but all who love have been born (*gegennētai*) of God. Plummer argues that this refers to everyone, Christian or non-Christian.<sup>102</sup> In other words, inasmuch as anyone has even the smallest capacity to love, this comes by the grace of God.<sup>103</sup> Marshall tends to agree and claims that it is because all men are created in the image of God that they have the capacity to love, and it is the result of "common grace" that even nonbelievers can demonstrate even an incomplete kind of love.<sup>104</sup> But John's claim that everyone who loves is born of God and knows (*ginōskei*) God does not include these incomplete expressions of love.<sup>105</sup> He is referring to a particular kind of love that is found only in those who have been regenerated by Christ.<sup>106</sup> The perfect tense of "born" would include the initial rebirth

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<sup>99</sup> Plummer, *Epistles of S. John*, 100. See also Westcott, *Epistles of John*, 147.

<sup>100</sup> Marshall rightly notes that this passage could possibly be misleading if not viewed in the proper context. "One might conclude that anyone who shows love is a child of God, regardless of whether he actually believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This misunderstanding can only arise, however, if we take this statement and wrench it out of its context in the letter. John makes it plain enough elsewhere that the true child of God both believes and loves (3:23)" (*Epistles of John*, 211).

<sup>101</sup> Stott calls this the "most sublime of all biblical affirmations about God's being" (*Letters of John*, 163).

<sup>102</sup> Plummer, *Epistles of S. John*, 100.

<sup>103</sup> Plummer provides an example by stating, "If Socrates or Marcus Aurelius loves his fellow-men, it is by the grace of God that he does so" (*ibid.*).

<sup>104</sup> Marshall, *Epistles of John*, 212. Marshall continues, "Human love however highly motivated, falls short if it refuses to include the Father and Son as the supreme objects of its affection."

<sup>105</sup> Hiebert comments that this kind of love will "prompt the believer to reach out to the unsaved around him, but his God-inspired love cannot find mutual realization with unbelievers" ("An Exposition of 1 John 4:7–21," 71).

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* Hiebert contends that "the use of the definite article with "love" (ἡ ἀγάπη) centers attention on the kind of love John was urging, "the love" that has its source in God. It is not the natural love of the world for its own (John 15:19), nor the love of publicans for fellow publicans (Matt 5:46), but a self-sacrificing love motivated by goodwill and implemented in action."

of the individual and the continuing effects this would have in their life, and the present tense of “know” emphasizes that the individual is continuing to grow in knowledge of God.<sup>107</sup> In other words, it is not the person’s ability to love that causes the new birth, but his ability to love flows from his regeneration in Christ.<sup>108</sup>

**4:8** John now turns from the positive expression of truth to its negative expression. He adds emphasis to the point in v. 7 by now stating the converse. Those who do not love do not know God. The absence of love in the life of an individual proves that he does not know God (*ouk egnōton theon*). The one who does not love is a stranger to God. He never even began to have a relationship with God; that is, there was never a time when this person could have legitimately claimed that he knew God.<sup>109</sup>

The reason this is true is because God is love (*Theos agapē estin*). John has already stated that God is Spirit (John 4:24) and that God is light (1 John 1:5), and now he gives one more encompassing statement regarding the nature of God.<sup>110</sup> In this context John is saying that to know the love of God is to manifest his love.<sup>111</sup> Without this manifestation one could not possibly know, or ever have known, God or his love. Smalley provides three observations about John’s description of God as love:

1. Its background is the Jewish (OT) understanding of God as living, personal, and active, rather than the Greek concept of deity which was abstract in character.
2. To assert comprehensively that “God is love” does not ignore or exclude the other attributes of his being to which the Bible as a whole bears witness: notably his justice and his truth.
3. There is a tendency in some modern theologies (especially “process” thought) to transpose the equation “God is love” into the reverse, “Love is God.” But this is not a Johannine (or a biblical) idea. As John makes absolutely clear in this passage, the controlling principle of the universe is not an abstract quality of “love,” but a sovereign, living God who is the source of all love, and who (as love) himself loves (see vv. 7, 10, 19).<sup>112</sup>

Because his very nature is love, mercy and goodness flow from God like a beautiful river, as sunlight radiates from the sun. Love, real love (cf. 1 Cor 13), has its ultimate source and origin in God. It is not an abstract concept but concrete action, as John will now explain.

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<sup>107</sup> Thomas, “Exegetical Digest of 1 John,” 358.

<sup>108</sup> Marshall asserts: “[Human love] falls short of the divine pattern, and by itself cannot save a man; it cannot be put into the balance to compensate for the sin of rejecting God. Love alone, therefore, is not a sign of being born of God” (*Epistles of John*, 212).

<sup>109</sup> Thomas, “Exegetical Digest of 1 John,” 358. See also Burdick, *Epistles of John*, 72.

<sup>110</sup> Marshall claims that “this statement is simply the clearest expression of a doctrine of the nature of God” (*Epistles of John*, 213).

<sup>111</sup> Bruce, *Epistles of John*, 107.

<sup>112</sup> Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 239–40.

**4:9** John states that believers are to love first, because love is the very nature of the God (v. 8) to whom they belong and of whom they are partakers and second (v. 9), because of the incredible manner in which God's love was displayed. This verse is clearly reminiscent of his magnificent statement found in John 3:16 (cf. also 1 John 3:16).

The sentence structure accentuates the nature and uniqueness of Christ.<sup>113</sup> The word *monogenēs* occurs nine times in the New Testament (Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; Heb 11:17; and in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). Only John uses the term *monogenēs* (translated "one and only") to refer to Christ. The double use of the article (*ton huion autou*, "the Son of him") and (*ton monogenē*, "the one and only")<sup>114</sup> emphasizes the uniqueness and deity of Christ.<sup>115</sup> God sent (*apestalke*) his Son. The corresponding noun *apostolos* is typically rendered "apostle" and indicates one who is sent on a mission with a purpose, as a representative of another. This purpose is "that we might live through him." Life through and in the Son is a subject that greatly

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<sup>113</sup> Westcott, *Epistles of John*, 149. "The order of the words in the whole clause is most impressive: 'in this that His Son, His only Son, hath God sent into the world,' into the world, though alienated from Him."

<sup>114</sup> There is some debate about the particular emphasis of the word μονογενής. According to Thomas ("Exegetical Digest of 1 John," 364) the word is derived from μόνος ("only") and γεννάω ("to beget"). Marshall says that in the OT the Hb. word *yachîd*, which means "single" or "only," is on occasion rendered in the Gk. ἀγαπητός but also sometimes by μονογενής (*Epistles of John*, 214, n. 8). This could mean that *monogenes* has some sort of nuance that pertains to being beloved. Marshall continues (contra Thomas) that the γενής part of the word has more to do with derivation (γένος) than with birth (γεννάω). The "English 'only begotten' arose from Jerome's use of *unigenitus* to replace the old Latin translation *unicus* in an effort to deny Arian claims that the Son was not begotten by God." Bruce translates the word "only begotten" and claims that the meaning combines the sense of begottenness and belovedness (*Epistles of John*, 108). Lenski asserts that "both 'His Son,' and 'the only begotten' avow the deity of the Logos" (*Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude*, 501). Stott argues that the word "applied to Jesus Christ indicates His uniqueness; he is the Son in an absolute sense. No greater gift of God is conceivable because no greater gift was possible" (*Letters of John*, 165). Plummer comments that the proper translation should be "only born" (*Epistles of S. John*, 103). For him, "Christ is the only born Son as distinct from the many who have become sons." Kruse has a note on "*Monogenes*" and "the Son's Preexistence" (*Letters of John*, 158–60). He argues, unconvincingly, that μονογενής means simply "one and only."

<sup>115</sup> Hiebert, "An Exposition of 1 John 4:7–21," 74; also see E. Schweizer, "Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund der 'Serdung-sformel', Gal. 4:4f., Rm. 8:3f., John 3:16f., 1 John 4:9," *ZNW* 57 (1966): 199–210.

interests John. He refers to it no fewer than six times in vv. 9–16. The perfect tense of “sent” emphasizes the permanent consequences of this act.<sup>116</sup> The verb “live” (*zēsōmen*) implies that those to whom the Son was sent were in a condition of spiritual death, and his mission was to impart life to them.<sup>117</sup> This life only occurs through (*dia*) him since he is the true and only mediating agent between God and man (cf. 1 Tim 2:5).

**4:10** In this verse the purpose in sending the Son is not the incarnation but the atonement<sup>118</sup>—God sent his Son to die. Further, God’s love is primary, not ours. The death of Christ is extolled, not the birth. John, in concluding the verse with the phrase “our sin” (*tōn hamartiōn hēmōn*), is keenly aware of his own need as well as ours for this propitiatory act. Our act was to sin. God’s was to love and send.

John begins the verse by choosing a parenthetical negative to emphasize the fact that man in his natural condition does not love God nor his Son whom he sent. But clearly and amazingly, God “loved us.” And what incredible and unfathomable love it is: He sent his Son, and he sent him to die for us. “Amazing love, how can it be?” Love is always demonstrated by actions. It is not abstract; it is never complacent or static. John has already given the purpose for this demonstration of love: (1) to take away our sins (1 John 3:5) and (2) to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). This marvelous act was prompted not by man’s love for God but God’s love for man, so that “the sending of God’s Son was both the revelation of his love (This is how God showed his love ... 9) and, indeed, the very essence of love itself (this is love ... 10). It is not our love that is primary, but God’s (10), free, uncaused and spontaneous. All our love is but a reflection of his and a response to it.”<sup>119</sup> The origin of love lies beyond human effort and initiative. Left to ourselves, we would not love him. We would hate him and oppose him. It took his boundless, sacrificial love to break our hearts of stone and bring us to himself.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Plummer, *Epistles of S. John*, 102.

<sup>117</sup> Westcott, *Epistles of John*, 149. “The natural condition of men is spiritual death.”

<sup>118</sup> See discussion of ἱλασμός in comments on 1 John 2:2 and also the appendix “Propitiation or Expiation: The Debate.”

<sup>119</sup> Stott, *Letters of John*, 164. See also Plummer, “The superiority of God’s love does not lie merely in the fact of its being Divine. It is first in order of time and therefore necessarily spontaneous” (*Epistles of S. John*, 102).

<sup>9</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [1, 2, 3 John](#), vol. 38, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 176–180.

## 2. DISCERNING THE GOD OF LOVE (4:7–16)

4:7–8. The writer now returned to the subject of **love** which, like faith in God's Son (v. 13), is a product of the Spirit. As a confession of the incarnate person of Christ marks one off as being actuated by God (i.e., "from God", vv. 4, 6) so does love, since **love comes from God**. Hence, one **who loves** (in the Christian sense of that term) **has been born of God** (cf. 2:29; 3:9; 5:1, 4, 18) **and he knows God**. Love stems from a regenerate nature and also from fellowship with God which issues in knowing Him (see 2:3–5). The absence of **love** is evidence that a person **does not know God**. Significantly, John did not say such a person is not born of God. In the negative statement only the last part of the positive one (in 4:7) is repeated. Since **God is love**, intimate acquaintance with Him will produce love. Like light (1:5), love is intrinsic to the character and nature of God, and one who is intimately acquainted with God walks in His light (1:7).

4:9–11. If one wishes to know **how God** has demonstrated **His love**, he need only look at the fact that God **sent His One and only Son into the world that we might** obtain eternal life thereby ("One and only" translates *monogenē*, "only born one," which also is used in John 1:14, 18; 3:16.) Moreover, this **love** was **not** a response to man's **love**, but an initiative on God's part (1 John 4:10). By it the **Son** became **an atoning Sacrifice** (*hilasmon*, "propitiation"; see comments on 2:2) **for our sins**. Nothing less than God's love in Christ is the model for the **love** Christians should have toward **one another**.

Important to John's argument is his reference to God's love in 4:9 as His love **among us**. In verses 12–16 he showed how this love, experienced among Christians, can make God visible to them.<sup>10</sup>

John begins this section with a command and its justification, or motivation for obedience. He calls out to his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ to obey Jesus' command to love one

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<sup>10</sup> Zane C. Hodges, ["1 John,"](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 898–899.

another.<sup>1218</sup> He will explain in the verses that follow why such obedience is the natural and proper response of God's children. These serve as a reminder to us that "fellowship with God and with his Son involves fellowship with one another" (Lenski, 494).

Ἀγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, "Beloved, let us love one another." Addressing his readers once more with one of his characteristic terms, John commands them to love each other. His choice of "beloved" once more reflects his pastoral care and love (Smalley, 236). It may also indicate he may be intending a word play (alliteration) by placing ἀγαπητοί alongside ἀγαπῶμεν (Brown, 513).

Using the 1 hortatory subjunctive ἀγαπῶμεν John includes himself and calls on his readers to love one another along with him.<sup>1219</sup> The first person plural, beginning here and throughout this section, is inclusive and relates what John says specifically to the Christian community (Haas, de Jonge, and Swellengrebel, 107; Smalley, 237). His use of this form of command communicates his recognition of his own need along with theirs. Moreover, he commits himself to loving them even as he calls for their love. As a present subjunctive, it implies a pattern of action that is continuous and so communicates the idea of " 'let us go on loving one another' as we have been doing all along" (Lenski, 495).<sup>1220</sup>

Burdick (317) argues that ἀγαπῶμεν should be taken as an indicative rather than imperative because "the main point being expressed in verses 7 through 16 is not an exhortation to love but a declaration that Christians do love because they have been born of God, who is love." However, John's pattern throughout the epistle is to call for proper responses to God's truths. Ἀγαπῶμεν was previously used in 3:18 and will be repeated in 4:19 with the same meaning, though without objects (Bultmann, 65). Thus it is an imperative, not indicative (Strecker, 143). Thus it is better to see him repeating the command rather than switching to a statement.

By his use of the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλους John focuses attention on the relationship of fellow believers and the need for love within the family of God more than the need to love all of humanity.<sup>1221</sup> Interpreters see the referent of ἀλλήλων in one of three ways. (1) It includes all mankind (Brown, 514; Bultmann, 65–66). (2) It includes both God and nonbelieving neighbor (Schnackenburg, 228–29; Smalley, 234; Stott, 163). (3) It is limited to the Christian community (Burdick, 317; Grayston, 124). This is indicated by the command of verse 11 and the statement that God abides in those who love one another (Thompson, 120, n.).

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<sup>1218</sup> Bruce (107) defines love in this passage as "a consuming passion for the well-being of others."

1 first person

<sup>1219</sup> D. B. Wallace, *Grammar*, 464–65.

<sup>1220</sup> Brown (513) allows the possibility that it has a durative force, but does not require it.

<sup>1221</sup> D. B. Wallace, *Grammar*, 351. BDAG, 46.

Further, this use of ἀλλήλους makes this a call to mutual responsibility within the body of Christ, and not a command for “reciprocal love” (contra Bultmann, 66). The command does not assume we receive love in return for our love, but that we are to each love the other regardless.

Though Scripture is clear that we are to demonstrate God’s love by doing good to all men (Rom 12:17–18; Gal 6:10; Phil 4:5; 1 Tim 2:1–4; Titus 3:1–2), this command does not focus on our showing love to nonbelievers. The world’s need for God’s love and our role in communicating it to that world is not John’s focus. Rather, John provides three reasons for believers to exercise mutual love within the family of God.<sup>1222</sup>

ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, “because love is from God.” The first reason to pursue mutual love within the body of Christ is the source of love, namely, God. John introduces his explanations with ὅτι functioning causally. Where Law (398) sees this ὅτι indicating a test of life, Burdick (318) counters that it introduces “an explanation of why the believer loves” rather than how to determine if one is a believer. John’s address of his readers as “beloved” here, as well as the other terms of endearment and his assurance in 2:12–14 makes clear that he regards his readers as believers. Thus providing a “test” for them to discern that runs counter to John’s message, especially what he will say in 5:13. John does not want them to question their salvation but to be certain of it. Thus he speaks to them as regenerate saints. Tests to determine if they are spiritually alive would undermine that assurance. However, one would expect him to provide tests of their relationship with God within His family. In that sense the Test of Fellowship view might seem to be in order here. However, it seems best to see him not addressing the question of fellowship within the family of God here as much as communicating the implications and obligations that arise from being a part of that family.

John’s repeated use of the article with love particularizes the love he is describing: it is not a generic love but a specific kind of love (Burdick, 317). Using his characteristic construction of the subject forward in the clause and the verb at the end for emphasis, John identifies the source of love once more. Repeating the ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ formula, John once more identifies love’s source. It is sourced in God (Brown, 513; Haas, de Jonge, and Swellengrebel, 120). It arises from His person and values. Marshall (211) sees this statement meaning that love both “has its origin in God and belongs to the divine sphere.”

The inclusion and placement of ἐστίν in the phrase is emphatic. It is also best to see it having a durative force and so communicating the idea that this is an abiding reality.<sup>1223</sup> This connects back to 4:6, so we see that “being from God determines the nature of the community” (Strecker, 143). Moreover, this community is expected to be characterized by love for one another.

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<sup>1222</sup> Burdick (317) observes that, though ἀγαπητοί is not limited to passages on love, of its eight uses in this epistle, six are connected to discussions on love (2:7; 3:21; 4:7, 11; 3 John 2; 3 John 5). The two exceptions are 3:2, discussing judgment before Jesus and the need for purity, and 4:1, discussing false teachers and the need to “test the spirits.”

<sup>1223</sup> B. M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, 208.



καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται, “and everyone who loves has been born from God.” The second reason for believers pursuing love of fellow believers is that it reflects their spiritual parentage.<sup>1224</sup> These words reflect back on 3:7–10, especially verse 10. Just as righteous conduct “manifests” one’s spiritual parentage—with God being their heavenly Father (3:1)—so, too, does the practice of loving believers. John communicates this truth here with πᾶς ὁ and the present participle ἀγαπῶν used “as a generalization to describe a category of people” (Harris, 184; also Brown, 514).<sup>1225</sup> Strecker (144) calls this a “generalizing πᾶς,” with love directed either toward God or others. Williamson (142) translates it with a purely progressive nuance and sees this expressing a “lifestyle.” Though the πᾶς is generalizing, the articular present participle should still be seen with its gnomic force. John is still describing character that leads to conduct rather than the conduct itself. Thus, the articular present participle with πᾶς carries the sense of “everyone who” and thereby particularizes the statement as another principle impacting John’s readers individually more than corporately.<sup>1226</sup> This is a reality that, though true of all of humanity, is even more true of them and should motivate each to action. Though it involves the life of the corporate body, this cannot be accomplished apart from individual action. Each of them should be moved to love other believers because this is the natural response of a family member who belongs. Additionally, loving other believers can then become a source of assurance in that one can see he or she is a part of the family of God by his or her conduct within the family.

The words πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν do not look at the cause of spiritual birth but at its effect (Brooke, 118). Birth (γεγέννηται) is the cause, love (ἀγαπῶν) is the effect. As Schnackenburg (228) says, “The true Christian is one who loves.”<sup>1227</sup> Even so, we must remember that John is focusing on love’s relationship to God and regeneration. Love in and of itself does not prove one is spiritually alive (Marshall, 212; Rensberger, 117; Yarbrough, 235). The unregenerate are capable of loving as well. Walls and Anders (209) point to the image of God in all men as evidence that even nonbelievers can express God’s nature at times. Thus we need not forget this as John speaks absolutely once again. Thus we need to remember that John is not

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<sup>1224</sup> Bultmann (66) interprets this as “love of neighbor.” Schnackenburg (229) rejects this on the grounds that love of Christian brothers is the theme of this section.

<sup>1225</sup> Harris (184–85) sees this used in conjunction with John’s conceptual dualism (“polar opposites”) in order to “categorize” “the opponents on the one hand and the readers, whom the author regards as genuine Christians, on the other.” Rather than seeing opponents, the contrast is better seen as being between his readers and the unbelieving world. This was Jesus’ concern in the Upper Room (John 15:18–25). Additionally, as John reflects on Jesus’ instructions there, he reflects those themes in this epistle.

<sup>1226</sup> Burdick (318) focuses on the progressive (“continuing action”) nature of the pres. tense when interpreting the sense of ὁ ἀγαπῶν.

<sup>1227</sup> ... der echte Christ ein Liebender ist.

addressing the question of the presence of love in all men, but its absence in believers and the inconsistency that it represents.

The verb γεννάω as used here “means to be fathered by God and thus a child of God” (Harris, 185). The perfect passive γεγέννηται is the third of five uses by John in this epistle (2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4) and likely a perfect of resulting state, thus focusing on completed results.<sup>1228</sup> Burge (186) concurs and sees this perfect “suggesting that divine rebirth is past, yet bearing fruit in the present. A person once converted now demonstrates the fruit of that conversion.”<sup>1229</sup> It is a birth that occurred in the past and continues to the present (Akin, 178). “Born of God” alludes to Jesus’ words to Nicodemus in the Upper Room (John 3:3–6).<sup>1230</sup> However, unlike Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus of the *need* for spiritual rebirth, John uses the intensive perfect to describe the *state* of the person. Those who love believers reveal the source of their spiritual birth. Using the same imagery as earlier (3:10), as God’s children they are acting in accordance with their parentage. Lenski (495–96) makes this connection with chapter three and says “The exercise of this love for one another evidences our origin from God ... and proves that we are no longer ‘the children of the devil’.” As Bruce (107) notes, John’s point is that “the children of God must reproduce their Father’s nature.”

καὶ γινώσκει τὸν θεόν, “and knows God.” The third thing that mutual love reveals is the individual’s knowledge of God.<sup>1231</sup> Moving from the perfect tense to describe their state of spiritual birth, John uses the present tense γινώσκει to describe the conditional experience of the believer.<sup>1232</sup> This use of the present tense of γινώσκω indicates the believer is continuing to grow in knowledge (Akin, 178) and suggests relationship (Smalley, 238).<sup>1233</sup> Reviewing the concept introduced in 2:3–6, John affirms that in loving other Christians the believer can know

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<sup>1228</sup> B. M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, 291–95.

<sup>1229</sup> Burdick (318) identifies this as an intensive pf. that communicates the fact that the person has been born into the family of God.

<sup>1230</sup> John’s repeated use of ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ is emphatic.

<sup>1231</sup> Burdick (318) sees this clause, which he sees as unnecessary to the flow of thought, as “aimed at the Gnostics.” However, John employs repetition throughout the epistle for emphasis. The importance of this truth is made clear precisely because it is interjected once more into the flow of thought.

<sup>1232</sup> Γινώσκει is gnomic rather than progressive or customary. Westcott (148) observes well, “The combination of γεγέννηται with γινώσκει (not ἔγνωκεν) is significant. Living knowledge is regarded only in its present activity.”

<sup>1233</sup> “As the presence of active love is the pledge of advancing knowledge, so the absence of love is the proof that apparent knowledge was not real” (Westcott, 148).

that he “knows” God experientially.<sup>1234</sup> This likely alludes to Jesus’ words in John 14:7 once again, words addressed to men whose salvation cannot be questioned. Though we often use the phrase “to know God” to mean “to have exercised justifying faith in God” or “to be a Christian,” John teaches that justified believers may not “know” the God in whom they believe (Grayston, 124). This knowledge of God is conditioned on meeting certain criteria, such as obedience and love of other Christians. The disciples were with Jesus more than three years and still did not “know” Him. Modern disciples can be in the family of God for decades and still not really know Him as well.

Burge (186) after observing John’s turn to the present tense notes that this implies “that love is connected to an ongoing awareness of who God is. Why did John select these particular words? Spiritual rebirth and divine knowledge were no doubt promoted among the secessionists (see 3:9).” Though John may have the gnostic heresy in mind as he says this (Kistemaker, 331), it need not be such. Though Gnosticism claimed special knowledge of God, fully developed Gnosticism was still decades away.<sup>1235</sup> John’s use of γινώσκω varies significantly from later developed gnostic thought, and so too that of incipient Gnosticism. His knowledge of God is relational, not special or mystical.

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<sup>1234</sup> Strecker (144) sees “know” to indicate the person “acknowledges God” by their love for Him and others. John’s focus on relationship with God from the beginning of this epistle indicates that he would have a more relational sense here.

Schnackenburg (228) sees this clause affirming one’s salvation. He says, “If the ‘begetting of God’ refers more to the believer’s origin, then ‘knowing God’ means even more so to have permanent fellowship with God. Only someone who has proven to be one who loves demonstrates—by this love—that he shares God’s nature and fellowship.” (Wenn sich die „Zeugung aus Gott“ mehr auf den Ursprung bezieht, so „Gott erkennen“ stärker auf die bleibende Gemeinschaft mit Gott. Nur wer sich als Liebender erweist, zeigt—eben durch seine Liebe—, daß er Gottes Art und Gemeinschaft besitzt.)

<sup>1235</sup> N. Perrin, “Gnosticism,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 256–59; D. M. Scholer, s.v. “Gnosis, Gnosticism,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*.

**4:8** This verse provides the contrast to the previous description of the child of God manifested through love for believers (Johnson, 102).<sup>1236</sup> It raises the question of whether John's statement describes an essential nature of God or an attribute in focus in this discussion.<sup>1237</sup>

ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν θεόν, "The one not loving has not known God." In contrast to the believer who loves, there is "the one not loving." John develops his contrast by using the identical words of the previous sentence with the negative particle μὴ replacing πᾶς. No stronger contrast can be made. These are opposites. However, herein lies the problem. The contrast is with someone who loves other Christian brothers and sisters. If this implication is to be continued as part of the discussion, then this is not someone who is simply "unloving" in a general sense but someone who is not showing love to a *fellow believer*.

Hodges (183) argues that John's failure to deny (by stating plainly) this unloving person's birth from God is significant. While the one loving evidences birth from God, this unloving person only evidences a lack of knowledge of God. Hodges (184) concludes, "It is a fact, both of Scripture and of Christian experience, that one Christian *can* hate another" (italics his). However, John provides textual clues that he may not have a believer in mind when he affirms this. His change from the present tense γινώσκει to the aorist ἔγνω seems intended to affirm that failure to love indicates that the person has *not* come to know God (Lenski, 496; Strecker, 144).<sup>1238</sup> Though knowledge of God is relational as John uses it, and normally a sanctification reality, it is also a justification reality. One not related to God cannot know Him relationally. Additionally, this change to the aorist form of γινώσκω draws a closer parallel to the perfect γεγέννηται in the previous sentence.<sup>1239</sup> Interestingly, Jesus uses this same verb and tense (ἔγνω) in Matt 7:23 with those He will refuse entrance into His kingdom.<sup>1240</sup> Thus this use of

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<sup>1236</sup> Schnackenburg (229) views this verse as a polemic against the gnostics. However, nothing in this paragraph requires a gnostic background. Rather, John is describing eternal truths that all believers understand regardless of the cause of their unloving conduct.

<sup>1237</sup> Brown (548) finds in this antithetical statement evidence of a chiasm with what precedes. Strecker (144, n. 14) correctly rejects this on the basis that nothing at the end of v 7 can be coupled with "God is love" in v 8.

<sup>1238</sup> Johnson (102) considers the aor. construction of οὐκ ἔγνω to indicate "the decisive and absolute character" of those who do not know God.

<sup>1239</sup> Strecker (144) suggests that this may be a rare use of a gnomic aor.

<sup>1240</sup> Yarbrough (236) observes that γινώσκω is negated five other times in the New Testament (John 1:10; 17:25; 1 Cor 1:21; 1 John 3:1; and Rom 10:19 with Israel) and all six occurrences involve failing to know God. The same negation occurs in the LXX in Isa 1:3 and Jer 8:7. Isa 1:3 reads: ἔγνω βοῦς τὸν κτησάμενον καὶ ὄνος τὴν φάτνην τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ, Ἰσραὴλ δὲ με οὐκ ἔγνω, καὶ ὁ λαός με οὐ συνῆκεν. Jer 8:7 reads: καὶ ἡ ἀσιδα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ

γινώσκω should be viewed as a perfect aorist John is affirming that one characterized by a lack of love has never really known God who is love. This statement appears to be similar to 3:6, which Strecker (144) notes demonstrates that “sin and knowledge of God are mutually exclusive” and that “the one who does not love belongs to the world and has no community with God.” Granted, John never actually says that the person who does not love is not born of God (v. 7).<sup>1241</sup> However, as a minimum he is affirming that one cannot have an intimate relationship with God without loving others. Whoever God indwells will reflect His character. Since God is characterized by love, anyone indwelled by Him will express His kind of love. So whoever claims to know God personally, experientially and yet does not love other believers is lying, whether to others or to himself or herself.

ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν, “because God is love.” This is the second statement in this epistle of God’s nature (1:5). Two other places in Scripture we are given similar declarations. In John 4:24 Jesus told the woman at the well, “God is spirit.” In Heb 12:29 we learn that “our God is a consuming fire.”<sup>1242</sup> Introducing this declaration of God’s nature with a causal ὅτι (Lenski 498; Strecker, 144), John explains why one cannot know God without loving others. It is in God’s nature to love, and those connected to Him will reflect His passion.

John’s declaration, “God is love,” is not an ontological statement and cannot be reversed (Bruce, 107; Harris, 185; Kruse, 157; Strecker, 148). The subject has the article and “love” is anarthrous (Painter, 266).<sup>1243</sup> Though “love is of God,” love is not God. This is another description of God’s character, one of His communicable moral attributes, not His essential

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ἔγνω τὸν καιρὸν αὐτῆς, τρυγῶν καὶ χελιδῶν, ἀγροῦ στρουθία ἐφύλαξαν καιροῦς εἰσόδων αὐτῶν, ὁ δὲ λαὸς μου οὐκ ἔγνω τὰ κρίματα κυρίου.

<sup>1241</sup> Stott (163–64) sees this describing a non-believer since love demonstrates the “authenticity” of his spiritual life and failure to love denies divine parentage. Barker (342) understands this as a test of life and failure means that a person has “not really been born of him, we do not have his nature.” Akin (178) interprets this to mean: “The one who does not love is a stranger to God. He never even began to have a relationship with God; that is, there was never a time when this person could have legitimately claimed that he knew God.” This would be more possible if the audience were a mixture of believers and unbelievers and John’s discussion was of a general nature. However, he is addressing believers and instructing them how to experience the eternal life they possess. Thus, the context of his audience and message must guide our understanding of individual statements. In this case, we should not be seeing a test of life being applied to John’s readers.

<sup>1242</sup> The text reads ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν πῦρ καταναλίσκων. Of note is the absence of εἰμι from this declaration as well as Jesus’ (John 4:24).

<sup>1243</sup> B. M. Fanning (*Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, 208) sees “God is love” as a gnomic pres.

being (Bultmann, 66; Smalley, 239–40; Strecker, 148). Brown (195) says of John’s “God is” formulas, “While there is emphasis on God’s activity, that activity is internally related to what God is before creation.” Further, it cannot be made either *a* or *the* most important or controlling of His attributes. However, it is one that believers can, and are expected to, express. God is no more “love” than He is “light,” though both describe His character and nature in some sense, light being a metaphor for holiness and purity while love is to be understood literally. Even so, love as defined by John is not so much emotional as volitional. It is God’s motive behind what He does more than it is His emotional response or attitude toward His children, though that is understood to be true as well. Rensberger (117) says, “ ‘God is love’ is not a speculative statement about the divine nature, but a claim about God’s actions. Love is a personal activity, not an abstract quality.” Lieu (177) concurs. “Love is not an abstract idea but is known through what God has done toward women and men.” Marshall (212) identifies the point of John’s affirmation, which will be developed in the verses that follow. He says well, “A person cannot come into a real relationship with a loving God without being transformed into a loving person.” Further, we are reminded, “ ‘God is love’ means not simply that love is *one* of his activities, but that *all* his activity is loving” (Smalley, 239; italics his).<sup>1244</sup>

**4:9** In this verse John’s focus shifts from God’s nature to His actions (Johnson, 102). The manifestation of God’s love toward us was His sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. John now moves from the theoretical to the practical. These next verses take the truth of verses 7 and 8 and show how it worked itself out in history. This then becomes the Christian’s model for action.

ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, “This is how the love of God was manifested toward us.” John continues his discussion of God’s love by describing how it expressed itself.<sup>1245</sup> He illustrates to his readers how to express love toward one another practically by describing God’s own actions. This is similar to Paul’s use of Jesus’ incarnation as an illustration of what he meant by considering others more important than oneself in Phil 2:3–11. Thus John begins with the logical connective ἐν τούτῳ. This use of ἐν τούτῳ looks forward once again to the “explanatory” ὅτι clause to complete its idea (Brown, 515; Burdick, 320; Culy, 107; Haas, de Jonge, and Swellengrebel, 121; Strecker, 149; Yarbrough, 237). Though it could be translated literally as “by means of this,” the idea of “this is how” expresses the point John is making that God’s own action on our behalf shows us how we are to act.

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<sup>1244</sup> Grayston (124–25) does not see this describing God’s nature, nor His activity, but “defining the condition on which God may be known.” This truth creates a demand just as God is light called for Christians to walk in the light.

<sup>1245</sup> D. Rusam (*Die Gemeinschaft der Kinder Gottes*, 111) emphasizes that God’s fatherhood involves caring love and says, “Thus, in 1 John God’s command for brotherly love is not based on God’s fatherly authority by which he has the ability to command, but on his fatherly love.” (So wird im 1 Joh das Gebot der Gottes—und Bruderliebe weniger auf Gottes väterliche Macht zurückgeführt, durch die er die Möglichkeit hat zu gebieten, sondern auf seine väterliche Liebe.)

John uses the aorist form of φανερώω to describe the manifestation, or visible expression, of God's love.<sup>1246</sup> Burge (187) describes this as "a word that refers to the disclosure of things formerly hidden." Strecker (149) sees this as a christological term. Though Lieu (180) describes understands the aorist here to indicate "a specific moment," it seems better to see this as a historical aorist (Lenski, 500), similar to the aorist of 1:2 and as a reference to Jesus' coming, not our conversion.<sup>1247</sup> His choice of ἐφανερώθη indicates that it was made visible. It was demonstrated.

Love "appearing" indicates that it could be experienced by humans. It is not just theoretical or philosophically present but practically and measurably (Strecker, 149). This same truth is affirmed by Paul in Rom 5:8. Christ died for us, but not because God wanted to demonstrate His love and that was the medium He chose to accomplish His aim. Rather, Christ's dying for us was the response and expression of God's love. When He acted on our behalf we then recognized it as that expression of His love toward us. Jesus' death demonstrated His love though it was not intended as a demonstration of anything.

The genitive construction describing God's love seems best as a subjective genitive, "God's love," rather than divine love as a concept (Burdick, 320; Lieu, 180; Painter, 266; Rensberger, 119; Yarbrough, 237).<sup>1248</sup> It is followed by the epexegetical ὅτι clause that explains it (Harris, 186; Lenski, 501). This is not God's kind of love, but the expression of His love.

The sense of ἐν ἡμῖν is interpreted in one of three ways:

(1) God's love was directed "toward us," or "for us" (Haas, de Jonge, and Swellengrebel, 122; Schnackenburg, 229, n. 4). Lenski (500) translates this as "in connection with us." In its

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<sup>1246</sup> Bultmann (67) defines ἐφανερώθη as "the revelation in the historical event of Jesus' appearance." Schnackenburg (228) defines it as "to become open to experience through God's sending of his only Son into the world." (Darin ist die Liebe Gottes „erschienen“, d. H. Erfahrbar geworden, daß er seinen einzigen Sohn in die Welt sandte.)

<sup>1247</sup> J. P. Louw, ("Verbal Aspect in the First Letter of John," 102) notes: "It is characteristic of the style of the First Letter of John, and likewise of the Gospel of John which is probably by the same author, to alternate the tenses when they repeat each other in the same context." He identifies the series of aor. and perfects in vv 9–14 (ἀπέσταλκεν ... ἠγαπήκαμεν ... ἠγάπησεν ... ἀπέστειλεν ... ἠγάπησεν ... ἀπέσταλκεν) as an example of this. He then notes that the "force of these tenses are that of the perfects, the aor. are reduction forms. To seek for any distinction of meaning between the perfects and aorists in this passage would distort the stylistic effect."

<sup>1248</sup> Smalley (240) sees this as an objective gen. emphasizing God as the agent.

favor are similar uses found in John 9:3 and in 2 Cor 4:10.<sup>1249</sup> However, Brooke (119) counters that John would most likely have used ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ (ἡ) εἰς ἡμᾶς if he had wanted to communicate this idea.

(2) It can function as a dative of sphere and mean “in our midst” or “among us” (Brown, 516; Burdick, 320; Johnson, 103; Kruse, 158; Lieu, 180; Painter, 266; Smalley 2:40; Stott, 164; Westcott, 149; Smalley, 240; Yarbrough, 238). This follows the special nuance of the preposition (Strecker, 149). Examples of this use include Gal 1:16; Matt 2:6; 1 Cor 2:6; 11:19; 2 Cor 4:3. The preposition can mean “among” when it is followed by a plural noun as here (Burdick, 320): “Thus the manifestation was not an internal experience, ‘in us,’ but an objective historical event that happened ‘among us.’ ”

(3) Functioning as a dative of sphere, it may mean “within” us (Brooke, 119; Harris, 186; Moody, 91; Thompson, 121–23).<sup>1250</sup> Since God dwelling in believers has been mentioned in this context, this third option seems best.

ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι’ αὐτοῦ, “that God sent His unique Son into the world in order that we might live through Him.” The manner in which God’s love was manifested is described in another epexegetical ὅτι clause (Burdick, 320). This clause is emphatic in its construction (Lenski, 501). John has exchanged positions between the subject and verb and moved the verb’s direct object to the beginning of the sentence. This serves to emphasize the subject: God.

John uses the same terminology to describe Jesus as he had used in John 3:16, referring to Him as God’s “unique [μονογενῆ] Son.” John is the only biblical author who employs this description of Jesus. This term designates uniqueness rather than physical birth (Grayston, 125; Kruse 159).<sup>1251</sup> For example, in Heb 11:17–18 Isaac is described as Abraham’s unique (μονογενῆ) son of promise though he was his second son by birth. Although we are called “sons of God” (Gal 3:26), we are not sons in the same way Jesus is; His sonship is unique. This term is used elsewhere of an only son in Luke 7:12; 9:38 and an only daughter in Luke 8:42. It is used of Isaac in Heb 11:17. It has this same sense in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18. In the LXX this term is used

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<sup>1249</sup> BDF §220 (1) sees this use of ἐν ἡμῖν to be ἐν used for “the customary dative” and to carry the sense of “in our case.” The prepositional phrase ἐν ἡμῖν is better translated “toward us” (dative of reference) rather than as “among us” (dative of sphere).

John 9:3 reads ἵνα φανερωθῇ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ while here it is ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν.

<sup>1250</sup> Williamson (143) sees it as both “among” and “within.”

<sup>1251</sup> BDAG, 658. F. Büchsel, “μονογενής,” *TDNT* 4:739–41. In describing Jesus as God’s unique Son, John places the adj. μονογενῆ in a second attributive adj. position in order to emphasize both the noun and adj. and thereby both His uniqueness and deity (Akin, 179; Kistemaker, 333).



to designate Jephthah's daughter as his only child (Judg 11:34).<sup>1252</sup> Beale and Carson describe well its use outside the New Testament. "In both Old Testament and Second Temple literature the Son of David and Israel are called God's "firstborn" or even "only" son (cf. Ps. 89:27; 4 Ezra 6:58; *Pss. Sol.* 18:4; *Jub.* 18:2, 11, 15)." This concept is developed by John to indicate Jesus is "God's 'one-of-a-kind' Son par excellence, Jesus (cf. 1:18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9)." It is related to His designation as God's "beloved son."<sup>1253</sup>

John's choice of ἀποστέλλω over πέμπω reflects the difference in focus between the two verbs.<sup>1254</sup> Πέμπω is more related to sending a messenger or someone for purposes of communication. On the other hand, ἀποστέλλω includes the idea of sending with a commission (Kistemaker, 333).<sup>1255</sup> It also implies Jesus' preexistence (Johnson, 103). Further, the perfect tense ἀπέσταλκεν reflects the continuing impact of Christ's accomplished work in His incarnation (Akin, 179; Plummer, 102; Williamson, 144). As an extensive perfect ἀπέσταλκεν ("has sent") focuses on the completed act at the time of writing. The Son is no longer being sent.<sup>1256</sup>

Interpreters are divided on the sense of κόσμος in this verse. (1) Some see it as negative; it is the world in opposition to God (Lieu, 180). Strecker (151) says it is "subjected to the domination of sin and is governed by nothingness and enmity toward God." Moody (92) describes it as "godless." Even so, it is inhabited by the people that are loved by God just as it was in John 3:16. (2) Others see it as neutral. Burdick (322) does not see κόσμος having an

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<sup>1252</sup> The text refers to her as his only daughter, and clarifies the sense with the following clause. καὶ αὕτη μονογενῆς αὐτῷ ἀγαπητή, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτῷ πλην αὐτῆς υἱὸς ἢ θυγάτηρ.

<sup>1253</sup> G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 423.

<sup>1254</sup> This is the first mention of "sending" in the epistle, though it was a common term in his Gospel (Brown, 517).

<sup>1255</sup> BDAG, 120; K. Rengstorf, "ἀποστέλλω (πέμπω)," *TDNT* 1:403–405. Rengstorf says, "In John's Gospel ἀποστέλλειν is used by Jesus when His concern is to ground His authority in that of God as the One who is responsible for His words and works and who guarantees their right and truth. On the other hand, He uses the formula ὁ πέμψας με (πατήρ) to affirm the participation of God in His work in the *actio* of His sending."

Moody (91) calls Jesus' coming as "an objective event in history."

<sup>1256</sup> Haas, de Jonge, and Swellengrebel (108) and Smalley (241) understand the perfect to indicate that the impact of Jesus' coming continues to this day. D. B. Wallace (*Grammar*, 574) cautions against giving the perfect a meaning of eternal or permanent results and "one must be careful not to read his or her theology into the syntax."

Bultmann (67) considers ἀπέσταλκεν here is equivalent to ἔδωκεν in John 3:16.

“ethical sense” here, but says it should be taken literally as describing “the place where people live” (also Smalley, 242). Brown (517) sees it as positive because it is part of an “incarnational formula,” and the pattern is for these formulations to have a positive view of κόσμος. He points to its use in 4:14 where Jesus is sent as “Savior of the world.” For him this indicates the sense it should be given here. Either view the meaning intended by John does not change. However, it does seem better to see John’s use as neutral here.

This final ἵνα clause gives the purpose of Jesus’ incarnation. We are the beneficiaries. This is a clear reference to our justification. As noted before, we were the focus of Jesus’ incarnation, not God. God’s motivation for sending His son was our need, not His benefit. What He did, He did for us, to give us life. When we listen in on the conversation of His Son in the Garden of Gethsemane, we see that there was no other way for us to have life. If there were any other way, God would have taken it and Jesus would not have gone to the cross. If any other religion could provide salvation, or if it were possible to live a sinless life, or if there were *any* other way that men could receive or achieve forgiveness of sins, the loving Father would not have sacrificed His beloved Son to offer an alternate or additional route. Not only is it not intolerant to say such; it is blasphemous to suggest otherwise. God’s love for us compelled Him to send His Son. His Son’s love for both the Father and us compelled Him to willingly obey.

Of interest is John’s use of ὁ θεὸς late in its clause. As Lieu (180) notes, since John had already used τοῦ θεοῦ in the previous clause, a pronoun would have been expected. However, his emphasis on God is such that where he has often referred to Him with pronouns, even without an antecedent, in this paragraph he is emphasizing God’s work and less often resorts to the pronoun. This repetition of θεὸς is intentional and emphatic.<sup>1257</sup>

With his singular use of the verb ζάω John describes the purpose of God’s action.<sup>1258</sup> His use of the first person plural includes John with the community of faith (Kruse, 158). Burdick (322) sees John’s use of the aorist subjunctive ζήσωμεν to be an ingressive aorist and thus focusing on our spiritual birth (Johnson, 104; Smalley, 242), our acquisition of life more than the experience of it.<sup>1259</sup>

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<sup>1257</sup> Smalley (242) and Haas, de Jonge, and Swellengrebel (108) suggest that it is redundant from the previous verse and may indicate this statement is drawn “from a traditional formulation.” This is speculative. It seems better to see John using repetition as a literary device to insure his focus on God and His love is unmistakable.

<sup>1258</sup> The ἵνα may be either purpose or result. The context does not provide enough information to discern which and both senses are true. Smalley (242) opts for both. Painter (269) notes that this does not say God sent His Son to save the world, only those identified as “we.” He correctly cautions against taking this to mean “a foreordained group selected” for salvation (election). It does not. However, election is clearly taught in Scripture (Rom 8:29; 9:23; Eph 1:4–5, 11).

<sup>1259</sup> Williamson (143) sees the subjunctive mood indicating that this “life” is not “irrevocable” but “conditional. One may have life by accepting Christ, but one may forfeit life by rejecting Christ.” This is an example of reading one’s theology into the grammar.

John's use of δι' αὐτοῦ could either look at source (Brown, 518) or means (Johnson, 104). Source seems like the sense here in that the thrust of these verses has been on God's work in Christ as the defining expression of His love. John is not describing how God saves people, but why and through whom. As Stott (164) notes well, John is telling us, "While the origin of love is in the being of God, the manifestation of love is in the coming of Christ."

**4:10** This verse is both parallel in thought to v 9 and develops its thought further. Where God sends His Son in v 9, we are now told the purpose of His coming and the nature of His mission.

ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, "In this is love." Beginning this sentence with the same prepositional phrase and sense, "by means of this," John further clarifies what he has said in the previous verse.<sup>1260</sup> This is another instance where ἐν τούτῳ looks forward to an epexegetical ὅτι clause, in this case to two of them (Culy, 108; Haas, de Jonge, and Swellengrebel, 123). By the repetition of ἀποστέλλω John links the purpose of Jesus' coming with its significance. What follows will explain the means by which love was expressed by God.

Love here is the love of God and not love in its absolute sense (Strecker, 152). John's use of the article with love removes it from the abstract conceptual sphere into the concrete world of reality (Lenski, 502). This is an "article of previous reference" (Lenski, 502), whereby John is reminding his readers that he has been talking about this love already and they can understand it from the immediate context.

οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήκαμεν τὸν θεόν, "not that we have loved God." Introducing this clause with its negative particle brought forward in the sentence, John emphasizes what is *not* true of God's motives before communicating His reason for sending Jesus (Westcott, 150). With this he introduces us to an antithetical statement that contrast's human love with God's (Strecker, 152). This makes clear that God's love and the actions it initiated were not a response to any love on our part. His actions were motivated purely from His own nature and concern, not ours. To think that God looked into the future and saw anyone's response to Him and based His saving action on that person's future attitude or action, would be to place salvation into the hands of men and wrest it from the hands of God. In everyone's salvation God is not the responder, but the initiator (John 1:12–13; Rom 9:11; Eph 1:4–5, 11; 2:8–9; Jas 1:18).

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Being in a ἵνα clause, the verb of necessity must be subjunctive. Thus the conditional aspect of the subjunctive is not the point of the clause. That being said, it must be noted that the conditional aspect of the subjunctive mood involves its potentiality more than its continuance unless the context clearly indicates that such is the focus. The idea of "might live" has to do with whether one is enabled to enter into life or not, not whether one can maintain that life. The point being made by John has to do with Jesus' work in giving life, not in maintaining it.

<sup>1260</sup> Burdick (322–23) takes this ἐν as locative rather than means. The phrase is then explained by the epexegetical ὅτι clause that follows. For him this sentence is a definition of love. He bases this on the presence of the article and the absence of any other modifier with love, and so is saying: "This is what love 'in and of itself' is."

The perfect tense verb ἠγαπήκαμεν in this instance does not focus on the completed results (intensive perfect), that we continue to love God, nor on the past choice to love (extensive perfect) but on the fact that we never did love God prior to His action. One might argue that this is an aorist perfect that parallels the other aorist verbs in the sentence and focuses simply on the fact of our not loving God prior to Him sending His Son.<sup>1261</sup> That would make the change to the perfect a stylistic variation. However, John's changes in tense are not stylistic, but deliberately chosen to communicate ideas. Strecker (152) understands John's choice of the perfect was "to express the endurance of love" while the aorist would have communicated only "its unique occurrence." Thus God was not responding to our love when He acted.

ἀλλ' ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, "but that He loved us." Using the strong adversative ἀλλά John gives the real reason for God's actions.<sup>1262</sup> He was moved by His own love, not ours. Additionally, his inclusion of the pronoun before the verb makes clear that it was *He*, God, who was doing the loving and we were receiving it. Again, this antithetical statement should not be seen as a response to any opponents but a clear explanation of God's actions on our behalf (Strecker, 152; contra Bultmann, 68).

καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμόν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, "and sent His son to be a propitiation for our sins." John uses the aorist ἀπέστειλεν to speak of God's past action. He sent His Son, but does not continue to do so.<sup>1263</sup> Of interest is John's choice of the aorist over and against the perfect. By this he is emphasizing the sending, but not its continuance at the time of his writing. He sees Jesus' coming to be the propitiation for our sins as a completed event.

The term, ἱλασμόν, may refer to either the "appeasement necessitated by sin" or the "instrument for appeasing," the sacrifice itself.<sup>1264</sup> Here John is using it with reference to Jesus serving as the atoning sacrifice, thus as the instrument. This connects back to 2:2.<sup>1265</sup> In 1:7 we

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<sup>1261</sup> This might be argued from what appears to be an editorial change to the aor. in the majority of MSS. The versions with the aor. ἠγαπήσαμεν appears to be an attempt to align this verb with the other aor. verbs in its immediate context (Burdick, 232; Strecker, 152).

<sup>1262</sup> This "strong adversative ... expresses sharp contrast between man's love and God's love" (Burdick, 323).

<sup>1263</sup> Burdick (324) sees ἀπέστειλεν pointing to the incarnation. G. Sevenster ("Remarks on the Humanity of Jesus in the Gospel and Letters of John," 189) adds "in the σὰρξ" as understood in this context and so would seem to support his view. However, with ἱλασμόν as part of the double acc. construction and clearly the purpose of the sending, incarnation is not in view here.

<sup>1264</sup> BDAG, 474; F. Büchsel, "ἰλεως, ἰλάσκομαι, ἱλασμός," *TDNT* 3:317–18.

<sup>1265</sup> Harris (188) sees ἱλασμός as "propitiation" with "the idea of turning away the divine wrath." Strecker (153) says it is "a synonym for the soteriological action of Jesus Christ." Moody (92) and Williamson (145) still see it as "expiation." Refer to 2:2 for a full discussion of its meaning and proponents of each view.

saw the benefits of that sacrifice, our constant cleansing through His blood. Thus we see that Jesus is the satisfaction of God's righteous wrath by being our substitute. Here John spells out what Jesus is propitiating—our sins.

**4:11** The proper response to God's demonstrated love is love for one another. We now see the application of the truth just stated.

Ἀγαπητοί, εἰ οὕτως ὁ θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, "Beloved, if God loved us in this manner." For the last time in this epistle, John addresses his readers with the endearing "beloved" as he prepares to admonish them once again to action.<sup>1266</sup> Rather than seeing this starting a new section or introducing a new thought, it is best to see John softening his command with tender words. This is not a correction but an encouragement. However, before admonishing his readers to love, he reminds them of their motivation for loving.

John reminds his readers of the truth of God's love before addressing the obligation that arises from it. He does this using the first class condition (εἰ followed by the indicative), that assumes the truth of its protasis (Burdick, 324; Culy, 110; Haas, de Jonge, and Swellengrebel, 124; Johnson, 105)<sup>1267</sup> and can often be translated by "since" (Burge, 188). However, it is not just God's love to which he points. It is the manner in which God's love manifested itself, and thus his use of οὕτως.<sup>1268</sup> This adverb, often translated "thus" or "so," in this kind of construction points the reader to the preceding material or to the moral of a story that has been concluded.<sup>1269</sup> By its placement at the head of its clause, John gives it the same emphatic force as it had in John 3:16, to which this may allude as well (Brown, 519; Bruce, 109; Kistemaker, 334). Further, it looks back on all that has been said from verse 7 on, with special focus on verse 10 (Strecker, 155).<sup>1270</sup> Thus the sense of οὕτως is not that God loved us *so much* that He sent His Son, but that His love expressed itself by the sending of His Son.<sup>1271</sup> The point is not the volume or intensity of God's love, but its activity and expression.

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<sup>1266</sup> Where over the course of these first 74 verses, he addresses his readers fifteen times with τέκνία, παῖδιά, or ἀγαπητοί. In the following 30 verses, he will not repeat any of the three terms until the end (5:21). He uses τέκνία in 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; and 5:21, παῖδιά in 2:14, 18; and Ἀγαπητοί in 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11.

<sup>1267</sup> BDF §371.

<sup>1268</sup> Lenski (503) sees John's use here as "aimed at Cerinthus, at his following, and all who are of a similar mind." However, being in a parenthetic portion of the epistle, it need not have any different significance than it had in John 3:16.

<sup>1269</sup> BDAG, 742.

<sup>1270</sup> Burdick (324) limits it to vv. 9–10.

<sup>1271</sup> R. H. Gundry and R. W. Howell, "The Sense and Syntax of John 3:14–17," 35–36.

καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν, “we also are obligated to love one another.” Now the application of the truth of God’s demonstrated love is brought home by John.<sup>1272</sup> John affirms the importance of the truth stated in the protasis through the apodosis. We have an obligation. He uses the same verb here (ὀφείλω) as he had in 2:6, which expressed our obligation to imitate Jesus’ walk.

John once again includes himself in the obligation that results from God’s work with ἡμεῖς placed in the emphatic position at the head of the clause (Brown, 520).<sup>1273</sup> This is not just a moral obligation John wants his readers to fulfill.<sup>1274</sup> It is an obligation he himself senses. Further, he does not use the subjunctive, which might have implied a hortatory command. He uses the indicative instead in order to state a fact. This is not a desire but a reality. This is not a passing obligation or one that is to be fulfilled occasionally. Rather, the present indicative implies it is a “continuous obligation” (Burdick, 324). Thus the application of the truth of God’s demonstrated love is that we are obligated to love one another in the same way that He loved us. This is the same truth taught by Jesus in the parable of the unforgiving slave (Matt 18:22–34) and His warning after the disciples’ prayer (Matt 6:14–15). To experience the forgiveness of God carries with it the obligation to forgive in like manner. To experience the love of God similarly carries with it the obligation of love in like manner.

Here John places ἀλλήλους before ἀγαπᾶν. We see this pattern also with Paul (Rom 13:8) and Peter (1 Pet 1:22). Beyond these three uses, the normal word order places the verb first (John 13:34; 15:12, 17; 1 Thess 4:9; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 12; 2 John 5). By doing this John draws attention to “one another” as opposed to love in this instance (Brown, 520) and thereby shows the importance of this being applied communally rather than selectively. This also stresses the reciprocal nature of that love. Everyone is to be loving everyone else, and to be the recipient of everyone else’s love in turn. This is the body of Christ at its best.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1272</sup> BDF §442. Strecker (155) gives this use of καὶ a causal sense and provides examples of similar uses in Matt 5:15; John 12:18; 15:8; and Jas 4:7. Brown (520) sees this καὶ as “strongly sequential” and should be translated as “in turn.” However, it seems best to see its role as adjunctive (Burdick, 324).

<sup>1273</sup> Brown (520) sees this forming a contrast with “God” in the previous clause. It would seem better to see it identifying us with God in term of our need to imitate Him.

<sup>1274</sup> BDAG, 743; F. Hauck, “ὀφείλω,” *TDNT* 5:559–63.

<sup>11</sup> Gary W. Derickson, *First, Second, and Third John*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 422–441.