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INTRODUCTION

Although at times it may have seemed like we would never get to the end of this series, we are now there. And this final chapter is really what all the previous chapters have been pointing us toward: interpreting the text of the Bible. We have been using Third John as a 'laboratory' text all through this series of studies. One of my secondary goals in this study has been to acquaint you with one of 'almost forgotten' books of the Bible that tend to receive very little attention in preaching and teaching in Protestant churches. Although these documents in the New Testament are very short -- Philemon, Second John, Third John, Jude -- they contain significant spiritual insights both out of the ancient world and that tend to be surprisingly relevant to our world today. My prayer is that those insights from Third John may become clear to you the reader as we bring this series of studies to a close. And that this will become incentive to take a close look at the other such books in the New Testament.

7.1 What did Third John mean to its original readers?

Uncovering the depth of meaning in this very short document of the New Testament poses several interesting challenges, mostly from the historical side. But the literary dimensions of Third John are laid out very clearly, in fact, among the clearest of any document in the New Testament. The real challenge is in nailing down precisely and confidently the historical aspects, particularly the compositional aspects. The other historical aspects are much less difficult to determine. Now once a full picture of these background issues is painted, to the degree that valid information is possible to conclude, the ideas and meaning of this text begin to fall into place beautifully so that the eternal spiritual truths of this short letter will come to the surface very clearly.

7.1.1 Historical Aspects

Uncovering the details of the historical aspects are more challenging than discovering the literary aspects. But there is a lot that can be found and it makes the interpreting of the document much easier. Of the various historical aspects, the compositional history is the most difficult to determine with certainty. The rest is relatively easy.

7.1.1.1 Internal History Aspects

Both segments of the internal history can be researched from an ample data base of ancient sources that will provide very helpful background understanding. The available sources for most of this come from the ancient world, and from outside the New Testament itself. The images that emerge from this data paint the backdrop to the text of Third John in tones and details that will help the text come alive and enable us to see a developing Christianity struggling with issues often very similar to those facing modern Christians.

7.1.1.1.1 Formal History Perspective

The formal history, by definition, centers on history as key events brought about by key individuals in a defined geographical region for a specific period of time. It's application here would begin with leaders and events in the Roman empire at large that would have impacted the province of Asia which is connected to the origin of the Johannine letters geographically.

Although one cannot be absolutely certain as to the time frame of this letter, the almost universal consensus of both ancient and modern scholarship is that its origin comes at some point in the final two decades of the first Christian century. Thus the question arises: What was going on in the Roman empire during this period of time?

7.1.1.1.1 Across the Roman Empire.

The Roman empire is to be distinguished from the Roman republic. The series of events from 44 to 27 BC mark the line of distinction between the era of the republic that existed for some 500 years prior to this point, and the beginning of the empire under the dictatorship of Octavian who was given the honorific title Augustus Caesar on January 16, 27 BC. The first two hundred years of the empire were marked by relative peace and prosperity sustained in large part by expansion of Roman control over most all of the Mediterranean world. Internal decay gradually eroded the life out of the empire and even the Christian emperors from the fourth century AD were not able to overcome the deterioration of the empire from within that enabled external enemies to finally bring it pretty much to an end by the eighth century AD, and completely with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 AD.

Augustus initiated the Julio-Claudian dynasty that included five emperors -- Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero -- through 68 AD. After a year of chaos in Rome and on the Italian peninsula, Vespasian emerged as victor and began the short Flavian dynasty that lasted from 69 to 96 AD. This included the reigns of Vespasian (69-79 AD), and his two sons, Titus (79-81) and Domitian (81-96). When Domitian was assassinated on Sept. 18, 96 AD an era came to an end with Marcus Cocceius Nerva coming to power in his place. This would begin a long term dynasty, the Nervan-Antonian dynasty, that lasted throughout the second century until 192 AD.

The two decades of the 80s and 90s are centered primarily in the reign of Domitian (81 - 96 AD). Most biblical scholarship in the modern world follows the almost universal view among the church fathers that the Johannine writings -- the fourth Gospel, the three letters, and Revelation -- have their origin during this period of time. On that assumption then, we need to learn as much as possible about the reign of Domitian.

The reigns of both the father Vespasian and the brother Titus prior to that of Domitian played a hugely shaping and defining role on the leadership of Domitian. Vespasian left the siege of Jerusalem in 68 AD in the hands of his son Titus in order to march some of his eastern legions back to Rome in order to seize the emper-ship. At the second Battle of Bedriacum he won a decisive victory over the Roman general Vitellius, who was subsequently killed by Antonius, Vespasian's battle field commander. Antonius then marched into the city on December 20 of 69 AD in victory, and the following day the Roman senate declared Vespasian emperor, who at the time was in Egypt consolidating his control over that region. This brought to an end the bloody, chaotic year of 69 known as the Year of the Four Emperors, that had been triggered by the suicide of emperor Nero in 68 AD. During the subsequent decade of Vespasian's reign consolidation of power, stabilization of the empire, along with expansion and growing prosperity characterized his rule. Major reforms economically and culturally were put in place including substantial tax increases. One lasting monument to him was the construction of the Colosseum in Rome. When the son Titus had completed the invasion of Judea and razed the city of Jerusalem, according to the Christian historian Eusebius, Vespasian now as emperor ordered that all descendants of the royal line of David be hunted down across the empire and executed. This led to substantial persecution of Diaspora Jews across the empire, as well as the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Jews in Palestine out of revenge for rebelling against the Romans. Christian Jews were not exempted from this persecution. He died of illness on June 23, 79 AD.¹ He left a substantial legacy of both wit, humor, and generosity on the one hand, and iron fisted control on the other.²

¹"In his ninth consulship Vespasian had a slight illness in Campania and, returning at once to Rome, he left for Aquae Cutiliae and the country around Reate, where he spent every summer; however, his illness worsened and he developed severe diarrhea.

"On 23 June 79, Vespasian was on his deathbed and expiring rapidly, he demanded that he be helped to stand as he believed "An emperor should die on his feet". He died of a fever. His purported great wit can be glimpsed from his last words; *Vae, puto deus fio*, 'Oh! I think I'm becoming a god!'"³⁵ ["Vespasian," wikipedia.org]

²"Vespasian was known for his wit and his amiable manner alongside his commanding personality and military prowess. He could be liberal to impoverished Senators and equestrians and to cities and towns desolated by natural calamity. He was especially generous to men of letters and rhetors, several of whom he pensioned with salaries of as much as 1,000 gold pieces a year. Quintilian is said to have been the first public teacher who enjoyed this imperial favor. Pliny the Elder's work, the Natural History, was written during Vespasian's reign, and dedicated to Vespasian's son Titus.

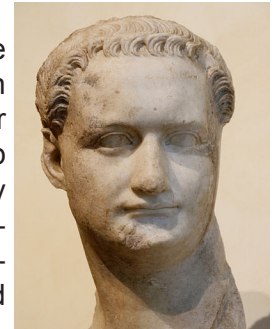
"Vespasian distrusted philosophers in general, viewing them as unmanly complainers who talked too much. It was the idle talk of philosophers, who liked to glorify the good times of the Republic, that provoked Vespasian into reviving the obsolete penal laws against this profession as a precautionary measure. Only one, Helvidius Priscus, was put to death after he had repeatedly affronted the Emperor by studied insults which Vespasian had initially tried to ignore, 'I will not kill a dog that barks at me,' were his words on discovering Priscus' public slander.

"Vespasian was indeed noted for mildness when dealing with political opposition. According to Suetonius, he bore the frank language of his friends, the quips of pleaders, and the impudence of the philosophers with the greatest patience. Though Licinius Mucianus,

The brief reign of Titus, his son, (79-81) was unremarkable for the most part, even though Titus himself did achieve some 'firsts.' He was the first emperor to directly succeed his father. He had distinguished himself as a military commander largely by completing the invasion of Judea with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple in 70 AD. For this he was awarded a Roman triumph in 71 AD, and the still standing *Arch of Titus* can be seen in Rome today. According to Josephus, many of the valuables including the Menorah and the copy of the Pentateuch located originally in the Jerusalem temple were carried in parade through the city, along with hundreds of Jewish prisoners. Until he succeeded his father as emperor, he served as prefect of the Praetorian Guard. One dark side was his highly controversial love affair with the Jewish Queen Bernice, a daughter of Herod Agrippa I, who surfaces in Acts 25 in the New Testament. Roman antagonism against her as a Jew forced Titus to publicly dismiss her when he became emperor in 79 AD. In history he is best remembered for his generosity in helping those caught up in the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD especially in the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Others were assisted in a massive fire inside Rome in 80 AD. Titus had to contend with occasional rebellions fueled by the false myths of Nero's revival. Reports frequently originated from the eastern empire, where Nero enjoyed considerable popularity, that he had somehow survived or else had come back to life intending to retake control of the empire. Various individuals during this period of time led abortive rebellion attempts while claiming to be Nero. Titus did complete the Colosseum project of his father. He died of a fever on September 13, 81 AD, and was then succeeded by Domitian, his brother.



Domitian, who had lived frustratingly in the shadow of his older brother Titus, came to power in 81 AD. The day following Titus' death, the Praetorian Guard declared Domitian to be emperor which gave him his chance to seize power quickly and firmly. His fifteen year reign lasted longer than that of any previous emperor since Tiberius (14 - 37 AD). His grip on the Roman empire steadily became stronger and increasingly dictatorial. He completely neutralized the Roman senate,³ and promoted the cult of emperor worship vigorously. He viciously sought to control public and private morals, and religious expression confined to traditional Roman religions with emperor worship as its center.⁴ He was ruthlessly determined



a man of disputable reputation as being the receiver in homosexual sex, treated the Emperor with scant respect, Vespasian never criticized him publicly but privately uttered the words: 'I, at least, am a man.'³⁶ He was also noted for his benefactions to the people, much money was spent on public works and the restoration and beautification of Rome: a new forum, the Temple of Peace, the public baths and the great show piece, the Colosseum.

"Vespasian debased the denarius during his reign, reducing the silver purity from 93.5% to 90% — the silver weight dropping from 2.97 grams to 2.87 grams.³⁷

"In modern Romance languages, urinals are still named after him (for example, *vespasiano* in Italian, and *vespasienne* in French³⁸) probably in reference to a tax he placed on urine collection (useful due to its ammoniac content; see *Pay toilet*).

"Vespasian appears as the king of Paltisca in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*, 2.1.7."

[“Vespasian,” wikipedia.org]

³The Roman historians closely linked to the Senate -- Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, and Suetonius in particular -- consistently paint him as a cruel and paranoid tyrant.

⁴Domitian firmly believed in the traditional Roman religion, and personally saw to it that ancient customs and morals were observed throughout his reign. In order to justify the divine nature of the Flavian rule, Domitian emphasized connections with the chief deity Jupiter,⁶⁶ perhaps most significantly through the impressive restoration of the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill. A small chapel dedicated to Jupiter Conservator was also constructed near the house where Domitian had fled to safety on 20 December, 69. Later in his reign, he replaced it with a more expansive building, dedicated to Jupiter Custos.¹⁰⁶

"The goddess he worshiped the most zealously however was Minerva. Not only did he keep a personal shrine dedicated to her in his bedroom, she regularly appeared on his coinage—in four different attested reverse types—and he founded a legion, Legio I Minervia, in her name.¹⁰⁷

"Domitian also revived the practice of the imperial cult, which had fallen somewhat out of use under Vespasian. Significantly, his first act as an Emperor was the deification of his brother Titus. Upon their deaths, his infant son, and niece, Julia Flavia, were likewise enrolled among the gods. With regards to the emperor himself as a religious figure, both Suetonius and Cassius Dio allege that Domi-

to bring Rome back to the days of glory and splendor that it had enjoyed under Augustus at the beginning of the empire. As a micro-manager of virtually everything, he did manage to root out corruption and inefficiency in the financial administration of the empire. He did not follow the path of cronyism that had prevailed in government appointments; instead he demanded absolute loyalty from his appointees and would execute them at any sign of disloyalty or ineptness. Many military campaigns were undertaken, and Domitian spent considerable time away from the city of Rome. But unlike previous emperors, in which the seat of governmental power remained in Rome while they traveled, the central power of the empire moved to where ever Domitian traveled. This was whether he was fighting battles in Britain or Gaul in the west or battles in Illyricum in the east.

Domitian's attitude toward non-Roman religions was at best toleration. But this was only to the extent that they were not perceived to work contrary to Roman cultural and religious values. Those religions that easily assimilated themselves into the traditional Roman religious tradition found greatest acceptance. Eusebius, the fourth century Christian historian, maintains that Domitian vigorously persecuted both Christians and Jews toward the end of his reign. Unfortunately, virtually no confirmation of this claim exists in the Greco-Roman sources, apart of accounts of the Jews being targeted for especially heavy taxation. This does not completely discredit Eusebius, but does urge caution about full acceptance of his claims.

What we can detect about the atmosphere of the Roman empire during the 80s and 90s is that of a powerful Roman emperor ruling with an iron hand. Intensely patriotic, he was highly suspicious of everything non-Roman. The legacy of his father and brother having crushed the Jews in Jerusalem gave him no positive feelings about Jewish people in the Roman empire. The suspicion against Diaspora Jews always put them on guard anywhere they lived in the empire. But this was especially so in the eastern empire. From all indications the Romans tended to make little or any distinction between Jews and Christians, considering Christianity as little more than a sect of Judaism. This in spite of the growing dominance of non-Jews in the Christian movement by this point in time. A religion founded by a Jew had to be a Jewish religion, regardless of who belonged to it. This is an attitude very different from the one expressed by the Roman proconsul in Corinth, Gallio, He didn't want to be bothered by what he saw as an internal squabble between Jews and Christians (cf. Acts 18:12-17). Thus both Christianity and Judaism with their 'stubborn' insistence on monotheism to the rejection of polytheism that dominated Roman culture would easily have been seen as dangerous to the welfare of the empire. These religions explicitly rejected as false this fundamental teaching of the Roman religious tradition. Therefore, wherever Christianity began making serious inroads into the population of a region in the empire it would be regarded increasingly as a threat to the empire.



7.1.1.1.2 Within the Roman province of Asia

Of more focused concern is what was taking place in the province of Asia? Ephesus was the provincial administrative capital and the Johannine tradition centers on the region around Ephesus for the apostle John during the last two or three decades of his life.⁵ Christianity came to Ephesus on the

tian officially gave himself the title of Dominus et Deus.^{108 109} However, not only did he reject the title of Dominus during his reign,¹¹⁰ but since he issued no official documentation or coinage to this effect, historians such as Brian Jones contend that such phrases were addressed to Domitian by flatterers who wished to earn favors from the emperor.⁶⁹

[“Domitian,” wikipedia.org]

⁵⁴Less well attested is the role of Ephesus in the final years and ministry of the apostle John. There is no internal evidence in either the Fourth Gospel or the Johannine Epistles that indicates their provenance or destination. While the Revelation of John was written from the island of Patmos, off the coast of W Anatolia, that geographical proximity does not intrinsically bespeak an Ephesian home of its author. In addition, there is no necessity based upon internal evidence of the documents themselves to identify the author of the Fourth Gospel with the author of the Revelation. The onus probandi for the historical reconstruction placing the apostle John (as the author of the Fourth Gospel, Johannine Epistles, and the Revelation) in Ephesus lies in the use of Christian literature of the 2d century. The consensus of 2d-century sources is in favor of placing John in Ephesus in his latter years. It was during these later years of his life that he was exiled to Patmos, wrote the Fourth Gospel, Johannine Epistles, and the Revelation, and combated gnostic heretics such as Cerinthus. However, the matter of John's tenure there was not without dispute in this early Christian period, with the result that certain Christian

western coast as well as to the Lycus Valley in the east central region in the middle of the first Christian century. This was the Pauline mission with a brief visit to Ephesus on the second missionary journey (Acts 18) and followed by the three year stay on the third missionary journey (Acts 19). In the early to middle 60s, the church at Ephesus was under leadership of Timothy at Paul's insistence (1 and 2 Timothy). From the mid 60s to the mid 80s a large gap exists in the New Testament records. But the picture that emerges, especially in Revelation 2 and 3 is that the province of Asia experienced considerable expansion of Christianity over this thirty to forty year period. Revelation was written sometime in the 80s to late 90s, thus giving us a glimpse toward the end of the century.

That gap is partially filled in by some of the church fathers,⁶ along with some of the Greco-Roman writers about the city of Ephesus itself.⁷ From every indication during the second half of the first century the city continued to grow and prosper. Its population is estimated to have increased from slightly under 250,000 in the first century BCE to between 400,000 and 500,000 residents by the end of the first Christian century. The Roman historian Strabo (64/63 BCE to approx. 24 AD) describes something of the history and the layout of the city at the beginning of the Christian era in his *Geography* 14.1.21-25. The era of growth and prosperity was largely due to the generosity of Caesar Augustus who greatly favored the city during his reign. It became the second largest city in the Roman empire, only behind Rome itself in size and influence. The huge temple of Artemis (450 ' long X 225' wide



authors opted for the presence of two different Johns (and later their graves) in Ephesus.” [Richard E. Oster, Jr., “Ephesus (Place)” In vol. 2, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 548-49.]

⁶Although legendary and clearly not historical, the apocryphal *Acts of John* contains several interesting tales about the exploits of the apostle John at Ephesus toward the end of the first century. He supposedly brought back to life a nobleman of the city Lycomedes and his wife Cleopatra, which astounds the residents of the city. On another occasion he supposedly causes the altar of Artemis to be broken into hundreds of pieces in judgment on the paganism of the city. Rather humorously, John and some traveling with him spend the night in an inn infested with bed bugs. When the group was bothered by the bugs, John supposedly instructed the bugs to vacate the room and not return until after the men had left the next day, which they did. The text contains other miraculous stories, again reflecting the Greco-Roman God-man who gained fame by performing sensationalist miracles. This writing coming out of the second half of the second century does affirm many other church traditions placing the apostle John in and around Ephesus toward the end of the first Christian century.

⁷“The common tradition of the Church affirmed that, after his leadership role in the church of Jerusalem, John moved to Ephesus, where he lived to an old age and died a natural death. The tradition is summarized by Eusebius (Hist. Eccl. 3.18.1; 23.3-4; 39.3-4; 4.18.6-8; 5.8.4; 18.14; 20.6; PG 20.252, 255-64, 296-98, 376, 449, 479-82, 486) who appeals to Irenaeus (3.18.1; 39, 3-4), Justin (4.18.6-8), Clement of Alexandria (3.39.3-4), Apollonius (5.18.14) and Polycrates (5.24.3) as early witnesses to the tradition.

“The testimony of Irenaeus (Haer. 2.22.3.5; 3.1.2; 3.4; PG 7.783-85, 845), Justin (Dial. 81.4; PG 6.669) and Clement of Alexandria (q.d.s., 42; PG 9.648-50) about John is known from extant sources, but the pertinent texts from Apollonius and Polycrates are extant only in the portions cited by Eusebius. Irenaeus claimed that he had reports on John's Ephesian ministry coming from Polycarp and Papias.

“The mid-2d century apocryphal Acts of John is another early witness to an Ephesian residency by John. Among the Latin Fathers, Tertullian tells of John's death at a late age (De anima. 50; PL 2).

“The tradition maintained that John was once banished to the island of Patmos, an island not far off the coast of Asia Minor relatively near Ephesus, but that he later returned to Ephesus where he lived until the time of Trajan. Since the tradition ascribed all five books in the NT's Johannine corpus (John, 1-3 John, Revelation) to John, the Patmos exile allowed for John's presumed composition of Revelation (Rev 1:9). Historical criticism has, however, convincingly shown that all five works could not have been written by the same author and that it is highly unlikely that John, the son of Zebedee, was the author of any one of them. [this is highly disputed]

“Making use of his several sources, Eusebius narrated a number of stories about John, including his raising a man from the dead at Ephesus (Hist. Eccl. 5.18.14; PG 20; 479-82) and his regaining a robber and murderer for Christ (3.39, 3-4; PG 20.296-98). Irenaeus tells of his having opposed the heretic Cerinthus (Haer. 3.3.4; PG 7.853). Later, Jerome told the story of John, feeble and quite old, being carried to gatherings of Christians, for whom he had but a single message: ‘Little children, love one another’ (Commentary on Galatians 6, 10; PL 26, 433).

“The Patristic tradition about John is, however, not entirely consistent. The Muratorian fragment suggests that John was with the other apostles when the gospel was written, a version of the tradition that would preclude the late date suggested by other Patristic witnesses for the gospel's composition. Heracleon (cf. Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 4.9; PG 8.1281), and later authors like Philip of Side (5th century) and George the Sinner (9th century) intimate that John died a martyr's death.”

[Raymond F. Collins, “John (Disciple)” In vol. 3, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 885-86]

X 60' height) was rebuilt for the third time in the second century BCE to a level of splendor never before achieved.

The church historian Eusebius in his *Church History* gives the most detailed account of the activities of the apostle John in the last decades of the first Christian century in and around the city of Ephesus. Book three, section 23, paragraphs 1-19 contain the longest account of John's activities.⁸ But the first reference to John by

⁸Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.23.1-19:

1. At that time the apostle and evangelist John, the one whom Jesus loved, was still living in Asia, and governing the churches of that region, having returned after the death of Domitian from his exile on the island.

2. And that he was still alive at that time may be established by the testimony of two witnesses. They should be trustworthy who have maintained the orthodoxy of the Church; and such indeed were Irenæus and Clement of Alexandria.

3. The former in the second book of his work *Against Heresies*, writes as follows: "And all the elders that associated with John the disciple of the Lord in Asia bear witness that John delivered it to them. For he remained among them until the time of Trajan."

4. And in the third book of the same work he attests the same thing in the following words: "But the church in Ephesus also, which was founded by Paul, and where John remained until the time of Trajan, is a faithful witness of the apostolic tradition."

5. Clement likewise in his book entitled *What Rich Man can be saved?* indicates the time, and subjoins a narrative which is most attractive to those that enjoy hearing what is beautiful and profitable. Take and read the account which runs as follows:

6. Listen to a tale, which is not a mere tale, but a narrative concerning John the apostle, which has been handed down and treasured up in memory. For when, after the tyrant's death, he returned from the isle of Patmos to Ephesus, he went away upon their invitation to the neighboring territories of the Gentiles, to appoint bishops in some places, in other places to set in order whole churches, elsewhere to choose to the ministry some one of those that were pointed out by the Spirit.

7. When he had come to one of the cities not far away (the name of which is given by some), and had consoled the brethren in other matters, he finally turned to the bishop that had been appointed, and seeing a youth of powerful physique, of pleasing appearance, and of ardent temperament, he said, 'This one I commit to you in all earnestness in the presence of the Church and with Christ as witness.' And when the bishop had accepted the charge and had promised all, he repeated the same injunction with an appeal to the same witnesses, and then departed for Ephesus.

8. But the presbyter taking home the youth committed to him, reared, kept, cherished, and finally baptized him. After this he relaxed his stricter care and watchfulness, with the idea that in putting upon him the seal of the Lord he had given him a perfect protection.

9. But some youths of his own age, idle and dissolute, and accustomed to evil practices, corrupted him when he was thus prematurely freed from restraint. At first they enticed him by costly entertainments; then, when they went forth at night for robbery, they took him with them, and finally they demanded that he should unite with them in some greater crime.

10. He gradually became accustomed to such practices, and on account of the positiveness of his character, leaving the right path, and taking the bit in his teeth like a hard-mouthed and powerful horse, he rushed the more violently down into the depths.

11. And finally despairing of salvation in God, he no longer meditated what was insignificant, but having committed some great crime, since he was now lost once for all, he expected to suffer a like fate with the rest. Taking them, therefore, and forming a band of robbers, he became a bold bandit-chief, the most violent, most bloody, most cruel of them all.

12. Time passed, and some necessity having arisen, they sent for John. But he, when he had set in order the other matters on account of which he had come, said, 'Come, O bishop, restore us the deposit which both I and Christ committed to you, the church, over which you preside, being witness.'

13. But the bishop was at first confounded, thinking that he was falsely charged in regard to money which he had not received, and he could neither believe the accusation respecting what he had not, nor could he disbelieve John. But when he said, 'I demand the young man and the soul of the brother,' the old man, groaning deeply and at the same time bursting into tears, said, 'He is dead.' 'How and what kind of death?' 'He is dead to God,' he said; 'for he turned wicked and abandoned, and at last a robber. And now, instead of the church, he haunts the mountain with a band like himself.'

14. But the Apostle rent his clothes, and beating his head with great lamentation, he said, 'A fine guard I left for a brother's soul! But let a horse be brought me, and let some one show me the way.' He rode away from the church just as he was, and coming to the place, he was taken prisoner by the robbers' outpost.

15. He, however, neither fled nor made entreaty, but cried out, 'For this did I come; lead me to your captain.'

16. The latter, meanwhile, was waiting, armed as he was. But when he recognized John approaching, he turned in shame to flee.

17. But John, forgetting his age, pursued him with all his might, crying out, 'Why, my son, do you flee from me, your own father, unarmed, aged? Pity me, my son; fear not; you have still hope of life. I will give account to Christ for you. If need be, I will willingly endure your death as the Lord suffered death for us. For you will I give up my life. Stand, believe; Christ has sent me.'

18. And he, when he heard, first stopped and looked down; then he threw away his arms, and then trembled and wept bitterly. And when the old man approached, he embraced him, making confession with lamentations as he was able, baptizing himself a second time with tears, and concealing only his right hand.

19. But John, pledging himself, and assuring him on oath that he would find forgiveness with the Saviour, besought him, fell upon his knees, kissed his right hand itself as if now purified by repentance, and led him back to the church. And making intercession for him with copious prayers, and struggling together with him in continual fastings, and subduing his mind by various utterances, he did not depart, as they say, until he had restored him to the church, furnishing a great example of true repentance and a great proof of

Eusebius comes in book three, section eighteen, paragraphs 1-3.⁹ Eusebius pictures the emperor Domitian as the second great persecutor of Christians right behind Nero. The two differing streams of traditions about John do raise questions about the historical accuracy of a lot of the material, but collectively they do paint the picture of the apostle's later years being lived out in the province of Asia in connection to the city of Ephesus.¹⁰

What can be concluded with considerable certainty is that these letters of John are connected with the region around Ephesus and come at a time when Christianity in its almost completely non-Jewish orientation was prospering and expanding greatly throughout the region.

7.1.1.1.2 Social History Dynamics

The interpersonal actions depicted in Third John reflect patterns of conflict and quests for control. Inhospitable treatment of strangers also enters the picture. These social dynamics relate to ancient concepts of friendship and leadership. Gaining understanding of views of appropriate and inappropriate patterns in these two categories will help position what we find in the text against the social backdrop of the first century world.

7.1.1.1.2.1 Friendship Concepts

Friendship in ancient Greek was defined through the words *φιλία* and the derivative words from this noun.¹¹ The noun *φιλία* is only used one time in the NT at James 4:4, which is very insightful. But from the root stem of *φιλ-* comes a large number of words used in the New Testament. The nouns *φίλος* and *φίλη* refer to a

regeneration, a trophy of a visible resurrection.

⁹Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.18.1-3:

1. It is said that in this persecution the apostle and evangelist John, who was still alive, was condemned to dwell on the island of Patmos in consequence of his testimony to the divine word.

2. Irenæus, in the fifth book of his work *Against Heresies*, where he discusses the number of the name of Antichrist which is given in the so-called Apocalypse of John, speaks as follows concerning him:

3. "If it were necessary for his name to be proclaimed openly at the present time, it would have been declared by him who saw the revelation. For it was seen not long ago, but almost in our own generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian."

¹⁰"Less well attested is the role of Ephesus in the final years and ministry of the apostle John. There is no internal evidence in either the Fourth Gospel or the Johannine Epistles that indicates their provenance or destination. While the Revelation of John was written from the island of Patmos, off the coast of W Anatolia, that geographical proximity does not intrinsically bespeak an Ephesian home of its author. In addition, there is no necessity based upon internal evidence of the documents themselves to identify the author of the Fourth Gospel with the author of the Revelation. The *onus probandi* for the historical reconstruction placing the apostle John (as the author of the Fourth Gospel, Johannine Epistles, and the Revelation) in Ephesus lies in the use of Christian literature of the 2d century. The consensus of 2d-century sources is in favor of placing John in Ephesus in his latter years. It was during these later years of his life that he was exiled to Patmos, wrote the Fourth Gospel, Johannine Epistles, and the Revelation, and combated gnostic heretics such as Cerinthus. However, the matter of John's tenure there was not without dispute in this early Christian period, with the result that certain Christian authors opted for the presence of two different Johns (and later their graves) in Ephesus.

"The Ephesian Christian community of the 2d century is documented, in part, by the evidence available in the letter to it from Ignatius of Antioch. The name of the Christian apologist Justin Martyr was also associated with Ephesus in the first half of the 2d century A.D."

[Richard E. Oster, Jr., "Ephesus (Place)" In vol. 2, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 548-49.]

¹¹"Friendship constituted a regular topic of discussion in ancient literature, although specific views on friendship varied in different periods, places and authors. Some of the ideals of friendship impact our understanding of NT passages even where the specific term is unused.

1. Kinds of Friendship in Antiquity
2. Ideals for Friendship in Antiquity
3. Dying for Friends
4. Friendship with God
5. Friendship Contrasted with Servanthood
6. Friendship in the New Testament"

[Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).]

friend, either male or female.¹² Additional terms reflect the posture and actions of friendship in the ancient world.¹³ Numerous other terms also reflect the idea of friendship, but come from alternative root stems in ancient Greek.

Various levels of friendship existed in the ancient world. Most of the time this was not a friendship of ‘equals’ but rather based on a hierarchal relationship of superior and inferior. Often this came out of a patron relationship, but both parties viewed the relationship as ‘friendship.’ Foundational to the idea of friendship in the ancient world was reciprocity.¹⁴ That is, friendship centered around obligations and expectations from both sides

¹²**34.11 φίλος, ου m:** a male person with whom one associates and for whom there is affection or personal regard—‘friend.’ φίλε, προσανάβηθι ἀνώτερον ‘come on up, friend, to a better place’ Lk 14:10; ἵνα μετὰ τῶν φίλων μου εὐφρανθῶ ‘for me to have a feast with my friends’ Lk 15:29.

“In some languages there are different terms for different grades of friends, that is to say, a difference between intimate friends with whom one constantly shares and those who constitute a somewhat wider circle of persons who are on friendly terms but who are not in the inner circle of intimate relations. The choice of terms for ‘friend’ will depend, of course, upon individual contexts.

34.12 φίλη, ης f: a female person with whom one associates and for whom there is affection or personal regard—‘friend.’ καὶ εὐροῦσα συγκαλεῖ τὰς φίλας καὶ γείτονας ‘and when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together’ Lk 15:9. See discussion at 34.11.

[Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 446.]

¹³**25.33 φιλέω^a; φιλία, ας f:** to have love or affection for someone or something based on association [5 highlights]—‘to love, to have affection for.’ See the discussion of the meaning of φιλέω and φιλία in 25.43.

φιλέω^a: ὁ φιλῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ὑπὲρ ἐμέ οὐκ ἔστιν μου ἄξιος ‘the person who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me’ Mt 10:37.

φιλία: ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν ‘affection for the world is hostility toward God’ Jas 4:4. In a number of languages it may be difficult if not impossible to speak of ‘affection ... is hostility.’ Frequently it is necessary to relate such emotional attitudes to individuals, so that this expression in Jas 4:4 may be rendered in some languages as ‘people who love the things in the world are against God.’

25.34 φιλαδελφία, ας f: affection for one’s fellow believer in Christ—‘love for one’s fellow believer, affection for a fellow believer.’ περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν ‘there is no need to write you about affection for your fellow believers’ 1 Th 4:9; ἡ φιλαδελφία μενέτω ‘keep on loving one another as fellow believers’ He 13:1.

In the NT the terms φιλαδελφία and φιλάδελφος (25.35) have acquired highly specialized meanings which restrict the range of reference to fellow believers. In non-biblical contexts these terms would refer to affection or love for persons belonging to a so-called ‘in-group,’ but in the NT this in-group is defined in terms of Christian faith.

25.35 φιλάδελφος, ου: pertaining to love or affection for fellow believers—‘one who loves fellow believers, loving one another as brothers.’ τὸ δὲ τέλος πάντες ὁμόφρονες, συμπαθεῖς, φιλάδελφοι ‘in conclusion, you must all have the same attitude and the same feelings, loving one another as Christian brothers’ or ‘... as fellow believers’ 1 Pe 3:8. See discussion at 25.34.

25.36 φιλανθρωπία^a, ας f: affection for people in general—love of mankind, affection for people.’ ὅτε δὲ ἡ χρηστότης καὶ ἡ φιλανθρωπία ἐπεφάνη τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ ‘when God our Savior showed his kindness and affection for mankind’ Tt 3:4.

25.37 φίλανδρος: pertaining to having affection for a husband—‘having love for one’s husband, having affection for one’s husband.’ ἵνα σωφρονίζωσιν τὰς νέας φιλάνδρους εἶναι ‘in order to train the young women to have affection for their husbands’ Tt 2:4.

25.38 φιλότεκνος, ου: pertaining to having affection for one’s own offspring—‘loving one’s own children, one who loves children.’ ἵνα σωφρονίζωσιν τὰς νέας φιλάνδρους εἶναι, φιλοτέκνους ‘in order to train the young women to love their husbands and children’ Tt 2:4.

[Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 292.]

¹⁴“1. Kinds of Friendship in Antiquity.

“Friendship was a regular ancient topic of discourse (e.g., Epictetus Disc. 2.22), the leading subject of numerous essays, for instance, by Aristotle (*Eth. Eud.* 7.1234b-1246a; *Eth. Nic.* 8–9); Plutarch (*Many Friends, Mor.* 93A-97B); Dio Chrysostom (*Third Discourse on Kingship* 99–100); Cicero (*De Amic.*); Seneca (*Ep. Lucil.* 3, “On True and False Friendships”; 9, “On Philosophy and Friendship”; see further Sevenster, 172–77); and Theophrastus (according to Aulus Gellius *Noc. Att.* 1.3.10–11). Scholars have produced detailed studies of friendship in Philo, who develops some Stoic ideals (see Sterling); on Aristotle (Schroeder, 35–45) and his followers, the Peripatetics (Schroeder, 45–56; for other sources, see especially Fitzgerald 1997b, 7–10). Even before Aristotle, many ideals of friendship circulated that later became pervasive in the Roman world (see Fitzgerald 1997a).

“There were a variety of perspectives on and kinds of friendship, not only in the philosophers but also throughout Greco-Roman and Jewish society. Friendship could signify a relationship of dependence or of equality, of impersonal alliances or of personal bonds of affection.

“1.1. Political Friendship. We will first survey some political kinds of friendship. The Roman ideal of amicitia was less apt to emphasize sentiment and male affection than did the Greek ideal of philia; it often represented an alliance of utility characteristic of par-

tisan politics among the Roman elite (Stowers, 29). The claim that Romans ‘were rather incapable of a heartfelt friendship’ (Friedländer, 1:225) is an exaggeration stemming from over dependence on the literature of the elite (and ignoring the abundance of genuine affection, e.g., in Cicero’s letters), but it does reflect the recognition of the importance of political connections in urban Roman friendship ideals. But there was considerable inter penetration of Greek and Roman ideals by the early empire (e.g., in Plutarch; see O’Neil), and political uses of friendship did not start with Rome.

“Friendship has been said to be largely political in writers such as Cicero (see Fiore) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (see Balch). One may contrast the older Stoic values of Chrysippus (Diogenes Laertius *Vit.* 7.7.189), but politically based relationships were common even among earlier Greeks. Whereas Aristotle notes friendships based on goodness, pleasure or utility (Aristotle *Eth. Eud.* 7.2.9–13, 1236a; 7.10.10, 1242b; *Eth. Nic.* 8.13.1, 1162ab), he assigns most to utility (Aristotle *Eth. Eud.* 7.2.14, 1236a; for political friendship in Aristotle, see further Schroeder).

“One of the most common political uses of ‘friendship’ in our literary sources refers to political dependence on a royal patron. This appears in ancient Israel (e.g., 2 Sam 15:37; 16:16–17; 1 Kings 4:5; 1 Chron 27:33) and applies to tyrants of the classical period (Diogenes Laertius *Vit.* 1.54), to the intimate circle of Alexander of Macedon (Diodorus *Siculus Bib. Hist.* 17.31.6; 17.39.2; 17.100.1) and to those of Cassander (Diodorus *Siculus Bib. Hist.* 18.55.1), to a high office in Hellenistic Syria (Diodorus *Siculus Bib. Hist.* 33.4.4a). This use of royal friendship appears with other rulers as well (Cornelius Nepos *Vir. Illus.* 9, 2.2; 18, 1.6; *Chariton Chaer.* 8.8.10), including in various Jewish sources (1 Macc 10:20; 15:28, 32; 2 Macc 7:24; *Ep. Arist.* 40–41, 44, 190, 208, 225, 228, 318; Josephus *Ant.* 12.366; 13.146, 225; *Life* 131; cf. *Sipre Deut.* 53.1.3). In the Roman imperial period it applies especially to friendship with Caesar (Epictetus *Disc.* 4.1.45–50; *Martial Epigr.* 5.19.15–16; *Herodianus* 4.3.5; inscriptions in Deissmann, 378), although of Jewish tetrarchs and rulers, apparently only King Agrippa I (Acts 12:1–21) felt secure enough to adopt this title on his coins (Meysan). John 19:12 probably refers to this position of honor (see e.g., Sherwin-White, 47); John 15:15 might present friendship with Jesus as friendship with a king.

“In one of its most common uses in ancient literature, ‘friendship’ could apply to alliances, cooperation or nonaggression treaties among peoples. Epics could use such language for alliances (Homer *Il.* 3.93, 256; 4.17; 16.282; Virgil *Aen.* 11.321), as might orators (Demosthenes *On the Navy Boards* 5; *On the Embassy* 62; *Letters* 3.27; cf. *Rhet. Ad Herenn.* 3.3.4). It also appears in geographers (Strabo *Geog.* 8.5.5) and apologists (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.109; 2.83b). Naturally, this language predominates in biographers and historians. We can attest it abundantly in biographers such as Arrian (*Alex.* 1.28.1; 4.15.2, 5; 4.21.8; 7.15.4); Plutarch (*Comp. Lyc. Num.* 4.6; *Pel.* 5.1; 29.4; also *Epameinondas* 17 in *Reg. Imp. Apophth., Mor.* 193DE); Cornelius Nepos (*Vir. Illus.* 7.4.7; 7.5.3; 7.7.5; 14.8.5; 23.10.2), and others (Josephus *Life* 30, 124). It is if anything more abundant in the historians, such as Polybius (e.g., *Hist.* 14.1); Dionysius of Halicarnassus (e.g., *Ant. Rom.* 3.28.7; 3.51.1; 5.26.4; 5.50.3); Diodorus Siculus (e.g., *Bib. Hist.* 14.30.4; 14.56.2; 17.39.1); Livy (e.g., *Hist.* 6.2.3; 27.4.6; 43.6.9); and 1 Maccabees (1 Macc 12:1, 3, 8; 14:40).

“Ancient writers frequently apply the designation friendship to personal or familial relationships undertaken for political expediency (e.g., Achilles Tattius *Leuc.* 4.6.1–3); Plutarch provides abundant examples (e.g., Plutarch *Ages.* 23.6; *Pomp.* 70.4; *Statecraft* 13, *Mor.* 806F–809B; *Philosophers and Men in Power* 1, *Mor.* 776AB; *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs* 6, *Mor.* 787B).

1.2. Patron-Client Friendship. Closely related to other political uses of friendship is the relationship between patrons and clients, often defined as friendship. In the Roman world, people probably often thought of both the royal and the non royal political images of friendship in terms of patron-client relationships. Patrons were called the clients’ friends (AE 1912.171, as cited in Sherk, 235), and even more often clients were called friends of their patron (*Martial Epigr.* 3.36.1–3; 3 Macc 5:26; probably P. Oxy. 2861). This image of dependence could be applied even to a magician dependent on a spirit (PGM 1.172, 190–91). Although the patron-client relationship involved fundamental inequality, the fact that ancient Greek ideals of friendship involved equality (see §1.3 below) allowed some clients to exploit this language to challenge some inequities in their patrons’ understanding of the relationship (see Konstan). This patron-client usage may have influenced the use of ‘friendship’ to describe the relationship between philosopher and disciple (Diogenes Laertius *Vit.* 6.2.36; Stowers, 39).

1.3. Non hierarchical Friendship. But not all ancient Mediterranean conceptions of friendship reflected this hierarchical sort of relationship, even though friendship normally anticipated reciprocity. In the eastern Mediterranean, societies of friends could include fellow members of one’s guild (Horsley, 4:17–18 §3). Although age-group societies may have declined in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the classical Greek wealthy image of friendship tended to be companionship based on groupings of the same sex and age, which constituted political parties (Stowers, 28–30, 39, 60; cf. Gould, 143–45). One may perhaps compare the relationship of associates in the Jewish *ḥabûrah* (cf. Oesterley, 172). Among the Greek schools, the Epicureans in particular emphasized friendship, regarding it as a source of pleasure (Diogenes Laertius *Vit.* 10.120; 148.27–28); the view of the Epicurean Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura* 5.1019–23) even sounds like later social contract theories. Plutarch (*Table Talk* 4, introduction, *Mor.* 660A) advocates befriending only the good while showing goodwill toward all.

“Although Roman patronal friendship made at best a vague pretense to equality, this traditional Greek image of friendship, even when related to benefaction, demanded at least the idea of equality. Aristotle cited the earlier proverb, ‘Friendship is equality’ (Aristotle *Eth. Eud.* 7.9.1, 1241b), and is said to have ‘defined friendship as an equality of reciprocal goodwill’ (Diogenes Laertius *Vit.* 5.31, as translated in LCL 1:478–79). Of course, what Aristotle meant by ‘equality’ differs considerably from our usage of that concept. Any kind of friendship could exist either between equals or with one as a superior (Aristotle *Eth. Eud.* 7.3.2, 1238b; 7.10.10, 1242b; *Eth. Nic.* 8.7.1, 1158b; 8.13.1, 1162ab); Aristotle further defined ‘equality’ more proportionately than quantitatively (Aristotle *Eth. Nic.* 8.7.2–3, 1158b). In the same way, his teacher Plato stressed both the friendship held by loving equals and that which stemmed from the poor’s need for the rich (Plato *Leg.* 8, 837AB).

of the relationship.¹⁵

What emerges in Third John is a picture of friendship between the elder and Gaius. The terms of endearment used by the elder toward Gaius reflect the language of friendship in the ancient world: Γαίῳ τῷ ἀγαπητῷ, *Gaius the beloved one* (v. 1); ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, *whom I love in truth* (v. 1). Notice how the elder complements Gaius in vv. 2-7. In addition, some of the friendship language surfaces in the elder's reference to Demetrius in v. 12. Whether Diotrephes ever participated in a formal friendship with the elder or not does not show up clearly in this letter. But what does become clear in the language used by the elder in vv. 9-10 is that now Diotrephes is considered an enemy rather than a friend. The basis of this is to some extent produced by disloyalty toward the elder in both refusing to listen to his words, spreading false statements about the elder, and refusing to give hospitality to the representatives of the elder upon their visits to the church.

Thus the idea of conflict that emerges here between the elder and Diotrephes arises within the framework of being either a friend or an enemy within ancient society. Expressions of disloyalty and spreading slanderous gossip about the other person (cf. 9-10) constituted a basis for treating such a person as an enemy. In society generally considering a person as such would have been grounds for taking damaging action against the person, and perhaps even violent action. Within the framework of Roman law it was a basis for legal action against the individual, which could easily ruin the person financially. But coming out of the Christian commitment of the elder, these available options in society for seeking retaliation against Diotrephes were not considered viable. Instead, there came a more balanced response of a warning (v. 10) to publicly expose Diotrephes and his actions during a possible visit of the elder to the church. Such public humiliation of Diotrephes would at minimum result in his loss of influence over the congregation. It might even provoke repentance and public confession of his sinfulness. Uppermost in the mind of the elder was the preservation of the integrity of the Gospel message in the church. The actions of Diotrephes were compromising that Gospel, and thus needed to be publicly exposed to the entire congregation.

7.1.1.1.2.2 Leadership Concepts

Concepts of leadership in the modern western world are culturally based, just as the very different ideas of leadership in the ancient world reflected the then prevailing ideas of culture. To speak of leadership from a biblical perspective means that one has to center that on the moral values emerging from biblical teaching.¹⁶ How

“Nevertheless, equality remained part of the traditional Greek ideal of friendship. As early as Homer a leader could honor a special friend above his other companions, regarding him as equal to himself (Homer *Il.* 18.81–82). Others could speak of a friend as ‘another I’ (Diogenes Laertius *Vit.* 7.1.23); Neo-Pythagorean tradition stressed friendship as equality (see Thom). Alexandrian Jewish writers also picked up on this; in Epistle of Aristeeas 228, the highest honor is to be shown to parents but the next honor to one’s friends, for a friend is the ‘equal of one’s own soul’ (*Hadas*, 189). This view continued to affect popular thought. Thus one letter recommends a friend (*amicum*) by exhorting the receiver to view him ‘as if he were me’ (P.Oxy. 32.5–6, 2d cent. A.D.); this ideal may inform the background of Philemon 17–19.

“Whether patronal or among peers, friendship was in general conditional. It normally included ‘obligations and expectations’ (Meeks, 30), whether formally or informally. Friendship appears frequently in private letters, where it often refers to friendship among peers. In such letters it appears ‘usually in the context of performing services for each other,’ such as watching over one another’s families or taking care of the other’s debts in his absence until his return (Evans, 202).”

[Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).]

¹⁵“The benefits and requirements of friendship are among the subjects addressed by Israel’s wise men, especially in Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus. The sage stresses loyalty and steadfastness as marks of the true friend (Prov. 17:17; 18:24; Eccles. 6:14-16) but warns that poverty or adversity often reveals people to be friends in name only (Prov. 19:4, 6-7; Eccles. 12:9; 13:21; 37:4-5). An irony of the book of Job is that Job’s three friends, in their frenetic attempts to effect his repentance, intensify rather than relieve his suffering. Because they are more loyal to their theological certainties than to Job, they are unable to attain the genuine sympathy that marks real friendship.” [Paul J. Achtemeier, Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 322-23.]

¹⁶As reflective of this note the two primary Pauline texts dealing with local church leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. Virtually nothing is said about leadership responsibilities and how to lead. Everything in both passages centers on the moral and religious life of the potential leader. How a leader led in the local church is never spelled out in the New Testament. Indirect signals strongly suggest that how this was done depended largely on whether the cultural orientation of the local church was Jewish or Gentile. The very loosely organized synagogue structure was the core model for Jewish Christianity, while the usual patterns of leadership administration

these values will be implemented into leadership of specific groups depends entirely on the cultural setting of the group.¹⁷ The actual carrying out of leadership depends completely on the cultural setting in which leadership is exercised. There are no universal principles of leadership; to think this and to attempt to teach such means only that the cultural values of the teacher have been falsely elevated to universal standards.

How did the various people groups of the first century Greco-Roman world view leadership? Determining this from the Bible is extremely difficult, due in large part to the lack of vocabulary for leadership. Only one Hebrew word for 'leadership' surfaces in the Old Testament, τ (yād). And this term fundamentally designated the hand. The idea of leadership comes out of the use of the hand to signal directions to be taken on a journey. In the Hebrew background lies the symbolism of the hand as expressing authority and also expressing power. And the term is actually only used one time in the entire Old Testament with this meaning: Numbers 33:1, *These are the stages by which the Israelites went out of the land of Egypt in military formation under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.*

Correspondingly, κυβέρνησις in the sense of leadership is only used one time in the New Testament at 1 Cor. 12:28, *And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.*¹⁸ The plural form κυβερνήσεις, used here,¹⁹ stresses varieties of leadership patterns in the early church.²⁰

Thus in order to grasp some idea of the ways that leadership was exercised in different groups one must turn to the Jewish and Greco-Roman literature of the first century world. First, how did the leaders of the ancient Jewish synagogue²¹ lead? Toward the end of the first Christian century the synagogue became the very heart of

in the Greek and Roman 'clubs' and other social organizations provided the background models for the Gentile oriented churches. The overlapping terminology found in the New Testament (πρεσβύτερος, ἐπίσκοπος, ποιμήν etc.) with the exact same terminology in reference to the Jewish synagogue and in the Greco-Roman literature unquestionably points this direction.

¹⁷A typical example of a modern publication on church leadership is Stanley, Andy, Reggie Joiner and Lane Jones. *7 Practices of Effective Ministry*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004. Careful examination of the contents reveals that the publication is totally dependent on modern early twenty-first century US culture not only for the way of presenting the ideas, but especially for how leadership is to be carried out in church life. The publication would be largely worthless when re-applied to another cultural setting elsewhere in the world.

¹⁸“κυβέρνησις is the noun of κυβερνάω. This means ‘to steer a ship.’ The κυβερνήτης is thus the ‘helmsman,’ as the context makes perfectly clear, e.g., in Ac. 27:11¹ and Rev. 18:17. The clarity of the image of the work of the helmsman made it obviously suitable for fig. use for the statesman. Plat. *Euthyd.*, 291c says, ἡ πολιτικὴ καὶ ἡ βασιλικὴ τέχνη is πάντα κυβερνῶσα. Polyb., 6, 4, 2 speaks of a βασιλεία τῆ γνώμῃ τὸ πλεῖον ἢ φόβῳ καὶ βίᾳ κυβερνωμένη. Here κυβερνάω undoubtedly means ‘to rule.’” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 3:1035.]

¹⁹“The literal meaning and the attested usage make it clear what Paul has in view when in 1 C. 12:28, among the gifts of grace which God gives individuals in the Church, he mentions κυβερνήσεις along with → δυνάμεις, → χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, → ἀντιλήμψεις and γένη → γλωσσῶν. The reference can only be to the specific gifts which qualify a Christian to be a helmsman to his congregation, i.e., a true director of its order and therewith of its life.² What was the scope of this directive activity in the time of Paul we do not know. This was a period of fluid development. The importance of the helmsman increases in a time of storm. The office of directing the congregation may well have developed especially in emergencies both within and without. The proclamation of the Word was not originally one of its tasks. The apostles, prophets and teachers saw to this. But these can hardly be possessors of the χάρισμα κυβερνήσεως in the specific sense, which comes only later in the list. The combination of ἀντιλήμψεις and κυβερνήσεις makes it certain that the ἐπίσκοποι (→ II, 615 ff.) and διάκονοι (→ II, 88 ff.), who are first mentioned in Phil. 1:1, are to be regarded as the bearers of this gift, or the → προϊστάμενοι of R. 12:8. No society can exist without some order and direction. It is the grace of God to give gifts which equip for government. A striking point is that when in v. 29 Paul asks whether all are apostles, whether all are prophets or whether all have gifts of healing, there are no corresponding questions in respect of ἀντιλήμψεις and κυβερνήσεις. There is a natural reason for this. If necessary, any member of the congregation may step in to serve as deacon or ruler.³ Hence these offices, as distinct from those mentioned in v. 29, may be elective. But this does not alter the fact that for their proper discharge the charisma of God is indispensable.⁴” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 3:1036.]

²⁰What I find fascinating is that modern commentators and Bible dictionaries approach the idea of leadership almost completely as a synonym to the concept of ‘authority.’ Although authority is one component of leadership, it is not the most important element. So at the start, the use of secondary sources of information will face the biases in favor of the modern perspective of the writer of the article.

²¹“SYNAGOGUE. The meeting place and prayer hall of the Jewish people since antiquity. During Second Temple times the term

Jewish religious life both in Palestine and in the Diaspora.²² The number of synagogues increased rapidly after 70 AD and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Its function in Jewish society expanded as well.²³ Two Greek terms surface in the NT in reference to the synagogue: συναγωγή (house of gathering) and προσευχή²⁴ (house of prayer), with the first term more oriented toward Jewish synagogues in Palestine and the second term more a Diaspora Jewish label. No set design feature was followed in the construction of the buildings used as synagogues either in Palestine nor in the Diaspora. The general consensus is that during the first century as often as not, private homes were used as gathering places for Jews. Archaeological discoveries suggest that the shift to specifically constructed buildings for synagogue use became increasingly dominant beginning in the second Christian century as a by-product of the destruction of the temple and the expanding role of the synagogue gathering place as a center of Jewish life.

The designated leader of the synagogue was the ἀρχισυνάγωγος, [president of the synagogue](#).²⁵ But this

‘synagogue’ referred both to a group of people and/or a building or institution. Although these notions are not mutually exclusive, it is quite probable that at its inception the synagogue did not refer to an actual building but to a group or community of individuals who met together for worship and religious purposes. This entry will explore the nature of the synagogue, first providing a broad introductory overview, and then surveying the evidence pertaining to early synagogues in the Diaspora.” [“Synagogue” In vol. 6, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 251-52.]

²²“By the 1st century C.E. the synagogue had become so important and central an institution to Jewish life in Palestine that the Talmud of Palestine refers to 480 of them existing in Jerusalem in the time of Vespasian (Kloner 1981:12). One scholar has recently proposed that in Jerusalem alone there were 365 synagogues in the late Second Temple period (Wilkinson 1976:76–77). A Greek inscription from Jerusalem dating to the 1st century C.E., found in the excavations of 1913–14, describes the varied function of the synagogue at that time (quoted in Levine 1987:17):

Theodotus, son of Vettenos, the priest and archisynagogos, son of a archisynagogos and grandson of a archisynagogos, who built the synagogue for purposes of reciting the Law and studying the commandments, and as a hotel with chambers and water installations to provide for the needs of itinerants from abroad, which his fathers, the elders and Simonides founded.”

[Eric M. Meyers, “Synagogue: Introductory Survey” In vol. 6, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 252.]

²³“The difference in Greek terms undoubtedly reflects the multiple functions of synagogues in both Palestine and the Diaspora; it also reflects how Jews and non-Jews perceived the role of the synagogue in society. The Hebrew and Aramaic terms of post-70 C.E. also reflect this variety to which is added the *bêt midraš*, or ‘house of study.’ Synagogue is equivalent to *bêt kneset* and proseuche equivalent to *bêt tēpillā*. It is noteworthy, however, that as the number of synagogues greatly and rapidly increases after 70 C.E. the nomenclature continues to reflect the varied communal aspects of life that were carried on within the confines of the synagogue, notwithstanding the fact that from the 2d century C.E. on the liturgical life of the synagogue is well documented and fairly stable. (The Jewish community center of contemporary America is a direct descendant of this multi-function ancient institution.)” [Eric M. Meyers, “Synagogue: Introductory Survey” In vol. 6, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 253.]

²⁴**2 a place of or for prayer, place of prayer Ac 16:13, 16.** Esp. used among Jews, this word is nearly always equivalent to συναγωγή in the sense of a cultic place (s. συναγωγή 2a; SKrauss, Pauly-W. 2 ser. IV, ’32, 1287f; ins New Docs 3, 121f; 4, 201f). But many consider that the πρ. in Ac 16:13, 16 was not a regular synagogue because it was attended only by women (vs. 13), and because the word συν. is freq. used elsewh. in Ac (e.g. 17:1, 10, 17); the πρ. in our passage may have been an informal meeting place, perh. in the open air (s. BSchwank VD 3, ’55, 279).—In the rare cases in which a polyth. place of prayer is called πρ., Jewish influence is almost always poss. (reff. fr. lit., ins and pap in Schürer II 425f; 439–47; Mayser I/32 ’36 p. 19; Boffo, Iscrizioni 39–60. See also 3 Macc 7:20 al.; SEG VIII, 366, 6 [II B.C.], also reff. in XLII, 1849; Dssm., NB 49f [BS 222f]; MStrack, APF 2, 1903, 541f; Philo; perh. Jos., C. Ap. 2, 10 and Ant. 14, 258 [contradictory positions on the latter in Schürer II 441, 65 and 444, 76]; Elbogen 2 445; 448; 452; SZarb, De Judaeorum προσευχή in Act. 16:13, 16: Angelicum 5, 1928, 91–108; also συναγωγή 2). But such infl. must be excluded in the case of the ins fr. Epidaurus of IV B.C. (IG IV2/1, 106 I, 27), where the Doric form of προσευχή occurs in the sense ‘place of prayer’: ποτευχὰ καὶ βωμός. Hence it is also improbable in IPontEux I2, 176, 7 and in Artem. 3, 53 p. 188, 27; 189, 2.—RAC VIII 1134–1258; IX 1–36; BHHW I 518–23. MHengel, Proseuche u. Synagoge, KGKuhn Festschr., ’71, 157–84; Schürer II 423–63.—DELG s.v. εὐχομαι. M-M. EDNT. TW. Sv.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 878-79.]

²⁵**ἀρχισυνάγωγος, ος, ὁ** (s. συναγωγή; Just., D. 137, 2 exx. fr. ins and lit. in Schürer II 434–36 and III 100f; Sb 5959, 3 [time of Augustus]; SEG VIII, 170, 2ff; on this ZNW 20, 1921, 171; Dssm., LO 378–80 [LAE 439–41] w. lit.) **leader/president of a synagogue**, a term found also in polytheistic cult (Poland, Gesch. 355–57) and given simply as a title (Schürer II 435; for ins evidence relating to Jewish women s. BBrooten, Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue, ’82; men and women: New Docs 4, 214–20), in our lit. only

term was just one of many labels used to refer to both men and women who functioned in leadership roles in some capacity.²⁶ His (or her) responsibilities centered on taking care of the physical arrangements for the Friday evening gathering of the Jewish community, but were not in any way limited to that.²⁷ The list of duties was fluid and mostly depended upon the needs of the situation and the moment week by week.

Connected to the leadership in the synagogue but also distinct from the synagogue and focused on leadership in the town or village especially in Palestine were the elders, οἱ πρεσβύτεροι.²⁸ In the largely patriarchal world of the first century, the council of Jewish elders functioned mainly as the ‘town council’ for the town with the administration of justice based on interpretation of the Torah as their main duty.²⁹ Responsibility for maintaining the religious life of the town became one of their duties as well. The later materials of the Mishna section of the Talmud, particularly in the tractate *Sanhedrin*, spells out the specific duties of the elders for later Judaism. But how much of this was in place during the first century is not certain.

When Christianity adopted the synagogue model along with the ‘town council’ model of the elders, the exact nature of how leadership was exercised by the Christian οἱ πρεσβύτεροι is never specified.³⁰ What seems

w. ref. to the Jewish synagogue, of an official whose duty it was esp. to take care of the physical arrangements for the worship services (Hebr. מְשִׁבְּתָה שָׂרָר) Mk 5:22, 35f, 38; Lk 8:49; 13:14; Ac 13:15; 14:2 D; 18:8, 17. Those named are Ἰάϊρος, Κρίσπος and Σωσθένης; s. these entries.—WThieling, *Der Hellenismus in Kleinafrika* 1911, 76; TRajak/DNoy, *JRS* 83, '93, 75–93.—M-M. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 139.]

²⁶“RULERS OF THE SYNAGOGUE [Gk *archisynagōgos* (ἀρχισυναγωγός)]. A title of honor for one of several synagogue officials attested in ancient Jewish, Christian, and pagan literary sources and in inscriptions. ‘Ruler of the synagogue’ is the most common Jewish title associated with the synagogue in antiquity. Other titles include ‘ruler’ (archōn), ‘elder’ (presbyteros), ‘mother of the synagogue’ (mater synagogae), and ‘father of the synagogue’ (pater synagogae).” [Claudia J. Setzer, “Rulers of the Synagogue” In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 841.]

²⁷“Although we have no catalogue of the functions of the ‘ruler of the synagogue,’ his or her duties seem to have spanned a range of practical and spiritual leadership roles. The “ruler of the synagogue” chose Torah readers and prayer leaders, invited others to preach, contributed to the building and restoration of the synagogue, and represented the congregation to the outside world. Several inscriptions cite women as ‘rulers of the synagogue.’ Children are occasionally called ‘rulers of the synagogue,’ which may mean the title was sometimes hereditary.

“The sources show no consensus on the practice of selecting an *archisynagōgos*. Some ‘rulers of the synagogue’ were appointed, some elected, and some inherited the office. Some served for one or more terms, while some held the office for life. Certain synagogues had more than one ruler.” [Claudia J. Setzer, “Rulers of the Synagogue” In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 841-42.]

²⁸“Person who, by virtue of position in the family, clan, or tribe; or by reason of personality, prowess, stature, or influence; or through a process of appointment and ordination, exercised leadership and judicial functions in both religious and secular spheres in the ancient world, both among biblical and non biblical peoples. The roots of the development of the presbytery (group of elders) in the NT and postapostolic church originate in Judaism and the OT, though the figure of the elder or groups of elders can also be found in the world surrounding ancient Israel and in the Greco-Roman world of the NT period.” [Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 679.]

²⁹“Each Jewish community had its council of elders, who had general administrative oversight and represented the community in relations with Roman authorities. Their primary duty was judicial. They were custodians of the Law and its traditional interpretations (see Mt 15:2) and were charged with both its enforcement and the punishment of offenders. The most important of these councils of elders was the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, a group of 71 men who acted as the final court for the entire nation.” [Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 679-80.]

³⁰ The specification of duties along with rankings of leadership roles begins taking shape in Christian tradition by the middle of the second century AD, in contrast to the first Christian century.

Acc. to 2 Cl 17:3, 5 exhortation and preaching in the church services were among their duties.—In Ign. the πρεσβύτεροι come after the bishop, to whom they are subordinate I M g 2; 3:1; 6:1, or betw. the bishop and the deacons I Ph d inscr.; 10:2; I Pol 6:1, or the higher rank of the bishop in comparison to them is made plain in some other way I Tr 3:1; 12:2 (s. πρεσβυτέριον b; cp. Hippol., Ref. 9, 12, 22).—Polycarp—an ἐπίσκοπος, accord. to the title of the Ep. bearing his name—groups himself w. πρεσβύτεροι in Pol inscr., and further takes the presence of presbyters in Philippi for granted (beside deacons, though no ἐπίσκοπος is mentioned; cp. Hdb. on Pol inscr.) Pol 5:3.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian*

to be the case early on among Christians was that the elders in the local church had basic responsibility for the religious life of the house church group, and that included establishing the meeting place, giving leadership to the meetings of believers etc. They could and often did a lot of the teaching of Christian principles, and were given other labels as well. Note how Peter identifies himself as ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος, a fellow elder, to those he addresses in First Peter 5:1-5.

Clearly by the early 60s the two designations of ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνους, *overseers and deacons*, have emerged as local church leaders. As both First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 make clear the ἐπίσκοποι and πρεσβύτεροι are interchangeable terms. Exactly how the duties of the πρεσβύτεροι differed from those of the διάκονοι differed from one another is never stated in the NT. At first glance a hint might be the Acts 6:1-7 text where evidently διάκονοι were elected by the Jerusalem church to take care of benevolence responsibilities. But note two important cautions here. First the term διάκονοι is not used in this passage to refer to the seven men set aside by the church. Second, the illustrations of the ministry of two of these seven, Stephen and Philip, show them preaching the Gospel rather than taking care of widows in Acts chapters six through eight. Once again the very loose and flexible understanding found in the Jewish sources applies to the understandings that surface inside the pages of the New Testament. What emerges is a needs basis for leadership roles, never an office or position. Those who assumed responsibility for giving leadership to the house church groups were understood to be leaders. Only Acts 6:1-7 suggests that the church elected individuals to leadership roles. Acts 14:23 suggests that the missionaries Paul and Barnabas played a decisive role in helping the congregations of Galatia establish πρεσβύτεροι in the local churches.

In addition to the Jewish influence, one needs to ask how much influence the 'secular' meaning of these leadership terms impacted the idea of leadership in Christian churches outside of Palestine, and especially when these churches became dominantly non-Jewish in membership. The answer to this question, however, is extremely difficult to project for most of the second half of the first century. With the abundance of Christian writings beginning early in the second century, the picture becomes increasingly clear. Beginning with First Clement dated around 96 AD, leadership in the Christian communities takes a dramatic shift in the direction of a hierarchical structure. This was driven both by doctrine and circumstance. The doctrinal side centered in several emphases. Most of Christianity began a movement toward sacramentalism as the key means of 'distributing' the grace of God to church members. This demanded an 'administrator' who was properly authorized to administer the sacraments. The local church leader evolved into a priest more than a pastor. The influences here came out of both the OT temple priesthood concepts and from the surrounding world of Greco-Roman religions with priests as the central leaders in the temples. Additionally, exploding heresies, particularly that of Marcion in the early second century, gave stimulus to the centralizing of authority inside the churches. Only a powerful local church leader could stem the undermining of the church by these false teachers.

Circumstantially, the rise of extensive governmental persecution of Christianity drove the move toward powerful local church leaders who stood as the bulwark against the Roman government's efforts to stamp out Christianity. Ironically but not completely surprisingly, the evolving church leadership structures especially in western Christianity beginning in the second century took on many of the patterns of Roman governmental organization. The emerging of the regional bishops had tones of a Roman senatorial provincial governor. The eventual emergence of a pope embraced much of the prompt and circumstance associated with the Roman emperor, and the college of cardinals mirrored aspects of the Roman senate.

But this leaves us with a rather large gap from the mid-60s to the late 90s. The NT writings that originate during this period -- the four gospels, Revelation, and the letters of John -- do not provide much insight into emerging patterns of leadership, apart from the situation connected with Third John. Thus we must turn to an exploration of Greco-Roman society in regard to social organizations and how they functioned in order to gain some possible insight.

The main Greek terminology designating organized groups and gatherings of people in the pages of the NT, συναγωγή, κοινωνία, αἵρεσις, and ἐκκλησία, provide limited insight. The first term, συναγωγή, normally specified the gathering of a harvest or some similar idea, but it also was a major label for organized Greek societies.³¹ These could be religious in purpose, but often were mainly social and religious expressions took place

Literature, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 862.]

³¹ In view of the gt. importance of συνάγω in Gk. societies it is not surprising that the verbal noun is also common in this sphere, esp. in many inscr.,⁴ rarely in relation to the founding or naming of a society,⁵ more commonly in the sense of the gathering or periodic

in connection to the patron deities of the group. Although not a normal ‘constitutional’ term for governmental assemblies, συναγωγή was used on occasion to designate trade guilds.³² Connected is ἐκκλησία in its secular use in the Greco-Roman world. While συναγωγή can refer to the ‘assembling of a group together,’ ἐκκλησία can then label the ‘assembled group.’³³ But it gravitates toward governmental assemblies and is not commonly used to label social organizations or trade guilds.³⁴ Clearly, the New Testament use of ἐκκλησία as a religious label is

meeting, esp. in the Doric isles, Asia Minor and Egypt, e.g., the well-known *Testament of Epicteta* from Thera in Crete (between 210 and 195 B.C.) ὅστε γίνεσθαι τὰν συναγωγὰν ἐπ’ ἀμέρας τρεῖς ἐν τῷ Μουσειῷ, IG, 12, 3, No. 330, 118 f., cf. also line 22, 115, 127 f., 131f. The society itself, which meets to worship heroes, is called τὸ κοινὸν τοῦ ἀνδρείου τῶν συγγενῶν and has 25 members; women and children are admitted to the συναγωγή (also σύνοδος, σύλλογος). From there we also have the inscr. which mentions a συναγωγή of the κοινὸν τοῦ Ἀνθισ[τ]ήρος, IG, 12, 3, No. 329, 15 f. We find [ς]υνλόγους καὶ συναγωγὰς in the draft of statutes for a cultic guild of Zeus Hypsistos of οἱ ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Διὸς Ὑψίστου συνόδου (between 69 and 57 B.C.? from Philadelphia in Fayyum?), Preisigke *Sammelb.*, V, 7835, 12.⁶ The use is similar in a clan society of Diomedes in Cos in Asia Minor, Ditt. Syll.3, III, 1106, 93 f. (c. 300 B.C.), which meets to worship Heracles and the hero who founded the family, though sacrifices are also made to Aphrodite and the Μοῖραι. All members of the family take part in the συναγωγή. Use of the τέμενος for other purposes is explicitly forbidden. Another example is found among the Neoi of Cyzicus, Ditt. Or., II, 748, 15 (3rd cent. B.C.). On a Ptolemaic decree in honour of the πολίτευμα of the Idumeans in Memphis we find the expression ἐπὶ συναγωγῆς τῆς γενηθείσης ἐν τῷ ἄνω Ἀπολλ[ω]νιεῖω, Ditt. Or., II, 737, 1 f. (2nd cent. B.C.).⁷ In BGU, IV, 1137, 1 ff. (6 B.C.) συναγωγή is used with ref. to the imperial cult and denotes a gathering of the Alexandrian σύνοδος Σεβαστῆ τοῦ θεοῦ Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος which took place ἐν τῷ Παρατόμῳ. As on the two previous inscr., the place of meeting is mentioned on one in honour of the board of a guild, ἐπὶ τῆς γενηθείσης συναγωγῆς ἐν τῷ Ἀριστίωνος Κλεοπατρεῖω, Preisigke *Sammelb.*, V, 8267, 3 (5 B.C.) from Kôm Truga in the Nile delta, cf. also the resolution from Kôm Tukala, *ibid.*, IV, 7457, 2 f.; also the resolution (104 B.C.) of a union which calls itself: κοινόν (sc. ἐκ τοῦ γυμνασίου),⁸ where we find the phrase ἐπὶ τῆς γενηθείσης συναγωγῆς, *ibid.*, V, 8031, 16. Whether συναγωγή has this sense among the *thiasites* of Nicaea in Bithynia too is contested. The ref. is to a Cybele inscr. acc. to which the priestesses of Cybele and Apollo are to be crowned ἐν τῇ τοῦ Διὸς συναγωγῇ, *ibid.*, I, 4981, 6 (2nd cent. B.C.). If συναγωγή is used metonymically here for the place or site of assembly⁹ this is an exception in the non-Jewish and non-Chr. sphere, though it is not impossible (cf. ἀγορά, ἐκκλησία, προσευχή, → II, 808, 10 ff.). συναγωγή is also used for a pagan cultic gathering in Ps.-Philo, *Eus. Praep. Ev.*, 1, 10, 52 (GCS, 43, 1 [1954], 53): Ζωροάστρης δὲ ὁ μάγος ἐν τῇ Ἱερᾷ Συναγωγῇ τῶν Περσικῶν φησι. On the burial inscr. in Cos which King Antiochus I of Commagene set up for himself (1st cent. B.C.) συναγωγαί, πανηγύρεις ‘festal gatherings’ and θυσίαι are mentioned together in annual celebration of his birthday and accession, Ditt. Or., I, 383, 94 f. In gen. συναγωγή is used predominantly for the festive assembly or meeting, whether cultic or not; this is esp. so outside Egypt. συναγωγή is close here to συναγώγιον ‘picnic,’ ‘feast,’ cf. *Athen.*, 8, 68 (365c). In *Diog. L.*, II, 129 it is used (par. ἐορτή) for a feast in the court of Nicocreon.¹⁰ Acc. to the statutes of the guild of Zeus Hypsistos (→ 800, 11 ff.) the ἡγούμενος was to arrange a πόσις for the members monthly ἐν τῷ τοῦ Διὸς ἱερῷ ἐν αἷς ἐν ἀνδ[ρῶν] κοινῷ σπένδοντες εὐχέσθωισαν, Preisigke *Sammelb.*, V, 7835, 8 f. and cf. the regulations for the feast of the κοινόν in the *Testament of Epicteta*: The συναγωγή includes the banquet δεῖπνον, drinking, crowns, perfumes μύρον, sacrifices. The same applies to the societies of Anthister, Diomedon, and the Neoi.¹¹ Cf. also *Cl. Al. Paed.*, II, 4, 4: ταῖς μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ τῇ εὐφροσύνῃ συναγωγαῖς ἐγκαταλέγομεν ἄν καὶ αὐτοὶ δειπνάρια τε καὶ ἄριστα καὶ δοχὰς εἰκότως ἂν καλοῖμεν τὴν συνήλυσιν ταύτην.” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 7:800-01.]

³²“Though συναγωγή is not a common guild-term, there are instances of its use for guilds themselves. A transition to this may be seen in the decree of the κοινὸν τῶν Ἀτταλιστῶν, CIG, II, 3069, 11 f. (2nd cent. B.C.) in Teos, where συναγωγή and αἵρεσις are par.¹³ An inscr. on a marble altar between Rodosto and Eregli near ancient Perinthus calls a barbers’ union συν[α]γωγή τῶν κουρ[έ] ω[v]14 (1st cent. B.C.). On a marble altar in Perinthus we also find συναγωγ[γ]ή [κ]ωποπωλῶν for a rowers’ union,¹⁵ and *Poll. Onom.*, IX, 143 mentions a συναγωγή ναυτῶν.” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 801.]

³³“That ἐκκλησία is also used in secular Gk., and denotes a popular assembly, is clear from the NT itself, Ac. 19:32, 39 f. The biblical sense in the OT and NT is furnished only by the addition τοῦ θεοῦ, and the specific NT sense by the further addition ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, irrespective of whether the addition is present in a given case, or present in whole or in part. What is the significance of the fact that later Gk. Judaism and early Gk. Christianity adopted this particular term? May it be that this is already a cultic expression in secular Greek?” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 3:513.]

³⁴“From the time of Thuc., Plat. and Xenoph., and especially in inscriptions, ἐκκλησία is the assembly of the δῆμος in Athens and in most Greek πόλεις. The etymology is both simple and significant. The citizens are the ἐκκληστοί, i.e., those who are summoned and called together by the herald.²³ This teaches us something concerning the biblical and Christian usage, namely, that God in Christ calls men out of the world.²⁴

“It is open to question whether or how a cultic society or union ever called itself an ἐκκλησία, thus forcing us to speak of a cultic term.²⁵ There is good reason to raise this question, Since an affirmative answer would enable us to see why, in the light of social and cultic usage, a Christian congregation regarded itself as an ἐκκλησία and thereby as a cultic union. In this respect we are to think particularly

derived overwhelmingly from the LXX use of ἐκκλησία to translate the Hebrew לְהִקָּרָא in the Old Testament. One additional signal of this is that the Latin had no equivalent term for ἐκκλησία as a label for a religious (or social) group. In the Latin church fathers, a wide variety of terms will be used for ἐκκλησία: curia (mostly), civitas dei, contio, comitia et als. Convocatio would have been a literal translation, but is never so used in reference to the church.

More frequent as a social group label was κοινωμία with its derivative forms.³⁵ The root idea is ‘something in common.’ In Greek society, the origins of societies, groups etc. are rooted in control of land and property.³⁶ Thus some aspect of economic concern served as an organizing motive for forming the various groups both social and trade unions. Virtually all had some religious emphasis usually centered on the patron deity of the group. The connection of φιλία, [friendship](#), with κοινωμία, [sharing / fellowship](#), was profound.³⁷ At the heart of friendship in a group was the readiness to share all things in common with one another. Thus early Christianity with its Jewish heritage on caring for one another found a cultural atmosphere in the Diaspora world of group sharing that could enhance its witness to the pagan world. Another aspect pertains to the cultic use of the κοινωμία concept. In the Greco-Roman religious heritage a rather mysterious conviction that eating and drinking brought reception of the powers of the gods. In the common meal usually at the beginning of the social and trade unions group meetings, the belief was that the sacral meal eaten in the presence of the statue of the patron deity meant that the deity of the relations at Corinth as depicted by Paul in 1 C. But apart from the fact that there is insufficient evidence to argue a cultic use of ἐκκλησία in the Greek world, Paul would have rejected this term and usage as an abuse. What mattered for him was simply and solely the OT and NT assembly of God in Christ. Some Gentile Christian circles, which were not so well, or not at all, acquainted with the OT context, might have understood the term in the light of its immediate derivation and possible recollections of Greek fellowships. It is quite possible, and wholly natural, that many matters of organisation in Christian congregations should have been regulated according to the pattern of contemporary societies.²⁶⁷

[*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 3:513-14.]

³⁵κοινός, κοινώνος, κοινωνέω, κοινωμία, συγκοινωνός, συγκοινωνέω, κοινωνικός, κοινώω [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 3:789.]

³⁶“Economic development led to the blossoming of the Greek city states, but also to sharper distinctions between rich and poor. The control of property also became a problem. Critical and hypercritical thinking was devoted to the question of a true social order. Theories of society arose which purported to solve the problem by communal ownership. According to his story, Pythagoras was supposed to have seen in the cosmic order a model of the order of human life. The original state when there was no private property, but all things were held in common, was the ideal.¹⁶ Hence Pythagoras fashioned a communal order for the narrower circle of his disciples. These parted from their relatives and renounced their personal possessions, putting them under the control of the fellowship (οὐσίας κοινάς). In the common life of the order they thus achieved the divinely willed ideal of society.¹⁷ Heraclitus bound the individual very closely to society with his admonition ἐπεσθαι τῷ κοινῷ, Fr., 2 (I, 77, 12, Diels); cf. Fr., 89 (I, 95, 10, Diels), and the Delphic god ordered κοινὸς γίνου (Ditt. Syll.3, 1268, I, 19). In Athens the movement of ethical reform after Socrates had as its goal the discovery of a correct theory on which to establish a happy order of society and state. Plato (→ 799 f.), who was influenced by the Pythagorean Timaeus, projected a model and ideal of the best state in the πολιτεία. He was strongly motivated by an ethical concern to overcome the natural egotism of those responsible for the state and to make them willing servants of the common good. Plato regarded private property as the root of all evil, since it leads inevitably to a selfish desire for gain (πλεονεξία) which disrupts society. Hence the two chief classes in the state, the guardians (φύλακες) and the soldiers, should renounce private property in order to be free from all desire or concern for gain. They should be fed communally from the national store and at public expense.¹⁸ By the establishment of community of wives and children the guardians should be freed from private wedlock and domestic concerns and thus committed the more fully to concerns of state.¹⁹ Hence the truly ‘social’ (φιλοπόλιδες) should rule in place of the ‘a-social’ (δυσκοινωνήτοι), Resp., VI, 503a, cf. 486b.” [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 3:792-93.]

³⁷“For the Gk. world, however, friendship is also a supreme expression of fellowship. In Gk. thinking this includes a considerable readiness to share material possessions.⁸ Sharing the same city underlies the fellowship of equal citizens, Aristot. Eth. M., I, 34, 9. In Platonism (→ 792 f.) κοινωμία acquires its greatest systematic significance. κοινωμία is the basis of → σωτηρία, the preservation not merely of individuals, but of the whole cosmos, which includes both men and gods.⁹ This is what underlies Plato’s projected political ideas on the community of goods and wives (→ 793).¹⁰ To Stoicism (→ 794 f.) the small city state is alien, but the concept of fellowship is still dominant. The world is the state for Stoics.¹¹ Hence they value the model harmony and fellowship which is found in the universe and which is the basis of its preservation.¹² The idea of an unbroken relationship of fellowship between God and man is thought to be wholly Gk.¹³” [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 3:798-99.]

was sharing in the meal with the group.³⁸

Also the term αἵρεσις and its derivatives fundamentally stresses efforts toward a goal, along with the idea of choice.³⁹ This word group tended to be used more in reference to social groups more centered on some philosophical set of teachings. This lies in the background of the NT use of it in reference to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and false Christian teachers. But the secular background use points to the frequent organization of societies built around a distinctive set of teachings, usually advocated by a particular teacher of some kind. The sense of the modern term 'heresy' comes to be attached to αἵρεσις only in the church fathers who elevate the word to a technical label with negative meaning.⁴⁰

Some importance is to be seen in labels that ancient Christian opponents attached to Christian congregations.⁴¹ That virtually no evidence exists to suggest that Christians ever adopted most of these labels for their

³⁸“In Sacral Speech. The group κοινων- is important in sacral speech. According to primitive ideas there is an inward reception of mysterious divine power (mânâ) in eating and drinking.¹⁴ This notion of direct union with the deity is at least a basic impulse in later cults as well, e.g., that of Dionysus etc.¹⁵ On the level of popular polytheism the sacrificial meal then becomes a communion of the deity with men. In Homer sacrifices are cheerful feasts in which the gods take part.¹⁶ Man and god are companions at table.¹⁷ Nor is this true only of the naive primitive age. In the Hellenistic period, too, the gods arrange and conduct sacrificial meals. Men are invited as companions (κοινωνός) to the table of the gods.¹⁸ In θεοξένια, the *lectisternia* of the Romans, the gods take a lively part in the common festivities through their statues.¹⁹ With union by eating and drinking in the sacred meal we may also mention sexual union with the deity.²⁰ Greek philosophy (Plato) lifts the thought of divine fellowship above the cultic experience and extols it as the highest and most felicitous form of fellowship.²¹ Stoic thinking regards the universe as a dynamic and integrated totality, and on this basis it arrives at the concept of mutual κοινωνία between men and of their κοινωνία with God.²² For Epict. κοινωνός is equivalent to fellow-man.²³ Hellenistic mysticism conceives of a general κοινωνία ψυχῶν between gods, men and irrational creatures.²⁴ By its very nature, however, it seeks union with the deity rather than communion.” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 3:799-800.]

³⁹“αἵρεσις, from αἰρεῖν, is used in classical Greek to indicate: a. ‘seizure,’ e.g., of a city (Hdt., IV, 1); b. ‘choice’ (αἰρέομαι mid.), in the general sense of choice of a possibility or even to an office; ‘inclination’ (opp. φυγή); and c. ‘resolve’ or ‘enterprise,’ ‘effort directed to a goal,’ almost προαίρεσις (Plat. Phaedr., 256c). The last meaning persists in Hellenism and occasionally in Christian literature (Ditt. Syll.3, 675, 28; Herm. s., 9, 23, 5).

“From this there develops in Hellenism the predominant objective use of the term to denote a. ‘doctrine’ and especially b. ‘school.’ The αἵρεσις of the philosopher, which in antiquity always includes the choice of a distinctive Bios, is related to δόγματα to which others give their πρόσκλισις. It thus comes to be the αἵρεσις (teaching) of a particular αἵρεσις (school).¹ Cf. the title of a work by Antipater of Tarsus (2nd century B.C.) κατὰ τῶν αἰρέσεων, and the writing of Chrysipp. αἵρεσις πρὸς Γοργυπιτίδην (Diog. L., VII, 191); also the description of the philosophical schools as αἰρέσεις in Polyb., V, 93, 8 (Peripatetic), Dion. Hal. Compos. Verb., 19, p. 134, 3 f. (ἢ γ’ Ἰσοκράτους καὶ τῶν ἐκείνῳ γνωρίμων αἵρεσις); Sext. Emp. Pyrrh. Hyp., I, 16; Diog. L., I, 19 (τοῦ δὲ ἠθικοῦ [sc. μέρους τῆς φιλοσοφίας] γεγονάσιν αἰρέσεις δέκα: Ἀκαδημαϊκή, Κυρηναϊκή κτλ.). For the concept of such a fellowship—as well as αἰρέσεις κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν (Sext. Emp. Pyrrh. Hyp., I, 185) we also have κατὰ ἰατρικὴν αἰρέσεις (ibid., I, 237)—the following aspects are important: the gathering of the αἵρεσις from a comprehensive society and therefore its delimitation from other schools; the self-chosen authority of a teacher; the relatively authoritarian and relatively disputable doctrine; and the private character of all these features.” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 1:180-81.]

⁴⁰“In the age which followed αἵρεσις was still understood as an eschatologically threatening magnitude essentially opposed to the ἐκκλησία. This may be seen clearly in Ign. Eph., 6, 2; Trail., 6, 1; Just. Dial., 51, 2. Here the term has already become technical. It is worth noting however—and this confirms what we have said about the material difference between ἐκκλησία and αἵρεσις—that within Christianity αἵρεσις always denotes hostile societies, and there is always consciousness of an inner relationship between heretics and the secular philosophical schools or Jewish sects (Justin Ap., I, 26, 8; Dial., 80, 4), which they also describe by the term αἵρεσις.¹³ What the Church usually has in view is Gnosticism. As seen by the Church, the Gnostics form schools.¹⁴ It is worth noting that when Celsus raises the charge of multiplicity against Christianity, the only defense that Origen can make (c. Cels., III, 12) is to point to the fact that οὐδενὸς πράγματος, οὐ μὴ σπουδαία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τῷ βίῳ χρήσιμος, γεγονάσιν αἰρέσεις διάφοροι; as it is in medicine, Greek philosophy, and Jewish exegesis, so also in Christianity. Origen, therefore, has lost sight of the material distinction between the ἐκκλησία and a αἵρεσις.” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 1:183-84.]

⁴¹“Lucian regards the Christians as a θίασος when he calls their leaders θιασάρχης.³³ Celsus calls the disciples of Christ θιασῶται.³⁴ More striking is the fact that Eusebius twice calls Christians θιασῶται and once even uses the pagan religious term θίασος for the Church.³⁵ This is all the known material to this effect. Hence we must be radically on guard against the exaggeration of regarding Christianity as a cultic society.³⁶ In order to form a just appreciation of the extent to which θίασος and ἐκκλησία are parallel, we must remember

group urges caution about assuming too much influence organizationally and structurally from the surrounding secular societies during the formative period of the 60s to the 90s.

Again this background of the existence of social organizations in the Greco-Roman world, especially outside Palestine, now we need to explore how those groups were organized and given leadership.

The term πρεσβύτερος (older), which is a comparative form of πρέσβυς (old), fundamentally specifies age (normally above 50 years). But as the term took on the technical meaning of elder or presbyter, the emphasis on age receded into the background and the emphasis on giving leadership to a group become foremost in its meaning. In the widespread secular -- non Jewish and non-Christian uses -- the singular πρέσβυς (= πρεσβύτερος in later use) designated the president or chief political officer of a group, while the plural πρεσβύτεροι had much the meaning of committee or board of directors for the group.⁴²

The term ἐπίσκοπος in secular Greek played off the root meaning of 'watch' 'protect' when employed as a title of an individual.⁴³ As a title it generally designated an individual or individuals charged with oversight responsibilities⁴⁴ such as the finances of a group, which could be social, governmental, or religious in orientation.⁴⁵ It often designated the sponsoring patron of a group who provided financial support for the group. It could refer

how extremely widespread was the use of εἴσος and related terms (ἔρανος, κοινόν, σύνοδος, σύλλογος etc.) for the various societies of antiquity. None of these titles ever came to be adopted by Christians. Individual names, derived from the names of gods or historical figures, were also in common use.³⁷ But no attempt was made to form a title from the name Jesus, and it was only gradually that the term Χριστιανοί, which is very rare in the NT (only Ac. 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pt. 4:16) came into prominence, and in the form Χρηστιανοί was connected with the proper name Χρηστός. Christians are partisans of Christ, i.e., of a man with the supposed proper name Christ, just as the Herodians are of Herod (Mk. 3:6; 12:13; Mt. 22:16). Christians represent one particular movement among others." [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 3:515-16.]

⁴²"Esp. important for bibl. usage is the fact that in the constitution of Sparta πρέσβυς occurs as a political title to denote the president of a college: τῶν ἐφόρων, IG, 5, 1, 51, 27; 6, 552, 11; νομοφυλάκων, 6, 555b, 19; βιδέων (ephebes), 6, 556, 6; συναρχίας (assembly of magistrates), 6, 504, 16. Quite independent is the use of πρεσβύτεροι as a title in Egypt inscr. and pap. (Ptolemaic and imperial period).⁴ Here committees and colleges of various kinds are entitled πρεσβύτεροι: the freely elected board of associated national husbandmen (πρεσβύτεροι γεωργῶν), BGU, I, 85, 9 ff.; P. Tebt., I, 13, 5; 40, 17 f.; 43, 8; 50, 20; P. Gen., 42, 15; P. Lond., II, 255, 7, also corporations: πρεσβύτεροι τῶν ἀλυροκόπων (guild of millers in Alexandria, 6 πρεσβύτεροι with a ἱερεὺς at their head, 3rd cent. B.C.).⁵ πρεσβύτεροι also appear in village government: πρεσβύτεροι τῆς κώμης.⁶ They have administrative and judicial functions. Their number varies (2, 4, even more than 10). Their period of office is limited to a year. It is important that πρεσβύτεροι is also a title among the priests of the 'great god Socnopaios' (BGU, I, 16, 5 f.). The ref. is to an executive committee of 5 or 6 members alternating each yr. and charged with supervision of the finances and negotiations with the authorities. The members are not old men (the text speaks of presbyters of 45, 35 and 30 yrs. of age).⁷ Rather different are the richly attested πρεσβύτεροι of Gk. societies.⁸ Here the word is not a title; the πρεσβύτεροι are not office-bearers but senior groups of various kinds (as distinct from junior groups), cf. the ὑμνωδοὶ πρεσβύτεροι of an inscr. found in Radanovo⁹ and the many clubs of men belonging to the senate.¹⁰ Elsewhere πρεσβύτεροι is used to denote the age of one guild as compared to a younger one:¹¹ σύνοδο· τῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ πρεσβυτέρων ἐγδοχέων (carriers), Ditt. Or., I, 140, 7 ff.: πρεσβύτεροι γέρδιοι (weavers)¹² or τέκτονες πρεσβύτεροι.¹³" [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 6:653.]

⁴³"In Gk. ἐπίσκοπος is first used a. with a tree understanding of the 'onlooker' as 'watcher,' 'protector,' 'patron.' His activity then takes the form of the different senses of ἐπισκέπτομαι, and esp. ἐπισκοπέω, in a gracious looking down upon the one protected and in care for him. Therewith the word ἐπίσκοπος comes to be used b. as a title to denote various offices. The official activities thus described vary, and are usually not too important. In this sense, the word has no religious significance, but is used almost exclusively for very secular appointments with technical and financial responsibilities. On the other hand, behind the sense of 'watcher' or 'protector' is a religious conception expressed in the fact that it is usually gods who bear this designation." [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 2: 609.]

⁴⁴"More commonly the ἐπίσκοποι are local officials or the officers of societies. Theological research has shown more interest in this usage, since it is felt that here we have the basis of the Christian use, especially when the responsibilities concerned are related to the cultus. In this case, however, while the term is undoubtedly used, and it relates to a work of supervision or control, there is no strict definition of what is involved and the term is never used with precision." [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 2:612.]

⁴⁵"In ancient Greece the word ἐπίσκοπος was used in many different ways to describe those who held various official positions in respect of their office and work." [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 2:611.]

to the patron deity who ‘watched over’ the group dedicated to him or her. The common meaning in these various applications was that of responsibility to see after the welfare of the group in some capacity.⁴⁶ The literature reflects that the role of the ἐπίσκοπος was very fluid and largely depended on the needs and assignments given by the group the individual served in.

The ‘waiter’ or ‘waitress’ orientation in serving food for διάκονος in its secular meaning dominated usage outside of Christianity in the ancient world. It never really achieved the technical level of meaning as a title, although as a honorific expression it was often used to refer to individuals rendering outstanding service in one of the pagan temples.⁴⁷ Somewhat limited in use but none the less present is ἀρχισυνάγωγος used in pagan religious cults and guilds.⁴⁸ Perhaps because of the typically negative and often mocking tone of the secular use of this term, it never finds its way into designating leadership inside the Christian community.

What is the picture that emerges here?

For one thing, it becomes clear that leadership in the ancient world both inside various groups as well as inside the Christian community remained fluid and functional. Job assignments and how to carry them out depended mostly on the wishes of the group and the personality and skills of the individual leader. Only rarely did the secular groups line out specific duties for their leader. Instead, a general consensus of leaders doing what needed to be done was the norm. The tone of patronage that permeated ancient society along with reciprocity expectations in friendships could open the door for abuse and excessive claims of power. Very possibly

⁴⁶“With the same basic meaning as it has when used of the gods, ἐπίσκοπος can also be applied to the activity of men. But here the sense is not so definite, and can be worked out in many different connections. Protective care, however, is still the heart of the activity which men pursue as ἐπίσκοποι, so that Thes. Steph., s.v. can give the general definition: qui rei alicui curandae praefectus est.” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 2:610.]

⁴⁷“In Epict. we often find the idea that the cynic is the servant of God. Thus Diogenes is the διάκονος of Zeus in Diss., III, 24, 65; cf. III, 26, 28; IV, 7, 20. Either in description of calling, or with reference to activities in sacral unions, διάκονος often occurs on inscriptions, mostly in lists of similar titles. Thus in 3rd century (B.C.) Troiza it occurs after ἱερο]μνάμονες and μάγειρος (IG, IV, 774) or between γραμματεῖς, κᾶρυξ and παῖδες (824). Again, a 1st or 2nd century (B.C.) list of names from Acarnania contains the following: πρύτανις, ἐστία, ὑποπρυτάνιες, μάντις, ἀγλήτᾳς ἱεροφόρος, μάγειρος, διάκονος, ἀρχονόχους, ἱεροθύτας (IG, IX, 1,486). And there is a similar list on the pillar of a temple to Apollo dating from at least the time of Christ’s birth (IG, IX, 1, 487 and CIG, II, Add., 1793b, p. 982). This is probably how *Inscr. Magn.*, 109 should also run. There can be no doubt that the reference is to cultic actions, sacrifices, consecrations etc. But the work of the διάκονοι obviously remained the same, i.e., the serving of food, since they are always mentioned after the cooks. Thus H. Lietzmann can describe as a cellarer’s guild the κοινὸν τῶν διακόνων which acc. to CIG, II, 1800 dedicates an inscription to Egyptian deities.¹³ Yet this is obviously a sacral rather than a secular guild, as we can see from the fact that a priest stands at the head. Similarly the inser, from Metropolis in Lydia (CIG, II, 3037) mentions male and female deacons along with priests and priestesses. According to *Inscr. Magn.*, 217 κομᾳκτορες, κήρυκες καὶ διάκονοι took part in the dedication of a statue of Hermes.¹⁴” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 2:91-92.]

⁴⁸“We find an ἀρχισυνάγωγος¹ in pagan cults and guilds, with no essential distinction from συναγωγός and συναγωγεύς,² compounds in ἀρχι- being common in the cultic unions of Greece.³ Eus. *Hist. Eccl.*, VII, 10, 4 speaks of an ἀρχισυνάγωγος of Egypt. magicians. Jewish synagogue rulers, Samaritans and Chr. presbyters are all lumped together in *Ep. Hadriani*; they are called astrologers, haruspices, and quacks, *Script. Hist. Aug., Vita Saturnini*, 8, 2. Similarly in Lampridius *Vita Alexandri Severi*, 6 Alex. Severus is mockingly called a Syrus *archisynagogus*. The main occurrence in relation to guilds is on inser., though we find it only in Macedonia-Thracia and Egypt. A votive inser. from Olynthos mentions an ἀρχισυνάγωγος at the head of a κολλήγιον: Αἰλιανὸς Νεῖκων ὁ ἀρχισυνάγωγος θεοῦ Ἡρώος καὶ τὸ κολλήγιον Βειβίῳ Ἀντωνίῳ ἀνέστησεν τὸν βωμόν, CIG, II, 2007 f.; the most interesting pt. here is that the ἀρχισυνάγωγος is an official of the god. Another inser. from Thessalonica, which contains a decree of the worshippers of Heracles for a guild-member, shows that the society of συνήθ[εις] τοῦ Ἡρακλέος is directed by an ἀρχισυναγωγῶν (part.); after him are three γραμματεῦντες and an epimeletes, BCH, 8 (1884), 463 (155 A.D.). An inser. of Perinthus in Thracia⁴ ref. to an ἀρχισυνάγωγος for a workers’ union called a συναγωγή → 801, 20 ff.; this is the only instance of συναγωγή for the society which the ἀρχισυνάγωγος heads: τὸν βω[μ]ὸν τῆ συναγωγ[ῆ] τῶν κουρέω[ν π]ερὶ ἀρχισυνάγ[ω]γον. Γ. Ἰούλιον [Ο]ὐάλεντα δῶ[ρ]ον ἀποκατέστη[σα]ν.⁵ In the votive inser. of a military union we find together ἀρχισυνάγ[ω]γος καὶ ἀρχιερεὺς for the one person; the ensuing ref. to [... θε]ῶν Φιλοπατόρων shows that this is in the sphere of profane Gk., Preisigke *Sammelbuch*, 623 (80–69 B.C. Fayyum). From Egypt we also have a resolution (Alexandria) which mentions several ἀρχισυνάγωγοι, τῶν ἀρχισυναγῶ[γων], *ibid.*, 8787, 3 V 7, p 845 (3–4 A.D.).⁶ The function of the ἀρχισυνάγωγος in a society was obviously that of the president (often he was also the founder) who convened and led the συναγωγή ‘(festal) assembly.’⁷” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 7:844-45.]

Diotrephes in 3 John 9-10 felt he had the right to adopt the stance of φιλοπρωτεύων, [loving to dominate](#), out of a background in the pagan world. Certainly if he made any claim toward being an ἐπίσκοπος in the church, the secular background of this term with a patronage focus would have justified his attitude in his own thinking.

But the relationship expressed in Third John between the elder (Ὁ πρεσβύτερος) and Gaius, as well as with Demetrius, reflect a framework of friendship concepts and leadership concepts common in the Greco-Roman society outside Palestine especially that were fundamentally healthy and positive. This background gave the elder the right and duty to issue warnings to Diotrephes, as well as gave added meaning to his words of praise for Gaius and Demetrius.

7.1.1.2 External History Aspects

The external history centers on the history of the writing of the document originally, and then on the process of copying and distributing the letter during the first eight or so centuries of Christianity.

7.1.1.2.1 Compositional History Perspective

We begin with the standard reporter questions of who, when, where, to whom etc. First, what answers to these questions can be understood directly from the content of the document itself?

Since the document is in the form of an ancient letter, the Praescriptio section (v. 1) provides most of the information. The letter comes from Ὁ πρεσβύτερος, [the elder](#). Unfortunately, this title reference provides almost no help at putting a name on the individual. But it does signal that the sender of this letter was known by his title, and evidently assumed that Gaius, the recipient, would know who was sending the letter. Also from this introductory verse we learn that the letter was addressed to Γαῖω, [Gaius](#). But only complementary phrases are attached to his name indicating the warm friendship of the elder to Gaius. No geographical indication is provided that would suggest where Gaius lived. From the contents of the letter it becomes clear that Gaius is part of a Christian community that includes a Diotrephes who has taken control over it. The exact role of Gaius in this community is not spelled out by the letter. While Gaius enjoys a close friendship with the elder, Diotrephes stands in a hostile relationship. Sometimes the greetings section in the Conclusio of ancient letters provides additional information that helps identify aspects of the compositional history. Unfortunately the Greeting section in v. 15b-c only identifies οἱ φίλοι, [friends](#), as sending greetings to Gaius from where the letter was written. Additionally, those whom the elder wants Gaius to greet where he lives for him are also identified only as τοὺς φίλους, [the friends](#). The lack of named individuals in both these sections leaves us without a clue as to whom these people were. Thus all the information the document gives us about the writing of the letter is that it came from an unnamed elder and was addressed to a Gaius. The when and where questions remain completely unanswerable from this source, and the answers to the whom and to whom questions have serious gaps of information in them.

Where does one now turn for help?

First, the context of the New Testament itself should be probed to see whether additional clues can be uncovered to help fill in some of the blanks. The foundational principle here is labeled *usus loquendi*, or local context. In this kind of situation it means an expanding context that begins with the Johannine letters, extends to the remaining documents traditionally in the Johannine section of the NT (gospel, letters, revelation). Finally the remainder of the New Testament comes into the picture for examination.⁴⁹

The most immediate context is that of the remaining letters grouped together under John's name. When one checks Second John an interesting discovery is made. The sender of that letter is also identified only as Ὁ πρεσβύτερος, [the elder](#), (2 Jhn 1). This is exactly the same identifying mark as in Third John, and strongly suggests the same person was responsible for both letters. But the recipient of Second John is different: ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς, [to the chosen lady and her children](#). Likely this was intended as a picturesque way of addressing a church and its members, even though κυρία might possibly have been a woman's name, or more possibly a title of nobility with something of the meaning of the Lady. Interestingly, the expansion phrases attached to the recipient's designation in vv. 1b-2 stresses the themes of love and truth just as do those connected to Gaius in Third John. In the Conclusio we find a similar expression of an anticipated visit, and the Greetings section also uses the generalized reference of τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφῆς σου τῆς ἐκλεκτῆς, [the children of your elect](#)

⁴⁹Here is where the use of a concordance is a valuable secondary tool. Behind that would be Bible dictionaries. The introductory sections of commentaries on Third John are also an important source. I suggest these three tools in the above sequence because this will keep you focused on searching the biblical text before turning to the opinion of others for insight. Again the *sola scriptura* principle is basic to biblical study.

sister, (v. 13). Unfortunately, no specific individuals are named in the contents of the letter. Thus we don't get any read help here. The themes of loving one another (vv. 4-6) and warning about false teachers (vv. 7-11) of the letter body somewhat reflect the core themes in Third John. The one clue here is that the false teachers are denying the real incarnation of Jesus into a genuine human being (v. 7). Whether this links up to Diotrephes or not is not clear, since nothing is said about the specifics of Diotrephes' teachings in Third John. What we can reasonably conclude, however, is that rather strong signals at the point of the Praescriptio and Conclusio sections of both indicate that these two letters came from the same person. And probably were addressed to the same Christian community, although this is less certain.

When one looks at First John, not much help emerges either. Although traditionally called a letter, the actual literary form is closer to an ancient tractate arguing some philosophical point. Instead of a letter Praescriptio the document contains a formal Prologue in 1:1-4. Neither does the document contain a Conclusio with Greetings. The writer of the document only identifies himself with the use of the first person I or we. The strong emphasis against false teaching, particularly in regard to the humanity of Christ, links it to the similar emphasis in Second John. Additionally a prominent emphasis on love and light are contained in the document helping to connect it to both Second and Third John. But none of these things provides any clues as to the identify of the sender of the document nor to the place of writing and the destination of the three documents.

Further neither the fourth gospel or the book of Revelation provide much help directly. Only in the assumption of a common authorship of all four documents does the name Ἰωάννης, John, surface. If this connection among these four documents is correct, then a John in the early Christian church is responsible for all four documents. Traditionally this John has been identified as the apostle John. But one must not forget that this is based on an assumption of these four documents being connected to one another with a common author. Absolutely nothing inside any of these four documents specifically make this connection.

Second, the traditions of early Christianity from the second through the eighth centuries is the next source of information available for assistance here.⁵⁰ The reasoning behind turning to these sources is that they are much closer in time to the original composition of the NT documents. Thus under normal circumstances they should be in a better position to know the answers to these reporter questions than we do. When modern writers refer to 'the traditional views' about the compositional history of the NT documents, they actually mean the view or views reflected in the church fathers during this period of Christian history. The composition history of all of the anonymous documents in the NT is identified from these sources of the church fathers.⁵¹

⁵⁰“If the ancient designation ‘Catholic Epistles’ is not particularly helpful, what about the value of the other ancient attempt to identify these epistles as ‘The First, Second, and Third Epistles of John’?” Such titles appear in all modern Bibles, and readers instinctively tend to give them a greater authority than the facts warrant. The three Epistles under discussion originally bore no title. Only toward the end of the second century were there prefixed to NT books titles representing intelligent (but not necessarily correct) guesses about authorship made by Christian scholars of that period. Sometimes these guesses were based upon earlier traditions but often traditions that were oversimplified and confused. Sometimes the guesses were based on an analysis of the contents of the NT book. The scarcity of solid information about NT authorship becomes apparent when we realize that only in the letters of Paul, James, Peter, and Jude and in Revelation (1:1, 4, 9) does the book itself supply us with the author’s name. And even in these instances caution is required, e.g., there is no reason to identify the prophet John of Revelation with any other ‘John’ known to us in the NT (and specifically not with John son of Zebedee), and in the case of the letters a disciple may have used the name of a more important Christian figure (Paul, James, Peter) to indicate his dependency on that master’s thought. To a modern reader it may be puzzling that a factor so important as authorship was not better defined in antiquity, but the authority behind the message was a far greater issue in Christian antiquity than the identity of the writer. For instance, what second-century title-givers dubbed ‘The Gospel according to Mark’ presents itself simply as ‘The Gospel of Jesus Christ’ (Mark 1:1). Granted these general limitations, we shall have to examine every facet of the claims implicit in the titles ‘The First, Second, and Third Epistles of John.’ Are all these works epistles? Are they all by one man? If so, was he the author of the Fourth Gospel? Again, if so, was he John son of Zebedee, or some other John (e.g., John the Presbyter mentioned by Papias—ABJ 29, xc–xci), or an unknown? In what order were these ‘Johannine’ works written, and were they written about the same time? In answering these questions, let us begin with the limited information about these three ‘Epistles of John’ supplied by antiquity.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 4-5.]

⁵¹“Already in the fourth century Eusebius (Hist. 2.23.25) records that the adjective *katholikos* (‘universal’) was being applied to these seven,² whence the frequent designation ‘Catholic Epistles’ or ‘General Epistles.’ This adjective may have been used originally of I John³ and then have spread to the other six. In the East the designation was generally understood to say something about the recipients: the seven were not letters addressed to a particular community, as were the Pauline Epistles to Rome or Corinth, but encyclicals addressed to larger groups dispersed in various places, or even to Christians in general (the church catholic).⁴ In fact, however, the

From the church fathers one must search for references to these three documents to discover the available information. Sometimes references to a document surface early on in the second century, but at times it is later centuries before references to some NT documents can be found.⁵² Another very important factor is the nature of the evidence in these sources. Does the church father clearly identify the document in his discussion of it? Or, does he either quote from the NT document or allude to a particular theme in the NT without specifically identifying his NT source? The first category is the best source, while the second category often becomes debatable.

Falling in the second category regarding the Johannine Epistles are potential allusions from Clement's First Corinthians, the letters of Ignatius, and the Didache -- all coming prior to the middle of the second century.⁵³ With a little higher probability of awareness of the Johannine epistles are the Epistle of Barnabas, Second Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Apologies and the Dialogue of Justin Martyr, the Epistle to Diogenetus, and Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians. These are prior to 175 AD, but only contain possible allusions.⁵⁴ The

designation is not then totally appropriate; for I Peter is addressed to specific churches, III John to an individual (Gaius), and II John to an individual church. In the West another interpretation appears whereby 'universal, catholic,' refers not to the general character of the audience but to the general acceptance of these epistles.⁵ This is seen in the designation *epistulae canonicae*, e.g., Junilius (PL 68, 19C) may be interpreted to say that to the books that were called 'canonical' (I Peter, I John) many added five more (James, II Peter, Jude, II and III John). Cassiodorus (*De institutione divinarum Litterarum* 8; PL 70, 1120B) understood 'canonical' as an epithet for all seven epistles." [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 3-4.]

⁵²"There is no certain evidence among Christian writers of a knowledge of any of the Johannine Epistles before the middle of the second century. Of course, this does not mean that they were written so late; for, as we shall see, a date ca. 100 is most plausible for their composition. But the lack of early attestation makes us cautious about assuming that there was a solid tradition throughout the second century attributing them to a known figure named John." [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 5-6.]

⁵³"The following parallels, suggested by various scholars, are in my judgment quite inadequate to establish knowledge of the Johannine Epistles:

- The First Epistle to the Corinthians, attributed to Clement of Rome and dated to ca. 96, gives this instruction (49:1): 'Let one who has love in Christ perform the commandments of Christ.' I John 5:3 makes a connection between love and keeping the commandments, but the vocabulary of the two works is quite different. I Clement 49:5 and 50:3 describe God's people as 'perfected in love,' a phrase reminiscent of I John 2:5; 4:12, 17-18; but the same form of the verb (*teleioun*) is not used by the two authors. Moreover, as I shall point out below in the NOTE on I John 2:5b (on 'has reached perfection'), the complexus of ideas has its origin in Judaism and is attested elsewhere in the NT. A God who is faithful and righteous (*pistos, dikaios*) is hailed both in I Clem. 27:1; 60:1, and in I John 1:9; but this is too common an OT motif to establish an interdependence of two Christian works.

- The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch are dated to ca. 110-15 and thus within about a decade of the composition of the Johannine Epistles and about two decades of the writing of GJohn. Ignatius, who came from Antioch, visited and wrote to churches in Asia Minor, not far from Ephesus, thus having contact with the two cities most often proposed as the center of Johannine Christianity. It is not surprising that scholars have debated whether such a chronological and geographical contemporary might have known GJohn9 and/or I John. If we confine ourselves here to knowledge of I John, Eph. 11:1 mentions the last times, while I John 2:18 mentions the last hour; Eph. 15:3 mentions that God will be revealed before us, as does I John 3:2. The parallels are far from verbatim, and once again we are dealing with common Jewish ideas. See below INTRODUCTION IV B3b for similarities between the opponents of Ignatius and those of I and II John, similarities that may arise from the common ambience.

- The Didache was written somewhere between A.D. 90 and 120 (although more would favor the earlier date). In 10:5 it shares with I John (and I Clement above) the theme of perfecting the church in love. This parallel becomes somewhat more impressive when the very next verse (Did. 10:6) speaks of the world passing away, as does I John 2:17 (with slightly different vocabulary). The issue of testing those who speak in the Spirit appears affirmatively in I John 4:1 and negatively in Did. 11:7, but with different vocabulary. Since there are also parallels between Didache and GJohn (see ABJ 29, 248; 29A, 673, 746), it is not impossible that there were some contacts between Johannine thought and that of Didache, even if there is no proof of literary contact."

[Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 6-7.]

⁵⁴"More adequate are the following suggested parallels, which I have arranged in ascending order of likelihood (so that only the last would I consider seriously as probative of knowledge of one or more of the Johannine Epistles):

- The Epistle of Barnabas (ca. 130?) has a passage about Jesus revealing himself 'as the Son of God come in the flesh' (5:9-11; also 12:10) which is close to the wording of I John 4:2 and 2 John 7. Another passage (Barn. 14:5), '... that, when Jesus was revealed, he might redeem from darkness our hearts given over to the deception [*planē*] of lawlessness [*anomia*],' has parallels to themes in I John

first quotes clearly from the Johannine epistles surface around 180 AD in the writings of Irenaeus.⁵⁵ But only First and Second John are referenced here. Also with direct mentioning of First and Second John is the Muratorian fragment in the 180s.⁵⁶ From around 200 to 250 a growing number of church fathers provide direct reference to

3:4 (anomia), 3:7 (planan), and to 3:8, “The reason the Son of God revealed himself was to destroy the works of the devil.”

- The Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (ca. 150?) asks (6:9), ‘Who shall be our advocate [paraklētos], if we are not found having pious and righteous works?’ 1 John 2:1 speaks of the righteous Christ as our paraklētos. Probably paraklētos, a Johannine word in the NT, was in wider Christian usage by mid-second century, and so its use is not sufficient to establish knowledge of I John by the author of II Clement.¹⁰

- The Shepherd of Hermas (before 150) has several interesting similarities to I John. In Hermas Man. 3.1 we find: ‘The Lord is truthful in every word and in Him there is no lie,’ resembling 1 John 2:27 where anointing from Christ is described as ‘true and free from any lie.’ The encouragement of Hermas Man. 12.3.5, ‘You will easily observe [the commandments], for they are not hard,’ resembles in thought 1 John 5:3: ‘We keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome.’ The Christian is told in Hermas Sim. 9.24.4, ‘Of his [the Son of God’s] Spirit you have received,’ even as 1 John 4:13 states, ‘He [God] has given us of His own Spirit.’

- Both the Apologies and the Dialogue of Justin Martyr (ca. 150) contain similarities to the Johannine Epistles. The reference to Christ’s blood purifying those who believe in him (I Apol. 32.7), which is similar to the affirmation of 1 John 1:7, would be too common a Christian idea to be at all persuasive were it not that the very next verse (I Apol. 32.8) speaks of the ‘seed of God, the Word,’ dwelling in the believer—themes found in 1 John 2:14 and 3:9. If one draws upon Dialogue 123.9, ‘We who observe the commandments of Christ are called genuine children of God—and that is what we really are,’ one finds a close parallel to I John’s frequent theme of keeping the commandments (2:3; 3:22; 5:3) and more specifically to 3:1: ‘Enabling us to be called God’s children—and that is what we really are.’

- The Epistle to Diognetus, another apologetic work of uncertain date (guesses range from 125 to 225), states (10:2–3), ‘God loved human beings ... to whom He sent His only Son.... How greatly will you love Him who first loved you?’ This is very close to the wording of 1 John 4:9, 19. In Diogn. 11:4 the Word is described as ‘the one who was from the beginning,’ a phraseology reminiscent of 1 John 1:1; 2:13–14.

- Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians, which can scarcely be dated after 140, supplies the most important early parallel to the Johannine Epistles. Speaking of deceiving false brethren (6:3) who do not acknowledge the cross, Polycarp says in 7:1, ‘For everyone who does not confess Jesus Christ to have come [perf. infin.] in the flesh is Antichrist’; and this is uniquely close to two Johannine passages: ‘Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess Jesus Christ coming [pres. ptc.] in the flesh. There is ... the Antichrist’ (2 John 7); ‘Every spirit who confesses Jesus Christ come [perf. ptc.] in the flesh.... Every spirit who does not confess Jesus ... is of the Antichrist’ (1 John 4:2–3).¹¹ The likelihood of a true echo of the Johannine Epistles is increased when we advert to the phrase ‘belong to the devil’ in the next line of Polycarp 7:1 and in 1 John 3:8. Important too is the next verse in Polycarp (7:2): ‘Let us return to the word handed down to us from [ex] the beginning’; for the theme of what was known or heard “from [apo] the beginning” is found in 1 John 2:7, 24; 3:11. Yet notice the difference of prepositions.

From the second set of suggested parallels it seems clear that by mid-second century ideas, themes, and even slogans of the Johannine Epistles (or, at least, of I John) were being cited in other Christian works. But no one of the proposed similarities consists of a verbatim citation, so that it is still very difficult to be certain that any of the mentioned authors had the text of a Johannine Epistle before him. Nevertheless, the likelihood that I John was available to Polycarp is increased by the information of Eusebius (Hist. 3.39.17) that Papias, who was a contemporary of Polycarp (3.36.1–2), ‘made use of testimonies from the First Epistle of John.’¹²

[Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 7–9.]

⁵⁵“The first undeniable citations of the Johannine Epistles occur ca. A.D. 180 in the writing of Irenaeus of Lyons who is said, as a youth in Asia Minor, to have listened to Polycarp preach (Eusebius, Hist. 5.20.6). In three passages of the *Adversus haereses* there are direct citations¹³ as part of Irenaeus’ anti-gnostic polemic:

1.16.3 cites 2 John 11 (as coming from John, the Lord’s disciple)

3.16.5 cites 1 John 2:18–19, 21–22

3.16.8 cites 2 John 7–8; 1 John 4:1–2; 5:1

Thus Irenaeus knew II John as well as I John, although perhaps not as a separate letter. When citing II John in 3.16.8, he refers to the citation as coming from the epistle he has already quoted, which has to be I John quoted in 3.16.5. Moreover, after citing II John he continues with other citations from ‘this epistle,’ namely 1 John 4:1–2 and 5:1.”

[Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 9–10.]

⁵⁶“A more obscure witness to I and II John is that of the Muratorian fragment or canon, a Latin list of books that were accepted as canonical. (The barbarous Latin probably represents a translation from Greek.) Customarily the fragment has been dated to the end of the second century (and thus roughly contemporaneous with Irenaeus) and associated with the church of Rome.¹⁴ It describes how John wrote the Gospel and then refers to ‘his epistles’ in which he claimed to write ‘what we have seen with our eyes, heard with our ears, and touched with our hands’ (1 John 1:1). Later the fragment makes another reference to the Johannine Epistles, which has usually been translated thus: ‘Certainly the Epistle of Jude and two of the aforementioned John are accepted in the catholic church.’¹⁵ If this transla-

First and Second John, identifying these documents with the apostle John.⁵⁷ And by 250 AD references to Third John begin surfacing as well.⁵⁸ Most of these sources are reflecting eastern Christianity, and the emerging western Christianity provides less affirmation of the Johannine epistles.

The church historian Eusebius in the early 300s states that First John was ‘universally accepted’ in the church, while Second and Third John were ‘well known and accepted by most’ but he placed them in his ‘disputed books’ category.⁵⁹ From all indications the hesitancy related to whether Ὁ πρεσβύτερος, *the elder*, in Second and Third John could be linked to the apostle John. This ‘mixed’ viewpoint about Second and Third John continued throughout most of the fourth century, but by the end of the century and clearly in the fifth century a general consensus emerged attributing all three documents to the apostle John.⁶⁰ The great barrier to be overcome lay in the self-designation of the Elder in Second and Third John and whether this should be taken as a reference to the apostle John. The issue was clouded by comments from Papias in the early second century mentioning two

tion is correct, surely the two are I and II John.”

[Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 10.]

⁵⁷“By the very end of the second century I John was being cited both in the West and in the East. For instance, Tertullian (d. 215) cites I John some forty or fifty times, referring to it as the work of John. Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. 220) not only cites I John¹⁶ but speaks of it as ‘the greater epistle’ (Stromata 2.15.66; GCS 15, 148), so that he knew at least one other Johannine Epistle. This is confirmed by the *Adumbrationes*, which contains Clement’s commentary on II John.¹⁷ When we join Clement to Irenaeus and the Muratorian fragment, we see that II John was receiving acceptance by A.D. 200, alongside I John.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 10.]

⁵⁸“Before the middle of the third century we find in Alexandrian scholarship the first attestation of the existence of III John (but even then our evidence is secondhand). According to Eusebius (Hist. 6.25.10), the famous Origen (d. 253) knew of both II and III John but also that ‘all do not consider them genuine.’¹⁸ Origen’s pupil Dionysius of Alexandria (d. 265) held that the apostle wrote both the Gospel and the ‘Catholic Epistle,’ but not Revelation; and he knew that there was a ‘reputed Second or Third Epistle of John’ (Eusebius, Hist. 7.25.7–8,11). The *Sententiae Episcoporum* (#381) from the Seventh Council of Carthage (A.D. 256) shows that III John was known also in North Africa about this same time, alongside II John. (Harnack and Manson¹⁹ have contended that the Latin translation of III John betrays a different hand from that of the translator of II John, an observation that probably implies a different and later history of acceptance in the West of III John.) Nevertheless, neither small Johannine Epistle was cited by Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258)²⁰ who quoted from I John.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 11.]

⁵⁹“In the early fourth century Eusebius of Caesarea placed I John among the ‘acknowledged books’ of Scripture, while II and III John, although ‘well-known and acknowledged by most,’ were listed among the ‘disputed books’ (Hist. 3.24.17 and 3.25.2–3). Evidently it was not clear to people whether the smaller Johannine Epistles were written by the evangelist or some other person.²¹ Yet in Eusebius’ own *Demonstratio evangelica* (3.5.88; GCS 23, 126–27), he says that the apostle who wrote the Gospel also wrote those Epistles wherein he calls himself a presbyter, a remark that would cover II and III John.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 11.]

⁶⁰“In mid-fourth century the North African Canon Mommsonianus (Cheltenham) listed three Epistles of John, but a marginal gloss corrected this to ‘only one.’ Toward the end of the century Jerome reported that many attributed II and III John to the Presbyter who was distinct from the Apostle John.²² A later canon once attributed to Jerome’s patron, Pope Damasus I (d. 384), spoke of only two Johannine Epistles, one of the Apostle John, the other of John the Presbyter. No use of II and III John was made by John Chrysostom (d. 407) or by Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428), influential figures in Eastern exegesis. Nevertheless, acceptance of three Johannine Epistles, with the assumption that they were written by the Apostle John, became the order of the day in the late fourth century, as can be seen from the Thirty-ninth Festal Letter of Athanasius (A.D. 367), the Synod of Hippo (393), and the Council of Carthage (397) at which Augustine was present.²³ The Alexandrian scholar Didymus the Blind (d. 398) wrote a commentary on all three, showing that they were now being considered a unit. The appearance of three Johannine Epistles in the great fourth- and fifth-century codices of the Bible was another sign of their ever wider acceptance in the Greek-speaking and Latin-speaking churches.

“In the Syriac-speaking church to the East, possibly Aphraates (ca. 340) and surely Ephraem (d. 373) knew I John, and in the fifth century only that Johannine Epistle could be found in the Peshitta, the most commonly used Bible of the various Syriac-language Christians. Not until later and still not universally did II and III John make their appearance in Syriac Bibles, e.g., in the Philoxenian version at the beginning of the sixth century, while still not being accepted by the Nestorians.”

[Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 11-12.]

individuals by the name John: the apostle John, and John the Elder, the latter being a disciple of the former. Lack of clearly established apostolic authorship posed a serious barrier to acceptance of these two documents. Not until that had been overcome did these two letters gain full acceptance into the canon of the New Testament.⁶¹

Thus the picture that emerges is one of affirmation that the apostle John was responsible for Third John, but this picture is somewhat mixed and the church fathers do not present a unanimous viewpoint on this. First John has uniform affirmation, but not Second and Third John.

And as one might well expect, the modern scholarly viewpoints on this matter of authorship remains mixed as well. Were there one, two, or three separate writers of these three documents? The influence of the modern 'scientific methodology' upon contemporary scholars leads some to an unnecessarily high level of skepticism regarding any established viewpoint in biblical interpretation. Thus some modern commentators will not acknowledge that the apostle John is connected to this document at all. Those with less skepticism will tend to entertain the possibility of John's link to this document, but with proper insistence on thorough examination of the pros and cons with this early church tradition. Although no one can assert with complete certainty who stands behind Third John the early church tradition provides the strongest alternative. And thus is the view taken in this study.⁶²

Once the authorship issue is settled as a starting point, the other questions become somewhat easier to answer. But again considerable uncertainty will remain simply due to the lack of specific information provided either inside the document or even in early church tradition.

The **When** question will depend in part on the perceived relationships among the Johannine writings in the New Testament. Generally, but not universally, the gospel is understood to have been written first, then followed over a period of some years by the three letters, and finished by the book of Revelation. The early church traditions tended to place this from the final years of the last decade of the first century through the first decade of the second century. But the pattern typical today is to see all these documents written in the last decade of the first century. Thus the three letters would be understood to have come into existence during the mid-90s of the first century.

The **Where** question is the most difficult of all to answer with certainty. The book of Revelation is the only one of these four Johannine documents to indicate its place of origin and the designated recipients. Patmos lay off the coast of the Roman province of Asia and the seven churches for whom the document was composed were also major cities in this same Roman province. But nothing in either the Gospel or the three letters specifically connects these documents to this same region. Again we are forced to turn to the early church traditions which generally assert that the last years of the apostle John's ministry were centered in Ephesus and the surrounding region. Probably this accounts for the minimum data as well or better than any other alternative.

For the past several decades in Johannine scholarship the influence of Redactional Critical studies that

⁶¹“How do we explain such a peculiar history of preservation with I John known and being accepted in mid-second century; with II John beginning to be accepted slightly later in that century; with III John not being mentioned till the third century;²⁴ and with doubts about the authorship and canonicity of II and III John lingering till much later? Even if the three Epistles were written by one man about the same time (which internal evidence favors), clearly they were not preserved side by side or evaluated on the same level. If the only problem were lack of citation by church writers, one could rightly argue that II and III John are the shortest works in the NT and that there would have been little occasion to cite them. But more is involved; for when II and III John are mentioned in the third and fourth centuries, there is marked doubt about them. Part of the answer surely lies in the fact that in the latter part of the second century I John, which supplies no direct information about its writer, won acceptance alongside GJohn as having the same apostolic author. However, II and III John describe their author as ‘the Presbyter,’ information which led many to judge that he was not the apostle to whom they attributed I John. This distinction was facilitated by reading the information of Papias (Eusebius, Hist. 3.39.4; ABJ 29, xc–xci) to mean that there were two men named John, one a disciple of the Lord, the other ‘the Presbyter.’ Lack of apostolic authorship constituted a serious obstacle to the acceptance of the shorter Epistles as Scripture. When that was overcome by assuming that through modesty the Apostle John called himself simply ‘the Presbyter,’ even as the Apostle Peter called himself ‘the Co-presbyter’ (1 Pet 5:1), a distinction regarding canonicity could still have been made between II John addressed to a church and III John addressed to an individual—biblical books were God’s word to the Church.²⁵” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 12-13.]

⁶²“Supporters for common authorship maintain that the difference between John’s Gospel and the First Epistle can be accounted for on the ground of differing purposes and an interval of time between the two publications. They argue that none of the differences requires a different author and say that the likenesses are so indisputable that they require the hypothesis of a complex Johannine school for which no historical evidence exists.” [Glenn W. Barker, “I John” In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Volume 12: Hebrews Through Revelation, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 303.]

stress the theological aspects of the documents of the NT has moved along the lines of a reconstruction of a Johannine community of believers during the last decades of the first century. Fr. Raymond Brown, widely acknowledged as the leading expert on the Johannine literature in the English speaking world, proposes a reconstruction that has gained wide influence: ⁶³

In the decade after the main body of GJohn was written (ca. 90), the Johannine Community became increasingly divided over the implications and applications of Johannine thought. Before the writing of I John a schism had taken place. The resultant two groups, consisting of the epistolary author's adherents and his adversaries, both accepted the proclamation of Christianity known to us through GJohn,⁶⁴ but they interpreted it differently. One can speculate whether outside influence played a role in the emergence of such different interpretations although there is no internal evidence of that; but almost surely the two groups justified their opposite positions on the basis of the Johannine tradition itself. One must be wary of arguing that GJohn led inevitably either to the position of the epistolary author or to that of his adversaries; nor is it clear that either position is a total distortion of GJohn.¹⁵⁵ Rather the Johannine tradition enshrined in GJohn, as it came to both the author and to his adversaries, was relatively "neutral" on some points that had now come into dispute. Either it did not contain direct answers for the divisive questions, or it contained texts that each side could draw upon for support.

In the epistolary author's judgment, his adversaries were innovators or "progressives" who were distorting the tradition as it had come down from the beginning; and these innovators had seceded from the true Johannine Community (his adherents). Surely in their judgment these secessionists (as I shall henceforth call them¹⁵⁶) thought that the author and his adherents had broken communion with them, and they may have thought that the author was reviving an outmoded christology instead of following the implications of the christology set forth in GJohn. In any case the author's admonitions did not stem the secessionists' success. In 1 John 4:5 he admits that they seem to be winning the world, and 2 John 10 shows that their missionary teachers were reaching even outlying communities.^{156a} The author appealed to his adherents to "test the Spirits" (1 John 4:1) as a safeguard against the secessionist claims, but there was not a sufficiently authoritative church structure to prevent secessionist inroads.

We have no certain knowledge of the outcome of the desperate situation portrayed in I and II John, but second-century history suggests that the two groups described in I and II John were swallowed up respectively by "the Great Church" (footnote 242 below) and by gnostic movements. Any amalgamation of the author's adherents with the apostolic Christians of the Great Church would have required on their part an acceptance of a much more authoritative church structure—an acceptance that would have caused friction. Such friction may explain III John where Diotrephes' exercise of authority in controlling who could visit (and presumably teach in) a local church is criticized by the author. How a need for structure and a reluctant Community tradition were ultimately reconciled may be illustrated symbolically by John 21, which assigns to Peter, one of the Twelve, an authoritative pastoral care of Jesus' sheep, but still gives preference to the Beloved Disciple who received no such role. The amalgamation of the secessionists into the known gnostic movements of the second century would have required a heightening of the dualistic christology and perfectionist anthropology criticized in I and II John. If the secessionists constituted the larger part of the Johannine Community and if they brought GJohn with them into docetic, gnostic, and Cerinthian groups, we can understand why GJohn was better known among "heretics" than among orthodox church writers of the second century (ABJ 29, lxxxi–lxxxii), and why Irenaeus remembered a figure like Cerinthus when he discussed GJohn. The ultimate acceptance of GJohn into the church's canon, attested in the late second century, was in no small part due to the fact that I John offered an example of how GJohn could be read in a non-gnostic and even an anti-gnostic way.

Although quite helpful as a working hypothesis, it should not be taken as being certain. The geographical location of this community becomes less important than trying to understand both the belief system advocated by the writer of the Johannine documents along with the opposition that is being opposed, especially in the gospel and in First John. Ephesus and the province of Asia, however, can easily serve as the assumed geographical setting for this community.

What we encounter here in these four NT documents is a final glimpse into apostolic Christianity at the end of the first Christian century. The aged apostle is working hard to help his community fend off growing foreign influences that had corrupting and destructive impact on the spiritual life of the community. Out of these writings come the transition into the second phase of the Christian movement in the second century where huge changes began taking place especially in how local church communities were organized along with significant shifts in doctrinal emphasis. The religious stream divides itself into two broad camps of orthodoxy and heresy and began a long, intense struggle for domination of the Christian movement. Eventually the continuity of orthodox Christianity would prevail over the comings and goings of various heretical efforts beginning with Marcion and the Gnostics of the second century. But under the heavy influence of regional cultural, political and other non-religious influences, orthodox Christian would gradually divide itself into eastern and western branches of

⁶³Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 69-71.

⁶⁴GJohn = the Gospel of John

Christianity by the fourth century.

Thus, Third John is set in the middle of the 90s as the last of the three short letters composed to address specific issues in this Johannine community. First and Second John are more focused on the errant doctrinal influences negatively impacting the community. Third John is more functional in addressing organizational and inter-personal relationships in the community. The fourth gospel had attempted to define the apostolic Gospel to this late first century, largely Gentile oriented Christian community. Portions of it had evidently been falsely interpreted as supporting a proto-gnostic understanding of the Christian belief. First John attempts to correct this misuse of the gospel. The final document of Revelation comes out of the explosion of persecution under emperor Domitian in the late 90s and as a book of hope and encouragement to this community now having to pay a severe price for faithfulness to the apostolic Gospel.

7.1.1.2.2 Transmission History Perspective

The process of copying Third John now becomes the focus of attention. The text of the three letters shows up in several relatively early manuscripts now available to us for examination.⁶⁵ One will notice that existing manuscripts of Third John only reach back to the fourth century AD. This signals our lack of any real data on the copying process in the second and third centuries, although the surfacing of the copying process in the fourth clearly implies that the process was in effect during the second and third centuries. Also to be noted is that secondary role that these three letters, especially the last two, played in the liturgical life of Christianity from the second century onward. Consequently not as many manuscript copies of these NT documents surface as with

⁶⁵The following list gives most of the older and more important manuscripts and authorities for the text of the Epistles:

B. δ1. Codex Vaticanus. Rome. Vat. Gr. 1209 (iv.).

κ δ2. Codex Sinaiticus. Petersburg (iv.).

C. δ3. Codex Ephraimi. Paris. Bibl. Nat. 9 (v.); 1 Jn. 1:1 τους—(2) εωρα[κομεν]. 4:2 εστιν—(3 Jn. 2) ψυχη.

A. δ4. Codex Alexandrinus. London. Brit. Mus. Royal Libr. I. D. v.–viii. (v.).

Ψ. δ6. Athos. Lawra 172 (β52) (viii.–ix.).

13 (= 33 gosp.) δ48. Paris. Bibl. Nat. Gr. 14 (ix.–x.).

48 (= 105 gosp.) δ257 Oxford. Bodl. Misc. Gr. 136 (A.D. 1391)

P. α3. Petersburg. Bibl. Roy. 225 (ix.). Palim sest. 1 Jn. 3:20–5:1 του.

389. α74. Patmos. Ιωαννου16 (x.).

25. α103. London. Brit. Mus. Harley 5537 (A.D. 1087). 1 Jn. 5:14–2 Jn. 5 missing.

61. α162. London. Brit. Mus. Add. 20003, and Kairo βιβλ. πατριαρχ351 (A.D. 1044).

Apl. 261. α7. Sinai 273 (ix.).

S. α2. Athos. Lawra 88 (α88) (viii.–ix.).

L. α5. Rome. Angel. 39 (ol. A. 2. 15) (ix.).

384. α54. Chalki. Εμπορ. Σχολη26 (x.).

9. α189. Cambridge Univ. Libr. Kk. vi.4 (xi.–xii.). See Westcott, p. 91, who gives a list of the interesting readings contained in this MS. It is not included in von Soden's list of the manuscripts of which he used collations for the text of the Catholic Epistles.

Old Latin Version

h. Fleury Palimpsest, ed. S. Berger, Paris, 1889, and Buchanan, *Old Latin Biblical Texts*, Oxford (v.). 1 Jn. 1:8–3:20.

q. Ziegler, *Itala Fragmente*. Marburg, 1876. 1 Jn. 3:8–5:21.

m. *Liber de divinis Scripturis sive Speculum*, ed. Wehrich. Vienna Corpus xii., 1887. The following verses are quoted: 1 Jn. 1:2, 3, 8, 9, 2:9, 10, 21, 23, 3:7–10, 16–18, 4:1, 9, 15, 18, 5:1, 6–8, 10, 20, 21; 2 Jn. 7, 10, 11.

Augustine's *Tractatus*. 1 Jn. 1:1–5:12.

Egyptian Versions

Sahidic. Balestri, *Sacrorum Bibliorum Frag. Copto-Sahid. Mus. Borgiani. Vol. iii. (continuation of Ciasca)*. 1904. 1 Jn. 1:2–5:15; 2 Jn. 5–13; 3 Jn.

Woide, *Appendix ad editionem N.T. Graeci*. Oxford, 1799. 1 Jn. 1:1–5:21; 2 Jn.; 3 Jn.

Delaporte, *Revue Bibl. internat. Nouvelle Serie ii.*, 1905. 1 Jn. 1:1–3; 7, 3:9–21, 3:24–4:20. Gives by far the most interesting form of the Sahidic text.

Bohairic. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the N.T. in the Northern Dialect. Vol. 4*. Oxford, 1905.

Armenian Version

Armenian Bible, ed. Zohrab. Venice.

[Alan England Brooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1912), lxii-iv.

the four gospels and the writings of Paul.⁶⁶

Consequently in the text apparatus of the United Bible Societies *The Greek New Testament* only two places are listed containing variations in wording considered important enough to impact the translation of the entire letter: vv. 4 and 9.⁶⁷

In verse four, the issue centers around the position and spelling of the direct object χαράν, joy.⁶⁸ The majority of the manuscripts read οὐκ ἔχω χαράν, but a few alter the spelling to χάριν, meaning “I do not have greater grace.” The similarity of spelling led to the confusion and the shift, but χαράν is the most likely original reading, based on external evidence.⁶⁹

In verse nine, the issue centers over the presence or the absence of the indefinite pronoun τι, something.⁷⁰ The meaning options are fundamentally between “I wrote something to the church” and “I wrote to the church.”⁷¹



⁶⁶“It has been customary to classify the Greek MSS. of the major NT books into four groups: Alexandrian (best represented by Codex Vaticanus³⁰⁰); Western (often a mixed group; represented by Codex Bezae and the text underlying the Old Syriac and the Old Latin); Caesarean (Ferrar and Lake group of minuscules; Codex Koridethianus); and Byzantine or Koinē (often represented by late minuscule MSS., and in the Gospels by Codex Alexandrinus). The Catholic Epistles are not the most frequently read section of the NT, either privately or in liturgical service; and so there is less textual evidence for them than for the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles. (For instance, Codex Bezae does not contain the Catholic Epistles.) Nor has there been accorded to the Catholic Epistles the same amount of scholarly attention given to the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles. For various reasons, then, it is not clear whether the above classification of four groups applies to the Johannine Epistles. For instance, Duplacy (‘Texte’) reports a division among scholars as to whether there was a Western text for them; and although Muriel Carder (‘Text’) argues for the existence of a Caesarean text, that theory has been sharply challenged by Aland (‘Bemerkungen’) and Richards (‘Classification’). The latter scholar, using the Claremont Profile method, classifies 81 MSS. of the Johannine Epistles into three groups: Alexandrian (with three subgroups), Byzantine (seven subgroups), and Mixed (three subgroups). In the NOTES on various verses, where there is a disputed textual reading, I shall give a representative (not an exhaustive) list of the important textual witnesses.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 129.]

⁶⁷The Text Apparatus in both of these printed Greek texts is a feature designed to enable the reader to quickly compare existing manuscript copies of the variations in wording among the varies existing copies of the Greek manuscripts and the versions through the middle ages. The differences between the structure and purposes of this apparatus in the two printed Greek NTs are largely centered around what the reader is needing this information for. The UBS Greek text apparatus only lists a small number of the variations which in the editorial opinion were of enough importance that they could impact the translation of the Greek NT into another language. On the other hand, the apparatus of the N-A *Novum Testamentum Graece* is completely different in structure and through a system of abbreviations will indicate the full range of variations occurring in all of the existing manuscript copies.

A side note. The most recent edition of this Greek NT is the 28th edition. I have an electronic copy of the text of the NT in this edition in my library, but am waiting on Logos to release the electronic edition containing the critical apparatus. It is on order. Hopefully this will become available soon. It contains an updated listing that adds the additional copies of the NT that have been discovered during the past two decades. Until that becomes available we will use the apparatus of the 27th revised edition released in 1993.

⁶⁸{A} οὐκ ἔχω χαράν κ A Ψ 048 33 81 436 945 1067 1175 1292 1409 1505 1611 1735 (1844^c omit οὐκ ἔχω) 1846 1852 2138 2344 Byz [K L P] Lect it^{ar} v.r. vg^{mss} syr^{ph, h} cop^{sa} arm eth geo slav (Cassiodorus) // χαράν οὐκ ἔχω C 322 323 1241 vid 1739 1881 (I 422) I 596 // οὐκ ἔχω χάριν B² (B* ἔχων) (1243 2298 χάριν οὐκ ἔχω) (1844* omit οὐκ ἔχω) it^{ar*}, I vg cop^{bo}

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

⁶⁹“The external evidence is strong for the reading in the text. A few manuscripts, however, read χάριν (grace, or divine favor) instead of χαράν (joy). The reading χάριν is the more difficult, and could, therefore, be original. But the word χαράν fits the language of the Johannine writings. Since the two Greek nouns are so similar in spelling, it is easy to understand how χαράν was miscopied as χάριν.” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 518.]

⁷⁰{B} Ἐγραψά τι κ* A 048^{vid} 1241 1739 2298 I 596 (it^l) cop^{bo} arm (Jerome) // Ἐγραψάς τι B cop^{sa, bo} // Ἐγραψα ἄν κ² 33 81 436 945 1067 1243 1292 1409 1505 1735 1881 2138 2338 2344 I 422 I 1439 it^{ar} vg (syr^{ph, h}) // Ἐγραψα ἄν τι 322 323 1611* I 1178 // Ἐγραψα C Ψ 1175 1611c 1844 1846 1852 Byz [K L P] Lect (eth) geo slav

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

⁷¹“The reading of the text best explains the origin of the several variants. The readings ἔγραψα ἄν (I would have written [but did

The Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th rev. ed) apparatus lists a total of 31 places where variations in wording occur across the range of still existing manuscripts.⁷² When a careful examination is made not]) and ἔγραψα ἄν τι (I would have written something [but did not]) are attempts to prevent the reader from drawing the conclusion that an apostolic letter was lost or that Diotrephes had shown such disrespect for the apostle John, considered the author of 3 John, as to ignore his letter. The omission of τι (something) in other manuscripts is probably an attempt to give more importance to apostolic authority by omitting such a general, indefinite term. Though some have understood the past tense verb ἔγραψα as an epistolary aorist, that is, ‘I am writing something,’ the reference is probably to a letter that had already been written and that no longer exists today, unless it refers to 2 John, as both some ancient and some modern interpreters have thought (see, for example, Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, p. 253).

“NRSV translates literally: ‘I have written something to the church.’ NJB probably expresses more accurately the sense of τι in saying ‘I have written a note for the members of the church.’”

[Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 518.]

⁷²Inscriptio:

*I. επιστολη γ΄ Ψ 049. 33. 69. 323. 614. 1739. 2464 al (P 81. 630. 1505 al) (issue over specific identification of apostle John)

| επ. γ΄ του αγιου αποστολου I. L al
| του αγ. I. (I. του απ. 1881 pc) επ. καθολικη γ΄ 1852. 1881 al
| I. προς Γαϊον επ. 1243 pc
| txt (x A B)

3. Johannes 2

*[προ Piscator cj] (use of the preposition προ rather than περι)

3. Johannes 3

* x 33. 81. 623. 2464. 2495 al (l) vg co (the mss omit the conjunction γάρ)

* μαρτυρουν B (Instead of the participle μαρτυρούντων, Vaticanus uses the verb μαρτυροῦν)

3. Johannes 4

* -ζονα τ. 614. 630. 1505 pc (alternative spellings for the comparative construction μειζοτέρων τούτων)

| -ζοτερον ταυτης 322. 323. 1739. 1881
| -ζοτεραν ταυτης (69). 1243. 1846 al

* 3 1 2 C (69). 322. 323. (614). 1739. 1881 pc (different sequencing of οὐκ ἔχω χαράν)

| ουκ εχω χαριν B (* εχων) (ε¹1243. 2298) pc lat bo

* x C² P Ψ 1739 M bo (some mss omit the article τῆ)

| txt A B C* 33. 81^{vid} pc

3. Johannes 5

* (ε)αν -ζη A Ψ (630). 945. 1505 pc (some mss shift ἐὰν ἐργάσῃ to an alternative subjunctive)

* εις τους P M (the τοῦτο ξένους is shifted to εις τους ξένους or to τοὺς ξένους)

| τους 81 pc
| txt x A B C Ψ 048. 33^{vid}. 323. 1241^{vid}. 1739 al l vg^{ms} (vg) sy^h co

3. Johannes 6

* ὄ K 630 (οἶ is replaced with ὄ)

* αληθεια και 614. 630. 1505 pc sy^h (ἀγάπη is replaced with ἀληθεία και ἀγάπη)

* -σας -ψεις C vg^{cl} (ποιήσεις προπέμψας is spelled as ποιήσας προπέμψεις)

3. Johannes 7

* αυτου Ψ 614. 630. 1846. 2495 al vg^{cl} sy^{h,h**} (after ὀνόματος is added αὐτοῦ)

* εθνων P M vg (ἐθνικῶν is replaced with ἐθνῶν)

| txt x A B (C) Ψ 33^{vid}. 630. 1505. 1739. 1881 al l; Hier

3. Johannes 8

* απολ- C² P M (ὑπολαμβάνειν is replaced by ἀπολαμβάνειν)

| txt x A B C* Ψ 33. 81. 323. 1739 al

* της -θειας 614. 623. 630. 1505 pc l vg (τῆ ἀληθεία is replace either with τῆς ἀληθείας or τῆ ἐκκλησία)

| τη εκκλησια x* A

3. Johannes 9

* I C P Ψ M (Ἐγραψά τι is replace by one of these alternatives)

| εγρ. αν (+ τι 323 pc) x² 33. 81. 323. 614. 630. 945. 1505 al vg sy
| εγραψας τι B co
| txt x* A 048^{vid}. 1241. 1739 pc bo^{mss}

3. Johannes 10

* εις C vg (the preposition εις is inserted before ἡμῶς)

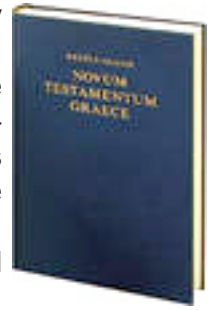
* επιδεχομενους C 323. 1241. 1243. 1739. 1881. 2298 pc vg^{cl} sy^{h,hmg} sa (βουλομένους is replaced by ἐπιδεχομένους)

* x 049. 614. 630. 1243. 1505. 1739 al (the preposition ἐκ is omitted)

of each of these variations it becomes clear that the motivation behind the variations was mostly stylistic ‘improvements’ on the wording of the text being copied.

Not a single one involves a significant change of meaning in the reading of the text. The desire to ‘contemporize’ the language of the text to a more natural reading at the time of the making of the copy is quite understandable. The ancient copyists never considered individual words in the text to be sacred or individually inspired. Rather the ideas expressed by the words were what came from God and the goal was to effectively communicate these ideas to their readers.

Consequently we can proceed to exegete the adopted wording of the Greek text in full confidence of it containing the exact words originally written.



7.1.2 Literary Aspects

Not only do the historical aspects of a text play a vitally important role in the interpretive process, but also the literary aspects are equally important to understanding the meaning of a passage.

7.1.2.1 Literary Form Aspects

In most contemporary circles the literary form of a written text is labeled with the French word *genre*. Not all texts possess a literary genre, since the core idea of genre is the repetition of an identifiable pattern of thought expression. Modern literary critics will sometimes argue over the details of a repetitive pattern in constituting a genre form, but universal agreement will come with the foundational view that repetition is crucial to establishing a literary genre.

Literary genres also occur at different levels.⁷³ These range from the complete contents of a document following a set form in its compositional arrangement, such as a letter. On the other end of the spectrum will come short phrase expressions such as proverbs or aphorisms. The same essential label of ‘genre’ will generally be used to refer to these differing levels of literary patterns. Increasingly among biblical scholars, the German word *Gattung* will be used as a synonym of the French word *genre*.

3. Johannes 11

* δε L 1852 pc vg^{mss} bo (the conjunction δὲ is inserted after ὁ)

3. Johannes 12

* εκκλησιας P^{74*} vid A^{*vid} (ἀληθείας is replaced either with ἐκκλησίας or with ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας)
| εκκλησιας καὶ τῆς ἀλ. C syr^{h,hmg}
| txt P^{74c} κ A^c B P Ψ 049. 33. 1739 M latt sy^h co

* οἰδατε P M vg^{ms} sy^h (οἶδας is replaced either with οἰδατε or οἰδαμεν)
| οἰδαμεν 2143 al boms
| txt κ A B C Ψ 048. 33^{vid}. 81. 323. 614. 1241. 1739 al d vg sy^h co

3. Johannes 13

* γραφειν P (2495) M (γράψαι σοι is replaced with γράφειν)
| txt κ A B C Ψ 048^{vid}. 81. 323. 630. 945. 1505. 1739 al

* ουκ εβουληθην A vg (οὐ θέλω is replaced with the stronger οὐκ ἐβουλήθην)

*¹ 2 1 A Ψ 048. 0251^{vid}. 33^{vid}. 81. 323. 630. 1241. 1505. 1739 al (σοι γράφειν is either reversed or replaced with σοι σοι γραψαι)
| σοι γραψαι P M
| txt κ B C pc

3. Johannes 14

* κ P Ψ M (σε ἰδεῖν is reversed)
| txt A B C 048^{vid}. 33. 81. 323. 1241. 1739 al

* λαλήσωμεν K 049. 0251. 1241. (1243) al vg^{ms} (λάλήσομεν is replaced with the alternative spelling of λαλήσωμεν or λαλήσαι)
| λαλήσαι 81 (pc) d vg^{mss}

3. Johannes 15

* αδελφοι A 33. 81* al sy^{hmg} (φίλοι is replaced with ἀδελφοί)

* ασπασαι κ pc (ἀσπάζου is replaced with ἀσπάσαι)

*¹ φ. σου Ψ (φίλους is replaced with ἀδελφούς)
| αδελφους 630. 1505. 1611 pc sy^h boms

* αμην L 614. 1852 al vgmss (ἀμήν is inserted)

[Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 627-28].

⁷³For a fairly detailed listing of these forms in the New Testament, see my “New Testament Genre,” article at cranfordville.com.

Why is it important to identify the genre forms that occur inside a passage of scripture? Since an identifiable genre means an established pattern for expressing ideas, knowing this pattern and the limits of idea expression contained in the genre becomes valuable for interpreting the meaning of the form being examined. Also, often certain forms were appropriate for certain circumstances. For example, an ancient letter was a substitute visit by the sender when circumstances made a personal visit impossible for the letter sender. Thus, unlike other broad forms in the NT such as history or gospel, knowing as much as possible about the intended designation of the letter along with that of the sender becomes much more important to the interpretive process. These aspects as well as others make identifying the literary genre important.

What genre patterns exist in Third John?

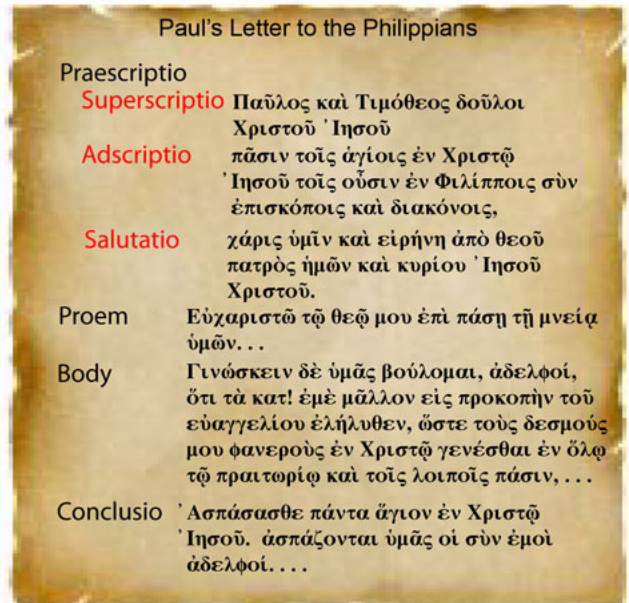
First, and most importantly, this short document is formatted more closely along the lines of an ancient Greek letter than just about any other document in the entire New Testament. The core elements of an ancient letter -- as charted out on the diagram to the right -- are the *Praescriptio*, the *Proem*, the letter body, and the *Conclusio*.

The formula nature of the *Praescriptio* (=pre-writing) meant that this writing was made last and was placed on the outside of the rolled up scroll containing the letter contents on the inside. Most ancient letters contain three elements in the *Praescriptio*: 1) the *Superscriptio* indicating the sender or senders of the letter; 2) the *Adscriptio* indicating the intended recipient or recipients of the letter; and 3) the *Salutatio* giving a word of greeting from sender to recipient. Usually the *Superscriptio* will contain both the name and title of the letter sender, particularly if the letter is of a more formal nature such as a military communication. The typical *Salutatio* of most ancient Greek letters was the single word χαίρειν, "hello," reflecting a common verbal greeting in first century society (cf. 2 John 10-11). The standard formula for Greek letters was X to Y: greetings, while the ancient Semitic (including Hebrew) letter formula was To Y from X: greetings.

The *Proem* typically was a prayer in the form of a health wish. Sometimes the *Salutatio* was merged into the *Proem* in ancient Greek letters, as is the case in Third John. In the letters of Paul a rather set formula is consistently used in almost all of his letters that begins with a prayer of thanksgiving and turns into a prayer of intercession. A couple of important implications come out of this section. First, the ancient world was a very religiously oriented world and greetings between friends and family almost always included an expression of desire that the patron god or gods of the letter recipient look with favor upon those the letter was sent to. Second, for the early Christian writers, the opening prayer at the beginning of a letter and especially when combined with the *Benedictio* prayer at the end of the letter mimicked the opening and closing prayers of early Christian worship that were based upon the Jewish synagogue Friday evening meeting. Since almost always the letters of the NT were written to be read publicly in Christian meetings, this provided subtle affirmation of the important of prayer surrounding everything a believer says and does.

The letter body is usually set off by a wide range of 'discourse markers' that signal both the beginning and ending of the body as well as sub-divisions within the content of the body itself. One important point that is especially true in the letter writing style of the Pauline letters more so than with those in the General Letters section: the so-called expansion elements in both the *Praescriptio* and the *Proem* typically signal most of the contents to be touched on in the letter body. By expansion elements is meant the additional words and phrases that build off of the core elements described above.

Most ancient letters come to a formal ending labeled today by the Latin term *Conclusio*. This is perhaps the most fluid part of the ancient letter and can contain a wide variety of sub-forms. Typically the *Travel Plans* of the letter sender signals either the end of the letter body or -- as in Third John -- the beginning of the *Conclusio*. Sometimes, if the letter were longer than normal, the sender would pick up pen in hand and write out a *Sender Verification* at the end of the letter so that the recipients would recognize his hand writing, since everything else was in the hand writing of the secretary. This could be a brief synopsis of the letter body as is found in Gal. 6:11-



Ancient Letter on papyrus

16, or a very short expression as in First Peter 5:12-14. Most importantly were the formal *Greetings* in which individuals with the letter sender ask to send their greetings to the recipient and/or the sender requests certain individuals in the targeted congregation be given formal greetings. The very important role of friendship in the ancient world stands behind the sending of greetings. Quite often, and almost always in Paul's letters, a *Benedictio* is included, usually at the very end. Other elements that surface inside the letters in the New Testament include a *Doxology*, request for prayer for the letter sender, and other items that are specific to individual letters rather than repeated forms.

So what elements of the ancient letter are found in Third John? In brief summation since these core elements will form the organizing structure of the exegesis section below, let me highlight some of the distinctives in Third John. In the *Praescriptio* (v. 1) a couple of missing elements are the personal name of the letter sender and the *Salutatio* which has been merged into the *Proem* section. Only the title is given in the *Superscriptio* section -- something not particularly unusual in the ancient world if the recipient knew the sender well. A very close adaptation of the *Proem* (vv. 2-4) as a health-wish prayer is found in Third John, putting it closer to the usual Greek pattern than any other letter in the NT. One distinctive marker used in Third John to signal both the *Proem* and two of the three sections of the letter body is Ἀγαπητέ, *beloved*, in vv. 2, 5, 11. These give a positive affirmation to these segments, while reference to a previous letter, Ἐγραψά, *I wrote*, in v. 9 signals the third sub-section of the letter body. The *Conclusio* in vv. 13-15 contain Travel Plans (vv. 13-14), a prayer wish (v. 15a), and Greetings (v. 15b-c). Verse eleven comes the closest to containing recognizable sub-genre forms with the two sets of antithetical expressions of basic spiritual principle. The details of all this will be amplified below in the exegesis section.

7.1.2.2 Literary Setting Perspective

Normally when studying a passage of text inside a document, identifying where this passage comes in the structural arrangement of the contents of the documents is important to understand. The literary context of a passage is very important to proper interpretation. Only with great caution and by following established guidelines can one correctly link up one text to another text elsewhere in the Bible. When a commentator strings together a series of passages and presents them as an organized expression, you can be certain that he has fallen prey to eisogesis of scripture rather than exegesis of scripture. And that the ultimate authority for what he is contending lies in his mind and not in the scripture. He has 're-contextualized' the scripture as a way to give it the meaning he wants it to have.⁷⁴ The tail has begun wagging the dog in this case! This is opening a big door to heretical teachings that seek to use the Bible to prop up the ideas of the teacher! That conceptual connections between different passage do occur is clear, but setting up links must be done with extreme caution and only by using proper guidelines.

In this study, we are looking at an entire document. Thus the issue of literary setting takes on altered meaning. Now we are looking more at canonical setting for the document. The most narrow setting is that this letter stands as the third of the three letters associated with the apostle John. The inner connection of these three letters is debated vigorously among modern scholars. Apart from authorship questions, questions about the sequencing of the writing of these letters exists as well as whether all three address the same Christian community. When one takes them in the traditional sequence of their numbering, the conclusions follow that First John is attempting to correct misunderstandings -- either deliberate or accidental -- of the fourth gospel. Second John moves to speak to a worsened division inside the Johannine community where an alternative group is increasingly breaking ties with the segment faithful to the apostolic gospel. This is motivated by changing doctrine as much as anything else. But in Third John a particular problem of abusive leadership in at least one part of the community is addressed. Although doctrinal issues may loom in the background, that is not the focus of Third John. Rather, it is the more functional issue of Diotrephes' heavy handed leadership style with the consequence of both his rejecting writings to the community along with emissaries sent to the community by the Elder. Gaius is the main point of positive contact in the community and upon whom hope for faithfulness to the apostolic gospel

⁷⁴One subtle implication of doing this eisogesis is that the commentator doesn't really understand the text well enough to explain its meaning within the framework of its natural literary setting. Another more serious implication is that the breath of God saturating a given passage is inadequate for this passage to have proper application to the targeted audience of the commentator. Thus the 'inspiration' of the commentator surpasses that of God in knowing better than God how to set up applications by linking the passage to other passages.

When proper critique of such practices are done, what surfaces is that the commentator is depending far more on western rationalistic philosophy than on the divine authority of inspired scripture. To the extent that this becomes true to the same extent the spiritual power of God in teaching and preaching the passage is eliminated and replaced with human reasoning and rhetoric. Nothing of lasting spiritual transformation will come out of this, because in reality God has been pushed into the background.

by the community depends.

At another level of literary setting Third John stands as a part of the General Letters of the New Testament beginning with James and concluding with Jude.⁷⁵ In the canonical history of the NT, First John was part of the beginning triad of documents in this section to gain official status -- James, First Peter, and First John -- largely out of a 'trinitarian' model. Gradually the expansion of the three moved symbolically from the number three to the number seven, the complete number. Consequently by the fourth century this section was expanded to seven documents, thus including Third John. The implication of this is that the complete witness of the apostles is presented now by the twenty-one documents in these two sections. All that God providentially deemed important is contained in these documents.

7.1.2.3 Literary Structure Aspects

Just as important as determining the literary setting for a passage is determining the arrangement of ideas inside the passage. Here the grammar of the Greek language becomes central, particularly at the point of primary and secondary idea expression. Although different ways of evaluating this arrangement are possible, one very helpful and visually prominent way is through a process called 'block diagramming' of the text.⁷⁶

Below is an English text diagram of Third John based on the syntax of the Greek text:

Praescriptio:

¹ **The Elder
To Gaius**

the beloved,
whom I love in Truth.

Proem:

² Beloved,

1 regarding everything I pray for you

that you will be prosperous and healthy
to the degree that you are spiritually.

³ For

2 I was caused to rejoice

greatly
at the coming of the brothers and their giving witness about you
in the Truth
just as you are walking in the Truth.

3 ⁴ I have no greater joy that this

that I hear about my children
that they are walking in the Truth.

Body, pt. 1:

⁵ Beloved,

**4 faithful you are doing
whenever you do actions**

to the brothers,

and

this -----

to strangers,

⁷⁵Canonically the Letter to the Hebrews stands between the Pauline section (Romans to Philemon) and the General Letters section (James to Jude). Both sections are arranged sequentially on a descending length basis from the longest to the shortest writings. Hebrews was very late in gaining canonical status and then only on a partial association with the Pauline letters. The partial factor is signaled by its location between the Pauline and the General letters. Full Pauline acceptance would have meant it would have come immediately after Romans and before First Corinthians.

⁷⁶For a detailed presentation of how to do this see my "Steps to a Literary Structural Analysis of the Greek Text," at cranfordville.com: <http://cranfordville.com/gkgrma05.pdf>.

6 who have given witness about you
 in love
 before the church
 whom you have treated well
 by having equipped them for their journey worthy of God;

7 for
 in behalf of the name
5 they went out
 taking nothing
 from the Gentiles.

8 Therefore
6 we ought
 to support such individuals
 in order that we might be participants
 in the Truth.

Body, pt. 2:

7 9 I wrote something to the church;
 but
8 the one loving to be first, Diotrephes, does not accept us.

10 Because of this
 when I come
9 I will call to mind his deeds
 which he did by evil words
 in making charges against us,
 and
 not being content with these things
10 he would not also receive the brothers
 and
11 those who wanted to he forbid
 and
 out of the church
12 he threw them.

Body, pt. 3:

11 Beloved,
13 do not imitate what is evil,
 rather
14 (imitate) what is good.

15 The one doing good is from God;
16 the one doing evil has never seen God.

17 12 Demetrius has a good witness
 from all
 and
 from the Truth itself;
 and
18 we give witness,
 and
19 you know that our witness is truth.

Conclusio:

- 20 ¹³ **Many things I have to write to you**
 but _____
 _____ with pen and ink
- 21 **I do not wish...to write to you;**
¹⁴ rather _____
- 22 **I hope**
 _____ **quickly to see you,**
 and _____
 _____ mouth to mouth
- 23 **we shall speak.**
- 24 ¹⁵ **Peace to you.**
- 25 **The friends send you greetings.**
- 26 **Greet the friends**
 by name.

Summary of Structural Analysis:⁷⁷

The traditional units of an ancient letter provide the best way to get into the organizing structure of the

⁷⁷This can be charted out in diagram fashion using what I have labeled a *Semantic Diagram* of the text:

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once this outline is developed, the I,II,III,IV etc. outline can be set up (see below) and then headings for each point written out based on that portion of the scripture text. The Exegetical Outline, normally done first, would use past tense verbs to summarize the “then” meaning of the text, while the Expository Outline -- perhaps only done with the first one or two outline levels -- would state the “now” text meaning. • This resulting Expository Outline can serve either as the foundation for a biblical based sermon or teaching outline. • By developing your outlines of the biblical text using this method, you will always have an outline that comes out of the biblical text. This avoids the eisogetical tendency of most commentary outlines to super impose an outline externally derived down on to the biblical text. • Outlining, following this method, becomes your way of summarizing the interpretive conclusions you have come to from your own careful study of the biblical text. • The outline structure for both the Exegetical and the Expository outlines would look like this. Just fill in the headings based on the biblical text portions. <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> I. (A-B) A. (A) _____ B. (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (2) _____ II. (A-B) A. (A) _____ B. (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (2) _____ III. (A-C) A. (1-2) _____ 1 (i-ii) _____ i. (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ 2 (i-iv) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ iii (iii) _____ iv (iv) _____ </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> B. (1-2) _____ 1 (i-ii) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ C. (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (i-ii) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ IV (A-C) A (1-2) _____ 1 (i-ii) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ B (B) _____ C (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (2) _____ </td> </tr> </table> | I. (A-B) A. (A) _____ B. (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (2) _____ II. (A-B) A. (A) _____ B. (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (2) _____ III. (A-C) A. (1-2) _____ 1 (i-ii) _____ i. (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ 2 (i-iv) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ iii (iii) _____ iv (iv) _____ | B. (1-2) _____ 1 (i-ii) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ C. (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (i-ii) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ IV (A-C) A (1-2) _____ 1 (i-ii) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ B (B) _____ C (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (2) _____ |
| I. (A-B) A. (A) _____ B. (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (2) _____ II. (A-B) A. (A) _____ B. (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (2) _____ III. (A-C) A. (1-2) _____ 1 (i-ii) _____ i. (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ 2 (i-iv) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ iii (iii) _____ iv (iv) _____ | B. (1-2) _____ 1 (i-ii) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ C. (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (i-ii) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ IV (A-C) A (1-2) _____ 1 (i-ii) _____ i (i) _____ ii (ii) _____ B (B) _____ C (1-2) _____ 1 (1) _____ 2 (2) _____ | | |

text of Third John. The *Praescriptio* elements in v. 1 provide some identification of the letter sender and recipient. We could wish for a sender personal name and a geographical indicator for the recipient. Just these two additions would have eliminated thousands of volumes of commentary debate concerning the specific identity of the sender and where Gaius lived. But helpful are the expansion elements stressing love and Truth. These will set something of a tone for the positive emphases contained in the letter body.

The *Proem*, very typical of letters in the ancient world, expresses profound gratitude to God for Gaius and his faithfulness to the apostolic Gospel and a hospitable spirit in hosting fellow missionaries of the Elder. The expansion elements here add to the theme of Truth not only the doctrinal affirmation but also the ethical obligations of the Truth as defining a way of living. And Gaius is faithfully following that moral path.

The letter body is composed of three segments: complements about Gaius (vv. 5-8); warning to Diotrophes (vv. 9-10); and complements about Demetrius (vv. 11-12). Clear discourse markers signal the shift in topic at vv. 5, 9, and 11. The themes of love and Truth continue to play an important role in the detailed ideas. Additionally the emphasis on walking in the Truth first put on the table in the Proem in vv. 3-4 continue to be stressed both positively by Gaius and Demetrius, and negatively by Diotrophes by his refusal to obey the Truth.

The *Conclusio* is a standard conclusion to an ancient letter. It begins with Travel Plans (vv. 13-14) as a transition from the letter body into the *Conclusio*. A Prayer wish (v. 15a) is followed by standard Greetings (v. 15b-c). Although more elements are sometimes included in the *Conclusio*, these are very typical elements both in ancient letters generally as well as in Christian letters.

7.1.3 Exegesis of Third John

With this outline coming naturally out of the text rather than being artificially imposed onto the text, we are in a position to explore in greater details the meaning of the text. This will provide a solid foundation for building applicational bridges over into our day and time.

7.1.3.1 Praescriptio (v. 1)

1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

1 Ὁ πρεσβύτερος Γαίῳ τῷ ἀγαπητῷ, ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.

This material, placed on the outside of the scroll in the original composition, serves as an ID marker for the document contained inside the rolled up (and probably sealed) scroll. Expressed not in sentence format but in a formula pattern, it identifies who the document is from and who it is written to. Usually in the *Praescriptio* of ancient letters, a third element, the *Salutatio*, is also found, most often the single word of oral greeting, *χαίρειν*, in the ancient Greek speaking world. But it is missing here, having been merged into the *Proem* section that follows with a prayer invoking God's blessings on the recipient of the letter. But the *Salutatio* is preserved in 2 John 3.⁷⁸

In closely examining the elements of this section, the *Superscriptio* and the *Adscriptio*, several interesting insights come to the surface.

Superscriptio. In the extremely short *Superscriptio*, Ὁ πρεσβύτερος, we do not get a name of an individual, but instead the title that was connected to the sender of the letter. One could wish that a name had been inserted before the title like in all the Pauline letters, e.g., in Eph. 1:1, Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ, *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God*. But on the assumption of common authorship of the three Johannine letters, the Elder was not in the habit of including his name before the title in his letters. Notice the very similar pattern in Second John 1, Ὁ πρεσβύτερος, *The Elder*.

First, what did this title mean in first century Christianity? In the history of the English Bible it has been translated mainly as the Elder.⁷⁹ Upon close examination of the patterns across the modern languages, a couple

⁷⁸2 John 3. *Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love.* ἔσται μεθ' ἡμῶν χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ παρὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ.

⁷⁹Note the patterns:

English Bible: *the elder* (Wycliffe, Geneva 1599, KJV, ASV, RSV, NRSV, NRSV UK, NASB, CEB, ESV, ESV British, LEB, NIV, NIV 1984, NIV, TNIV, NIV UK, Phillips NT, Mounce NT, NET Bible, the Voice); *the Elder* (NLT, GNT, NCV, Third Millennium Bible, Weymouth, 21st Century KJV); a ruler (BBE); *the Ancient* (Douay-Rheims); skipped over (HCSB); *The Pastor* (Message); *the presbyter* (Knox); *The church leader* (NLV).

German Bibel: *Der Älteste* (Luther 1545, 1912, Elberfelder 1905, Neue Genfer Übersetzung, Schlachter 1951, 2000); *Als verantwortlicher Gemeindeleiter* (Hoffnung für Alle).

French Bible: *L'ancien* (Segon 1910); *L'Ancien* (Ostervald, La Bible du Semeur, Nouvelle Edition de Genève – NEG1979); *De*

of interesting points arise. First, in English the translation “the elder” emphasizes the age factor in πρεσβύτερος, while the translation “the Elder” stresses the title meaning of πρεσβύτερος. One detects the same variations in the French “L’ancien” or “L’Ancien” and also the Spanish “El anciano” and “El Anciano.” Second, those translations following an intensive dynamic equivalent method of translation pick up on the title meaning but use more understandable terms such as “The Pastor” (the Message), “The church leader” (NLV), “Del líder y encargado de la iglesia” (Traducción en lenguaje actual).

This raises then the very legitimate question of the precise meaning of πρεσβύτερος. Is the term merely signifying that the letter came from an older Christian man? This is hardly possible because of the context. Although πρεσβύτερος in its basic definition as a comparative adjective does mean ‘older,’ inside early Christianity as well as first century Judaism the term in Greek had taken on an official meaning referring to a leader either in the synagogue, a ‘town council’ leader in the Jewish villages and towns in Palestine, and a leader of a house church group of Christians. With this title role of πρεσβύτερος the idea of older age recedes into the background and becomes of little significance to the meaning of the term. Centrally then πρεσβύτερος as a title speaks of being in a leadership role in the life of a Jewish or Christian group. Added to that derived meaning of πρεσβύτερος is the clear literary setting here in verse one of standing in the position where a title was placed in ancient letters. Consequently, the evidence significantly favors understanding πρεσβύτερος as a title of the individual responsible for sending the letter. Those translations using “The Elder,” “L’Ancien,” “El Anciano” reflect this understanding, as well as the highly dynamic equivalent translations using different but synonymous expressions specifying a church leader.⁸⁰

What becomes clear is that at the end of the first Christian century πρεσβύτερος still is used as a leadership term, particularly in regard to local church leadership, much in the same way as is found in Acts where Luke calls local church leaders by πρεσβύτερος consistently in the 30s through the early 60s, along with Jewish leaders.⁸¹ With the now Gentile domination of the Christian movement, the secular background meanings of πρεσβύτερος in Greco-Roman society help define roles of leadership of these Christian communities. For the detailed discussion of this background see **topic 7.1.1.1.2.2** above. One clear implication of this use of πρεσβύτερος is that it signals that the letter is not intended solely as a personal letter between the Elder and Gaius. The insertion of a title here strongly points to the letter as a more official communication ultimately to the

la part de l’ancien (Segond 21).

Spanish Biblia: *El anciano* (BdA, Reina-Valera Antigua, Reina Valera Contemporánea, Dios Habla Hoy, Nueva Biblia Latinoamericana de Hoy, Nueva Versión Internacional, Nueva Versión Internacional (Castilian), Reina-Valera 1960); *El Anciano* (La Palabra (España), La Palabra (Hispanoamérica), Reina-Valera 1995); *Yo, Juan, el anciano* (Nueva Traducción Viviente); *Del anciano* (Palabra de Dios para Todos); *Del líder y encargado de la iglesia* (Traducción en lenguaje actual).

Latin Vulgate: *senior*.

⁸⁰“In the format of Hellenistic letters (Appendix V below), the Opening Formula (Praescriptio) supplied the identity of the sender, which in ordinary letters consisted simply of a personal name. In public or official letters the name might be accompanied by an identifying title, e.g., ‘Jonathan the high priest’ (1 Macc 12:6); ‘Arius king of the Spartans’ (12:20); ‘Lucius consul of the Romans’ (15:16). This is a normal practice also in NT letters where of the 13 Pauline Epistles and 4 other Catholic Epistles only 2 (I and II Thessalonians) use the personal names of the senders without some identifying title. In the others we find ‘apostle’ (8 epistles), ‘servant’ (3), ‘servant and apostle’ (3), and ‘prisoner’ (Philemon). Moving beyond the NT to the ‘Apostolic Fathers,’ we find the simple personal name used by Polycarp and by Ignatius (‘who is also called Theophorus’). II and III are our only Christian examples from this period (A.D. 50–150) of a sender giving a title or designation and no personal name. Although a few (Schwartz, E. Meyer) have mentioned the possibility that an original personal name was lost in transmission, this is an unlikely hypothesis for two letters. Rather, one may suppose that in a close-knit body of Christians the recipients would have known the personal name of the sender, but that the designation ‘the Presbyter’ was customary or preferred by him, by them, or by both. (One may wonder whether titles of reverence were not a Johannine trait, for in GJohn such symbolically important figures as the Beloved Disciple and the mother of Jesus are never identified by personal name.) The theory that the letters are fictional and that their creator prefixed this title to make readers think that they came from an important figure in Asia Minor (e.g., John the Presbyter mentioned by Papias; see below) has been proposed by Hirsch; but then one might wonder why the creator did not go farther in his fiction and supply the personal name ‘John’ or imitate common NT style by supplying the more impressive title ‘the Apostle.’” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 647.]

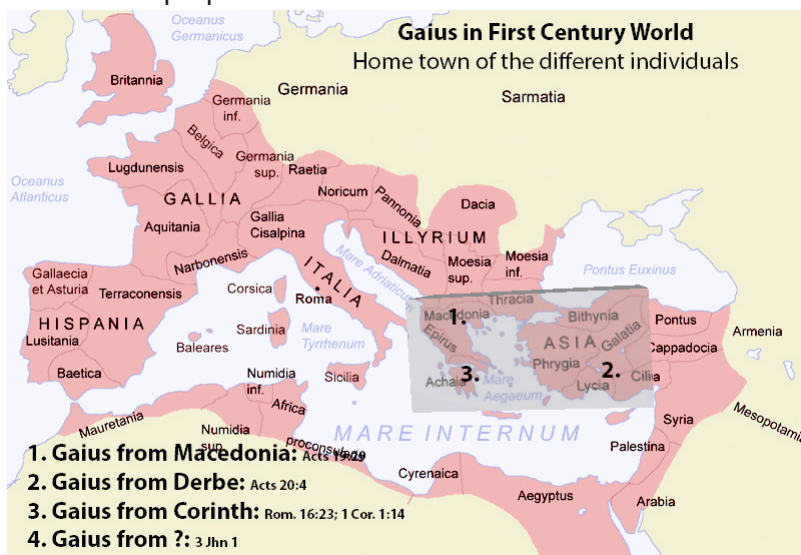
⁸¹Cf. Acts 4:5, 8, 23; 5:21; 6:12, 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 22:5; 23:14; 14:1; 25:15.

community of believers that Gaius belonged to.⁸²

One of the puzzling questions since the early decades of the second century has been to put the name of an individual to this title πρεσβύτερος. Different names have been proposed down through the centuries of interpretive history, but mostly they center on whether the Elder refers to the apostle John or to another person known by the title The Elder, who was a disciple of the apostle in the late first century. Although we cannot be completely certain of the identity of the Elder, the strong and increasingly uniform church tradition pointing to the apostle John has more going for it than any of the alternative proposals.

Adscriptio: Γαῖω τῷ ἀγαπητῷ, ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ. The personal name Γαῖω is the core element here, and is followed by two separate modifying expansion elements, τῷ ἀγαπητῷ and ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.

As is reflected in the chart on the right, a concordance search of the name “Gaius” will produce listings indicating four different individuals with this name in the pages of the New Testament.⁸³ The individual by this name listed in Third John is not identified with any specific geographical location. In theory, he could be the Gaius from Macedonia, Derbe, or Corinth. But such is not likely, since the Johannine community associated with these three letters traditionally was located in the province of Asia, and especially with Ephesus. Additionally, the three individuals with this name mentioned in either Acts or Paul’s writings surface in the 50s of the first century, while the Gaius of Third John is surfacing in the 90s of the first century. This time gap also lessens the likelihood of him being connected to any of these other three fellows with the same name. The best summation of the existing data comes from the BAGD lexicon: “Γάϊος, ου, ὁ (Γαῖος W-H.; found frequently, e.g. Diod S 11, 60, 1; 13, 104, 1; 19, 73, 1) Gaius name of several Christians about whom little is known.”⁸⁴ In the early decades of the second century another Γάϊος surfaces who made copies of the writing *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (cf. MPol. 22:2).⁸⁵ Also the church father Origen in his commentary on Romans asserts that this Gaius was the first bishop at Thessalonica.⁸⁶



⁸²“The writer refers to himself simply as ‘the elder.’² He thus writes in token of the position of authority and respect which he holds in the church, so that this is not a private letter but rather has the force of an official communication.” [I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 82.]

⁸³Γάϊος [Gaios /gah·ee·os/] n pr m. Of Latin origin; GK 1127; Five occurrences; AV translates as ‘Gaius (of Corinth)’ twice, ‘Gaius (of Macedonia)’ once, ‘Gaius (of Derbe)’ once, and ‘Gaius (a Christian)’ once. 1 a Macedonian who accompanied Paul in his travels. 2 a man from Derbe who went with Paul from Corinth in his last journey to Jerusalem. 3 a man of Corinth who was his host in his second sojourn in that city. 4 an unknown Christian to whom John’s third epistle is addressed. Additional Information: Gaius = ‘lord’.” [James Strong, *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2001).]

⁸⁴William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 186.

⁸⁵“This account Gaius transcribed from the papers of Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, who also lived with Irenaeus. And I, Socrates, wrote it down in Corinth from the copies of Gaius. Grace be with everyone.” [Michael William Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 245.

⁸⁶“Origen says that according to tradition he was the first Bishop of Thessalonica. Cf. Origen, *Comm. in Ro. x. 41*, ‘Fertur sane traditione maiorum quod hic Gaius primus episcopus fuerit Thessalonicensis ecclesiae’.” [Alan England Brooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1912), 180.]

But interestingly the later document *Apostolic Constitutions* (vii. 46) contends that Gaius was the first bishop of Pergamos in Asia. But the historical reliability of this is subject to serious questioning.

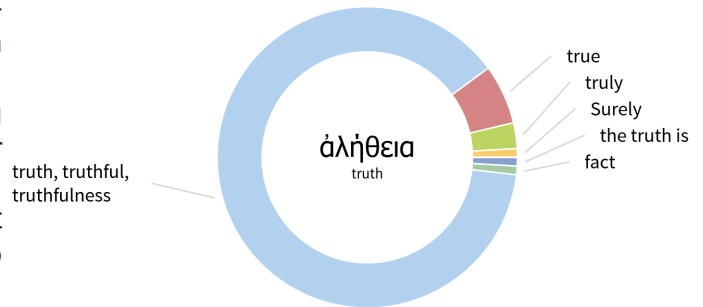
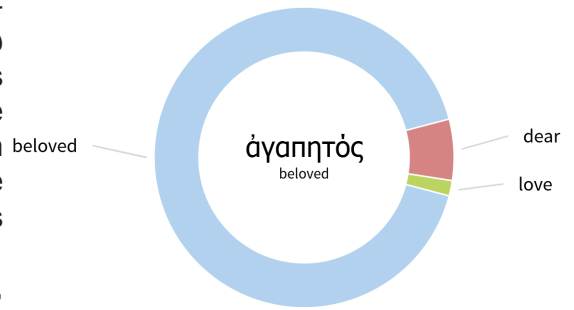
XLVI. Now concerning those bishops which have been ordained in our lifetime, we let you know that they are these:— James the bishop of Jerusalem, the brother of our Lord; upon whose death the second was Simeon the son of Cleopas; after whom the third was Judas the son

The information that we do have comes from the expansion elements in verse one, which are twofold. First, Gaius was τῷ ἀγαπητῷ, *the beloved one*. The verbal adjective ἀγαπητός, ἡ, ὄν is derived from the Greek perfect tense passive participle form with the resulting meaning of ‘an object of love.’ It is used some 61 times in the NT often as a modifier of someone’s name, thus specifying the person as an object of divine love, although it can specify one as being loved by another person such as a parent or close friend.

Here in Third John, verse one is the first of four uses (vv. 1, 2, 5, 11) with all alluding to Gaius. The last three of these show up in the Greek vocative case of direct address, Ἀγαπητέ, *beloved*. Although the common implication of divine love stands in the background, the dominant focus seems to be on the Elder’s love for Gaius as a dear Christian friend. The New International Version, for example, adopts this understanding with its translation of all four instances of ἀγαπητός as “dear friend.”

This raises some questions about the second expansion modifier ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, *whom I love in the Truth*. If ἀγαπητῷ specifies the Elder’s love for Gaius, then why did he add this relative clause modifier saying the same thing? The only possible grammatical answer is that this relative clause was meant to amplify and add emphasis to the commitment of the Elder to Gaius. What did the Elder mean by ἀγαπητῷ? The present tense verb ἀγαπῶ, that follows, stresses ongoing devotion to Gaius.

The emphasis on the verb subject ἐγὼ highlights prominently the Elder’s loving. And the prepositional phrase ἐν ἀληθείᾳ defines the context of that love as being in *Truth*. Although a few translations take ἐν ἀληθείᾳ as an adverbial modifier adding intensity to the verb,⁸⁷ the role of ἀλήθεια, *Truth*, in Third John (cf. v. 1 ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, v. 3 τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, v. 4 ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, v. 8 τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, v. 12 [ἀληθῆς]) underscores something more profound. It is the Gospel that is Truth and what defines the basis for the love that the Elder has for Gaius.⁸⁸ The Johannine literature especially often uses ἀλήθεια, *Truth*, to mean εὐαγγέλιον,



of James. Of Cæsarea of Palestine, the first was Zacchæus, who was once a publican; after whom was Cornelius, and the third Theophilus. Of Antioch, Euodius, ordained by me Peter; and Ignatius by Paul. Of Alexandria, Annianus was the first, ordained by Mark the evangelist; the second Avilius by Luke, who was also an evangelist. Of the church of Rome, Linus the son of Claudia was the first, ordained by Paul; and Clemens, after Linus’ death, the second, ordained by me Peter. Of Ephesus, Timotheus, ordained by Paul; and John, by me John. Of Smyrna, Aristo the first; after whom Stratæas the son of Lois; and the third Aristo. **Of Pergamus, Gaius.** Of Philadelphia, Demetrius, by me. Of Cenchrea, Lucius, by Paul. Of Crete, Titus. Of Athens, Dionysius. Of Tripoli in Phœnicia, Marathones. Of Laodicea in Phrygia, Archippus. Of Colossæ; Philemon. Of Borea in Macedonia, Onesimus, once the servant of Philemon. Of the churches of Galatia, Crescens. Of the parishes of Asia, Aquila and Nicetas. Of the church of Æginæ, Crispus. These are the bishops who are entrusted by us with the parishes in the Lord; whose doctrine keep always in mind, and observe our words. And may the Lord be with you now, and to endless ages, as Himself said to us when He was about to be taken up to His own God and Father. For says He, “Lo, I am with you all the days, until the end of the world. Amen.” [“Apostolic Constitutions 7.4.46,” *New Advent.org*]

⁸⁷“Some renderings of the phrase used are, ‘my dear Gaius, whom I truly love’ (TEV), ‘to Gaius, my friend (or brother), who is very dear to me’; or in two sentences, ‘to Gaius whom I love. I love him/you with all my heart.’” [C. Haas, Marinus de Jonge and J. L. Swellengrebel, *A Handbook on the Letters of John*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 176.]

⁸⁸“**esp. of the content of Christianity as the ultimate truth** (cp. Plut., Mor. 351e ἀ. περί θεῶν; Philo, Spec. Leg. 4, 178, the proselyte is a μεταναστὰς εἰς ἀ.) **Eph 4:21** (CScott, Exp. 8th ser. 3, 1912, 178–85; FBriggs, ET 39, 1928, 526). ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀ. **the word of truth Eph 1:13; 2 Ti 2:15; Js 1:18.** ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀ. τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς **Col 1:5; cp. 2 Pt 1:12.** ἡ ἀ. τοῦ εὐαγγελίου **Gal 2:5, 14.** ἔστιν ἀ. Χριστοῦ ἐν ἐμοί **2 Cor 11:10.** ὁ περί ἀ. λόγος **Pol 3:2; πείθεσθαι τῇ ἀ. Gal 5:7; πιστεύειν τῇ ἀ. 2 Th 2:12;** hence πίστει ἀληθείας belief in the truth vs. **13; δύνασθαι τι κατὰ τῆς ἀ. ... ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀ. 2 Cor 13:8; περιπατεῖν ἐν ἀ. 2J 4; 3J 3f** (cp. 4 Km 20:3); ζῆν κατὰ ἀ. **I Eph 6:2; πορεύεσθαι κατὰ τὴν ἀ. Pol 5:2; ἐν ἀ. (3 Km 2:4) Hm 3:4; gird oneself w. truth Eph 6:14;** cp. Hm 11:4.—**Truth expresses itself in virtues like righteousness and holiness, Eph 4:24** (Nicol. Dam.: 90 Fgm. 67, 1 Jac. δικαιοσύνην κ. ἀλ.). Hence it is contrasted w. ἀδικία **1 Cor 13:6; Ro 1:18; 2:8.** In the last-named passage a negative attitude toward the truth is called ἀπειθεῖν τῇ ἀ. Also **πλανᾶσθαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀ. wander from the truth Js 5:19; ἀστοχεῖν περὶ τὴν ἀ. 2 Ti 2:18; καταστρέφειν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀ. Hs 6, 2, 1, cp. 4; ἀποστρέφειν τὴν ἀκοὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀ. 2 Ti 4:4** opp. μῦθοι, cp. ἀποστρέφεσθαι **Tit 1:14; ἀποστρεῖσθαι τῆς ἀ. 1 Ti 6:5;** ἐρευνᾶν περὶ τῆς ἀ. make inquiries about the truth **Hm 10, 1, 4; 6; ἀνθίστασθαι τῇ ἀ. oppose the truth (i.e. the gospel) 2 Ti 3:8.** Opp. μῦθοι **4:4. Truth can**

Gospel. Thus the love of the Elder for Gaius grows out of the shared commitment to the Gospel and is defined by this spiritual reality.⁸⁹

7.1.3.2 Proem (vv. 2-4)

2 Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.
3 I was overjoyed when some of the friends arrived and testified to your faithfulness to the truth, namely how you walk in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

2 Ἀγαπητέ, περὶ πάντων εὐχομαί σε εὐοδοῦσθαι καὶ ὑγιαίνειν, καθὼς εὐοδοῦταί σου ἡ ψυχὴ. 3 ἐχάρην γὰρ λίαν ἐρχομένων ἀδελφῶν καὶ μαρτυρούντων σου τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς σὺ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖς. 4 μειζοτέραν τούτων οὐκ ἔχω χαράν, ἵνα ἀκούω τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατοῦντα.

The *Proem* of most ancient letters was a health wish in the form of a prayer to the patron deity of the letter recipient. The apostle Paul, in ‘Christianizing’ this pattern in his letters, turns it into a prayer of thanksgiving to God, which is often extended with a prayer of intercession, for his readers. He has a couple of stock phrases that are used to introduce the *Proem* section of his letters: εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου, *I give thanks to my God* (Rom. 1:8; with slight variations see 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:3; Philm. 4; Col. 1:3; Phil. 1:3), Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, *Thanks be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Eph. 1:3); and Χάριν ἔχω τῷ, *I give thanks to ...* (1 Tim. 1:12, ...ἐνδυναμώσαντί με Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν, ...*to the One who strengthened me in Christ Jesus our Lord*; 2 Tim. 1:3, τῷ θεῷ, *to God*). But the *Proem* in both Second and Third John go their own distinctive directions,⁹⁰ with the one in Third John being closer in wording to those in the secular world of the first century.⁹¹

be communicated (cp. Did., Gen. 86, 21): φανερώσει τῆς ἀ. by a clear statement of the truth **2 Cor 4:2** (sim. in later Christian prayer POxy 925, 4f φανέρωσόν μοι τὴν παρὰ σοὶ ἀλ.); is taught D 11:10; recognized **1 Ti 4:3**; Hv 3, 6, 2; cp. ἐπίγνωσις τῆς ἀληθείας (Alex. Aphr., Quaest. 3, 12, II 2 p. 102, 3 γνώσις τ. ἀληθείας) **1 Ti 2:4**; **2 Ti 2:25**; **3:7**; **Tit 1:1**; **Hb 10:26**; ἐδραϊώμα τῆς ἀ. **1 Ti 3:15**; ὁδὸς τῆς ἀ. **2 Pt 2:2**; 1 Cl 35:5 (cp. Pind., P. 3, 103; Eur., Fgm. 289; Gen 24:48 al.; En 104:13; OdeSol 11:3); ὑπακοὴ τῆς ἀ. **1 Pt 1:22**; ἀγάπη τῆς ἀ. **2 Th 2:10**. God is πατὴρ τῆς ἀ. 2 Cl 3:1; 20:5; φῶς ἀληθείας IPHld 2:1 (cp. Ps 42:3); θεὸς τῆς ἀ. (1 Esdr 4:40) 2 Cl 19:1; cp. 1 Cl 60:2. The reverse genitival constr. in ἀ. τοῦ θεοῦ **Ro 1:25**, is best rendered truth about God (so Twentieth Century NT, NRSV) as opp. to the deception of polytheists, who in effect lie about God despite their better knowledge described vss. **19–21** (REB et al.: truth of God).—**Ἄ. is a favorite word of the Joh. lit., and plays a major role in it.** God’s word is truth **J 17:17** (Ps 118:142). Truth w. χάρις **1:14**, **17**; w. πνεῦμα **4:23f**; cp. ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ ἀ. **1J 3:18** (opp. λόγῳ, γλῶσση). W. ἀγάπη **2J 3**. The Spirit leads into truth **J 16:13**; hence πνεῦμα τῆς ἀ. **14:17**; **15:26**; **16:13**; **1J 4:6** (cp. Hm 3:4). πνεῦμα is identified w. ἀ. **1J 5:6**; it is mediated through Christ **J 1:17**, who calls himself truth **14:6** (cp. PGM 5, 148 ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀλήθεια, on the other hand POxy 1380, 63 [early II A.D.] Isis is called ἀ.; Apollonaretal. Berl. Gr. Pap. 11517 [II A.D.]: Her 55, 1920, 188–95 ln. 52 Apollo as the ἀψευδῆς ἀ.; M. Ant., 9, 1, 2 God=Nature ἀλήθεια ὀνομάζεται; Lucian, Hist. Conscr. 61 says of a good history-writer: ἦν ἀλήθεια ἐπὶ πᾶσι); hence as source of praise for a Christian Δημητρίῳ μεμαρτύρηται ... ὑπ’ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀ. **3J 12**. **One who possesses Christ knows truth** (γινώσκ. τὴν ἀ. as Jos., Ant. 13, 291; Tat. 13, 1; ἀληθείας γινώσις; Maximus Tyr. 26, 5b; Did., Gen. 116, 17) **J 8:32**; (cp. IQS 5:10); **2J 1**; does the truth **J 3:21**, cp. **1J 1:6** (ποιεῖν τὴν ἀ. Gen 32:11; 47:29; Is 26:10 al.; TestReub 6:9; TestBenj 10:3; ἔλεος καὶ ἀ. PsSol 17:15); stands in the truth **J 8:44**; is of the truth **18:37**; cp. **1J 2:21**; **3:19** (ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας=corresponding to the truth PTurin I, 6, 13). The truth sets one free **J 8:32**, but is not present in those who deny the fact of sin in their lives **1J 1:8** or do not heed Christ’s commands. Christ proclaims this truth: λέγειν (Jos., Ant. 10, 124) **J 8:45f**; **16:7**; λαλεῖν **8:40** (also λαλεῖν ἐν ἀ. IEph 6:2); μαρτυρεῖν τῇ ἀ. **18:37**. As John the Baptist witnesses to Jesus, he witnesses to the truth **5:33**; cp. μαρτυρούντων σου τῇ ἀληθείᾳ bear witness to your (fidelity to the) truth **3J 3**; ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀ. vs. **8**. In Pilate’s question τί ἐστὶν ἀ.; **J 18:38** the worldling speaks (cp. 4 Macc 5:10). Opp. θάνατος ISm 5:1.—Mlt-Turner 177f.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 42.]

⁸⁹“In truth I love you. Literally, ‘whom I love in truth,’ just as in 2 John 1b (see NOTE there), although III John does not expand upon this clause as II John does. It is likely that ‘in truth’ (anarthrous) is theological here as it was there and thus is not equivalent simply to the adverb ‘truly.’ Belief in Christ who is the truth makes one a child of God and constitutes the basis of love. The similarity to II John makes it questionable that we should read into 3 John 1 a veiled reference to the Diotrefes of v. 9: ‘I love you even if Diotrefes does not’ or ‘I love you rather than Diotrefes.’” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 703.]

⁹⁰**2 John 1:4.** I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father.
Ἐχάρην λίαν ὅτι εὑρήκα ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς ἐντολὴν ἐλάβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς.

⁹¹The only other General Letter to contain a *Proem* is **1 Peter 1:3-12**, Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ..., *Thanks be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...* Not too surprisingly, given the fact that Silas did the actual writing of the letter (cf. 5:16), the introductory expression is very Pauline and follows exactly the example of Eph. 1:3.

The vocative case form of direct address, Ἀγαπητέ, **Beloved**, signals a move to the *Proem* from the *Prae-scriptio*. The Elder will use this twice more in vv. 5 and 11 in order to signal a new topic and one being addressed directly to Gaius. The core expression is simply εὐχομαί, **I am praying**. The present tense form of the verb stresses a prayer that is regularly repeated by the Elder, not one that he just prayed this one time in connection with the composing of the letter. The scope of his praying included περὶ πάντων, **concerning all things**. That is, the Elder's prayer wish for Gaius encompassed every part of Gaius' life.

The specific content of the Elder's prayer was σε εὐδοῦσθαι καὶ ὑγιαίνειν, **for you to prosper and be healthy**. Here the Pauline expression of thanksgiving for his readers is skipped in favor of intercession in behalf of Gaius. Two points of prayer request are repeatedly made by the Elder to God in behalf of Gaius. First, that Gaius would εὐδοῦσθαι, **prosper**.⁹² The verb εὐδοῶ basically stresses outward success, including material prosperity.⁹³ The English expression "**may go well with you**" (NRSV et als.) effectively captures the essence of the meaning. The prayer is for Gaius' life to function well and free of trouble and problems. Although the spelling εὐδοῦσθαι could mean '**you yourself prosper**' in the intensive function of the Greek middle voice, the context favors the present tense passive voice understanding with the meaning literally, "**you continue to be prospered.**" The point here is that the 'prospering' action is being done by God, and not by Gaius' own efforts. Second, that Gaius **might enjoy good health**, ὑγιαίνειν. Given the lack of adequate medical treatment for illness and the horrific danger to one's life that illness posed in the ancient world, such a prayer for God to grant an individual good health took one greater importance than would be true in today's world.

The absolutely intriguing aspect of this prayer is the benchmark standard for prosperity and good health: καθὼς εὐδοοῦταί σου ἡ ψυχὴ, **to the extent that your spiritual life is being prospered**. The Elder asks God to bless the physical life and circumstance of Gaius up to the same level that his spiritual life is prospering. With the present tense verbal expression uniformly used here the clear sense is that the Elder is praying, "God continually make the rest of Gaius' life outwardly and physically match the level of Your prospering of his spiritual life." Now that's a prayer that challenges! What we see here is the inclusiveness of praying set forth by Jesus in the model prayer in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 6:9-17). Even more is the wholistic approach to life foundational to the Hebrew / Jewish perspectives beginning in the Old Testament. God is concerned about all of our life, not just our 'soul.' This is at the heart of the "life abundant" that Jesus stressed in John 10.

The next two verses, vv. 3-4, provide a foundation for the prayer expression in verse two. One is event specific (v. 3) and the other is principle oriented (v. 4). The Elder begins with an expression of great joy (ἐχάρην λίαν) over the arrival of some Christian brothers (ἐρχομένων ἀδελφῶν). They had recently arrived at where the Elder was after spending time with Gaius.⁹⁴ They brought a wonderful report about the faithfulness of Gaius to

Eph. 1:3. **Thanks be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...** Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,...

⁹²“*Euodousthai*, ‘to be well off, to prosper on one’s way,’ is common in the LXX and the papyri. Elsewhere in the NT it is found at the beginning of Romans (1:10) and the end of I Corinthians (16:2). Bartlett, “Historical Setting” 215, makes the uncontrollable suggestion that the verb is a play on the name Euodius (masc. form of a name found in Philip 4:2), the name borne by the predecessor of Ignatius at Antioch, so that III John becomes the key for how Gaius Euodius became bishop of Antioch!” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 703.]

⁹³**εὐδοῶ** fut. εὐδώσω; 1 aor. εὐδώσα LXX; pf. 3 sg. εὐδῶκεν Gen 24:21, 27; Tob 10:14 S. Pass.: fut. εὐδοθήσομαι; aor. εὐδώθην and εὐδώθην LXX (s. ὁδός; Soph., Hdt. et al.; pap, LXX; on the latter Anz 290; Just., A II, 7, 8) in our lit. only the pass. is used, and not literally ‘be led along a good road’, but in the sense: **have things turn out well, prosper, succeed** of pers., abs. (Josh 1:8; Pr 28:13; 2 Ch 18:11; En 104:6; TestGad 7:1) εὐχομαί σε εὐδοῦσθαι κ. ὑγιαίνειν *I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health* **3J 2**; cp. εὐδοοῦταί σου ἡ ψυχὴ it is well with your soul *ibid.*; εὐ. ἐν τινι succeed in someth. (2 Ch 32:30; Sir 41:1; Jer 2:37; Da 6:4) Hs 6, 3, 5f. W. inf. foll. (cp. 1 Macc 16:2) εἴ πως ἤδη ποτὲ εὐδοθήσομαι ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς *whether I will finally succeed in coming to you* **Ro 1:10**. θεσαυρίζων ὃ τι ἐὰν εὐδοῶται *save as much as he gains* **1 Cor 16:2**. Yet, in this pass. the subj. may be a thing (Hdt. 6, 73 τῷ Κλεομένει εὐδώθη τὸ πρήγμα; 2 Esdr 5:8; Tob 4:19 BA; 1 Macc 3:6) understood, such as business or profit.—DELG s.v. ὁδός. M-M. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 410.]

⁹⁴The best guess at geography from the traditions of the church fathers is that the Elder (the apostle John) was in Ephesus and that Gaius was in a Christian community somewhere else in the province of Asia. Should the *Apostolic Constitutions* be accurate (& it prob-

the Gospel: καὶ μαρτυρούντων σου τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, and were giving witness about you in regard to the Truth. The specific content of that witness is spelled out in the dependent appositional clause καθὼς σὺ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖς, that you are walking in the Truth.⁹⁵ The image of ‘walking’ encompasses belief and behavior, and thus is a good inclusive expression.⁹⁶ Thus on the basis of this report of Gaius’ faithfulness to living out the Gospel, the Elder then asks God to prosper Gaius in every aspect of his life to the level of the spiritual blessings already coming to him.

It is helpful to note the similarity of this expression to 2 John 4, Ἐχάρην λίαν ὅτι εὔρηκα ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς ἐντολὴν ἐλάβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς, I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father. In the assumption of both letters having been sent to the same Christian community, but with a small amount of time between them, the Elder finds a lot to rejoice about in this congregation where Gaius is. To be sure, Second John acknowledges that not all of this community are obedient to the Gospel (cf. vv. 7-11). But many in the church are and this is good news to the Elder.

This then prompts the Elder to give a second reason for his prayer expression in verse four. There is nothing that brings him greater joy (μειζότεραν⁹⁷ τούτων⁹⁸ οὐκ ἔχω χαράν⁹⁹) than the news that (ἵνα ἀκούω¹⁰⁰ his ably isn’t), then Pergamus would be the city in Asia where Gaius was.

⁹⁵“If Gaius’ truth (v. 3a) is illustrated by his hospitable behavior, what is the force of *kathōs* in v. 3b? Bultmann, *Epistles* 98, argues for the comparative force, ‘as indeed you walk in the truth.’ But it is not clear what is being compared since both main and subordinate clauses concern Gaius. Can Gaius’ truth be compared to his walking in truth? (A *kathōs* comparative here is not so clear as the *kathōs* in 1 John 2:6: ‘The person ... ought himself to walk just as Christ walked.’) A simpler explanation is that, instead of being a comparative, *kathōs* here means ‘to the degree that’ or ‘as exemplified by the fact that.’ (One must leave open the complementary possibility that this is an instance of *kathōs* introducing indirect discourse: THLJ ISO; BDF 4532; BAG 3925; BAGD 3915.) The words that follow *kathōs* would then be the Presbyter’s own statement, ‘You are walking in truth,’ a reinforcement of the very words of the brothers, ‘He is walking in truth.’ BDF 396 points out that a particular aspect of *hōs*, a variant of *kathōs*, is that it tells us not only ‘that’ but ‘how.’ Such an emphasis here would mean that the brothers told the Presbyter not only that Gaius was walking in truth but how he was doing this.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 706.]

⁹⁶“While the Presbyter would not speak of Gaius’ truth unless Gaius had a correct christology, we shall see that there is no evidence that Diotrephes had a false christology. Consequently, if there is any element of anticipated contrast to Diotrephes in the reference in v. 3 to Gaius who walks in truth, that element involves his behavior toward the brothers — he shows them love and Diotrephes does not. I share this view with Bultmann, Marshall, Schnackenburg, and Westcott, and thus disagree with Bergmeier, Bonsirven, Brooke, and Büchsel who think the primary issue is Gaius’ doctrinal stance. Confirmation for this interpretation will be found in v. 5 where work done for the brothers illustrates ‘walking in truth’ in v. 4.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 705-06.]

⁹⁷“*Meizoteros* is a Hellenistic double comparative (‘more greater’), a form developed when the normal comparative *meizōn* had lost its force (MGNTG 1, 236), so that the language formed a comparative of the comparative. As for connotation, the least one may say is that the Presbyter is being emphatic. A close syntactic parallel to this sentence is John 15:13 when rendered literally, ‘Greater [*meizōn*] than this no one has love that [*hina*] anyone lays down his life for his beloved.’ Parallel in vocabulary and idea is 2 John 4: ‘It gave me much joy to find some of your children walking in truth.’” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 706.]

⁹⁸“When the presbyter speaks of ‘these things’ (τούτων), he is referring to the fact that he has experienced such joy on several occasions: namely, whenever he has heard good reports of his ‘children’s’ adherence to the truth. The plural alludes to what follows in the sentence, rather than to v 3 (against Westcott, 237).” [Stephen S. Smalley, vol. 51, 1, 2, 3 *John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 348.]

⁹⁹“In the present passage Codex Vaticanus, the Bohairic, and some Latin witnesses read *charis*, ‘grace,’ for *chara*, ‘joy’; and Chaine, *Epîtres* 253, opts for ‘no greater grace’ as the less banal reading. However, ‘grace’ may have been introduced by scribes who sought variety by avoiding two references to ‘joy’ in a row (vv. 3, 4) and were influenced by Paul’s use of *charis* at the beginning of letters (Rom 1:5; Philip 1:2; 1 Cor 1:3; etc.). A mention of ‘joy’ as the Body-Opening of a letter is standard format; it is found in 2 John 4 and seems the more plausible reading here.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 706.]

¹⁰⁰“The *hina* clause is exegetical of the ‘these’ in the main clause, but the pl. demonstrative antecedent is unusual — witness the sg. demonstrative antecedent in John 15:13 cited above. Some suggest that it reflects the plural reports implied in v. 3, or else that there may be an element of purpose in the *hina* (Harnack, “Über” 8; rejected by B. Weiss, Briefe 187) so that the clause is not totally

‘children’ (τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα) are walking in the Truth (ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατοῦντα). Gaius falls into the category of being one of the Elder’s children. Although the idea of spiritual children from the Pauline materials usually stresses that the apostle led them to a faith commitment, in the Johannine materials the emphasis falls more on a pastoral connection to the individuals in which the apostle John feels a very close connection to these individuals and thus speaks of them as his children. The phrase τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα is somewhat unusual and the possessive adjective ἐμὰ adds intensity to the expression: *my own children*.¹⁰¹ Here the conviction of the Elder as a matter of principle stands as a basis for his prayer to God in behalf of Gaius.

The general picture that emerges here is of a spiritual leader finding immense joy in learning that people in the Christian community of Gaius, and especially Gaius himself, are faithfully serving God through the Gospel. Not only are their beliefs in line with the Gospel teaching, more importantly their lifestyle and morality is consistent with the demands of the Gospel. At a time when false teachers and false teaching were increasing across the late first century Christian world, it was so refreshing for the Elder to get news of the faithfulness to Christ of those he felt close connections to.

Here is a powerful lesson for us today, especially for those in Christian leadership roles. Gaius and the others in his church were not being faithful to the Elder. To the contrary, they were faithful to the Gospel! Unlike Diotrephes who was trying to build a personal empire in the church with members he could control, Gaius and the others were committed to Christ and to the teachings consistent with the Gospel. Their loyalty was not to a preacher, but to Christ. This is what brought deep joy to the heart of the Elder. And should bring joy to us as well.

Those spiritual leaders whom we look up to with deep respect and esteem must never become idols to us. We may in some sense be their ‘children’ and be proud of it, but our first loyalty must always be to God through Christ. The Elder never commended Gaius for doing what he told Gaius to do. Instead, Gaius was commended for his obedience to the Truth, that is, the Gospel. We can honor best those who have played influential roles in our lives by being faithful to God.

7.1.3.3 Letter body (vv. 5-12)

A couple of signals indicate a shift from the letter Proem to the letter body. First, is the vocative case Ἀγαπητέ, Beloved, which serves as a new topic discourse marker (cf. vv. 2, 5, 11). Second, is the shift from the first person singular verbs in vv. 2-4 to the second person singular verb in v. 5. The body proper of the letter will then extend down through verse twelve with the Travel Plans in vv. 13-14 transitioning into the letter Conclusio.

Inside the letter body, three distinct units emerge with a variety of discourse marker signals: vv. 5-8, 9-10, and 11-12. By the use of Ἀγαπητέ in vv. 5 and 11 along with the second singular verb form the Elder surrounds the negative section regarding Diotrephes in vv. 9-10 with a positive word directed to Gaius. The first section in vv. 5-8 builds off some references in the Proem in v. 3, while the last section in vv. 11-12 centers on fundamental teaching coming off the negative example of Diotrephes and a commendation of Demetrius who carried the letter from the Elder to Gaius and his church.

7.1.3.3.1 Gaius (vv. 5-8)

5 Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the friends, even though they are strangers to you; 6 they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on in a manner worthy of God; 7 for they began their journey for the sake of Christ, accepting no support from non-believers. 8 Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we may become co-workers with the truth.

5 Ἀγαπητέ, πιστὸν ποιεῖς ὃ ἐὰν ἐργάσῃ εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοῦτο ξένους, 6 οἱ ἐμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐνώπιον ἐκκλησίας, οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ· 7 ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐξῆλθον μηδὲν λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνικῶν. 8 ἡμεῖς οὖν ὀφείλομεν ὑπολαμβάνειν τοὺς τοιούτους, ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.

exegetical. More simply, we may be encountering the meaningless vagaries of Johannine grammar.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 706-07.]

¹⁰¹“The presbyter rejoices in the news that his ‘children’ (τέκνα) are living in the truth. Paul uses this term (τέκνα) with reference to those whom he has brought to Christ (1 Cor 4:14; Gal 4:19; Phil 2:22); and it is possible that in the present context the metaphor carries a similar implication (the presbyter was responsible for the conversion of Gaius). Equally, τέκνα may simply mean those over whom the elder exercised pastoral (‘fatherly’) supervision (cf. Brooke, 183; Dodd, 159). See 2 John 1, 4, 13; also 1 John 2:1. The intensive ἐμὰ (‘my’) indicates the closeness of the relationship between the pastor and his spiritual offspring (they are his own).” [Stephen S. Smalley, vol. 51, 1, 2, 3 *John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 348.]

The Elder elaborates on the expansion elements in v. 3 about Gaius' walking in the Truth with greater details of his actions in verses 5-8. This section is made up of two Greek sentences: vv. 5-7 and v. 8. The first sentence is -- in English grammar terms -- a compound complex sentence form, containing two independent clauses (vv. 5-6 and v. 7) connected by the causal conjunction γὰρ meaning that the second clause provides an affirming basis for the first clause. The first independent clause is composed of the main clause in v. 5a then followed by a couple of relative dependent clauses in vv. 5b-6. All together the passage is an eloquent tribute to how Gaius was walking in the Truth.

The first main clause expression complements the hospitality of Gaius: πιστὸν ποιεῖς ὃ ἐὰν ἐργάσῃ εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοῦτο ξένους, *you are acting faithfully in whatever you are doing toward the brothers, and this to strangers*. The primary point of the Elder is to affirm the actions of Gaius as being πιστὸν, *faithful*. The adjective πιστός, ἡ, ὄν, derived from the verb πείθω, is capable of a wide range of meanings: trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring etc., and can reference these qualities either to people or to God.¹⁰² Although different understand-

¹⁰²πιστός, ἡ, ὄν (πείθω; Hom.+).

1. pertaining to being worthy of belief or trust, trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring trust/faith, pass. aspect of πιστεύω (Hom.+).

a. of pers.

a. of human beings (and Christ) δοῦλος (1 Km 22:14; 2 Macc 1:2; OdeSol 11:22; Jos., Ant. 6, 256; SIG 910 A, 5 [Christian]; PLond Π, 251, 14 p. 317 [IV A.D.] δούλους πιστοὺς καὶ ἀδράστους): δοῦλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ **Mt 25:21a, 23a; cp. 24:45**; Hs 5, 2, 2 πιστότατος (v.l. πιστός). οικονόμος **Lk 12:42; 1 Cor 4:2**. μάρτυς (Pind., P. 1, 88; 12, 27; Pr 14:5, 25; Ps 88:38; Jer 49:5; Philo, Sac. Abel. 17) ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου **Rv 2:13** (μάρτυς 3); in this 'book of martyrs' Christ is ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός (καὶ ὁ ἀληθινός) **1:5; 3:14; cp. 19:11** (the combination of ἀληθινός and πιστός in the last two passages is like 3 Macc 2:11). Cp. **Rv 17:14**. πιστός ἀρχιερεὺς a faithful or reliable high priest **Hb 2:17** (of Christ); cp. **3:2** (ἀρχιερέα ... πιστὸν ὄντα τῷ ποιήσαντι αὐτόν). σύμβουλοι πιστοὶ B 21:4. πιστοὶ ἄνθρωποι reliable persons **2 Ti 2:2** (cp. Is 8:2; sing. Tob 5:3 S; 10:6 S; ApcEsd 2:2). Paul honors his co-workers w. π. as a designation: Timothy **1 Cor 4:17**. Tychicus **Eph 6:21; Col 4:7** (both πιστός διάκονος ἐν κυρίῳ). Onesimus **Col 4:9**. Eraphras **1:7** (πιστός ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ). Cp. **1 Pt 5:12** (διὰ Σιλουανοῦ τ. πιστοῦ ἀδελφοῦ).—Moses was πιστός ἐν ὄλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ **Hb 3:5** (Num 12:7). πιστὸν τινα ἠγείσθαι consider someone trustworthy (Aristoph., Plut. 27) **1 Ti 1:12** (cp. **Hb 11:11**; s. β below); s. PtK 3 p. 15, 18. γίνου πιστός (γίνομαι 7 and cp. Jos., Vi. 110, Ant. 19, 317) **Rv 2:10**.—πιστός ἐν τινι faithful, reliable, trustworthy in someth. (TestJos 9:2 π. ἐν σωφροσύνῃ) ἐν τῷ ἀδίκῳ μαμωνᾷ in matters relating to unrighteous wealth **Lk 16:11**. ἐν τῷ ἄλλοτρίῳ in connection with what belongs to someone else vs. **12**. ὁ π. ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ καὶ ἐν πολλῷ π. ἐστίν one who is trustworthy in a very small matter is also trustworthy in a large one vs. **10**; 2 Cl 8:5; cp. **Lk 19:17**. π. ἐν πᾶσιν trustworthy in every respect **1 Ti 3:11**. Also ἐπί τι in (connection w.) someth. **Mt 25:21b, 23b**.—When Paul explains in **1 Cor 7:25** that the Lord graciously granted him the privilege of being πιστός, and uses this as a basis for his claim to be heard w. respect, πιστός can hardly mean 'believing' (s. 2 below); the apostle rather feels that in a special sense he has been called and commissioned because of the confidence God has in him (πιστός is almost like a title='trusted man, commissioner', oft. in ins of distinguished pers.: ISyriaW 2022a; 2029; 2034; 2045f; 2127f; 2130; 2219; 2238–40; 2243; 2394; cp. SEG XLII, 1484, 1599.—Corresp. πίστις='position of trust': Achilles Tat. 8, 15, 1 οἱ ἄρχοντες οἱ ταύτην ἔχοντες τὴν πίστιν).

β. of God as the One in whom we can have full confidence (Pind., N. 10, 54; Dt 7:9; 32:4; Is 49:7; PsSol 14:1; 7:10; Philo, Rer. Div. Her. 93, Sac. Abel. 93, Leg. All. 3, 204) **1 Cor 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor 1:18; 1 Th 5:24; Hb 10:23; 11:11; 1 Pt 4:19; 1 J 1:9**; 1 Cl 60:1; ITr 13:3. π. ἐν ταῖς ἐπαγγελίαις 1 Cl 27:1 (cp. Ps 144:13a πιστός κύριος ἐν τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ). πιστός ἐστίν ὁ ἐπαγγελάμενος (God) is trustworthy, who has promised 2 Cl 11:6.—Also of the 'Lord' (Christ), who is spoken of in the same way as God **2 Th 3:3; 2 Ti 2:13**.

β. of things, esp. of words (Hdt. 8, 83; Pla., Tim. 49b; Aristot., Rhet. 2, 1, 1377b, 23; Polyb. 3, 9, 4; 15, 7, 1; Plut., Mor. 160e; Cass. Dio 37, 35; Jos., Ant. 19, 132; Just., D. 11, 2 διαθήκη; Ath., R. 17 p. 69, 16 τὸ πιστόν; Aberciusins. 6 γράμματα πιστά [of a divine teacher]) πιστός ὁ λόγος (Dionys. Hal. 3, 23, 17; Dio Chrys. 28 [45], 3) it is a trustworthy saying **1 Ti 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Ti 2:11; Tit 3:8; cp. 1:9** (JBover, Biblica 19, '38, 74–79). οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ **Rv 21:5; 22:6**. Opp. ψευδῆς Hm 3:5ab. Ὁν τὰ ὄσια, Δαυὶδ τὰ πιστά Ac 13:34 s. ὄσιος 3.—Of water dependable (i.e. not likely to dry up suddenly; cp. Dt 28:59 νόσοι πισταί), unfailing, plentiful B 11:5 (Is 33:16). πιστὸν ποιεῖν τι act loyally **3 J 5**.

2. pert. to being trusting, trusting, cherishing faith/trust act. aspect of πιστεύω (Aeschyl., Pers. 55, Prom. 916; Soph., Oed. Col. 1031; Pla., Leg. 7, 824; Cass. Dio 37, 12, 1; Just., A I, 53, 10 al.), also believing, full of faith, faithful (cp. POxy 1380, 152 ὁρῶσι σε [=Isis] οἱ κατὰ τὸ πιστόν ἐπικαλούμενοι [on this s. AFestugière, RB 41, '32, 257–61]; Sextus 1; 8; Wsd 3:9; Sir 1:14, 24 v.l.; Ps 100:6; SibOr 3, 69; 724) of OT worthies: Abraham (who is oft. called πιστός; cp. Philo, Post. Cai. 173 Ἄβρ. ὁ πιστός ἐπώνυμος; 2 Macc 1:2; 1 Macc 2:52; Sir 44:20) **Gal 3:9**; 1 Cl 10:1; Νῶε πιστός εὐρεθεὶς 9:4; Moses 17:5; 43:1 (both Num 12:7) and s. 1α above (Hb 3:5). Of believers in contrast to doubters Hm 11:1ab. Of belief in the resurrection of Jesus μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός **J 20:27**. Of one who confesses the Christian faith believing or a believer in the Lord, in Christ, in God π. τῷ κυρίῳ **Ac 16:15**. Also π. ἐν κυρίῳ Hm 4, 1, 4. π. ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ **Eph 1:1**. πιστοὶ ἀδελφοὶ ἐν Χρ. **Col 1:2**. δι' αὐτοῦ (=Χριστοῦ) πιστοὶ (πιστεύοντες v.l.) εἰς θεόν **1 Pt 1:21**.—The abs. πιστός also means believing (in Christ), a (Christian) believer and is used both as adj. (Just., D. 110, 4) and as subst. **Ac 16:1; 2 Cor 6:15; 1 Ti 4:10; 5:16; 6:2ab; Tit 1:6**; 1 Cl 48:5; 62:3; 63:3; Hm 9:9; Hs 8, 7, 4; 8, 9, 1; 8, 10, 1; 9, 22, 1. οἱ πιστοὶ the believers = the Christians **Ac 12:3 D; 1 Ti 4:3, 12**; IEph 21:2; IMg 5:2 (opp. οἱ ἄπιστοι); MPol 12:3; 13:2; AcPl Ha 7, 7 (cp. Just., D. 47, 2 τοῖς Χριστιανοῖς καὶ πιστοῖς). οἱ ἄγιοι καὶ πιστοὶ αὐτοῦ ISm 1:2. οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς πιστοὶ=the Israelite (s. **Ac 10:36**) believers/Christians Ac

ings of precisely what the Elder meant here are found among the commentators, the best understanding is that Gaius in showing hospitality is doing what a Christian ought to do.¹⁰³ This stands at the heart of what the Elder had meant earlier in the phrase οὐ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖς, *you are walking in the Truth*.

The faithful actions of Gaius are defined simply as ὃ ἐὰν ἐργάσῃ, *whatever you are doing*. The context makes it clear that this refers to Gaius showing hospitality to Christian brothers. The indefinite relative clause is used in order to include a wide range of actions focused on showing hospitality, such as providing meals, a place to stay, assistance for their trip, help in their ministry activities while staying with Gaius etc.

The ancient world valued hospitality and the Greek language used a variety of expressions to refer to it.¹⁰⁴ Those words built off the stem with ξένος play off of two distinct meanings, which are not always mutually exclusive in nature: foreign/alien/strange and guest. Mostly in the NT, ξένος refers to someone or something as strange.¹⁰⁵ Much more so than in modern society, others in the ancient who were different in appearance, language etc. and unknown personally were viewed with suspicion and usually assumed to be enemies. Very early on in most cultures the easiest solution to this dilemma was simply to kill such individuals when they came into your region. Greek culture, however, began taking an alternative through seeking to establish friendship with those perceived to be ξένους. Its elitist attitude about its own culture prompted this move as an expression of superiority to everyone else seen as barbarians. Such people gradually were granted certain legal status in Greek 10:45. Without the art. (Orig., C. Cels., prol. 6, 5) Dg 11:2, 5. νέοι ἐν τῇ πίστει καὶ πιστοὶ young in the faith, but nevertheless believers Hv 3, 5, 4.—πιστὸς εἶναι be a believer IRo 3:2. ἐὰν ἢ τις πιστότατος ἀνὴρ even though a man is a firm believer Hm 6, 2, 7.—LFoley, CBQ 1 '39, 163–65.—B. 1167. New Docs 2, 94, w. reff. to Christian ins. DELG s.v. πείθομαι. M-M. ENDT. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 820-21.]

^{103c}*You demonstrate fidelity by all the work that you do.* Literally, ‘you do [the] faithful/sure whatever you work [ergazein].’ In the petition section of the Body-Opening of a Greco-Roman letter (Appendix V C below), *kalōs poiein*, ‘to do well,’ often appears as a polite introductory formula; and that phrase will occur in 3 John 6b. The expression here *piston poiein*, ‘to do [the] faithful/sure,’ is a Christian equivalent which has several possible theological overtones. The interpretation that it means ‘to do something sure/worthy [of a reward]’ underlies the reading in the sixth-century Codex 80, which has substituted *misthon*, ‘reward’ (see 2 John 8b), for *piston*. In this exegesis Gaius’ actions would be looked upon as trustworthy by God. An impressive list of scholars (Bultmann, de Jonge, Schnackenburg) interprets the phrase to mean ‘to act faithfully/loyally’; and although there are few parallels for this translation, it is possible (BAG 670, 1b; BAGD 665, 1b). Gaius would then be praised for being a ‘good and faithful [pistos] servant’ (Matt 25:21).

“But such interpretation still leaves us with the question of how this loyalty or fidelity is understood. Is it fidelity to previous instructions by the Presbyter about hospitality? That is unlikely since the Presbyter seems to be contacting Gaius for the first time on the subject of hospitality. More likely Gaius is praised for acting as a true believer, conformable to a faith (*pistis*) that is showing itself in works (Bernard, Bonsirven, de la Potterie, Estius, Oecumenius, Wilder, Zorell). In that sense *piston poiein* would be very close to ‘walking in truth.’ Confirmation that Gaius is being praised as a believer is found in the partly parallel expression *ginesthai pistos*, ‘to become/be faithful,’ used in John 20:27: ‘Do not persist in your disbelief, but become a believer.’ The interpretation makes especially good sense if, as I shall argue in the COMMENT, Gaius is being encouraged to offer hospitality to a group that includes missionaries employed by the Presbyter to combat the secessionists.”

[Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 707-08.]

¹⁰⁴Cf. Louw-Nida Greek lexicon, topics 34.57-34.61 under “Show Hospitality.”

34.57 ξενίζω; ξενοδοχέω; φιλοξενία, ας f; ξενί^{ab}, ας f: to receive and show hospitality to a stranger, that is, someone who is not regarded as a member of the extended family or a close friend; **34.58 φιλόξενος, ον:** pertaining to showing hospitality to strangers; **34.59 πόδας νίπτω:** (an idiom, literally ‘to wash the feet,’ derived from the practice of washing the feet of any guest entering the home) to show sincere and gracious hospitality to someone; **34.60 ξένος^b, ον m:** a person who shows hospitality to guests; **34.61 καταλύω^c:** to experience the hospitality of someone, with principal focus upon lodging.

[Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 453-54.]

^{105c}In the NT it is used predominantly in the sense of ‘strange’ (adj. 3 Jn. 5; Hb. 13:9; also Mt. 25:35 ff.; noun Eph. 2:19; Hb. 11:13), ‘foreign’ (adj. Ac. 17:18, noun v. 21, Mt. 27:7), also ‘surprising’ (1 Pt. 4:12; Fr. of an Unknown Gospel, ed. H. I. Bell T. C. Skeat [1935], 13). It does not have the sense of ‘guest,’ though we find the less common ‘host’ (R. 16:23). The verb ξενίζω can mean in the NT both ‘to surprise,’ ‘to be strange to’ (Ac. 17:20; 1 Pt. 4:4, 12) and also ‘to entertain,’ ‘to lodge’ Ac. 10:23 etc.; Hb. 13:2). All the other derivatives found in the NT (ξενία, ξενοδοχέω, φιλοξενία, φιλόξενος) belong exclusively to the domain of hospitality.” [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 5:2.]

society and codes of conduct defining actions toward them developed.¹⁰⁶ The Roman attitude moved along parallel lines to those of the Greek culture.¹⁰⁷ During the period of the Empire attitudes softened considerably toward aliens living in the midst of natives in the various cities, especially where there was above average affluence such as the province of Asia. And early Christianity both reflects and distinguishes itself from the surrounding cultural attitudes.¹⁰⁸ There developed a high value on showing hospitality to ξένους. This was true in the surrounding Greco-Roman society and particularly true in the early church.¹⁰⁹ The racially mixed nature of the Pauline churches in the mid-first century represent a huge step forward toward overcoming the barriers toward ξένους. By the end of the first century the mixture of various Gentile cultures inside the Christian churches was substantial, especially in the cultural-melting pot cities such as Corinth, Ephesus etc. where wide diversity of races of people lived side by side. In the smaller towns and villages without this extensive racial diversity the older prejudices would still be present. Traveling where one did not know the people then presented challenges and dangers.

Against this backdrop -- and to heighten the negativism of Diotrophes' refusal to show hospitality -- Gaius is commended highly for his actions of hospitality. Some uncertainty exists over the phrase και τοῦτο ξένους. Does it define a separate group distinct from εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφούς, **to the brothers**? Or, does the elliptical phrase merely define (at least some of) the brothers as strangers? Very likely the latter meaning is the correct one,¹¹⁰ even though some ancient copyists altered the wording in favor of the first understanding.¹¹¹

^{106c}The individual provisions of the Gk. law of aliens concerning πρόξενο²⁶ and ξενοδίκαι,²⁷ μέτοικοι (πάροικοι)²⁸ and (παρ) ἐπιδημοῦντες ξένοι,²⁹ belong to legal history. In relation to the NT it is more important that there developed a code of conduct towards ξένοι. In the old lists of vices, esp. in connection with judgment in the underworld, maltreating the ξένος comes just after ungodliness and impiety vis-à-vis parents,³⁰ and in the morality of popular philosophy in the Hell. period τὸ καθήκον πρὸς ξένους has an assured place.³¹ In this period, too, it is emphasised in the much-cultivated literary genre of consolatory writings for the exiled (→ παραμυθέμηναι) that only ἄφρονες treat the ξένος badly (Plut. De Exilio, II, 607a). On the other hand, a specific type of conduct is also expected from the alien, cf. the ideal picture in Eur. Suppl., 891–899, and if he settles he incurs certain obligations; he must ξενικὰ τελεῖν (Demosth., 57, 34) and render military service. In this respect foreigners gained such importance in Athens, which raised a kind of foreign legion,³² that mercenaries were called ξένοι (Suid. ξ, 20).³³ As distinct from these actual relations Plato in his ideal state (Leg., VIII, 845 ff.) sketched the basic outlines of a new order for ξένοι which would grant certain concessions but finally amount to a milder form of the Spartan ξενηλασία³⁴ [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 5:5-6.]

^{107c}The relation to aliens developed in much the same way in Rome. *Hostis* originally means a stranger, who is *eo ipso* an enemy.³⁵ Even up to the imperial period the alien was theoretically without protection or rights,³⁶ and only by finding a host could he secure accommodation, for inns were primarily for nationals, not aliens (→ 18, 24 ff.), and only by acquiring a *patronus* could he enjoy legal protection. As aliens had no legal rights, so, with women (e.g., in Eleusis), they were often excluded from cultic fellowship³⁷ and troublesome aliens might be deported at any time, as in Sparta. Special officials were appointed, as in Greece, to exercise jurisdiction over aliens—the *praetor peregrinus* from 247 B.C.—and already the *Law of the Twelve Tables*, following Gk. models, granted the privilege of prompt treatment to a *hostis* who was accompanied to the courts by his host.³⁸ [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 5:6-7.]

^{108c}With the OT (→ 10) and Judaism (→ 11) newly emerging Christianity shares a revulsion against everything foreign in religion (e.g., Aristid., 15, 7). But in place of the imperfect and often distorted love for strangers in the contemporary NT world Jesus shows that unrestricted and unconditional love for the ξένος is a special instance of love for the neighbour (as the Holiness Code had already done in Lv. 19:18, 34, → n. 61). In many cases a ξένος will be ὁ πλησίον μου.” [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 5:15.]

^{109c}The virtue of hospitality (φιλοξενία, not ξενία, in the NT, cf. R. 12:13; Hb. 13:2) makes the one who exercises it, the host (ξένος R. 16:23), the φιλόξενος (1 Tm. 3:2; Tt. 1:8; 1 Pt. 4:9), who practises it by ξενοδοχεῖν¹⁴⁵ (1 Tm. 5:10) or ξενίζεῖν, ‘to receive as a guest’¹⁴⁶ (Ac. 10:23; 28:7; Hb. 13:2; mid. ‘to dwell as a guest,’ 1 C. 16:19 v1.; Ac. 10:6, 18, 32; 21:16),¹⁴⁷ also συβάγειν¹⁴⁸ (Mt. 25:35 ff.), ὑπολαμβάνειν (3 Jn. 8), perhaps in a ξενία, ‘guest-chamber,’ Phlm. 22 (→ n. 137).” [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 5:20.]

^{110c}The ‘strangers’ to whom the writer refers in this were not a separate group welcomed by Gaius, but the ‘brothers’ themselves (Plummer, 188; Dodd, 159). His brotherly love included (καὶ τοῦτο, ‘especially’; cf. 1 Cor 6:6; Eph 2:8; Phil 1:28) fellow-Christians who were in fact unknown to him (ξένους, ‘strangers’).” [Stephen S. Smalley, vol. 51, 1, 2, 3 *John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 349.]

¹¹¹Note the wording of mss P M εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφούς καὶ εἰς τοὺς ξένους, or mss 81 pc with εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφούς καὶ τοὺς ξένους. These manuscripts are very late and very secondary in nature. These changes represent struggles to understand the ellipsis εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφούς

The Elder's commendation of Gaius is based on a report received from the brothers who received this generous treatment from Gaius (v. 6): οἱ ἐμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐνώπιον ἐκκλησίας, οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ, *who have witnessed about you regarding your love before the church, whom you will have done well by having outfitted them for their trip in a manner worthy of God.* These statements, especially the first one, allude back to the expansion element in the Proem, ἐχάρην γὰρ λίαν ἐρχομένων ἀδελφῶν καὶ μαρτυρούντων σου τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, *for I was overjoyed by the coming of the brothers and their testifying about you regarding the Truth* (v. 3). Here more insight is provided affirming the sacrificial love of Gaius in showing hospitality to these visiting brothers. When these brothers arrived back to the church of the Elder (possibly at Ephesus) they publicly gave testimony before the church concerning Gaius' loving actions when they were visiting his church.

The second relative clause οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ poses some challenge because the core verb ποιήσεις is future tense rather than the Aorist tense (past time) as with ἐμαρτύρησάν in the first clause. Again some copyists (C vg^d) altered the wording from καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας, *you will do well by having outfitted*, to καλῶς ποιήσας προπέμψεις, *and having done well you outfitted*. The future tense here points toward this action of outfitting visitors (προπέμψας) as something always true and appropriate no matter what the time frame, past, present, or future. The idiomatic and formulaic nature of καλῶς ποιήσας points to the so-called Gnostic function of the Greek future tense.¹¹² The participle προπέμψεις adds further detail to Gaius' hospitality. He not only invited them to stay with him and provided assistance while they were in his home, but when they were ready to leave to head back home to where the Elder was, Gaius provided them with supplies of food etc. to make the trip easier for them. The verb προπέμπω specifies either to escort someone on their journey or the equip them to make the journey.¹¹³ The latter meaning is most likely here and notes the generosity of Gaius as a host of the brothers from the Elder's church. The final phrase ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ, *worthy of God*, adds the distinctive Christian flavor to the hospitality of Gaius. What he did was not to bring honor to himself, but instead to glorify God in affirmation of the difference the Gospel makes in the life of the believer.

The basis of this commendation of Gaius' generous hosting of these traveling brothers is given in verse seven: ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐξῆλθον μηδὲν λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνικῶν, *for they went out in behalf of the name having taken nothing from the Gentiles.* Now we are beginning to understand better who these brothers were. They were traveling missionaries doing service for the Gospel. In their travels around Asia they passed through *καὶ τοῦτο ζέοντες.*

¹¹²6b. *and you will do a good thing by helping them to continue their journey.* Literally, 'whom you will do well having sent them forward.' In the NOTE on 5a (and Appendix V C below) I call attention to *kalōs poiein*, 'to do well [kindly do],' as a standard way in Epistolary Format for introducing the request that embodies the whole purpose of the letter. Two instances where it accompanies a theme similar to that of III John are James 2:8 ('If indeed you fulfill the royal law found in the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well') and Ignatius, Smyrn. 10:1 ('You did well to receive as deacons of God Philo and Rheus Agathopous, who followed me in the cause [logos] of God; and they too are thankful to the Lord for you because you refreshed them in all ways'). The ancient versions recognized the grammatical awkwardness of this relative clause in III John, and some of them shifted to a new main clause as I have done. Other scribes noticed the complication of a future verb ('will do') followed by an aorist ptc. ('having sent'), since the brothers cannot have testified in the past to what Gaius would do in the future. Consequently in Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus there is a shift so that the main verb is read as aorist and the ptc. as a future. However, this neglects the subtlety of the Presbyter who is praising what Gaius has done in the past, and is doing so in order to invite Gaius to a future manifestation of love. Normally an aorist ptc. would indicate action before the main verb, but at times it indicates the coincidence of the two actions (even if that is infrequent when the main verb is future: MGNTG 3, 79–80; also Brooke, Epistles 185, who offers papyri parallels). Here the aorist gives a tone of surety (the action is as good as done) as well as providing a basis for continuity with the future." [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 710-11.]

¹¹³προπέμπω impf. προέπεμπον; fut. 3 pl. προπέμψουσιν Judth 10:15; 1 aor. προέπεμψα, pass. προεπέμψην (Hom. et al.; ins, pap, LXX; TestSol 22:16 P; JosAs 22:7; Ar. [Milne p. 76 ln. 38]; Just., D. 19, 4) 'send forth'.

1. to conduct someone who has a destination in mind, accompany, escort (Soph., Hdt.+; PFlor 206, 2; LXX; JosAs; Jos., Bell. 2, 631, Ant. 20, 50; Just.) προέπεμπον αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ πλοῖον they accompanied him to the ship **Ac 20:38.** ἕως ἕξω τῆς πόλεως escort outside the city **21:5.**

2. to assist someone in making a journey, send on one's way with food, money, by arranging for companions, means of travel, etc. (1 Macc 12:4; 1 Esdr 4:47; EpArist 172) τινά someone **1 Cor 16:11.** W. δέχεσθαι Pol 1:1. σπουδαίως **Tit 3:13.** ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ **3J 6.** W. the destination given οὗ ἔαν πορεύομαι **1 Cor 16:6.** Pass. w. ὑπό τινος **Ac 15:3.** Also w. the destination: εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν **2 Cor 1:16;** ἐκεῖ **Ro 15:24.**—M-M.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 873.]

the town where Gaius lived, and thus spent some time with him. The phrase ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος, *in behalf of the name*, underscores their Christian mission.¹¹⁴ What we see here is a brief glimpse into missionary strategy in the late first Christian century. Leaders like the apostle John had trained up assistants who carried the Gospel message to surrounding regions of where the leader was stationed at the moment. This had been Paul's strategy in the mid-first century as Acts makes clear, and it is still being followed nearly half a century later by John.

As these missionaries traveled from place to place they were dependent upon either converts or already existing Christian communities to support them in this work. The point is made emphatically that these missionaries did not charge for their services: μηδὲν λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἔθνικῶν, *taking nothing from the Gentiles*. Here the term ἔθνικῶν points to those not yet Christians, as is reflected in the NRSV translation "non-believers." This approach of Christian missionaries stood in strong contrast to the traveling philosophers known as Sophists who traveled the countryside of the northern Mediterranean extensively during this same time period. These used their individually devised 'philosophy' (φιλοσοφία) as a money-making scheme to fleece audiences from their money. Paul had earlier strongly distanced his missionary approach from such phony tactics in 1 Cor. 2:1-5. These missionary associates of John were following the same pattern nearly half a century later.

The implication of both affirmations in the long sentence of vv. 5-7 comes in verse eight: ἡμεῖς οὖν ὀφείλομεν ὑπολαμβάνειν τοὺς τοιούτους, ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, *Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we may become co-workers in the Truth*. One clear implication (οὖν) from what Gaius' was doing had the quality of a timeless spiritual principle which the Elder now states. Believers become obligated from God to help such missionaries spread the Gospel (ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ὑπολαμβάνειν τοὺς τοιούτους), and the consequence (ἵνα) is that we become co-workers with them in advancing the Gospel (ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ).

This missionary support, first stated as προπέμψας ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ in v. 6b, is now defined as ὑπολαμβάνειν τοὺς τοιούτους in v. 8. The verb ὑπολαμβάνω has a wide range of meanings coming out of its etymology of 'to take under' in the sense of receiving something or someone into one's care. This is its meaning here, although the only place in the NT with that particular meaning.¹¹⁵ The clearly defined impact of giving such support is to become partners with the missionaries in spreading the Gospel: ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ. The possible sense of this expression could be to become co-workers with the Truth, but this is unlikely because συνεργός normally takes a genitive case modifier and τῇ ἀληθείᾳ is dative case. The better understanding is that missionary supporters become co-workers with the missionaries in a joint effort to advance the Truth, i.e., the Gospel. This follows a similar pattern to Paul's expression of thankfulness to the Philippians for their prayer and financial support of his ministry in Phil. 4:10, Ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μέγਾਲως ὅτι ἦδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν, ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ ἐφρονεῖτε, ἡκαιρεῖσθε δέ, *I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it*.

What we indeed see here is an example of a Christian like Gaius giving generously of time, effort, and material support to the work of these missionary assistants from the apostle John. He opened his home to them when others in the church refused to, he helped them in their work while they stayed with him, and he helped outfit them as they were leaving to move on to other places of ministry. This is clearly a worthy example that Gaius has left for all of us to follow.

7.1.3.3.2 Diotrephes (vv. 9-10)

9 I have written something to the church; but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. 10 So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing in spreading false charges against us. And not content

¹¹⁴For his sake, lit. 'for-the-sake-of the name.' 'The name' may stand for the person of Christ (see 1 John 3:23); hence, 'for the sake of Christ,' or 'in the service (or as servants) of Christ,' 'in order to do the work of Christ.' But one may also emphasize a special aspect of the activity of the preachers, namely, to confess and proclaim the name of Christ (as Lord, compare for example, Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:9-11), which is the essence of any Christian activity. Therefore the phrase may also be rendered, 'to make known the name of Christ,' 'to proclaim the words of Jesus Christ.'" [C. Haas, Marinus de Jonge and J. L. Swellengrebel, *A Handbook on the Letters of John*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 180-81.]

¹¹⁵The ὑπολαμβάνειν of the *Textus Receptus* must be merely a scribe's error; the word is always used in the sense of receiving or getting, or getting back what is due (cf. 2 Jn. 8, μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβετε). ὑπολαμβάνειν occurs elsewhere in the N.T. only in the Lucan writings, in the various senses of answer, suppose, receive (νεφέλη ὑπέλαβεν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῶνόφθαλμῶν, Ac. 1:9). The usage of the LXX is similar. But in other Greek it is often used in the sense of receiving with hospitality, and especially of supporting. Cf. Strabo, p. 653, οἰεῦποροι τοὺς ἐνδεεῖς ὑπολαμβάνουσιν. It suggests support as well as welcome." [Alan England Brooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1912), 186-87.]

with those charges, he refuses to welcome the friends, and even prevents those who want to do so and expels them from the church.

9 Ἐγραψά τι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· ἀλλ' ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς. 10 διὰ τοῦτο, ἐὰν ἔλθω, ὑπομνήσω αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιεῖ λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς, καὶ μὴ ἀρκοῦμενος ἐπὶ τούτοις οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐπιδέχεται τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοὺς βουλομένους κωλύει καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει.

The second major section of the letter body comes in verses 9 and 10 in the form of two rather short sentences. But these are packed full of strong charges of Christian leadership failure by another in the Christian community where Gaius lived. The first sentence sets up the problem with Diotrefes, and the second issues a warning to him.

The problem. The Elder wrote a letter to the church but Diotrefes refused to accept it. The first declaration is Ἐγραψά τι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, *I wrote something to the church*. Variation in the wording of this surfaces in the manuscript copies.¹¹⁶ Primarily the variations center on the presence or absence of the indefinite pronoun τι. Thus the translation is between “*I wrote something to the church,*” or “*I wrote to the church.*” No substantive difference in meaning exists between these two alternative readings. A few of the minor variations seek to diminish the rebuff of the Elder by toning down or completely altering the wording, but the clear motives behind these variations means they could not have been original. Later copyists were bothered that anyone could be so rude to the apostle John inside the Christian community.

The one question that proves difficult to answer is “which letter”. Three options are possible: First John, Second John, or a lost letter. Although some commentators go to extreme lengths seeking to establish either First or Second John as being referenced here, neither of these letters seem to fit. Both center on doctrinal error creeping into the Christian community, and Third John does not touch on this at all. The third option is the most popular among commentators both in the ancient and the modern traditions.¹¹⁷ The unknown contents of this lost letter play a major role in prompting the writing of Third John, simply because Diotrefes evidently destroyed this lost letter. If this reasoning is correct, then much of the emphasis in Third John comes out of this previous letter that didn't get through to the church because it was delivered to Diotrefes. But now Third John is going to Gaius, whom the Elder trusts to get it before the larger church.

The problem centers in the second statement of this first sentence: ἀλλ' ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς, *but Diotrefes who loves to be first does not receive us*. Both the attitude and actions of Diotrefes are problems. This is the only time in the entire NT that this man is mentioned, so all that we really know about him comes from these two verses. His name was relatively common in the ancient world as several ancient writings suggest.¹¹⁸ But, of course, this limited information has not prevented a lot of speculation about him down

¹¹⁶{B} Ἐγραψά τι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ A 048^{vid} 1241 1739 2298 I 596 (it) cop^{bomss} arm (Jerome) // Ἐγραψάς τι B cop^{sa, bo} // Ἐγραψα ἄν κ² 33 81 436 945 1067 1243 1292 1409 1505 1735 1881 2138 2338 2344 I 422 I 1439 it^{ar} vg (syr^{ph, h}) // Ἐγραψα ἄν τι 322 323 1611* I 1178 // Ἐγραψα C Ψ 1175 1611^c 1844 1846 1852 Byz [K L P] *Lect* (eth) geo slav

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).

¹¹⁷“If one takes the aorist as a genuine past action, what was the ‘something’ he wrote? Very few scholars have contended that it was I John (which has no address to a church). Many scholars have argued that the ‘something’ was II John addressed ‘To an Elect Lady’ which is a church (Belsler, Bresky, Calmes, Dibelius, Findlay, Hauck, Holtzmann, Jülicher, Loisy, McNeile, Meinertz, Moffatt, Strathmann, B. Weiss, Wendt, Zahn). An implication in this theory is that, since II John concerns secessionists, Diotrefes ignored the letter because he was a secessionist or a secessionist sympathizer. But then one would have expected III John to raise the issue of secession in order to convey the message that Diotrefes had ignored. (Moreover, one wonders whether the Presbyter would have referred to his urgent assault upon the secession in II John or, a fortiori, in I John as ‘something’?) The ‘something’ written in the past has to be related to why III John is being sent to Gaius. It probably was looked upon by Diotrefes as an interference in the church of which he was leader. Accordingly, most scholars think that the reference in v. 9 is to no known Johannine work but to a lost letter which Diotrefes destroyed. Chapman and Windisch propose a testimonial letter for a missionary (see v. 12); Bonsirven thinks of a letter of advice and admonition for the church in which Diotrefes lives, somewhat similar to the letters in Rev 2–3; Streeter thinks it contained a request to address the church through missionaries. In any case, for the Presbyter to have been so upset by Diotrefes’ ignoring the letter means that such a refusal constituted a major rupture of the Presbyter’s previous relationship to the church.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 716.]

¹¹⁸“The name (‘God-nurtured’) is not overly common, but not so rare as to justify Findlay’s suggestion that he belonged to the aristocracy. BAG 198 (BAGD 199) points to occurrences in Thucydides and Diodorus of Sicily, and Greek inscriptions.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London:

through the centuries of interpretive history.¹¹⁹

Both his attitude and action of rejecting the Elder's letter do not point primarily to issues of doctrinal difference. Instead, they suggest the issue was Diotrephes' dominating control of the church where he lived, and thus a power issue.¹²⁰ But this needs to be tempered with the implications of a common community for all three letters as well as a common author for all three letters. If these three letters emerge over a two to three year period of time in the mid 90s, then common implications cannot be ignored. Quests for power and control will almost always have some connection to Christian belief either proper or heretical. Clearly from the first two letters a lot of doctrinal controversy was swirling around both the Elders' situation and especially in the community to which these three letters were addressed. Local leaders were taking their house church groups into streams of thinking clearly contradicted by the apostolic Gospel (cf. 2 Jhn. 7-11; 1 Jhn. 2:18-24). This inevitably created tension over whose influence should prevail in the community. One must not conclude that Diotrephes had sided with the false teachers mentioned in the first two letters. What he had done, however, was adopt their rejection of the leadership role of the apostle John in teaching the correct Gospel to the community. Whether he agreed with their teaching or not cannot be determined.

His attitude was ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν, wanting to be chief over them.¹²¹ This very rare Greek verb [Yale University Press, 2008], 716.]

¹¹⁹“An early churchman who asserted authority over all in his local church, rejected the authority of the elder who wrote 3 John, attacked the elder in public, forbade anyone to receive the elder's emissaries, and excluded all who did (3 John 9–10). The name Diotrephes, which means ‘nourished by Zeus,’ occurs in the NT only in this one passage.

“Some consider Diotrephes as a representative of the same docetic interpretation of Jesus as 1 and 2 John reflect (Bauer 1971: 93). The author of 3 John, however, never charged Diotrephes with heresy. The conflict was over authority in the church instead of theology.

“According to one view, Diotrephes was a monarchical bishop (Zahn 1909, 3: 374–81). On the other hand, he could have been an elder or a deacon who abused his authority. Or he may have exercised authority over the entire church by the dominance of his personality without holding any office.

“The conflict between the elder and Diotrephes probably represented a transition period in church government. In that case the elder represented the older, centralized leadership of an elder over a number of churches in the region. Diotrephes represented a younger generation that sought greater local autonomy and moved in the direction which eventually led to the monarchical episcopacy (Dodd *Johannine Epistles* MNTC, 163–64).”

[Virgil R. L. Fry, “Diotrephes (Person)” In vol. 2, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 204.]

¹²⁰Quite interestingly modern interpreters coming themselves out of a hierarchical church tradition will tend to see in this issue of control a fight between control by a church hierarchy symbolized by the Elder and a local pastor insisting on local church autonomy with centralized local leadership. Of course, neither of the assumptions present here have a legitimate basis in the first century situation.

The apostles do not represent a centralized hierarchy that controlled the “Christian Church” as Acts 15 makes abundantly clear. The haphazard patterns of communication among the churches in the first Christian century would have made such control functionally impossible. As a religious movement rapidly distancing itself from Judaism but not gaining legal status inside the Roman empire the first century version of Christianity was a clustering of groups of house churches in the major cities and some in the smaller towns who voluntarily worked together mostly inside the cities and towns. The apostolic leadership, as defined by Peter in 1 Peter 5:1-4, was a leadership by example based on original personal contact with Jesus by the Twelve. It possessed no authority to dictate to local churches what they had to do or else face legal action by the Twelve for disobedience. Careful reading of the letters of Paul and Peter clearly reflect their approach to encourage and appeal to the churches in order to correct problems. Not once do they threaten to close down a disobedient church, because they neither claimed nor possessed authority to do such.

It is not until well into the second century that one can trace clearly a movement toward centralized local leadership with the rise of the local and then regional bishops. But a general centralized control does not emerge until the late fourth century when the Roman bishop with the help of the Roman government achieves clear dominance over the other regional bishops. To read all of this back into the first century is utterly baseless.

Those of us whose heritage is in the free church tradition of modern Christianity understand well what happens with a local spiritual leader becomes power crazy and seeks to turn his church into his own personal empire. Any rebuke or encouragement to straighten up coming from both the outside and from opposing members inside the church is met with severe rebuff and rejection. This seems much closer to what was happening in the church of Diotrephes and Gaius in the late first century.

¹²¹“*who likes to be first among them.* The plural ‘them’ after the singular ‘church’ is an example of pronominal agreement according to sense (MGNTG 3, 40); it cannot be used to argue that there were factions in the church or that it consisted of several house congregations. The third person pronoun makes it unlikely that Gaius (who is consistently addressed in the second person) is to be considered a member of the church. The verb form is a pres. ptp.: ‘The-liking-to-be-first Diotrephes,’ a construction which implies that what follows

φιλοπρωτεύω stresses the ambition of Diotrophes to exercise dominating control over the Christian community where he lived. That he possessed authority to control is made clear by the subsequent statements. What is not clear is just how this dominating attitude of Diotrophes was carried out. To be sure, he rejected the letter from the Elder as a rejection of the Elder himself; he refused to receive the representatives of the Elder who had brought the letter to the church there; he worked to prevent anyone else in the church from receiving them and any who did he expelled from the church.¹²² This seems to point to a church leader functioning rather much as a dictator in complete control of the church.

But what was the actual situation? Clearly from passages like Romans 16, the early church in a large city such as Rome, Corinth, or Ephesus was made up of a cluster of house church groups meeting mostly in private homes scattered over the city. In these large cities of several hundred thousand residents Christianity grew to a point where there would be large numbers of these groups meeting in different homes. The model from Jerusalem in Acts 15 suggests that leaders of these home based groups were called πρεσβύτεροι, *elders*, at least by Luke but in Paul's writings not only this term but also ἐπίσκοποι, *over-seers*, and διάκονοι, *deacons*, are used. From Acts 15, it becomes clear that James functioned as a leader of these leaders, and could speak in their behalf as he did at this meeting. Where one of the apostles was located, or one of his esteemed and trusted associates, they would function somewhat in the role of James over that community. The examples here would be Titus at Cyprus and Timothy at Ephesus. But as becomes very clear from a study of church organization inside the NT, these were ministry functions, not offices. And they remained extremely fluid and flexible depending on the individual needs of each situation. Numerous signals come out of such a study also that the patterns varied across Christianity in the first century. Local influences, Jewish and also Gentile organizational traditions impacted how individual Christian communities worked, depending on the influence of these backgrounds inside individual Christian communities. To assume a completely unified and uniform pattern across first century Christianity is not possible, given the data inside the New Testament.

Then in light of this, what role was Diotrophes attempting to play in his religious community? The Elder's words are not sufficiently precise to know whether he had assumed absolute control much in the manner of a ('does not pay attention to us') flows from his liking to be first. The verb *philoprōteuein* is found in Greek only in III John and in patristic writings dependent on III John, a fact that has led Bultmann, *Epistles* 100, to suggest that perhaps the author coined it to avoid the real title of Diotrophes (*episkopos*, 'bishop'), which the Presbyter would disparage. However, the component parts (*philos*, 'beloved,' and *prōtos*, 'first') are extremely common, and the corresponding noun *philoprōteia* and adjective *philoprōtos* are known in secular Greek. Some would press the verb to mean that Diotrophes had not yet become the recognized leader in the church but only desired or loved that position, eg., 'their would-be leader' (NEB). The actions that follow in v. 10, however, indicate an actual exercise of authority: Diotrophes can refuse to pay attention to the Presbyter; he can refuse to show hospitality (the practice of which is the duty of the presbyter-bishop of the Pauline Pastorals: 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8); and he can have individuals expelled from the house-church (whether by direct order or by persuading the church to do so). Clearly the Presbyter does not approve of Diotrophes' ambition, but the need to write III John testifies to the independence of Diotrophes, who has succeeded in frustrating the Presbyter's goals. Diotrophes' primacy is a fact, then, not just a desire." [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 716-17.]

¹²² In the NT the verb ἐκβάλλειν occurs primarily in connection with the expulsion of demons; cf. Mark 3:15, 22–23 par.; 7:26, 29–30; 9:18, 28, 38 par.; Matt 7:22; 8:31; 9:33; 12:27, and frequently. In the Fourth Gospel it often has a neutral meaning: John 2:15 (the money changers); 9:34 (the man who had been healed); 10:4 (the sheep); it is also said of the Revealer that he will 'never drive away' his own (6:37), or of the 'ruler of this world' that he 'will be driven out' (12:31: ἐκβληθήσεται ἔξω; cf. 1 John 4:18: 'perfect love casts out fear': ἔξω βάλλει). In the Johannine Letters the verb appears only at 3 John 10. It describes the act of expulsion from the community and is analogous to the disciplinary measures of the synagogue in Judaism and early Christianity: cf. Luke 6:22; Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:2; Josephus Bell. 2.143; P. Oxy. 1.104, 17. One may question whether John 9:34–35 should be counted among these, in harmony with the 'Johannine love of multiple meaning' (BAGD 237); cf. ἀποσυνάγωγος in John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2. In 'expelling' the members of the community, Diotrophes anticipates the later church process of excommunication, but it is impossible to determine from this passage whether and how his measures were hierarchically based or justified in law by a fundamental community legal structure (cf. Matt 18:15–20; 1 Cor 5:1–5; Heb 6:1–10; 1 John 5:16–17; 2 John 10–11; Ingrid Goldhahn-Müller, *Die Grenze der Gemeinde: Studien zum Problem der Zweiten Busse im Neuen Testament unter Berücksichtigung der Entwicklung im zweiten Jahrhundert bis Tertullian* (GThA 39; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989) 74–75. The problem can scarcely be solved by supposing that ἐκβάλλει is a 'conative present' and describes an action that has been attempted but not accomplished (BDF §319). This would explain why Gaius apparently is not one of those expelled, since the presbyter's communication would otherwise be superfluous (cf. Schnackenburg, *Epistles*, 298). But it is not apparent from 3 John that Gaius is subject to Diotrophes; against this interpretation is also that the preceding present-tense verbs ἐπιδέχεται and κωλύει describe a real event." [Georg Strecker and Harold W. Attridge, *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996).]

modern cult leader. Or, whether he had such a backing from the various house church leaders that his words carried substantial influence on the community and its collective decision making.

Also this raises the question of Gaius' role in that community. The picture of domination by Diotrophes leads some commentators to conclude that Gaius did not belong to the same Christian community. But this depends too much on modern patterns, and ignores the functional reality of multi-house church groups in a particular Christian community. Very likely Gaius was leader of one of the house church groups who refused to bow to Diotrophes' demands, in his quest for control over the entire community. The clear implication of the letter body, especially v. 10, is that other house church groups sided with Gaius rather than with Diotrophes. According to 1 John 2:19, some of the house church groups had already broken contact completely with the Christian community: ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξήλθαν ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν· εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν· ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν, *They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us.* Thus a splintering of the Christian community was already in process by the time of the writing of Third John.

Clearly Diotrophes' pattern of exercising influence over the community stood in violation of 1 Peter 5:3, μηδ' ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κληρῶν ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου, *Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock.* Only in a very twisted and perverted way could he have considered himself to be 'taking care of the church' in the pattern of 1 Tim. 3:5, εἰ δὲ τις τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου προστῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν, πῶς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται; *for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?* Clearly Diotrophes stood in contradiction of Paul's instruction that a local leader must be φιλόξενον φιλάγαθον σώφρονα δίκαιον ὄσιον ἐγκρατῆ, *hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled* (Titus 1:8, cf. also 1 Tim. 3:2).

The warning. The first part of verse ten contains the Elder's warning to Diotrophes: διὰ τοῦτο, ἐὰν ἔλθω, ὑπομνήσω αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιεῖ λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς, *for this reason, when I come I will publicly expose his actions, which he does with evil words by making false charges against us.* The warning comes out of Diotrophes' refusal to accept the letter sent to the church (διὰ τοῦτο). The details of the warning point to how and why Diotrophes refused to accept the letter. In order to justify his rebuff of this esteemed Christian leader, Diotrophes engaged in a slander campaign against the Elder among the house church groups in his community. The intensity of this effort is signaled by λόγοις πονηροῖς, *evil words*, and φλυαρῶν¹²³ ἡμᾶς, *making false charges against us.*

The heart of the warning from the Elder is simply ὑπομνήσω αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα, *I will expose his actions.* The verb ὑπομνήσω states that he will publicly expose everything that Diotrophes has done before the entire community in the confidence that his deeds cannot stand the scrutiny of the truth.¹²⁴ The church is expected to realize this and thus reject Diotrophes. In the background here lies the ancient social tradition of extreme shame when a friendship bond is broken. To be publicly rebuked was extremely damaging to one's reputation and influence, and usually ruined one's life in society. Where participation in society was what determined one's worth and value, such an experience would be disastrous.

The problem has been to this point the Elder's ability to get through to the entire community in order to address them. Evidently this was the intent of this lost previous letter that Diotrophes blocked. Now Third John is being written and will be delivered to Gaius instead of Diotrophes in the hope that it will be read to the entire community. The desire of the Elder is that this letter should lead to a solution to the problem with Diotrophes. But if it doesn't then a personal trip to the community by the Elder will be the next step. Although this would mean a



¹²³ φλυαρέω (φλύαρος; Hdt. et al.; PSI 434, 7; 9 [III B.C.]; Sb 2266, 12; Tat. 33, 1; Iren., Orig., Hippol., Theoph.) **to indulge in utterance that makes no sense, talk nonsense (about), disparage** (Isocr. 5, 79 w. βλασφημεῖν; X., Hell. 6, 3, 12; Philo, Somn. 2, 291) w. acc. of pers. (cp. the pass. Diog. L. 7, 173 τὸν Διόνυσον καὶ Ἡρακλέα φλυαρομένους ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν=Dionysus and Heracles, victims of poets' prattle) and dat. of thing λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς disparaging us w. outrageous statements or chattering maliciously about us (=bad-mouthing us) **3J 10**.—DELG s.v. φλύαρος.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1060.]

¹²⁴ ὑπομνήσω] Cf. Jn. 14:26, ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν ἐγώ. The Elder will recall to them the whole conduct of their leader and show it in its true light." [Alan England Brooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1912), 189.]

person confrontation with Diotrephes before the church, the Elder is more than ready to do this in order to bring solution to the problems in the community.

7.1.3.3.3 Demetrius (vv. 11-12)

11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil but imitate what is good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. 12 Everyone has testified favorably about Demetrius, and so has the truth itself. We also testify for him, and you know that our testimony is true.

11 Ἀγαπητέ, μὴ μιμοῦ τὸ κακὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν. ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν· ὁ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἑώρακεν τὸν θεόν. 12 Δημητρίῳ μεμαρτύρηται ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ ὑπὸ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας· καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ οἶδας ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθὴς ἐστίν.

The third section of the letter body returns to speaking to Gaius directly, as the use of the second person singular verbs in verse eleven signal, along with the vocative Ἀγαπητέ, beloved (cf. vv. 2, 5). This time the Elder lays some admonitions on Gaius, especially in light of the negative example of leadership set by Diotrephes.

Although the vocabulary is slightly different, the meaning is essentially the same in the expressions found in 1 John 3:7-10,

7 Παιδιά, μὴ δεῖς πλανάτω ὑμᾶς· ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός ἐστιν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστιν· 8 ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν, ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει. εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερώθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου. 9 Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται. 10 ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἐστιν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ διαβόλου· πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ.

7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone *who does what is right* is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 Everyone *who commits sin* is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 Those who have been born of God *do not sin*, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. 10 The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: *all who do not do what is right* are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters.

Additionally this Johannine vocabulary in v. 11 resurfaces in First Peter.¹²⁵ The admonition is to not do evil and to do good. The verb μιμοῦ underscores imitating the patterns of bad and good actions as observed in the life of others. Obviously the bad example contextually is that of Diotrephes (vv. 9-10), and the good example is that of Demetrius (v. 12). But Gaius needs little instruction here in light of the heaping praise the Elder has already given to him regarding his walking in the Truth (vv. 3, 5-6). Thus the admonition comes more as a reminder rather than as new instruction.

The theological foundation for the admonition is set up in the antithetical parallel statements in the second part of verse eleven: ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν· ὁ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἑώρακεν τὸν θεόν, *the one doing good is (born) of God; the one doing evil has never seen God*. The first positive strophe of these two lines effectively summarizes 1 John 3:9-10, Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται. 10 ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἐστιν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ

¹²⁵Compare 1 Peter 3:17. κρεῖττον γὰρ ἀγαθοποιῶντας, εἰ θέλοι τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, πάσχειν ἢ κακοποιῶντας. For it is better to suffer for *doing good*, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for *doing evil*.

1 Peter 2:15. ὅτι οὕτως ἐστίν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀγαθοποιῶντας φιμοῦν τὴν τῶν ἀφρόνων ἀνθρώπων ἀγνωσίαν, For it is God's will that by *doing right* you should silence the ignorance of the foolish.

1 Peter 2:20. ποῖον γὰρ κλέος εἰ ἁμαρτάνοντες καὶ κολαφιζόμενοι ὑπομενεῖτε; ἀλλ' εἰ ἀγαθοποιῶντες καὶ πάσχοντες ὑπομενεῖτε, τοῦτο χάρις παρὰ θεοῦ. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when *you do right* and suffer for it, you have God's approval.

1 Peter 3:6. ὡς Σάρρα ὑπήκουσεν τῷ Ἀβραάμ κύριον αὐτὸν καλοῦσα, ἧς ἐγενήθητε τέκνα ἀγαθοποιῶσαι καὶ μὴ φοβούμεναι μηδεμίαν πτόησιν. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you *do what is good* and never let fears alarm you.

1 Peter 4:19. ὥστε καὶ οἱ πάσχοντες κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ πιστῷ κτίστη παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ἐν ἀγαθοποιῶν. Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while *continuing to do good*.

1 Peter 2:12. τὴν ἀναστροφὴν ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἔχοντες καλὴν, ἵνα ἐν ᾧ καταλαλοῦσιν ὑμῶν ὡς κακοποιῶν ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύοντες δοξάσωσιν τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς. Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as *evildoers*, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.

1 Peter 2:14. εἴτε ἡγεμόσιν ὡς δι' αὐτοῦ πεμπομένοις εἰς ἐκδίκησιν κακοποιῶν ἔπαινον δὲ ἀγαθοποιῶν· or of governors, as sent by him to punish those *who do wrong* and to praise those *who do right*.

1 Peter 4:15. μὴ γὰρ τις ὑμῶν πασχέτω ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτης ἢ κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτρεπίσκοπος· But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, *a criminal*, or even as a mischief maker.

διαβόλου· πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ. Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. 10 The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters. This is foundational Christian truth: if one is genuinely a child of God he or she will live like it in doing what pleases the Heavenly Father.

But conversely, the other side is also just as true: ὁ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἑώρακεν τὸν θεόν, whoever does evil has not seen God. And v. 11b reflects 1 John 3:6b, πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν, no one who sins has either seen him or known him. The use of the Greek perfect tense verb, ἑώρακεν, in both letters stresses that there was never a saving encounter with God. Although outwardly a professing believer, inwardly the individual was never a Christian. What betrays his hypocrisy is his outward actions, that do not match an inward faith surrender to God through Christ. James hammered this principle strongly years before in 2:14 (vv. 14-26) of his writing: Τί τὸ ὄφελος, ἀδελφοί μου, ἐὰν πίστιν λέγη τις ἔχειν ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχη; μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν; What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can such faith save you? The message of the Elder is consistent with the apostolic tradition of the Gospel. Christianity is a life changing encounter with the living God through faith surrender to Christ. The genuineness of that encounter will unquestionably be reflected in the lifestyle of the believer from that encounter on.

In verse twelve the Elder turns to Demetrius, who was to carry this letter to Gaius. The key focus is on a testimony about Demetrius: μεμαρτύρηται, μαρτυροῦμεν, and ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν.¹²⁶ The point is that of individuals giving testimony to others about a third party. This can be in a formal setting such as a court, but often would simply refer to informal settings of personal conversations or gatherings of individuals in some kind of group meeting. Here the point centers on a church gathering where a positive witness about Demetrius' character and Christian commitment are affirmed.

The highly classical Greek grammar construction of the first main clause in v. 12 is impossible to translate literally into English because the English language doesn't have a 'subjectless passive voice verb' construction like the one here. Instead of the nominative case specifying the verb subject, the dative case noun fulfills that role. Although relative common in classical Greek, this is the single instance of it in the New Testament.

The sources of the positive witness about Demetrius are three fold: ὑπὸ πάντων, by everyone; ὑπὸ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας, by the Truth itself; and ἡμεῖς, we, i.e., the Elder and those with him at the writing of the letter. The first source, ὑπὸ πάντων, should be understood generally, not absolutely. That is, the majority of people who knew Demetrius were favorably impressed by him. Secondly, the Gospel affirms the solid character and commitment of Demetrius. Here the Elder personifies ἀληθεία as though it could speak as a person speaks.¹²⁷ The point with this is simply that Demetrius' life so lived out the principles of the Gospel that it was evident to everyone who knew him. And thirdly, the Elder adds his voice to the chorus of witnesses with a pointed stress on the validity of his positive testimony: καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ οἶδας ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθὴς ἐστίν, and we ourselves also are giving testimony, and you (Gaius) know that our testimony is true. The symbolism of three witnesses is significant here.

¹²⁶gets a testimonial. Literally, 'has been testified to,' a perfect passive tense, suggesting that such testimony has been given over a period of time. In vv. 3 and 6 we heard of testimony that was given to the truth and the love of Gaius; and so presumably it is to the truth and love of Demetrius that this testimony refers, namely, that he is a true Johannine Christian in belief and practice. If Demetrius is going to carry this letter, or if eventually Demetrius is going to come to Gaius' house, this letter constitutes a recommendation for Demetrius. In the NT, especially in the Pauline churches, we find a practice of letters to and fro recommending Christians to be received, supported, and listened to (Acts 18:27; Rom 16:1-2; 1 Cor 16:3; 2 Cor 3:1; Philip 2:25-30; Col 4:7-9). The struggles of Paul with the Judaizers and other opponents made it necessary for his churches to have a way of knowing whether strangers who came preaching Christ were on Paul's side or not. But we have no way of ascertaining whether the practice of letters of commendation was in vogue early in all Christian communities. Would the Johannine Community with its distinctiveness and its stress on love within the brotherhood have required a letter commending Johannine Christians as they moved from one Johannine church to another? The secession described in 1 John 2:19 may well have been the Johannine occasion for introducing letters of recommendation since it would no longer have been easy to detect immediately on which side of the dispute a Christian of the Johannine heritage stood. Indeed this problem may have led Diotrephes to close his church to all visiting missionaries (see COMMENT). For his part the Presbyter may have been meeting the problem by sending just such a recommendation as we find in 3 John 12." [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 722-23.]

¹²⁷This is signaled especially by the use of the agency construction for personal agents in ancient Greek: ὑπὸ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας, the preposition ὑπὸ and the ablative of direct personal agency case function. Had the Elder perceived ἀληθεία as an impersonal "it" the instrumental of means case spelling would have been required.

The individual named Δημήτριος is unknown in the New Testament apart from this one reference. Another man by the same name shows up in Ephesus as the silversmith who led the attack on the apostle Paul for threatening his business in connection to the temple of Artemis. Despite some highly imaginative church traditions that assume a later Christian conversion for this Ephesian Δημήτριος so that he is the same person named in Third John, no evidence exists to substantiate such an understanding. Equally unlikely is the speculation that this Δημήτριος is actually the Δημᾶς, *Demas* (cf. Phil. 24; Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:10), on the very unlikely basis of Δημᾶς being a shortened spelling of Δημήτριος.¹²⁸

What the context of Third John suggests is that Demetrius is coming to where Gaius is and will need a place to stay. Very likely this is in order to deliver this letter from the Elder to Gaius and to arrange for it to be read to the various house church groups in the Christian community. The ‘triple’ strong testimony in verse twelve may very well reflect the OT requirement of two or three witnesses in order to verify something. And this is in anticipation that Demetrius will very likely encounter opposition there where Gaius is because of the stance of Diotrophes toward those connected with the Elder. Still many questions about details remain unanswered.¹²⁹

7.1.3.4 Conclusio (vv. 13-15)

The ending of ancient letters shows a great deal of flexibility. But a few elements are almost always included in the more formal ending of a letter; greetings and a prayer. Three sub-forms surface in this short *Conclusio*: travel plans, a closing prayer, and greetings.

7.1.3.4.1 Travel Plans (vv. 13-14)

13 I have much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink; 14 instead I hope to see you soon, and we will talk together face to face.

13 Πολλὰ εἶχον γράψαι σοι ἀλλ’ οὐ θέλω διὰ μέλανος καὶ καλάμου σοι γράφειν· 14 ἐλπίζω δὲ εὐθέως σε ἰδεῖν, καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσομεν.

The similarity of this expression to the one in Second John is remarkable, and thus merits our consideration:

12 Πολλὰ ἔχων ὑμῖν γράφειν οὐκ ἐβουλήθην διὰ χάρτου καὶ μέλανος, ἀλλ’ ἐλπίζω γενέσθαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσαι, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾖ πεπληρωμένη.

12 Although I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and talk

¹²⁸ “*Demetrius*. The fourth-century Apostolic Constitutions (7.46.9; Funk 1, 454) reports that the Apostle John ultimately made him bishop of Philadelphia in Asia Minor (NOTE on Gaius in 1a above); but this information is of dubious historical value, exemplifying as it does a tendency to invent successful careers for NT worthies. Although this common name is frequent in Greek inscriptions, there has been the usual attempt to identify Demetrius with Christians of the same name in the NT. (a) Since tradition associates the Johannine writings with Ephesus, it has been suggested imaginatively that here we have in later life and as a Christian convert the Demetrius of Acts 19:24 who made silver shrines of Artemis/Diana of Ephesus. (b) Chapman, “Historical Setting” 364ff., proposes identification with Demas (perhaps a shortened form of Demetrius), a fellow-worker of Paul who is known to the church at Colossae, near Ephesus (Philem 24; Col 4:14), and who is later mentioned as being at Thessalonica after he had deserted Paul (2 Tim 4:10). Obviously both identifications are pure conjecture.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 721-22.]

¹²⁹ “This leaves many questions. From where will Demetrius come to Gaius? Is Demetrius with the Presbyter and thus a missionary ‘brother’ similar to those to whom Diotrophes is now refusing hospitality? (Indeed, one may wonder whether Demetrius was not the subject of the earlier letter [of recommendation] described in v. 9 as written by the Presbyter but ignored by Diotrophes.) Or is he a member of Diotrophes’ church who has been expelled (for showing hospitality to ‘the brothers’?) and who is now seeking another house-church that he may join? The suggestion that he was formerly from Gaius’ own church (Camerlynck, Harnack, Vrede) and that he has had an unfortunate past does not fit the tone of the testimonial in 12 which implies that he is not well known to Gaius. The possibility that Demetrius comes from a church or area in which none of the principals of III John lived is lessened by the fact that the Presbyter knows him well enough to recommend him strongly.

“Why is Demetrius singled out for special testimonial? Both the (a) and (b) attempts above to identify him as another NT Demetrius posit in his personal life faults that would create a demand among Christians for reassurance as to his character and purpose. More often the explanation is sought in the difficult task he is about to undertake: Is he to be head of the missionary expedition about to set out? Is he to reestablish the Presbyter’s influence in the church against Diotrophes? Is he to replace Diotrophes as “first” in the local church? (That seems unlikely in light of the Presbyter’s negative attitude in 9b toward seeking primacy.) Is he going to carry the letter to Gaius? Again we are lost in conjecture.”

[Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 722.]

with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

The wording varies only slightly between the two expressions of travel plans at the end of both these letters. This led to a few efforts by later copyists to completely harmonize the two sets of expressions.¹³⁰ But the variations are stylistic changes more than anything else. The general thrust of both sets of travel plans are the same: the Elder had a lot more he wanted to say but preferred to say it orally rather than in a letter. His expectation was to be able to make a trip there and thus be able to speak personally.

In Third John the shift from the first person plural in verse 12 to the first person singular signals a topic shift that he is moving into the end of the letter. The most natural implication from Πολλὰ εἶχον γράψαι is that the Elder did the actual writing of the letter himself, rather than by a writing secretary. The shortness of the letter would point that direction. But this conclusion is not completely solid, because such language could have just as easily implied the letter sender doing ‘the writing’ through the hand of the writing secretary.

The contrastive Πολλὰ εἶχον γράψαι σοι with ἀλλ’ οὐ θέλω διὰ μέλανος καὶ καλάμου σοι γράφειν positions the two verbs εἶχον γράψαι and οὐ θέλω... σοι γράφειν as covering the past and the present. The Elder over the time since the previous letter has had a number of topics needing to be put into a letter, but now at present he does not desire to be writing all of this down in a letter. Thus his preference is simply to make a trip there to speak directly to Gaius. His expectation is to be able to make this trip rather soon (εὐθέως), rather than sometime in the distant future. A similar desire was expressed in Second John (v. 12) -- ἀλλ’ ἐλπίζω γενέσθαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς, [but I hope to come to you](#) -- but it did not raise expectation of this trip being made shortly. The πρὸς ὑμᾶς, to you, in Second John goes back to the Adscriptio letter recipients, ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς, [to the chosen lady and her children](#). That is, the Christian community where Gaius lives.

What is not spelled out is whether the Elder made the trip alluded to in Second John and now plans on another trip after Third John. Or, whether both sets of expectations of a trip would end up being realized after Third John. And that is, if the expectation actually came about. Both sets of travel plans express the expectation of making a trip, it is clearly not certain, especially as the ἐὰν ἔλθω, [when I may come](#), in 3 John 10 expresses. We don’t see the level of expectancy that Paul expressed to Philemon in Philm. 22 when he asked Philemon to get a guest room ready for him at Philemon’s home: ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἐτοίμαζέ μοι ξενίαν· ἐλπίζω γὰρ ὅτι διὰ τῶν προσευχῶν ὑμῶν χαρισθήσομαι ὑμῖν, [One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you](#). The unfolding of subsequent events in Paul’s life from the time of the writing of this letter strongly suggest that Paul was never able to make that trip to Colossae to visit Philemon. And thus we don’t know about the Elder either.

In the interesting play on metaphors in the travel plans of both Second and Third John, a strong contrast is made between μέλανος καὶ καλάμου, [ink and pen](#),¹³¹ for γράφειν, [writing](#), and στόμα πρὸς στόμα, [mouth to mouth](#), for ἀλάησομεν, [speaking](#). These were the two primary means of communication in the ancient world, but that world greatly preferred oral communication directly. The μέλανος καὶ καλάμου was available only if στόμα πρὸς στόμα was not circumstantially possible. English Bible translators with these expressions in Third John take the Greek metaphors and use an equivalent English metaphor rather than translate the Greek text literally. Thus μέλανος καὶ καλάμου becomes “[pen and ink](#)” rather than “[ink and pen](#).” Also especially, στόμα πρὸς στόμα becomes “[face to face](#)” rather than “[mouth to mouth](#).”¹³²

¹³⁰“The MS. tradition betrays scribal attempts to harmonize the two formulas. The differences reflect a letter writer who has a general pattern but who shifts details unconsciously and without significance within that pattern.” [Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 724.]

¹³¹Note that in Second John 12 it is χάρτου καὶ μέλανος, [paper and ink](#), rather than μέλανος καὶ καλάμου, [ink and pen](#), in Third John 13. For a more detailed discussion of these tools for writing see topic 3.1.1 in my “History of the Bible,” session 12 at cranfordville.com under **Bible Study Series**.

¹³²This highlights a dilemma faced by every Bible translation with figurative language in translation. The translator has three options in these instances. He (or she) can translate the source language figurative expression literally. Thus the 3 John 14 στόμα πρὸς στόμα would be translated “[mouth to mouth](#).” The problem with this approach is that nine times out of ten or more, the resulting figurative expression in the receptor language ends up meaning something very different than the source language figurative expression. One extremely common mistake made here by Bible translators is with the Greek word καρδιά, [heart](#). In the ancient world the καρδιά in its non-literal meaning was the place of deciding and choosing things, but in modern English the heart as a figurative expression is where people feel emotions. For the ancient world the place to feel things were the guts, the σπλάγχνα.

Option two for the Bible translator is to translate ‘metaphor to metaphor.’ That is find a metaphor in the receptor language with the

This preference for direct oral communication between individuals has dominated western culture until the recent launching of email and social networking. Now people often refer to send an email or post a note on Facebook rather than sit down directly to discuss issues and problems. Increasingly research from both psychological and sociological perspectives is suggesting that the inability of a growing percentage of young people to establish meaningful relationships is in large part due to the destructive nature of relying on these indirect means of communicating with other people. Modern society is ‘back handedly’ proving the wisdom of the ancient preference of direct personal oral communication as key to establishing meaningful relationships.

7.1.3.4.2 Benedictio (v. 15a)

Peace to you.

Ειρήνη σοι.

Quite interestingly Second John places the prayer for peace as a part of the *Salutatio* at the beginning of this letter (v. 3): ἔσται μεθ’ ἡμῶν χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ παρὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ, *Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and fromh Jesus Christ, the Father’s Son, in truth and love.* This position at the beginning of a letter is more typical than at the end, but First Peter, Galatians, and Ephesians all contain a ‘peace prayer’ in their *Conclusio* section.¹³³

The idea of εἰρήνη is deeper than the English word ‘peace.’ In the English speaking world, peace usually means the absence of conflict. You have peace when you stop fighting. The biblical idea of εἰρήνη was largely taken from the Hebrew word דִּילְשׁוּ, *šā-lōm*. The central meaning of the Hebrew word is completeness, wholeness, safety etc. Through the Septuagint translation of דִּילְשׁוּ with εἰρήνη the definitional idea of peace in the Bible grows out of the Hebrew concept.¹³⁴ This is why overwhelmingly the use of εἰρήνη in the New Testament is connected to God and Christ. We never achieve wholeness of life outside of Christ and only through the saving power of God. Thus when we enter into peace with God the experience is far more than to cease fighting with God. Instead, to enter into peace with God means to step into a life that is whole and complete.

Thus when the Elder prays for peace to be on Gaius (σοι) in v. 15, he is asking God to bless Gaius with the richness of a complete, whole, healthy spiritual life. The ending prayer comes then full circle to the beginning prayer wish for Gaius in verse 2 that God would prosper Gaius with a completely full and rich life. The letter thus begins and ends with a prayer, signifying that all of our experience grows out of divine blessing and activity. This is true both for the community of believers as well as for its individual members.

7.1.3.4.3 Greetings (vv. 15b-c)

The friends send you their greetings. Greet the friends there, each by name.

ἀσπάζονται σε οἱ φίλοι. ἀσπάζου τοὺς φίλους κατ’ ὄνομα.

As explored above in topic 7.1.1.1.2.1 on ***Friendship Concepts***, the role of establishing and maintaining

same basic meaning as the metaphor in the source language. Thus στόμα πρὸς στόμα, *mouth to mouth*, in the Greek becomes “*face to face*” in the English. Another perhaps slightly more accurate English metaphor is “*heart-to-heart*,” which conveys a tone of seriousness to the conversation. Every adult remembers well those “*heart-to-heart talks*” with parents during their teen years! Usually this approach is the best translation option.

But on occasion no metaphor exists in the receptor language with a similar meaning to the one on the source language. The translator must then move from figurative meaning to direct meaning. In the Third John 14 στόμα πρὸς στόμα the translation would be something along the lines of the adverbs ‘directly,’ ‘personally,’ etc.

Figurative language adds richness and vividness to the expression of ideas and thus where equivalent meaning figures of expression in the receptor language exist it is better to use them in the option two approach.

¹³³Note **Galatians 6:16**. *As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.* καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν, εἰρήνη ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔλεος καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ.

Ephesians 6:23. *Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Εἰρήνη τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς καὶ ἀγάπη μετὰ πίστεως ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

First Peter 5:14. *Peace to all of you who are in Christ.* Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ.

¹³⁴As a concluding wish it is in line with the expressions of peace with which Paul also ended his letters (e.g. Rom 16:20; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9; see also the benedictions at Gal 6:16; Eph 6:23; 1 Pet 5:14). The secular equivalent would be ἔρρωσο (‘farewell’; literally, ‘be strong’); but here the presbyter is taking over a Jewish blessing (cf. Num 6:26), which had been given a new content for Christians from its use by Jesus (cf. John 20:19, 21, 26; see also John 14:27). For ‘peace’ (= ‘well-being’) see further the comment on 2 John 3.” [Stephen S. Smalley, vol. 51, 1, 2, 3 *John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 363-64.]

friendships with a network of people was hugely important in the first century world. For Christians, building and maintaining this network of friendship with believers in other Christian communities was very important. It served as foundational to expressions of hospitality and to mutual cooperation in spreading the Gospel. The sending of formal greetings in a letter was an important part of maintaining those friendships. For Christianity, the cultural and racial diversity of the church especially by the end of the first Christian century presented real barriers to building these friendships. Thus most all the NT letters containing a formal *Conclusio* will include a *Greetings* section. The vocabulary of greeting is ἀσπάζομαι, I greet, send greetings, and ἀσπασμός, greeting. A few times the physical greeting of a kiss on the cheek, φίλημα (noun) and φιλέω (verb) is included in the greetings section. The close connection to *friendship* (φιλία) is obvious from the Greek stems.

This comes to the surface in the vocabulary of the Elder: ἀσπάζονται σε οἱ φίλοι. ἀσπάζου τοὺς φίλους κατ' ὄνομα. *The friends send you greetings. Greet the friends by name.* The friends with the Elder sent their greetings, and Gaius was to pass on the Elder's greetings to the friends there. The use of φίλοι rather than brothers etc. which are commonly used in the Greetings sections of the other NT letters highlights the inner circle of people who shared common Christian values among the Elder and Gaius. In the Elder's spiritual community not all members shared his values and commitment. Clearly in Gaius' community not all shared these same values. The Elder's objective in sending greetings to the 'friends' was to draw them closer together and help them fight off the corrupting influences promoted by the false teachers and, especially in this letter, that by Diotrephes.

7.2 What does third John mean in our world?

The ultimate objective in Bible study is to discover spiritual examples and principles from the scriptural text that can shape and inform the way we live the Christian life. Down through most of the interpretive history of the Bible, Third John would rank among those few very short documents in the NT that have received only minimal attention. Is this because there is little spiritual insight for one's own world in this document? Most have thought so. Hopefully this study has demonstrated how wrong that conclusion is.

What can we learn from Third John? Let me suggest the following as a starter to get you going in reflection on the personal meaning of this NT document for your life.

First, from the deep friendship shared between the Elder and Gaius we sense just how important such Christian friendship is for the cause of the Gospel. Both in the Christian community of the Elder as reflected in the first two letters deep divisions and serious polluting of the Gospel message was jeopardizing the spiritual health of that community. But these dynamics were taking place in the believing community of Gaius as well. And added to those unhealthy influences was the attempt by Diotrephes to seize complete control of that community for his own personal objectives. For the Elder, who most likely was the apostle John, his circle of friends in his community were a priceless source of encouragement that the truths of the apostolic Gospel would prevail over these corrupting influences. And he saw in Gaius along with the circle of friends there the same hope. We have no way of knowing whether those committed to the apostolic Gospel were in the majority or whether the alternative teachings were dominant in either of these communities. But in both communities were individuals solidly committed to the truth of the Gospel and they formed the hope for the future of the Christian message. Building bonds of solid and deep friendship between these two communities was vitally important. And this letter sought to accomplish that very objective.

Second, this document above all others in the NT underscores the destructive impact when a spiritual leader turns into a dictator. Diotrephes stands in Christian history as the prime NT example of how not to lead a Christian community. His approach contradicted virtually every apostolic teaching about qualities of healthy leadership over a church. By the standards for leadership set forth by Paul in Titus and First Timothy as well as those by Peter in First Peter, Diotrephes had no legitimacy as a spiritual leader. Whether with misguided intentions or more likely with evil intentions, he set out to turn the spiritual community where he was into his own personal empire with its members completely loyal to him and isolated from any apostolic influence. He was rapidly moving that community to a cult status where he and his teachings would be the sole focus of the life of the religious group. The Elder along with Gaius and his friends recognized this and vigorously opposed it.

Third, from this letter we gain further insight into the importance of supporting missionary efforts in whatever way possible. Gaius stands as a timeless example of a Christian who opened his home for traveling missionaries. He supported them during their stay with him. And, when they prepared to leave for other places he helped outfit them so their ministry elsewhere would have a foundation financially etc.

I will always remember preaching in a small ranching community in west Texas many, many years ago.

The family who hosted me overnight on Saturday and Sunday evenings operated a large ranch a few miles outside the town. When I arrived they met me at the church to take me out to their place. When we arrived at the ranch house, I was expecting to stay in a guest bedroom at the main house. But instead the husband took me to a really nice cottage not far from the main ranch house. He called it "The Prophet's House." He had built a very nice cottage with kitchen etc. just for visiting preachers and their families when they came to the church to preach or lead some kind of meeting. Over that weekend, and at another time later on, I received the most gracious Christian hospitality I have ever received. This family loved the Lord deeply and through this ministry had been able to bless countless dozens of preachers over the many, many years of opening up this home. I think of them every time I read about Gaius or about Philemon in the pages of the New Testament.

A church is never stronger than when it promotes missionary causes that are centered in the Gospel. Early Christianity grew rapidly because congregations saw themselves as outposts and launch pads for spreading the Gospel into all the towns and villages around them -- and beyond. The Christian community provided a refuge for spiritual nourishment and re-vitalization, but it did not see itself as a fortress. Rather it functioned more like an army expanding out in new conquests for Christ with changed and transformed lives by the power of the Gospel. The community, where Gaius had positive influence, functioned this way. The stance of Diotrephes sought to turn the focus inward in isolation from the outside.

Fourth, another lesson is the contrast between Gaius and Diotrephes. For Gaius there was room for diversity in the church that centered around a common commitment to the Gospel. For Diotrephes, however, the church had to be uniform under the central control of a very dominating leader. For Gaius discussion of differing ideas in healthy respect of one another was key to a vital church. But for Diotrephes only the leader's views mattered and it was the task of the members to conform to those views. For Gaius establishing friendships with outsiders such as the Elder who shared common faith commitments was vital. For Diotrephes, isolating the group from all outside influences was the only way to establish purity of belief and practice.

Much of Protestant Christianity in the western world is caught up today in the very same conflicting dynamics. It gets 'dressed up' with the phony labels of 'liberalism' and 'fundamentalism.' These conflicting dynamics thrive in times of change and uncertainty. Clearly that was the situation of Gaius' community in the mid-90s of the first century with increasing moves by the Roman emperor Domitian to promote a 'love it or leave it' Roman nationalism. All things different and perceived as contrary came under heavy suspicion and not many years afterwards a massive empire wide persecution of Christians and other religious groups would erupt with hugely destructive impact. Times of change and uncertainty in contemporary western societies are providing somewhat similar social dynamics to feed the same internal issues within Christianity as faced by Gaius and his community. The approach of Gaius and of the Elder is the key for the future of Christianity today. If it shrivels up into an internally centered fortress like the one proposed by Diotrephes, modern Christianity will die and move off the world stage as a meaningful spiritual presence.

We have a lot that we can learn from Third John!

CONCLUSION

I sincerely hope that you have learned as much about Third John through this study as I have. It's one of those books of the New Testament that I have read many times over the past half century. I even used it many years extensively as an early Greek text for my students in the second semester of biblical Greek studies. But I have learned so much more of the profound spiritual riches contained in this little letter through completing this study.

The inexhaustible riches of God's Word truly come to life in the study of these kinds of books in the Bible. And they along with the Romans, Psalms etc. books of the Bible reveal new and exciting spiritual insights every time we take the opportunity to look at them closely.

My prayer is that you now feel renewed interest and excitement in probing the depths of scripture. With the tools provided in the series of **MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE**, you can begin this adventure of discovery and experiencing of God's breath, θεόπνευστος, embedded in the pages of this text providing you with new life and interest.

