

An Annotated Bibliography for 1, 2 & 3 John¹

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Akin, Daniel. *1, 2 & 3 John*. New American Commentary 38. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002.

Bray, Gerald Lewis and Thomas C. Oden, eds. *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, 11. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Following the pattern he set in this series' volumes on Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians, Bray provides for each periscope in the Catholic Epistles the text in the Revised Standard Version, an overview of the patristic commentaries on it, quotations from the most important patristic expositions keyed to specific words and phrases, and brief notes below. Also included are a 14-page introduction to the Catholic Epistles, a list of early Christian writers and documents cited, and biographical sketches and short descriptions of select anonymous works.

Barker, Glenn W. "1, 2, 3 John." In *Expositor's Bible Commentary: with the New International Version of the Holy Bible*. Ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, et al. 12 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976-1992. vol. 12: Pages 293-380.

Bray, Gerald Lewis and Thomas C. Oden, eds. *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, 11. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Brooke, Alan England. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*. International Critical Commentary. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1912; repr. 1994.

¹ The information given under most entries was gleaned and taken from *New Testament Abstracts*.

Brown, Raymond Edward. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*. New York: Paulist, 1979.

Brown, Raymond E. *The Epistles of John*. Anchor Bible, 30. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982.

Bruce, F. F. *The Epistles of John: Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.

Burge, Gary M. *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. [also on the Gospel]

Based on his PhD dissertation directed by noted NT scholar I. H. Marshall, Burge investigates the Johannine community's view of the Holy Spirit's role and contends that its pneumatology is first and foremost Christocentric. Burge surveys the research done on Johannine pneumatology, considers the Spirit as "Paraclete," and discusses the Holy Spirit in John's gospel and other Johannine writings under the following titles: (1) Spirit and Christology, (2) Spirit and eschatology, (3) the Spirit and the sacraments, and (4) Spirit, mission, and anamnesis.

Burge, Gary M. *The Letters of John: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

In an exposition of 1, 2, and 3 John Burge shows that the Johannine church struggled with the intellectual setting in that time and also with internal leadership matters, etc. He argues that the Johannine context can easily be bridged today to our culture because it too is struggling with the same sort of things. After an introduction of thirty pages, Burge follows the following outline: prologue (1:1-4); God is light—and we should walk accordingly (1:5-3:10); God is love—and we should walk accordingly (3:11-5:12); and conclusion (5:13-21). For 2 John the outline is: personal greetings (1-3); loving the family of God (4-6); protecting the family of God (7-11); and closing (12-13). Like all of the NIV Application Commentaries, the author is concerned with the original meaning of the text, bridging contexts, and contemporary application.

Charlesworth, James H., ed. *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. New York: Crossroad, 1990; enlarged ed. of Brown & Charlesworth, 1972.

Culy, Martin M. *1, 2, 3 John: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004.

Dodd, C. H. *The Johannine Epistles*. Moffat NT Commentary 19. London, Hodder & Stoughton; New York: Harper, 1946.

Edwards, Ruth B. *The Johannine Epistles*. NT Guides. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

Edwards first reflects on reasons why one should study 1, 2, and 3 John. Next, she discusses the form, style, and content of 2 and 3 John, and the form, style, sources, and background of 1 John. Then she deals with the authorship and date of these letters, along with a consideration of Christology and John's opponents. After sketching the main themes of 1 John, Edwards next discusses God's love and human response, sin, forgiveness, judgment, and eschatology.

Haas, C., Marinus de Jonge, and J. L. Swellengrebel. *A Translator's Handbook on the Letters of John*. London: United Bible Societies, 1972.

Hengel, Martin. *The Johannine Question*. London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989.

Hengel argues that John's gospel and the Johannine letters are not the expression of a community, as many scholars believe, but rather that of a theologian, a towering figure who is the founder and head of the Johannine school. The book is divided into five chapters: (1) the Fourth Gospel in the second century A. D.; (2) John the Elder as the author of 2 and 3 John; (3) 1 John and the split in the school; (4) the author, his pupils, and the unity of the Gospel; and (5) John the Elder, his origin, and the historical setting of his school.

Houlden, J. L. *A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*. Black's NT Commentaries. Rev. 2nd ed. London: A & C Black, 1994.

Johnson, Thomas Floyd. "The Antithesis of the Elder: A Study of the Dualistic Language of the Johannine Epistles." PhD dissertation: Duke University, 1979; (UMI microfilm, 1980).

Johnson, Thomas Floyd. *1, 2, and 3 John*. New International Biblical Commentary, 17. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993.

Kenney, Garrett C. *Leadership in John: An Analysis of the Situation and Strategy of the Gospel and the Epistles of John*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000.

After a brief introduction Kenney reflects on Johannine Christianity (sources, authorship, date, milieu, location, origin, and development) and the nature of leadership (understood as “the means by which authority is made effective”). He investigates leadership in 2 John, 3 John, John’s gospel, and 1 John, in that order, referring to five subjects: (1) adherents; (2) opponents; (3) legitimation; (4) strategy; and (5) leadership. He concludes that many of the problems faced in these letters are similar to those faced by Christian churches today.

Kenney, Garrett C. *The Relation of Christology to Ethics in the First Epistle of John*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000.

Kenney discusses the authorship, historical setting, and structure of 1 John, and also provides an exegesis and commentary on each section of 1 John (1:1-4; 1:5-2:2; 2:3-11; 2:12-17; etc.). He investigates the relationship between Christology and ethics according to 1 John as gospel and command, and considers various elements of Christian spirituality: trinitarian, Christocentric, the Holy Spirit, Scripture-authority, ecclesiastical, etc.

Kruse, Colin G. *The Letters of John*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Apollos, 2000.

In his introduction Kruse notes that in a sad time in the Johannine community’s life, these letters make important contributions to the grounds for Christian assurance, the Holy Spirit’s role in the community, Christian perfection, the meaning of *koinōnia*, the atonement, and Christology. For each letter he furnishes an introduction and exposition of the text. His outline for 1 John is as follows: a preface concerning the word of life (1:1-4); claims to know God tested by attitudes to sin (1:5-2:2) and by obedience (2:3-11); affirmation and exhortation for believers (2:12-17); etc. The outline of 2 John has these headings: opening greetings (1-3); walking in the truth (4-6); denial of the truth (7-9); do not receive those who deny the truth (10-11); and final greetings (12-13). His outline for 3 John is: opening greetings (1); rejoicing that Gaius walks in the truth (2-4); Gaius commended for his hospitality (5-8); Diotrophes’ opposition to the elder (9-10); the elder’s commendation of Demetrius (11-12); and final greetings (13-14). Kruse also includes notes on love

and hate in the Johannine community and an appendix on biblical and extrabiblical references to Cain.

Law, Robert. *The Tests of Life: A Study of the First Epistle of John*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909.

Lieu, Judith, and John Kenneth Riches. *The Second and Third Epistles of John: History and Background*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986.

Based on a PhD dissertation directed by F. M. Young, this book examines 2 and 3 John to consider their subject matter, origins, reception, and how they have been used. The book has five chapters and discusses their inclusion in the canon, genre, the presbyter and his letters, background, and the gospel in John's writings.

Lieu, Judith. *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*. NT Theology. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

After an introduction to the historical and background settings of the Johannine epistles, Lieu discusses theology: the author and his community, confidence in the community's life (we know), the language of religious experience ("fellowship with him"), life's tests, Jesus in faith and tradition, God and the world, whether theology is present in these epistles. She also places the letters within the Johannine tradition and the New Testament, and considers their importance in the church.

Marshall, I. Howard. *The Epistles of John*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.

Though somewhat dated now, this commentary by a noted British evangelical is well-done and quite helpful.

Maynard, Michael. *A History of the Debate over 1 John 5, 7-8: A Tracing of the Longevity of the Comma Johanneum, with Evaluations of Arguments against Its Authenticity*. Tempe: Comma, 1995.

After defining terms and introducing the text-critical problem known as the Johannine Comma, Maynard makes available the relevant evidence from each century regarding the debate over the authenticity or inauthenticity of 1 John 5:7-8. The work contains several quotations which run the gamut from various early church Fathers to many modern scholars up to 1995. The book includes fifteen appendices. Maynard

concludes that many of the arguments against the omission of the disputed text are lacking.

Painter, John. *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature and Theology of the Johannine Community*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.

Painter examines the Johannine community's history, literature, and theology from the viewpoint of its pursuit for Jesus the Messiah. Chapter subjects include: Johannine Christianity, Christology and history in the Prologue, quest stories in John 1-4, the paradigm of rejection, the Messiah and the bread of life, the hidden Messiah in John 7-8, the Son of Man as the light of the world, the enigmatic Son of Man, the Messiah as the good shepherd, the continued quest, eschatological faith redefining Messiahship, the Messiah's farewell, the opponents in 1 John, and the quest's fulfillment.

Phillips, John. *Exploring the Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2003.

Rensberger, David K. *1 John, 2 John, 3 John*. Abingdon NT Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997.

Richards, W. Larry. *The Classification of the Greek Manuscripts of the Johannine Epistles*. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977.

Written primarily for the textual critic, this work classifies the Greek manuscripts of the Johannine letters by considering at least three manuscripts of all known manuscript groups. After some chapters on materials and methods on selecting readings, the author considers various manuscripts and applies what is known as the Claremont Profile Method. He gives attention also to the methods used in NT textual criticism and points to the use of computers in processing data for this discipline. The book also contains appendices on units of variation and their support, the use of multiple readings, and the percentage agreement of P⁷⁴ with the manuscripts selected for this study.

Schnackenburg, Rudolf. *The Johannine Epistles: Introduction and Commentary*. Trans. by Reginald & Ilse Fuller. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

This English translation of Schnackenburg's commentary is based on the seventh German edition, which was written in 1984. His lengthy

introduction to the Johannine letters and 1 John include discussions on form and genre, composition and style, the unity and structure of 1 John, the false teaching opposed, the letters' place in the history of religions, etc. The largest part of the commentary is a detailed exposition of 1 John with twelve excursuses. Then, after an introduction to 2 and 3 John, he provides an exegesis for each letter.

Segovia, Fernando F. *Love Relationships in the Johannine Tradition: agapē/agapan in I John and the Fourth Gospel*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.

This work operates on the hypothesis that the author of 1 John was engaged in the redaction of the Fourth Gospel. After highlighting the state of research on several topics, Segovia examines the meaning of the words *agapē* and *agapan* in 1 John, the sections of Jesus' farewell discourse (John 15:1-17; 13:34-35; 15:18-16:15) that are assigned (by J. Becker) to a life setting like that found in 1 John, and in the other *agapē* passages in the Gospel of John. He concludes that the redactor working in the presupposed setting of 1 John sprinkled Jesus' farewell discourse with assertions of the centrality of Christ's death to the community, and also traced back the love command to Jesus himself as he prepared his disciples for his departure.

Sloyan, Gerard Stephen. *Walking in the Truth: Perseverers and Deserters: The First, Second, and Third Letters of John*. NT in Context. Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995.

In his introduction to these letters, Sloyan points out their literary character and harshness in tone. In the exposition he aims to explain the letters when it is difficult to understand their meaning, and then make accessible that once-observed message to the present-day church.

Smalley, Stephen S. *1, 2, 3 John*. Waco, TX: Word, 1984.

Considered one of the standard works to consult on John's letters, Smalley argues that these epistles were written by one author in the last decade of the first century A.D. He maintains that they reflect the emergent history of the Johannine community which led to John's gospel. After a bibliography and introduction he treats 1 John according to the following outline: preface—the word of life (1:1-4), living in the light (1:5-2:29), living as children of God (3:1-5:13), and conclusion—

confidence (5:14-21). For Smalley 2 John deals with living in truth and love, and 3 John is a plea for help.

Smith, D. Moody. *First, Second, and Third John*. Interpretation Commentary Series. Louisville: John Knox, 1991.

Stott, John R. W. *The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*. 2nd ed. Tyndale NT Commentaries, 19. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Pound-for-pound, Stott's commentary is probably the best commentary available on the Johannine letters. His work is probably best known for its examination of the various "tests" of assurance which spiral down through the letter: (1) orthodox belief, particularly in the incarnation of Jesus, (2) a lifestyle which obeys God, and (3) love for fellow believers.

Strecker, Georg. *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John*. Hermeneia Commentary Series. Trans. by Linda M. Maloney; ed. by Harold W. Attridge. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.

Talbert, Charles H. *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*. Reading the NT. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

This book aims to understand large thought units and their relationship to Johannine thinking as a whole. The book first treats the Johannine letters: getting oriented (2-3 John; 1 John 1:1-5), walking in the light (1 John 1:6-2:28), discerning the spirits (1 John 2:29-4:6), etc. The book next deals with John's gospel: a revealing and empowering presence (John 1:1-18), creator of a new community (John 1:19-2:12), proponent of a new birth (2:13-3:21), etc. An appendix is also offered on ascending-descending redeemer figures in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Thompson, Marianne Meye. *1-3 John*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.

Vaughan, Curtis. *1, 2, 3 John*. A Study Guide. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970.

Wagner, Günter. *An Exegetical Bibliography of the New Testament: John and 1, 2, 3 John*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987.

This bibliography on John's gospel and letters is written in a chapter-and-verse number format that lists the books and articles that have been written on each passage.

Other useful bibliographies/surveys which consider resources on the Johannine letters include:

D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).—soon to be published in a 6th edition (2007).

John Glynn, *Commentary and Reference Survey* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003).