

## The Third Epistle of John

*Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth. (3 John 1:8 NASB)*

### 3 John Introduction

Someone read 3John 1:1-7

Someone read vv 8-14 (15)

#### *Canonicity*

Due to the brevity and casual nature of 2&3 John, it is not surprising that they were among the last to be accepted as canonical (define “canon”). Eusebius in his Church History (ca 290ad) lists them as “disputed, although well known and accepted by many.”

References exist in no less than half a dozen other ECFs, including the Muratonian Canon, which was known in Rome about 200ad.

The commentator Plummer remarks: “It is apparent that precisely those witnesses who are nearest to S. John in time are favorable to the Apostolic authorship, and they seem to know no other view.”

The contents of 3John reflect that it is the product of the same author as 1&2John.

#### *Authorship*

Following the traditional format of a letter written in Biblical times, the author refers to himself at the very beginning. But he does not use his name, instead he refers to himself as what?

The Elder (Greek=*ho presbuteros*), from which we get the name of what mainline denomination?

This has occasioned much speculation on the author’s identity. How exactly does he identify himself?

*The Elder.* What does this fact imply?

1. He was known to his readers
2. They would recognize his authority
3. His authority would be such that is could settle disputes among the brothers

This sounds like John the Apostle, doesn’t it? So, how did the view that there was another John the Elder arise?

There is an obscure passage in *the History of the Church*, attributed to Papias, that reads:

5. It is worth while observing here that the name John is twice enumerated by him. The first one he mentions in connection with Peter and James and Matthew and the rest of the apostles, clearly meaning the evangelist; but the other John he mentions after an interval, and places him among others outside of the number of the apostles, putting Aristion before him, and he distinctly calls him a presbyter.

6. This shows that the statement of those is true, who say that there were two persons in Asia that bore the same name, and that there were two tombs in Ephesus, each of which, even to the present day, is called John's. It is important to notice this. For it is probable that it was the second, if one is not willing to admit that it was the first that saw the Revelation, which is ascribed by name to John.

The suggestion is a very clever one, and yet it is only a guess, and does not pretend to be more. He concludes that the Apocalypse must have been written by some person named John, because it testifies to that fact itself; but the style, and other internal indications, lead him to think that it cannot have been written by the author of the fourth Gospel, whom he assumes to be John the apostle.

However, the "presbyter John" has again played an important part among some critics as the possible author of certain of the Johannine writings, though the authenticity of the Apocalypse has (until very recently) been so commonly accepted even by the most negative critics that the "presbyter John" has not figured at all as the author of it; nor indeed is he likely to in the future. – Notes by Phillip Schaff

So, if the author was the beloved Disciple – as I believe it is – the why do you think he doesn't give his name?

Similar to GJohn, 1John, and 2John.

Out of humility – remember, he is one of the Sons of Thunder reborn to the Disciple of Love.

But, see Rev 1:1. Why do you think John identifies himself by name here?

See Isa 1:1, Jer 1:1, Eze 1:3, Dan 7:1, etc.

Consciously writing a prophetic vision, like the OT prophets

So, to sum up, the author, in my view, is the Apostle John. He was probably writing from Ephesus (although there is no direct evidence of this), and was writing either in the first half of the 80's or perhaps 10-15 years later.

His theme is that a nearby church was showing Christian love by being hospitable to true teachers of the Gospel, with the notable exception of Diotrefes, whom I'll address more fully later, and much more when we get to that passage. Thus, the little letter serves as a kind of counterbalance to 2John, which – as we learned – dealt with *not* giving hospitality of any kind to teachers who denied the Incarnation. In contrast, in this letter the Elder commends a member of a local church,

Gaius, for showing kindness and a welcoming spirit to itinerant missionaries who teach that the Christ “came in the flesh.”

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### *The Form*

Like 2John, it is short enough to fit on one piece of papyrus, and contains a more or less standard greeting and conclusion. In fact, it is the shortest book in the NT, in the Greek text (by both word count and line count). Ancient Greek was written in all capital letters, with no breaks between words. So, counting lines yields an accurate reflection of the total length – each line consisting of about 36 letters.

ΕΝΑΡΧΕΗΝΟΛΟΓΟΣΚΑΙΗΛΟΓΟΣΗΝΠΡΟΣΤΟΝΘΕΟΝΛΟΓΟΣΚΑΙΘΕΟΣΗΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ

Interestingly, English bibles are split over how the verses are divided up in 3John. Some Bibles, such as the NASB and ESV, divide v14 in half, making an additional verse (15). The NIV follows the KJV, and combines them into a single verse (14).

Question: Which is correct?

Trick! Chapter and verse divisions were not added until the Reformation!

### *The Audience*

The beloved Gaius was the recipient of the letter. ‘Gaius’ was the Greek form of the Latin Caius. It was as common as John or James is today. It was probably delivered by the third person mentioned in the letter – who is that?

Demetrius

And why do I say he delivered this letter to Gaius?

### *Purpose*

As I said, this letter compliments 2John very nicely in that it fleshes out how churches should respond to travelling teachers and evangelists. In his previous letter, John proscribed hospitality to false teachers. If that was all we had to go on, we would have only one side of the story: The negative side. But praise God we have 3John, which shows us the positive side. It encourages Gaius to continue opening his home and providing meals for “strangers” who come proclaiming the true Gospel.

# ΕΝΑΡΧΗ ΗΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ Η ΛΟΓΟΣ ΗΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΘΕΟΣ ΗΝ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God

## *Outline*

- I. The Salutation (1-4)
  - a. The Author (1a)
  - b. The Recipient (1b)
  - c. The Prayer (2-4)
    - i. The Statement of the prayer (2)
    - ii. The Reason for the prayer (3-4)
- II. The Message (5-12)
  - a. The Obligation to Support Missionaries (5-8)
    - i. The commendation of Gaius' ministry (5-6a)
    - ii. The nature of Gaius' further ministry (6b)
    - iii. The explanation concerning the obligation to missionaries (7-8)
  - b. The Opposition of Diotrephes (9-10)
    - i. The letter to the church (9a)
    - ii. The refusal of Diotrephes (9b)
    - iii. The dealing with Diotrephes upon John's arrival (10a)
    - iv. The delineation of the deeds of Diotrephes (10b)
  - c. The personal lesson from the Circumstances (11)
  - d. The testimony to Demetrius (12)
- III. The Conclusion (13-14/15)
  - a. The brevity of the letter and John's upcoming visit (13-14a)
  - b. The benediction on the reader (14b)
  - c. Mutual greeting of friends (14c/15)