This first letter of John, inseparable from his Gospel, reminds us that the Christian way is nothing less than a divinization: our own.

From all time the Christian ideal has seemed too pale or too narrow for many people. Without directly criticizing the values of Christianity and its benefits to humanity, they saw it as limiting people. We think of all those, like Marx, who affirmed that a real human liberation involves a struggle against faith. We think of those who today rely on science to widen the possibilities of life. We again think of all those who, shunning western activism, seek in oriental wisdom a way to the Absolute which they have failed to see in Christian faith.

Even for Christians, the sentimental religion springing from enthusiasm for Jesus, the good Master teaching universal love, often hides an ignorance of the ambitions of faith. For in Jesus it is God himself we want to reach, we are seekers of truth and we want to merge into this truth from which we have come.

John affirms in this first letter: If you have the Son of God you have total truth, you are on the way to authentic love and you are in communion with God himself.

However, perhaps, we are deceiving ourselves when we pretend to be in Christ. This is why John specifies the criteria, the conditions enabling us to verify if we are truly walking in the light and living in Love:

– In Christ we recognize God himself; yet we must always remember to interiorize his actions, his mission, his way of being human.

– We believe we have been reborn from God: that does not mean that we are above his commandments, nor that we should neglect daily efforts to be worthy of him.

– Faith has renewed our knowledge of God. What matters most is to understand his love and, for that, there is no better teaching than that of the cross.
1 John 1:1-7

1. This is what has been from the beginning, and what we have heard and seen with our own eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, I mean the Word who is Life...

2. The Life made itself known, we have seen Eternal Life and we bear witness, and we are telling you of it. It was with the Father and made himself known to us.

3. So we tell you what we have seen and heard, that you may be in fellowship with us, and us, with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

4. And we write this that our joy may be complete.

Walk in the light

5. We heard his message from him and announce it to you: God is light and there is no darkness in him.

6. If we say we are in fellowship with him, while we walk in darkness, we lie instead of being in truth. 7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we are in fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, purifies us from all sin.

8. If we say, “We have no sin,” we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all wickedness.

10. If we say that we do not sin, we make God a liar, his word is not in us.

Fulfill the commandment of love

1. My little children, I write to you that you may not sin. But if anyone sins, we have an intercessor with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Just One. 2. He is the sacrificial victim for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

3. How can we know that we know him? If we fulfill his commands.

4. If you say, “I know him,” but do not fulfill his commands, you are a liar and the truth is not in you. 5. But if you keep his word, God’s love is made complete in you. This is how we know that we are in him:

6. He who claims to live in him must live as he lived.

7. My dear friends, I am not writing you a new commandment, but reminding you of an old one, one you had from the beginning, and what we have heard and seen with our own eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, I mean the Word who is Life...

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the beginning. This old commandment is the word you have heard.

8 But, in a way, I give it as a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light already shines.

9 If you claim to be in the light but hate your brother, you are still in darkness.

10 If you love your brothers and sisters, you remain in the light and nothing in you will make you fall. 11 But if you hate your brother you are in the dark and walk in darkness without knowing where you go, for the darkness has blinded you.

12 My dear children, I write this to you: you have already received the forgiveness of your sins through the Name of Jesus.

13 Fathers, I write this to you: you know him who is from the beginning. Young men, I write this to you: you have overcome the Evil One. My dear children, I write to you because you already know the Father.

14 Fathers, I write to you because you know him who is from the beginning. Young men, I write to you because you are strong and the Word of God lives in you who have indeed overcome the Evil One.

15 Do not love the world or what is in it. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For everything in the world— the craving of the flesh, the greed of eyes and people boasting of their superiority— all this belongs to the world, not to the Father.

17 The world passes away with all its craving but those who do the will of God remain for ever.

Reject the antichrist

18 My dear children, it is the last hour. You were told that an antichrist would come; but several antichrists have already come, by which we know that it is now the last hour.

19 They went out from us though they did not really belong to us. Had they belonged to us, they would have remained with us. So it became clear that not all of us were really ours.

20 But you have the anointing from
1 John 2

14:26
2 Cor 1:21

1:8

Today there are still many people who make a distinction: on one hand the man Jesus, lost in the mist of legend and on the other hand an idealized Christ adored by believers. John says: “The one who has come in history, he himself is eternal God.”

You received from him an anointing, and it remains in you. John not only speaks of the anointing of oil in baptism and confirmation. “Christ” signifies precisely “he who is anointed,” and this anointing was the presence in him of the Spirit of God, his Father. John adds: “You cannot receive passively just any instruction in the Church, but you must discern whether the word of God is being faithfully transmitted.”

His anointing (Spirit) teaches you all things. In writing that, John had in mind the prophets who were the animators of the churches: through their inspired words the Spirit taught the community (see Acts 14:2 and 1 Thes 5:19). Today the Spirit also maintains us in the truth through the leaders of the community and those who teach but we are not dispensed from seeking by ourselves the meaning of the Word and discerning what others tell us.

• 3.1 Here begins the second part of the letter: we are God’s children and we must live as such. How do we prove that we are God’s children? According to the same criteria that we have already seen: breaking away from sin, keeping the commandment of love, proclaiming our faith. There are many ways of saying we are God’s children. One person might simply think: “God loves people” means that human beings have great dignity. Here John calls our attention to two points:

• you are sons and daughters, but in order to become like God, do not seek anything else but to be perfect as God is perfect;
• you are children who will return to the Father. Do you really think about the unique and transcendent end for which God has chosen you? Being aware of this, let us understand that God purifies us in a thousand ways, because only in this way can we attain our goal.

We shall be like him: sharing all that God is and somehow becoming God with God (see 1 Cor 13:13). Those who now bear their lives of suffering with Christ will be transfigured like him (Mt 9; Col 3:4). Then the universe will reach its goal, having the children of God as its center (Rom 8:19) or better, the New Creature.

Those born of God do not sin (v. 9). This appears exaggerated, but being children of God is not a fantasy: we have really begun a life in truth and in love. To the person who has been reborn, it becomes impossible to commit real sin: to deliberately refuse to love, or to forgive or to continue to struggle. But we pray to the Father: “Lead us not...”
5 You know that he came to take away our sins, and that there is no sin in him. 6 Whoever remains in him has no sin, whoever sins has not seen or known him.

7 My little children, do not be led astray; those who do what is right are upright, just as Jesus Christ is upright. But those who sin belong to the devil, for the devil sins from the beginning.

This is why the Son of God was shown to us, he was to undo the works of the devil.

8 Those born of God do not sin, for the seed of God remains in them; they cannot sin because they are born of God.

9 What is the way to recognize the children of God and those of the devil? The one who does not do what is right is not of God; so, too, the one who does not love his brother or sister.

10 For this is the message taught to you from the beginning: we must love one another. 11 Do not imitate Cain who killed his brother, for he belonged to the Evil One. Why did he kill him? Because he himself did evil and his brother did good.

12 So, be not surprised, brothers if the world hates us; 13 we love our brothers and sisters, and with this we know that we have passed from death to life. The one who does not love remains in death.

14 He who hates his brother is a murderer. All murders and massacres spring from hatred and grudges. When war suddenly devastates a country, it is due to the fact that many people were resentful toward others, and others, in even greater numbers, refused to make sacrifices to settle their difficulties and tensions. The practice of love never weakens us as can happen with other forms of sacrifice done without love. Rather, it transforms us into God’s likeness and we are no longer fearful or distrustful of him.

Every time it (conscience) reproaches us. Doubtless John wishes to say that God knows and judges us better than we can ourselves. He does it with a love that is lacking in us. We should beware of the guilt feelings for faults which we have regretted and doubtless repaired: this form of anguish encloses us within ourselves instead of turning to God who knows what to do with ruined lives and make them new again.

To believe in the Name (3:23), that is to say, in the divinity of Christ.
Do not trust every inspiration

1 My beloved, do not trust every inspiration. Test the spirits to see whether they come from God, because many false prophets are now in the world.

2 How will you recognize the spirit of God? Any spirit recognizing Jesus as the Christ who has taken our flesh is of God. 3 But any spirit that does not recognize Jesus is not from God, it is the spirit of the antichrist. You have heard of his coming and even now he is in the world.

4 You, my dear children, are of God and you have already overcome these people, because the one who is in you is more powerful than he who is in the world.

5 They are of the world and the world inspires them and those of the world listen to them.

6 We are of God and those who know God listen to us, but those who are not of God ignore us. This is how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error as well.

God-Love is the source of love

7 My dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8 Those who do not love have not known God, for God is love.

9 How did the love of God appear among us? God sent his only Son into this world that we might have life through him.

10 This is love: not that we loved God but that he first loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

11 Dear friends, if such has been the love of God, we, too, must love one another.

12 No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love comes to its perfection in us.

13 How may we know that we live in God and he in us? Because God has given us his Spirit.

14 We ourselves have seen and declare that the Father sent his Son to save the world. 15 Those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in them and they in God.

16 We have known the love of God and have believed in it. God is love. The one who lives in love, lives in God and God in him.

17 When do we know that we have reached a perfect love? When in this world, we are like him in everything, and expect with confidence the Day of Judgment.

18 There is no fear in love. Perfect...
love drives away fear, for fear has to do
with punishment; those who fear do not
know perfect love.

19 So let us love one another, since he
loved us first.

20 If you say, “I love God,” while you
hate your brother or sister, you are a
liar. How can you love God whom you
do not see, if you do not love your
brother whom you see?

21 We received
from him this commandment: let those
who love God also love their brothers.

Faith comes from God

5 All those who believe that Jesus
is the Anointed, are born of God;
whoever loves the Father, loves the
Son. How may we know that we love
the children of God? If we love God and
fulfill his commands,

3 for God’s love requires us to keep
his commands. In fact, his command-
ments are not a burden

4 because all those born of God over-
come the world. And the victory which
overcomes the world is our faith. Who
has overcome the world? The one who
believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

6 Jesus Christ was acknowledged
through water, but also through blood.
Not only water but water and blood.
And the Spirit, too, witnesses to him
for the Spirit is truth.

7 There are then three testimonies:
the Spirit, the water and the blood,
and these three witnesses agree.

9 If we accept human testimony, with
greater reason must we accept that of
God, given in favor of his Son.

10 If you
believe in the Son of God, you have
God’s testimony in you.
But those who do not believe make
God a liar, since they do not believe his
words when he witnesses to his Son.

11 What has God said? That he has
granted us eternal life and this life is in
his Son. The one who has the Son has
life, the one who do not have the Son of
God do not have life.

How may we know that we love the children
of God? John already told us: the person who
loves God also loves his brothers and sisters.
Here, however, John expresses it the other way
around: those who love their brothers and sisters
are known by the fact that they love God.

Many things are called love; there may be
something of love in all of them, more or less.
The love of God for us and the love that he gives
us toward other people cannot be confused with
other loves. The love springing from an authen-
tic communion with God does not resemble
sentimental love, blind and fickle. Rather, it is
effective, both in the sense that it liberates others
and it transforms us in Christ.

Verses 6-9 point out three complementary
aspects of the Christian experience, which are
first seen in Jesus himself. John characterizes
them with three words:

– **water**: water is the symbol of cleanliness and
of new life.

– **blood**: the blood of the sacrifice, the painful
atonement for sin, the blood of martyrs.

– **Spirit**: the uncontainable power that ani-
mates Christ’s witnesses; the amazing creativity
of the people and institutions that are rooted in
faith.

These three witness to Jesus Christ and they
also characterize Christian salvation. We can
easily see that they correspond to the three
sacraments of baptism, eucharist and confirma-
tion.
Keep yourselves from idols

13 I write you, then, all these things that you may know that you have eternal life, all you who believe in the Name of the Son of God.

14 Through him we are fully confident that whatever we ask, according to his will, he will grant us. If we know that he hears us whenever we ask, we know that we already have what we asked of him.

15 If you see your brother committing sin, a sin which does not lead to death, pray for him, and God will give life to your brother. I speak, of course, of the sin which does not lead to death. There is also a sin that leads to death; I do not speak of praying about this. 17 Every kind of wrongdoing is sin, but not all sin leads to death.

16 We know that those born of God do not sin, but the one who was born of God protects them and the evil one does not touch them.

19 We know that we belong to God, while the whole world lies in evil.

20 We know that the Son of God has come and has given us power to know the truth. We are in him who is true, his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

21 My dear children, keep yourselves from idols.
Chosen lady: this is the way John greets the community of an unknown city. The Church is chosen and holy, just as the people in it are the chosen and holy ones of God.

John invites the people to have a steadfast and emphatic attitude toward those who do not accept the faith of the apostles. At the same time he reminds them of the fundamental law for Christians: love.

To remain zealously faithful to the Truth is to love Christ who entrusted this truth to us. We need the whole truth and not only what is most pleasing to people today.

1 I, the elder, to the chosen Lady and her children, whom I love sincerely – and with me all who know the truth – because of this same truth which is and will be in us forever.

2 Grace, mercy and peace be with you in the name of God the Father and of his Son, Christ Jesus, in truth and love.

3 I rejoiced greatly on meeting some of your children who live in accordance with the truth, according to the command we have received from the Father. 4 And now, I ask you, Lady – I write to you not a new commandment but that which we had from the beginning – I ask you: let us love one another.

5 This is love: to walk according to his commandments. And this is the commandment: that you walk in love as you have learned from the beginning.

7 Many deceivers have gone out into the world, people who do not acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ who came in the flesh. They are impostors and antichrists. 8 Take care of yourselves that you do not lose the fruit of your labors, but receive a perfect reward.

9 Everyone who goes beyond and does not remain within the teaching of Christ does not have God. The one who remains in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your houses or even greet him. 11 Even in greeting him you would become an accomplice in his wicked deeds.

12 I have many things to write to you, but I prefer not to use paper and ink. I hope to meet you and speak to you personally, that our joy may be full.

13 The children of your chosen sister greet you.
To the Christians who knew him, the apostle John was not “Saint John,” but a man. For a certain Diotrephes, to whom John gave the responsibility of a community that we do not know, John was a bothersome old man. In order to better dominate his church, Diotrephes was cutting off the relationship.

John, however, in his three letters, as in the Gospel, speaks of the “communion” which must exist among Christians. Any church or group must remain open to others, maintaining constant contact with them. Paul also insists on this responsibility: to welcome in their homes all Christians coming from other places in order to strengthen the bonds of the common faith.

1, the elder, to my dear friend Gaius, whom I love sincerely.
2 Dear friend, may everything go well with you and may you enjoy health of body and soul. I greatly rejoiced with the friends who arrived and testified to your faithfulness to the truth, namely how you walk in the truth. Nothing gives me greater joy than to know that my children live in the truth.
3 Beloved, you do well to care for the brothers and sisters as you do. I mean those coming from other places. They spoke of your charity before the assembled Church. It will be well to provide them with what they need to continue their journey, as if you did it for God. In reality, they have set out on the road for his name without accepting anything from the pagans. We should receive such persons, making ourselves their cooperators in the work of the truth.

9 I have written these words to the Church. But Diotrephes, who is anxious to preside over it, does not acknowledge our authority. So when I come, I will not cease reproaching his manner of acting, since he discredited us with words of evil intent. And not content with that, he does not receive the friends and even restrains those who want to receive them, and expels them from the Church.

11 Dear friend, do not imitate evil, but only the good. Whoever does good is of God. Whoever does evil does not know God. 12 Now about Demetrius: everyone praises him, even the truth itself. We, too, praise him, and you know that our testimony is true. 13 I have many things to tell you, but I do not want to do it in writing. 14 I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

15 Peace be with you. Your friends greet you. Greet the friends for me, each one by name.
The Holy Spirit may have wanted to leave us the Letter of Jude so that we could appreciate the Gospels and other writings of the apostles better. We would have to be familiar with the literature of those days to know how complicated and incredible religious books were, both the books of the Jews and of the pagans. In comparison, the Gospels and Paul seem to belong to this century.

This letter which is attributed to the apostle Jude Thaddeus was written, in fact, about the end of the first century. It denounces the false teachers like those mentioned in the letters to Timothy and Titus.

Nevertheless, the comparisons and the examples which are used come from the Jewish books of the time. The Church had not yet defined which books were inspired by God and were part of the Bible. Besides the Old Testament, Christians used the religious literature of the Jews (for example, the Book of Enoch, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Assumption of Moses). So there are many legends concerning ancient times which we find in this letter. In this literary form which seems rather antiquated to us, there is a strong call to preserve the integral faith of the apostles, which at the time was a serious concern of the Church. Therefore, a few years later, the author of 2nd Peter copied part of this letter.

1 Jude, servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those called to the faith, beloved by God the Father and kept in Christ Jesus.

2 May mercy, peace and love abound in you.

3 Most beloved, I had wanted to write to you about the salvation we all share, but now I feel I must urge you to fight for the faith God has given once for all to the saints.

4 Some individuals have slipped into your midst, godless people who were long ago marked down for condemnation. They make use of the grace of our God as a license for immorality and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

5 Although you may be aware of it, I wish to remind you that the Lord saved his people from the land of Egypt, but later delivered to death those who did not believe. He did the same with the angels who did not keep their rank but abandoned their dwelling places. God enclosed them in eternal prisons, in the pit of darkness until the great day of Judgment. Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities who prostituted themselves and were lured into unnatural unions are also a warning of the punishment of eternal fire. In spite of all this, these people now do the same: in their ravings, they debase their bodies, scorn the celestial
9 When the archangel Michael fought against the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare insult him, but simply said, “May the Lord rebuke you!”

10 Not so these people, they insult and scorn what they cannot understand; what they know by instinct like animals, they use for their corruption. 11 Woe to them! They follow the footsteps of Cain and like Balaam go astray because of money: they will finally perish like the rebellious Korah.

12 When you celebrate your love-meals, they spoil everything, coming only for the food and shamelessly seeing to their own needs. They are like clouds carried along by the wind which never bring rain, like trees without fruit at the end of autumn, twice dead when up-rooted. 13 The scum of their vices are splashed like foam on the rough waves of the sea, they are like shooting stars which the thick darkness engulfs for ever.

14 The patriarch Enoch, the seventh after Adam, said these words about them: The Lord comes with thousands of angels to judge everyone and call the wicked to account for all the evil deeds they committed; he will punish all the injurious words the impious sinners uttered against him.

15 All these are discontented who curse their lot and follow their passions. Their mouth is full of arrogant words, and they flatter people for their own interest.

16 But, most beloved, remember what the apostles of Christ Jesus, our Lord, announced to you. 18 They said to you, “At the end of time, there will be scoffers led by their desires which are those of godless people.”

19 Actually, these people are those who cause divisions, they are worldly people and do not have the Holy Spirit.

20 But, dearly beloved, build your life on the foundation of your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. 21 Remain firm in the love of God, welcoming the mercy of Jesus Christ, our Lord, which leads to eternal life.

22 Try to convince those who doubt; 23 others you will save, snatching them from condemnation. Treat the others with compassion but also with prudence, shunning even the clothes that touched their body.

24 To the one God who is able to keep you from all sin and bring you happy and without blemish before his own Glory, 25 to the one God who saves us through Jesus Christ, our Lord, to him be glory, honor, might and power, from past ages, now and forever. Amen.