



**St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church**  
Heliopolis, Egypt



**Commentary on  
The 3rd Epistle of John**



*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
the One and Only God,  
Amen.*

*An exegetical study of the Holy Bible*

**"commentaries on the New Testament"**

**The Third Epistle of St. John the Beloved**

*prepared and published by priests and servants of  
St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church  
Heliopolis, Egypt*

*Translated by George Ishack, Ottawa, Canada, 2025  
All biblical quotations are taken from the New King James version of the Holy Bible*

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*His Holiness Pope Tawadros II  
118<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria  
and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark*

## Prelude

### 1. The author:

As indicated in the title, it is authored by St. John the Beloved, Christ's disciple. This is corroborated by the epistle's style and expressions, which match St. John's gospel.

### 2. The epistle's intended audience:

It was addressed to "Gaius," one of the apostle's beloved disciples. It applies to believers anywhere in the world.

### 3. Timing of the epistle - where it was written:

It was written in Ephesus, after 90 A.D, towards the end of St. John's life, and prior to his exile in the island of Patmos.

### 4. The epistle's purpose and features:

- a- Adherence to the truth.
- b- Hospitality to strangers.
- c- Rejecting pride.
- d- The significance of Church Tradition.

### 5. The epistle's sections:

- a- Gaius: his adherence to the truth and his his hospitality to strangers  
(Verses 1 - 8)
- b- Diotrephes: his pride and resistance to the Church  
(Verses 9 - 11)
- c- Demetrius' faithfulness - tradition  
(Verses 12 - 14)



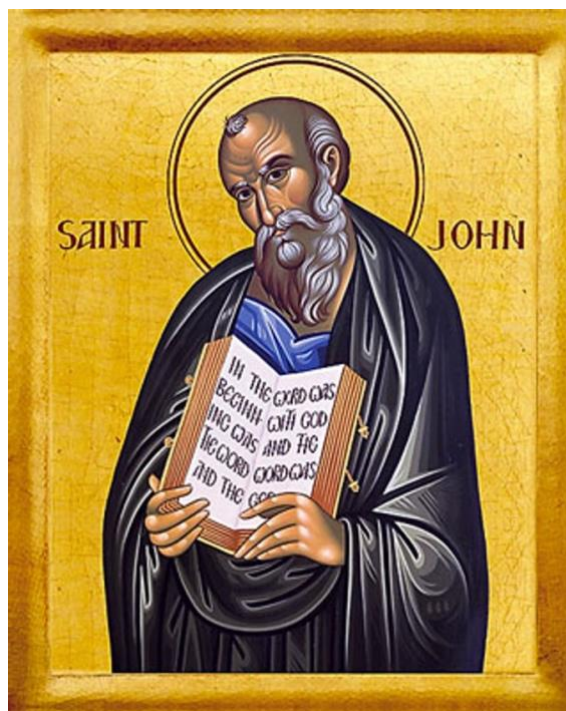
*"Interpretation of the holy Bible - the New Testament"  
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*An exegetical study of  
**The Third Epistle of St. John the Beloved***

*Hospitality to Strangers*

1. **Gaius: his adherence to the truth and his hospitality to strangers - verses 1 - 8:**

***"The Elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren [believers - church members] came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers [preachers visiting the church], who have borne witness of your love before the church [the Ephesian Church]. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake [Christ's name], taking nothing from the Gentiles [cities where Christ's name was preached]. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth."*** (3 John Verses 1 - 8)



### **Verse 1:**

St. John refers to himself as "**the Elder**," due to his advanced age, plus high clerical position. The Greek word for "**Elder**" is "Presbyteros" which refers to a person holding a position of leadership or authority in a community. This letter is sent to one of his disciples named Gaius. He declares that his love for that disciple is "**love in truth**," hence, "love in God," which is more sublime than any human type of love.

### **Verse 2:**

Gaius, likely, was suffering from some physical ailments. The apostle wished him cure, as well as success in all aspects of his life, akin to his success in his spiritual life. St. John had received news of Gaius' spiritual news from other Church members.

Our Church's motherhood is demonstrated in its prayers for our souls, as well as for our physical well-being, for the afflicted, and for the travellers. Our Church is sensitized to the needs of its children.

+ *Be sensitized to the needs and circumstances of those around you. Help them in their hardships and tell them words of encouragement. This will impart peace to them and aid their spiritual growth.*

### **Verse 3:**

Some believers had informed the apostle about Gaius' life in Christ, demonstrated in his conduct and upright lifestyle.

### **Verse 4:**

The apostle's spiritual fatherhood is evident in being over-joyed, at his children's - hence believers' - uprightness and Christian conduct.

### **Verse 5:**

The apostle praises Gaius for his love to believers, his help and empathy in their hardships, and his hospitality to strangers - preachers visiting from other Churches. Hence, Gaius was characterized by his love and welcoming heart to all.

### **Verse 6:**

Preachers returning from Gaius' hospitality met with St. John, the Ephesian church's pastor, and witnessed for Gaius' kindness, generosity, overall help and prayers.

### **Verse 7:**

The apostle continues to praise Gaius because he greatly appreciated the well-being of those preachers. Since they offered their services free of charge, they needed all life's necessities which Gaius had provided expecting no return.

### **Verse 8:**

**"...the truth.."** - This refers to hosting strangers and catering to the needs of those who spread the word of God. St. John encourages all believers - not just Gaius - to care for servants and preachers, and cater to their needs, because they serve God freely.

### **2. Diotrephes: his pride and resistance to the church - verses 9 - 11:**

***"I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God."*** (3 John Verses 9 - 11)

### **Verse 9:**

**"the church"** likely refers to the church in which Gaius was a member. The letter to which the apostle is referring is not among the epistles in the Holy Bible. That letter contained instructions, among others, concerning caring for preachers. Diotrephes, a co-servant with Gaius in that church, was too proud to obey St. John's instructions, and had his own ideas about running the church's affairs.

### **Verse 10:**

Diotrephes persisted in his wickedness, mocked the apostle, spread false allegations against him, prohibited hospitality to visiting preachers, and even expelled them. He declared his leadership over church affairs. We note St. John's firmness, who had planned to visit that church; he declared that he would deal appropriately with the rebellious Diotrephes, and rebuke him, to avoid others' offences.

+ *Despite St. John's loving nature, he was strict when necessary. Love others tenderly, or strictly, in accordance with their souls' needs for salvation; in so doing, you have to forego your own natural tendency. Seek God's guidance in administering the most appropriate approach.*

### **Verse 11:**

St. John's strictness with Diotrephes stemmed from his desire to avoid the spread of offences to church members. Consequently he asked Gaius to persevere in his good deeds and to ignore Diotrephes, since hospitality to strangers is proof of sonship to our beneficent God. Evil-doers demonstrate sonship to Satan.

### **3. Demetrius' faithfulness - tradition - verses 12 - 14:**

***"Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true. I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name."*** (3 John Verses 12 - 14)

#### **Verse 12:**

In order to encourage Gaius further, St. John praised another faithful fellow-servant in that church, namely, Demetrius. God witnessed to his faithfulness through blessings and spiritual virtues. Believers and non-believers alike also witnessed to his love and good conduct.

+ *Offer your love to all, for God's sake. Be diligent in your conduct, in order to win others, and to win God's blessings.*

#### **Verses 13 & 14:**

St. John reiterates what he had said in his second epistle, namely, he had many other teachings that, practical considerations, made it impossible to include them exhaustively in his epistles. However, he would teach other servants and believers upon his meeting them. Those teachings are labelled "Church's Tradition." Put differently, they are apostolic teachings, unrecorded in the Holy Bible; they were received, and diligently followed, by successive generations of priests and bishops.

#### **Verse 15:**

The apostle concludes his epistle by giving the essence of God's grace's work in His children, namely, the peace and joy filling believers' hearts. He transmits this to Gaius and all other believers in his church. He also sends the peace of all believers accompanying St. John to Gaius and his fellow-servants. Love links believers in all churches.

