

The Third Epistle of John

A new English Translation

by David Robert Palmer

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Abbreviations used herein:

NA – Nestle-Aland 27th Edition (same as ECM in 3 John)

ms – one manuscript

mss – manuscripts

f. after a manuscript number means the manuscript "unequivocally supports the reading indicated, but represents it defectively." (so the ECM)

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The Third Epistle of John

ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ Γ

Chapter 1

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

²Dear friend, I wish for you to prosper and be healthy in every regard, just as your soul is prospering. ³For¹ it cheered me greatly when some brothers came, bearing witness to your truth, how² you are walking in the truth. ⁴I have no greater joy than this, hearing that my children are walking in the truth.

⁵Dear friend, you do commendably whatever you labor at³ for the brothers, that is, for those travelers,^{4 5} ⁶who have testified before the church about your love. Whom you will do well to supply for their journeys in a manner worthy of God. ⁷Because, you see, for the sake of the Name they have gone forth, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.^{6 7}

⁸We therefore ought to take them who are like this under our roof,⁸ so we will become co-laborers with them in the truth. ⁹Which⁹ I have written to your church; but Diotrephes, who wishes to be leader

NOTE about the text-critical apparatus in this document: Due to feedback I have received about apparatuses "cherry-picking" which minuscules and witnesses to cite, I have made the decision to eliminate this issue by using only one objective criteria: ALL witnesses dated before the 9th century are cited, and NO witnesses dated after the 8th century are cited. The result is clean, and very clear.

¹ **v. 3a** txt γάρ "for" A B C 048 syr^{ph,h} cop^{bo}mss TR RP NA28 // omit ⲛ vg it^l cop^{sa,bo} // *hiat* ⲡ⁷⁴ 0251. The ECM editors consider the readings with and without γάρ to be of equal weight. The word γάρ here connects the idea in verse 2, that Gaius' soul is prospering, connects that with the report in verse 3 that John has received, that Gaius is walking in the truth.

² **v. 3b** See BAGD in nr. 5, that after words of saying, like the word "testify" is here, καθὼς means "how, that." (After all, it is a contraction of κατα ὡς.)

³ **v. 5b** txt ἐργάση (2d sg aor mid subj) ⲛ B C TR RP NA28 // ἐργάζη (2nd sg pres mid ind) A // <--> 048 vg it^l syr cop // *hiat* ⲡ⁷⁴ 0251. It is very likely that the continuous aspect reading ἐργάζη is an assimilation to the continuous aspect (pres) of ποιεῖς.

⁴ **v. 5c** txt εις τοὺς ξένους TR RP // τοῦτο ξένους ⲛ A B C 048 vg it^l cop^{sa}mss,bo syr^{ph,h} NA28 // *hiat* ⲡ⁷⁴ 0251. (A few Gk mss read ξεινοὶς instead of ξένους, and the Latin & Syriac witnesses are not useful as to the Greek case inflection thereof.) The reading with τοῦτο is the most difficult one. In fact, the whole verse 5 is the most difficult verse in 3 John to translate. For some translators have had difficulty with the fact that there are two verbs in the verse, ποιεῖς and ἐργάση. Indeed, some copyists conformed the subjunctive of ἐργάση to the present indicative of ποιεῖς. I get the impression that the term "the brothers" refers to one set of known traveling brothers. And not to "the brethren" generally, nor to the congregation in Gaius' church.

⁵ **v. 5d** Classically the word "stranger" meant "alien, traveler, sojourner." Both Zeus, the God of the Greeks, and Yahweh, the God of the Jews, warn us to be sure to be hospitable to "strangers." This use here of strangers probably means someone that Gaius did not previously know. Still, most Greek speakers would be aware of the classical connotation of the word.

⁶ **v. 7c** txt ἐθνικῶν ⲛ A B C 048 it^l syr^{hms} cop^{bo} arm NA28 // ἐθνῶν vg syr^{ph,h}mss cop^{sa,bo}mss TR RP // *hiat* ⲡ⁷⁴ 0251.

⁷ **v. 7d** Regarding this about Gentiles, see Matthew 10:5-10. See also Genesis 14:22,23.

⁸ **v. 8b** txt ὑπολαμβάνειν ⲛ A B C* NA28 // ἀπολαμβάνειν C² TR RP // <--> latt syr cop // *unreadable* 048 // *hiat* ⲡ⁷⁴ 0251.

⁹ **v. 9a** txt τι τῆ "which to" ⲛ^{*3} A B cop^{sa,bo} arm NA28 // τῆ "to" C TR RP // ἂν τῆ "would have to" ⲛ² 048 vg syr^{ph,h} // *hiat* ⲡ⁷⁴ 0251. The ECM editors consider the NA28 and RP readings to be of equal weight. The word τι is an indefinite pronoun, with many meanings, depending on context and construction. It is also used as a relative pronoun, which I believe it is here.

over them,¹⁰ does not welcome us.¹¹ ¹⁰For which reason when I come, I will bring up the works that he has been doing, making frivolous charges against us with oppressive words. And not satisfied with this, neither does he welcome those brothers. And the ones that try to, he prevents, even throws them out of the church.

¹¹Dear friend, do not imitate the bad, but rather the good. Someone practicing the good is of God. Someone¹² practicing the bad, has not seen God.

¹²Demetrius is borne witness to by all, and by the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know¹³ that our testimony is true.

¹³I had many things to write to you,¹⁴ but do not wish to write to you by paper and ink. ¹⁴Instead I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.¹⁵

¹⁵Peace to you. The friends *here* greet you.¹⁶ Greet the friends¹⁷ *there* each by name.¹⁸

¹⁰ v. **9b** This is the first example of the error of the idea of one leader who is over all the other leaders. This idea is contrary to the teachings of the apostles, who deliberately appointed multiple, co-equal pastors in each church. The apostles as well, were co-equal to each other. In fact, I think the primary purpose of this third epistle of John is to combat the arising error of Diotrephes, the error of the idea of one supreme leader. God has been against this idea throughout the whole Bible. Israel had multiple judges and prophets, but the people wanted a king. God warned them against that. Do a study of how leadership was structured in the New Testament. Start with these passages:

When they had ordained elders in every church, Acts 14:23.

Elders of the church in Ephesus, Acts 20:17

Ordain elders in every city, Titus 1:5

Let him call for the elders of the church, James 5:14.

I Peter 5:1,2, "The elders among you I exhort, overseers of the flock..." Here Peter equates elders, presbuteroi, with overseers, episkopoi "bishops."

Acts 20:28, (see 20:17, elders of the church of Ephesus, 20:28, Paul now calls them overseers, episkopoi, so Paul also equates presbuteroi with episkopoi.

Philippians 1:1, the church there has plural overseers.

Titus 1:5, 7 Paul says appoint elders...for an overseer is... Paul again equates an elder with an overseer.

We can say that the office of elder and the office of overseer are the same office. The overseers should naturally be somewhat elder, especially elder in the faith (I Timothy 3:6, he must not be a recent convert) and one of their main functions is to both oversee and to visit; both meanings of episkopew.

Here in 3 John, there were some traveling brothers mentioned, who possibly had some supervisory function. That would make them, taking from the lists of offices and/or gifts, one of the following: apostles, prophets, or teachers.

¹¹ v. **9b** Or, "does not approve of us." Also in v. 10 in reference to "the brothers."

¹² v. **11** txt omit **NA B C** 048 vg it^d syr^{ph,h}mss cops^{sa,bo}mss RP NA28 // +δὲ syr^hmss cop^{bo} TR // NA28<--->TR it^l // *hiat* **74** 0251.

¹³ v. **12c** txt οἶδας "you know-singular" **NA B C** 048 vg it^d syr^{ph}mss cops^{sa,bo} eth arm NA28 // L. 1: οἶδατε "you know-plural" vg^{mss} syr^{ph}mss,h TR RP // οἶδαμεν "we know" cop^{bo}mss // *hiat* **74** 0251.

¹⁴ v. **13a** txt {C} γράψαι σοι **NA B C** NA28 {} // σοι γράψαι 048^{vid} // γράφειν PsOec TR RP // γράφειν σοι arm // γράφειν ὑμιν eth^{ms} // *hiat* **74** 0251. Some might have been suspicious of how the phrase σοι γράφειν is in this verse twice in some form. If the Byzantine text is right, it would be less redundant, and read as follows: "I had many things to write, but to YOU I do not wish to write by paper and ink." In other words, "you are too special, I would rather see you face to face." Cf. 2 John 12, which has no such redundancy. Yet perhaps that comparison is the very thing that caused some scribes to unconsciously or consciously be averse to the redundancy. The fact that the reading with σοι comes in two different word sequences, also makes it somewhat suspect.

¹⁵ v. **14-15** The Westcott & Hort and the ECM GNT editions assign a verse number 15 at this point. This makes a lot of sense. But it has resulted in the situation that some translations have a verse 15 and some do not. The TR, the Robinson-Pierpont, and the NA28 editions do not have a v. 15, but continue the same text as that v. 15, but only as a longer v. 14. I do have a v. 15, because the ECM edition is the most current state of the Greek New Testament.

¹⁶ v. **15a** txt φίλοι "friends" **NA B C** 048 vg it^d syr^{ph,h} cops^{sa,bo} arm TR RP NA28 // ἀδελφοί "brothers" A eth // *hiat* **74** 0251.

¹⁷ v. **15b** txt φίλους "friends" **NA B C** 048^{vid} 0251^{vid} vg it^d syr^{ph} cops^{sa,bo} eth TR RP NA28 // ἀδελφούς "brothers" syr^h cop^{bo}mss // *hiat* **74** 0251.

¹⁸ **v. 15c** *txt omit* **Ⲭ** A B C 048 *vg it^d syr^{ph,h} cop^{sa,bo} eth arm TR RP NA28* // +ⲁⲙⲓⲛ "amen" *vg^{mss}* // *hiat* **ⲡ**⁷⁴ 0251.

Principal Witnesses to 3 John

MS	Date	AKA	Contents	Location
ⲡ ⁷⁴	VII	P. Bodmer XVII	III Jn 6,12 (partial)	Cologne/Genf, Bibl. Bodmeriana, P. Bodmer XVII
□	IV	01	III Jn all	London, the British Library, Add. 43725
A	V	02	lacks only 1st word	London, British Library, Royal 1 D. VIII
B	IV	03	III Jn 3-15	Vatican Library, Vat. gr. 1209
C	V	04	III Jn all	Paris, National Library, Gr. 9; Ephraemi Syri Rescriptus
048	V		III Jn all, but partial in most verses	Vatican Libr., Vat. gr. 2061, fol. 198, 199, 221, 222, 229, 230, 293-303, 305-308
0251	VI		3 Jn 12-15, but partial	Paris, Louvre, S.N. 121
it ^d	V	5 (D ^{lat})	3 Jn 11-15	Cambridge, Univ. Libr., Nr. II 41 (lat. of Codex Bezae)
it ^l	VII	67	3 Jn 1-10	León, Archivo Catedralico, Ms 15

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