

Like Cain or Like Christ?

1 John 3:10-18

In 1 John 3:10-18, the Apostle John declares love to be a fruit by which we may know that we are a Christian.

- I. The example of _____ (11-15)
 - A. A motivation to _____ (12-14)
 - B. A heart of _____ (15)
- II. The example of _____ (16-18)

Hatred characterizes the world, whose prototype is Cain. It originates in the devil, issues in murder and is evidence of spiritual death. Love characterizes the church, whose prototype is Christ. It originates in God, issues in self-sacrifice, and is evidence of eternal life. - John Stott

First, when John says that the one who does not love “remains in death” [v 14], he indicates that men and women are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins to start with and not that they die later through sinning. In other words, this is an indirect expression of the doctrine of original sin that is so unpopular with some churchmen. Men do not begin neutral, as we might say, and then either choose or reject God. They start as sinners and express their sin in everything they think and do.

Second, there is a passing reference to the supernatural nature of the new birth. When John says Christians are those who “have passed from death to life” [v 14], he is indicating that becoming a Christian involved something much like a resurrection. No one grows into Christianity, in other words. Christianity is a divine creation or re-creation, by which God of his own free will plants spiritual life within a person who otherwise is dead spiritually.

Third, the impartation of the divine life is of necessity accompanied by the characteristics of the one who gave it, above all by love, so that the one who does not love cannot be assured that he is of God’s family (whatever his beliefs or upbringing) and so the one who does love can know that he is of the brethren. - James Montgomery Boice