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maintained both by the Torah (Lev 11:44) as well as by the Apostles (1Pet 1:16) is nothing less than the holiness of God Himself.

For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. (Lev 11:44)

but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." (1Pet 1:15–16)

It is to this standard that He calls His people in every era, not being satisfied by a lower standard in the time before the Messiah, and expecting a higher one after His appearance. In fact, the standard of holiness He requires is nothing short of the highest standard, i.e., the standard of His own holiness, "be holy as I am holy." And the Torah is a verbal revelation of His holiness.

The increased mention of the Spirit of God in the Apostolic Scriptures coincides with the fulfillment of the promise made by the prophets that in the last days the Spirit would be poured out afresh upon Israel to enable her to be a light to the nations. This means that the Spirit would be increasingly active among the Gentiles as the promised harvest of the nations is realized. That the majority of the Apostolic Scriptures were from the hand of Paul, himself the Apostle to Gentiles, gives yet another reason why the work of the Spirit in the Apostolic era is so much more noted than in the Tanach. In ancient Israel, the Spirit of God is virtually inactive among the nations. In contrast, in the Apostolic Writings, dominated by the Pauline epistles, the promised activity of the Spirit among the Gentiles becomes a major focus. Paul wanted his readers to recognize the fact that the promised ingathering of the nations, begun at Shavuot (Acts 2) was surely in progress, and that God had appointed him to be a major leader in that endeavor. The promised enablement of the Spirit makes possible the ingathering of the nations.

Does the increased activity of the Spirit in the Apostolic era produce a more significant level of spirituality within the people of God?

The obvious answer to this is "no." The activity of the Spirit is wider, upon a greater number of people, and therefore more prominent, but this increase is in quantity, not quality. The same Spirit is active with the same message, producing faith in the same Object (Yeshua), and sanctifying God's children according to the same level of holiness

166 – Excursus: The Spirit’s Work before Yeshua’s Coming 1John: Chapter 3 in all eras and all generations. To conclude otherwise is to ignore the overarching teaching of the Scriptures.

But if this be the case, how is one to understand a verse like John 14:17—

that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. (John 14:17)

Usually this verse is brought forward by those who see a new and enhanced spirituality in the Apostolic era as teaching that the Spirit was only “with” the believers of ancient times (“with” = less intimate) while He is “in” the believers following the ascension of Yeshua (“in” = more intimate). But this is a naive approach to the use of prepositions in the Greek. “With you” utilizes the preposition *πάρα* (*para*), “with, alongside of” while “in you” has *ἐν* (*en*), usually translated “in, by,” etc. But we should note the interesting parallel between the words used in this text when compared to Exodus 31:13, which uses almost the same construction in the Lxx Greek:

Exodus 31:13 Lxx	John 14:17
<p>καὶ σὺ σύνταξον τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ λέγων ὁρᾶτε καὶ τὰ σάββατά μου φυλάξεσθε σημεῖόν ἐστιν <u>παρ’ ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν</u> εἰς τὰς γενεὰς ὑμῶν ἵνα γνῶτε ὅτι ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ ἀγιάζων ὑμᾶς</p> <p>But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign <u>between Me and you</u> throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.</p>	<p>τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὃ ὁ κόσμος οὐ δύναται λαβεῖν, ὅτι οὐ θεωρεῖ αὐτὸ οὐδὲ γινώσκει· ὑμεῖς γινώσκετε αὐτό, ὅτι <u>παρ’ ὑμῖν μένει καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται.</u></p> <p>that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides <u>with you and will be in you.</u></p>

Here, in Exodus 31:13, the same Greek construction as in John 14:17 is used to translate the common Hebrew *בין ... בין*, “between . . . between.” It could be that the phrase “with you . . . will be in you” simply reflects the Semitic construction “between you,” meaning that the Spirit would be active among them as He had been while they walked with Yeshua. Yeshua’s point would thus be that even after He left, the Spirit’s work would remain, strengthening them, leading them, and equipping them to accomplish the work He had commissioned them to do.

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If the Greek construction does not reflect a Hebrew use of the preposition בֵּינְךָ, “between,” “among,” the Greek could just as easily be understood as “with you (now) ... will be among you (in the future).” Whatever the case, the idea that the Spirit of God is somehow localized “beside” you now but “indwelling” you later cannot be sustained on the basis of the prepositions—they are far too fluid in their meaning to allow such strict delineation.

It should also be noted that there are significant textual variations on this verse in the Greek text. The UBS text gives the reading “with you ... will be in you” its lowest rating of probability for being the original text. In fact, Westcott in his commentary opts for the reading that yields “He abideth by you and is in you” (taking the present tense as the original reading, not the future tense).¹ Whatever the case, this verse should surely not be considered foundational for the belief that there was an increased, personal and internalized work of the Spirit after the death and resurrection of Yeshua.

Another verse often pointed to by those who believe the time following Yeshua brought a higher spirituality to the people of God is John 7:39:

But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Yeshua was not yet glorified. (Jn 7:39)

The first thing that we should note about this text is that the word “given” in the translation above is added by the translators. Though it shows up in some manuscripts, the clear weight of the early Greek manuscripts do not include it. Its addition in some of the manuscripts is best explained as an attempt to assure the reader that John was not denying the existence of the Holy Spirit.

What could John mean by stating that “the Spirit was not yet?” The key is in the following phrase, “because Yeshua was not yet glorified.” That is, until Yeshua ascended to the Father, reclaiming the glory He had set aside for His work as the Servant Messiah (cf. Jn 17:5), the Spirit could not become active in the task of harvesting the nations. The phrase “the Spirit was not yet” must mean, therefore, that the work of ingathering the nations, requiring the intercession of Yeshua as the High Priest in the heavenly Tabernacle (cf. Hebrews 7-9), could not be accomplished until Yeshua ascended as High Priest and the Spirit en-

1 Brooke Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Baker, 1980 [original publication 1908]), 2:177.

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abled the disciples to launch the final harvest of the nations through the message of the gospel they would carry.

It seems quite clear that John was referring to the special and specific work of the Spirit in equipping the disciples to be the initiating force in the promised harvest of the nations. This is why they were to wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit would empower them for their mission:

but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Thus John’s statement that “the Spirit was not yet” must be interpreted to mean that He was not yet active in the harvest work of the nations, a work He would activate after the ascension of the risen Messiah. Surely the verse cannot be interpreted to mean that the eternal Spirit was not yet in existence, or that somehow the Spirit of God was inactive. Any reading of the Hebrew Scriptures shows this to be entirely out of the question.

Once again, this verse, like others brought forward, when taken in its context, in no way supports the idea that a higher spirituality was initiated during and after the time of Yeshua.

It seems clear, then, that the idea of a greater spirituality among the people of God after the appearance of Yeshua is not warranted. Nor do the Scriptures support the viewpoint that the Spirit did not indwell the “Old Testament believers” and that His indwelling presence only took place after the pouring out of the Spirit at Shavuot (Acts 2).

The primary verse used by those who teach that the Spirit of God did not permanently indwell believers before the coming of Yeshua, is Ps 51:11, in which David implores God not to take His Holy Spirit from him.

Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. (Ps 51:11)

But this verse of the Psalms should be collated with the historical recounting of the kingship being taken from Saul and passed to David. This we find in 1Sam 16:13–14, when Samuel is anointing David as the future king.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and

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went to Ramah. Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him. (1Sam 16:13–14)

What is evident from these verses is that the anointing of the Spirit in this instance specifically denoted the empowerment of the Spirit to reign as king. The empowering work of the Spirit was removed from Saul and given to David.

It is in this same manner that David, in his prayer of contrition (Ps 51), pleads with God not to remove the empowering work of the Spirit by Whom He would be enabled to remain as king and to have success as the appointed leader of the nation of Israel. That this prayer was obviously granted is confirmed by David himself in his final words:

The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. (2Sam 23:2)

Wood likewise understands Ps 51:11 in this way:

“Take not thy holy spirit from me.” These words have often been misunderstood; some even believe that David was requesting that he not lose his personal salvation. But David was not thinking of this; he simply did not want to lose the special Spirit-empowerment that had been his from the day of his anointing by Samuel. He had seen Saul lose his empowerment when the Holy Spirit had been taken from him—his manner of rule had rapidly deteriorated after that—and he did not want the same to happen to him. The words indicate, then, his recognition of continuous Spirit-empowerment.¹

Conclusion

The work of the Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKodesh) in drawing the elect to faith in Yeshua and thus to obtaining eternal life through the grace of God in the salvific work of Yeshua, is the same in all eras, both before and after the coming of Yeshua. While those believers who lived before Yeshua's incarnation were saved by faith forward-looking to the One Who would come, those who are saved following Yeshua's incarnation are saved by the same faith in the One Who has come and Who has completed His sacrificial work of His death and resurrection. And, the work of the Spirit in calling, regeneration, endowing faith, indwelling

1 Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Zondervan, 1976), p. 51.

the believer, securing his or her sanctification, and resurrection to eternal life is the same for all who are saved in all eras.

This is substantiated by the fact that:

- 1) the Scriptures everywhere speak of only one means of salvation for all peoples, in all generations;
- 2) the Scriptures teach that the Spirit must be active in all phases of personal salvation, from justification through sanctification, leading to glorification;
- 3) that the increased mention of the Spirit in the Apostolic Scriptures reflects the empowerment promised for the ingathering of the nations, fulfilling the promise given to Abraham that “in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 12:3).

----- *End of Excursus* -----

The application of this study to our immediate text in 1John 3:9 is obvious: John has emphasized that the mark of authenticity for all who confess faith in Yeshua is that their life is characterized by righteousness and not by sin. And, that which guarantees this to be the case is that “His seed remains in him.” This means that the ongoing, indwelling work of the Spirit in applying the truth of the Scriptures to the child of God is that which secures the perseverance of the children of God to avail themselves of the means of God’s grace by which they are more and more conformed to the image of Yeshua Himself. This is equally true of believers before as well as after the coming of Yeshua.

10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

John now summarizes the current paragraph (vv. 4–10) by repeating the criteria by which the children of God are identified and seen to be distinct from the children of the devil. For John, there is no middle ground. He speaks in two absolute categories only: light or darkness, truth or lies, God or the devil, life or death.¹ For John it is an “either-or” situation: either a person is a child of God through faith in Yeshua, or a child of the devil, denying Yeshua.

And how does one know to which category he or she belongs? It is by one’s life actions and decisions. John puts this in the negative: the unbeliever does not practice righteousness, i.e., in accordance with

¹ Kistemaker, *1John*, p. 304.

what God has revealed is righteous, nor does the unbeliever love his brother as God defines love. Obviously, the opposite is true for the believer: his or her life will be characterized by righteous living and by tangible acts of love and charity toward other believers.

Thus, in this summary of the paragraph, John emphasizes that the life of a true believer in Yeshua is known both by a positive and a negative: the believer regularly lives and acts in accordance with that which God has declared to be righteousness, and abstains and turns from that which God has forbidden and declared to be that which is unrighteous. Once again we see that the criteria by which “righteous” and “unrighteous” are defined is God’s revealed teaching: His Torah.

While “righteousness” could, in the minds of some, be seen as coldly judicial, the addition of the final phrase, “nor the one who does not love his brother,” reminds us that “righteousness,” as revealed to us through the appearance and work of Yeshua, flows from God’s own compassion and love. John therefore exhorts us to God’s own righteousness which includes genuine love and compassion for others who are part of the believing community, remembering that the privilege of being called “children of God” is the result of God’s own abundant love to each one of His children (3:1).

It seems clear as well that John’s emphasis upon loving one’s brother is set against the backdrop of his description of those who had left the community and were seeking to persuade others to follow them in their denial of Yeshua. Loving one’s brother in the context of a believing community surely includes encouraging one another in the faith, praying for each other, and helping to meet the needs of each other. Loving one’s brother means we do not abandon each other in order to pursue our own desires. But it also means that we bear with one another, carefully and with wisdom warning and even exhorting one another to remain faithful to the Lord and to the righteous life He Himself modeled.

It is this theme, “Brotherly love as the mark of the true believer,” which will dominate the next paragraph in this chapter, i.e., vv. 11–18.

11–12 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

For this is the message¹ which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another... – Continuing with the theme of “loving one another,” John reminds us that this is a central tenant of believing faith, not something that is a peripheral issue. He therefore emphasizes that this was a core aspect of the Gospel which they “heard from the beginning.” This most likely refers to the work of the Spirit of God in their initial coming to faith in Yeshua as they received the message of the Gospel, as John describes in 2:27.

As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. (1Jn 2:27)

Indeed, the message of the Gospel itself is centered in the love of God in sending His Son to die for sinners, and it is the love of God which sets the criteria by which we are also to love those who are His children. This was plainly taught by Yeshua Himself.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (Jn 13:14)

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. (Jn 15:12)

that we should love one another... – Thus, the love which is to be characteristic among members of God's family and therefore within the

1 As noted in the comments on 1:5, this is the second time that John uses the Greek word *ἀγγελία* where we would expect *ἐπαγγελία* (found 52x in the Apostolic Scriptures) and, in fact, some manuscripts have *ἐπαγγελία* in this verse, most likely because scribes thought the rare *ἀγγελία* was a mistake. These two occurrences (1:5, 3:11) are the only times in the whole of the Apostolic Scriptures where the word *ἀγγελία* is found. John may have used the less common word to emphasize the initial reception of the Gospel by his readers.

community of believers in Yeshua, is love characterized by giving help, compassion, and concern without the expectation of receiving something in return. Once again, John has employed the Greek verb ἀγαπάω (*agapaō*, “to love”), a word which gained its biblical meaning from the manner in which the Apostles utilized it.

agapaō is one of four Gk. verbs meaning “to love.” In secular Greek especially before the time of Christ, it was a colorless word without any great depth of meaning, used frequently as a synonym of *erōs* (sexual love) and *phileō* (the general term for love). If it had any nuance, it was the idea of love for the sake of its object. Perhaps because of its neutrality of meaning, the biblical writers picked *agapaō* to describe many forms of human love (e.g., husband and wife, Eph 5:25, 28, 33) and, most importantly, God’s undeserved love for the unlovely. In other words, its meaning comes not from the Greek but from the biblical understanding of God’s love.¹

John will have much to teach us about how *agapē* kind of love is a core characteristic of the believer’s life, for love is one of the attributes of God Himself and He is the One Who therefore embodies the true characteristic of love. Thus “love can never be regarded as an afterthought in the teaching of God’s revelation.”²

The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1Jn 4:8)

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1Jn 4:16)

Our salvation has as its purpose that we might have fellowship with God and He with us. Thus, in such fellowship we desire to become like Him—to think His thoughts after Him and to live in a way that displays His character. Coming to know that God is love, and to have experienced His love through the gift of the abiding Ruach and the assurance of forgiveness through the saving work of Yeshua, one who is truly born again desires to love others in the same manner in which he or she has been loved by God. Just as Paul wrote:

1 “Love” in William D. Mounce, ed. *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Zondervan, 2006), p. 427.

2 Kistemaker, *1John*, p. 306.

For the love of Messiah controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. (2Cor 5:14–15)

...not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. – One way to define something is to show its opposite, and this John does by bringing the example of Cain, showing how hate is the opposite of love. Love builds up and strengthens while hate destroys and kills.

Notice that John mentions Cain by name but not so with Abel, who is simply designated as Cain's brother. This reinforces what he has written in v. 10, that those who do not practice righteousness are children of the devil. The point is clear: Cain did not become a "child of the devil" by murdering his brother. Rather, his act of hatred, which eventuated in murder, demonstrated that he was, in fact, a child of the evil one.

And the hatred Cain had for his brother is made even more insidious when read in the Greek. For though the English translations opt for the word "slew" or "murdered" (ESV, NIV, HCSB), the Greek actually uses the word "to slaughter," i.e., "to cut the throat" in a manner in which livestock are slaughtered. Thus, the NET Bible translates the phrase "brutally murdered his brother."

Further, when John gives us the reason for Cain's hatred, he does so in a manner which exemplifies his primary premise, i.e., that those who practice evil are children of the devil, while those who are true believers in Yeshua demonstrate their faith by living lives of righteousness. This is because the Greek word John uses to describe Cain's deeds as "evil" is *πονηρός* (*ponēros*), the very same word he uses when stating that Cain was "of the evil one" (*πονηρὰ, ponēros*), the very term he uses throughout the epistle to refer to Satan as "the evil one."¹ In complete contrast, the word "righteous" (*δίκαιος, dikaios*), used to describe the deeds of Abel, is the same word used to describe Yeshua throughout this epistle.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1:9)

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Yeshua Messiah the righteous; (2:1)

1 1Jn 2:13, 14; 5:18, 19.

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. (2:29)

Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; (3:7)

Thus, John uses the narrative of Cain and Abel as a perfect illustration of his primary point in this pericope: those who are born from above and are therefore children of God, have lives characterized by righteousness. Those who are unbelievers do the works of the devil.

Now some may say that such a description is extreme, for, they might argue, many unbelievers live good, moral, and righteous lives. Surely John, in choosing the story of how Cain murdered his brother Abel, has given what might be considered an extreme example, for there are obviously many unbelievers who do not engage in open homicide. But in giving this example, John has reminded us of a very important point, and it is this: only that which is done out of faith, that is, faith in Yeshua and the work He has accomplished, is pleasing to the Father.

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Heb 11:6)

In these words we have it clearly set forth: no one, no matter how pious they may be in seeking to “be religious” or to follow culturally acceptable mores, is acceptable to God if they have rejected Yeshua as “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). The prophet Isaiah made it amply clear to Israel, that their attempts to honor God through their own form of religion were unsuccessful, for their self-righteous labors were rejected by the Almighty, for the prophet proclaims: “And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment” (Is 64:6).

Interestingly, John’s use of the Cain and Abel narrative in our verse is the only reference to the Tanach in the entire epistle. As such, it brings up the question of why Cain’s sacrifice was rejected while Abel’s was received. The answer may lie in the specific terms the Genesis narrative uses to describe the offerings of Cain and Abel.

So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. (Gen 4:3–5)

The obvious difference between the two is the inclusion of “firstlings” to describe the offering of Abel, something lacking in connection with Cain’s offering. Cain’s offering was not rejected because it was “from the ground” rather than an animal offering, for grain offerings are clearly an acceptable offering or sacrifice (cf. Lev 2). Rather, what the Genesis narrative emphasizes is that Abel brought from the firstlings (בְּכוֹר, *b'chor*) and from the best (מֵחֵלְבֵהֶן, *mechelōēhen*),¹ while Cain apparently did not bring the firstfruits nor from the best of the crop. Granted, this is presumed from the way the narrative is constructed, but this seems to be the most obvious reason that Cain’s offering was rejected. If this is correct, then the offering which Cain brought was a reflection of his selfish perspective, a self-centeredness which fomented hatred, which then resulted in committing murder, a striking out at the image of God in which mankind was created (Gen 9:6). Thus, John’s use of the Cain and Abel narrative reinforces his main point: the heart of the believer is characterized by seeking God while the heart of the unbeliever is self-centered.

13–14 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

Having demonstrated the character of hatred in the actions of Cain, and thus juxtaposed hatred against its opposite, the love of one’s brother, John now reminds us that the love of God which is to characterize the inner workings of the believing community is not something the world will offer to the believer. For even though a child of God may live a humble life of faith, acting righteously in the midst of an unbelieving world, even as Cain hated his brother because of Abel’s righteous deeds, so the world will inevitably hate the believer who is intent upon living righteously. John, in this text, is simply emphasizing the very words of Yeshua Himself.

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before
it hated you. (Jn 15:18)

The Greek construction in the phrase “if the world hates you” is a

1 Note the NET translation: “But Abel brought some of the first-born of his flock—even the fattest of them. And the LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering.” (Gen 4:4)