



I find that even today the content and purpose of the letter determines the type of designation that I give myself when I sign it. When writing to a relative, I sign "Cal" or "Uncle Cal" whatever my relationship is to them. Writing to the church people it is simply "Pastor Cal." When writing to the courts to advocate for a person, I sign "Rev. Calvin VanderMey" so that they know this is a licensed ordained minister licensed and qualified to give an opinion on the matter. The designation "elect lady" has been interpreted as referring either to a group or to an individual. Commentators have wondered if it is to the whole church or an unnamed local church, or even the church at Ephesus. Also, commentators who believe it is an individual have guessed that it might be the Virgin Mary, Martha of Bethany, or early converts such as Electa, Kyria, or an unnamed woman of a local church in Asia. Nothing in the letter suggests that it is to a local church, and thus the only designation that would fit with the content of the epistle is that this is an older woman with grown children and a sister who was a Christian.

The love which John professes in these opening verses is not romantic love, but rather a love for one who knows the truth. This love is closely associated with "the truth," and thus John appreciates the devotion shown by this elect lady to the truth. The definite article in front of words such as "truth" shows that John is speaking of Christian truth, the Gospel. From this phrase, we can also conclude that Christian love is the product of truth dwelling in the believer. Remember in First John, the Apostle affirmed that belief in the truth that "Jesus is the Christ" results in new birth, and new birth results in mutual love because we have become members of the family of God? Thus, fellowship among God's people is inseparable from the truth. We cannot sacrifice the fundamentals of the Christian faith without sacrificing the indispensable bond of all true fellowship, which is love.