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### The Devil's Greatest Attack on Christianity

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## THE DEVIL'S GREATEST ATTACK ON CHRISTIANITY

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF 1 JOHN  
NUMBER 29  
1 JOHN 4:4-7

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1 JOHN 4:4-7 "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

It is very easy to read a passage like this and to distort it and make it say something that it doesn't say. We need to make a distinction in this passage between what God calls love and what man calls love. According to the world, love is the basis of unity for all mankind. But this false doctrine leads to what the world calls "The Brotherhood of Man and The Fatherhood of God." There is no such thing as universal brotherhood or universal fatherhood. God is only the Father of those who have believed in Jesus Christ as Saviour. He is not the God of the unbeliever. Satan is the god of the unbeliever and Satan is the god of this world, the ruler of the Kosmos (under the permissive will of God). In the Angelic Conflict, God has set up love as the means whereby every person, both angelic and human unbelievers, will be destroyed. The concept here is that the basis for unity among believers is doctrine, not love. Love is used as a weapon to neutralize Satan, but it is also used to bring happiness to the persons involved. We have a weapon we can use to neutralize Satan in the Angelic Conflict and that weapon is a relaxed mental attitude produced by love. This always leads to happiness.

1 JOHN 4:4 "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The "ye" here means "All of you believers." "Are" is the present, active, indicative of eimi and it means "All of you are out from the source of God." "Little children" is from teknion, and it is a term used for an immature believer out of fellowship. This refers to believers who are out of fellowship, and is not a term of endearment. "And have overcome them" is from nikao. You are losing while you are carnal, but you can't help but win eventually, because you are in the plan of God. You are a winner not because of what you do, but because you are in the plan of God. The whole thrust of this passage is this-- "You get out of fellowship by what you think." But your position "In Christ" is yours permanently and can never be changed once you have believed. The word for "greater" is meGas. "Is he that is in you" refer to the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is greater than Satan. "He that is in the world" is just another name for Satan.

1 JOHN 4:5 "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." "They" here refers to false teachers and demons who are inspired by Satan. There are two types of Gnosticism involved here--the Cerinthian and the Docetic gnosticism. This false doctrine had infiltrated Ephesus and this is why Ephesus did not become the power that would have saved the Roman Empire. The word "are" here is the present, active, indicative of eimi and it means this is their

status quo. They are and always will be this way. They are said to be "out from the kingdom of Satan." They speak from the standpoint of the world. I think, in order for you to understand what I am going to write in this paper, we need to stop and take a short look at Gnosticism. Actually, this thing called Gnosticism is the basis for all the cults we have in the earth today. It is the Satanic attempt to neutralize the Spirit filled life. Satan's counterattack took the form of Gnosticism. It took the form of a religion, a religious system called Gnosticism.

### THE DOCTRINE OF GNOSTICISM

1. GNOSTICISM HAS BEEN AND IS SATAN'S GREATEST COUNTERATTACK ON CHRISTIANITY DURING THE CHURCH AGE.

This is Satan's attack during the intensified stage of the Angelic Conflict. Gnosticism takes its name from the Greek word gnosis, which means knowledge, or to know. The Gnostics say that they have inside information that makes them different from others. They claim to have a relationship with God that no one else has. In other words, they say, "We know the truth about God and you do not know it." The gnostics say that knowledge is your salvation. The Christian comes right back and says, "No, that is not true. It is not gnosis but epignosis resident in the human spirit. We exhale from the human spirit and this kind of exhale faith brings peace and power and victory in the Christian life." So Gnosticism derives its name from the Greek noun gnosis.

2. GNOSTICISM IS A COMBINATION OF THINGS.

It is a blend of religion and philosophy and culture of the ancient world. It is a blend of several things. The technical name for a blend like this is electic. For certain kinds of minds it furnished cosmic myths. For other types it gave them philosophy and philosophical thought. It took Persian dualism and mixed it with Judaism and used a Christian vocabulary.

3. GNOSTICISM ADOPTED GREEK MYSTERY CONCEPTS.

They claimed they had a knowledge of God that others did not and could not possess. They had a gnosis that no one else had. They knew something that no one else knew.

4. ASCETIC GNOSTICISM CAUSES MUCH TROUBLE IN OUR DAY.

In Ascetic Gnosticism the idea is presented that we are spiritual by giving up certain things, by denying ourselves of certain pleasures. They say there is a heaven called pleroma. The real you is your inner soul which they call an aeon. This aeon is in your body and if you are going to get this aeon into the pleroma, you must follow a source of extreme asceticism. You must deny yourself everything in life that could be classified as pleasure. In place of pleasure you must adopt a miserable way of life. If you follow this way of extreme asceticism, then the aeon will end up in the pleroma. Now if you think that idea didn't have much influence, then you are wrong. It had an amazing influence in the Roman Catholic Church. It started a whole order of Monasticism in the Catholic Church and brought on a whole system of penance and deprivation of all kinds of things. It drove people into monasteries and caused them to deprive themselves of food, pleasure, marriage, and a thousand other things.

5. GNOSTICISM INSISTS THAT HEAVEN IS CALLED PLEROMA.

This is where Persian dualism comes in. Pleroma had a force contrary to it and that is where Persian dualism comes in. That opposing force is called hule. This is the world of evil. So Persian dualism took pleroma and threw it over against hule and said this is the conflict of good and evil. They said if you have more good deeds in you than you do bad deeds, your aeon would go to the pleroma. So you see, this is the basis of that false legalistic idea that if you do more good than bad, then you will go to heaven when you die.

6. GNOSTICISM SAYS THE HUMAN BODY IS ESSENTIALLY EVIL.

Gnosticism says that the aeon, the real you, is imprisoned in something that is very evil, called the human body. The reason the body is evil is that it imprisons the aeon, the real you. This led them to denounce the body as evil, and to denounce the sex act as something evil. Now we know better than this. We know that the body is not evil, only it contains an old sin nature. In this system of Gnosticism the person who was responsible for the aeon being trapped in the body was the demiurge. This demiurge to them was the Jehovah God of the Old Testament. From this idea you can see how they played down Jesus Christ in the Old Testament and much of liberalism in theology came from right here.

7. IN GNOSTICISM CHRIST IS THE HIGHEST AEON.

They say that Christ was just a human being trapped in a human body. He was the highest aeon. Docetic Gnosticism disagreed with this idea. They said Christ is not a human at all, just a sweet kind of a god.

8. GNOSTICISM HAD TWO SYSTEMS OF SALVATION.

This was their attempt to reach every person in the world. The first system is called Asceticism. This system says that the aeon is liberated into the realm of happiness by denying self of all that brings happiness. They say you must abstain from certain foods, from all sex and marriage, and must live a life of poverty and hardship. They had three famous branches.  
Essenes of Qumran

These are the people made famous by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. They fled from civilization, deprived themselves of normal living and devoted their lives to copying the Scriptures and old manuscripts.

The Marcianites

These differed quite strongly from the Essenes about what to give up.

The Moniceans

These were like many of the people of India today and refrained from eating meat and other things.

From the way everybody was living it up in the Roman Empire, you can see how something like this would catch fire and sweep many people off their feet. This appealed to a way to satiate their guilt complex and every other trend they might have toward asceticism.

The second system is called lasciviousness. This is the system that sponsored all kinds of sexual activities and debauchery of every kind. They said they would deliver the aeon into the pleroma by living to excess in every realm. Many people came to think this was a good way to get to the pleroma so they chose this route. We have the mention of the Nicolaitans of Revelation 2:15 who were of this group.

9. GNOSTICISM NEVER WAS INTERESTED IN MORALITY OR ETHICS AS SUCH.  
The whole thrust of Gnosticism was to free the aeon from the evil substance, called evil matter. So they developed the two systems we have outlined above and you could take your pick of either one. Gnosticism was anti-marriage, anti-family, anti-nation.
10. GNOSTICISM GATHERED ALL THOUGHT PATTERNS INTO ONE SYSTEM.  
By the time John was writing 1 John, Gnosticism had gathered all thought patterns into one system and they called it Gnosticism. Mythology, myths, philosophy took on a Christian vocabulary so they could attack Christian doctrine. Paul strikes at this in Ephesians and Colossians.
11. GNOSTICISM STRUCK AT THE CHURCH IN TWO WAYS.  
At first, Gnosticist decided to attack the church from without. But when they discovered that this didn't work too good, they changed their approach and infiltrated the church. It had great success in infiltrating the Roman Catholic Church.
12. GNOSTICISM HAD SOME POSITIVE EFFECTS ON CHRISTIANITY.  
Gnosticism caused the church to take a strong stand on the validity of the Canon of Scripture. If it is not in Scripture, then it is not true. It also caused the early church to give great emphasis to Bible Doctrine versus human viewpoint. Gnosticism forced people to turn back to the Bible and learn true doctrine. But Gnosticism has cut a deep trench in Christinaity and this has been the Devil's most successful weapon against Bible Doctrine. You name any of the cults of our modern day and you can trace them right back to Gnosticism. They are just parading under new names today like The Unification Church, The Way, The Local Church, Transcendental Meditation, The Divine Light Missio Hare Krishna, and the Children of God.

Therefore verse 5 says, "They are of the world" and this is a good description of Gnosticism. "Therefore they speak out from the world, and the world heareth them." This is a present, active, indicative of akouo and it means the world just keeps listening to them. There will always be multitudes of people who can be swept aside by false teaching.

1 JOHN 4:6 "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." There is a way to meet this kind of an attack, and that way is to rely upon our personal relationship with God. So this verse says, "We are of God." This is the present, active, indicative of eimi and it means this is our inner character, this is the stuff of which we are made. We are born again people, therefore, we

partake of the very nature of God. It really says once we have believed "We keep on being out from the source of God." Next we have "He that knoweth God" and this is the present, active, participle of ginosko. These are the people who are positive toward doctrine. These are the people who keep taking in doctrine and this is the way they have come to really know God.

Now we turn to the unbeliever, or the extreme reversionists. These are the people who rely upon experience and will not listen to God. These are the believers who are out of fellowship. They are living with darkness in their souls.

Next we have "Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." "We know" is the present, active, indicative of ginosko and it means we keep on knowing because we keep on taking in truth.

1 JOHN 4:7 "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." "Let us love one another" refers to agapao and this means mental attitude love. This refers to the filling of the Holy Spirit, and the filling of the Holy Spirit will produce this kind of love every time.

GALATIANS 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,"

ROMANS 5:5 "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

It is also related to doctrine which produces this mental attitude in the life. Love is a fantastic weapon to use on the Devil. Doctrine unified believers and their greatest weapon is love. "Let us love" is a present, active, subjunctive. So this means this is potential and it depends on our positive volition toward doctrine. "For love is out from the source of God." This says literally "The love is out from the source of God." This is such a great subject we will leave this for our next study.