

Present-Day Heresies; Docetism Refuted by Paul, Col 1:12-22; Gnostic Vocabulary & Johannine Definitions, 1 Jn 1:5; Light & Darkness: Intro

13. No message is considered divine revelation unless its origin is from God—divine inspiration—and is communicated by those who are authorized to teach it orally or put it in writing—divine revelation.
14. John is about to intensify his argument against the influences of Gnostic philosophies that have been given an ear by many believers in Asia Minor.
15. Throughout the Church Age, each generation will face challenges from heretical ideas that seem valid to the mind of those who do not have the doctrine to properly evaluate them.
16. John was fighting Gnosticism. In the twenty-first century we discover several subtle heresies and deviations from literal hermeneutics, such as hyper-Calvinism, Dominionism, Lordship salvation, Preterism, and numerous fuzzy gospels from a variety of sources.
17. In addition to heresies within the church, the human viewpoint spawned by Progressive ideologies have come to dominate public discourse and which are in direct opposition to biblical principles that address personal integrity and common decency.
18. John had first-hand knowledge of the truth about Who and what God is and he is assigned the duty to communicate it in writing to the believers of Asia Minor.
19. The indicative moods of his message convey to the biblically obedient Christian the absolute truth of what he writes. The message—**ἀγγελία, angelia**—which he has heard from Jesus—**ἀκούω, akouō**, in the indicative mood, he has communicated—**ἀναγγέλλω, anangellō** in the indicative mood—over the duration of the Church Age.
20. This sets up his definition of what God is as an absolute irrefutable fact of biblical theology. It is introduced by the conjunction **ὅτι, hoti**: “that.”
21. Next is the singular subject **Θεός, Theos**: “God” followed by the present active indicative of the verb **εἰμί, eimi**: “is.”

present:	Static: a condition which is assumed as perpetually existing and to be ever taken for granted as a fact.
active:	God produces the action of perpetually existing.
indicative:	Declarative: a dogmatic statement of fact about the essence and personality of God.
22. This is the spot where John uses the vocabulary of Gnostic dualism to define the essence and personality of God. It is the nominative neuter singular noun **φῶς, phōs**: “Light.”
23. The Gnostics viewed “light” as “good” and “darkness” as “evil.” Simply stated, this is a good analogy but their definitions of these two terms fail to acknowledge correct antecedents. The best they can do is to classify them as the “Beneficent Spirit” and the “Destructive Spirit.”
24. I’d like to review at this point an excerpt from the *Nelson Study Bible* that we noted about six weeks ago in paragraph V: “1 John, Chapter 1: Introduction:

Radmacher, Earl D. "The First Epistle of John." In *The Nelson Study Bible*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 2137–38:

Based on the concept that matter is evil and spirit is good, some Gnostics concluded that if God was truly good He could not have created the material universe. Therefore, some lesser god had to have created it. According to them, the God of the Old Testament was this lesser god. The dualistic views of Gnosticism were also reflected in the prevalent belief that Jesus did not have a physical body. This teaching, called Docetism \dō-sē'-ti-zem\ [δοκεῖν, *dokein*: to seem], claimed that Jesus only appeared to have a human body and never actually suffered pain and death on the Cross.

25. Colossians 1 confirms that Jesus in His undiminished deity did, in eternity past, create the universe. Verses 12-22 are clearly directed toward the heresies of Gnostic philosophy that were influencing believers at Colossae.

Col 1:12 - Constantly being thankful to the Father, having qualified you all for a share of the assigned inheritance of the saints in light.

v. 13 - Who has rescued us out from the dictatorship of darkness, and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

v. 14 - By means of Whom, [**Jesus Christ**] we have redemption through His blood, the cancellation of sins.

v. 15 - For He [**Jesus Christ**] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

v. 16 - For by Him [**Jesus Christ**] were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers – all things were created through Him [**Jesus Christ**], and for Him.

v. 17 - And He [**Jesus Christ**] has existed eternally before all things, and by Him all things hold together.

v. 18 - And He [**Jesus Christ**] is the ruler of the body, the church. Who is the beginning—the firstborn from the dead—that in all things He might have the preeminence.

v. 19 - For it was the good pleasure of the Father for all the fullness [πᾶς τὸ πλήρωμα, *pas to plērōma*] to dwell in Him [**Jesus Christ**].

v. 20 - And through Him [**Jesus Christ**] to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him and only through Him, whether things on earth or things in the heavens.

v. 21 - And you, and only you, who were at one time being in a state of alienation [**reversionism**] and hostile in thinking [**legalistic**] by wicked works [**human good**],

v. 22 - but now He has reconciled by means of the body of His flesh through death [**spiritual death only**] because in Him [**Jesus Christ**] He has determined with pleasure to present all of you consecrated, without blame, irreproachable, in His presence.

26. More insight on the Gnostic problem at Colossae is provided by:

Scofield, C. I. (ed.). *The Scofield Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1641:

Colossians 2:18. Gnosticism. Paul warned the Colossians about a false teaching that later developed into the heresy called Gnosticism. This false teaching assigned to Christ a place subordinate to the true Godhead, and undervalued the uniqueness and completeness of His redemptive work. It insisted that between a holy God and this earth a host of beings, angels, etc., formed a bridge, of which host Christ was a member. This system included the worship of angels (v. 18) and a false asceticism (vv. 10-22).

For all these errors, the apostle had one remedy, a knowledge (*epignōsis*, that is, *full knowledge*, 1:9-10; 3:10) of the fullness of God in Jesus Christ. Paul is not afraid of wisdom, or knowledge, and refers to them frequently, but he does insist that the knowledge be according to divine revelation. His devastating answer to this false teaching is in 1:19 and 2:9, in which the Lord is revealed as the one in whom “all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form.” The word “fullness” (Greek *plērōma*) is the very word Gnosticism used for the entire host of intermediary beings between God and humanity. The incarnate Lord, crucified, risen, and ascended is the only Mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim. 2:5).

26. With these things in mind we can now start to appreciate the vocabulary that John chooses in this second paragraph:

1 John 1:5 - And this is the message we have heard from Him and have communicated to you, that God is Light ...

27. The opposing dualistic principle opposed to Light is used in the last phrase of the verse. It begins with the connective conjunction **καί, kai**, plus the prepositional phrase **ἐν αὐτῷ, en autos**: “and in Him.”

28. This is followed by the negative conjunction **οὐκ, ouk** plus the present active indicative of the verb **εἰμί, eimi**: “there is no”:

present: Static; a condition assumed to be perpetually existing or to be ever taken for granted as a fact.

active: The essence of God does not produce darkness.

indicative: Declarative: a statement of dogmatic fact.

29. What is not produced is “darkness,” the subject, **σκοτία, skotia** plus the feminine adjective **οὐδεῖς, oudeis**: “no, none at all.”

1 John 1:5 - [Expanded translation] And this is the message which we have head from Him and have communicated to you that God is Light and in Him there is no darkness, no, no darkness at all.

XII. Light and Darkness:

1. John uses the word “light” to illustrate the essence of God, the Persons of the Godhead, and Their personalities.
2. In the process he will draw comparisons between the systems that function under status quo spirituality and the systems that function under status quo carnality.
3. In so doing John is refuting the principles of Gnosticism by using the vocabulary of Gnosticism.
4. Gnostic philosophy makes a big deal out of the duality of light and darkness and John applies its vocabulary to his illustration but develops his own definitions for each.
5. Light is used as an analogy for the essence of God illustrated by the color spectrum of visible light.

6. Light is used as an analogy for the personalities of the Godhead illustrated by the electromagnetic spectrum.
7. These illustrations can then be applied to the spiritual conflict that exists in the souls of individuals as well as the cosmic conflict that rages in the Invisible War.
8. The Holy Spirit is going to inspire John to take the phenomenon of light and use it to reveal God and Christ.