

1 JOHN: DISCERNING TRUE FROM FALSE SPIRITUALITY

Part XI: True Spirituality's Discernment Of False And True Spirits

A. Discerning False And True Spirits By The Confession Of Jesus Christ's Incarnation (1 John 4:1-3b)

I. Introduction

- A. Dave Hunt & T. A. McMahon in The Seduction of Christianity, 1985, p. 7-8 warned that today's evangelical church is "in danger of making 'cultism' the measure of evil and being blind to anything else that doesn't fit a particular definition of 'cultism.' The church needs to recognize that cults are only part of a much larger and more seductive deception" where "many church leaders" unwittingly "sincerely practice and promote" error!
- B. 1 John 4:1-3b gives instruction on the discernment needed to handle this problem, and we view it for insight:

II. Discerning False And True Spirits By The Confession Of Jesus Christ's Incarnation, 1 John 4:1-3b.

- A. The Apostle John warned that believers in Christ must **stop believing** (*pisteuete*, present imperative of *pisteuo* with the negative adverb, *me*, that is, to **stop a current activity** of "believing," U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 820; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 326; Dana & Mantey, A Man. Gram. of the Grk. N. T., 1955, p. 301-302) every spirit, that is, every alleged prophet or religious teacher that comes along, for all such parties are empowered either by the Holy Spirit or by evil spirits, 1 John 4:1a.
- B. Rather, believers must test, examine (*dokimazo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 201) the spirits behind all such alleged prophets and teachers to see if they are of God, 1 John 4:1b.
- C. The need for this command is incredibly far reaching as seen by John's words in 1 John 4:1c,d (as follows):
 - 1. There exist many false prophets, and with them by application today, many false teachers who have lying spirits from Satan behind them, 1 John 4:1c. This was predicted in passages like 1 Timothy 4:1-3.
 - 2. These false prophets and teachers have permanently gone out into the world so that they still remain in it as part of the world system (*exeluthasin*, perfect tense of *erchomai*, "go out," Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 145; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 273-274), 1 John 4:1d.
 - 3. Thus, since John implied by his use of the present imperative *pisteuete* in 1 John 4:1a that believers tend to trust parties that teach religious concepts without discernment, a problem that writers like Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon also voice (Ibid., The Seduction of Christianity), in addition to the many false teachers with evil spirits behind them, Bible-believing Christians often unknowingly adopt Satanic views taught by such evil spirits behind false teachers and prophets due to the failure on the part of said believers to test all the spirits. These believers in turn unwittingly adopt and then teach Satan's views to other undiscerning believers in an ever widening circle of doctrinal leavening in Christendom, Ibid., Hunt and McMahon.
 - 4. Thus, we must test **every** teacher, **even reputable believers**, to screen out Satanic **error** that even believers can unwittingly promote in not discerning Satan's agents from which such error originated!
- D. Thus, John gave the test for discerning the Spirit of God behind a prophet or teacher in 1 John 4:2-3a: every spirit who confesses as his belief (*homologeō*, Ibid., Arndt & Ging., p. 571) that Jesus Christ has permanently come (*eluthota*, perfect tense of *erchomai*, "is come," Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 132; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 310-311) in the flesh is of God, but every spirit that does not confess as his belief (*homologeō* again, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 571) "the" (*ton*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) Jesus, namely, the just-named-in-the-previous-context-Jesus-Who-has-permanently-come-in-the-flesh, is not of God.
- E. In fact, the spirit that never confesses as his own belief that Jesus Christ has permanently come in the flesh is the spirit of the antichrist, which spirit is now already in the world, 1 John 4:3b!
- F. Applied to Christian teachers, we believers must **TEST** the **TEACHINGS** of **EVERY** teacher, **even of professing, reputable BELIEVERS**, to discern **WHETHER** they came from God or from a Satanic spirit that denies Christ's incarnation. This involves examining sources, but also testing the teaching via Scripture.
- G. The intent in such testing is not to condemn the believer who has unwittingly taught Satan's error, but to clarify God's truth to him that he might purge out the leaven in his teaching and adhere to the Lord's truth!

Lesson: *Since even believers often tend not to test every teacher who comes along, even Christian teachers can fall prey to adopting Satanic concepts that are spewed out in the world by the many agents of Satan with evil spirits who have permanently gone out into the world. The ultimate test is the confession of Christ's incarnation.*

Application: *(1) May we test each teacher to see if he confesses as his belief the incarnation of Christ. (2) May we test the teaching every teacher gives to see if it is from God or from Satanic sources that deny Christ's incarnation!*