

HHBC



1st John

INTRODUCTION:



Epistle or Church Circular of 1st John:

Authorship:

- John: the original one of the 12 Apostles. "The disciple whom Jesus loved" [4x in the Gospel of John]
- John: son of Zebedee, brother of James. The third of the core apostles: Peter, James & John
- Author of: Gospel of John, I , II and III John & the Book of Revelation
- Virtually Unanimous: as to the authorship being the third Apostle & writer of Gospel & Revelation
 - A. There are: a minority of scholars who think I John is a different writer than Gospel #4
- **OUTSIDE VERIFICATION:** of John being the author—
 - A. Polycarp (an acquaintance of John's); Ireneaus (disciple of Polycarp); and many manuscripts from 300-399 A.D. attribute it to John
- **INSIDE VERIFICATION:** from John's pen: (similarities of thought & verbal expression- *Daniel Wallace*)
 - A. Is in the style of writing and use of words and phrases, e.g.: 'in the beginning': Gospel of John vs. 'from the beginning' in 1st John / / / / God is 'Light' and 'darkness' descriptions in 1st John 1:4-7 vs. Jesus being the Light & the darkness does not comprehend Him in John's Gospel 1:4-9 / / / / Heavy use of 'abide' and 'abiding' in both the Gospel and I John. "Love one another" commandment in both books.
 - B. The writer claims he is an eyewitness to Christ's earthly life; he has authority in speech, he clearly expects no only to be heard, but to be obeyed [*Donald Guthrie*]



Epistle or Church Circular of 1st John:

Date Written:

- Most say: 90 – 96 A.D.: before Revelation, but after the Fourth Gospel. Some say: 65-69 A.D. right after the Fourth Gospel. A minority view: they were written after the Book of Revelation

Where Written:

- Most authorities say: **EPHESUS**; where John migrated to after the diaspora from Judea/Samaria/Galilee

To Whom Written:

- Some say: home churches in and around Ephesus, but more likely:
- To churches in Asia Minor: specifically distributed to *Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea*



Why Written:

1st John

- **ASSURANCE:** to believers that (1) Jesus Christ was of God, (2) that He was really here in the flesh (being now a half century or more removed from their history): *“what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—”* and (3) that the believers in Christ know have eternal life in His name
- In Order to: keep them in the truth and in the Light of God’s word against heavy Gnostic “evangelism” trying to lead them away from objective Truth

John’s Five-Fold Purpose as stated in the letter:

1. **That** you may have fellowship with us, God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (vs 3)
2. **That** your joy may be made complete (vs 4)
3. **That** you sin not (2:1)
4. **That** you may KNOW that you have eternal life (5:13)
5. **That** you believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ (3:23). [J.Vernon McGee]... As to the above 5
6. **For good measure:** that we abide in Him (2:28; 4:13) [A. Molloy]

- 1st John: is a Family Letter; written to us as “little children” and familial relationships are key. If we sin, that’s a break of a family relationship w/ the Father; how to restore relationship... [McGee; H.A. Ironside]...



Epistle or Church Circular of 1st John:

The Underlying Issue:

1. The arrival of the 1st Century Gnostic Heresies:

- a) Gnostics: meaning "knowing ones," held that spiritual excellence consisted not in a holy life- but in their superior knowledge- which enabled them to rise above the earthbound chains of matter in their apprehension of the heavenly truth that had been made known to them. This knowledge, they claimed, *had been made known to them through Christ as the Messenger of the true God.* Thus, the gnostic Christ was not a saviour; he was a revealer. He came for the express purpose of communicating his secret gnosis. This undermined the Christian view of sin and the atonement. [D. Edmond Hiebert; *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (July, 1988) 197-210. © 1988 by Dallas Theological Seminary]
- b) Specifically: **Docetic** Gnosticism— the Lord Jesus Christ seemed to have a physical human body, but in fact, His body was just a phantom
- c) **Cerinthian** Gnosticism: Cerinthus was a contemporary of John at Ephesus, only accepted the Gospel of Matthew as true. Jesus was a natural born son of Mary & Joseph, but 'The Christ' came upon Him at his baptism and remained with Him until just before death on the cross. The 'Christ' empowered Jesus' earthly ministry. 'The Christ' is a spiritual power/entity that steps into the time-space history of the earth from time to time. Both Docetism ad Cerinthianism eliminate Jesus Christ's incarnation and nullify His atoning work [D. Edmond Hiebert]



Epistle or Church Circular of 1st John:

The Underlying Issue:

1. One More Gnostic heresy arriving later in the 2nd Century, but a by-product of the above:

- a) Was **Montanism**: named after a priest in 156 A.D. in Phrygia named Montanus. Tertullian in the 200's became its chief proponent. The essential principle of Montanism was that the *Paraclete*, the Spirit of truth, whom Jesus had promised in the Gospel according to John, was manifesting himself to the world through Montanus and his two associate prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla. *[Brittanica.com]* This prophetic style was known for it's frenzied, ecstatic state it put its adherents into. A direct violation of Paul's treatise on speaking in tongues & utterances in I Cor. Chap. 14.

The Solution:

Was for John to vigorously DEFEND the True Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ— His incarnation and His atoning work can be seen in the following passages:

- a) “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: ***Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.***” —1 John 4:1-2
- b) “I say this because many deceivers, ***who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.***” —2 John 1:7
- c) “These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.” —1 John 2:26



Epistle or Church Circular of 1st John:

Docetism & Cerinthianism in Today's World:

“The Christ” by Alice Bailey, founder of Lucis Trust, *c.a. 1925*

“The Christ” has been for two thousand years the supreme Head of the Church Invisible, the Spiritual Hierarchy, composed of disciples of all faiths. He recognises and loves those who are not Christian but who retain their allegiance to Their Founders—the Buddha, Mohammed and others. He cares not what the faith is if the objective is love of God and of humanity. If men look for “the Christ” Who left His disciples centuries ago, they will fail to recognise “the Christ” Who is in process of returning. “The Christ” has no religious barriers in His consciousness. It matters not to Him of what faith a man may call himself.

The Son of God is on His way and He cometh not alone. His advance guard is already here and the Plan which they must follow is already made and clear. Let recognition be the aim.

He is that Great Being Whom the Christian calls “the Christ”; He is known also in the Orient as the Bodhisattva, and as the Lord Maitreya, and is the One looked for by the devout Mohammedan, under the name of the Imam Mahdi. He it is Who has presided over the destinies of life since about 600 B.C. and He it is Who has come out among men before, and Who is again looked for. He is the great Lord of Love and of Compassion, just as his predecessor, the Buddha, was the Lord of Wisdom. ... He is the World Teacher, the Master of the Masters, and the Instructor of the Angels, and to Him is committed the guidance of the spiritual destinies of men, and the development of the realisation within each human being that he is a child of God and a son of the Most High. (*This Theosophy also sees all “Christs” as Avatars*)



H. A. Ironside's

I John OUTLINE:

- I. **GOD IS LIGHT** (1:1 – 2:2)
 - A. The Reality of Christ. (1:1-4)
 - B. The Christian message (1:5-2:2)
- II. **LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT** (2:3-29)
 - A. Obeying God (2:3-11)
 - B. Overcoming the Wicked One (2:12-17)
 - C. Avoiding Dangers (2:18-29)
- III. **GOD IS LOVE** (3:1-24)
 - A. The Children of God (3:1-10)
 - B. The Command to love (3:11-24)
- IV. **LIVING IN GOD'S LOVE** (4:1-21)
 - A. Try the spirits (4:1-6)
 - B. Love one another (4:7-13)
 - C. Dwell in God (4:14-21)
- V. **GOD IS LIFE** (5:1-21)
 - A. Victory over the World (5:1-5)
 - B. The Three Witnesses (5:6-13)
 - C. Faith's Confidence (5:14-21)



I John 1:1-4

1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify ***and proclaim to you the eternal life***, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; ***and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*** 4 ***These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.***



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Final Thought:

J.B. Stoney, *Ministry, Vol. 8, No. 53; I John 1:1-4*

It is not merely that we live forever, but that in eternal life our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. We belong to the divine circle, we are translated from the human circle to the divine one. Here on the earth, we are cared for like children in the nursery or schoolroom, but it is new and pleasing to children when they are brought from the nursery into the company of their parents, into their circle. No one could have an idea of the divine circle until one had been in it. Fellowship with the Father and His Son is the crown and climax of all blessing. It is not so much the measure of your apprehension as the simple fact that you are there . . .

. . . In His life you cross over Jordan; you are then in the sphere of His life, you know Him as your Head; and next you are in fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Now you know union with Christ, and your joy is full. *Most Blessed!*