

Salute to Joe Hunt; Review: Edification Complex; 1 Jn 1:5: Review of Iranian Dualism; John's Message from Christ Now in Writing for the Church

**1 John 1:4 -** We write these things so that your state of true happiness might be completed.

24. Here we find the principle that if a person is going to acquire true happiness then he must study the writings of the apostles: "I write these things so that." Learning what is written will lead that believer to a level of spiritual completion that is characterized by sharing the happiness of God.
25. John now continues his polemic against Gnostic philosophy by introducing an analogy that borrows from Gnostic dualism's vocabulary to illustrate God's essence and personality.

**XI. 1 John, Chapter 1:5:**

**1 John 1:5 -** [NASB] This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

1. In opposition to the Gnostic doctrine, John now communicates a message that He and other apostles received from Christ. He uses an analogy that presents God as "Light" as opposed to "darkness."
2. Gnosticism is a syncretism of many philosophies that were popular during the first century and following. In view here is Iranian dualism which was one of the earlier influences on the development of Gnostic philosophy and which was influential in John's day. Some details we have already noted are necessary to review:

**Elwell, Walter A. (ed.). *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 445:**

*Iranian.* This branch of Gnosticism developed in Mesopotamia and reflects a horizontal dualism associated with Zoroastrian worship. In this pattern light and darkness, the two primal principles or deities, are locked in a decisive struggle. Since light transcends itself and shines beyond its own realm, light particles were subjected to capture by its jealous enemy, darkness. In order to launch a counterattack and recapture its lost particles, therefore, light gives birth to a series of subordinate deities that are emanated for the purpose of doing battle. In defense, darkness likewise sets in motion a comparable birthing of subdeities and arranges for the entombment of the light particles in a created world. This cosmic realm becomes the sphere of combat for the protagonists. The object of the struggle is the winning of the human beings who bear the light particles and the effecting of their release from the prison of this world so that they may reenter the sphere of heavenly light.

3. Additional concepts about Iranian influences on Gnosticism are found in the:

***Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia*. 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1979), 5:1067:**

Iranian Gnosticism is characterized by an absolute, radical dualism: light and darkness, *pneuma* ("spirit") and chaotic formless matter, oppose each other from eternity.

Iranian dualism expressed itself most characteristically in Zoroastrianism. In Zoroastrian religious texts, the *Gāthās* [Gā'-tas: 17 poems traditionally attributed to Zoroaster that form an important part of the Avesta, his complete writings.], there is an opposition between two spirits, the Beneficent Spirit and the Destructive Spirit. These two spirits are different, irreducible principles; at the beginning they have chosen life and nonlife, respectively. Though the Beneficent Spirit is almost the substance of the divinity, nothing is said in the *Gāthās* about the origin of the Destructive Spirit.

4. This is obviously a load of goo, nevertheless certain aspects of it were absorbed into Gnostic thought and it influenced many early Christians' views of God and Christ.

5. John takes this dualistic approach and uses it to teach the doctrines of the Trinity, divine essence, and divine personalities.
6. Let's start with the exegesis of the first phrase of verse 5. The verse begins with the demonstrative pronoun **οὗτος, houtos**, which emphasizes a category, followed by a connective conjunction, **καί, kai**, translated "And this."
7. Next is the present active indicative of the verb "to be": **εἰμί, eimi**, "is," followed by its subject, **ἀγγελία, angelia**, translated "the message."
8. John then reveals the source of this message. He obtained it in oral communication from Jesus Christ, indicated by the first person plural, perfect active indicative of the verb **ἀκούω, akouō**: "which we have heard."
- perfect: Dramatic: since the perfect represents an existing state, it may be used for the purpose of describing a fact in an unusually vivid and realistic way. The dramatic perfect emphasizes the results of an action.
- active: The apostles produce the action of hearing what is communicated orally to them.
- indicative: Declarative: a statement of fact thus an historical reality.
- Translation: "And this is the message which we have heard ..."
9. This is followed by a prepositional phrase, the ablative of source of the preposition **ἀπό, apo**, plus the ablative of source from the masculine singular pronoun **αὐτός, autos**: "from Him."
10. The question is, who's "Him"? The antecedent can be either God the Father or Jesus Christ, both of Whom are mentioned at the end of verse 3. The exegetical rule is to go to the nearest antecedent mentioned in the previous context and that would be Jesus Christ.
11. Therefore, the message John heard was communicated to him orally from the source of Jesus Christ and now he is writing it to his flock in the autograph of First John. This he conveys with the present active indicative of the verb **ἀναγγέλλω, anangellō** plus the dative plural of **σὺ, su**: the believers who study First John: "and have communicated it to you."
- present: Retroactive Progressive: denotes action which has begun in the past and continues into the present thus it indicates ongoing duration. What John communicated verbally in his own generation is preserved by him in written form and thus made available to every succeeding generation.
- active: The apostles produce the action of the verb through the process of divine inspiration and subsequent revelation, which John classifies in this verse as "the message."
- indicative: The historical reality of apostolic revelation canonized in the Bible.
12. Here's how the verse reads as far as we have gone:
- 1 John 1:5a - And this is the message which we have heard from Him and have communicated it to you ...**
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.

NOTE: Second Session: Annual Congregational Meeting.