



CAPITOL COMMISSION

EXAMINE 1John 1:6-2:2

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Nothing gives more bang for your buck than self-examination. It can greatly help you to improve as a Christian in every area of life, and it doesn't cost a dime. Even the old philosophers knew the value of the exercise.

“Zeng Shen was young enough to be Confucius's grandson, yet he won high praise from the old sage. One of the sayings for which Zeng Shen is famous goes something like this. "Every day I ask myself three questions. The first is, 'Have I sinned in my thoughts and actions toward others?' The second is, 'Have I broken faith in any of my friendships?' The third is, 'Have I tried to teach anything to others I have not fully learned and understood myself?' If Zeng Shen asked himself these three questions every day, resolving to make no mistakes, then, young as he was, we can well understand why Confucius praised him. Not only is each of the three questions extremely important in itself, but the practice of examining one's own behavior every day is a habit that every leader should cultivate.”
- Konosuke Matsushita¹

The non-Christian embraces examination for self-improvement. For the Christian the stakes are much higher.

In order to better understand the text, we will devote some attention to the possible sources of the error(s) John was seeking to address among the recipients of his writing.

In consideration of these errors John suggests certain “tests” as safeguards. Assuming approximately 35-40 years to have transpired in John's life and in the life of The Faith following Pentecost, this epistle is sent to believers somewhere in Asia Minor.

Historically, there has been ample time for the evil one to sow the tares² Jesus had spoken of in his Kingdom teaching.

There has also been sufficient time for the disciplines of the Christian life to have become “burdensome” in the minds of many as they compare their lifestyles with those who “supposedly” are more spiritual.

Might this be representative of the pressures the Hebrew Christians were experiencing, provoking the writer of the epistle **To The Hebrews?**

Into just such an atmosphere the evil one (cast out of heaven: John 12 and Revelation 12) will sow deceit and dissension in his last ditch effort to thwart the plan of God.

If truth and unity are to be the hallmarks of the Household of The Faith³, then the evil one's chief weapons will be deceit and dissension. Jesus said he was a liar and the father of lies⁴.

ERROR

As The Faith advanced across the Empire during the first century, she encountered, apologetically, Greek Philosophy. Greek thinking had been a subtle influence within Judaism since Alexander's advance in the years since the 4th Century BC. (To read of the impact, let me suggest Leon Uris' Exodus⁵)

Alexander's impact had positive and negative aspects: 1) Positive: commerce, language, transportation, 2) Negative: alien philosophical influences via Socrates and Plato.

By the time of the Lord Jesus, the Jewish philosopher, Philo, contemporary with Jesus and writing from Alexandria, had been making significant inroads into Jewish thinking.

Into this alien milieu, the Lord Jesus and his band introduced a revolutionary concept, long contained within the OT writings, but obscured by Adam's impact.

TRUTH

You recall Pilate's observation to Jesus, “...what is truth...⁶

You also recall Jesus' declaration to the Twelve during His last hours with them: “...I am...The Truth...⁷

By man's fallen nature, he is not philosophical, but Empirical.

But, by virtue of Creation, the Imago Dei is philosophical.

Therefore, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, we must to a degree discipline ourselves philosophically.

We must learn to think as God thinks.

To use the phraseology of the Puritans, we must think God's thoughts after him.

Better still, we must recognize **we do think** as God thinks, only in terms of creaturely limitations.

That is God thinks Determinatively; whereas we ought to think, by design, deductively.

APPLICATION:

As Legislators duly elected to represent a given constituency and as believers, your obligation I would suggest, is to represent your constituents in terms of Reality and Truth.

That, for certain, puts you “...over a barrel...” given current political realities.

Ultimately, TRUTH serves your constituents best in the long-term⁸.

Sadly, and in the short-term, they may not understand and even vote you out. But, if you are convinced God placed you in office and will keep you there according to His good pleasure, your part is to serve in terms of Truth.

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In the long-term, theoretically, they will come to recognize the decision was best for them and will "...rise up and call you blessed..."⁹ (Wouldn't that be great?)

Your part as their duly elected representative and as God's ordained "power" is to rule/lead/regulate in their best interests, irrespective of their initial reaction.

Pragmatically, it is as if you are a parent leading a child. You know what is best for the child and are obligated to lead, accordingly, theoretically knowing the child will thank you, later.

As a Christian Legislator, you are obligated to lead in accordance with TRUTH and, Aye...there's the rub.

But, you sought office as a believer....

SPECIFIC ERRORS

*Docetism*¹⁰

Greek word for "seem, appear". (Dokeo). Jesus only seemed to be, appeared to be Incarnate. If so, the veracity of John 1:14 is destroyed.

*Gnosticism*¹¹

Reality is two-fold: Physical and Immaterial (spiritual). The Material is evil, the Spiritual is Good. If so, Genesis 1 is destroyed.

*Cerinthism*¹²

Denied the Virgin birth and Jesus' deity. Taught the Christ came upon Jesus at the baptism and departed at the Crucifixion. Veracity on 1 John 1:1-4 destroyed.

TESTS

1. Theological
2. Ethical

These tests follow quite logically with truth or belief coming first. The proverb states "**As he thinketh in his heart, so is he**". Proverbs 23:7.

Therefore, beliefs ultimately determine behavior. Here is where Adam's impact reigns in that we deceive ourselves by saying we believe something which contradicts our conduct.

John addresses this reality in verses 5-10 of chapter one and verses 1,2 in chapter 2.

Verse 5 states the Theological reality: God is LIGHT.

(Verses 1:6-2:2 illustrate the Moral implications of a denial of this truth as well as a resolution of the dilemma.)

Verse 6 states the **Delusion**. The conduct of one walking in darkness stands in stark contrast to Reality. The one walking in darkness consciously deceives himself/herself denying conduct reflects one's thought/belief.

Verse 7 states the **Delight** available to one walking in the LIGHT. Darkness is a metaphor for confusion and/or chaos, among other things, but does reflect the individual and social experience of walking in darkness.

Verse 8 states the **Deceit** employed by the denier. The darkness of Sin is not **reality** for the denier. For the denier, everything is relative.

Verse 9 states step one of **Deliverance** for the individual. The word confession in the Greek is `omologew/ meaning "say the same thing", that is, call it what God calls it! The point being, when one says the same thing as God says, one experiences the first step of deliverance.

Verse 10 states the **Denial** of the individual. "I didn't sin. I just made a mistake, I just mis-spoke, etc."

Verses 1, 2 of Chapter 2 states step two of **Deliverance**.

The joy and assurance of true deliverance is founded on a specific reality, that being the Substitutionary Atonement of Jesus Christ for those who belong to him. Not only is Jesus our sin-bearer, but he is also our Advocate, the One pleading our case before The Father.

Propitiation/Expiation/Advocacy: weighty words with eternal impact!

Finally, note how John refers to these folk. He calls them "...my little children...". He uses the familiar diminutive. John has lived long enough to know the daily battle one faces wrestling with the impact of Adam's sin. Jesus' Substitutionary Atonement broke the power of sin in the believer's life, but did not eliminate its presence. His work frees us up to resist and experience the true Joy of Walking in the Light

¹ <http://www.heprayed.com/PracticalDevotions/32>

² Matthew 13:25

³ Galatians 6:10

⁴ John 8:44

⁵ <http://3.ly/ZDzo>

⁶ John 18:37, 38

⁷ John 14:6

⁸ Psalm 145:9

⁹ Proverbs 31:28

¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Docetism>

¹¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism>

¹² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cerinthus>