

Gnosticism, Colossians & Christianity

Fred R. Coulter

Today we're going to cover Colossians 1 & 2 in a special and a different way. What I'd like to do is mention that there is a second edition of the book entitled *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* by Alan Knight, explaining how the New Testament Church was overrun with Gnostic teachings. Some of you may have his first edition already; but his second edition has a third more material and is far more complete.

What is so important concerning it is: Why did Jesus say, as He was closing His ministry; 'Beware that no one will deceive you, for many will come in My name saying I am the Christ'—that is believe that He is the Christ. And how many times did the apostles say: Beware! Beware! Beware! Watch out! There're going to be those rising, even among yourselves, that are going to lead people astray. And hasn't that happened?

We know that they had the problems with the circumcision party, which insisted that all new converts be circumcised like the proselytes for Judaism. That's one problem. We also have the problem as we find in Acts 8 with Simon Magus. He was called *the father of Gnostic Christianity*. Well, he was one of them. And as this book points out—*Primitive Christianity in Crisis* by Alan Knight—Christian gnosticism came about because of a reformation of the Greek religion, beginning back in the 5th and 6th centuries_{B.C.}—where they essentially gave up on animal sacrifices and they said that as they looked in the heavens. The heavens are perfect and up there is where all the souls are; and they descend down to earth to come into a body of a human.

Now, all of you former Mormons, listen up, this is pure Mormon doctrine—that there have to be souls to come into the bodies of babies in order to be saved. So what you have is a Gnostic religion in Mormonism.

But the pure Gnosticism was that they would come down, and as they entered into the realms of the planets—because the planets, they saw, had irregular orbits as compared to the heavens, which were regular—they said the heavens was where God is, and the souls that are up there are pure souls, but as they come down through the seven planets. Sound a little bit like your horoscope in your paper today?

Do people still believe in Gnosticism? *Yes, indeed!* It would come down and it would enter into a person depending on how much they were polluted by the seven planets. By the way, the seven planets

relate to the seven days of the week: Monday-Sunday.

Now, the Gnostic religion was refined, and it became a spiritual thing. Let's see how Paul encountered them. There are more than two kinds—but you have the philosophy of Plato and then you had Pythagoras and you had some others; and all of these combined to bring about the immortality of the soul; and the souls coming down from heaven.

The only thing with Gnosticism was that you had an endless—Hinduism is a take-off of it—recycling of your soul until it is purified and returns to heaven to the ether of God. That is almost pure Hinduism today. They also had it that if you didn't live a reasonably decent life you could come back as an animal. Then you have to make your way out of that of being an animal, and so forth.

What does all of this have to do with Christianity? When they refined it and refined it, it came out to be Hellenistic Gnosticism, but you had something very akin to Christianity. What they said was that the God of the Old Testament and the Hebrews was the 'evil' God. Does that sound familiar? He was the harsh God. Does that sound a little like Protestantism? The Father in the New Testament is all pure love. And when they came into contact with Christianity, they said you've got to reform this, because Christianity was teaching keeping the commandments.

We're going to see about philosophy today when we get into Col. 2.

Acts 17:16: "But while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he saw *that* the city was wholly given to idolatry, *and* his spirit was sorely moved within him. Because of this, he reasoned earnestly in the synagogue with the Jews and those who worshiped *there*, and daily in the marketplace with those who met with *him*" (vs 16-17).

So, he had the same two confrontations that we're confronted with today: Judaism on the one hand, and Greek pagan philosophy and religion on the other hand. When Paul went to the marketplace to dispute, here's who he disputed with:

Verse 18: "Then some philosophers... [and that's what Gnosticism is, *Greek philosophy*] ...of the Epicureans and the Stoics encountered him...." The Epicureans were of this ilk: God gave us all these places, all these good things, we should use them, we should enjoy them and since we are spiritual and our souls are going to go back to heaven, nothing that we do in the material world affects our salvation.

Does that sound familiar? *Just like Protestantism!* I actually had a woman tell me that her friend, who is a Baptist, said that when the rapture came, if she were committing adultery, that Christ would take her to heaven; right out of that adulteress union.

Going back just little bit in history: When Alexander the Great conquered all the world—the known world at that time—they also brought in the Hellenistic religion. And they reformed every religion in every country that they came to, to make it conform to one branch of the Greek philosophy. That is all Gnosticism. Well, they did it to the Jews. The thing that people don't understand is there were Hellenistic Jews. Jews, as you read in Acts 6, were of the synagogue of the Alexandrians, which was the hotbed of Hellenistic Judaism.

Right in the time of Christ, one of the greatest teachers of Hellenistic Judaism was Philo, who believed in Hellenistic Mystic Judaism. Now, that's a strange and a weird combination; because they believe in souls that come from heaven, that go back to heaven, *an immortal soul*. They believed that out of the goodness of your heart you will be good and you don't need any laws. Does that sound familiar? And that's the whole point of Alan Knight's new book: second edition of *Primitive Christianity in Crisis*, that modern day evangelical Christianity is Gnosticism reborn. Quite a good book!

As he points out in the book: Do you think that anyone who truly believed in the true Christ would be deceived today by the pope? Hardly anyone? *No, you wouldn't!* Do you think they would be deceived by Judaism? *Well, some have been:* sacred names and prayer shawls and observing the new moon and things like that, circumcision and so forth. But the one that is most dangerous is modern *Gnostic Evangelical Protestantism*. We'll show you why a little later.

The second group of philosophers were Stoics; they said, 'Look, one way to purify your soul is to get away from all of this material world around you. These were the ones who were the founders of monasteries and nunneries and things like this where they get away from the world, *supposedly*. Of course, a lot of this information we now have is because of the Dead Sea scrolls. It's very interesting that we would have had all this information and knowledge sooner if the Muslims had not burned the famous library in Alexandria. *We would have known!* And likewise, a little later, the library in Laodicea.

I think it's very profound that today the biggest problem is Laodiceanism and in the Churches of God today is *Protestant Evangelical Gnosticism*. So, the Stoics said, 'We need to deprive

the flesh, we can't touch this, we can't handle this, and we must be stoic and abstain from sex. The thing that they all got into was *angel-worship*—it was all part of it. They also had a 'savior' who died and was resurrected. They also had a ritual of baptism.

Wherever Paul went, and when Christ preached, these people heard Him. So, the Stoics, encountered him:

Verse 18: "...And some of them said, 'What will this babbler have to say?' And some said, 'He seems to be a preacher of foreign gods'..." They never heard of the resurrection; they never heard of the mortality of the soul: *'the soul that sins it will die.'* They never heard that you have to keep the commandments that are found in the Old Testament. This now is harsh! This is what they were up against!

"...because he was preaching to them the Gospel of Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought *him* to Mars Hill, saying, 'May we know what this new teaching *is* that is spoken by you? For you are bringing certain strange things to our ears. So then, we desire to know what these things mean.' (Now all *the* Athenians and the strangers sojourning *among them* spent their leisure in nothing other than to tell and to hear something new.)" (vs 18-21).

They didn't have TV to distract them. They were very intelligent people. After all, Pythagoras was mathematics, because they mixed science in with it, too. When you study algebra one of the first things you do is the Pythagorean Theory of the square of a triangle and the hypotenuse and the base. And you get that in what, the sixth grade, fifth grade, probably not till the first year of college today—geometry.

This is the whole thing about Gnosticism and Alan Knight brings it out very well in here, called *predestination*; fate, fatalism. You have no choice over what you're going to do. If God loves you, you're going to heaven. If God hates you, you're going to hell. They also had a purgatory, too. I mean, this is some really good knowledge and information to have.

Verse 22: "Then Paul stood in *the* center of Mars Hill and said, 'Men, Athenians, I perceive *that* in all things you are very... [superstitious—and that means you are devoted to demon or deities] ...reverent to deities... [that is the angelic worship we'll get into a little bit later] ...For *as* I was passing through and observing the objects of your veneration..." (vs 22-23)—because they don't want to miss any gods. You've got to honor this one and honor that one and honor the other one and so forth.

“...I also found an altar on which was inscribed, ‘To an unknown God.’ So then, He Whom you worship in ignorance *is* the one *that* I proclaim to you. **He is the God Who made the world and all things that are in it...**” (vs 22-24).

Let’s understand something: In Gnosticism, the earth was created by evil beings, and the God of the Old Testament was a demiurge or a demigod who created the world, and that’s why there’s evil in the world.

So when he says: “...God Who made the world and all things that *are* in it...” this is a profound statement to these philosophers.

“...Being *the* Lord of heaven and earth...” (v 24). Because what the Gnostics said is that there is the Father in heaven, but evil angels and good angels, and the evil God of the Hebrews was the One Who ran this earth. So, this is boring them apart. This is absolutely just like taking a blowtorch to what they believe. This is profound because they didn’t think that the God Who ran the earth was the One Who ran heaven. This is stunning! This is turning the world upside down.

“...He does not dwell in temples made by hands” (v 24). And that’s all the Greeks did, made temples everywhere: temples to Zeus; temples to Apollos; temples to Mercury; temples to Diana; temple to Athena; etc., etc., everywhere they went temples to Isis and Osiris and Tamuz. Of course, the thing is the Jews wanting to blend in with the Greek society. You remember that almost 300 years before Christ, you have the Septuagint Bible being translated, at least the Law.

They spoke Greek. They loved the Greek philosophy, as witness of Philo. And I’ve read all of Philo’s stuff, and after a while it’s just like reading some of these other Greek philosophers. What he did, he was the first teacher of what are called *allegorical teachings of the Old Testament*, which means you read a law that says something definite, and then he weasels around it by giving an allegorical interpretation. One of the things that you’ll see concerning this is it’s all wrapped up and comes out with Sunday-worship, and how they allegorically reason about the days of creation and what they mean.

But the long and the short of it is—and you can read it in the book—they took the seventh day; now the seventh day commemorates *the creation and the Sabbath and God’s rest*. In Gnosticism it was for the planet Saturn, the most evil of all the gods. That being the day of the God of the Hebrews, the Hellenists always ridiculed it; always deprecated it, and the Jews that converted to Hellenism also did the same thing.

Now, to help them along their way to hate it,

what do you have on the other side? *The scribes, the Pharisees, the traditions, all the rules, all the laws* that governed every thought of every day from the time you wake up and also during your sleep until the time you get up, all day long. Yes, the *Code of Jewish Law* book, and today we have the same thing within Judaism; we have the *orthodox*. They hate all the other Jews because they’re too liberal. The *reformed* Jews cannot stand the orthodox Jews because they are just mean and evil with all these laws. So, here comes ‘Christianity’ in the midst of all of this:

- here comes *the real Savior*
- here comes *the One to bring the true laws*
- here comes *the One Who created heaven and earth*
- here comes *the One that’s contrary to the Greek Gnosticism*, God actually took upon Him the flesh of human beings

So, the Gnostics were stuck with a problem. I’m getting a little ahead of the story, but I’ll finish the thought. What happened was when Christ came down from heaven *He took over the body of the man Jesus*. So, now you have what is called *Docetism*. And that’s what John refers to: **‘If anyone says that Christ came not in the flesh is not of God; he’s an antichrist.’** Because they were saying that Christ just possessed the body of the man Jesus, and before Jesus died on the cross, Christ went back to heaven. It was only the man Jesus Who died. This is what they taught, and they did it all from here. So you see that this is something that was profound and important.

Verse 25: “Nor is He served by the hands of men, as *though* He needs anything, *for* He gives to all life and breath and all things.”

Oh, that just destroys so much of the philosophy of Hellenistic Gnosticism it’s unreal! Because angels gave a certain kind of life to certain kind of beings, and the evil God of the Old Testament gave a certain kind of life to the Jews, and so forth. It’s really quite a thing when you read that book and then go back and read some of these things, it just kind of opens everything up to your understanding.

Verse 26: “And He made of one blood all the nations...” This is not what the Gnostics thought. You had the perfect ones, the spiritual ones; kind of like the caste of the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church today. The pope is neither a man nor a god, he’s kind of in between. Then you have all of these superior, spiritual ones: cardinals and bishops and archbishops and priests and all that sort of thing. These were the ‘elect.’

Now, Christ comes along and Paul comes along and says ***brethren are the elect! That all men***

are sinners! This is dynamite stuff! All have to repent! Why should they repent when they've got the new revelation—Hellenistic Gnosticism. So, these are really profound things here.

“...all the nations of men to dwell upon all the face of the earth, having determined beforehand *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their dwelling; in order that they might seek the Lord... [not worship angels; not seek demigods; not seek to go back to heaven as a purified spirit] ...if perhaps they might feel after Him and might find Him; though truly, He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being... [he puts the hook into it to get their attention] ...as some of the poets among you also have said, ‘For we are His offspring.’” (vs 26-28).

Certain people are not the offspring of God, they can't be, they're the offspring of demons. What's the old story about giants. That's a Gnostic story in Gen. 6, and that should be tyrants, not giants. The story and the explanation of it comes from the Jewish kabala, which is Jewish Gnosticism.

Verse 29: “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God... [that's an amazing statement—isn't it?] ...we should not think that the Godhead is like that which *is made* of gold, or silver, or stone—a graven thing of art *devised by the* imagination of man.” All of those things were made to honor the gods, what are we talking about here.

Just the other day I was watching some television and it showed one of these—in Moscow—churches with the dome on top of it, the gold colored dome, and so forth. Since the steeple is the male phallic symbol, and the orthodox churches are Gentile, meaning they don't circumcise, it takes no imagination to understand what the gold top of the domes of the orthodox churches really represent. But people don't understand that. ‘Oh, isn't that beautiful. Oh, wow!’ Paul is knocking all of this. The orthodox, how they have their icons and their pictures that weep, and the Catholics have all their statues. The Buddhists have all their statues. *All of this is Gnosticism!*

Verse 30: “‘For *although* God has indeed overlooked the times of this ignorance, He now commands all men everywhere to repent... [that is an amazing message to these people] ...because He has set a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness... [there's no judgment in gnosticism beyond just how you live your life and try and get your soul back to heaven] ...by a man Whom He has appointed, having given proof to all *by* raising Him from *the dead*’” (vs 30-31). No immortal soul! So, this just came like an atomic bomb right into Gnosticism.

Now, let's backup on the story a little bit here. Another part of the teaching is also very

similar to the teachings of modern-day evangelical Protestantism, which is that the Gnostics had the new knowledge, or the new teaching. What you need is the *new knowledge*: ‘We don't have anything to do with the God of the Hebrews, which is an inferior God anyway because He's the One Who created this evil earth. Now we have a *new teaching*.’

In order to fit this into Christianity, what they said was that the ministry of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, was for the Jews. After His resurrection and during his 40-day ministry, He revealed many things to His chosen apostles. Now, that's a true statement, but in meaning ‘chosen apostles’; it means the ones of Gnosticism. And what was the teaching? *The teaching is that you don't have to keep the Law*. If you believe in these teachings of Gnosticism and you have God in your heart, you don't have to keep the Law because the physical material world out there does not affect your salvation. Now, doesn't that sound an awful lot like modern-day Protestantism? *Yes, indeed!* That's exactly what happened.

Now then, when you come to some of the teachings of John, we're able to understand many of these things today because there is what is called the Nag Hammadi Library that was discovered in Upper Egypt. That's where they found the so-called gospel of Barnabus, and the so-called gospel of Thomas, and the so-called gospel of Mary Magdalene, and the apocrypha of John and the gospel of Peter, and all of these are Gnostic writings written by someone else.

from: *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* by Alan Knight

The scholar John Turner in his introductory comments to his translation of the Nag Hammadi text, the book of Thomas, the contender has the following to say about the Gnostic penchants for progressive revelation...

And that's what they have in Protestantism today—*dispensationalism!* Well, under the dispensation of the law, they were saved by the law, etc. Under the dispensation of grace we're saved by grace, and we don't need law.

...and rejection of Jesus' earthly ministry, here he comments on a certain class of Gnostic text. These dialogs are set at a time between the resurrection and ascension when both He [Christ] and His teachings were available to select apostles in a form unclouded by the sort of materiality which was believed to obscure the spiritual significance of His earthly pre-existence teaching.

In other words His teachings in the Gospels were contaminated with materialism, because He was not yet resurrected.

This special teaching might consist of enlightening commentary on His darker earthly teachings or even new revelation to special apostles.

This is going to make more sense than ever before when you understand that there were Gnostic Christians whose sole goal and motive in life was to reform Christianity from its Hebrew roots. They had apostles. We just read it here. What did Paul write about? *False apostles*.

2-Corinthians 11:1—this is going to open up like you will never believe: “I would *that* you might bear with me in a little nonsense; but indeed, do bear with me. For I am jealous over you with *the* jealousy of God because I have espoused you to one husband, so that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness... [who is Satan the devil] ...so your minds might be corrupted from *the* simplicity that *is* in Christ. For indeed, if someone comes preaching another Jesus...” (vs 1-4)—the Docetic Jesus—the man Jesus and the spirit soul Christ, united together in one body.

“...whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit... [which is a *satanic spirit*] ...which you did not receive, or a different gospel... [a new dispensation of enlightenment that was given to only *special* apostles, after His resurrection] ...which you did not accept, you put up with it as *something good*” (v 4).

You just sit there and go along with it when you can see why the Greeks would. He had a real difficult problem here.

Verse 5. “But I consider myself in no way inferior to those highly exalted *so-called* apostles.” That’s a correct translation, especially in the light of what we just read; because there were those going around saying they were apostles. You put up with them. Then he goes on and explains certain things.

Verse 13: “For such *are* false apostles—deceitful workers who are transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And *it is* no marvel, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.... [What was the whole goal of Gnosticism? *Knowledge to enlighten!*] ...Therefore, *it is* no great thing if his servants also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness—whose end shall be according to their works. Again I say, no one should consider me a fool; but if otherwise, receive me even as a fool, that I also may boast a little. What I am *now* saying, I do not speak according to *the* Lord, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting. Since many boast according to *the* flesh, I also will boast. For since you are *so* intelligent, you gladly bear with fools” (vs 13-19).

That perfectly describes exactly what happened to all of those who have subverted to Gnostic Protestantism—the modern version today—and that it happened in a major Church of God.

Verse 20: “For you bear *it* if anyone brings you into bondage, if anyone devours *you*, if anyone takes *from you*, if anyone exalts himself, if anyone beats you on the face. I speak as though we were under reproach for being weak; but in whatever *way* anyone else is bold (I speak in foolishness), I also am bold” (vs 20-21).

- Are they Japanese?
- Are they Italian?
- Where did they come from?
- Who were they?

Paul says, v 22: “Are they Hebrews?...” These are Jewish Hellenistic Gnostics setting about to reform Christianity and give them the *new* knowledge that comes from Gnosticism. What did Satan tell Eve? ‘*If you eat of this tree you will be as gods; you’ll be enlightened.*’ They are Hebrews.

“...So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they *the* seed of Abraham? So am I” (v 22). Well now, notice how many people that excludes. This can only be Jewish Hellenistic ‘religion.’

Verse 23: “Are they servants of Christ? (I am speaking as if I were out of my mind.) So am I, above *and beyond measure*—in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in imprisonments more frequent, in deaths often.”

The Hellenistic Gnostic Christians did not suffer these things. Why? Why did they not suffer these things? Here’s why Protestantism succeeds so well in the world, and you can add on Catholicism. Catholicism is just a more idolatrous form of Gnosticism. I just want to inject one thing here: What is a cult? *A cult is anything that does not follow and believe the Word of God!* That means Catholicism is a cult. Islam is a cult. Hinduism is a cult. Protestantism is a cult. Anyone who believes in the trinity is following a cult. And it all comes from paganism and Hellenistic Christianity.

1-John 4:1: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this *test* you *can* know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in *the* flesh is from God. And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God.... [and that was the *new* teaching—Docetism] ...And **this is the spirit of antichrist**, which you heard *was* to come, and even now it is already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them because greater is He Who *is* in you than the one who *is* in the world” (vs 1-4).

If you go after this Gnostic Christianity, even in today's form in Protestantism, you are going to an inferior belief that promises freedom but brings you into bondage; because if you have the Spirit of God in you, 'the One Who is *in* you is greater than the one who is in the world; and the one who is in the world is antichrist and Satan.'

Verse 5: "They are **of the world**... [profound statement, *not of God*] ...because of this, they speak of the world, and the world listens to them."

I was watching the news and they were talking about Christmas and they had Jerry Falwell on there and they had an atheist on there: 'Is it right to have nativity scenes on state property?' and all this sort of thing. This is just a satanic subterfuge to keep you away from the true God. It's amazing!

Verse 5: "They are of the world... [not from God] ...because of this, they speak of the world, and the world listens to them. We are of God; the one who knows God listens to us; the one who is not of God does not listen to us. By this *means* we know the Spirit of the Truth and the spirit of the deception" (vs 5-6). That's what's so important.

1-John 1:1: "That which was from the beginning..." What was the Gnostic Christian gospel? '*Jesus' earthly ministry was polluted because it was the man Jesus and the spirit Christ.* So therefore, you don't need to listen to the Gospels. You need to listen to the things of Paul.' Isn't it profound that how in the original order of the New Testament what do we have? *We have the General Epistles first before we get to Paul!* There's a reason for all of this.

"...that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our own eyes, that which we observed for ourselves and our own hands handled, concerning the Word of life" (v 1). We're reporting this to you.

Verse 5: "And this is the message that we have heard from Him and are declaring to you: that God is light... [that is the One Who created the earth, not the demigod of the Gnosticism] ...and there is no darkness at all in Him."

The various souls had various aspects of light and darkness in them, depending on when they were born, according to the astrological charts. Does that sound familiar today? *Yes, indeed!* Same way with God.

We're setting the record straight against the lawlessness of those people who say you don't have to keep the commandments of God, you just have it all in your heart. If you're a good person you automatically do everything that you need to do. If you don't do it, well then, don't worry about it

because it has nothing to do with your salvation. John_[transcriber's correction] sets the record straight:

1-John 2:3: "And by this *standard* we know that we know Him: if we keep His commandments.... [that's what he's harping on all the way through here] ...The one who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him" (vs 3-4). Who were the ones that said they know Him and were keeping the commandments but the Gnostic Hellenistic Christians, and who were former Jews, Hebrews and Israelites.

Verse 5: "On the other hand, *if* anyone is keeping His Word..." That's contrary to Gnosticism; and isn't this what Protestantism hits us with today? *Oh you keep the commandments. Oh you're seeking salvation and justification by works. No!*

"...truly in this one the love of God is being perfected. By this *means* we know that we are in Him. Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself also to walk even as He Himself walked" (vs 5-6). What is that? *Christ in His physical, earthly ministry as He walked*—the 'inferior ministry' they were rejecting! *Another Jesus* that they were preaching!

Verse 7: "Brethren, I am not writing a new commandment to you... [because that's what they were doing, coming in with a new commandment. 'Oh, we've got a new way of looking at this.'] ...but an old commandment, **which you had from the beginning.**"

You get out your handy-dandy concordance and look up the word *beginning* in 1-John and you will see that he constantly—1st, 2nd, 3rd John. These Gnostics were saying 'No, we don't have to go back to the beginning of the ministry of Christ, because after His resurrection He had a *new* enlightenment for the *special* apostles.

"...the old commandment is the message that you have heard from *the beginning.*" (v 7).

It's very interesting that at the end of the book of Colossians Paul says to *read this epistle in the Church of Laodicea.* And who dares? We don't have the Epistle of the Laodiceans—this is quite good enough. Let's see here just in the first chapter some very profound and important things that combat Gnosticism, then in the second chapter we get into the very heart and core of Gnosticism.

Colossians 1:8—it talks about how they received and so forth: "Who has also informed us... [Epaphras] ...of your love in *the Spirit.* For this cause we also, from the day that we heard *of it,* do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the **knowledge** of His will..." (vs 8-9)—

- *knowledge* is ‘gnosis’ and ‘epignosis’
- gnostics means *knowledge*

This is directly against it. This is the knowledge of *His* will.

“...in all wisdom...” (v 9)—‘sophia’—which is part of the word ‘phiosphias’—*philosophers*

“...and spiritual understanding...” (v 9)—these false Gnostic apostles were saying you don’t have the spiritual understanding.

Verse 10: “That you may walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work...” Gnostics, just like the Protestants today don’t believe in good works. Oh, they believe in some, but not the way that Paul is writing about here.

Quite contrary to the Gnostics, “...and growing in the knowledge of God” (v 10). Only the Gnostics could grow in the knowledge of God as they would profess. These people who kept the commandments, they couldn’t grow in knowledge; they’re limiting themselves, they’re hindering grace, they’re cutting off the spirit; same thing today.

Verse 11: “Being strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father, Who has made us qualified for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the Light” (vs 11-12).

It’s God the Father Who makes you qualified, not some angel. Today in Catholicism they have angel-worship. We’ll see a little later those are called ‘saints,’ so they build a little statue. This pope has made more cardinals and more saints than any other pope in history.

Verse 13: “**Who has personally rescued us from the power of darkness...**” That is another profound statement, because it’s not God and Gnosticism who is to rescue you from the power of darkness; it is the enlightenment of the their ‘gnosis’ or *knowledge* that is to rescue you.

“...and has transferred *us* unto the kingdom of the Son of His love; in Whom we have redemption through His own blood...” (vs 13-14). That’s a terrible thing. That’s why the Eucharist is an unbloody sacrifice and comes out of Egypt.

“...even the remission of sins; Who is *the* image of the invisible God...” (vs 14-15).

So, the Gnostics believe that the heavens were God. Anybody remember the name Stavrinides (former WCG)? *God is everywhere!* What did he bring into the Church? *Hellenistic Gnosticism!* What did they all say? *Oh, it’s so wonderful when you understand it!* It really means if you allow your brain to get so messed up that you think you

comprehend it, and you get this warm, fuzzy feeling, then you’ve made it, which is just the opposite, *you have just lost it!*

Isn’t Satan sneaky? *Yes!* He wants to deceive the elect. We’re looking at some of his devices on how he has done this. We will never, never read the New Testament the same again once you understand about Hellenistic Gnosticism, the reformer of primitive Christianity, out of which came the Roman Catholic Church. And then the reformation, when they got done with it they never really got back to ‘sola scriptura,’ as they said they were, *the Scriptures only!* They got back to another form of Gnosticism. *Amazing!* What did Solomon say? *‘There’s nothing new under the sun.’* So, what he’s saying here, *if you have seen Christ*—just like Christ said—*you’ve seen the Father.*

“...*the* firstborn of all creation” (v 15)—*the firstborn from among the dead.* Again, this gets back to Jesus’ birth. You can say this: In His physical birth, through the virgin Mary, He was the Firstborn of all the creation of mankind by the preeminence of the fact that He was the Creator. He explains about Christ and how profound He was and what He did

Verse 16: “Because by Him were all things created...” He’s greater than anything that has been created; any philosopher who comes along and says the Hebrew God of the Old Testament was an inferior God. *NO!*

“...created all things, the things in heaven... [when you say that the pure souls of evil lived] ...and the things on earth... [that you say were made by demons] ...the visible and the invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or powers...” (v 16). Part of Gnosticism was to *get in touch with the powers, the angelic powers.*

“...all things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all, and by Him all things subsist” (vs 16-17). *He upholds the universe by the word of His power!* (Heb. 1).

Verse 18: “And He is the Head of the Body, the Church...” What came out of Gnosticism? *The pope*, who’s the head of ‘the church.’ I mean, all of this stuff is so relevant today; but it is profound to understand where it came from so that you realize what’s going on.

“...Who is *the* Beginning, *the* Firstborn from among the dead, so that in all things He Himself might hold the preeminence. For it pleased *the Father* that in Him... [not some other Christ] ...all the fullness should dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, whether the things on the earth... [meaning not to any of the Gnostic knowledge and the rituals that they go through] ...or the things in heaven” (vs 18-20). He

has to straighten out the things in heaven because of the rebellion of Satan the devil and the angels.

Verse 21: “For you *were* once alienated and enemies in *your* minds by wicked works; but now He has reconciled *you* in the body of His flesh through death, to present you Holy and unblamable and unimpeachable before Him” (vs 21-22).

That’s quite a thing! That’s how you stand before God. He wants you to know that through Christ this is accomplished and not through the false knowledge as gnosis.

Verse 27: “...Christ in you, the hope of glory”

Colossians 2:1: “Now I want you to understand what great concern I have for you, and for those in Laodicea, and as many as have not seen my face in *the* flesh... [and it might well that he have concern with the things going on] ...That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love unto all **riches** of the full assurance...” (vs 1-2). *The riches*—‘ploutos’—is one of the things that the Gnostics wanted you to do is be fulfilled—‘pleroma.’ You’re fulfilled in Christ.

“...and understanding... [that comes from God] ...unto *the* knowledge of the mystery of God... [the true mystery *vs* the gnosis mystery] ...and of *the* Father, and of Christ; **in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**” (vs 2-3). Not in demigods, not in angels, not in gnosis of teaching—**but in God!**

Verse 4—he’s starting to get into it: “Now, this I say so that no one may deceive you by persuasive speech. For though I am indeed absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord...” (vs 4-6)—‘the way I preached it to you’—not the false apostles, not the Gnostics.

“...be walking in Him... [as we saw in 1-John, ‘walking in His commandments’] ...being rooted and built up **in Him**... [notice the emphasis here] ...and being confirmed in the faith, exactly **as you were taught**... [no new knowledge coming in] ...abounding in it with thanksgiving. **Be on guard so that no one takes you captive through philosophy**...” (vs 6-8).

And that’s where we started in Acts 17—right? *Yes!* And gnosticism is philosophy. Greek religion is philosophy.

When I was going to attend the University of San Francisco—which is a Jesuit university in San Francisco, back in 1963—what was one of the first required courses that they would have you take? I finished two years at the College of San Mateo,

and I was going to take, at that time, a business course because they had a renowned business school up there. I was just getting the *Plain Truth* and just getting some of these things so I had some knowledge, but I had no designs of going to Ambassador College at that point. I figured I’d get my business degree and so forth.

In the *Plain Truth* we were getting the Ten Commandment series and Satan’s Great Deception—which was perfect for me to have going to a Jesuit university, to see all that nonsense going on up there. So, one of the first classes—and it’s mandatory that you take it—was Philosophy 101. The Roman Catholic faith is not based upon the Bible, it’s based upon *human philosophy* and the *traditions of the fathers*. I was listening to this, having it ringing and clanging around in my mind about Satan’s Great Deception and the Ten Commandments; and here I’m getting all this philosophy and I’m sitting there saying to myself: What am I doing here?

I know God was dealing with me, and so just before I withdrew—you have to withdraw in six weeks so you don’t get any bad grades on the transcript or anything—so one of the things that did it: they had all of the busts of all of these ‘important people,’ and in the front of every classroom they had a crucifix, and I was standing up in between classes and I was looking down and they had a nice little square down there where you could walk from one building to another building, and I was up there just before class. I was looking down there and here comes a Jesuit in his long cloth-sack robe with his prayer missal walking along and I just got done reading about the Pharisees and scribes that go around in long robes and like the salutations of everyone. So, here he’s walking, doing his prayer-walk with his Catholic missal, not a weapon, it is a prayer-book.

So the students come along and say, ‘Hi, father’ and he bows his head and I thought: *I’ve got to get out of here!* That’s when I made up my mind, I’m going to withdraw, so I did. I went down to the main office and said I have to withdraw, and as I walked into the main office, guess what greeted me? This great, huge picture—it must have been five feet high and at least three feet wide—of a bust figure of ‘Christ’ with long hair and a beard and this little crown of thorns on his head with one little drop of blood coming down with this very feminized real meek look on him. And I said, *I’ve got to get out of here!* Anyway, that’s how God got me out of that mess. **You have to have knowledge and understanding of God’s Word to understand what’s going on.** And just look what a little bit did for me.

Verse 8: “...through philosophy and vain deceit... [It’s all a lie! It’s all a fable! Every bit of

it's a fable!] ...according to the traditions of men..." What do they say when they're confronted with Scriptural Truth? *Well, we have our traditions!* The traditions of the 'fathers.' Where do they come from?

"...according to the elements of the world... [this could have reference to the elemental spirits or the demons of this world] ...and not according to Christ. **For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily...** [that is directly against Gnosticism] **...and you are complete in Him...** [You don't need these Gnostics. You don't need philosophy. You don't need vain deception.] ...Who is the Head of all principality and power" (vs 8-10).

The thing is this: If you get involved in Gnosticism, you're getting involved in angel-worship, who the greatest of those could be *principalities and powers*. God doesn't want you worshipping those. He wants you worshipping Him! So, you're complete in Him!

Verse 11: "In Whom you have also been circumcised with *the* circumcision not made by hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." That's a permanent change of the heart and mind that is accomplished by the Spirit of Christ.

Verse 12: "Having been buried with Him in baptism... [because they also had their own baptisms] ...by which you have also been raised with *Him* through the inner working of God, Who raised Him from the dead. For you, who were *once* dead in *your* sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has *now* made alive with Him, having forgiven all your trespasses" (vs 11-13).

Now notice the translation of v 14, which does away with the modern Gnostic teaching of doing away with the commandments of God; and this is as accurate a translation as you can get:

Verse 14: "He has blotted out the note of debt..." *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop shows that people were to keep a list of their sins and so forth. What do some of these 'religions' require you to do today? *Have a journal!* What do you do with this journal? *You list all your sins and all your good points!* That's what this is talking about, a listing of them.

"...against us *with* the decrees of *our* sins, which was contrary to us..." (v 14). The Laws of God have never been contrary to us, they are good. They define sin so we can stop sin.

"...and He has taken it... [the note of debt] ...away, having nailed it... [the note of debt] ...to the cross" (v 14). Having nothing to do with nailing the Ten Commandments to the cross. This translation clarifies it.

Verse 15: "After stripping the principalities and the powers... [it's important to understand that all the demonic powers] ...He made a public spectacle of them, *and* has triumphed over them in it"—*through His crucifixion, death and resurrection* to triumph over all the powers of evil, Satan the devil and the demonic fallen angels. This is important to understand, because we need to go through the rest of this chapter to really grasp it.

Verse 16—the Gnostic Christianity of the world reads this verse this way: 'Since you don't keep the Holy Days, and since you don't keep the Sabbath, and since you can eat any meat you want, don't let anyone judge you in doing those things.' Now, who ever judged them—from the world—from doing those things? *Nobody!* Nobody judges them for going to church on Sunday. Only those who are Sabbath-keepers, but we don't stand up and say, 'Ohhhh, I saw you go to church on Sunday!' *No!* But they do that to us: Are you a Jew?

A point was made that the Colossians were a Gentile community; this is a Gentile church. So, for them to convert from philosophic Gnosticism and come out of that and begin keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days, what would all of their friends do? *They would judge them!* How?

- you meet on Saturn's day, the most evil day of the week
- you don't eat any more pork
- you don't follow the Roman calendar anymore
- you keep Passover
- you keep Unleavened Bread

Are you Jews? That's what it means to *judge you*. You cannot judge someone concerning these things unless you are doing them.

Now, let's see how clear it becomes, v 16: "Therefore, do not allow anyone to judge you in eating or in drinking..."

- the Stoics said *no wine*
- the Epicureans said *get drunk*
- the Jews said *no unclean foods*
- The pagans say *eat anything you want*

Like in New Guinea, one of the things they delight in are roasted huge, giant termites about the size of a golf ball, luscious and slimy and delicious. Now what did I just do? *I just judged them for eating it!* So, if they began following God's way they were being judged by other people for following God's way.

"...or with regard to a festival, or new moon or *the* Sabbaths" (v 16). There's no article there; this has to do with calendar calculation—not observing of the new moon on a monthly basis, otherwise it would say: new moons (plural) as it does with

Sabbaths or *the* Sabbaths; because in saying when you are keeping these things what is this doing? *It is teaching you!*

- Has that not happened to us when we keep the Holy Days?
- Do we not learn?
- Does it not teach us?
- Do we not dwell in grace and knowledge through God's Spirit?
- *Yes!*

Verse 17: "Which are a foreshadow of the things that are coming..." The new modern translations translate that: a foreshadow of things *that were* to come; saying that in Christ they have been completed and you don't need to keep the Sabbath; you don't need to keep the dietary laws; you don't need to keep the Holy Days. That's exactly the Gnostic teaching today that they were teaching then.

So, does this not open up Col. 2? I know I've given quite a few sermons on Col. 2, and this is covering the same ground with a little bit different knowledge brought into it and from a little bit different angle.

"...but the Body of Christ" (v 17). The completion of the thought means: In any of these foregoing things, let the Body of Christ judge you in it, which is *the Church!*

Now that Paul all done with this, he gets into the nitty-gritty of it, v 18: "Do not allow anyone to defraud you of the prize *by doing his will* in self-abasement and *the worship of angels...*"—principalities and powers.

That ties right back in with v 8: "Be on guard so that no one takes you captive through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the traditions of men... [Don't let any man get you involved in it] ...according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ"—and v 15: the principalities, too. See how it all ties together. That's what they were doing: self-abasement, worship of angels.

"...intruding into things that he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his own carnal mind" (v 18)—as it appeals to the carnal mind. It gives you power without having to submit to God. That's what the thing is.

Now, when they got into angel-worship, here's what happen, v 19: "And not holding fast to the Head [Christ], from Whom all the body, being supplied and knit together by the joints and bands, is increasing *with* the increase of God. Therefore, if you have died together *with Christ* from the elements of the world... [Hellenistic Gnosticism] ...why are you subjecting yourselves to *the decrees*

of men as if you were living in *the* world? *They say,* 'You may not handle! You may not taste! You may not touch!' The use of all such things leads to corruption..." (vs 19-22). An ever Gnostic-type community has been known to be led into all kinds of corruption.

"...according to the commandments and doctrines of men, which indeed have an outward appearance of wisdom in voluntary worship *of angels*, and self-abasement, and unsparing treatment *of the* body, not in any respect to the satisfying *of the needs* of the flesh" (vs 22-23).

You're not going to stop lust by beating your back. The Catholics have it today where that you flagellate yourself with a little whip, and they like to do this during Lent and during the crucifixion week. There are even some in the Philippines that *have themselves crucified!* They run the nails right through their hands and they put them up on a cross and this is some big thing to do.

One of the greatest rip-off artists in the world was made a saint: Mother Teresa. The Catholics got millions and millions soliciting for her. She was *under a poverty vow*. She never had a hospital. That's why she was made a saint, so they can continue under the name of Saint Mother Teresa. Now 'we can get more millions.'

This gives you just a little inkling of some of the things that are in the Bible that shows us—and exposes today—not only the 'old time religion' of Gnosticism, but the *new* 'old time religion' of evangelical Protestantism and their grace and lawlessness. We heard about the duality of prophecies and things in the Old Testament that the New Testament has a lot of duality to it. Yes, indeed, it does, without a doubt!

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Acts 17:16-31
- 2) 2-Corinthians 11:1-5, 13-23
- 3) 1 John 4:1-6
- 4) 1 John 1:1, 5
- 5) 1 John 2:3-7
- 6) Colossians 1:8-22, 27
- 7) Colossians 2:1-18, 8-23

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Acts 6
- Genesis 6
- Hebrews 1

Also referenced, Books:

- *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* by Alan Knight
- *Code of Jewish Law* by Solomon Ganzfried & Hyman Goldin
- *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop

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