

Introduction

- Its the real thing!
 - Coke...
 - reality is a major thing
- But, listening to John Peel yesterday:
 - woman, agnostic, son in a cathedral choir...
 - everyone's got to find their own way of dealing with religion...
- Mixed up culture!!
 - at times gullible, careless, and paranoid!

Test the Spirits

- Context: Christians in midst of schism & heresy
 - being encouraged to test what is being said and done
 - in particular prophetic or ecstatic utterances
 - perhaps something like a word of prophecy or word of knowledge in charismatic circles?
 - normal, acceptable part of worship - but what was the content?
- They appear to have been in danger of operating on an "if its supernatural it must be from God" rule!
- John says they should be more discerning than that!
 - in particular, apply the rule:
 - "Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God..." (v.2)
 - man Jesus is the Christ (son of God, Messiah) and came in flesh - anti-gnostic gaurd
 - in a specific context, where these were the key dangers
- How are we to test the Spirits?
 - direct application in context of prophetic or supernatural utterances
 - more generally, we need to be seeking to discern the spirit that stands behind what is being said
 - not just the character, but also the origin of the utterance
 - weighing, testing - against what the Scripture says
 - runs counter to the spirit of the age - becoming increasingly hard to say to someone "I think you are wrong"...
 - yet it is a struggle we need to engage with, for otherwise we lay ourselves open to being invaded or infiltrated by the spirit of antichrist
- Vicar of a tea-total congregation - friends wound him up - they'd give him some peach brandy if he'd publicly acknowledge the gift... to friends surprise he readily agreed, and the following acknowledgement duly appeared "thanks for the gift of fruit and the spirit in which it was given!"

You are from God...

- Reassurance, encouragement for perhaps beleaguered faith
 - "are we OK, are we up to scratch?"
 - yes, you are: dear children, from God, have overcome them

Conclusion