

KOINONIA KONNECTION

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WHERE CAN WE FIND TRUTH?

"For in Him the whole fullness of Deity dwells bodily." -Colossians 2:9

This is the pressing question of our times. How can we know what the Truth is? In former decades, Western society merely assumed a set of propositions or beliefs (sometimes correct, sometimes quite wrong). These gave our lives direction, and allowed us to make judgments about truth, reality, and moral standards. Whether these values were held with conviction, or merely learned through upbringing, they granted society a common ground to deal with those fundamental issues which must be settled should a culture desire to be civilized and successful. Yet, with the collapse of absolutes in this epoch which has been dubbed the Postmodern, the settling influence of Belief has been lost. The only conviction is the impossibility of conviction.

The death of truth not only promises to cast culture and civilized society to the winds, but its effects descend to the personal level by robbing men of self-understanding, spiritual meaning, and a moral compass. This philosophical atom bomb has created a vast throng of human casualties, lost and miserable souls robbed of all hope and significance.

What message can we bring to the multitudes of lost corpses wandering the streets of our spiritually shattered world? Is the Church merely to become a place where they can gather and suffer with others who, like them, have no hope...like strangers clutching each other desperately in a plummeting airplane? **NO!**

Our world may be gloomy with uncertainty, but by no means are the People of God in the same position. There is a message of light and hope that we are able to bring to the tired soul. We truly do have The Truth. But the Truth is not found in a list of religious statements. Its found in a Person. And how can we know that the words of this Person are different? How can we be sure that His views on Truth aren't just another coffee-house philosopher's opinion among a multitude of opinions?

Well, wait until you hear about this Person's credentials...

THE FULLNESS OF DEITY

One ancient author, writing during the Christological controversies of the fourth century, has said, "Christ is all that the Father is...except Father." This well-expresses the thought behind the Apostle's words in Colossians 2:9 when he speaks of Christ as being the dwelling place of the "fullness" of deity. With the exception of His Fatherhood, the Son is all that His Father is. All the majesty, honor, power, knowledge, and glory of the Godhead are Christ's by nature. He is rightly an object of worship and adoration, as is the Father. He is the Creator of all things, and all things are under His royal sway. Yes, truly Christ is all that "God-ness" is expected to be. Nothing whatsoever is lacking.

Paul uses very meticulous terminology in our verse to stress Christ's full Divinity. Rather than telling us that Christ is like God (theotes), he informs us that Christ is God (theotes). What a major difference one little letter "i" can make in our understanding of Christ! Rather than merely sharing in God's attributes or perfections (which

we do, to some degree, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit), Christ shares in God's essence. He is the same in Divine substance with the Father, as the Nicene Creed tells us.

The Book of Colossians has, as its core emphasis, the Person of Jesus Christ. Paul strains himself to make as clear as possible Who Christ is, and What He is. Though we do not know the particulars of the Colossian situation, it is generally agreed that Paul's emphasis upon the nature of Christ was due to some form of heresy which was afflicting the church of that city. One element of that heresy clearly was an attack upon the doctrine of Christ as it had been received from the Apostles.

And so, Paul defends the orthodox doctrine of Christ on two fronts. On the one hand, he defends the absolute, essential Deity of Christ. Christ is the fullness of Deity. All that the Father is, Christ is. On the other hand, Paul guards Christ's true humanity. The fullness of Deity in Christ dwells "bodily." Christ was true flesh and true bones. Son of God, yet born of a virgin. It may well be that Paul is arguing against some early form of Gnosticism, which in the next century would come to deny that Christ had a true human body. But whatever enemy may have been the target for Paul's inspired pen, his words serve to give us firm ground to stand upon in regard to our knowledge of the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

ALL THE TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

Though our passage has been most precious to the Church in her development of a faithful apprehension of Christ's nature, Paul had a particular question in mind when he wrote it: How can we know Truth?

The Roman Empire in Paul's time was stock full of "isms." Neo-Platonism, Sophism, mysticism, skepticism, and many many more. And for every "ism" there was a plethora of teachers who flooded the marketplaces, universities, and

city streets with their cleverly-formulated arguments. For the Christian, spiritually speaking, Rome was a veritable minefield. At every turn he was confronted by yet another philosophy vying for his devotion, seeking to turn him from the pure Gospel he'd received.

Evidently, the Colossian believers had not passed through this minefield unscathed. While they were not abandoning Jesus entirely, they were mixing Christ with some other, unnamed non-Christian philosophy. This mixture was creating a deadly brew, capable of robbing them of their very souls. Paul feared that the Colossian believers might disqualify themselves (Col. 2:18) by so poisoning their faith with this foreign influence that they would lose hold on the Gospel of grace they had received. To put it bluntly, philosophy was killing them.

How does Paul answer this danger? Why, with the divinity of Christ, of course. The Apostle's primary concern is not to present a systematic lesson on Christ's divinity, per se, but rather to convince believers who are spiritually in over their heads, and in no small amount of jeopardy, to abandon whatever "ism" is spoiling their faith in favor of a more beneficial and sure way. It's not that Paul wants the Colossian believers to forsake the pursuit of knowledge. He merely desires them to find knowledge in the right place. For Paul, the question of existence is not so much, "How can I know truth?" but "Where can I know truth?" And the "where" is in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Paul's discussion of our Lord's divinity has Christ's personal credentials in mind. Who better to reveal to us Truth than God Himself? Is there anyone more qualified to answer the questions of the universe than the One who created the cosmos? Cannot the Author of life tell us the meaning of life? Yes, indeed! And Christ is God, truly the Author of Life. In Him is the fullness of Deity. Therefore, it is no surprise

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FAMILIES IN FOCUS

THE DUTIES OF PARENTS - PART 3



6. TRAIN THEM TO A HABIT OF PRAYER.

Prayer is the very life-breath of true religion. It is one of the first evidences that a man is born again. "Behold," said the Lord of Saul, in the day he sent Ananias to him, "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11). He had begun to pray, and that was proof enough.

Prayer was the distinguishing mark of the Lord's people in the day that there began to be a separation between them and the world. "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26).

Prayer is the peculiarity of all real Christians now. They pray - for they tell God their wants, their feelings, their desires, their fears, and mean what they say. The nominal Christian may repeat prayers, and good prayers too, but he goes no further.

Prayer is the turning-point in a man's soul. Our ministry is unprofitable, and our labour is vain, till you are brought to your knees. Till then, we have no hope about you.

Prayer is one great secret of spiritual prosperity. When there is much private communion with God, your soul will grow like the grass after rain; when there is little, all will be at a standstill - you will barely keep your soul alive. Show me a growing Christian, a going forward Christian, a strong Christian, a flourishing Christian, and sure am I, he is one that speaks often with his Lord. He asks much, and he has much. He tells Jesus everything and so he always knows how to act.

Prayer is the mightiest engine God has placed in our hands. It is the best weapon to use in every difficulty and the surest remedy in every trouble. It is the key that unlocks the treasury of promises, and the hand that draws forth grace and help in time of need. It is the silver trumpet God commands us to sound in all our necessity, and it is the cry He has promised always to attend to, even as a loving mother to the voice of her child.

Prayer is the simplest means that man can use in coming to God. It is within reach of all - the sick, the

aged, the infirm, the paralytic, the blind, the poor, the unlearned - all can pray. It avails you nothing to plead want of memory, and want of learning, and want of books, and want of scholarship in this matter. So long as you have a tongue to tell your soul's state, you may and ought to pray. Those words, "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2), will be a fearful condemnation to many in the Day of Judgment.

Parents, if you love your children, do all that lies in your power to train them up to a habit of prayer. Show them how to begin. Tell them what to say. Encourage them to persevere. Remind them if they become careless and slack about it. Let it not be your fault, at any rate, if they never call on the name of the Lord. This, remember, is the first step in religion which a child is able to take. Long before he can read, you can teach him to kneel by his mother's side, and repeat the simple words of prayer and praise which she puts in his mouth. And as the first steps in any undertaking are always the most important, so is the manner in which your children's prayers are prayed, a point which deserves your closest attention. Few seem to know how much depends on this. You must beware lest they get into a way of saying them in a hasty, careless, and irreverent manner.

You must beware of giving up the oversight of this matter to servants and nurses, or of trusting too much to your children doing it when left to themselves. I cannot praise that mother who never looks after this most important part of her child's daily life herself. Surely if there be any habit which your own hand and eye should help in forming, it is the habit of prayer. Believe me, if you never hear your children pray yourself, you are much to blame. You are little wiser than the bird described in Job, "which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear" (Job 39:14-16).

Prayer is, of all habits, the one which we recollect the longest. Many a grey-headed man could tell you

how his mother used to make him pray in the days of his childhood. Other things have passed away from his mind perhaps. The church where he was taken to worship, the minister whom he heard preach, the companions who used to play with him - all these, it may be, have passed from his memory and left no mark behind. But you will often find it is far different with his first prayers. He will often be able to tell you where he knelt, and what he was taught to say, and even how his mother looked all the while. It will come up as fresh before his mind's eye as if it was but yesterday.

Reader, if you love your children, I charge you, do not let the seed-time of a prayerful habit pass away unimproved. If you train your children to anything, train them, at least, to a habit of prayer

7. TRAIN THEM TO HABITS OF DILIGENCE, AND REGULARITY ABOUT PUBLIC MEANS OF GRACE.

Tell them of the duty and privilege of going to the house of God, and joining in the prayers of the congregation. Tell them that wherever the Lord's people are gathered together, there the Lord Jesus is present in an especial manner, and that those who absent themselves must expect, like the apostle Thomas, to miss a blessing. Tell them of the importance of hearing the Word preached, and that it is God's ordinance for converting, sanctifying, and building up the souls of men. Tell them how the apostle Paul enjoins us "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25), but to exhort one another, to stir one another up to it, and so much the more as we see the Day approaching.

I call it a sad sight in a church when nobody comes up to the Lord's table but the elderly people, and the young men and the young women all turn away. But I call it a sadder sight still when no children are to be seen in a church, excepting those who come to the Sunday School, and are obliged to attend. Let none of this guilt lie at your doors. There are many boys and girls in every parish, besides those who come, and you who are their parents and friends should see to it that they come with you to church.

Do not allow them to grow up with a habit of making vain excuses for not coming. Give them plainly to understand that so long as they are under your roof

it is the rule of your house for every one in health to honour the Lord upon the Lord's day, and that you reckon the Sabbath-breaker to be a murderer of his own soul.

See to it, too, if it can be so arranged, that your children go with you to church and sit near you when they are there. To go to church is one thing, but to behave well at church is quite another. And believe me, there is no security for good behaviour like that of having them under your own eye.

The minds of young people are easily drawn aside, and their attention lost, and every possible means should be used to counteract this. I do not like to see them coming to church by themselves - they often get into bad company by the way, and so learn more evil on the Lord's day than in all the rest of the week. Neither do I like to see what I call "a young people's corner" in a church. They often catch habits of inattention and irreverence there, which it takes years to unlearn, if ever they are unlearned at all. What I like to see is a whole family sitting together, old and young, side by side - men, women, and children, serving God according to their households.

But there are some who say that it is useless to urge children to attend means of grace, because they cannot understand them. I would not have you listen to such reasoning. I find no such doctrine in the Old Testament. When Moses goes before Pharaoh (Ex. 10:9), I observe he says, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters: for we must hold a feast unto the Lord." When Joshua read the law (Josh. 8:35), I observe, "There was not a word which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them." "Thrice in the year," says Ex. 34:23, "shall all your male children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel." And when I turn to the New Testament, I find children mentioned there as partaking in public acts of religion as well as in the Old. When Paul was leaving the disciples at Tyre for the last time, I find it said (Acts 21:5), "They all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed."

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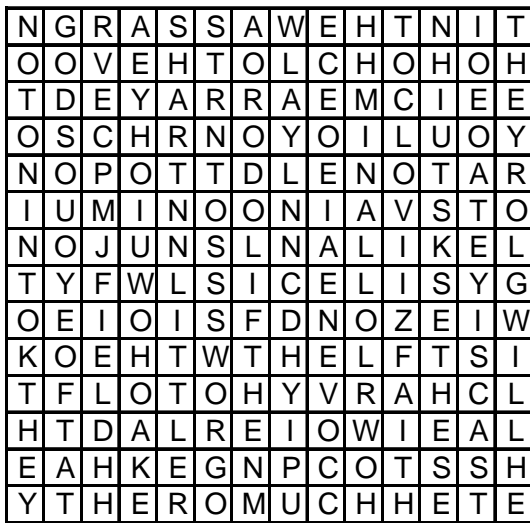
Samuel, in the days of his childhood, appears to have ministered unto the Lord some time before he really knew Him. "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him" (1 Sam. 3:7). The Apostles themselves do not seem to have understood all that our Lord said at the time that it was spoken: "These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these

things were written of Him" (John 12:16).

Parents, comfort your minds with these examples. Be not cast down because your children see not the full value of the means of grace now. Only train them up to a habit of regular attendance. Set it before their minds as a high, holy, and solemn duty; and believe me, the day will very likely come when they will bless you for your deed. *-by J.C. Ryle*

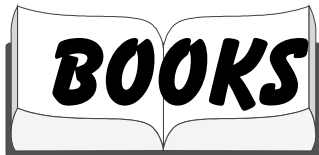
YOUTH'S CORNER

LUKE 12: 27,28



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BOOKS IN REVIEW

Ours is a curious day. On one hand, we are awash with Bible translations. And yet, ours is a day in which Biblical illiteracy is rampant. This illiteracy is not limited, as one might expect, to the homes of unbelief, but is interestingly apparent in Evangelical contexts, both families and congregations. Gerard Chrispin has given us a tool to help God's people mine the riches of God's Word. Although, this is not a commentary, this book will help the reader get into Scriptures and learn their context, overarching structure, and central message. He places the emphasis on Christ as the heart of the Scriptures. The plain and succinct overviews of each of the books of the Bible as well as the summaries of every chapter will give the reader a solid grasp of what the Bible is saying in each of its various parts. He also provides advice regarding how to read God's Word for not only novices in the Scriptures but also for those who have been on the Way awhile. This book is 665 pages hardcover and can be purchased from Sola Scriptura Ministries in Canada.

The Bible Panorama
by Gerard Chrispin

-submitted by Cope Jonkman



MISSION SPOTLIGHT

REFORMED FAITH AND LIFE - CANADA

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Dear Christian Friends,

As far as I can remember - it must be at the age of five or six- I wanted to become a Missionary! Where? In China or in India.

I was born and raised in a Christian family. My father was an Evangelical minister who escaped the Genocide of 1915, losing both parents and three brothers, and endured three years of exile among Kurds under horrible conditions. My mother lost her parents and five brothers. And so, my geographical notions would not extend further than these countries, so much so that for the child I was, they were par excellence the heathen countries, who knew nothing of the Lord Jesus!

I did not become a missionary there. On the contrary, the Lord opened another field, French Reformed churches in France and later the entire French-speaking world as a Broadcast minister.

What about Armenia? Well those were the years during which the homeland was under Soviet domination. My main concern was how to get rid of that tyranny. And what better way to achieve it than becoming the Prime minister of a liberated Armenia?

Well, I did not become Prime Minister. And even when the cunning and pernicious communist propaganda invited Armenians of the Diaspora to return to the homeland after WWH, we refused to join the thousands of Armenians taking the boat from Piereas, Greece -where I was born- to go to the historic homeland.

Yet, the Lord offered another possibility to serve the homeland. Even before my official retirement from the French Reformed broadcast ministry some

twelve years ago, I decided that the best way to help Armenia to recover from the atheist regime and its inhuman sequels was to proclaim the Gospel through the spoken and written word. This ministry started with the encouragement and support of a few friends, Armenian or not.

Our conviction was that the Reformed understanding of the Gospel and of the Christian Life would be the best way to introduce to the Christian Faith those who escaped the atheist regime.

Now, not only Armenians in Armenia but also from other places are eager to listen to our broadcast or to read our literature. Just a few days ago a telephone call. Guess from where! Moscow. A gentleman explaining that there are thousands of Armenians in Russia who need to hear the Gospel and to become familiar with the Faith and Life ministry which is grounded upon the Gospel. We are already sending material to Moscow, as much as the international situation allows such transportation. For, as you may know, relations between Russia and Georgia are strained, and for my poor country, Georgia is the only port which can be used to export or import material!

Several letters from listeners and readers again witness how they benefit from our ministry. It would take pages to relate all of them and let you know the gratitude of our correspondents. The Holy Spirit is active and is effectively operating in the lives of many.

Thank you too, dear friends; thank you to all of you who, during the past twelve years, have shared with us this spiritual burden, such an urgent ministry. Because of your prayers and financial support it has been possible.

At the end of the year we have not been able to reach the proposed budget for 2006. However, some of the most important expenses have been covered, thanks to your generous contribution. I take the opportunity to thank especially my friend

and colleague, Reverend Rick Miller of Dutton U.R.C. for his generous help and willingness to make the recordings at his Church which spares us some costly expenses.

Dear friends, may the celebration of the Incarnation of the Son and Savior fill you with a special Joy.

May the all powerful grace and the peace which surpasses all human understanding keep and protect you so that you may each day praise Him and serve Him.

In a second letter Rev. Eric Kayayan continues:

If there is one thing we can be sure of as we approach the end of this year, it is that Jesus-Christ's second coming has come nearer to us, even though we know neither the time nor the hour of it. This situation is not without parallel with that of believers in the Old Testament: some of them, like Simeon and Anna, had the privilege to see and embrace - the Messiah, counting themselves blessed to have lived so many years to see this moment happening and to witness in such a special way God's covenantal faithfulness. As for us, we are privileged to read their testimony recorded in Luke chapter two, for through their inspired testimony, we are made partakers of the same redemptive event. It also encourages us to persevere through the passing years, since time passing by is not a mere cycle - however much appearances may induce us to think - nor a mere point of no return towards our own physical death. Above these discouraging perceptions there is God's redemptive plan at work, heading towards its fulfillment, i.e. the inescapable coming of a new heaven and a new earth, when the King of kings will come to judge the living and the dead.

God's redemptive plan has in mind the gathering of a people which is spread out not only geographically, throughout the nations, but also chronologically, throughout the ages. The preaching of His Word by servants called to this mission is the tool He uses to gather in one body His people spread out geographically as well as chronologically. And certainly, as the end of the year approaches and with it the celebration of Jesus-Christ's incarnation, we can say that the Incarnate Word has come nearer to many people spread throughout the

French speaking world, thanks to the regular broadcasting of Reformed Fiat and Life's programmes. In July this year we started being on the air in Kigali, capital of the tiny East African country Rwanda. Just recently I heard the good news that RFL could at last come on the air in Quebec City, among the autochtone Indian community. Exploratory work in French speaking Niger is progressing. Several local stations in important cities of Madagascar have expressed interest in broadcasting RFL on a regular basis. God willing I might go and visit them next year to establish a permanent collaboration. Our faithful partners in the mission, Trans World Radio and FEBA Radio, keep airing RFL on Short Waves: Trans World Radio is looking forward to start a Medium Wave broadcast from Benin next year, thus covering the region of the Gulf of Guinea. RFL certainly hopes to be part of this new range of broadcasts.

Whereas we are reminded of God's faithfulness in his promises, we are also being put before our own responsibility in supporting and promoting the proclamation of his eternal Word. Let us be quite frank: RFL has gone through a difficult financial year. By the Grace of God we were eventually able to keep our financial commitments. Thereby, no doubt, God is testing the faithfulness of his children to rely on him alone; He is also testing his Church's motivation and genuine enthusiasm to proclaim his Word to the ends of the earth.

From my side, let me conclude the year and celebrate Christmas in fellowship with all supporters of RFL's ministry by remembering the words of Psalm 119:89-91, which bind God's eternal Word to the passing generations throughout the ages: "Your Word, O Lord, is eternal, it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures. Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you."

In His name

*Rev. Eric Kayayan
Minister of the French Radio Broadcast
December 2006*

WHERE CAN WE FIND TRUTH?
(CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER)

that in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. 2:3)

THE ANSWER FOR OUR TIMES

These words of the Holy Spirit to the Colossians concerning Christ are useful not only where there is an overabundance of truths (such as was the case in Colossae), but also where there is an entire absence of truth. Indeed, such are the times we live in. Our danger lay not so much in a multitude of philosophies clamoring for our loyalty, as in the temptation of allowing ourselves to embrace the shadowy meaninglessness of a Truth which can never be known. Though on the surface relativism may seem to be bright with possibilities (“relativism” being the belief that truth is relative to the individual, and thus conflicting views can be equally valid and virtuous), in truth it is the doorway to a black and morbid purposelessness which rends the soul. Our age claims to be the most enlightened in human history. Yet, if that is so, why is our age also the most anxious, the most depressed, the most suicidal? Ours is a generation without hope.

It is into this Void that the message of Jesus Christ comes with life-changing, and light-bringing power. The world cries, “Who will show us the truth?” In Christ, the world has its answer. Not only does Jesus teach the Truth, He is the Truth: “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.” (John 14:6)

True enough, many reject His message. Many absolutely hate it. It’s dogmatic, they say. It’s closed-minded, they claim. It’s oppressive, they declare. Perhaps if it we were speaking of a mere man, they would be right. But Jesus Christ is no mere man. There is none other who possesses such stellar qualifications to serve as a Proclaimer of Truth. This role is His irrefutable right. In Christ we find no fallible philosopher or human teacher. Jesus is God Himself. He alone carries Wisdom and Knowledge in His hand.

“For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.” (Proverbs. 2:6)

-by Edward W. Ludt

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For Christ’s Crown and Covenant

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