

In Search of Reality

By David Morsey

For the most part people want to know what is real—what can we depend on? There is a certain measure of fantasy—what we hope is real or wish were real. These are the areas that cloud our sense of the real and hinder our pursuit of it. It would be convenient if we could classify our knowledge into the categories of fact, fantasy and fiction, but the problem is that they are so intertwined that they are hard, if not impossible to separate. It would also be much simpler if we could say that in certain areas—religion, science and medicine, for example—people want reality, but that is not always the case. Even Einstein in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, had difficulty letting go of certain of his theories, even to the loss of a degree of prestige. Fantasies and biases are the vein of realities. But we would certainly expect something of reality in the area of religion, where the eternal spirit is at stake. Unfortunately that is not the case. People cling tenaciously to concepts of religion (or irreligion) which they hold avidly to be true. If any area of life needs reality it is religion. And yet that is the very area in which claims to truth are bogged down in a hopeless quagmire of deceptions and misconceptions; of illusions and delusions; of quasi-knowledge and blatant ignorance. But where is the truth? How do we know who is self deceived and/or deceiving others? Whom can we trust? What can we depend on? How can we ever be sure of the “truth?” This was the famous question of the infamous Pilate. Enmeshed in the pagan world of egoistic ambition—of deception and delusion; of intrigue and treachery—he had totally lost his perception of reality. But he was not alone. Tragically the whole of Jerusalem had lost its way. The very center of the divine/human encounter was awash in the same deception and treachery and egoistic self ambition. The holy city of God had become a seething cauldron of clashing cultures and raging religious conflict. The religious leaders, too, were lost in the human wilderness.

So where are we today? Are we any less lost in the wilderness than was Pilate or Jerusalem? Do we really know what the truth is? Can we really tell who has it? *But doesn't the Lord reveal that to us?* Well the Lord has given us a written revelation in the Bible. *But there are so many different interpretations.* So now you see the problem. *How do we know whose interpretation is right? Isn't it right there in black and white?* Who's black and white translation are we talking about? *So how can we be certain of anything?* That happens to be the question that has troubled philosophers since the world began. Plato said, after a lifetime of pursuit of “the real”—“We are hopeless unless we can find some sure word of God and use it as a raft to float down the river of life.” But we must remember that Plato's “word” was not the Bible and his word “God” was not the God of Israel, but some projected deity. So Plato never found the reality he was looking for. His concept of the universe was that the essence of it was *logos*—ideas. Four centuries later John would challenge Plato and declare that the *logos* he was seeking was really Christ. *“In the beginning was the Word [Logos] and the Logos was with God and the Logos was God”* (John 1:1). The Greek use of *logos* meant far more than our simple “word.” The English “word” is basically a unit of speech. To the Greeks it was ideas and concepts. Thus John, in applying “*Logos*” to Christ was saying in effect that he was the mind of God brought into an involvement with a space/time creation. He was the Living Revelation of God—God expressing His Spirit being in a material reality. *“All things came into being through Him and without Him nothing came into being that was”* (John 1:3). It is important to realize, however, that Christ was in Spirit form during creation

and up until the incarnation when the Spirit entered the womb of Mary and emerged as a human possessing the Spirit of God. *“And the Word [Logos] became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten [emerging] of the Father”* (John 1:14).

In the search for reality we must first come to Christ. He is the bedrock of all knowledge and understanding both in religion and in the areas of secular knowledge. We begin with Christ because he was the beginning of the universe. Those who try to discover a universe apart from Christ become entangled in a hopeless maze of theories. To the casual observer, science only deals with the facts. That is far from the truth. Even the most celebrated scientists realize that they are dealing with possibilities and not absolutes. Remember that science is only a matter of method and not conclusion. Technically, scientists are those who use the scientific method of discovery, but can rarely close the case. Actually, it is far more reasonable to assume that God was eternal than that the atom was eternal. So in our search for reality we start with Christ, who said, *“I am the way, the [reality] and the life”* (John 14:6). The word that is usually translated “truth” is rather the Greek word *aletheia*, which means “reality” or “genuineness.” Truth does not fit. Actually, truth is merely the verbalizing of reality. Christ is the most essential reality of the universe whether or not we are able to verbalize that adequately. The failure to distinguish between these words has caused a great deal of confusion in the body of believers. In certain sense only God is able to come to absolute terms with reality. We only have a sort of “functional” truth. That is to say, that the human brain is limited in its capacity to come to absolutes. That is why there are so many myriads of different perceptions of truth. Jesus said, *“You shall know the truth [reality] and the truth [reality] shall make you free”* (John 8:32). The myriads of versions of “truth” have led only to confusion and bondage. Jesus did not say that truth would make us free—the human perception of reality—but reality itself would make us free. Knowing reality is simply knowing Christ. It is characteristic of religious sects and groups to make bold claim to “truth,” to justify their existence and their crusades for new members. But what is it that they are really saying? They are not saying—“We have Christ and others do not.” They are rather saying—“Our efforts to verbalize Christ are better than yours.” But why so? Some will say, “We have revelations from God;” or “We pray more;” or “We are more pure and holy.” But none of these are verifiable. How do we know that one has had revelation from God? How do we know that one’s piety is more acceptable to God than another’s? In short, no human person can be relied upon absolutely, whatever their claims, to give an accurate verbalization of Christ.

So where does that leave us? Where do we find a reliable verbalizing of Christ? The answer of course is the Bible. Without the Bible one is in a vast quagmire of speculations and misconceptions. Without adequate input, one is in something of a “cerebral carousel”—a merry-go-round of the mind. There are no guidelines; no landmarks; no lighthouses.

But why the Bible? How do I know it’s right? Read it! It is one of the few religious writings that makes that claim. If you want to find out if the claim is valid, check it out. If indeed God wrote it, it is up to Him to confirm it. If you read it, it should make an impact on you—when other writings do not. We should certainly be able to expect that much from God. We poor humans have no way to validate the things of the Spirit. So we have Christ as the bedrock of our faith, through the action of the Holy Spirit within us, and we have the Word of God as the ultimate verbalization of our relationship to God,

Who is the essence of all reality. But how do we know we are getting the most accurate rendering of that word? There are so many different interpretations. Here is where it gets more complex. We must recognize first that contrary to popular belief, there are not many interpretations. Surely God has one message for all. *“God is not the author of confusion but of peace”* (I Corinthians 14:33).

Confusion is the result of myriads of private interpretations by those who think that anyone can teach the Bible just by praying for God to show the meaning of it. The fallacy of this idea is that there are so many different interpretations (a fact not missed by the detractors of the Bible). Peter said, *“No Scripture is of private interpretation”* (II Peter 1:20). The answer, of course, is sound scholarship in submission to the Holy Spirit. One aspect of this scholarship is what might be called “scientific semantics”—intensive study the original text of the Scripture. But true scholarship involves much more—history, culture and in fact all of the social sciences—in order to understand the integration of humans with the Bible. If one is going to be a responsible authority in the conveying of scripture one must get the knowledge if one does not have it. Or, one must be under the guidance of one who does have it. Without true knowledge, one must not speak as an authority. If one claims private revelations, it is fair to ask “How do we know?” Why is one revelation more valid than another? What is the basis of ones claim to truth? Why should others believe such a one?

But now we must face the reality that there are in fact such myriads of interpretations and confusions. Where do we stand? We must go back to the reality of Christ as our bedrock. Whatever words the human mind might be able to conjure up; whatever the systems of belief; whatever articulations, the reality of Christ remains forever within us. And we know that He is within us because we want him to be. If the Spirit of God had not touched us, we would not want Christ within. That is what breaks the circle; that is what gets us off the merry-go-round. Once Christ is within us, He leads us to reality. *“When that One comes—the Spirit of Truth [reality]—He will lead us into all truth [reality]”* (John 16:13). We may not always be lead into the verbalizing of reality, but we will always have reality in the presence of Christ within. All of the complex questions that we have raised are resolved for us in terms of our personal experience with Christ, and the understanding of the difference between truth and reality. Our faith is not in the human words that explain Christ to us, but in Christ Himself. So we do the best we can to come to accuracy of articulation. We avoid those who claim private revelations, because we have no way to validate their claims. We avoid those whose claim to truth is based on greater piety, or closeness to God, or greater discipline or spirituality. We insist on adequate equipment; on proper credentials. If this seems too severe, remember that the welfare of ones daily enjoyment of Christ is at stake. Remember that God has called us unto peace and not unto confusion. The message of the angels was one of peace on earth. Possessing the Spirit of Christ within, one should be at peace, in spite of all of the human failures and fallacies. Believers may have many problems in the flesh, and yet, belonging to Christ, they may be at peace in their spirits.

You must do the best you can to find accurate and adequate verbalizing of the reality of Christ, but let the basis of your faith rest in His energy within you and not anything that human minds can conjure up as a system of belief. Once one has been “born again”—received Christ within one’s spirit—one may rely on this inner presence for eternity. The certainty of this real presence is always validated, whatever one’s situation may be, in the fact that one wants Christ to be within. One may experience problems and failures

and the range of human errors and mistakes, and these one must deal with as one goes along, but always in the context of the presence of Christ. *“For He had said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”*