



"To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge."

—Benjamin Disraeli

**15-Jan-21**

## **The Same Mind, Judgment, and Speech (Part One)**

Back in late-2001, my wife Mikele and I took advantage of the cheap airfares that followed the events of September 11 that year, spending several weeks in England, Scotland, and Wales. While in Scotland, we visited the renowned Loch Ness and took a bus tour around areas of the lakeshore. Throughout the tour, we heard various opinions from our tour guide and fellow tourists about the infamous Loch Ness monster's existence. Some held that *something* was in the lake and that not all the reports could be coincidental. The more skeptical maintained that not enough concrete evidence existed.

As the day wound down and the shadows lengthened, our guide brought us to one of his favorite spots on a secluded part of the shore. As we walked along a narrow walkway, there, through the branches and the fading light, we could make out the form of a creature that resembled a small brontosaurus, with a long, curving neck. Some readers may be skeptical, but we know what we saw.

This series will return to Nessie later, but for our purposes, think of the Loch Ness monster—and all the claims and uncertainty that surround it—as a

symbol. We are confident of many things that we know, perhaps because of personal experience, yet we must continually evaluate the veracity of what we believe we know. Additionally—and more importantly—we must determine what godly [wisdom](#) constrains us to *do* with our knowledge once we are confident it reflects reality. The Loch Ness monster can represent any knowledge: In the uncertainty surrounding it, what is adamantly held by some to be true may be instantly rejected by others as preposterous.

The English philosopher Herbert Spencer observed a principle that is worth reflecting on: "When a man's knowledge is not in order, the more of it he has, the greater will be his confusion."

Spencer's observation parallels [Daniel 12:4](#), where the angel tells Daniel, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." Knowledge increases exponentially today, but—to borrow Spencer's term—it is not *orderly*. Thus, even as humanity's knowledge increases, so also does its confusion. The modern knowledge explosion has produced confusion because it leaves out the knowledge of [God](#). Without that all-important foundation, knowledge is ungrounded at best, poisonous at worst.

Besides, everyone's knowledge and experience are unique. If a person lives in the Philippines, Trinidad, or Zambia, he knows things that an American lacks, and vice versa. If someone has intimate experience with abortion, the devastation of war, or the heartache caused by impaired or distracted driving, he possesses knowledge that many others can only grasp intellectually. If a person's close friend or family member works in law enforcement, his knowledge differs from that of a gang member who lives on the mean streets of a large city—and vice versa. If someone lives a rural life, closer to God's creation, he knows things that one living in the fast lane cannot identify with—and vice versa. There are as many examples as there are people.

Further, each individual's circumstances and experiences determine how he interprets other knowledge. If a person grows up without God, he will dismiss any suggestion that He has the solutions. He may instead seek out guiding principles from science, the Stoics, or perhaps the Orient. In other words, what knowledge one already has—and believes to be true—determines whether he accepts or rejects new knowledge.

In addition, we rarely consider that *our* knowledge might be incorrect. We may admit that what we know is incomplete, but we trust what we already know, seldom pondering whether our knowledge could be faulty. If someone sees a creature at Loch Ness, he will not be convinced that his knowledge is defective.

We must remember one aspect of knowledge, especially as it increases today: "We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but [love](#) edifies" ([1 Corinthians 8:1](#)).

Even if our knowledge is deeper than someone else's, if godly knowledge does not order it, it will divide rather than unite and uplift, as happened in Corinth. The Corinthians possessed some truth, but its fruit was not love, [joy](#), [peace](#), and so on. Possessing knowledge often leads to dismissing or disparaging those who do not share in it.

We see this in the comments section of any current-events article, video, or social media thread. Reading between the lines, the essence—if not the plain statement—of many comments is that anyone who does not know what the commenter does *must* be an idiot. Thus, as knowledge without God increases, so does animosity and even violence, as we witness today. Our current information explosion is not making society better—only information-bloated and proud.

Many will remember the urban-myth emails that people forwarded constantly. When younger—with all that implies—I often tried to debunk these forwards without regard for the recipient, to the dismay of some acquaintances. My knowledge may have been more accurate in one area, but without also knowing how to deal with the overall situation, my technical correctness did not profit anybody because my approach did not edify. Which was more important? Certainly, some knowledge is so critical that we must uphold and defend it at all costs, but the truth about these urban myths did not qualify. Nothing was gained, except maybe some hard feelings and gnashing of teeth.

Even if we were to have perfect knowledge—an impossibility—it will not profit if others will not hear us because we have already repelled them with our approach. I will most likely not convince anyone that a monster lurks in

Loch Ness, but I could easily strain the relationship in the effort to force such knowledge on him.

This is not to suggest that we do not pursue knowledge. Indeed, we must pursue it. But as we pursue it, we must remember the dangers of pride and damaging relationships by what we do with our knowledge.

- David C. Grabbe

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Tests of True Knowledge](#)**

by Martin G. Collins

Knowledge of the truth is essential, but it must be God's knowledge, and not a syncretistic mixture of worldly philosophy or mystical Gnosticism. Political correctness, a modern application of Gnosticism, can usher in some unacceptable consequences, such as occurred with the prideful 'tolerance' of incest as practiced in the Corinthian congregation. Like leavening, toleration of one offense would lead to toleration of other offenses. Progressives in American politics shamelessly call evil good and good evil, murdering fetuses in the name of 'women's rights' and practicing sodomy in the name of marriage 'equality.' All of these progressive insights emanate from Satan, who has 'transformed' himself as an angel of light. Similarly, ditchism in religion (veering from one extreme or the other, such as overly strict or overly lenient) leads to unpleasant imbalances. Relying solely on human intellect is one such ditch when it is isolated from the heart and from practice. Proper knowledge must always be joined to the will of God. A person who is puffed up parades his knowledge either by exhibiting impatience, intolerance, or an obsequious false modesty, marginalizing what they consider to be the weak or uneducated. Some prideful people, caught up in their wealth of knowledge, are rendered totally useless in serving others. Conversely, the love of Christ surpasses all knowledge, putting us into proper humble and lowly perspective; to know and love God is to understand Him. Knowledge of God creates love for God as well as perfecting our relationships with others. The happiest people in the church are those who

know His teachings and practice them 24 hours a day, growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord, actively practicing love as motivated by God's Holy Spirit, instill

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Whatever Happened to Gnosticism? Part One: False Knowledge](#)**

by David C. Grabbe

"Gnosticism" sounds like an old and very dry Greek philosophy, the subject of a somnolent college lecture. Not so, says David Grabbe. Gnosticism is very much in vogue today in books and movies—and in the belief systems of a great many people who profess to be Christian.

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