



WNC: Winter Series  
LETTERS from PRISON: WEEK 4 –COLOSSIANS I  
Philemon\*Colossians\*Ephesians\*Philippians

Week 1: Meeting Paul  
Week 2: Philemon  
Week 3: Enter Colossae

**COLOSSIANS: “The highest doctrine concerning Jesus Christ in the New Testament.”**

The Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible pg 2137

“this Epistle ... to express it in one word, **distinguishes the true Christ from a fictitious one.**”<sup>1</sup>

What happens when someone continues to harp on one point?

- Roll our eyes?
- If we respect them, we get more curious
- We ask **WHY** are they doing this.

Once accepted as Truth:

- We find ways to apply their message.
- We need to seek to understand Christ – man and Lord
- How to live with Him as the CENTER of our life.
- Paul labels everyone who adheres to religious practices not centered on Christ as captives to an **“empty and deceitful philosophy according to human tradition ... not according to Christ”** (2:8).<sup>2</sup>
- The Church in Colossae began during **that period of prodigious missionary and evangelistic activity associated with the apostle’s Ephesian ministry** (c. AD 52 to 55).
- So effective were the daily evangelistic ‘dialogues’ held in the hall of Tyrannus, where Paul’s bold speaking compelled men’s attention during the long siesta period (the first lunch-hour lectures recorded), that it is possible for Luke to claim that ‘all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks’ (Acts 19:8–10).<sup>3</sup>
- Paul was notable for sharing his ministry, converts were soon trained and equipped to be his associates in spreading the gospel far and wide.

**Possibly** – Epaphras, who had come from Colossae in the Lycus valley:

- was brought to faith in Christ. A hard worker

**Colossians 4:13** *For I testify for him that he has worked strenuously for you and for the believers in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis.*

Epaphras – quickly developed into a mature servant of Christ.

Paul calls 1:7 *You learned it from Epaphras, who is the fellow slave we love and Christ’s faithful minister for your sake.*

It was this man whose privilege it was to become the evangelist to his own people.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pao, D. W. (2012). [Colossians and Philemon](#) (p. 19). Zondervan.

<sup>2</sup> Pao, D. W. (2012). [Colossians and Philemon](#) (p. 19). Zondervan.

<sup>3</sup> Lucas, R. C. (1980). [Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon](#) (pp. 18–20). InterVarsity Press.

<sup>4</sup> Lucas, R. C. (1980). [Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon](#) (pp. 18–20). InterVarsity Press.



- So resonated with Paul: **1 Corinthians 15:10**,

*10 But by the [remarkable] grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not without effect. In fact, I worked harder than all of the apostles, though it was not I, but the grace of God [His unmerited favor and blessing which was] with me. AMP*

{Colossians 1:29 For this I labor [often to the point of exhaustion], striving with His power *and* energy, which so greatly works within me.}

- The immediate result of the ministry of Epaphras was the planting of new churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis as well as at Colossae.

For these congregations Epaphras worked and prayed with good success: we know this because some years later (c. AD 62), on a visit to Paul who was now under house arrest in Rome, **he can report on that hallmark of genuine Christian life, love**, as being characteristic of these believing communities (1:8).<sup>5</sup>

- Before the Church in Colossae grew strong, there was “*other, more disturbing, tendencies*”(Lucas)
- This conversation between Epaphras and Paul, resulted in this letter to the Colossians.

WHAT were these tendencies?

*The nature of the ‘Colossian heresy’ has been discussed for over a hundred years since Lightfoot wrote his great commentary on Colossians (1875). But it is still not known exactly what was the ‘false teaching’ that threatened the peace and stability of the Colossian Christians and their near neighbours.*<sup>6</sup>

Universal opinion: False Teachers (being now challenged by



However, Dr. M.D. Hooker of Cambridge:

- She argues that there were no such heretics in the Colossian community. She points out that, unlike the situation with the Galatians, there is no evidence that the church at Colossae had succumbed to distressing error. Evidence is also lacking for the existence of false teaching with regard to Christ. Dr Hooker concludes that a more likely explanation is that **young converts** were under external pressure to conform ‘to the beliefs and practices of their pagan and Jewish neighbours’. Paul’s emphasis on the uniqueness and supremacy of Christ’s work in creation and redemption is therefore to be seen as a reminder that they had no need to look elsewhere for completion of salvation outside of Christ.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Lucas, R. C. (1980). [Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon](#) (pp. 18–20). InterVarsity Press.

<sup>6</sup> Lucas, R. C. (1980). [Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon](#) (pp. 18–20). InterVarsity Press.

<sup>7</sup> Lucas, R. C. (1980). [Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon](#) (pp. 18–20). InterVarsity Press.



•Colossians I •

A customary greeting introduces us to one of Paul’s **most powerful and attractive letters**, written from prison to a young church in the province of Asia. <sup>8</sup>

**(CEB) Greeting Colossians 1:1-14**

**1** From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will, and Timothy our brother.

**2** To the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

**Thanksgiving and prayer for the Colossians**

**3** We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. **4** We’ve done this since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all God’s people.

**5** You have this faith and love because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. You previously heard about this hope through the true message, the good news, **6** which has come to you. This message has been bearing fruit and growing among you since the day you heard and truly understood God’s grace, in the same way that it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world. **7** You learned it from Epaphras, who is the fellow slave we love and Christ’s faithful minister for your sake. **8** He informed us of your love in the Spirit.

**9** Because of this, since the day we heard about you, we haven’t stopped praying for you and asking for you to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. **10** We’re praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way: by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; **11** by being strengthened through his glorious might so that you endure everything and have patience; **12** and by giving thanks with joy to the Father. He made it so you could take part in the inheritance, in light granted to God’s holy people. **13** He rescued us from the control of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. **14** He set us free through the Son and forgave our sins.

**Hymn about Christ’s work**

<sup>15</sup>The Son is the image of the invisible God, the one who is first over all creation.<sup>16</sup> Because all things were created by him: both in the heavens and on the earth, the things that are visible and the things that are invisible. Whether they are thrones or powers, or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He existed before all things, and all things are held together in him.

<sup>18</sup> He is the head of the body, the church who is the beginning, the one who is firstborn from among the dead!<sup>19</sup> so that he might occupy the first place in everything. <sup>20</sup> Because all the fullness of God was pleased to live in him, <sup>21</sup> and he reconciled all things to himself through him— whether things on earth or in the heavens. He brought peace through the blood of his cross.

<sup>22</sup> Once you were alienated from God and you were enemies with him in your minds, which was shown by your evil actions.<sup>23</sup> But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death, to present you before God as a people who are holy, faultless, and without blame. <sup>24</sup> But you need to remain well established and rooted in faith and not shift away from the hope given in the good news that you heard. This message has been preached throughout all creation under heaven. And I, Paul, became a servant of this good news.

**Paul’s service for the church**

<sup>24</sup> Now I’m happy to be suffering for you. I’m completing what is missing from Christ’s sufferings with my own body. I’m doing this for the sake of his body, which is the church. <sup>25</sup> I became a servant of the church by God’s commission, which was given to me for you, in order to complete God’s word. <sup>26</sup> I’m completing it with a secret plan<sup>27</sup> that has been hidden for ages and generations but which has now been revealed to his holy people. <sup>27</sup> God wanted to make the glorious riches of this secret plan<sup>28</sup> known among the Gentiles, which is Christ living in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup> This is what we preach as we warn and teach every person with all wisdom so that we might present each one mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> I work hard and struggle for this goal with his energy, which works in me powerfully.

<sup>8</sup> Lucas, R. C. (1980). *Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon* (pp. 18–20). InterVarsity Press.



**COLOSSIANS 1:1-8**

1. Heresy or Heretics?
2. What does LOVE got to do with being A Colossian?
3. The Colossian Philosophy

- CHECK UP: Am I a COLOSSIAN?

**(AMP) Greeting Colossians 1:1-8; 9-14**

**Thankfulness for Spiritual Attainments**

**1** Paul, an apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed) by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

**2**To the <sup>(a)</sup>saints and faithful <sup>(b)</sup>believers in Christ [who are] at Colossae: Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God our Father.

- a. [[Colossians 1:2](#) Every born-again believer (saint) has been reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, made holy and set apart for God’s purpose.]
- b. [Colossians 1:2](#) Lit *brethren*.

**3**We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we pray always for you,

**TYPICAL PAUL – Giving Thanks**  
**1:6, 10**  
The first OT allusion occurs in 1:6, 10, the former a part of the thanksgiving, and the latter a part of a prayer based on the thanksgiving (translations of Scripture quotations are mine or the NASB [1971 edition]):

**Gen. 1:28**

**Col. 1:6, 10**

“**Increase** [*auxanō*] and **multiply** [*plēthynō*] and fill the earth ... and rule over ... **all the earth** [*pasēs tēs gēs*].” (LXX)

“in **all the world** [*panti tō kosmō*] also it [the word of truth, the gospel] is **bearing fruit** [*karpophoreō*] and **increasing** [*auxanō*]” (1:6)

“**Be fruitful** and multiply, and fill the earth ... and rule ... the earth.” (MT)

“in every good work **bearing fruit** [*karpophoreō*] and **increasing** [*auxanō*]” (1:10)

Note that Gen. 1:26 has “rule over ... **all the earth**” in both LXX and MT (also, “all the earth” appears in Gen. 1:29).

Several commentators have noticed that 1:6, 10 are an allusion to Gen. 1:28 (and perhaps 1:22<sup>9</sup>)

<sup>9</sup> Beale, G. K. (2007). [Colossians](#). In *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (p. 842). Baker Academic; Apollos.



<sup>4</sup> for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus [how you lean on Him with absolute confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness], and of the [unselfish] <sup>α</sup>love which you have for all the saints (God's people);

- c. [Colossians 1:4](#) The key to understanding this and other statements about love is to know that this love (the Greek word *agape*) is not so much a matter of emotion as it is of **doing things for the benefit of another person**, that is, having an unselfish concern for another and a willingness to seek the best for another.

<sup>5</sup> because of the [confident] hope [of experiencing that] which is reserved *and* waiting for you in heaven. You previously heard of this *hope* in the message of truth, the gospel [regarding salvation] <sup>6</sup> which has come to you. Indeed, just as in the whole world *the gospel* is constantly bearing fruit and spreading [by God's power], just as *it has been doing* among you ever since the day you first heard *of it* and understood the grace of God in truth [becoming thoroughly and deeply acquainted with it]. <sup>7</sup> You learned it from [our representative] Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf <sup>8</sup> and he also has told us of your love [well-grounded and nurtured] in the [Holy] Spirit.

- WHO are the Colossians?
- Would we want to go to church there...I mean BE the church with them?
- There is a shadow here...WHAT did Epaphras tell Paul about them?
- Am I like the Colossians? Could my name be listed in this letter?

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## 1. Heretics V.S. Heresy?

Clue from last week's ending verse:

**Colossians 1:21-23** CEB

<sup>21</sup> Once you were alienated from God and you were enemies with him in your minds, which was shown by your evil actions.<sup>22</sup> But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death, to present you before God as a people who are holy, faultless, and without blame. <sup>23</sup> **But you need to remain well established and rooted in faith and not shift away from the hope given in the good news that you heard.** This message has been preached throughout all creation under heaven. And I, Paul, became a servant of this good news.

Another Clue:

**Colossians 1:4**

<sup>4</sup> for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus [how you lean on Him with absolute confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness], and of the [unselfish] <sup>α</sup>love which you have for all the saints (God's people);

**I am aligning with Heresy.**

Does not seem to match the approach Paul took with the Galatians:



### Galatians 1:6-10

#### (AMP) Perversion of the Gospel

<sup>6</sup> I am astonished *and* extremely irritated that you are so quickly shifting your allegiance *and* deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different [even contrary] gospel; <sup>7</sup> which is really not another [gospel]; but there are [obviously] <sup>Ⓢ</sup>some [people masquerading as teachers] who are disturbing *and* confusing you [with a misleading, counterfeit teaching] and want to distort the gospel of Christ [twisting it into something which it absolutely is not]. <sup>8</sup> But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we [originally] preached to you, let him be condemned to destruction! <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so I now say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel different from that which you received [from us], let him be condemned to destruction! <sup>10</sup> Am I now <sup>Ⓢ</sup>trying to win the favor *and* approval of men, or of God? Or am I seeking to please someone? If I were still trying to be popular with men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

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Paul knew this thread of philosophy was poison.  
Out of LOVE he needed to communicate WHY.

## 2. What does LOVE got to do with being A Colossian?

### Colossians 1:4

<sup>4</sup> for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus [how you lean on Him with absolute confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness], and of the [unselfish] <sup>Ⓢ</sup>love which you have for all the saints (God's people);

- a. [Colossians 1:4](#) The key to understanding this and other statements about love is to know that this love (the Greek word *agape*) is not so much a matter of emotion as it is of **doing things for the benefit of another person**, that is, having an unselfish concern for another and a willingness to seek the best for another.

### Today, what agape have I done?

AGAPE = **Love**. First and last word in Christian theology and ethics. It is therefore important to understand clearly this exceedingly ambiguous term.<sup>10</sup>

### What does AGAPE mean?

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<sup>10</sup> White, R. E. O. (1988). [Love](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 1357). Baker Book House.



**WRITE AGAPE ATTRIBUTES ON THE BOARD**

O.T. – Hebrew Word

**Sexual Love:**

Adam & Eve / Jacob & Rachel / Song of Songs

**tormenting lust** (2 Sm 13:1–15),

**parental love** (Gn 37:4),

and both **sexual and divine love** in one context (Hos 3:1).

The **love of friends** (1 Sm 20:17),

David's love having some ground in gratitude, Jonathan's in admiration, but with an element of altruistic self-renunciation as the crown prince stepped down for David's sake.

- For this strong, unselfish love the OT usually employed another word, **almost untranslatable, *hesed***, rendered sometimes "**loyalty**" (2 Sm 22:26 RSV), more often "**steadfast love**" (Gn 39:21) or "**kindness.**"

***Hesed* is not an emotional response to beauty, merit, or kindness, but a moral attitude dedicated to another's good, whether or not that other is lovable, worthy, or responsive (see Dt 7:7–9).**<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup>"The Lord did not love you and choose you because you were greater in number than any of the *other* peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. <sup>8</sup>But because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed (bought) you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. <sup>9</sup>Therefore know [without any doubt] *and* understand that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who is keeping His covenant and His [steadfast] lovingkindness to a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;

N.T.

***In the New Testament.*** Christianity inherited this strongly moral connotation of love, not always remembered by those who sentimentalize the love ethic.

## **Agapē**

- Of Greek words **available**, *eros* (sexual love) does not occur in the NT;
- *phileō*, spontaneous natural affection, with more feeling than reason, occurs some 25 times,
- *philadelphia* (brotherly love) 5 times,
- *philia* (friendship) only in James 4:4;
- *storgē*, natural affection between kinfolk, appears occasionally in compounds.
- *agapē*, generally assumed to mean moral goodwill

<sup>11</sup> White, R. E. O. (1988). [Love](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 1357). Baker Book House.



which proceeds **from esteem, principle, or duty**, rather than attraction or charm.

- *Agapē* means to love the undeserving, despite disappointment and rejection; the difference between *agapaō* and *phileō* is difficult to sustain in all passages.
- *Agapē* is especially appropriate for religious love.
- *Agapē* was long believed to be a Christian coinage, but pagan occurrences have recently been claimed. The verb *agapaō* was frequent in the Greek OT. Though *agapē* has more to do with moral principle than with inclination or liking, it never means the cold religious kindness shown from duty alone, as scriptural examples abundantly prove.

## **Hesed**

*The Synoptic Gospels.* Jesus embodied the concept of *hesed* in the all-caring, all-inclusive fatherhood of God, shown toward just and unjust, far exceeding the divine concern for ephemeral grass, falling sparrow, or untoiling lilies of the field. <sup>12</sup>

### **Luke 12:22-28 [AMP]**

<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to His disciples, “For this reason I tell you, **do not worry about your life\***,

**\*Do not worry about your life = Freedom of worry due to Trust**

as to what you will eat; or about your body, as to what you will wear.<sup>(a)</sup> <sup>23</sup> For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. <sup>24</sup> Consider the ravens, for they neither sow [seed] nor reap [the crop]; they have no storehouse or barn, **and yet God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than the birds! \*\***

**\*\*Trust in God because He created this world with our care in mind**

<sup>25</sup> And which of you by worrying can add one hour to his life’s span? <sup>26</sup> So if you are not even able to do a very little thing [such as that], why are you worried about the rest? <sup>27</sup> Consider the lilies *and* wildflowers, how they grow [in the open field]. They neither labor nor spin [wool to make clothing]; yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory *and* splendor dressed himself like one of these.<sup>(a)</sup> <sup>28</sup> But if this is how God clothes the grass which is in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, **\*\*\*how much more will He clothe you?** You of little faith!

**\*\*\*Our value was a direct part of His consideration in that creation.**

SAFETY. PERSONAL. KINDNESS.

### **Matthew 5:44-4**

<sup>12</sup> White, R. E. O. (1988). [Love](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, pp. 1357–1360). Baker Book House.



44 But I say to you, <sup>(a)</sup>love [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for] your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>(A)</sup> 45 so that you may [show yourselves to] be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on those who are evil and on those who are good, and makes the rain fall on the righteous [those who are morally upright] and the unrighteous [the unrepentant, those who oppose Him]. 46 For if you love [only] those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do that?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers [wishing them God’s blessing and peace], what more [than others] are you doing? Do not even the Gentiles [who do not know the Lord] do that?<sup>48</sup> You, therefore, will be perfect [growing into spiritual maturity both in mind and character, actively integrating godly values into your daily life], as your heavenly Father is perfect. <sup>(B)</sup>

**Footnotes**

- a. [Matthew 5:44](#) The key to understanding this and other statements about love is to know that this love (the Greek word *agape*) is not so much a matter of emotion as it is of doing things for the benefit of another person, that is, having an unselfish concern for another and a willingness to seek the best for another.

**Proverbs 25:21-22 (AMP) – cf. MT 5:44**

21 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;<sup>(A)</sup> 22 For in doing so, you will <sup>(a)</sup>heap coals of fire upon his head, And the Lord will reward you.

*Footnotes*

- a. [Proverbs 25:22](#) This expression may refer to an Egyptian custom in which a penitent man carried a pan of coals on his head as a sign of repentance. The message of these verses is the admonition to return good for evil in the hope that your enemy will be moved to repentance.

**Leviticus 19:2 (AMP) – cf. MT 5:48**

2 “Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.’<sup>(A)</sup>

**1 Peter 1:15 (AMP) – cf. Lev 19:2**

15 But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all *your* conduct [be set apart from the world by your godly character and moral courage];

**Hosea 2:19-20**

“And I will betroth you (Israel) to Me **forever**;  
Yes, I will betroth you to Me in **righteousness** and in **justice**,  
In **lovingkindness and loyalty**, and in **compassion**.

20 “I will betroth you to Me in **stability** and in **faithfulness**.

Then you will **know** (recognize, appreciate) the Lord[and respond with loving faithfulness].

- Examine the list on the Board.



- Take a pic.
- Which ones have I done today?

THE Scale: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • 10

## COLOSSIANS 1:1-8

1. Heresy or Heretics?
2. What does LOVE got to do with being A Colossian?
3. The Colossian Philosophy

- CHECK UP: Am I a COLOSSIAN?

### 3. The Colossian Philosophy

#### Colossians 2:8

<sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception [pseudo-intellectual babble], according to the tradition [and musings] of *mere* men, following the [elementary] principles of this world, rather than following [the truth—the teachings of] Christ.

#### Philosophy =

Empty deception. Traditions. Worldly Principles

#### DEFINING:

- Philosophy

Definitions from [Oxford Languages](#) · [Learn more](#)

/fəˈlāsəfē/

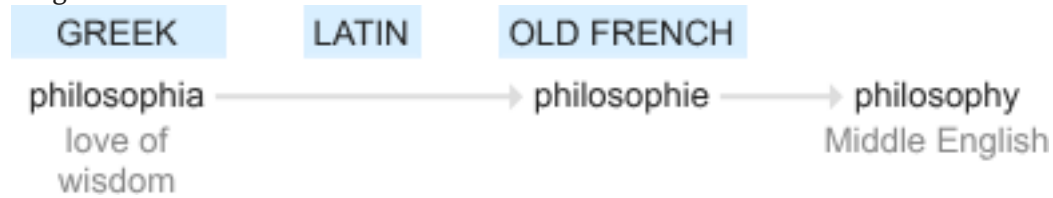
noun

noun: **philosophy**

1. the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline.
  - the study of the theoretical basis of a particular branch of knowledge or experience.  
"the philosophy of science"  
Similar: Thinking. Reasoning. Thought. Wisdom. Knowledge.
  - a theory or attitude held by a person or organization that acts as a guiding principle for behavior.  
Similar: Beliefs. Credo. Faith. Convictions. Ideology. Ideas. Thinking. Notions. Theories. Doctrine. Tenets. Values. Principles. Ethics. Attitude. Line. View. Viewpoint. Outlook. world view



Origin



Middle English: from Old French *philosophie*, via Latin from Greek *philosophia* ‘love of wisdom’.  
 Use over time for: philosophy



The PROBLEM arises when we assume or, more likely, another person attempts to convince us that THIS philosophy in bedrock truth....that presents itself as an **alternative** to or as an **element** that can be combined with faith in Christ.

**1828:**

**PHILOS'OPHY**, *noun* [Latin *philosophia*; Gr. love, to love, and wisdom.]

1. Literally, the love of wisdom. But in modern acceptance, *philosophy* is a general term denoting an explanation of the reasons of things; or an investigation of the causes of all phenomena both of mind and of matter. When applied to any particular department of knowledge, it denotes the collection of general laws or principles under which all the subordinate phenomena or facts relating to that subject, are comprehended. **Thus, that branch of philosophy which treats of God, etc. is called theology; that which treats of nature, is called physics or natural philosophy; that which treats of man is called logic and ethics, or moral philosophy; that which treats of the mind is called intellectual or mental philosophy or metaphysics.**

The objects of *philosophy* are to ascertain facts or truth, and the causes of things or their phenomena; to enlarge our views of God and his works, and to render our knowledge of both practically useful and subservient to human happiness.

**True religion and true philosophy must ultimately arrive at the same principle.**

**CLUES within the letter of Colossians:**



The philosophy was clearly indebted to Judaism in some form <sup>13</sup>

**Judaism:**

the Sabbath (2:16)  
circumcision (2:11)  
food laws (2:21).

And

**Mysticism:**

the “powers” (1:16; 2:8, 10, 15),  
the “worship of angels” (2:18),  
asceticism (2:21–23),  
festivals (2:16),  
and wisdom (1:9, 2:3, 23; 3:16) .<sup>14</sup>

1. It involved regulations concerning food and drink, the observance of a ritual calendar including new moons, sabbaths and other festivals (Col 2:16; 21).
2. Self-abasement and “worship of angels” were a constituent part, perhaps as a precursor to experiencing visions, perhaps as part of what was seen in visions (Col 2:18). The phrase “worship of angels” is particularly problematic since it can mean “angelic worship” or “the worship of angels [by human beings]”. The picture of the philosophy will be very different depending on which way we go.
3. It involved other taboos, particularly against touching or handling certain things (Col 2:21), though the text leaves tantalizingly unspecified *what* was not supposed to be touched.
4. In large part these regulations and taboos were understood to constitute a kind of asceticism, a rigorous limitation of bodily indulgences (abstinence from certain pleasures and other forms of self-denial) held to facilitate spiritual progress (Col 2:23; reflected indirectly in Col 3:5–11).



Indirectly, the letter further suggests that

5. Spiritual entities like “the elemental spirits of the cosmos”, “powers”, “principalities” and the like played an important part in the theoretical or practical content of this philosophy (Col 1:16; 2:8–10, 15, 20).
6. The philosophy *may* have promoted itself as inducting its devotees into the knowledge or mysteries known to the spiritual elite, thus presenting itself as having something new and

<sup>13</sup> Bird, M. F. (2009). [Colossians and Philemon](#) (p. 26). Cascade Books.

<sup>14</sup> Bird, M. F. (2009). [Colossians and Philemon](#) (p. 26). Cascade Books.



WNC: Winter Series

LETTERS from PRISON: WEEK 4 –COLOSSIANS I

Philemon\*Colossians\*Ephesians\*Philippians

important to offer even those who had been inducted into the Christian philosophy (Col 1:9; 2:2–3, 9–10).<sup>15</sup>

### COLOSSIANS 1:1-8

1. Heresy or Heretics?
2. What does LOVE got to do with being A Colossian?
3. The Colossian Philosophy

- **CHECK UP: Am I a COLOSSIAN?**

[Review love list on the Whiteboard]

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<sup>15</sup> deSilva, D. A. (2004). [\*An introduction to the New Testament: contexts, methods and ministry formation\*](#) (pp. 692–693). InterVarsity Press.