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# **WORLDVIEW**

**WHAT WE BELIEVE, WHAT THEY BELIEVE, AND WHY THEY ARE WRONG**

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# WORLDVIEW

WHAT WE BELIEVE, WHAT THEY BELIEVE, AND WHY THEY ARE WRONG

KEVIN SWANSON



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# **PART I**

## **WHAT IS TRUE?**





## INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble. (Proverbs 4:18-19)

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**T**hose of us who live in the developed world in the 21st century find ourselves in a massive worldview war and the stakes are extremely high. It is a war of ideas, and, as one thinker put it, “Ideas have consequences.” That should be an obvious truism, even an understatement. As Jesus said, “Ye shall know the teachers by their fruits,” or by the consequences of their ideas. The consequences of the post-Christian ideas in our world have been extremely destructive. Secularism or naturalistic materialism as a worldview, is the dry rot of a civilization. The ideas of the wicked are deceptive and absent of light — and all who follow their ideas will inevitably stumble when they attempt to live out those ideas. Conversely, the path of the just becomes more plain, because the light of God’s truth shines upon them. Because powerful governments control almost every university, secondary, and primary educational institution today, those who hold to a Christian

worldview are very much in the minority. At least 99% of universities (private and public) in this country are financed and controlled by the Federal and State Governments through student loan programs and other financing. About 95% of the secondary and primary schools are financed by governments. The fear of God and a Christian worldview are expressly banned from these schools by federal mandate. We are heavily outnumbered in this worldview conflict.

A worldview is a network or web of presuppositions by which we interpret data, organize facts, and assess all other propositions. All worldviews are not equally true. Or, to put it another way, the worldview claiming “There is no God” and that worldview which states “There is a God” cannot both be true. One worldview is better than the others, because it is true and the others are not. That truthful worldview, therefore, is the only worldview which can provide the preconditions for intelligibility and a right interpretation of the universe. Only the Christian worldview provides these preconditions because it is based on God’s truth, and this basic structure of thought maintains an internal coherence and a rational explanation for man’s thinking and life. All other worldviews are inherently destructive, especially so when those who adhere to them are self-consistent and live by the worldviews they profess.

The presuppositions that make up a worldview ask fundamental questions, such as: What is real? Does God exist? What is right and wrong? What is truth? What is man’s essential value or purpose? What is man’s essential problem? We will boil a worldview down to five basic questions:

*A worldview is a network or web of presuppositions by which we interpret data, organize facts, and assess all other propositions.*

1. What is true, and how do we know it is true? This is usually referred to as epistemology.

2. What is real? This is usually referred to as metaphysics.
3. What is right and wrong? This is usually referred to as ethics.
4. What is man's basic problem?
5. How is man saved from this problem?

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8, NKJV)

Sadly, the world has bamboozled Christians into thinking that what is taught in the schools (in the history, science, psychology, and literature classes) are unbiased and neutral. This is how they have robbed Christians of their faith over the last six generations. They claim not to be biased, while they are biased, and while they shame Christians for their bias. It is a sophisticated con game played at the highest levels of academia. Generation after generation, our children are cheated through worldly philosophies, according to the basic principles of the world (false worldviews).

Therefore, the Christian student must be aware of the conflict of disparate worldviews. If they will operate in this world, they should understand what false worldviews teach and why they are wrong. They must be equipped to “pull down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

Worldviews may be hard to detect on the surface. Merely surveying the floors and the floor coverings of buildings will not discover the concrete foundation and footers that lie under the surface. A quick survey of a newscast, a chemistry textbook, a documentary film, or a fiction novel won't immediately reveal the worldview presuppositions that lie underneath the information conveyed. It takes a healthy degree of worldview savvy, a self-consciousness of one's own worldview, a thoughtful consideration of the text, a realization of the author's emphases or lack of emphases, an understanding of the heart and life of the author (or producer) to get at the heart of the worldview. Yet, when Christians absorb themselves in the zeitgeist contained in media and

educational resources without discernment for years on end, they will find themselves thoroughly committed to the wrong worldview, especially if they have not been well-disciplined in a Christian world and life view.

## CHAPTER 1

# WHAT IS TRUTH?

For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.  
(Psalm 36:9)

---

**W**here would we be without light? As anybody who has ever walked in darkness could testify, absence of light makes it impossible to see anything. There would be no definition to any of the surrounding reality. Submerged in pitch darkness, all definition to our surroundings is lost. We could not describe what is in front of us, nor could we ever find our way. Where are we and where are we going? Neither of these questions can be answered without light. How hopeless and aimless is the case of those who have no light! But, thanks be to God, it is by His light that we see light. There is no other possibility for light, than with God. For “He is light, and in Him is there no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

Truth works like light. When there is no light in the room, you cannot see reality for how it really is. Everything looks dark, and there are no colors and shapes for you to see. If you were to charge into the room, you would bump into things and, no doubt, fall down on the floor. Without a light on the

situation there is no way of knowing what reality looks like. Truth describes reality accurately, so that you can walk without falling down.

At the trial of Jesus, Pilate asked the question, “What is Truth?” The Roman procurator didn’t realize that Truth was standing right in front of him. Earlier in His ministry, Jesus had said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Truth, therefore, must be personal. Truth is the personal revelation of God to man. To know God in truth is to know that which is true, and this knowledge comes through Jesus Christ, His Son.

*What is Truth?* The question is vitally important to humanity — perhaps it is the most important question of all. What is true? Our very life, our future, and our eternal condition hangs on the right answer to this question.

Truth is the right way to consider or think about something as opposed to the wrong way. If a friend told you that the ice on a lake was two feet thick and sufficient to hold your weight, you would be more likely to venture on to the ice. But, if the ice turned out to be three inches thick, the consequence of you believing and acting upon that lie could be catastrophic. The truth in the case of Jesus’s trial was that He was innocent of any charges that might require the death penalty. Pilate surrendered his interest in the truth by asking the question, as he buckled to political pressure. Later we discover that the Roman Governor committed suicide. Wrong understandings of the world will result in bad actions and effects.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.  
He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth,  
because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh  
of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8:44)

People lie. That’s a fundamental proposition, and any contradiction to that proposition would itself constitute a most radical deception. The world is filled with liars, and they cause a great deal of harm. To lie about the thickness of the ice on a lake brings about devastating consequences for the person who ventures on to the ice and falls through. Jesus called the devil “the father of

lies,” and this is a fundamental reality in a Christian worldview. The devil is not to be trusted, and humans are not to be trusted much either. There are many traps, snares, deceptions, false systems of religion, and misleading notions in this world. There are a great many wizards in this world that “peep and mutter.” So, you have to be on your guard.

Darkness is the absence of light, and lies are the absence of truth. “If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth” (1 John 1:6). So, to believe lies is to walk in darkness, and the result of walking in darkness is to go the wrong way and to fall.

To respond to this certain fact of the devil’s deceptiveness with paranoia, total skepticism, or perpetual cynicism about every proposition would be to fall into another snare of the devil. The only hope for knowing truth with certainty is to first, know and believe that God has revealed truth to us. The only proper and rational response to

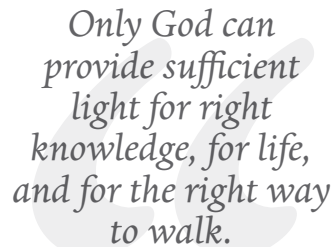
the wizards that peep and mutter is to seek God; or in the words of Isaiah 8:20: “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

I cannot overstate this point. Only God can provide sufficient light for right knowledge, for life, and for the right way to walk. We are entirely, perpetually dependent upon God’s revelation of truth to know anything for certain, to walk the right way, to identify the right destination, and to live eternally.

The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

(Proverbs 4:19)

And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them



*Only God can  
provide sufficient  
light for right  
knowledge, for life,  
and for the right way  
to walk.*



in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. (Isaiah 42:16)

## **KNOWLEDGE**

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts . (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Unlike the animals, man was created with the capacity to know God and to know himself, and to know the rest of God's creation.

There are differences, however, between our knowing and God's knowing. Here are a few of these differences:

1. God knows everything, and we do not. We know a little bit about the atom, but God knows everything about the atom. We can see some of the stars in the heavens, but God can see all of them, all at once. God knows us better than we know ourselves — infinitely so.

2. God knows how everything relates to everything else, and we do not. We can see how one thing relates to another thing or a few other things, but that's about it. Our knowledge is the same as God's knowledge, only in the sense that we can see these limited connections as God sees them. But we cannot see how everything connects to everything else in the universe.

3. God knows what will happen in the future, and we do not. His knowledge of the future is based in His determination of the future.

4. God does not increase in His knowledge. He already knows everything. We increase our knowledge incrementally every day. We are reliant upon our senses to obtain data and learn more about God's universe, while God does not rely on any means to obtain new information.

5. God holds the position of ultimate honor and majesty in that He knows everything. The more we know, the more we realize we do not know. Therefore, the more we learn of true knowledge, the more we are humbled and realize that we do not take the place of the highest honor.

6. God does not forget anything, whereas we quickly forget quite a few things we have learned along the way. Now, it is true that God does not remember our sins, in the sense that He associates those sins with us. Because they have been cast away from us, they are no longer associated with us in His mind. Our sins have been put upon His Son, and then put to death at the cross.

7. God is the source of all knowledge, and we are not. He is the ultimate authority in determining what is true and what is false. We must test what we think we know to be true by some authority. We might refer to an encyclopedia, or to an expert, or to scientific data in order to establish the truthfulness of what we think we know. Because God Himself determines truth, there is no authority to which He would refer to verify what He knows to be true. We are, therefore, always dependent upon God's knowledge for our own knowledge. We are dependent on His light to see light.

8. While God's knowledge is infinite and comprehensive, the Christian's knowledge will be sufficient knowledge for faith and life. Our knowledge of a thing is not absolutely precise or accurate, but the knowledge of it is sufficient for our salvation and life in God. We can know with sufficient accuracy. We can know enough to live life to the highest purpose for which God has created us. We must believe that what God chooses to reveal to us will be sufficient for us. He is good, all wise, and desirous of a relationship with us. Therefore, He will communicate to us the things we need to know for this life.

9. Our knowledge is a mixture of truth and error. Sometimes the puzzle pieces don't fit together very well, and so we lack coherence in our system of knowledge. God's knowledge is perfect, and He maintains a perfect coherence of all there is to know.

10. God's creation and providence (in the natural world and in history) are the workings out of what He planned in His mind. As such, He is the

ultimate Creator bringing something out of nothing, according to His own creativity. Human philosophers, psychologists, artists, and scientists are more discoverers than creators. They do not add to the available knowledge in the universe, but only think God's thoughts after Him (to the extent that they think rationally and produce anything that is good).

## **SIMILARITIES BETWEEN OUR KNOWING AND GOD'S KNOWING**

Now, there are also similarities between our knowing and God's knowing.

1. The source of our knowing is the mind of God, and the same is true of God.
2. We can make distinctions as God makes distinctions between that which is true and that which is false, that which is a dog and that which is a cat. We may have a hard time distinguishing between two things that look very much alike, but that is because we are limited in the number of distinctions we can make.
3. We can also note the same reference points of one thing to another. For example, you know that your mother gave birth to you on a certain day, and God knows the same thing about you.

Given this vast difference between God's knowing and our knowing, now we can see why the Apostle Paul would exclaim this doxology!

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!  
For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?  
Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?  
For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever . Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

## THREE VIEWS OF KNOWLEDGE

There are three different views of knowledge as demonstrated by the following three illustrations:



The first chart demonstrates a rationalist form of knowledge. The box represents the screen of our own minds, and the box within the box is what a person thinks he knows about truth and reality. According to this view of knowledge, everything is supposed to be explained and clearly understood. Those who hold to this form of knowledge think that they know everything, and they can explain everything in a logical manner. There are no mysteries in their foundational understanding of reality, of human nature, of God, and of God's works. Various cults and humanist worldviews will attempt to hold this view. Of course, the problem with this view of knowledge is that we cannot possibly know everything about everything.

The second chart illustrates a completely relativist form of knowledge. The dashed lines mean that we cannot know anything for certain. There is no coherence, and there may be contradictions in this view of knowledge. What we think we know cannot be known for sure to be true. Therefore, this chart represents the abandonment of any real knowledge. Relativism gives up on the possibility of knowing anything. It is irrational and insane — and this is where most of the world lies in the 21st century.

Then, the third chart represents a proper view of real knowledge, based on revealed truth. What God has shown us within the screen of our minds is certainly true. While we do not know what the lines look like outside of the screen, we are certain of the things God has revealed to us within the screen.

We cannot see where the lines meet. We believe that God's knowledge is coherent and non-contradictory. But we cannot fully explain reality as God understands it. There is much about the universe that nobody can explain. Worldly philosophers are stumped as well. Nobody can explain how the world works. How does the whole world run without falling into chaos? How does man retain moral responsibility in a world of chance, or a world that is determined to run a certain way? These are impossible questions to answer. The world cannot answer them, but we can. We explain impossibilities with incomprehensibilities, which only God has figured out. This third chart best comports with Deuteronomy 29:29:

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. (Deuteronomy 29:29)

## **HOW ONE'S VIEW OF REALITY AFFECTS ONE'S VIEW OF TRUTH**

Everyone has a worldview, which means that each person looks at the world through his own pair of glasses. Each person interprets what he sees by the worldview through which he views the world. Using this analogy then, if the glasses are shaded pink, the person looking through the glasses will see the grass as pink. If somebody else wears glasses that are shaded blue, that person will see the grass as blue. Because they each view the world differently, the two could very well argue over the color of the grass. It is the worldview that colors their interpretation of what they see.

But now, the more important question is — which pair of glasses more accurately interprets reality? Which pair of glasses are better than the other? People don't usually question their own worldview. They just assume they have the right worldview. Christian apologetics will provide good tests by which to determine a good or bad worldview. But, suffice it to say, a good

worldview will provide a coherent basis for human thought. One cannot very well “prove” a worldview with certainty, without appealing to omniscience, or somebody who knows all things perfectly, and could determine in every case whether something was true or false. That is why divine revelation is the best way to determine truth with any certainty.

Nevertheless, it would be good and honest, from the outset, to lay out the basic points of the Christian worldview. Here it is in short order:

1. God exists, and He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His attributes (including omniscience) (Heb. 11:6, 1 John 3:20).
2. God created us with the capacity to know the things He has for us to know (Eph. 4:24).
3. God has graciously revealed His truth to us (Deut. 29:29).
4. God’s truth comes with the utmost authority, and we are bound to believe it (Deut. 4:2, Matt. 5:17-19).
5. God reveals His truth to us by special revelation (orally or in writing), and by natural revelation. He intended us to live with special revelation as a guide to right knowing (Ps. 19:1-17).
6. God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18).
7. God is sovereign and all powerful, and able to preserve His Word of truth through all generations (1 Pet. 1:25)

Before we can know anything, these are the things which must be believed. We cannot get on with knowing certain truths, until we have accepted the metaphysical facts that God exists, that God is all sovereign and all powerful, and that He is Himself all knowing. If God was not sovereign and all powerful, how could we be sure he would preserve His Word once revealed to man? If God was not all-knowing, how could we trust His revelation with an absolute certainty?

On the other hand, if God did not reveal His truth to man, then how could we know that He exists? He communicates His existence, His power and glory to man through revelation.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. . . (Hebrews 1:1-3)

## **AUTHORITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Suppose someone told you there were 4,123,456,789,123 ants in Africa at this moment. How would you know this, or, more specifically, how would you know this to be true? How could you claim this knowledge? First, you could not claim to know this fact if it were untrue. If there were more or less ants in Africa than that number, you would have believed a lie. To believe a lie is not to know something. So, the statement would have to be true if you were to claim this as something you know. Then also, there must be some evidence of the truth of the statement. If there was no evidence or basis for the statement, believing the person who said it does not constitute true knowledge. If the person who made the statement was just making up the number on the spot, that statement contributes nothing to your knowing. For a statement to be true and to be known, there must be some reason to believe it. That's why true knowledge has to be justified, true, and believed by the person who claims to know it.

A justified reason for the belief could be an authority who did sufficient research. Or perhaps, some scientist came up with an ant-counting device able to count all the ants on the earth from outer space. Even so, you would still have to trust the expert or the technology producing the count.

Not all authorities are equally trustworthy. These days, people trust scientists mostly, but they still don't know the degree to which the scientists are trustworthy. Here are some of the problems that call into question the trustworthiness of scientists and other people who claim to know things:

- People lie.
- Demons lie to people.
- Scientific equipment is not always very precise. Measurement equipment can break.
- Knowledge is usually communicated, and people make mistakes when they communicate either through oral or written testimony.
- Every fact to be known depends on the reliability of other assumptions believed to be known. Thus, reducing the reliability of each additional fact, given the limited reliability of the assumptions.
- The human brain is limited in its capacity.
- People forget things, and the facts become twisted over time. This applies to historians reporting on something that happened, and scientists who report on their experiments. Can you trust what people tell you, or what is contained in books? The trustworthiness of any person is variable. That means there is a possibility a person is lying to you. There is a possibility that someone has been deceived, or that person has failed to verify the thing he claims to believe, the thing he is communicating to you.

We usually believe people because we are convinced they are trustworthy, or that they are an authority. Teachers are authoritative because they have studied a subject more than others, including their own students. Scientists become authorities on certain subjects (like cancer or rocket boosters), because they have studied in these areas for a long time.

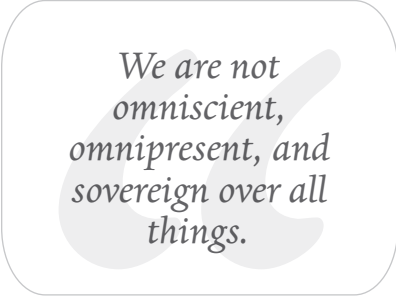
Now, it is difficult to ascertain the level of trustworthiness of any particular person, textbook, or authoritative source. Often, we trust educated people with doctorate degrees because they have been certified by an institution. But who are these people running the institutions? What if the entire institution is deceived by the devil? What if the entire system is fooling millions of people in a similar manner as the tailors and their propaganda program beguiled the Emperor and his kingdom with their “new clothes?”

Because it is impossible to know the level of trustworthiness of every



person, every fact, and every textbook, we are left with a great deal of uncertainty in human knowledge. This is the biggest problem. If you don't know the trustworthiness of a person, how much trust can you place in them? Thankfully, when it comes to scientific inquiry, you can determine probability by repeating an experiment over time. This provides a little bit of understanding as to the probability that a cause-effect relationship might be true and reproducible. However, science is a very limited field of knowledge. The modern world tries to use science to determine the past (evolution), and the future (global warming), the nature of man (psychology), and the existence of God, but these matters are far beyond the capabilities of the field of science.

Do we know anything for sure? Any honest person would admit that you cannot know anything for sure, unless you are omniscient or you hear from one who is omniscient. But to be omniscient, one would have to have collected all the data. One must know about all reality. One must be aware of what everything is made out of, every force in the universe, and every non-material concept that is knowable. That would mean that a person would have to be omnipresent to know everything that is happening right now. One would have to be eternal to know what has happened in the past. And, one must be in total control of the future, in order to know every contingency, and every possible thing that could happen in the future. That's a tall order for a human. We are not omniscient, omnipresent, and sovereign over all things. Our limitations prevent us from knowing anything for certain, in and of ourselves.



*We are not  
omniscient,  
omnipresent, and  
sovereign over all  
things.*

Philosophy is supposed to be the “love of knowledge.” But human philosophy turns out to be a quest for knowledge that always ends in doubt and uncertainty. This was true of the Greeks. And, it is true of modern post-Christian philosophers like René Descartes and John Dewey. Without God, man always ends up in doubt.

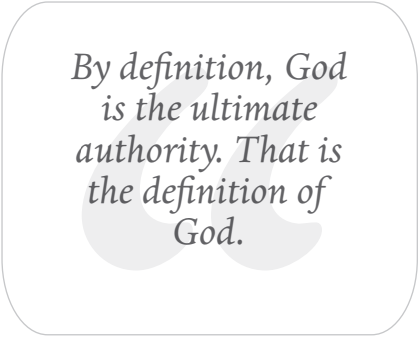
## ULTIMATE AUTHORITY - ULTIMATE TRUSTWORTHINESS

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak. (John 12:46-50)

How would you define an ultimate authority? A university professor takes points off an exam when the student doesn't get the right answer as presented in the class. A much more ultimate standard for authority is set by these words from the Lord in John 12. What earthly authority could ever claim the very words he spoke would be the basis by which his hearers would be judged in the final assize at the end of the world? There can be no higher authority than that. Christ spoke only and ever on the authority of God the Father, and He delivered not one word more than that which the Father would have Him speak.

By definition, God is the ultimate authority. That is the definition of God. He is the very source of all reality and all true knowledge. He determines what is right and wrong. Because He is truth and speaks as the ultimate authority, he is ultimately trustworthy. If God is God, and God exists, to doubt God is not to believe that God is God and that God exists. In other words, one cannot claim to believe in God and then fail to believe what God reveals. That would be not to believe in God.

All other sources of information will be doubtful or relatively untrustworthy, calling for varying levels of doubt. Only God is ultimately trustworthy, and completely unworthy of any distrust. Doubting God must be the most fundamental sin against God and against any and all true knowledge. Doubting God is insanity. Any person who would not doubt himself or doubt every other person in the world before doubting God has given way to irrational pride. As the Apostle Paul states it, “Let God be true and every man a liar!” (Rom. 3:4). The infinite chasm between the finite, mortal, and fallible mind of man and the omniscient mind of God would absolutely and always demand self-doubt over doubting God.



*By definition, God is the ultimate authority. That is the definition of God.*

God is not a man, that He should lie,  
Nor a son of man, that He should repent.  
Has He said, and will He not do?  
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? (Numbers 23:19)

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. (Hebrews 6:13-18)

This doctrine offers us great comfort, primarily because our hope rests in the promises of God. We hang our very souls upon God's promises of forgiveness of sin and an eternal inheritance. But this hope is only possible because of two things: 1) The immutability of God's counsel or Word, and 2) The oath He takes by Himself.

When a notary seals an official document such as a will, the heir has the assurance that he will receive the inheritance. The signatories may have even taken an oath in the presence of witnesses to confirm the truthfulness of the document. For our assurance, however, God seals the document with His own name, a reputation of ultimate trustworthiness based upon His own essential truthfulness; and then confirms it with an oath that cannot be broken. These attestations render a great deal of confidence and an unbreakable hope to those who depend upon contractual promises.

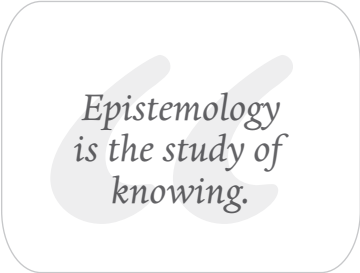
## **IN CONTRAST. . . WITH OTHER WORLDVIEWS**

To assist with a better understanding of one's own worldview, there is some value to drawing contrasts with other worldviews. Every worldview or religion maintains some view of knowledge — and the Christian view is superior to all others. That must be assumed within the framework of this worldview; if God is the source of truth and if others contradict the most basic truths presented in divine revelation, they must be wrong. In fact, we go so far as to say that all other worldviews or religious perspectives are foolish, deceptive, and devilish. These are the wizards that peep and mutter, and there is no light in them (Is. 8:19).

## **RANDOM OR HIGHLY INSUFFICIENT THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE**

Epistemology is the study of knowing. What is the standard or basis for determining what is true? Most people have never thought about thinking, or

developed a theory about knowing. Generally, people are quite opinionated about certain things, and they believe they know a particular thing is true without thinking much about the basis for that knowledge. They take their own existence for granted. They assume that stealing is wrong, especially if somebody robs their house. They consider themselves to be nice people. They may or may not believe in a god or gods, but if a god exists, they are pretty sure of one thing — the gods are happy with them. Some believe there is no god. They may think of themselves as cosmic dust floating around a universe of pure chance. They may believe that man appeared on the earth by evolutionary processes. They may believe government is responsible for saving man from his troubles. They think they know all these things, because an expert told them that was the case. They might assume that a majority of scientists or experts agree on the matter. They believe their university teachers. They believe media pundits.



*Epistemology  
is the study of  
knowing.*

Suppose that 100,000 smart people (university professors or scientists) told you that you do not exist. That's a pretty fundamental proposition. It cannot be proven one way or the other, in any ultimate sense, either by science or by observation.

The question to ask then is this. How do these smart people know this to be the case? Who said they were smart people? Who gave them their college degrees? Are they in the position to know these things about a very ultimate question relating to life?

When examining the foundations in the edifice of knowledge, we must insist on examining the basis for knowing. We must force the question. . . How do you know this is true? If an unbeliever were to be honest, he would have to admit that he has no basis for knowing, and he has no desire to pursue the true basis of knowing. He always reverts to irrationality over against seeking out a reasonable basis for knowledge. He insists upon suppressing the truth in

unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).

## SCIENCE

Most unbelievers in Western society point to science as the basis for their knowing. However, the definition of science has become increasingly slippery, and once again, dishonesty governs the business of science these days. Science cannot provide any absolutely sure knowledge at 100.00% certainty. Science can describe something observed, and distinguish one thing from another. Science concludes cause-and-effect relationships at certain probabilities. But science is totally incapable of determining the origin of the universe, the origin of the fundamental laws of nature, the extreme fine-tuning of the universe, the origin of consciousness, and the existence of moral, rational, and aesthetic objective laws. Science cannot determine man's worth in the universe, man's purpose, man's existence, or the existence of anything within the universe, or the existence of God. These are ultimate questions.

Here is another important maxim. The more fundamental the question to be answered in the quest for human knowledge, the more critical is the need for certainty. That is because the edifice of human knowledge is built up on the fundamental propositions. Science may conclude with 99% probability that gravity exists (by dropping an object 100 times), but science cannot conclude with 99% probability that God exists or doesn't exist. Science cannot draw conclusions concerning the rightness or wrongness in ethics, with any probability. Science gives no absolutes and no universal laws with absolute certainty. Thus, without a foundation for knowledge, science is no good for producing a system of knowledge.

With science then, you might be pretty sure of a window existing in the edifice of knowledge. But you have no assurance whatsoever concerning the fundamental propositions that lie at the foundation of knowing.

## THE PHILOSOPHERS

Whether it be with the Zoroastrians, ancient Greek philosophers, or the post-Christian philosophers of the 17th to the 20th centuries, man has attempted the search for a basis for truth using his own reason or his own empirical study of the world. Throughout human history, there were effectively two “heroic” attempts to build a system of knowledge on the foundation of human reason – that of the pre-Christian world of the Greeks, and the post-Christian world of Western apostates.

Rationalists like Rene Descartes were hoping human reason could determine some ultimate truth. Empiricists like John Locke or David Hume relied on the senses to determine some true knowledge. And, the subjectivists look for meaning and knowledge within themselves.

In all cases, the finite mind of man was supposed to be the source of this knowledge. Humanist philosophers set out to discover ultimate truths, but because these smart people could not know everything about the world, they could not come upon foundational truths. Descartes’ rationalistic attempt to find an idea that was “clear and distinct” was a failure, eventually turning into Leibniz’s bizarre speculations. Locke’s empiricism ended in David Hume’s skepticism.

Twentieth century philosophy gave up on identifying ultimate truths. Instead, Nietzsche, Dewey, and Sartre settled on identifying ideas that were found to be useful, pragmatic, or problem-solving. They all capitulated to Nietzsche’s nihilism — the idea that the world is chaos and not understandable, ultimate truths are unknowable, and meaning or purpose of life is sheer nonsense.

Man-derived philosophy always oscillated between rationalism and irrationalism, settling into irrationalism at the end. Rationalism was the optimistic position that the human mind could judge between truth and falsehood. Irrationalism would then concede that human reason was insufficient to the task, and surrender the possibility of knowing anything for certain.

Human philosophers were entirely incapable of achieving any consensus or agreement on basic epistemological principles relating to human knowledge. There is no agreement among the smartest unbelievers in the world on determining the truthfulness of any basic proposition. Thus, no foundation for knowledge and education can be had among the humanist philosophers and institutions that run our world today. So much for philosophy.

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unbeliever.*

## **RELATIVISM — “WHAT’S TRUE FOR YOU”**

Doubt and uncertainty is the position of the unbeliever. He prefers not to be sure about anything rather than to be sure that there is a God to Whom he is morally accountable. He would rather doubt his own existence and pretend ignorance of every single thing there is to know rather than to face God.

This doubt usually reverts to the position of relativism. This is the rejection of all absolutes, all certainty, all truth, and all knowledge. However, the relativist position is only a pretense and a ruse. For the relativist is very sure of his doctrine of relativism to the point that he will admit to being a relativist, and argue for it. He both states that there is no truth, and advocates vociferously for the truth that there is no absolute truth. But then, he is always inconsistent to his position as a relativist. When somebody steals his car, he is very sure, at that moment, that it is wrong to steal.

The relativist expresses less and less interest in claiming to know anything, or identifying some basis for knowing this or that. What he thought was true for one moment, may not be true the next. So why bother taking the time to give a rational explanation for what he knows or knew a minute ago? This verges on insanity. The relativist is only one step away from a mental institute, or he may already be there. This psychological pattern is outlined in Romans 1:28-29.



And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness. . . (Romans 1:28-29)

## **REVELATION BY DEMONS AND GURUS**

Some world religions are based on teachings from human gurus, enlightened persons, or spiritual revelations from a spirit or god in a pantheon of gods. The Buddha's writings and the Hindu Bhagavad Gita fall into this category. Neither religion claims the revelations to come from the God of gods, or the Source of all Knowledge and Truth. Hinduism is a polytheistic religion, and Buddhism claims no personal god, or ultimate God as the source of all truth. Either the propositions shared in these writings come from the mind of man or the mind of a demon/spirit/god. None of these sources are omniscient. The authority claim for these writings is a man, who says he was enlightened. One thing we know and that is that he was not enlightened by God, the ultimate and only source of Truth and Knowledge. Thus, the authority claim is vacuous. This is a non-authority, and not worthy to be trusted. Men lie. Demons are not to be trusted. As long as multiple gods are configured, there is no reason to believe one god over another. Multiple gods means multiple contradictions, multiple opinions — none of which even claim ultimate authority and omniscience concerning all there is to know.

Both the Buddhist and Hindu religions claim to be non-dogmatic and highly synthesized. People are drawn to these religions because they claim not to be dogmatic about this proposition or that proposition. "There are many truths, or many ways to finding truth," the gurus tell us. They surrender authority by appearing to be openminded, all the while, still claiming their position to be true. These religions look for substantiation by an inner experience or a subjective experience that feels like "peace." If the method yields a gratifying experience, they assume that the underlying message must be right. The same

thing could be said though, for any superficial experience that feels good, to include the drug culture, certain sexual experiences, and hypnosis. Does a good superficial effect or a good feeling render a value judgment concerning the action or the thinking behind the action? Such arguments assume that whatever feels good must be ethically right, or must be based in true propositions. Are highly subjective feelings a good judge of truth? These superficial experiences that feel good in the moment may yield an evil or painful effect later on, as in the case of hangovers. Moreover, the experience may have almost nothing to do with the ideology or philosophy that is said to have been associated with it.



## CHAPTER 2

# GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO MAN

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. (Genesis 6:13-14)

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**W**hat are the possible sources of certain knowledge to which one might turn? Besides seeking knowledge in one's own mind, or the mind of another human or demon or a consensus of such, there is only one other source of knowledge: God.

Throughout the history of human existence, man has had access to divine revelation. At first, the revelation came by oral means.

God spoke to Adam around 4000 BC.

God spoke to Noah around 2600 BC, (at least 1,400 years later).

God spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob between 2000 BC and 1840 BC.

God spoke to Moses around 1440 BC.

Beginning with Moses, a phonetic language developed (not with the

Phoenicians who came centuries later). Incorporating this written language, God recorded the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone around 1440 BC. This first inscribed revelation signified the unchanging nature and the preserving purpose Yahweh God intended for His revelation. His Law-word is still in stone, to this day.

Now, there are two different worldviews that hold to the epistemology of divine revelation. Essentially, these worldviews are summarized this way:

1. God is incapable of substantially preserving His revelation from one generation to the next for any or all people on the earth. His revelation therefore, is not accessible to the world for certain periods of time. Or, God changes His revelation concerning Himself and His works in the most fundamental way. By this theory, God's truth comes and goes, or His fundamental truth propositions as revealed to men really do change.
2. God is capable of preserving His revelation through the eons of time, and He does not change His revelation concerning Himself and His works, in any fundamental way.

Islam, Mormonism, and certain Christian sects maintain the first of these two worldviews. Orthodox Christians maintain the second worldview perspective.

Muslims believe that God's revelation was garbled over time by interpolations and man-sourced additions, and that God was unable and/or not willing to maintain adequate accuracy or precision for any or all peoples. Thus, subsequent revelations must replace all previous revelations, which, in their view, is the purpose of the Quran. That, of course, would call into question the current copies of what is purported to be divine revelation. How might man have gummed up the original revelation, given that God is unwilling or unable to preserve it? And where is the original autographa for these scriptures? What confidence might we claim that the Scriptures would be preserved between AD 600 and AD 2000, if God was incapable or unwilling to preserve the Scriptures between 1440 BC and AD 600 (at which time some

other person claimed to have received the corrections)? Assuming the Mormon and Muslim position, what is to say the revelation of the Book of Mormon hasn't been fouled up and distorted over a period of the last 150 years, or the Quran over a period of 1,400 years?

Moreover, the Islamic explanation for the extensive contradictions between subsequent revelation (the Quran) and original revelation does not comport with the claims of the Quran itself. For example, Surah 5:44,47,48 hold that God issued a perfect revelation to Moses, the prophets, and the apostles in the Gospels. The Quran goes on to urge everyone to read the aforementioned revelation in the Law and the Gospels (Surah 5:68), and explicitly notes that God's revealed words cannot be changed or corrupted (Surah 6:115; 10:64).

The website serving the Mormon religion ([churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org)), helpfully informs us what the Mormons believe concerning the relationship of their "revelatory" book and the Bible. Quoting directly: "The Book of Mormon restores plain and precious truths that have been lost from the Bible." Similar to the Muslims, the Mormons claim that critical truths once communicated by God were "lost from the Bible." How many more of these claims will certain demonic cults suggest for us before the end of the world? Already, these two major cults have captured about 22.2% of the world's population.

Joseph Smith isn't the only one to claim a special dispensation of divine revelation. Millions of individuals have given way to highly subjective forms of divine revelation when they claim that "The Lord told me this or that." While not all who say such things will claim equal authority to that of Scripture, often there is an underlying lack of respect for that Scripture already revealed. In so doing, these folks perpetuate a disunity, a discontinuity, and a disrespect for God's Word.

Trusting in the providential, sovereign hand of God in the preservation of His Word through the centuries does relieve us of any need to rely upon or look for the original autographa, which turn out never to be available. Christianity would contend that the polytheism of the Mormons is a major, radical, and fundamental reorganizing of foundational biblical perspectives

concerning reality. The most rational people would agree that one's view of everything (reality, truth, ethics, worship, and life) is completely rearranged by a shift to polytheism. This is not some minor disagreement over whether tattooing is disallowed by Leviticus 19:28, or whether or not John the Baptist was immersing people in the Jordan River. That should be patently obvious.

The Christian perspective holds that the basic doctrines concerning origins, man's problem, the means of man's salvation, and the nature of God are no different as presented in the first revelation, as that which comes in subsequent revelations. God's definition of man's problem and His plan of salvation contained in Genesis 3 is basically the same as what we find in Revelation 3. Christians do not dispense with the revelation provided Abraham, Moses, David, and Isaiah; and neither do they find contradictions between the words of Jesus and the words of Moses or Isaiah. Some sects, following Marcion and other heretics in the church, might point out purported contradictions in preference for New Testament revelation. These sects turn into wayward cults. But the orthodox Christian church has always rejected such views of God and His revelation.

The corpus of revealed Scripture is itself a truth unit, to which if anything is added, if any part is (substantially) modified, or if any part of it is taken away, the integrity of the truth unit is fatally compromised. Thus, additional revelation, before the closing of the biblical canon, that does not comport with that which was already revealed, would have to be rejected outright.

The Scriptures also bears out this internal integrity, unity, and continuity. Subsequent prophets always respect the writings of prior prophets, and often quote from them. Jesus, the very Son of God, treated the Old Testament Scriptures with ultimate reverence, as it were the very Word of God, quoting

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that He will.*

from David's Psalms, all five books of Moses, as well as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Jonah, Micah, Zechariah, and Malachi. The system of theology that best maintains and accurately presents the unity of both Old and New Testaments is less likely to fall into heterodoxy and aberrant cultism.

In diametric opposition to the claims of Mormons and Muslims, Scripture itself certifies God's intent to preserve His Word. Not only is He capable of preserving His Word, but He insists that He will, that we can be sure that there will be no mangled texts or "lost books" which might reappear after centuries of inaccessibility (Matt. 5:17-19, Mark 13:31, Luke 16:17, 21:33, Ps. 12:67, Ps. 19:9, 102:18, 111:7-8, 119:89-91, 152, 160, Is. 40:8, 59:20-21, Dan. 12:4, Matt. 4:4, Rom. 15:4, 1 Cor. 9:10, 10:11, 1 Pet. 1:25).

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. (1 Peter 1:23)

The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever. (Psalm 12:6-7)

The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. (Psalm 111:7-8)

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. (Isaiah 40:8)

... the truth of the Lord endureth forever . Praise ye the Lord. (Psalm 117:2)

Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them forever. (Psalm 119:152)



Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever. (Psalm 119:160)

## **THE ONLY VIABLE POSITION**

We would be hopeless without God revealing Himself to us, and we would be equally hopeless if man or devil was constantly garbling the message (and the integrity of the Word could never be maintained). For those who would rather not take the route towards uncertainty, doubt, irrationalism, and insanity, the only viable solution for any sure foundation for knowledge is divine revelation. Those who look to divine revelation as the only possible, reliable source for truth, can count on two things:

1. God has revealed His truth to man from the beginning.
2. And, that truth has been preserved first by oral means, and then in written form for 6,000 years.

This being the case, anybody receiving divine revelation as the very source of truth would have to discount all discontinuous systems of revelation and those bearing internal contradictions, including Mormonism and Islam. God would not have left His world without revelation for thousands of years until Mohammed or Joseph Smith appeared on the scene.

## **WHEN GOD SPEAKS**

Necessarily, God's truth is ultimate truth and not a tinge of mistruth is to be found in it. God's truth is 200-proof truth. It is like silver purified in the fire seven times. Since "The God," is by definition "The Authority" in the arena of truth, ethics, and reality, there can be no competition. The mind of man cannot assume the authoritative position to question God, or to determine the truthfulness of what He reveals to man.

Now, if that person questioning God refuses to acknowledge the existence of God as God (as the ultimate authority over truth, ethics, and reality), then there is no use continuing the conversation. If one rejects God, of course he will reject God's revelation out of hand for the very reason that he refuses to believe in God. Conversely, if one believes in God as God, and as the rightful Authority over all human thinking and action (which is the very definition of God), then from this perspective, God must speak, and God must be heard, and agreed with, and obeyed. If God exists and God is speaking, there is only one proper response, and that is the response given by young Samuel. "Speak Lord, for your servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:10).

The Scriptures are filled with incredulous questioning for the man who stands in the face of God's infinite knowledge: "Will a man debate with God? Who has been his counselor? Who is this that obscures my counsel by words without knowledge? Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty?"

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that He will*

If God, as God, was to speak, how could any other person (who is not God) question the veracity of His words? That would immediately remove God from His place as God. The Enlightenment thinkers of the 18th and 19th centuries set out to determine "the reasonableness" of divine revelation. This was the root of all

the modernism, skepticism, and apostasy that followed. As C.S. Lewis put it, modern man put God in the dock, and man took his place on the bench to decide the verdict concerning God's revealed Word.

The ancient man approached God (or even the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man, the roles are quite reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock. He is quite a kindly judge; if God should have a reasonable defense for being the god who permits war, poverty, and disease,

he is ready to listen to it. The trial may even end in God's acquittal. But the important thing is that man is on the bench and God is in the dock. (C.S. Lewis, *Essays on Theology and Ethics*)

## **THE RIGHT WAY TO RECEIVE GOD'S REVELATION**

Given the vast difference between God's knowledge and man's knowledge, the only right way to receive God's revelation must be in the way a two-year-old receives instructions from his father. The father tells the boy to switch on the lights. So, he obeys his father's words and the lights turn on. His little mind cannot comprehend the nature of the atom, the electrical force of flowing electrons, and the function of a switch in an electric circuit. But certainly he can know enough to turn on the lights. While teaching these basic lessons, the father knows what the son would need to know, what the son would not need to know, and what the son could not possibly handle knowing. The limited knowledge bequeathed to the boy would constitute a carefully crafted, sufficient knowledge for functioning in the home. Similarly, God knows what His sons need to know, what they do not need to know, and what they could not possibly handle knowing about. . . everything. He gives His sons sufficient knowledge needed for faith and life. Thus, as we approach the subject of knowledge, we first mistrust ourselves and then we trust God.

The condition of the heart is important for the reception of true knowledge. Consider the man who is changing the oil in his car, when his wife hands him a new book. He opens the book and begins to read, but curiously, he discovers that the words are smudged. "This book does not come across very clearly," he remarks. He misreads large portions of it, due to the smudges on the page. What he does not realize, is that the smudges have been put there by his own hands. The problem is not with the published book, but with the fellow reading the book. Likewise, that person receiving divine revelation finds himself smudging the pages. His own heart is contaminated with pride, hatred for God, an affinity for lies, and a tendency towards autonomy (or a worship of his own opinions). The lack of clarity does not come from the

book itself, but from his own hands and heart.

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. (Matthew 13:13-15)

Worldly philosophers have been incapable of resolving the most fundamental questions of man's existence and metaphysical reality. What is the ultimate reason for why things happen? Or, what is the ultimate cause for what happens? Or, is there any ultimate intention or cause behind what happens in the universe? His conclusions are always contradictory or insufficient to provide for a workable system of knowledge. At some point, the two-year-old must admit that he cannot comprehend it. This is the best synopsis of the history of philosophy. Now, at this point, the two-year-old may do one of two things. He may throw up his hands and resign himself to his ignorance, or, he could listen to his father.

The Christian listens to Father. The two-year-old realizes that certain questions are unanswerable in a comprehensive, or even intellectually satisfactory, way. Nonetheless, he receives the answers as sufficient and he is satisfied, though the answers be less than comprehensive in scope. The unbeliever stubbornly refuses to receive the answers unless and until they provide for a comprehensive understanding of all things. But then, he is left with nothing upon which to build his system of knowledge. On the other hand, the believer humbly receives what God gives him and happily and confidently builds his system of knowledge and life upon it.

Given that our knowledge of theology, soteriology, and the universe will be less than comprehensive, how do we proceed in our discussions on the intricacies and controversies of theology? Where I live in the Colorado

countryside, the unpaved roads run for miles through empty fields. Those used to traversing the rough roads ride along at 50 to 60 miles per hour. When the fog settles, or the snow fall picks up, however, the driver must slow down right away so as not to run off the road. In a blizzard or a pea soup fog, the driver slows to a crawl. He might have somebody walking ahead of him to search out the road. At points, it would be better that he bring the vehicle to a dead stop. This is the way to proceed with theology. Those who maintain a high clip on the road of theology, are incapable of discerning foggy conditions, and would do better staying home and walking the dog. They are too proud, and somehow incapable of discerning foggy conditions.

The process by which to engage discussion on the controversies in theology is simply this: unity, humility, and appropriate caution.

1. Form convictions and seek unity on that which is clear.
2. Honestly and humbly acknowledge that which is not revealed — the incomprehensibilities.
3. Carefully move into the fog, gingerly identifying those truths that may still be ascertained. Some gradation in dogmatism is appropriate for every thoughtful student of the Word.

## **THE CHRISTIAN PAIDEIA — THE LADDER OF KNOWLEDGE**

When the Christian teacher takes his students up the well of knowledge, he starts at the bottom of the well. As he shares knowledge, perhaps some of the students will look down upon those who missed the class, and they feel a sense of superiority and pride at that moment. Before the class is over, however, the teacher removes the top cover of the well, and reveals a universe of incomprehensibilities yet to discover. The entire class is struck down by wonder, humility, and the fear of God. There is no room for pride in this classroom.

This is very different from a humanist or classical Greek view of wisdom.

Aristotle abominates humility, which he can only define as “a fear of disrepute.” Modesty, he says, “is not a virtue,” and may only be expressed when someone makes mistakes in the face of man. Meanwhile, the boaster is commended as long as his purpose is “to win fame or honor .” Such mutterings indicate enormous, fatal flaws in the ethics and epistemology of the Greeks.

## THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)

The Bible has a great deal to say about knowledge and wisdom — a very clearly laid-out epistemology. Here we read the foundation of true knowledge is the fear of the Lord God. Before receiving the truth about God, one must fear Him. Before reviewing arguments concerning the existence of God, one must fear God, whose existence is ostensibly being argued for. Before coming to know something about sin and salvation, one must fear God. One who approaches divine revelation without fearing God, has already smeared his grease-stained hands all over the Word.

## CORE WISDOM

And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto [Jesus], Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and

*As the final and ultimate revelation of God, Jesus Christ comes to earth and lays out the core faith, in the starkest terms possible.*

keep it. (Luke 11:27-28)

As the final and ultimate revelation of God, Jesus Christ comes to earth and lays out the core faith, in the starkest terms possible. The woman referred to in the Luke 11 pericope commends Mary, who was greatly blessed to give birth to Jesus. But the greater wonder, the greater blessedness is for that one who actually hears the Word of God, and keeps it. The Word did more than evoke a feeling or engage the mind. The recipient hears the Word, understands it, believes it, and keeps it with him for the rest of his life. That is the miracle, and the truly blessed state. This is in keeping with the rest of Jesus's teaching, and it is the most fundamental test of a true believer.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. (John 8:51)

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. (John 14:21)

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. (John 15:10)  
And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. (1 John 2:3)

The test of true faith is the "keeping" or "guarding" of the Word of God or commandments of Jesus. This renders the Word of God as priority, as the highest authority governing our lives; and the Word does not slip in priority, or interest, or focus over time. Other words the Scripture uses to describe the obtaining of true knowledge is to "continue" in the Word, or to "abide" in the Word. The seed in the good soil was received by the soil, and burrowed deeply into that soil. The seed marinated deeply into the recesses of the heart. The birds of the air did not pluck it out. The rocks did not stop the seed from burrowing deeper into the ground. What makes the difference between the

soils in the parable is the retention of the Word, the meditating on the Word, the abiding of the Word, and the doing of the Word.

The Word in the Parable of the Sower and elsewhere in Scripture is presented as something animate, something “living and powerful,” an organic life form that grows into a human soul like a seeded plant and becomes part of it. Interestingly, the plant in the Parable of the Sower appears as a conflated combination of the Word (the seed) and the person in whom the Word is active. Does the Word or the person bring forth the fruit? When the plant withers and dies, does the plant or the person wither? As the Word is received, it appears that the Word embeds itself, or engrafts itself into the person, such that the person begins to look like that which the Word envisions. This is the picture given in James 1:

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)

## **DOERS OF THE WORD**

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:20-21)

Here is another important element of a biblical theory of knowledge. To know something or to “come to the light,” one must not only hear the truth, but do the truth. One does not yet come to the light until he has done the truth. One does not know love until he has loved. One does not know God’s sovereignty and salvation, until he has acted in faith in the midst of the storm — believing in God’s salvation, and believing in the doctrine of God’s sovereign control over all these things.

Merely to receive the proposition or even to comprehend the proposition mentally is still not to possess true knowledge. This is only half the way to knowledge. Without the doing of the Word, we are still “like a man



observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the

*To know something or to “come to the light,” one must not only hear the truth, but do the truth.*

perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:23-25). Continuance and doing both, are essential for right knowledge.

Given this biblical epistemology then, there is no value in a PhD degree unless the knowledge acquired is applied. There is no sense of having

achieved wisdom or knowledge in a seminary theology degree program, unless the Word is applied in faith and love. The Scriptures repudiate a knowledge that puffs up in favor of a love that builds up (1 Cor. 8:1). There are serious differences between various conceptions of knowledge itself; and there is a world of difference between the sort of knowledge shared in a secular university and that obtained through Christian discipleship and learning centers.

## **THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTER, ABIDING UNITY, AND CONNECTIVITY OF THE REVEALED WORD**

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. (Matthew 23:23)

There are several principles to keep in mind as we approach God’s revelation.

1. Jesus said, “Man lives by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

2. Jesus also condemned the Pharisees for having “omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith” (Matt. 23:23).
3. We are also told that “All the promises of God in [Christ] are yea, and in [Christ] Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Cor. 1:20).

This text points to connectivity in which all the promises come together into Christ. There is no contradiction and no disunity, and yet there are still more essential and root truths to which we hold. This, I figure to be something like a tree. There are trunk truths, branch truths, and leaf truths in the full conception of God’s truth. Some have called the trunk truth the “rule of faith.” It is that essential core description of the faith summarized over and over again by the apostles, usually in 50–100-word sentences. This basic rule of faith is found in the message Titus was given to teach the Cretans in Titus 2:11-15, and then repeated in Titus 3:1-7. Paul gives the Ephesian believers a synopsis in Ephesians 1:3-10, and Peter offers something similar in 1 Peter 1:13-21. Paul only has a brief moment to break down the faith to one sentence, while the Philippian jailer threatens suicide: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

The teaching of Jesus contained in the Gospels is mostly trunk. The man who fell on his face, and cried out “God have mercy on me a sinner,” went home justified. Christ told the adulteress, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.” Jesus came “to save His people from their sins.” He said, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). The Lord’s Prayer synthesizes the faith into worship, life’s purpose, submission to God’s will, God’s salvation from evil, forgiveness of sin, and God’s provision for physical needs. As for faith, the instruction is simple: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” That’s core. . . trunk — a bouillon cube of truth.

Highly sectarian churches, who wish to fashion themselves as “conservative” or “traditionalist,” often prefer to teach in the leaves, and this usually accelerates the process of Christian apostasy. To hold on to the leaves

while abandoning the trunk will only separate the leaves from the trunk in the mind and the heart of the adherent. Leaves separated from branches and trunk die. This occurs for the Pharisees when they still tithe of their mint, anise, and cumin, but forget why they do it. They ignore the weightier matters of the law — love, faith, and righteousness.

The strongest churches will have the firmest grip on the trunk faith. The most mature believers will hold strongly to the trunk faith, while occasionally touching a leaf or two. The teaching in every healthy Christian ministry will be characterized by trunk faith. Always, we begin with the trunk faith and work up into the branches and leaves. Wisdom dictates what is the camel and the gnat, what is the major and the minor, what is the trunk and the leaf.

The mere possession of the Scriptures is not enough for one to come to the knowledge of the truth. For one thing, natural man will always tend to “suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”

Accessing the Word is a spiritual experience. This means that there is a spiritual reaction to the Word that happens inside the human soul. As the Puritans would say: “The same sun that hardens the clay, softens the wax.” The condition of the heart matters. Often, there is a deadening to the live Word, and that deadening intensifies as the Word is applied. The Word comes as a catalyst in a chemical reaction, so to speak. Thus, there is almost, if not totally intentional, a closing of the eyes or a shutting up of the ears (Matt. 13:15) with the unbeliever who rejects the Word. “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed. . .” But then also, the devil offers three ways in which to misguide the recipients of special revelation. These three deviations constitute all wrong teaching in the Christian churches.

1. Wrong interpretations of Scripture or wrong doctrine. It is always wise to ask the question, “How might I be misinterpreting the passage?”
2. Missing doctrine. It is always wise to ask the question, “Is there something missing to this message I am hearing from this passage? Has the preacher missed the main thrust of the passage?” Or, does this

ministry carry on for months and years at a time without including teaching on major portions of the Word, such as the gospel?

3. Wrong emphasis. It is always wise to ask the question, “What is the emphasis of this ministry, and does this comport with the emphases brought out in Scripture?”