

Christian Worldview and Apologetics

Section 1, The Christian Worldview

II. What & How Do We Know? (Epistemology)

- Asks, “what counts as true knowledge and how do we know?” This is not a settled question in the world!
- We will define knowledge as **justified (true) belief**, not merely belief such as a child’s belief in Santa Claus

A. The Futility of Autonomous (self-governing) Reasoning

1. Three Tendencies of non-Christian Thinking

- Rationalism
 - Chief concern is certainty (doesn’t trust sense experience or subjectivity)
 - A Priori knowledge of “criteria” or “standards”; generally have argued that our “knowledge is built up by a deductive process” because this preserves certainty: “I think therefore I am”
 - Critique
 - Just as fallible as sense experience: Parmenides
 - Few persuasive areas in which knowledge is a priori: laws of logic, our own mental states, and the existence of objective truth; but we cannot “deduce the whole fabric of human knowledge from these or even enough knowledge for a meaningful philosophy”
- Empiricism
 - Get away from arbitrary ideas of rationalists and ground our knowledge in the FACTS of our experience
 - Not certainty but as close as we can get
 - Critique
 - Our senses deceive us
 - Our evaluation of the facts are conditioned by our expectations

- Too limited: Cannot justify a general proposition such as “all men are mortal”; Cannot justify any statements about the future (induction)
 - Cannot justify itself: All knowledge must be based on sense experience cannot be justified by sense experience
 - Subjectivism
 - Can’t entirely escape problem of criteria and of “facts”
2. Non-Christians are Ultimately Committed to Autonomous Reason (or Criteria)
 3. Leads to Irrationalism:
 - Elephant Illustration
 - **Big Black Question Mark** eventually drives both rationalists and irrationalists to the same position

B. The Resolution of Divine Revelation

1. Christians are Committed to Dependence upon Revelation for our Thinking (both natural and special!)

- Read from Genesis 2

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. **[Mankind’s Environment]**

7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

8 And the LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. **[Mankind’s Environment]**

9 And out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good

and evil. [**Environment Oriented to Mankind and Mankind Oriented to his new Environment**]

15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. [**Work is a Divine Calling, not merely a survival mechanism**]

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die. "

[**God Interprets His Creation for Man**]

- **Genesis 3 records mankind's first attempt to think contrary to God's revelation:**

3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.' "

4 And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die!

5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

2. The Three Perspectives of Christian Knowing: “knowledge always involves a **subject**, an **object**, and **law**.”

- Normative (criteria or standards)—God’s **Law** for our Thoughts
 - Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
- Situational (facts of our experience)—Accord with the Facts
 - “Scripture will tell us how to make use of natural revelation”
- Existential (the testimony of the Holy Spirit to redemptive truth; the help of the Spirit to “apply” Scripture to our experience)

3. Gives basis for confident knowledge

- Elephant Illustration Revised
- View of reality comports with view of knowledge: No ?
 - We can have true knowledge about the world even though we don’t know everything about the world: new discoveries won’t intimidate us (i.e., quantum mechanics)
 - We have a basis for justifying **induction**:

Genesis 8:22 "While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease."

Genesis 1, “according to their kind”

Matthew 16:2 But He answered and said to them, "When it is evening, you say, ' *It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.*'³ "And in the morning, '*There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.*' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot *discern* the signs of the times?