

Foundations of Knowledge

Part 3: From Natural to Special Revelation

This week: God communicates truth by direct propositions (Special Revelation)

Review

- Experience gives enough for us to infer God's existence.
- Nature gives detailed data of some of God's attributes (Ps. 19, Ps. 111, Rom. 1:18-21)
- **truth**→data→perception→induction→propositions (T/F)→**concept of truth** (belief)
- Nature does not give propositions—Science seeks truth, but requires *empiricism* and rests on unprovable tenets: reality, cause and effect, existence of consistent “laws” or natural rules, observations can be valid, induction

Although not provable (not strictly *logically deductive*), empirical knowledge is *reasonable*.

1) Christian empiricism

- a) שְׁלֵג (sheleg) exercise— What extra-scriptural “prior knowledge” is required to interpret scripture?
- b) Does this weaken *sola Scriptura*? (see John MacArthur, “What Does Sola Scriptura Mean?” Aug. 7, 2015 on Ligonier Ministries blog)
- c) Empiricism in Scripture: John 20:29-31; Lev. 5:1; Isa. 41:18-20; Matt. 24:32-33; Rom. 1:18-21; 1 Cor. 13:12

2) Once we have a reasonable truth, we can transfer this truth to other minds via language— *propositions*, or *truth statements*. Give some examples of something you know that has come from direct personal interaction with others. How trustworthy is this belief?

Conclusion: God expects us to use our *experiences*, our *rational minds*, and *communication with others* to state, interpret, and accept truths, necessarily *without strict proof* of those truths.

3) Ideally we could get *direct truth statements* without empiricism and the weakness of induction—only clear, direct statements from an infallible authority would fall in this category. But propositional truths cannot be fully understood and accepted without full trust in the authority who gave them — *faith*.

4) God communicates directly—Special Revelation

5) “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence”—Carl Sagan

- a) Rational argument for God's communication
- b) Experiential evidence for (direct) communication?
- c) Expect God to have communicated with His people

6) What do you require to believe the truth of Scripture? Miracles, scientific “proof,” prophecy fulfillment, manuscript evidence, trustworthy testimony of those living today...

Important note! Acknowledging the truth (assent) is **not sufficient for salvation** (e.g., James 2:19); God requires full surrender and “re-birth” into eternal life. This is a *rational, evidential, reasonable faith*, not blind.

Next week: The “big bang” and the age of the universe

Resources: Josh McDowell, *New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*; C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*; Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Who Made God?*; Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God*; Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* and *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel*; Neil R. Lightfoot, *How We Got The Bible*