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KNOW, KNOWLEDGE (יָדָע, know; Gr. γινώσκω, *know* [by experience]; οἶδα, *know* [a fact])

1. Biblical usage
2. Knowledge and faith
3. Epistemology
 - a. Philosophical
 - b. Biblical
4. Neo-orthodoxy
5. Knowledge of God

Presumably knowledge, if it be defined at all, means the possession of truth by a mind. The problems that an analysis of knowledge entails are enormous.

1. Biblical usage. The Bible frequently commends knowledge and wisdom: "The Lord is a God of knowledge" (1 Sam 2:3). "Have they no knowledge, all the evil doers who... do not call upon the Lord?" (Ps 14:4). "Teach me good judgment and knowledge." (Ps 119:66). "Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold." (Prov 8:10). "By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make you free: (John 8:32). "Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood." (1 Cor 13:12). Asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col 1:9). "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true" (1 John 5:20). One may note relative to this last verse that the so-called epistle of love uses the word "know" thirty times in its five chapters, not counting words like "understand", "teach", "see", "hear", "believe", and "truth", all of which have to do with knowledge.

In view of the misapprehensions of some immature Christians, what the Bible does not say also should be pointed out. Nowhere does the Scripture modify the high value it places on knowledge by deprecating "mere" human reason. Reason and knowledge are integral parts of the image of God in which man was created. In the OT the term "heart" designates the mind, intellect, or reason in about three-fourths of its 750 occurrences. Examples are: "The Lord said in

his heart...." (Gen 8:21) (obviously he did not say in his emotions); "I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and mind" (1 Sam 2:35); "Make the heart of this people fat....lest theyunderstand with their hearts" (Isa 6:10); "He has shut ...their minds [KJV hearts] so that they cannot understand. No one considers" [KJV "none calleth to mind"] (Isa 44:18, 19). In both cases the same Hebrew word is used.

Granted that the mind or heart of man can be and is sinful, as some of these verses plainly indicate, the antithesis between the heart and the head, along with the suggestion that the intellect is evil but the emotions are free from sin, is nevertheless a distortion of the Scriptural view of man.

Although the Heb. and the Gr. verbs for knowing usually bear the most ordinary meaning, exemplified when one says that he knows that David was king of Israel and that Paul was an apostle, they can also be used in other senses, some of which are sources of confusion in theology and philosophy.

The sense in which the words are used to designate sexual intercourse, as in Genesis 4:1, "Now Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain," is a sense that causes no confusion. We simply note the usage and pass on.

Confusion, however, may arise from another meaning which also has no place in epistemology, for in addition to knowing that David was a king, the verb also means to choose, to select, and therefore to approve. When Psalm 1:6 says that "the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish," it is not reflecting on divine omniscience. In the ordinary sense God knows the way of the wicked as He knows everything else. Here the word is used in the sense of approval. Similarly, when Amos 3:2 says "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," the prophet is not denying that God knew the Egyptians and Canaanites. This verse is no denial of omniscience. Here the verb means to choose or elect.

This usage, so clear in the OT, causes some theological confusion when NT material is discussed. Those who reject the doctrines of predestination or unconditional election try to base salvation on foreseen faith and election of foreknowledge. Such a view is inconsistent with the meaning of the words. In 1 Peter 1:2, where the RSV gives the correct sense, "chosen and destined by God," the KJV has the more literal tr. "elect according to the foreknowledge of God." In 1 Peter 1:20 the KJV vs. the same word "foreordained." Similarly Romans 8:29 does not speak of the mere knowing ahead of time, as Eng. usage would lead one to expect, as if God

looked ahead into an independent and undetermined future and discovered (If anything undetermined could be discovered) what was going to happen; rather, foreknowledge means foreordination.

In addition to the above source of theological confusion, there is an alleged usage that causes philosophical confusion. Or, perhaps, it may be said that a certain philosophical confusion tries to construe knowledge in a still different sense. Some devout and fairly orthodox theologians, and in general the neo-orthodox thinkers insist that there is a radical difference between knowing a proposition and knowing a person, or between knowledge "about" and knowledge "by acquaintance."

According to the neo-orthodox position God does not reveal truths that can be intellectually apprehended, but He reveals Himself in a direct encounter or confrontation. Now, insofar as support for this view is sought in the different compounds of γινώσκω or in the other verbs οἶδα, εἶδεναι and ἐπισταμαι, the attempt is a failure. Kittel's Wörterbuch under the entry γινώσκω states that this knowledge "is achieved in all the acts in which a man can attain knowledge, seeing and hearing, in investigating and reflecting....also personal acquaintance....Whatever can be the object of enquiry can be the object of γινώσκω." Kittel continues by noting that Gnostic γνωσις is no different except as to the object. And in the LXX γινώσκω and εἶδεναι both tr. the one Heb. verb יָדַע Kittel is replete with all the lexicographical details, none of which are of any help in epistemology.

2. Faith and knowledge. Noting the usage of the word knowledge in its ordinary meaning offers little aid in solving problems of theology and philosophy. One such problem is the distinction between knowledge and faith. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor 8:1), does not at first sight agree with the praises of knowledge quoted earlier; yet the following verses indicate that the knowledge referred to is either mistaken opinion or a true proposition so misapplied and conjoined with error that the combination is false. Some commentators explain v.1 as ironical.

A similar explanation is required to understand the Christian opposition to Gnosticism. This religion in the early centuries, using Christian terminology, made salvation depend on knowledge, and, by implication, not on faith. The great objection to Gnosticism, however, is not a repugnance to knowledge as such. The real objection was twofold. First, the Gnostic tenets amounted to a texture of superstitious mythology. Second, even if the Gnostics had propounded a

true science of astronomy, such knowledge could not save. Salvation depends on faith in Christ.

What then is the relation between faith and knowledge? Protestants have traditionally analyzed faith into knowledge, assent, and trust. This analysis is not as simple as it seems. Knowledge in this context apparently refers only to understanding (not believing) the meaning of a proposition. Of course one can understand the meaning of false propositions, such as, David was king of Tyre; but undoubtedly true propositions are intended because assent to or belief in a false proposition would be error, not knowledge.

Note that this last instance of the word knowledge does not bear the same meaning it bears in the analysis. In the analysis knowledge occurs as distinct from assent, as a separate element in faith; but if knowledge is defined as the mind's possession of truth, there can be no knowledge apart from assent. This is one difficulty. Furthermore, worse, the element of trust, which Protestants emphasize, defies all explanation and remains in utter confusion. Illustrations, such as actually depositing money in a bank rather than merely believing that the bank is sound, depend on a physical action, in addition to the mental act of believing. Such additional external action is inappropriate to represent the thoroughly inner mental act of faith. Knowledge is an integral part of faith, and not its antithesis.

3. Epistemology. (a) Philosophical. The main problem of knowledge, which is the crucial question in all the history of philosophy, concerns knowledge in its most ordinary sense. We say we know that two and two are four, that the earth revolves around the sun, or at least that a bright disk appears in the sky, and perhaps that God exists and stealing is immoral. Epistemology is a theory of how one can know anything. This question is not explicitly discussed in the Bible; but answers to it, however obtained, have a profound influence on theological formulations.

Since the matter is extremely technical and difficult, some simplification is necessary.

Systems of philosophy generally can be divided into two groups: empirical philosophies are exemplified by Aristotle, Aquinas, Hume, and the contemporary schools of Pragmatism and logical Positivism-the second group comprises the rationalistic or idealistic philosophies, exemplified by Plato, Augustine, Anselm, Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel. The first group exhibits serious divergencies, for Aristotle and Logical Positivism are rather far apart; but differences within the second group are perhaps even greater.

Empiricism is the view that all knowledge is based on experience alone. Experience has not always been restricted to the five senses, though this is a common form of the principle; but the

Epicureans stressed the experience of pain, the Sophists acknowledged the experience of dreams and hallucinations (a fact Descartes and other rationalists use in opposition), others admit aesthetic experience-coining the word aesthetics from the Gr. word for sensation, and, finally Schleiermacher, the founder of modernism, and contemporary liberalism develop religion and theology out of religious experience. Sensation, however, remains basic in all forms of empiricism.

Rationalism (idealism is not a good name, for Berkeleyan idealism is completely empirical) holds that all or at least some knowledge is a priori, innate, rational, non-sensuous.

Plato taught that the soul before birth is in contact with the ideal objects of knowledge, and that here on earth we remember what we previously knew. Spinoza taught that without the aid of sensation, doubtful aid because it is the source of error, all knowledge can be deduced from definitions by logic alone. Even the existence of God, as Anselm taught earlier, can be demonstrated from the definition that God is the all-perfect Being: if He did not exist, He would not be all-perfect. Kant said that the mind at birth is furnished with the a priori (independent of experience) intuitions of space and time, and a set of twelve a priori categories. Neither of these by themselves, and much less sensations by themselves, are knowledge, but when sensory material is arranged and ordered by these a priori forms, the combination is knowledge. Finally, the dialectic of concepts of the last philosopher listed, Hegel, is just too complicated to characterize in any space.

Two lines of procedure are now necessary: one should evaluate the merit of each of these main divisions of philosophy, and one should attempt to determine which, if either, the Bible favors.

The first is a task for the professional philosopher. Some considerations, however, may be mentioned, which must be taken into account.

All philosophy, all theology, and all common conversation must make use of so-called abstract concepts. In philosophy the terms substance, cause, quality, relation find a necessary place; in theology there is sin and righteousness, atonement and justification, and so on; in common speech too one talks about causes and relations as well as about truth and falsity, times and places, cats and dogs.

Rationalism specifically asserts the reality of such concepts. These are the objects of knowledge that constitute Plato's World of Ideas. Philo Judaeus and Augustine make them the

content of the Divine Mind. Thus far rationalism makes philosophy, theology, and conversation possible.

Although nominalists such as Roscellinus and Occam assert that concepts refer to no reality whatever, that they are mere sounds in the air without meaning, and thus make philosophy and ordinary conversation both impossible, still the major empiricists try to explain the genesis of concepts. Aristotle attempted to abstract them from sensory experience. The concepts were somehow in the visible objects and could be detached, or abstracted by imagination and intellect. The British empiricists build up concepts by adding and subtracting particular sensations. Thus they claim to make knowledge possible.

The question, of course, is whether or not concepts can in fact be abstracted from sensations. Plato denied it. Further, even the abstraction of such "empirical" concepts as cat and dog depends on a theory of visual imagery that introspective psychology cannot sustain. It is all the more difficult to see how normative concepts such as justice, can be derived from purely factual material.

Kant forcefully extended this argument in opposition to Hume. Knowledge, Kant insisted, contains necessary and universal judgments, such as two and two are, are always, and must be four, and, all pendulums always must swing in a certain way. Note definitely that when the law of the pendulum was formulated, the scientists thought that all pendulums in the past have swung and all future pendulums will swing just as described. But experience does not extend to all past pendulums, and with even greater clarity it does not extend to any future pendulums. Experience gives neither universality nor necessity.

Similarly normative moral principles can never be derived from experience. We see acts of honesty and instances of theft. The two are equally in experience. Experiences can never determine that theft is wrong or that honesty is right.

Perhaps the simplest example of an a priori category is that of unity. The concept of the number one is essential, not only to mathematics, but also to all learning; for learning could never proceed unless we could distinguish one thing from another. Berkeley, the British empiricist, attempted to base the idea of unity in sensation. The unit, he said, is just any one thing you choose. You can count chairs or grains of sand. Thus we find our unit in experience. Kant demolished Berkeley's argument. First, the empiricist misstated the problem, which is not the selection of a unit from among other unities; the problem is the origin of the idea of unity.

Second, the idea of one must be present before we can identify a chair or a grain of sand as one. The idea is not derived from the experienced object. And, finally, no experienced object is strictly a unity, since everything in space has parts. Therefore the concept of one must precede experience. These sample arguments must suffice to show the philosophic advantages of rationalism, or a priorism, over empiricism.

(b) Biblical. Does Scripture take sides in the dispute between empiricism and rationalism? Obviously the Bible has no such technical arguments as those found in Kant. Nevertheless the prophets and apostles tell us something about the nature of man.

In the first place God created man in His own image. The animals were not so created. The difference is that man is rational, and animals are not. In Proverbs 7:22, 23 and Isaiah 56:10 the natural ignorance of animals is used as a similitude to castigate the sinful ignorance of men.

That knowledge is part of the image of God, and therefore that at least some knowledge is non-empirical, is broadly hinted in Colossians 3:10, where the effect of regeneration is the renewal of the knowledge original in the divine image.

Further, Romans 1:32 and 2:14 show that even sin does not eradicate certain innate moral knowledge. And with respect to sin, all the historical churches acknowledge that a depravity of nature is inherited from Adam. This is inconsistent with the view that the mind at birth is a blank sheet of paper (Locke), or morally neutral (Aristotle), and requires the admission of some sort of a priori. If therefore the more complex matters of morality are innate, how can one deny that simpler principles antecede experience? Scripture therefore seems to be on the side of a priorism.

4. Neo-orthodoxy. The discussion so far has maintained the position that knowledge is commendable and is essential to faith. Therefore religion, or at any rate Christianity, must hold theology in high esteem. At various times, however, protests are made against "cold" intellectualism or the pride of "mere" human reason. Mystics have commended trances; others make religion essentially emotional; and most recently neo-orthodoxy has enthroned paradox and contradiction.

These modern theologians have arrived at their position more by emotional reaction than by logic. They had been educated under a combination of Schlegel and Hegel. This liberalism looked on sin as a fast disappearing remnant of man's animal ancestors. The kingdom of God was equated with socialism and optimism flourished. Then World War I revealed man's depravity to Europeans, and World War II to Americans. Machine guns and concentration camps

liquidated the utopian doctrine of man's essential goodness and society's progress.

Furthermore, Hegel's rationalistic solution of all philosophic problems was too neat, and therefore unreal. The great dialectic came to appear as hollow word-play. Yet these theologians were equally unable to solve the problems. They braved Socrates' sad scorn of misologists and declared that the problems of life are rationally insoluble. Life is deeper than logic. The universe and God Himself are self-contradictory. We must make our decisions in the freedom of blind faith. Besides, religion is not an intellectual matter anyhow: it is an experiential encounter with God.

Emil Brunner states this position clearly. Rejecting the idea that revelation is a communication of truth, Brunner asserts that "All words have only an instrumental value. Neither the spoken words nor their conceptual content are the Word itself, but only its frame" (*The Divine-Human Encounter*, p. 110). He then adds that "God can, when he wills, speak his Word to a man even through false doctrine" (*ibid.* p. 117).

Karl Barth earlier, in his *Romans*, had made a great deal of contradictions and insoluble paradoxes. Though later he lost some of his exuberance, he still rejected logical consistency. The latest edition of *Church Dogmatics*, in a section refuting a defense of logical consistency, argues that "The very minimum postulate of freedom from contradiction is acceptable by theology only upon the very limited interpretation, by the scientific theorist upon the scarcely tolerable one, that theology will not assert an irremovability in principle of the 'contradictions' which it is bound to make good" (*Church Dogmatics*, I, i, p. 8). This sentence is obscure: it neither asserts nor denies that contradictions are removable; it merely says that theology should not assert their irremovability. What follows in the passage seems to let the contradictions stand, for he says, "But the propositions in which it asserts their removal will be propositions about the free action of God, and so not propositions that 'remove' the contradiction from the world." Continuing to talk of coherence and systematization, Barth insists that "The theologianshould know what he is doing when he transgresses them, and that as a theologian he cannot escape the necessity of transgressing them." Or, in very plain words, a theologian must be incoherent.

Nevertheless the neo-orthodox school writes theology, and Barth and Brunner have been esp. voluminous. But if they do not recognize the necessity of being consistent, of what value can their theology be? In principle every one of their sentences is both true and false. If we discard logic, then, when we believe that David was king of Israel, nothing prevents us from believing at

the same time that David was not king of Israel. This would be simply the necessary incoherence of theology.

In particular, the neo-orthodox theologians, and some modernists as well, believe that God reveals Himself through contradictory systems in the Bible. Brunner concocts a remarkable conclusion that we could believe in the resurrection of Christ, even if there were no reports, for the witness to the resurrection is not that of eyewitnesses but of faith-witnesses. He further makes Christ sinless but fallible. Then, again, when Paul speaks of a time before Esau's birth, he means the Edomites in the days of Malachi. And, finally, "God and the medium of conceptuality exclude each other" (cf. Paul King Jewett, *Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation*, p. 184 and passim).

If, now, all our theological talk is self-contradictory, if faith must curb logic, and if God and thought are mutually exclusive, then no knowledge of God is possible, and religion must be emotional and experiential. But it will not be Christianity.

5. Knowledge of God. In opposition to this neo-orthodoxy and to all other forms of thought that deny God can be known, we are here conclude with what was strongly hinted at the beginning of this article in its commendation of knowledge in general. We shall simply add a few references to knowledge of God in particular.

In the first place, all Scripture is inspired of God and is profitable for doctrine. The following vv. are some of those which are most explicitly profitable for the doctrine of God. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" introduces the concept of creation and of God as creator. That this creation was decreed from all eternity and is always controlled by providence is taught in Ephesians 1:11, "The purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, " and in Daniel 4:35, "he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand," and in many other passages. The Bible also tells us that God exists in three persons; that God is eternal, omniscient, and immutable.

That God can be known, that man can entertain truth, that theology is possible, has been an unbroken tradition among all Christians. To deprecate knowledge in favor of some emotional upheaval, to repudiate logic and enthrone contradiction and incoherence, to reduce the Biblical material to the status of a symbolism that points uncertainly to an unknowable Something or other, is to abandon Christianity and commit intellectual suicide.

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