

Our Source of Authority: The Bible, The Word of God

I. How do we know God?

A. Through Natural Revelation (revelation = uncovering, revealing):

1. Romans 1: We know God through CREATION.

- a. Related to the cosmological argument for the existence of God = argument from causality and unmoved mover.
- b. Related to the teleological argument for the existence of God = argument of intelligent design (teleos = goal; there is purpose inherently displayed in creation; note: Behe's "irreducible complexity").

Read Romans 1:20

Read Psalm 19:1

Summary: The Word is saying that God's existence is self-evident through the creation. Here, Paley (18th. Century A.D.) is known for his watch argument. Suppose you find a watch on the ground (as opposed to a stone), he argues that you would intuitively know that someone/something put the watch together; that the springs, gears, glass, metal, etc. did not simply self-assemble. What does the Bible say of the one who says there is no God?

Read Psalm 14:1

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) wrote in *De Mundo* (cap. VI): "Though God is invisible to every mortal creature, He is visible from His very works."

Cicero (106-43 B.C.) wrote in *Tuscul. Disputt. I. 28*: "You do not see God, and yet you learn to know God from His works."

And yet, as powerful as this form of natural revelation is, how *much* does it tell us about God? If the created order – what is in the universe and the universe itself – was the *only* source of knowledge you had on God, what might you conclude about Him?

This is a wonderful source of knowledge, but it is incomplete for knowing God in a personal way. However, this also explains why there are so many religions in the world. People have this basic knowledge of God, but if they have nothing else beyond this, then it is likely that many will attempt to "fill in the blanks" if you will and create man-made systems of belief.

Other people console themselves with this minimal source of knowledge and settle for basic forms of religion like Deism or Theism. A deist believes that God exists, but that He is detached

and disinterested in what He created. He got things going and then backed off in a most impersonal way. Theists believe that God is more personal and interactive.

However if we are left with only this bare knowledge of God, people can slip into more problematic belief systems like polytheism or pantheism. Others believe that since this form of knowledge is so limited, it is better to retreat to atheism or agnosticism.

We need more.

2. We should also acknowledge that we know God through our CONSCIENCE:
 - a. This is related to the ontological argument = that the mere idea of God suggests His existence.
 - b. This is also related to the axiological argument = morals, values and a sense of purpose suggests that God exists.
 - c. This is esp. related to the Moral Argument For The Existence of God elaborated upon by C.S. Lewis, esp. in his book *Mere Christianity*.
 1. Where did we get this sense of right and wrong?
 2. Carried to an extreme, some atheists insist that the greatest argument AGAINST God is the so-called "Problem of Evil". But, according to the moral argument, atheists may very well be shooting themselves in the foot to use this argument. Where did their sense of "evil" come from?

Read Romans 2:14-15

Thus the Bible is saying that we should know God exists not only from CREATION, but also through CONSCIENCE. However, even with these, these natural sources of revelation do not necessarily tell us that God is merciful, or a God of grace, or a God of love. That is, these are enough to tell us that God exists and this alone should compel us to seek Him. We should be extremely concerned about the "big" questions, like who am I, why am I here, where am I going...we are given this natural revelation so that we would be interested in more, much more...but where do we go for the next step?

By the way, many will stop here in their search for God and come up with many other philosophies on how to seek God such as mysticism, rationalism, empiricism, relativism or skepticism. Again, we need more. No one knows this better than God! He did something about it!

B. Through Special Revelation:

The second major source of knowledge of God is through special revelation. In Christianity this is vital. Without special revelation, we would never know God to be a God of love and mercy; we would never know how we are to be saved and rescued from death and into eternal life.

1. Our source of special revelation is the Bible.
2. This rests on the presupposition that we live in an “open” as opposed to a “closed” universe. Here, such natural arguments for God’s existence can come into play again (i.e. intelligent design). It seems that we are presumptuous to believe that all that exists is only what we can observe.
3. God “breaks through” as it were, through His Word.
4. The Bible is also called “The Word of God”. The word “word” refers again to revealing or showing something. Just like ideas are revealed through speaking, God is revealed through the Word. To the Christian Church, therefore, the Bible is no mere book. The Bible reveals God. What is more, the Bible reveals God and gives intimate details about Him and His relationship to us. All of those big questions are answered (note: the Bible does not claim to answer *all* questions...it is not a science manual or a home-repair encyclopedia, but it does answer the most important questions we have for life and eternal life!).
5. Who wrote the Bible?
 - a. God Himself.
 - 1) This is called the doctrine of INSPIRATION (very important).

Read 2 Peter 1:21

This word for describing inspiration is *phe-e-ro*. This is translated here as “carried along”. To get a good picture of this word, read another Scripture:

Read Acts 27:15

At first glance this verse seems completely unrelated to our topic at hand. However, interestingly enough the passive verb is the same verb used in 2 Peter 1:21. So, here’s

the picture: In the same way as the wind drove the ship, God the Holy Spirit drove the writers of the Bible. Their unique humanity, personality comes out – this was not mechanical dictation – but God supplied His thoughts through these human instruments. What they originally wrote

down were words expressing God's very thoughts. The words were from God Himself. This is inspiration.

Now read Acts 1:16. Who spoke through David?

Now read 2 Timothy 3:16. This expression "God-breathed" is sometimes directly translated "inspired". This is the most direct Scripture describing the doctrine of inspiration. The Word of God/The Bible is directly from God; it is God-breathed.

- 2) A corollary doctrine to INSPIRATION is INERRANCY.

Thus, in the Christian Church we consider the Bible to be the "source and norm" of Christian doctrine/teaching. That is, the Bible alone establishes our belief, not any church leader or church tradition. Church tradition in and of itself is not a bad thing, but even that tradition must serve the authority of God's Word. It should facilitate the faithful transmission of the Word and never cloud the Word of God.

b. Through Human Instruments:

- 1) The Prophets wrote the Old Testament
- 2) The Evangelists wrote the Four Gospels of the New Testament.
- 3) Apostles or close companions of apostles wrote the letters of the New Testament.

II. More On The Bible:

A. These are other important attributes of the Bible to be aware of:

1. Efficacy: The Holy Spirit works through it to effect salvation. A true means of grace. See John 6:63 Romans 10:17.
2. Sufficiency: All we ultimately need. 2nd. Timothy 3:15.
3. Perspicuity: That is by the Holy Spirit, it is clear and can be known. Psalm 119:105. See also Psalm 19:7.

4. Unity

a. There are two testaments and 66 books from ONE author.

The Basic Divisions of the Bible:

The Old Testament:

The Pentateuch: 5 books.

The Historical Books: 12 books.

The Poetic Books: 5 books.

The Major Prophets: 5 books.

The Minor Prophets: 12 books.

The New Testament:

The Gospels: 4 books.

Historical Book: 1 book.

Epistles: 21 (first 13 are Pauline, written by St. Paul).

Apocalyptic: 1 book.

b. The heart and center of the Bible is Jesus Christ.

c. The overarching theme is ONE:

Justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ apart from the works of the law.

- 1) The OT looks forward to the COMING Christ.
- 2) The NT looks back to the Christ who HAS COME.

d. A vital distinction throughout: Law and Gospel. More on this in later courses. However, for now, here is a basic distinction:

THE LAW: Shows us our SIN. That is, in telling US what to do and what not to do, we see our failure to keep the law of God. This reveals how we FALL SHORT or MISS THE MARK of God's standard. This condition is called "sin". The law shows our sin.

THE GOSPEL: Shows us our SAVIOR. That is, in telling us what JESUS CHRIST did and does and will do FOR US, we see how we are saved from sin and death. This reveals the MERCY and LOVE of God. How God imputes this or counts this as benefiting us is what we call GOSPEL, or GOOD NEWS, for this is how we are saved and rescued by God.

Notice the crucial distinction between Law and Gospel: We are active in connection to the Law, but we are passive in connection to the Gospel. According to the Law, we rebel; according to the Gospel, we are saved. According to the Law, we break the Ten Commandments. According to the Gospel, Jesus keeps the Ten Commandments for us and then takes the punishment for our breaking them in our stead. We cannot properly understand the Bible apart from a proper distinction between Law and Gospel.

Let's take a little test: Identify each Scripture as "Law" or "Gospel":

1. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.
2. You shall not steal.
3. Be still and know that I am God.
4. Christ died for the ungodly.
5. Christ became a curse for us.
6. Christ became sin for us.
7. Christ made atonement for our sin.
8. You have been buried with Christ.
9. Do not neglect going to church.
10. Pray on all occasions.
11. Love one another.
12. Jesus loves you.

B. The Purpose of the Bible:

1. To save us from sin and damnation through faith in Christ.
2. To train Christians to live as His children here and now.

3. To give God glory through the above.

Read John 5:39 and John 20:31

III. How do we know that the Bible is trustworthy?

A. Three main aspects:

1. Internal Evidence.
2. External Evidence.
3. Bibliographical Evidence.

B. Look Appendix 3: “Ten Characteristics of The Historical Nature of the Bible”. These are all INTERNAL evidence aspects.

C. What about external evidence?

1. There are four major aspects:

#1: Christian historians.

#2: Non-christian historians.

#3: Archaeology.

#4: Messianic Prophecies (8 in 1 person = 10 E 17, note illustration of Texas and silver dollars two feet high throughout).

D. What about bibliographical evidence? See Appendix 3: “Bibliographical Evidence for the Bible”.

E. Finally, see Appendix 4: “An Evidential Apologetic” by John Warwick Montgomery.

For Review: *Small Catechism* pgs. 47-53 and 100-101 on Law and Gospel especially.