



FINDING TRUE KNOWLEDGE BEHIND THE CURTAIN

(PHILOSOPHY OR FAITH)

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Reading- Hebrews 6. 13-20.

Laws of logic

There is such a thing as logic. What is it? It's an immaterial law of the universe. A chain of reasoning. It can be expressed formally, however, most people use it loosely. God uses it here in our text. The reasoning proceeds as follows. There are two things (v13 and v14). In v13 God swears by Himself:

"For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,"

And in v14 there is His promise:

"Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee."

These are the two immutable things of verse 18:

"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie"

This guarantee and promise can be expressed simply like this:

If God speaks then God cannot lie because He is trustworthy;
God does speak,
therefore He cannot lie and you can trust that word.

This is a valid argument, it works logically, it affirms the antecedent. But is it a sound argument? That is, are the premises true? The premises are:- If God speaks he cannot lie and God does speak. Is any of it true? Why should I believe in God at all? The answer to that is; Because, if you don't, you can't really know, or prove, anything without being arbitrary or inconsistent, and life becomes meaningless and absurd.

Philosophy

To explain this we need a bit of history, a brief, fairly recent, philosophical progression. This was an attempt to try to find truth from a human starting point.

How do you know what is true? There were essentially two competing ideas. The first, put forward famously by Rene Descartes, was that you can know because you think. This is Rationalism; the logical use of reason. Intuition and deduction, alongside innate knowledge and concepts. For example with mathematics. The second was later put forward by such men as John Locke and David Hume. They said, you can know because of your senses and experience; what you can measure, touch, see etc. This is Empiricism- observation and experimentation. Then Immanuel Kant came along and said "No, it must be both". Thought and sense, he said, are linked and dependent upon each other. Thought doesn't exist in a vacuum, it needs a reference point provided by time and space and linked to matter. Thought, time and the brain are all linked. Physical senses have to be processed by the mind. But both things are bound by our bodies and our own experiences, we can't know anything beyond this. Therefore he said there were two worlds, one, of our bodily experience, and secondly, the true world. We can't know for sure things as they really are in this true world. We are essentially stuck behind the curtain of our sensory experience and can't look beyond it. He said we can only know what we can experience with our senses and mind, nothing else. So man put himself in a box of his own sense and reason. You can't know what's outside, and you can't know if there is a God. This is Scientific-Rationalism and the age termed 'The Enlightenment'. Then came Existentialism with its purely subjective view-point, whether optimistic or pessimistic (life is devoid of meaning except the one you give it- this was supposed to be freedom), and ultimately Postmodernism, and said, "It's worse than that, both mind and sense must be doubted." Your sight may be different to others, your tastes may be different to others. Without absolutes and meta-narratives, whose experience is true? There is just a multiplicity of perspectives, individual 'truths' which are only true for you. The soul of man 'died' in such a climate (Rev.16.3).

The problem with Empiricism is that science can only ever be provisional, it's only true until it's proved false. Then there's the problem that uniformity in nature cannot be assumed: It can't be assumed over space; why should laws of nature be the same in one place and the

same on the other side of the universe? Or over time; why should our experiments behave in the same way tomorrow as they have today? Science just assumes they will behave that way because they always have done. This is an arbitrary assumption. And of course there is that question of why natural laws are there at all, in their mathematical precision. Then, there is the discovery of the theory of Relativity and Quantum Mechanics, which puts the role of the observer as central to the experiment. This makes 'truth' essentially subjective.

Then there is the problem with Rationalism, that it cannot be presumed to be reliable. Memory, for example; life could be a dream. Also, logic and reason also work within laws, but again, why are those laws there? We can't adequately explain the order of laws without a lawgiver. It's arbitrary to just use them without a reason to explain why they exist. We also can't explain moral laws. What is right and wrong if life is a mere accident of chance? Kant tried to draw morality from the laws of logic alone, but this is a non-starter as it simply rests one set of laws upon another foundational set of which you can't account for either. Morality, then, can only ever be subjective and essentially non-binding in a Godless universe. Kant doesn't explain *reason*, let alone *morality*. How can you impose an imperative drawn from logical laws when you can't even explain why those laws are there? Even language cannot be trusted to give an accurate representation of thought. Therefore with Postmodernism you can't truly know anything, even inside the box.

This is all a natural progression of philosophical thought and its conclusions are understandable. Without belief in God, nothing can ultimately be made to make sense and life is ultimately meaningless. We are increasingly living in a post-truth age, an internet age, of fake news, AI algorithms written by unknown coders and deep fake videos. An age where knowledge and information isn't judged by its truth but by its commercial value; knowledge is produced to be sold. Truth is increasingly impossible to find, in an absolute sense, without an absolute God. That's why the Bible says, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge." Only a belief in God makes sense of our experience, because He is the Creator and He is truth.

Nothing new under the sun

The wise King Solomon agrees, in Ecclesiastes he says, everything is a meaningless vanity 'Under the Sun'- a phrase indicating the restriction of bodily, material, experience, lived in this life only, as if there is no God. And this is the conclusion of centuries of secular philosophy. But, in the temple Solomon built (modeled on the earlier Tabernacle), there was a significant symbolic visual aid for our understanding;- curtains, two pairs of them. The first, as an entrance into the 'holy place', the second, an entrance into the 'holy of holies'. Outside of this temple was an outer courtyard. This outer courtyard had only one entrance and represents the way we should seek God through a sacrificial altar (Christ's offering up a perfectly righteous life and bearing away the guilt of His people) and a large ceremonial washing basin (The washing away the stain of corruption of sin, providing holiness, a cleansing power of expiation in His people). This is the conversion of an individual, cleansing and justification through faith in Christ's substitutionary atoning work on Calvary. Outside of that courtyard was representative of the material world of mind and purely carnal sense, only 'Under the Sun'. The 'holy place' represents the experience after conversion, life lived with the eyes of faith in revelation of God, 'special' revelation as opposed to 'natural' revelation.

The 'holy of holies' represents heaven where faith gives way to sight. In the 'holy place' there was the light of the lamp stand, representing God revealing Himself by His Spirit in His word. In the 'holy of holies' there was the light of the 'shekinah'. In this picture we can see that we can go behind the first curtain with faith in revelation from God after conversion to Him, which in turn gives us access through the second 'veil' to heaven in Christ. Because we can trust in God, in His revelation, therefore we can trust Him to have made our senses true as well as our language. This curtain, or 'veil', is spoken of in v19 of our text.

In Hebrews 6:18 -20 it says:

"18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

And in 1 Kings 8:6-8 we read:

"6 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. 7 For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. 8 And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day."

We can see that 'faith' and 'hope' are like the staves of the Ark being seen in the holy place through the curtain, that may be touched, grasped.

Making sense of it

The key to making sense of all this is that the philosophers make a terrible mistake, they assume something; that God is passive. He doesn't act or speak. He's just a concept to them. You see, they're right, that without God, you cannot ultimately know what's true. You can't ultimately prove God purely from inside yourself. But what if He reveals Himself to us, through special revelation, from outside of us, by speaking the Bible and acting by Christ who is Himself the Word? And not only that, He then works faith in individuals, through His Spirit, opening the eyes of their understanding in order for them to 'recognise' the ultimate truth. The only way to see behind the curtain is faith in God's revelation. The only way out of the box, is by faith in God, revealing what is true.

This is how it works:

We find ourselves born with senses and rational thought naturally, but without faith they cannot be explained. We use these things to look at the world around us and the Bible and its claims. But it is only when we have faith in the Bible's truth that we can make sense of who we are why we think and sense. This is the real starting point - faith in God (this is itself a gift from God, Eph 2.8. A realization of the truth of God, a recognition given by the Holy Spirit), in the Bible, that God is true and cannot lie; this gives a reason for reason and senses, so you can use them. Because of this, it is now not arbitrary or inconsistent to use them. Our reason, then, confirms our faith, through logic and science, that we can trust, because God is true and has given us the uniformity of nature, our senses and the laws of logic for us to use. This then backs up our faith through arguments from rational thought, the

argument from design or archeological discovery for example. But faith must be foundational. This argument backs up itself because we can appeal to nothing higher than God. It's an ultimate proof. It's circular, but it's not a 'vicious' circle, it's a self-sustaining, non-arbitrary, circle. A transcendental argument.

We can only believe in the God of the Bible though, not any old god. Only the One true Biblical God has made us and is trustworthy. The Bible explains He has made the laws of nature and the laws of logic that we can trust and use because we are rational creatures made in His image. He has given us senses we can rely on, upholds the natural world, natural laws that enable science, gives us language to express ourselves, especially the Bible, a book spiritually discerned- a 'living' book, infallible and inerrant, having been preserved from error. Only in the Bible does God promise to uphold all things, in all places, so that we can trust tomorrow to be like today, upholding the laws of time and space. He says this to Noah in Genesis 8.22. Only the God of the Bible made Man in his image so we can use our thoughts and our senses and trust them. Only in the Bible does God send His Word, Jesus Christ, into the world to take action and reveal Himself to us.

A trustworthy belief system

You see, you have to have three things for a trustworthy belief system:

- 1). It mustn't be Arbitrary, that is, belief for no reason.
- 2). It mustn't be Inconsistent. Using things you can't account for, like logic or morality.
- 3). It must account for the preconditions of intelligibility. Why we can know anything, trusting the uniformity of nature or our memories, for example.

Evolutionary, materialistic, Atheism fails all three tests. Only the Christian belief system has this. As we have seen, human philosophy fails utterly in its quest for absolute truth and ends by saying you can't know anything for sure. In fact, you can't even know that you can't know! Without reliable belief, it's impossible to even do anything without being arbitrary or inconsistent. Even in order to pick up a specific object you need to trust your eyes, your recognition, your memory, your arms, your legs and your sense of touch.

So there is a stark choice:

Either believe; and know the truth God has to tell you about life, hope and salvation.

Or, not believe; knowing nothing for sure and then life becomes absurd, a darkness with no truth, you'll be lost.

You could try to find 'meaning' but it'll be like chasing the wind. Know this, if you don't believe, you won't be able to be consistent in your belief system. Say goodbye to absolute truth. So, there is a choice. This is why Joshua says;

"Choose you this day whom you will serve but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord" Joshua 24.15.

So we have 3 main ways to discover truth:

1. What we glean from our senses.
2. What we glean from our thoughts.
3. Outward Revelation and inward realization from God.

All three are needed. But only the last one through FAITH can make any sense of the first two and take us to the furthest point in order to find the truth of God.

The ultimate proof of God, turns out to be that, if there was no God, you couldn't prove anything at all. There's really only two options. Either God is real, or life is absurd. Which option will you take? Belief- faith, breaks you out, makes you free to see! We can see the outward creation, the inward moral law written on our hearts and the truth of God's word.

Remember, only faith in the God of the Bible can make sense of morality- right and wrong. He gave His laws, summed up in the ten commandments. Without Him, everyone could make up different moral laws, being a law unto themselves, without an absolute, overarching, moral reference point. However, with God, we can have these absolute standards. The problem is, the Bible says we've broken them. We have been given an internal magistrate; the conscience, testifying to this. The Bible also reveals the truth that Mankind's problem with God isn't predominantly an intellectual problem but a problem of his willful resistance. Man is attempting to find a reason not to believe in God because he doesn't *want* to know God, and *holds down* the truth in unrighteousness Romans 1.17-22.

Christ and redemption

In Hebrews 6:19-26 Jesus Christ is shown as the 'forerunner' opening up the way to heaven, the way for Man to be reconciled and forgiven for breaking God's laws. He did this by coming and 'speaking' into this world and revealing the truth. He is the 'Word' (the logos) made flesh. He did this by 'action', living a life of righteousness worked for us. He then died a substitutionary atoning death in order to take our punishment, for there is no way that Man could ever redeem himself Romans 3.21-26. When Christ died those curtain 'veil' of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom by God. Showing that He has made the way into heaven, going before us.

This is the truth revealed by God and this is why you can trust it, because if you don't, you can't trust anything else or know anything else is true. Atheism simply doesn't make sense. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. Faith allows us to think and experience.

Here's to those people who break out of this dark world and find God behind the curtain by faith. In John 18.36-38 Christ says:

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?"

This shows the stark contrast between faith and human philosophy.

Logically:

If God speaks a truth (revelation- the Bible) then he cannot lie;

God does speak a truth (the Bible);

Therefore, he cannot lie. And we can trust it.

We can know what is true and what is not true. With God, we can trust our senses, the natural, moral and logical laws, because he made them and He made us to use them. But, without Him, you can't make sense of your senses and you can't have a reason for your reason, even though you may use them.

"But", you say, "I can see just fine, I can think just fine!". Yes, but you can't ultimately be sure that what you see and think are true. No God, no faith, then no foundation. But if you trust Him: the Way, the Truth and the Life; you will start to see, to think and to live the life of faith. A reasonable rational faith, from a God who makes sense.

This age may tell us we're nothing more than an accident of chemistry and natural processes but, maybe, it's no more apparent than in our creativity, that we give away the reality that we are so much more. A person may really believe that they're a rabbit, for example, but in the end must confront the truth that they don't look or act like a rabbit. Why do we yearn for meaning and purpose? Why do we make art exploring our soul as if we're driven by something more than mere instinct? Why are we conscious of love as something more than sexual appetite, of morality more than societal control? Because, truth be known, we're made in the image of the God of love and justice who came to take our place and bear our punishment in order to redeem us.