

Chapter 1 – Concerning the Knowledge of God

Q1. Whence do we know that there is a God?

A. From nature, and from the Holy Scriptures.

The question is about the place from where a person gets the knowledge of God from. However, there are a number of assumptions made. What are these assumptions?

In the first place, *there is a God*. It is clear that this is necessary. If there is no God, there would be no need for any religion. Also, if God would not exist, it would be unnecessary to look for salvation or to obtain it. The New Testament makes clear that we need to know that God exist, before we could come in prayer before the LORD. We read in Hebrews, “He that cometh to God must believe that He is [=exist]...” (Hebr. 11:6). The question to you and me is, do we believe that God exists? How is this visible in our lives? Today, the existence of God is much questioned. The evolution theory says that there is no God. We can say that this view has problems. Let us first think about what the evolution theory is, before we enter into its issues. What is the evolution theory? Indeed, the believe that there is no God. At the beginning of time, there was a great explosion, called the big bang. This caused to form the universe. Little by little planets were formed. One day there came life on earth. Very small and simple cells. This developed more to fishes, which transformed into reptiles and birds. Then the land animals were formed out of these preceding animals. At last, man came forth from the ape. What are things in the evolution theory that are problematic? Yes, there are a couple of things to mention. One is the beginning of life. Scientists have not been able to get life from something that is not alive. This is certainly problematic. How did all that life come into existence from only physical dead material? This is a question that scientists cannot answer. A second challenge is the beginning of the universe. Without any cause the ‘big bang’ suddenly happened. But we can say from all of life, everything that happens has a certain cause. This is also true for the beginning of the universe. If there was an explosion, what or who caused the explosion? Scientists leave us in the dark. A third problem that can be pointed out is the missing links. That means a link between one type of animal and another, for example a half-fish-bird. Evolutionists say that man came from the ape. But where is the living being that should be the link between them? This is still not found. And from the Bible we can say, this being will never be found because it never existed. Let us now look at the second assumption of the question.

The next assumption is that *human beings have the capacity to know things*. The question says “whence do we know.” There is no doubt whether one can know things. No, this is simply assumed. Note that it does say “we” and not “all creatures.” We believe that human beings differ from animals. They do not have the capacity to know things in the way we do. Animals cannot think logically about God’s existence. For example, one day you pass by one of your cows. You think, it would be nice to tell him one of the great histories of the Bible. So, you tell him the story of Joseph in prison. The cow seems to listen carefully to you. But would he really understand? Would he be able to tell it back to you? No, of course not. That is foolishness to think. He has not the capacity to reason.

In the third place, the question makes clear that *God has revealed himself*. What if God existed but had not made himself known. How would this be a problem? Think also about this question, what would be good ways to make yourself known to another person? It is good to give another example. There is a new president installed in the United States. But he lives in the basement of his house. He never comes into the public. He does not reveal himself in any media. How would we know that there would be a new president? We would not. This shows that the question is right. If God exists, He also revealed Himself.

The last assumption is that there is a *place or source where we can obtain knowledge of God*. What would it be if there would be revelation but no source to get it, how would someone profit from it? That would not be the case. For example, the United States has certain laws. These laws are revealed in the past to the public. Currently, there is no place where these laws can be found. How would I know the laws of the United States? I would not. That they are revealed is not enough. I also need to have a place where to find this information. The same is true with the revelation of God. It must be found in certain sources. What are these sources?

In the answer, there are two sources mentioned by which God revealed Himself: 1. Nature. 2. Scripture. They have both a different purpose. The first source, nature, has the purpose that people know *that* God exists. Certain characteristics of God are visible in nature, for example the design element in nature shows that He has a mind. The second source, Scripture, shows *who* God is. This knowledge can be known by the mind and by the heart. The last one is necessary for salvation. This is what we call experimental knowledge. The experience that God exist.

Q2. How is God known Of how many kinds is the knowledge of God from nature?¹

A. In two ways: (1) an internal, or innate (2) an external or acquired knowledge.

This question speaks about the knowledge of God that comes from nature. It is the first type of knowledge that we found in the previous answer. Let us first think about this, what is knowledge? Dictionaries give different answers. Simply said, knowledge is information that is stored in a person's mind. Do animals have knowledge? Yes, to a certain extend this is the case, but it differs from knowledge that humans have.

In the answer on the question, we find two types of knowledge: internal and external knowledge. It is seen from the perspective (view) of man. On the one hand knowledge on the inside, on the other hand that what comes from the outside. The first one is also called "innate" knowledge. That means, something that one has from birth. It is internal. Someone is born with it. The assumption here is that everyone has this knowledge. For example, every baby has a voice. At certain moments, he will cry out loud when it has pain or need food. Other times, it feels that the mother is close. Did his mother have to teach this? No. It was as it were programmed in the baby. In the next question, we will go deeper into this matter. The other type of knowledge is "acquired." This means that someone obtains or gets knowledge from elsewhere. It is not ingrained in the person. For example, a baby has the ability to speak. The capacity is given from birth. However, parents have to teach the child the sounds, words and a whole language. The existence of external knowledge assumes three different

¹ Literally: Lit: Of how many kinds is the knowledge of God from nature? A. Of two kinds...

things. First, not everyone has this knowledge. Some do have it, others may not. Second, a person can increase this knowledge by research. This includes the knowledge about God. Third, one needs a specific external source to obtain this knowledge. It is not found in the person itself.

Q3. What is the internal or innate knowledge?

A. It is the knowledge of God which is naturally in the hearts of all men from birth.² “Because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them” (Rom. 1:19).

What does “innate” or “internal” mean? In simple terms, it is something that is “by nature.” The Oxford dictionary defines it as follows, “The basic or inherent features of something, especially when seen as characteristic of it,” and the Collins dictionary says, “As a result of inborn or inherent qualities; innately.” In other words, it is something inside man. It is part of his essence or being. He is not able to change that. For example, why is it that humans eat food and not grass? Maybe there are few exceptions, but that would be very unnatural. Why do we love certain foods and other not? We are born with it. So, innate knowledge means that it is inborn in a person's heart by nature.

A question that arises is, what is the heart? Different theologians give a variety of answers. For example, Rev. Kersten says, “The most inner of your being, with your heart, out of which are the outgoings of life and not only in the externally appearance.” Another theologian, Jamieson, says, “The ‘heart,’ must here mean the sincerity of both the thoughts and the feelings.” In other words, it is someone’s true self, the most inner part of a human. Notice that the answer speaks of the hearts of “all men.” That includes everyone in the church, each person in the world. It is both those that call themselves atheists as well as those that follow other religions. That is why there are so many religions in this world. No one is excluded. You could ask, where do we find this in the Bible? That is a very good question. In Romans 1, we find a reference, where it says, “Because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them” (Rom. 1:19). The annotations on the Bible write, “Namely so much as a man without God’s Word can know out of nature...This is within their minds” (SV-KT44-45), and “By the law of nature, in their conscience.” In other words, this knowledge is available for everyone and even in the conscience of a person. What does this practically mean? That the conscience of a person speaks. When? Think about the example when a child does something wrong. What happens? First, he will hear a voice inside that tells him: What you do is wrong. Second, when mother comes, he will feel that he has done wrong. He wants to hide from mother. Why is that? It is because his conscience speaks. So, we can say that each person in the world has certain knowledge of God. This is knowledge that he is born with. It is specifically revealed when he does something against God’s law. Then his conscience begins to speak.

² Literally the answer says, “That which is inborn in the hearts of all men by nature.”