

SECOND SESSION: IS THERE A BODY OF UNIQUELY CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE?
THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD.

1. Knowledge is *the ability to represent things as they are on an appropriate basis* of thought and experience, not to exclude communications from qualified others. This is knowledge as it exists in ordinary life, where we expect our dentist and auto mechanic to *know* what they are doing.
2. Knowledge confers upon its possessor *the right to act, to direct action, to determine policy and to teach*. No other human possession does this: not feeling, opinion (belief), power or tradition (habit). This is because knowledge, involving truth, puts us in position to deal confidently and successfully with reality. (The cavity in your tooth, for example.)
3. We *believe* something when we are prepared, in appropriate circumstances, to act as if it were so. To believe, we do not have to know, but belief entirely without associated knowledge is dangerous if not impossible, though sometimes it may be unavoidable. The case of David and Goliath. (I Samuel 17) David's faith was based on knowledge. Faith is not opposed to knowledge, not a blind leap. Not "believing what you know ain't so."
4. Most of what we know we know *because someone told us*. For example, most of us here know the multiplication tables. Probably very few if any of us have thought them out to see that and why they are true. But you still know them, because they were conveyed to you in a certain established context of learning and you have some experience with using them. And you could, with some effort, come to see why they are true: why, for example, 5 times 7 equals 35. This is how knowledge by authority works, and without it we would all have to start from scratch and would never get anywhere with finding the knowledge we need to live. Knowledge by legitimate authority always welcomes testing and questioning.
5. Knowledge and who has it and who doesn't is a hot political issue. People get killed over it: Socrates, Jesus. This is because it does confer the right to act, direct, make policy and teach. This is huge power over human affairs. Nearly every issue publicly debated in our society today involves the question of who knows and who does not.
6. Now in matters affecting world view, the issue of "who knows" repeatedly comes up. Go back to Dr. Provine's statement quoted last evening. Or to the calculation that the earth was created a few thousand years ago.
7. Jesus and his teachings strongly intersect world view issues, for these issues connect up with assumptions we make in living the spiritual life. Even such matters as *what is spiritual life*. What is spirit, what is spirituality. What is the difference between a person who is spiritual and one who is not? Or is everyone, whether they want it or not?
8. Think of life as the capacity for self-initiating, self-sustaining, self-directing activities. Thus, a stone is not alive, but a cabbage, a goldfish, a dog are. There are different kinds of life depending on what activities are involved. You can play chess and watch a game of chess intelligently. But a dog can't, though they could see the board or even chew on it. Is there a spiritual life?
9. Is there a life that transcends physical powers? And what is involved in living that life? Here there are huge world view implications, though perhaps it is not necessary to have thought about them to live the spiritual life. Children and other saints, for example, may have no idea of them.
10. This, I think, is where Jesus as teacher comes in. Think of him, for the moment at least, as the smartest, the most intelligent person who ever lived. Then think of his answers, implicit or explicit, to the five questions we have used to specify world view. Understand that his answers are not things you have to accept without thinking or questioning, but as avenues that can be used to explore reality and goodness. Put them to the test of thought and experience in any and every fair way.

11. Jesus' basic message (first question) was: "Repent, for the Kingdom of the Heavens is at hand." (Matt. 4:17). What is the Kingdom of the Heavens. Think of it simply as *the range of God's effective will*, where what he wants done is done. Like your kingdom, the range of *your* effective will. We pray "thy kingdom come" over and into our kingdom (or queendom). This kingdom is a realm of interacting persons. Prayer.
12. We are to seek the kingdom of God and his kind of righteousness (Matt. 6:33) and all else needed will come to be. Seek it. It will not jump down your neck. God leaves us room. How do you seek it? You put into practice what Jesus said about the kingdom and observe the effects. His teachings express the reality of the kingdom. Identify with them in action. Compare how one gets to know electricity—how we got to know about it and live with it—or anything else. All of reality does not lie about in clumps like stones and squirrels. Most of what exists is not visible, or, perhaps, even detectable by human abilities. And for all that is detectable, we have to suit our approach to its nature. Subject determines method.
13. How does Jesus answer the second question? Who is well-off? His answer is: Anyone alive in the kingdom of the Heavens? To them he says: "Don't worry!" Compare to the strictly human answers: Wealth, reputation, etc. The "Woe be's" of Luke 6:24-26. Again, we have it on the best of authorities, but put it to the tests.
14. Likewise for the third and fourth questions. The really good person is the one whose life is pervaded by God's kind of love, *agape*. That requires intelligence, awareness and development of character. And how does one become like that? Through life as an apprentice of Jesus in kingdom living.
15. What about the knowledge question, question five? No doubt with respect to knowledge there is much for us to do. With reference to the first four questions, knowledge is provided through the teaching of Jesus in the context of the Jewish background and the experience of his followers through the ages. This does not dispense with experience and reason. Wesley's "Quadrilateral" of revelation, tradition, experience and reason, all in balance, none exclusively.
16. With respect to knowledge generally, it is very much a human project and responsibility to develop it. It is a part of what was assigned to in the "creation covenant." (Gen 1:26) Because so much power is involved in it, we have to grow in character to handle it. Terrorism as we know it today was impossible before the long developments of science and technology. Knowledge not only puffs up, as St. Paul pointed out, it *blows* up. Still, it is through knowledge that we grow toward the kind of "dominion" that the kingdom of God has appointed for human beings. What lies ahead in our universe along these lines we "see darkly, obscurely."
17. It is important today that those who stand with Jesus Christ and for him and for humanity present what he has to say on the four questions as knowledge: as information upon which we can act with confidence that it is true, and thereby come to experience and live in the kingdom of God, which is the eternal kind of life now.
18. Insofar as this requires refusing to agree with "knowledges" coming at us from various sources around us, whatever they may be, we need to do that with love, joy, peace, and intelligent persistence. It is in this connection that working with world views is of vital importance. Our ministers and teachers stand at the center of this conflict of ideas. We must recognize them in this work, prayer for, and support them. They have the knowledge for which the world languishes.