

Ways of Knowing

Brethren Training Network conference

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Conference theme: “Public faith in diverse contexts”

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I’ve been invited to present an elective paper on ‘Ways of Knowing’, linking Jesus’ teaching and Trinitarian insights to ways of knowing in our multi-religious contexts.

1/ Jesus and Ways of Knowing Matt 7:7-10 Ask, Seek and Knock

*Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find.
Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.*

These verses are absolute treasure for our topic: ways of knowing. Let me unpack. In Matthew, Jesus’ greatest sermon chapters 5–7, he describes the way faithful followers of the King will live. He expects kingdom-shaped living, and the Beatitudes show its radically distinct shape. Happiness comes to those who least *deserve* it. Contrary to the principle of *desert*, it takes the principle of *grace* if we are to ‘see God’ or possess the kingdom (Mtt 5:8,10). Jesus is contrasting a grateful attitude with the Pharisees who self-righteously believe they *deserve* blessing, and withhold it from others (Mtt 9:12, 12:7).

Coming to the immediate context of our text, in Mtt 7:1-6, Jesus teaches we are not to judge others. Our knowledge doesn’t entitle us to judge other people. Jesus knows knowledge puffs up; often leading to self-commendation and other-condemnation.

The ancient definition of knowledge is ‘justified true belief.’¹ Jesus very quickly exposes the ethical nature of knowledge and its major temptation—self-justification and critical spirit. Once we have *seen* something, we feel we deserve credit and/or we feel entitled to condemn those who have not seen. For humans, knowing immediately entangles us in ethical issues related to *gift* and *desert*. We will find the themes of grace and truth intertwined in everything we say as Christians about ways of knowing.

Now in verse Matthew 7:7-8, in contrast to knowledge sought in the interests of self-justification and comparison, Jesus commends a very different way of knowing.

‘Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.’

Notice there are three verbs and three outcomes. Asking, seeking and knocking appear to be a model for various applications. One application is prayer as verse 11 makes clear. We can ask God. Another application involves asking parents for what we want. My focus will be on the broadest application—

¹ This definition goes back to Plato (*Theaetetus* 201, *Meno*, 98). Edmund L. Gettier highlighted some difficulties in his ‘Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?’, *Analysis* 23.6, June 1963.

ways of knowing anything. One more thing to notice is the promise of verse 8: knowledge will come to those who ask, seek and knock.

The three verbs are interesting. The usual verb associated with knowledge in the West is 'seeking'. Scientists seek knowledge and (hopefully) they discover. Hence, seek and you will find. Much more associated with traditional knowledge is the verb 'asking'. Where there are traditional authorities who/that are believed to know and are trustworthy, asking is a productive way to learn. Hence, ask and you will receive. In fact, science is highly productive because it does both asking and seeking. In any area of knowledge, you can't make much progress without 'asking' the discipline what we know and should take for granted. It's important to see that asking and seeking correlate, respectively, to *trusting* and *questioning*, to *faith* and *reason*. To ask requires some trust, some faith. To seek requires questioning, some reasoning. The third verb Jesus uses highlights the *relational* nature of knowledge—knock and the door will be opened to you *by someone/something else*. It is only as you continue in a relationship, only as you pay attention to a subject (or a person) that they yield their truth and secrets. It's important to see that 'knocking on the door' introduces us to the importance for knowing of *involvement* and *context*.

How succinct and profound are Jesus' words in Matthew 7:7-8! They inexorably lead us to relational, humble, confident knowing. They do not promise comprehensive or absolutely certain knowledge. They forewarn us about self-justification and exploitation of knowledge. They enshrine a balance between grace and truth. As I have argued elsewhere, they point us to *love* as the most optimal way of knowing.

Let me illustrate these three verbs in my life story.

Seeking and Finding

When I was nine years old, I got lost in India! We were cycling home from an inter-school art exhibition in the Ketti Valley to Lushington School in Ooty. The instruction when we set out that afternoon was: 'Follow the railway tracks' to Ooty. But after several miles, I got separated from the rest of the group. Lost! All alone in rural India! That was until one more fellow-student came by. Together we followed the rails. I was safe. When he followed his instincts and left the tracks to strike out for home another way, I kept him in my sights. And so, I made it home also. I was seeking; I found my way home. There are lots of ways of seeking. Much later, I returned to the scene and realised that had I kept to the rail tracks I would have made it home another, though longer, route. By then I was an adult working in India and my goal was no longer getting home safely, it was to explore all over India. I confidently explored similar rail tracks up to Darjeeling. In another adventure, in Nepal I rode with my children on the roof of a bus. It was exciting quite recently to re-explore that journey home to Lushington, 'Google Mapping' it from the vantage point of satellite images. There is so much to be found by seeking.

Asking and Receiving

Knowledge is not simply exploration—as if the knowledge gained was entirely deserved by our valiant efforts. When you're beginning to explore something, it pays to ask those who have gone before, and written the books (!). I had just finished my MTh at SAIACS, Bangalore, and was working as a faculty in theology there. I had the opportunity to do a PhD and was casting about for a subject. Dr Paul Hiebert, renowned professor of anthropology and mission, was visiting. So I asked him, 'I'm looking at the area

of epistemology in theology. What might be a good place to dig?’ He answered, ‘what about a trinitarian approach to knowing?’ That was a great nudge. Similarly, I read a remark by Dr Tom Wright about modern and postmodern issues and he suggested that what we need is ‘an epistemology of love.’ From these giants, I received those gifts. It pays to ask. Not just by discovery, knowledge is also received.

Especially when it is interpersonal, knowledge comes ultimately by grace. The known allows itself to be known. When I was at university, I was fascinated with a girl in my hometown. Of course, we ‘knew’ each other. But it took years for me to pluck up the courage to strike up a real conversation, even longer to ask her out on a date. Then it was months to get beyond the pain of her response: ‘No.’ Still wishing her well, I set out to forget her. How surprising then when, nearly a year later, she opened the door, willing now to being known. This year we celebrated 43 years of married life and revisited the spot we first held hands! Academic fascinations can have similar mutuality. When we ask, we (may) find ourselves receiving.

Involvement, Context and Having the Door Opened

Asking and seeking, finding and receiving all occur along the journey of our involvement with what we are seeking to know. And I specifically want to highlight that involvement includes the particular context of our point in history, culture and geography, even eschatology! The door of knowledge opens at particular places or events in our lives. Knowledge is not abstract or universal. It is particular doors that open, not every door. As we knock on a door, in that relational involvement, learning can take place. The door opens. We grasp something suddenly. Surprises come sometimes, yes! Academic journeys can have turning points; Aha moments, when something we at last grasp begins to shed light on new and unexpected dimensions. I was tremendously excited to discover in Karl Barth patterns in epistemology I had noticed before in less theological contexts.

Let me explain. I did an MTh thesis and a PhD thesis on the same subject but from entirely different logical directions: from below and from above. Epistemology from below starts from the phenomenology of our *experiences* and can seek to bring them into coherent relation to the *revelation* of God in Christ. I discovered three important themes and began to wonder whether they were Trinitarian. But then the question became: Was I imagining it? Was there any connection with God apart from the number three? Was I simply reading into things what I wanted to read into them? So I set out to work the other direction: working from *revelation* and to *experience*. I asked what could be learned for epistemology by looking at God’s knowing and then at human knowing. Imagine how my heart glowed when I discovered those same themes in Karl Barth! Or were they shown to me? Who knows! All I can say is that they keep on illuminating my world.² All I can do is share my delight and see if lights come on for others. I’ll come to the three themes soon, but first a little more of my story.

After completing my doctorate, my denomination (Open Brethren) gave me the responsibility of leading their bible college in New Zealand. Pathways College was on the verge of closing down. Fewer

² For instance, my ‘Reproducing Leaders through Mentoring’ in *Tending the Seedbeds, Educational Perspectives on Theological Education in Asia*, Alan Harkness (ed), Asia Theological Association, 2010, pp. 167-191; and ‘A Theology for Advanced Theological Studies’ in *Challenging Tradition, Innovation in Advanced Theological Education*, P Shaw and H Dharamraj, eds., Langham, 2018, pp. 167-184.

My MTh thesis was ‘Personal Open Committedness—A Central Theme in a Christian Epistemology and its Missiological Implications for People facing Modernity, especially New Zealanders’ (SAIACS, 1996). My University of Aberdeen PhD thesis was published as *Wouldn’t You Love to Know? Trinitarian Epistemology and Pedagogy* (Pickwick, 2014).

churches trusted it, fewer students signed up for its residential classroom-centred courses. After listening carefully to blunt opinions, we could see radical change was needed. Was learning best offered as knowledge conveyed to receptive minds in classrooms? Mmm—that didn't seem so sure. Or was there a place for learning in context? I thought so. Recognizing the power of contextual involvement turned out to be another door that opened. Could we rebuild the trust by sharing with churches the privilege of seeing students learn while helping in ministry? The result was an internship mode of learning which was dramatically transformative. Knowledge was excitingly discovered in practice and in relationships. There was room for the learner's exploration, and it was not so easy to forget the need for grace. Back in June 2005, when I attended this BTN conference in Dubuque for the first time, it was my privilege to talk about this ministry internship model. It was a game changer for Pathways College.

Keeping on Asking, Seeking, Knocking

After five years at Pathways, we were called to work in South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS), India. I had studied at SAIACS before, but now I was Principal. That ten years' experience of academic leadership in a South Asian context was exciting. I discovered context-based learning works just as transformatively in India. We restructured our MA program to include action learning in the local context. I remember vividly one African student whose ministry placement was to nearby ministry to street people (rather like Mother Teresa's in Calcutta). She shared how after getting nowhere for several weeks, she realized she was looking down on the residents. She discovered humility broke down barriers to relationship. The new context has also raised many more questions for me about epistemology and pedagogy. There's plenty of adventure ahead as we keep on asking, seeking and knocking.

Question Discussion time:

Asking, Seeking, Knocking

Get into pairs. Take 10 min now to talk to your neighbour about stories in your life that illuminate these ways of knowing: seeking and finding; asking and receiving; and knocking and having the door opened.

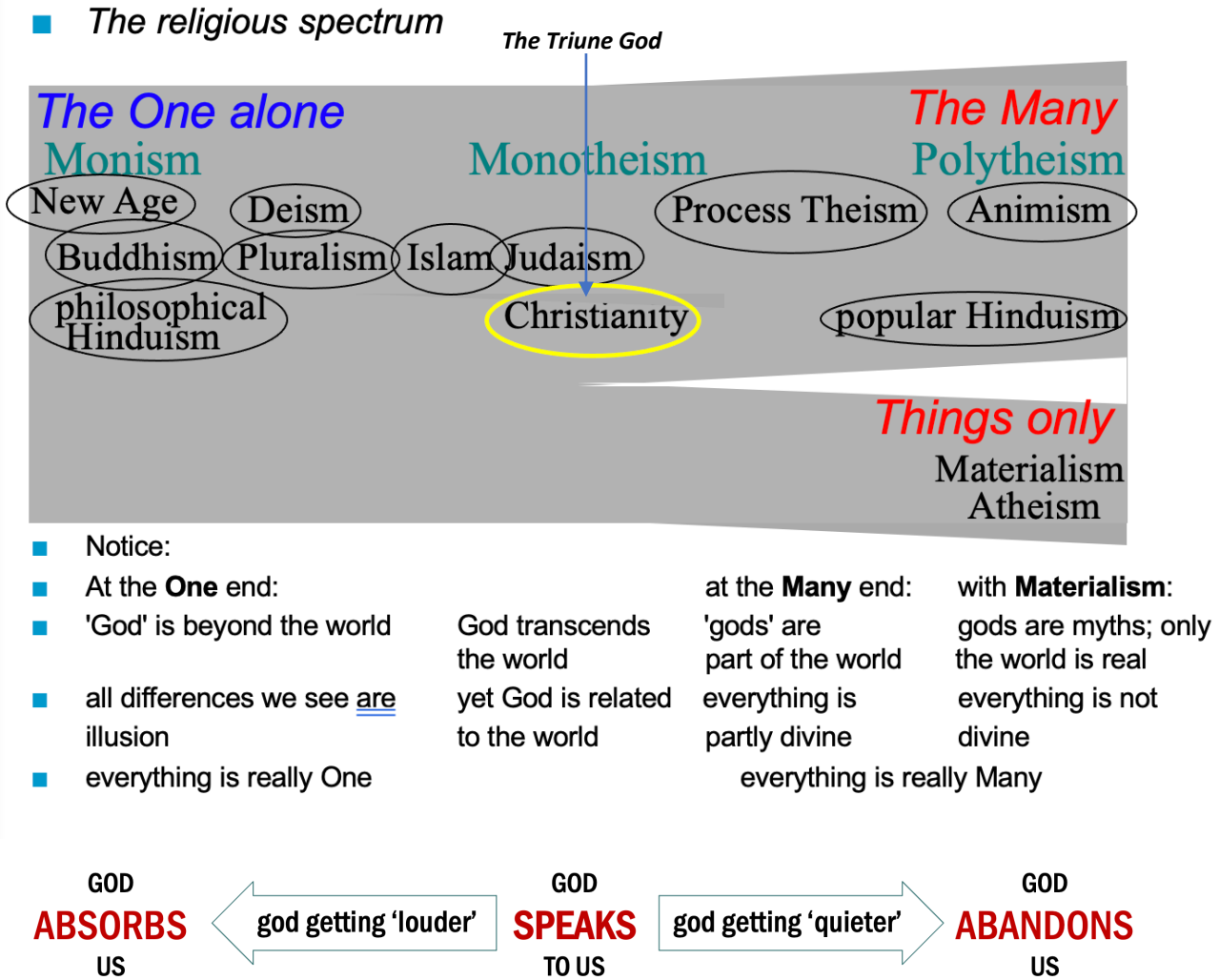
2/ Ways of Knowing and the Religious spectrum.

Ways of knowing have a similar spectrum of styles as ways of talking with people. Have you ever met people who talk at you without listening? ... who talk down to you? Shout at you? {Think of them as at one end of the spectrum. Then at the other end of the spectrum, there's those} ... who hardly listen to you, ignoring everything that you say? This notion of a spectrum is useful as we think about ways of knowing and the various religions.

In the West, it is easy to treat secularism/materialism as the only alternative to Christianity. The South Asian context is multi-religious in a way that makes such an outlook impossible. Ways of knowing relate to religious cosmologies; epistemology is entangled with ontology. Perhaps that's because the way we think the way god relates to the world provides a model for how we should relate to the world.

If we look at the range of religious views about how God and the world relate, they range from religions that emphasise the Oneness of everything to the Manyness of everything.³ So we have Buddhism at the One end, and Polytheism and Materialism at the Many end. With Buddhism, everything is God. With Polytheism and Materialism, there are many gods. At the One end, the **transcendence** of god is emphasized. God is 'beyond' the world; god is 'above' us. At the Many end, the **immanence** of gods is emphasized. Gods are part of the world; they are 'with us'.

Figure 1: How is God Related to the World



Notice then the ways of knowing that 'god' displays in knowing the world: With Buddhism, everything is God; God **absorbs** us. With Polytheism /Materialism, gods (if they exist) have no interest in us. We try to get their attention, but we are alone. God has **abandoned** us.⁴ **But the Triune God speaks to us.**

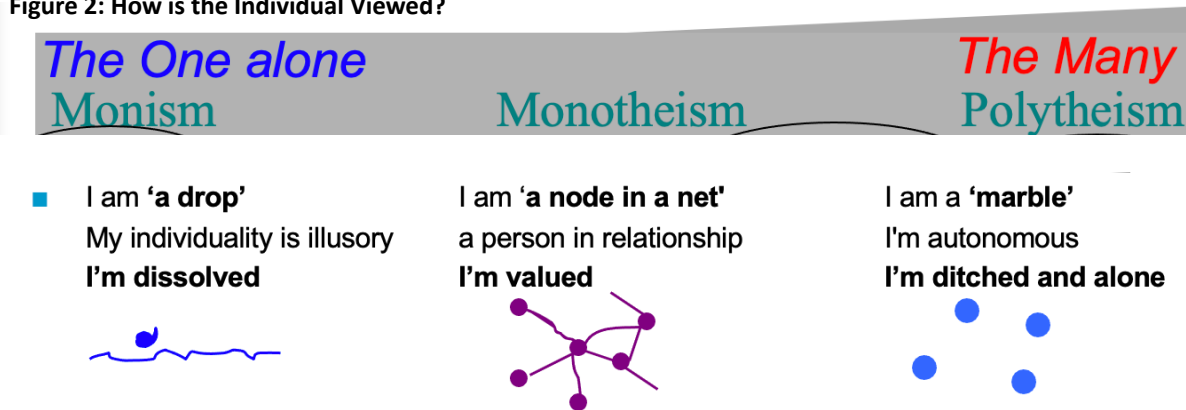
³ Though he does not present a diagram, my religious spectrum is inspired in part by Colin Gunton's book, *The One, The Three and the Many; God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity*, Cambridge University Press, 1993. Gunton's focus is on modernity's tendency to assert the Many over the One, displacing God.

⁴ For this insight, I'm indebted to H. A. Williams, quoted in Michael Lloyd, *Café Theology*, St Pauls Theological Centre: 2012, pp. 298-302. Williams speaks of the Trinity meeting two threats to humans: 'the threat of isolation, on the one hand, and the threat of absorption, on the other. Each is a potential murderer.'

Speaking metaphorically, he does not overwhelm us with a loud voice. He does not ignore us, distancing himself so his voice grows fainter. He does not dissolve us; He does not ditch us. Far from absorbing us or abandoning us, God speaks to us. You could say God has manners. **He loves us.** This is only possible because God is Trinity. God the Father speaks through his Word and his Spirit.

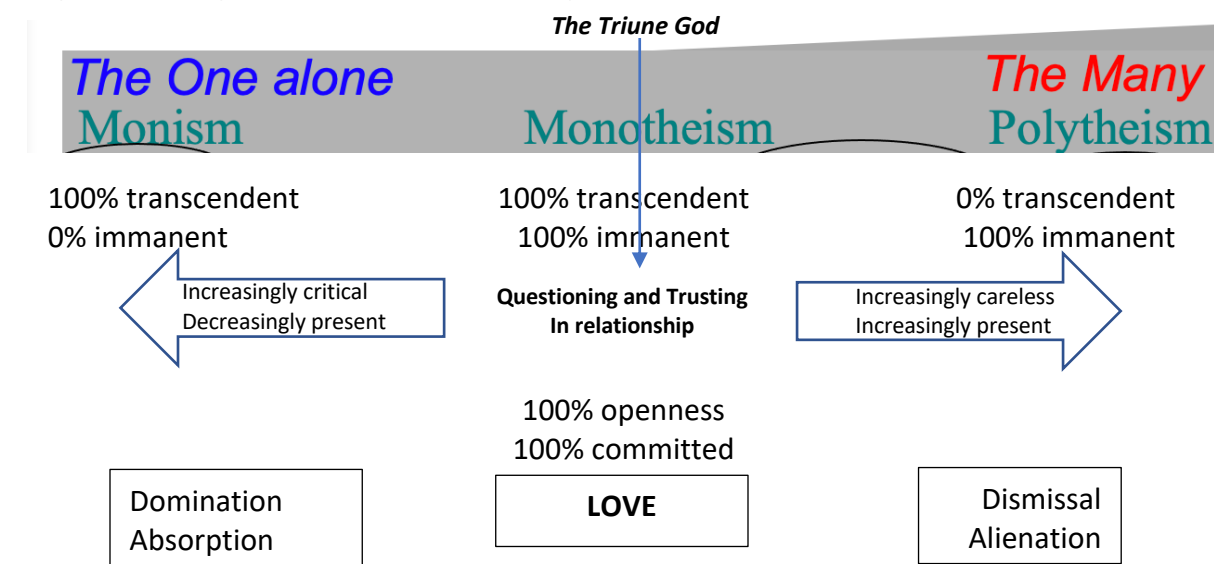
Notice how important to humans are these ways of knowing. With Buddhism, our personal identity disappears in the end. With polytheism/materialism, our existence is ultimately meaningless. The doctrine of the Trinity demonstrates it is possible for persons to be incredibly close without losing our identity; to know deeply without warping the other. The Triune God shows for us the *optimal* way of knowing lies between domination and dismissal; between dissolving and ditching others. He does not to smother or swamp us, absorbing us by force of personality. He also defuses our fear of being excluded, of being barred from intimacy and meaning. Assuming God’s knowing is an example to us,⁵ it follows that when humans dominate or dismiss others, the quality of the knowledge is impaired and the humanity of both knower and known suffers. As an example, take domination or dismissal in a marriage.

Figure 2: How is the Individual Viewed?



These reflections on God’s knowing in the religious context also yield insights for human knowing for *epistemic stance*—how do we hold ourselves towards the other.

Figure 3: What Epistemic Stance does 'God' Adopt towards Others?



⁵ Which I have argued elsewhere. Refer my *Wouldn't You Love to Know?*

In committedness, the Triune God turns towards others, gives himself to them, in *grace*. God trusts. In openness, God is receptive to others and critically reflects on them, in *truth*. God questions. The story of the Bible shows God's trusting and questioning occur in a relational history.

In knowing others, we should avoid domination and dismissal, and aim at a loving respectful attitude. The Triune God's example of 100% committedness and 100% openness in relationship captures the ideal epistemic stance; it captures what love is. It demonstrates that there is a fruitful balance, a tension between openness and commitment, a fruitfulness in both questioning and trusting in relationship. In other words, there is a coherence between God's stance in knowing and Jesus' words, 'ask, seek and knock.' When we stop being open to the other, or when we stop being committed to the other, or when we stop being present for the other, we slide off into domination or dismissal and our knowing becomes defective.

I think these reflections on ways of knowing may be useful in our ministry situation, and in missional dialogues. Of course, these are not coercive proofs of the superiority of Christianity over other religions. Like any argument there is an element of circularity. I've assumed that being absorbed and alienated are not good. Someone may object that love doesn't lead to the certainty that they are looking for. I agree. Jesus offers asking, seeking and knocking but he does not offer certainty.

Question Discussion time:

Absorption, Alienation, and Love as Openness, Committedness and Involvement

Think for a minute about witnessing to the love of God to a Buddhist. I was talking with a Buddhist friend. Having just broken up with her partner, she was experiencing the pain of loss of intimacy. I asked her if she could describe the Buddhist vision of the ultimate future. She did. She understood God and world are ultimately One, talked about nirvana. When I suggested that ultimately it seemed like her particular individuality would disappear, she responded that she'd never thought about it like that, and the conversation went on for an hour. Nirvana is oblivion. Not tender intimacy. That's rather different from the Christian vision: communion with the holy Trinity, face-to-face and embodied (1 Cor. 13:12; 15:54) in grace-enabled communication with him and all God's people.

Spend 8 minutes talking with your partner about ways you resonate (or don't).

What do you think? Do these reflections on the ways of knowing implicit in various religious traditions make sense? Do they offer fruitful ways of interacting with others? Where does Islam fit on this spectrum?

3/ Ways of Knowing and Western Thinking⁶

From Trusting to Questioning

For the last several centuries, ways of knowing in the West have been dominated by modernist and then postmodernist thinking. Rene Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am' influenced moderns to think increasingly of themselves as rational individuals. The goal was certainty in knowing and the way was

⁶ Adapted from my 'Theology for Advanced Theological Studies'

doubting and questioning. No longer could we trust authorities like the church. If you want truth, modernists assumed, you must maintain your distance, be objective. *Faith* became unpopular; *reason* was the way ahead. This epistemological assumption influenced Western ways of knowing. Teaching and learning enshrined this 'objectivity.' Research was expected to be written up without first-person language. The personal circumstances of the researcher would be an intrusion. Similarly, any enthusiasm or passion would be evidence of bias.

Of course, modernism's confidence in questioning was opposed or ignored by others placing their confidence in trusting. Classical approaches to learning clung to an emphasis on trusting authorities. This promoted conformity rather than individualism. The authority of traditions, church or scriptures were not to be surrendered lightly. In theological education, liberals welcomed questioning, fundamentalists emphasised trusting. Tellingly, however, both were convinced that certainty was the goal. In Asia, Africa and South America, knowing and learning remained largely classical. In the West, knowing and learning were emphasized objectivity. To a large extent this attempt to be objective, this disciplined effort to pay attention to the subject, has been the reason for the fruitfulness of science. It's been hugely successful. But increasingly there were nagging doubts.

Questioning the Questioning

As Carver Yu observed, modernity was characterized by 'technological optimism and literary despair.'⁷ The rise of postmodernism showed all was not well. The goal of certainty has not been achieved. Doubts arose about the doubting. Claims for objectivity seemed to mask hegemony. Scepticism about grand metanarratives grew. The widespread assumption that everyone thinks the same way and can be persuaded the same way has become questionable. There simply is no representative faceless universal person with a universal rationality. Everyone is different. They come from somewhere at a particular period in history. What persuades one does not persuade another.

This postmodern conviction has become so widespread, and notions of truth itself have changed. What is true for you isn't necessarily true for me. Knowledge has become seen to be relative, personal and perspectival. A person's perspective is unquestionable, his or her faith is once again permitted though it is no longer universally true. Along with privatisation, pluralisation and relativisation, however, has come fragmentation. Indeed, with widespread pessimism about knowing things as universally true, life has become 'liquid.'⁸ I'm obliged to keep on changing. Permanence is suspect. If an overarching metanarrative doesn't exist, globalisation must be the enemy. This deep-rooted distrust of distrust has led to populism and tribalism in all sorts of places.

The Tribal Reassertion of Certainty

Public faith in diverse contexts is our theme. There are voices still asserting we can know with certainty. The loudest voice is fundamentalism, whether Islamic or Hindu. If the West has lost its epistemological certainty, perhaps fundamentalism is the answer? Only at the cost of our personal and religious freedom, it would seem, lost to terrorists or demagogues. So, if reason fails us, do we reassert faith? Are we best served by questioning everything or by trusting our valued authorities? Believing

⁷ Carver Yu, quoted by Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell. The Gospel as Public Truth*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. & Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1991), p. 19.

⁸ Refer Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Wiley, 2000. Bauman sees 'postmodernity' as an extension of modernity.

nothing and believing everything are equally counsels of despair. Relativism gives up asking for truth and settles for cynicism. Fanaticism believes with certainty but stops listening. No, ways of knowing should not aim at certainty. That is a chimera.

More Modest Ways of Knowing

The answer is simply that absolute certainty belongs only to God. Humans must settle for ‘walk[ing] by faith, not by sight’ (2 Cor 5:7). Faith and reason go hand in hand. Listening to God, reason is faithful, and, listening to others, faith is reasonable. The answer is not distrust and self-assertion. I argue that the answer is *love*. This is as true at the level of contemporary philosophy and geopolitics as it is true of personal relationships and theological studies. Truth is worth the effort and risks of exploration; it is worth the mysteries and depth of personhood in all our diverse contexts. Asking, seeking and knocking are worth doing. Asking seeking and knocking are worth advancing with humble confidence in the public sphere. Truth is God’s gift in grace. Truth is worth loving for. Why do I have this confidence? Our confidence is based on God’s example, to which we now turn.

4/ A Theology of Ways of Knowing

The best way to know anything is follow God’s example. He loves. The best way for us to know something is to love it. If we think about people, the best way to know someone is to love them. Indeed, that’s what explains the intimacy of friendship and marriage. It’s also true of knowing God, the best way to know him is to love him. We are to love God with all our strength, mind and heart; we must pay attention to God in Christ and by the Spirit. This is the intuition that underlies this theology for advanced theological research. But can we call it a theology?

Yes, we can. As I have argued elsewhere,⁹ God’s (self-revelation of God’s own) knowing guides how humans should know. We ought to relate responsibly to others as God does. That is, we should imitate God’s epistemic stance—his love. This is the best model for knowing anything. Love should be committed, open and involved.

We find in the three themes of *committedness*, *openness* and *involvement* an echo of the Trinitarian God. God expresses his committedness to us in revealing himself, by giving himself to us, in his Son; he shows his openness to us by remaining the Lord who claims our obedient response, and he demonstrates his involvement with us by the indwelling of his Spirit. This is how he knows us. He loves.

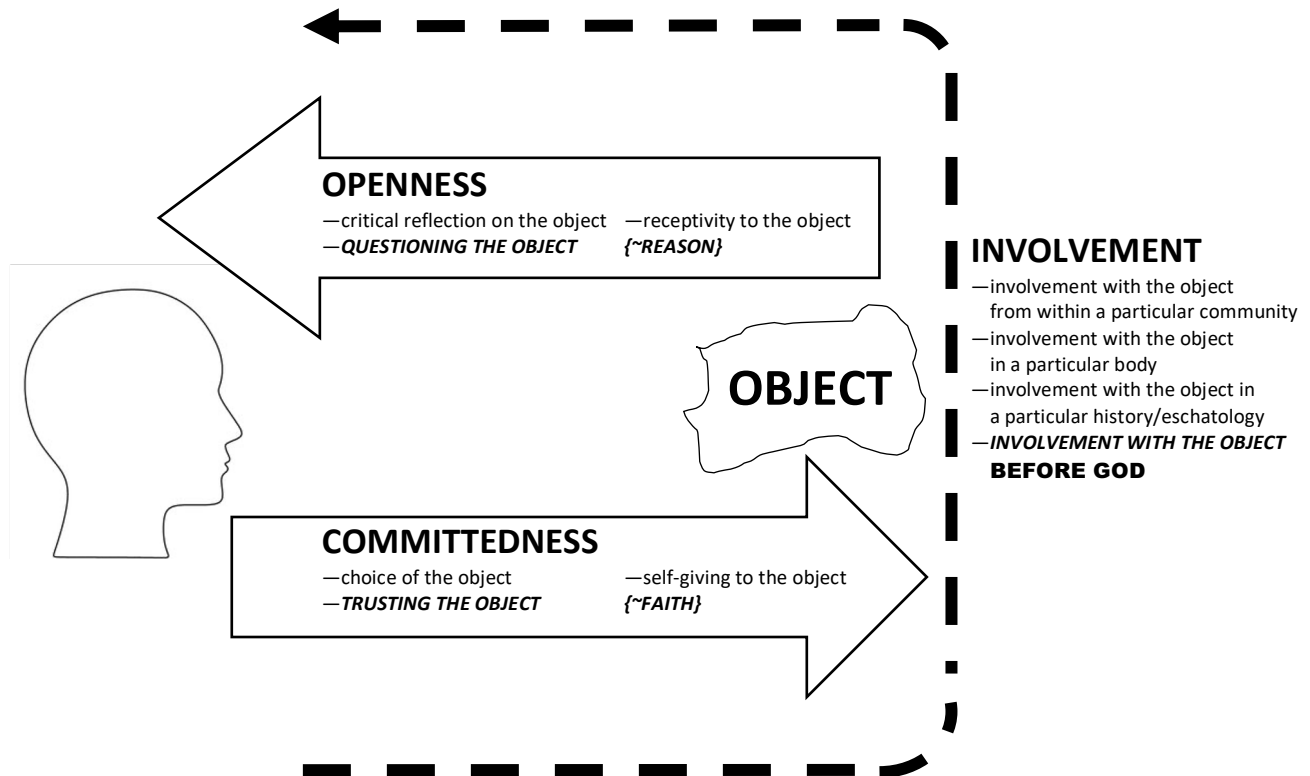
If the way God knows is shaped by the ideas of committedness, openness and involvement, then our knowing *God* ought to be also. We ought to love him the way he loves us. We ought to trust and question him at the same time. Being fully committed is what we usually call faith; being fully open to him is what we usually call submission but it can extend to daring request or daring complaint; involvement is what we usually call fellowship, the life of loyal faith. These are the dimensions of biblical covenant-keeping.

If our knowing God involves (or ought to involve) committedness, openness and involvement, then our knowing *anything* should also. We ought to pay careful attention to the object, not presuming we already know everything about it. It means knowledge is personal and relational. Knowledge is not the

⁹ WYLTK

possession of individuals, who imagine themselves as ‘masters of the universe,’ justifying domination and exploitation.¹⁰ The goal is not alienated objectivity. Knowledge allows us to responsibly learn about and care for the world around us. Learning is joyful, thankful worship of God before whom we stand. As the diagram¹¹ below seeks to show, loving means *trusting* and *questioning* the object—in a relationship that irrevocably involves us as human beings and before God. In this relationship, we both give ourselves to and expect things of the object we wish to know. The attitude faith adopts towards the object is committedness; openness is the attitude reason adopts towards the object.

Figure 4: Our Optimal Epistemic Stance towards any Object



God’s committedness to the world justifies a fundamental *realism*, an optimism about the reliability of our knowledge. God’s openness to the world guarantees its intelligibility and encourages our exploration. It justifies in us a *critical* realism. God’s eschatological goal for his creation guarantees the meaningfulness of the world, but also underlines the provisional nature of our knowledge. What humble confidence these affirmations lead to, in all fields, and especially in theological studies. There is a real world about us which we can confidently and humbly explore.

¹⁰ Colin Gunton blames Immanuel Kant’s view of the mind’s assertive activity for such attitudes. *Enlightenment and Alienation*, Eerdmans, 1985, p. 25.

¹¹ Adapted from WYLTK, figure 4.16.

Conclusion: Humble Confidence in Diverse Contexts

We began with Jesus' words: 'Ask, Seek, Knock'. It is time to reflect on the *promise* of Matthew 7:8-10. If we keep on asking, seeking and knocking, we will find, receive and have the door opened to us. What is the reason Jesus gives for this? It is the goodness of God. 'If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.' Not only to in answer to our prayers, but in answer to our ways of knowing. God's gifts include the deliverances of our epistemic faculties!

Think about photons. They are one of the most astonishing miracles of the universe. Without photons, we would know nothing beyond our arm's length. If the cosmos were comprised only of Lego blocks—a 'Lego-verse', if you will—there would be a million-billion things, but all would be dark, none could be seen; none could be known. In God's universe, our actual universe, gazillions of photons at each instant year on year reveal those things to our intelligence-enabled retinas. God gives us light, so we see. What a good gift. God has also given us words, even better, he has given us his Word. Despite the pessimism of postmodernism and the tribalism of religious fundamentalisms, God gives humans knowledge. What humble confidence we can have, as we ask, seek and knock.

Truth is worth the effort and risks of exploration; it is worth the mysteries and histories, the depths of personhood in all our diverse contexts. Asking, seeking and knocking are worth doing. What we have been given, what we have found, and what doors we have had opened to us we believe are worth advancing with humble confidence in the public sphere in every context. Truth is God's gift in grace. Truth is worth loving for. Truth is worth witnessing to.

Question Discussion time:

1. Do you agree that Jesus' words (in Matthew 7:7-10) give us grounds for a proper confidence in the public sphere? Is it proper to relinquish claims to absolute certainty? Why or why not?
2. What challenges / opportunities does displaying *committedness* (in our ways of knowing) encounter in the public sphere? Is it okay to be confessional?
3. What challenges / opportunities does displaying *openness* (in our ways of knowing) in the public sphere? a) Is it okay to be open to new evidence? ...open to future confirmations that might vindicate us?
b) Is it okay to be open to rejection of Christ and ourselves by people we meet? ...Open to future repentance and obedience as people respond/or not?
4. How do the diverse contexts we encounter affect the way we know?
5. What challenges/opportunities do the ways of knowing described have for Christian *training*?

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