

Knowledge, Falsely So-Called

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INTRODUCTION

Christianity demands discernment: some things are to be treasured, other things are to be cast aside as worthless. Some things guarded, other things avoided.

Paul closed his first epistle to Timothy by saying, "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge" which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith" (1 Tim. 6:20-21).

The KJV says, "avoiding profane and vain babblings, and **oppositions of science falsely so called**: which some professing have erred concerning the faith." The NKJV says, "avoiding the profane and idle babblings and **contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge** by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith."

FALSE CLAIMS

False claims are presented as factual, giving rise to sincere but mistaken emotions (Gen. 37:18-34). The human heart is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9-10). Decisions rooted in emotion are suspect at best and sinful at worst (Eccles. 9:3; Mark 7:20-23). False claims may be presented as truth, giving rise to disobedient actions on the part of those who are undiscerning (1 Kings 13:11-32).

FALSE SIGNS

False signs may seemingly confirm the power of idolatry (Deut. 13:1-5). Normally, true miracles are the province of the Lord God, and idolatrous priests and prophets are powerless in comparison (Deut. 18:15-22).

As an illustration, consider Elijah's one-sided victory over the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:20-40). Consider how the magicians of Egypt matched the miracles of Moses and Aaron, at least for a time (Exodus 7:10-13, 20-23; 8:6-8). Their deceptions, though ineffective and weak replicas, were enough to justify Pharaoh's rebellion. Even when their magic failed, and they confessed their impotence, Pharaoh's heart remained hardened (Exod. 8:16-19). Reflect also upon Simon's astonished recognition of the superiority of miracles over magic (Acts

8:5-24). Consider the failure of the seven sons of Sceva, Jewish exorcists, to cast out evil spirits (Acts 19:11-17).

Yet, Sacred Scripture also refers to false religious systems that arise with all power, great signs and false wonders (Matt. 24:23-28; 2 Thess. 2:3-12; Rev. 13:13-14). How does one judge such claims? Do their prophecies come to pass? If not, do not believe them. Does their message harmonize with the Bible? If not, do not believe them.

FALSE DOCTRINES

False doctrines are presented as Biblical, giving rise to fervent but vain worship (Matt. 7:21-23). Satan is a master of deception, and so also are his minions (2 Cor. 11:2-4; Gal. 2:4-5). Despite the difficulties of looking past appearances, and distinguishing truth from error, we possess the means of discernment: the inspired Word of God (Acts 20:28-32; Gal. 1:6-10). Error appeals to the carnal mind, turning the grace of God into licentiousness and sensuality (Eph. 4:17-24; Jude 3-4; 2 Peter 2:1-3).

CONCLUSION

Today, Christians are confronted with a host of teachings that stand in opposition to the Word of God: evolution, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, etc. All are allegedly supported by “scientific studies,” and have the endorsement of the political, cultural and educational establishment. Proponents of scientific fads attempt to stifle dissent, asserting “The science is settled!” Yet, when the evidence is weighed in the balance, it is found wanting. Soft science often masquerades as hard science. Unproven theory is often presented as fact. Let us not be deceived by “science falsely so-called.” The issue is simple: does the doctrine and/or practice harmonize with the Word of God? If so, it should be accepted because it is true. If not, it should be rejected because it is false.