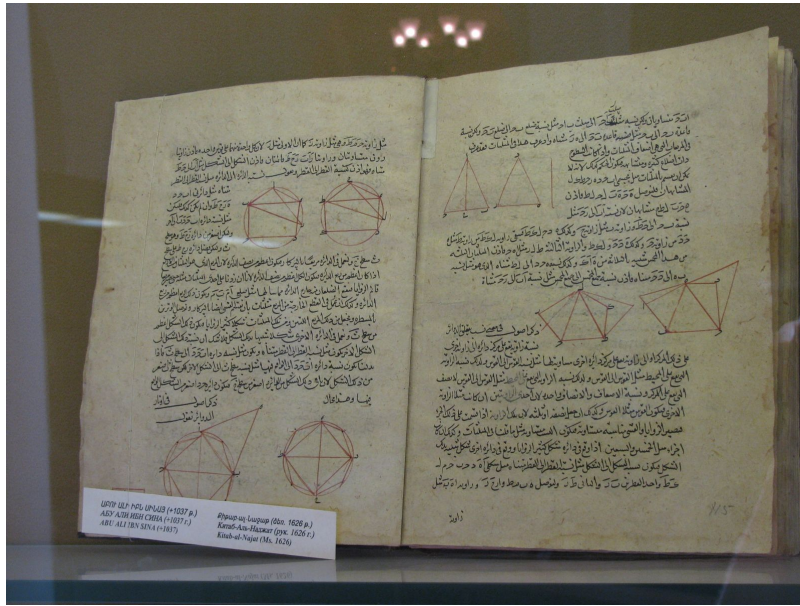




**Discussions with My Friend:
An Introduction to the Gospel of Jesus Christ By David
Stewart**

Chapter 06: Seeking Truth through Reason



Confucius, Buddha, and others distilled divine principles from observations of the world and human society. Socrates, known for the systematic, rational method of inquiry which bears his name, recognized evidences of God in the natural world and approached Christian theology of the judgment and afterlife on many points.^[1]

Much has been made of supposed contradictions between science and religion. We have already seen that reason and logic cannot prove the atheist's claim that God does not exist, and indeed furnish many evidences for Him. Neither the skeptic who believes nothing without signs, proof, or consensus, nor the superstitious zealot who practices absurdities disconnected from observable reality, is a lover of wisdom. Correct reason and true religion support each other. Apparent conflicts point to flaws in understanding, and refinement is needed on both sides. The same verses of scripture are interpreted very differently among denominations and even among adherents of the same faith; science has made great strides yet new discoveries continue to overturn theories once represented as established fact.

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Human reason is necessary yet not sufficient for finding truth, as attested by the multitude of vigorously asserted yet conflicting opinions of scholars and philosophers. The limitations of our own knowledge and the near impossibility of fully separating out our own biases, culture, and worldview should caution thoughtful individuals from concluding that, through the faculties of their reason alone, they have reached the final truth. The best scholars humbly keep in mind the limitations of their own faculties and knowledge, and continually seek new data and perspectives to refine their understanding. Human reason must be augmented with strivings for purity and the use of additional tools to find divine truth.

All faiths involve some beliefs which transcend understanding and may appear strange or unreasonable to non-believers. The doctrine of Christ's resurrection and the various miracles and theophanies of scripture all fall outside the bounds of known scientific principles and experience, yet those who deny their possibility argue from ignorance. Sometimes, the reasons for divine instructions may become apparent only long after the fact, as was the case for the Hebrew dietary law forbidding the ancient Israelites from eating the meat of certain animals that we now know were at risk for harboring parasites. The individual who refuses to act until shown incontrovertible proof of God's will find that it is too late to board the Ark when the floods rise. When individuals asked Christ for a sign, he replied that "an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas."[\[2\]](#)

We may not be able to understand everything as mortals and must accept some things on faith, yet reason and knowledge help us to understand our duties to god and man, to serve others, and to follow right paths in life. Gandhi observed: "Faith... must be

enforced by reason... when faith becomes blind it dies." Austin Farrar wrote:

"Though argument does not create conviction, the lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced, but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish."^[3]

Reason and knowledge are essential elements of true faith. Christ taught his followers: "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,"^[4] reinforcing the importance of study, reason, and faith in finding truth, and the power of truth to improve our own life and that of others. This implies that truth, reason, and study are important. The Book of Mormon teaches that with diligent nurturing, faith can turn into knowledge.^[5] The Doctrine and Covenants, a book of modern revelation, states that "the glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth."^[6] Both reason and faith are essential aspects of our spiritual journey, as "it is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance."^[7] Spiritual progress requires commensurate increase in knowledge and understanding: "That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day."^[8] Believers are therefore instructed to seek knowledge and understanding and to impart it with others: "seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith."^[9]

^[1] Socrates, Phaedo.

^[2] Matthew 12:39

^[3] Austin Farrar, "Grete Clerk," in Jocelyn Gibb, comp., Light on C. S. Lewis, p. 26.

^[4] John 8:32

^[5] see Alma 32

^[6] D&C 93:36

^[7] D&C 131:6

^[8] D&C 50:24

^[9] D&C 88:118