

Article 1: Things Only God Can Know

Jesus insisted that, for *reason* to do its proper work, it must be submissive to *revelation*.

In Mark 12:18-27, Jesus upbraids the Sadducees because they presumed their powers of reason to be the final arbiter of all things true. Their question to Jesus was not designed to elicit from Him an interpretation of an Old Testament text. Their only interest was in defending themselves, and the positions they had staked out, which seemed reasonable to them, given their basic assumptions.

Now, to be sure, reason is an important gift and a powerful tool, but only when it is properly employed. Jesus insisted that, for reason to do its proper work, it must be submissive to revelation. Moreover, in our use of reason we must learn to be content with the fact that there are some things we can never know, at least, never know in the same way that God does (cf. Eccl. 3:10, 11).

It is in the power of God to know all things and to reveal whatever He considers essential for our salvation and wellbeing. In His response to the Sadducees, Jesus cited a text of Scripture, which He illuminated more deeply than His interlocutors had ever considered, given that their presuppositions precluded them from thinking about such matters as Jesus did. But Jesus also drew from the power of God to reveal a truth about human life in its resurrection state which is nowhere else revealed in Scripture. The error of the Sadducees, He pointed out, was to depend too much on their finite reason. Their hubris kept them from searching the Scriptures as fully as they should and from resting content with the fact that certain hidden things are reserved to God alone (Deut. 29:29).

We must guard against leaning too much on our ability to figure things out. Only when our minds are circumscribed by Scripture can we hope to know the truth that gives life, sanctifies, and fits us for every good work (Jn. 6:63, 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:15-17). Thus, we must make daily reading and study of Scripture the touchstone for all aspects of our lives.

At the same time, we must rest in the power of God to know and do what we cannot. For example, we may not be able reasonably to suppose that God can use us as His witnesses. This is the source, I believe, of a great deal of Christian reticence today.

Nevertheless, we must believe what God has written (Acts 1:8), and rest in His power to do in and through us more than we might ever dare to ask or think (Eph. 3:20). Thus fortified with the Word and resting in the power of God, we must obey and, opening our mouths, trust the Lord, according to His Word and power, to provide the words that will be effective in helping others to learn the Good News of the Kingdom of God (Lk. 12:11, 12).

For we walk by faith, not by sight. Only faith pleases God and brings forth in our lives that refraction of His presence which glorifies Him, even in the humblest everyday details of life. Let us not be like the Sadducees, who knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. Rather, let us strive to know the one and rest in the other, that we may in all things obediently glorify King Jesus.