



Lesson One

How Can I Know Anything for Sure?



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A French graduate student in chemistry was weary of the pressures in his studies so he decided to get away for a weekend. The city he visited happened to be where I lived. Through some rather unusual circumstances we met and got acquainted. We shared ideas about God, religion and values. He expressed his uncertainties to me later in a letter:

I should confess that I have become very skeptical, not to say atheistic, in recent years. Like many of my friends, we look at the church as something that was, but not giving any solutions for the future.

The fundamental ideal of right and wrong changes so much with time, culture, philosophies and religions that no one can predict what a presumably loving God will take as criteria.

We are living in an epoch of transition. Life has been changing so radically lately that a person has trouble knowing which are the real values and where to stand. In this changing world it is important to have an open mind.....

The university student expressed some honest and significant questions. Hopefully you are like him and many others today who are beginning to doubt their doubts. This course is based on the assumption that you are serious in wanting to understand what Christianity has to say about these and similar questions.

LESSON OUTLINE

- The Nature of Truth
- Criteria for Testing Truth
- Obstacles to Clear Thinking
- Causes of Doubt
- A Challenge

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

1. How would you define truth?
2. What weaknesses can you see in the first eight criteria for testing truth, especially if each one was to be used as the sole criterion?
3. For a truth to be systematically consistent, what four aspects must come together in agreement?
4. Of the four obstacles to clear thinking, which do you feel is most abused by Christians?
5. What cause or causes for doubt have been the most troublesome for you?
6. Are you willing to investigate sincerely the authenticity of the Christian response to the great questions of life?

WORD STUDY

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| <u>absolute</u> | — <u>Free from imperfection; perfect.</u> |
| antinomy | — <u>A contradiction between two apparently equally valid principles or between inferences correctly drawn from such principles.</u> |
| axiology | — <u>The study of the nature, types, and criteria of values and of value judgments, especially in ethics.</u> |
| empiricist | — <u>One who believes that all knowledge depends on sense perception or experience.</u> |
| epistemology | — <u>That branch of philosophy which studies the nature, possibility and limits, as well as the validity of knowledge.</u> |
| relativism | — <u>A theory that knowledge is relative to the limited nature of the mind and conditions of knowing; that ethical truths depend upon the individuals and groups holding them.</u> |

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

A popular notion in the world today is the idea that there is no fundamental right and wrong. Modern man thinks of ethical standards and truth as relative, based on convenience, situation, or privilege. Some would say they vary according to culture, epoch, or practice. He may therefore feel uncomfortable with the thought of “knowing something for sure.” He hesitates to accept an absolute standard in any area of life.

A consideration of right and wrong leads us to the question of values, or axiology, to use a philosophical term. The study of values in this context leads us directly to the very problem of knowledge. This age-old problem of knowledge is the main subject of this lesson.

Philosophers have wrestled with this question since the time of the ancient Greeks. Its technical term in philosophy is epistemology, coming from the Greek word epistemology, meaning “knowledge.” Thus, epistemology is the study or theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge.

But not only is this a philosophical matter, it is also a matter of practical significance. The need for assurance or a firm conviction about what is true is important in our times when doubt and pessimism are so prevalent. This question, whether one is aware of it or not, is at the very core of personal existence. It is for this reason we begin this study with a discussion of knowledge and truth.

THE NATURE OF TRUTH

Absolute or Relative?

Protagoras of Abdera^a argued that truth is not absolute, but relative. It is just a matter of opinion. What is true for you, is true for you; what is true for me, is true for me. Many people today believe this. I remember the professor saying in a psychology class once, “There is only *one* absolute, and it is that there are no absolutes. “

The idea is that since each person sees things differently, absolute truth is impossible. This is the position of the empiricist—that is, one who says that all knowledge depends on sense perception. This leads to the belief that “man is the measure of all things. Since all things are moving and changing, man creates his own reality, hence his own truth.

The empiricist is right in some ways. For example, we all experience our environment in slightly different ways. A person who is blind has many experiences that are unknown to a seeing person. I happen to be slightly color-blind and even this changes my perception to some degree.

Unfortunately, the empiricist has gone too far. Because *some* things are relative, he has concluded that *all* things are relative, which is an unwarranted generalization. Empiricism, when applied in this all-inclusive way leads to relativism (that truth is relative) and ends in skepticism (nothing can be known for certain). To say that the opinions of all men are true is to grant that the opinions of a person's opponents are true. To make truth relative to culture, circumstances or the times is to lead to confusion, then to skepticism, and finally to despair.

Christian teaching rejects the idea that truth is relative. Jesus announced, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32). Later, He made the awesome proclamation: I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

Think about the colossal implications of these two assertions! Jesus is saying that to be related to Him is to be related to truth *itself-Absolute Truth.*

How Absolute?

Denying the absoluteness of truth involves a self-contradiction. It is to affirm as an absolute truth the relativity of truth. Doing this makes us illogical and contradictory.

Remember the professor's statement: "There is only one absolute, and that is that there are no absolutes. *Absolute truth is the standard by which even the veracity of opinions is judged.* Thus there could be no valid opinions without absolute truth by which to judge them.

Since there *is* absolute truth, it follows that not all things or ideas are true. Truth implies error. It is necessary, therefore, to establish some criteria for separating truth from error. Before we can do that we must have a working definition of truth.

Truth Defined

Professor Carnell says, "The true is a quality of a judgment or proposition, which, when followed out into the total witness of facts in our experience, does not disappoint our expectations" (Carnell, p. 45). Thus, truth is in accordance with the actual state of affairs. It is that which conforms to an essential reality. For example, if you are told that a Professor Sutta lectures at the University of Manila and you go there and discover that this is indeed a fact, then this statement is true. "Truth, then, in its simplest dimensions, is a judgment which corresponds to things as they actually are" (Ibid. p. 46).

To be very precise, we must go one step further. Truth is ultimately the perfect correspondence or harmony with the mind of God, who *is* Truth. Because God is the author of all facts, there is no reality apart from His eternal nature. "For that mind," says Dr. Carnell, "was the blueprint according to which the contingent universe was formed" (Ibid.).

The mind of God knows reality perfectly; therefore "truth is a property of that judgment which coincides with the mind of God" (Ibid. p. 47). If we disagree with God's interpretation of reality then we are in error for God is absolute truth and cannot err or lie. God's statement on the matter comes from the Old Testament: "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man,

that he should repent. Has he said, and will he not do it?" (Numbers 23:19).

The true is not something above God; it is that which agrees with God. From the Christian perspective then, truth is seen as correspondence with the mind of God.

CRITERIA FOR TESTING TRUTH

If truth is that which corresponds with the mind of God, how do we know when *our* judgment corresponds with God's mind? Dr. Carnell lists several criteria that commend themselves to rational men as a guide to judge the truthfulness of a statement.^b

Instinct

Instinct can help us on the lowest level of judgment. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), founder of psychoanalysis, defended the validity of this test. He went so far as to think that anything instinctive must be true.

It is true that instinct provides motivational power but it provides very little in the way of guidance. For example, on a desert island, I might feel the urge to drink any water in sight. Instinct would tell me I had a true thirst. But it would not be much help in determining the safety of the water for drinking. So, although instinct may urge you to seek the truth, it fails to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Moreover, instincts can be environmentally conditioned. Then it is impossible to tell what is instinctive and what is acquired by conditioning. So, even if instinct can suggest truth, it cannot itself evaluate it.

Custom

There is some value in custom, provided the custom was originally based on truth. A custom is any habit or pattern which has become established for an individual or in a given group of people. In most societies, for example, it has been the custom for young people to show respect for parents and elders. But customs can be good or bad, right or wrong, true to the mind of God or out of harmony with the mind of God.

The custom, for example, in which a widow used to throw herself into the flames containing the bier and body of her dead husband, is not generally considered today to be a good custom. Every culture has good and not-so-good customs. Customs in various places and in different times may actually conflict with each other. Thus, custom alone cannot be a reliable test for truth.

Tradition

Traditions are simply customs that have become rigid within a culture. The common argument for tradition usually states: "So many people could not be wrong for so long a time." Some forms of Christianity which have their roots deep in the past are filled with traditions and may even be appealing to them as an evidence of truth for dogma or practice. As in the case of customs, traditions are often helpful. If they were originally based on truth, they give us roots in the past that can be a stabilizing influence. These traditions can serve as reminders of things that are important.

But traditions too have their weaknesses. They are dependent for value upon their sources. But even if their sources are good, there is the danger of corruptive change over long periods of time. A tradition based on truth and transmitted in purity is useful. If its source is false, or if it has been corrupted by time, then it can be bad-even dangerous.

Finally, there can also be conflicting traditions. Truth must establish tradition, and not tradition truth.

Consensus Gentium

This term simply means "the consent of the nations." What is believed by everyone, everywhere, always sounds like a foolproof criterion for establishing truth. This sounds more convincing than it really is.

For example, not too many centuries ago, people believed that the sun came up each morning and set each evening. We speak of it that way because those handy phrases match what appears to happen from our perspective. But every school child

now knows that it is just an illusion caused by the earth's rotation.

It is a good thing to believe what your forefathers believed, if what they believed is true. However, it is necessary to find out if what they believed *is* true. A Communist roommate of a Christian student remarked one day, "We have always been taught that there is no God, but suppose there is one."

Thus, "a proposition must be true to be worthy of the belief at all, but it does not follow that what is believed by all is true" (Carnell, p. 49). This test of truth proves to be insufficient in itself.

Feelings

Everyone knows what it is to follow feelings, "hunches" emotions, inspirations, and even convictions. They are, you might say, a universal, commonly used way of determining beliefs and actions. Probably more important decisions than we care to admit have been based on hunches or the inspiration of the moment. This is not all bad. Emotions are an integral part of the human make-up. For most people, how they "feel" about a thing is important.

But while they do give us an indication of what may be true, feelings are not really a reliable test for truth. They are vague, ill-defined, often unstable and fallible. They are apt to be subject to physical fatigue, sickness or some other imbalance of the bodily functions. Truth must have something more objective than feelings to determine its validity.

Sense Perception

The impressions we receive through the five senses-sight, touch, hearing, taste, smell-would appear to be a reliable test for truth. Indeed, these are a source of truth. Most of the time we can rely on personal experience. But it is limited and our senses can be deceived. For example, trainrails appear to join in the distance. A boat oar half emerged in water appears bent. And most of us have no doubt experienced seeing a mirage on a hot dusty day.

Also, we accept as valid knowledge many things we have not experienced with our senses, such as historical material and geographical data. For example, we did not experience the Napoleonic Wars, so we must rely upon written records for any true knowledge of them. We must rely upon maps to provide an accurate picture of a country where we have not been ourselves. So, we cannot depend fully upon sense perception alone to know truth.

Correspondence

Correspondence declares that an idea is true if it coincides with reality. For example, the idea “tree” is true when it meets successfully with the tree out there in nature, in reality.

There is great value to correspondence, especially in the case of concrete reality. For example, archaeological discoveries of the past century have confirmed much information given to us in the Bible. Geographical locations, identification of peoples, places, events, cultures, and many other facts have been validated positively because of the correspondence between the findings of archaeology and the biblical record.

So correspondence may be used as a good *definition* of truth, but it is defective as a *test* for truth, for such correspondence must in some way be established. Another problem is, *how could* this test be used to measure the value and truth of intangibles such as love, happiness, beauty, or joy?

Pragmatism

Pragmatism defines truth as *that which works*. This would seem to be a very simple and direct way to find truth and it is, in fact, a way that we use almost every day at a practical level. *if a cook follows a recipe accurately, she can expect the results to be as predicted. But if she uses substitutes, or misreads the instructions, the original recipe cannot be blamed for failure.*

So there is merit to this approach, for we would not expect ultimate truth to have poor consequences or bad results. But sometimes things that seem to be *working* are not in our best

interests. Our limited vision of future consequences reduces the value of pragmatism as a test for truth. It is possible for things to work temporarily, seeming to produce favorable results, when the basis for them is not true. For example, a man in financial difficulty might solve his problems by embezzling money from the firm he works for. His solution may seem for a time to “work” but in the end such actions will prove to be unsatisfactory and costly.

The validity of truth cannot rest solely on the “workability” of pragmatism. Pragmatism can lead to skepticism and despair as well, for that which works-or is true-for one person may not work-or be true-for another. Because Christianity is true, it does work, but we do not base its truth on workability.

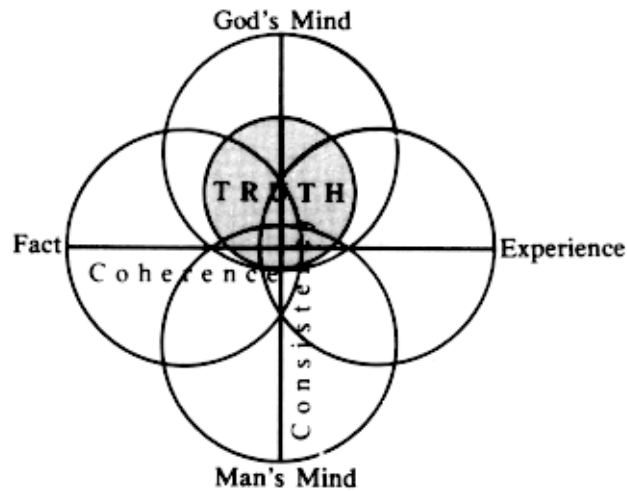
Systematic Consistency

Systematic consistency provides the most reliable test for truth. It involves two parts, *consistency* and *coherence*.

Consistency means that every true idea will be consistent with what else is known. The parts or features of the whole must be in agreement with one another. There are some who mistakenly teach that in Christianity there are ultimate or eternal paradoxes (apparent contradictions) or antinomies. But such apparent contradictions can be tolerated because there will be a final resolution of seemingly conflicting ideas in the mind of God.

Consistency is not enough, however, for even though it shows the absence of error, we must also know how, when, and why truth sticks together. *Coherence* means *how truth holds together*. It is a comprehensive view of all the facts. The cohesiveness of ideas, their fitting relationship to one another, forms a solid foundation for determining truth.

Systematic consistency, then, is *that which is logically self consistent (noncontradictory) and fitting with the world of fact and experience*. Together, these correspond with truth as it is in the mind of God, since God by nature is self-consistent and is the author of all facts.



The above sketch serves to illustrate the idea that truth is that in which there is cohesiveness between fact and experience, as well as consistency between the mind of rational man and the mind of God, or Absolute Truth.

It is well to review in your mind these nine tests for truth discussed here. Can you see that *systematic consistency* embraces all of them? None of the first eight are sufficient alone to verify truth. But something that is true quite often elicits a positive response in each of them so that the overwhelming impression is positive.

OBSTACLES TO CLEAR THINKING

All of us, when faced with new ideas, must be sure we are thinking clearly on the subject at hand. If it is only propaganda that is coming to us, we must be aware of it. If we are asked to examine truth and old prejudices are in the way, we need to recognize them for what they are so that we can overcome them. Consider these common obstacles to clear thinking as Professor Titus outlines them (Titus, pp. 26-29). Keep your thinking about Christianity as honest and rational as possible.

Prejudice

A prejudice is a mental bias, a prejudgment, which can lead to ignoring or minimizing sound evidence. There are many kinds of prejudice in the world today and they can make it difficult, even impossible, to reach accurate conclusions. Prejudices are usually *emotionally* oriented rather than *fact* oriented.

Propaganda

The term propaganda, as it is commonly used, means the selective or slanted use of information in order to further or to hurt a cause. It is in this sense a form of human manipulation. It is a powerful tool used by some in an attempt to control thinking. Propagandists play on the emotions, using highly charged language in order to obtain a predetermined response. Propaganda is not the approach of biblical Christianity and is in no way the objective or approach of this material.

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is the belief that knowledge is guaranteed or “validated” by an authority. It is supposed to be accepted on “blind faith” without regard to the way in which it does or does not harmonize with fact and experience.

Christians are sometimes accused of authoritarianism because they have accepted the Bible as the final authority. Christians themselves do not accept this suggestion because they are convinced that the Bible gives evidence of harmonizing fact with experience. (This will be discussed in lesson four.)

Fallacies in Logic

Violations of the principles of logic can be divided into three groups: terminology, premises, and generalizations.

Semantical fallacies (terminology) are the faulty, careless, or improper use of words. You may inadvertently change the meaning of a word in some discussion. *Law*, for example, can be applied to natural law, legislative law, or moral law. Care must be taken not to use the same word-law-while changing your meaning of it.

Formal fallacies (premises) occur in the misuse of those steps in reasoning which would cause us to draw invalid conclusions from our basic propositions or premises. Take the following argument as an example of a formal fallacy. Men wear trousers. Person A wears trousers. Therefore, Person A is a man. In the first premise we have not stated that *only* men wear trousers, and thus the conclusion drawn is based on faulty reasoning.

Empirical fallacies (generalizations) arise from making hasty generalizations. Because event B followed event A, we may wrongly assume or generalize that there is a direct causal relationship---that A caused B. For example, I may not eat anything for my evening meal and go to bed and wake up the next morning with a terrible headache. Now to generalize that not eating before a night's sleep causes headaches is improper.^c

Thus, to avoid fallacies in logic, we must avoid misusing terminology and premises and avoid making too broad generalizations.

CAUSES OF DOUBT

Honest doubters are those who have genuine intellectual difficulties and are willing to have them resolved. As far as doubts about Christianity are concerned, there are four basic causes for questioning its validity. Perhaps you can identify with one or more of these causes. If so, may I suggest that you be honest with yourself, admit it, and try to overcome the cause or causes.

Inconsistency Among Christians

It is sad but true that some professing Christians are bad examples of what Christianity is all about. It is reasonable for non-Christians to expect from Christians high ethical standards and the consistent practice of their faith. Perhaps the only "Bible" you have read is the life of some Christian. May I suggest that you not judge Christianity on that basis. Rather, examine Christianity on the basis of its principles. Put the effort of heart and mind to the

task of going directly to the “textbook” of Christianity -the Bible itself-and apply yourself to it and to these lessons.

Lack of Information

Perhaps right now you are in the throes of intellectual doubt and want to search out the truth concerning Christianity. Often, people who are not Christians have mistaken ideas about what Christianity really teaches. The only way to find out for sure is to study the Bible for yourself and find out from sincere and informed Christians what they believe. To be really intellectually honest, you must not reject Christianity until you have put forth an effort to learn as much as possible about it from accurate sources.

Moral Resistance

I must say this kindly, but say it nevertheless. Many people do not accept Christianity because they know something about it--its high moral and ethical standards and they do not want to adjust their lives accordingly. At this point you should examine your motives and your doubts. It could be that you will find you do not *want* Jesus to be the Son of God and the Bible to be God's book because it may oppose your present life-style. This is a common reason for not embracing Christianity. Some people come to a point of belief, and then, instead of accepting, they reject it because they fear the consequences or feel they lack the inner strength to live as a Christian should.

Spiritual Insensitivity

This is the basic cause of doubt. The apostle Paul, greatest of all theologians and a genuine intellectual, said: “The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

It is at this point that I am reminded of the limitations of these lessons. At best I can only point out facts and pertinent information as alternatives to doubt. No one can fully “prove” the validity of the Christian way of life to you, except the Spirit of God. If you are open and willing to receive truth, His Spirit

will give you inner assurance regarding spiritual realities and experiences.

A CHALLENGE

There is really little point in your continuing in this course unless you take a tough-minded, stick-with-it attitude. If there is no God, then the sooner we find out the better. If belief in God is not true, then it is an evil that should be removed once and for all. On the other hand, if there is a God, then to know and to understand God's mind and workings is the most important thing in our existence.

If Jesus was simply another ethical teacher, then why all the excitement? If the Bible is just one of many holy books recorded by man in his blind search for the divine, then why bother to read it and seek to understand it? If prayer is merely "talking to oneself," then it would be well to give up such nonsense immediately.

What am I trying to say? Simply this. Take the time, energy and self-discipline to consider seriously the message and meaning of Christianity. May I suggest the following:

1. Complete all five basic lessons in this course. Use the *Questions for Thought, Self-Check Review* and *Personal Study* sections as tools for "digging in" to each lesson.
2. Obtain a Bible and look up the references used in the lessons and especially in the *Personal Study* section at the end of each lesson. There you will be asked to read certain passages from the Bible and comment on them.
3. Adopt the attitude of the experimental method. As you have time and inclination, read in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Read short consecutive passages--marking, questioning, and reflecting.
4. At the end of each lesson there will be a short list of books for further study, each related to the topic of that

lesson. Go to a library or bookshop and read further in some area that is of special interest or concern to you.

I realize that this is a demanding request. But I also know that it may change your life for the better. Let me encourage you not to start with any preconceived judgments. The first followers of Jesus Christ were attracted to Him *before* they had all their questions answered and doubts settled. The same can happen to you just as it did to them.

^a Protagoras (c. 483-484 B.C.), a Greek philosopher who was most famous for developing the principles of debate. Some scholars would not consider him a philosopher, but simply a “traveling professor.” His most famous statement is “man is the measure of all things.” It is from such statements that his doctrine of relativism comes, although again, not all scholars of ancient philosophy would agree on this exact interpretation of his famous saying.

^bThese criteria are discussed in detail in Carnell, pp. 47-62. A fuller treatment of these same criteria may be found in *An Introduction to Philosophy*, 3rd ed., 1963, pp. 52-82, by Edgar Sheffield Brightman.

^cThe empiricist, discussed earlier, is guilty of making too broad generalizations and granting too much credit to sense perception.

REFERENCES CITED-LESSON ONE

1. Brightman, Edgar Sheffield. *An Introduction to Philosophy*. 3rd ed. New York, New York, USA: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963.
2. Carnell, Edward John. *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966.
3. Titus, Harold H. *Living Issues in Philosophy*. New York, New York, USA: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1970.

FURTHER STUDY SUGGESTIONS

- Carnell, Edward John. *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966.
Chapters 3-6 are especially helpful on the subjects of the nature of and criteria for truth.
- Keyser, Leander S. *A System of Christian Evidence*. Burlington, Iowa, USA: The Lutheran Literacy Board, 1953.
Chapters 2 and 19-21 are of particular relevance to the topic of doubt and doubters.
- Pike, Kenneth L. *With Heart and Mind*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970.
Chapters 1-6 discuss the intellect, which relates to the subject of epistemology.
- Ramm, Bernard L. *The God Who Makes a Difference*. Waco, Texas, USA: Word Books, Publisher, 1972.
Chapters 2 and 4 contain material on both the nature of truth and the problem of doubt.
- Trueblood, Elton. *A Place to Stand*. New York, New York, USA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969.
Chapters 1 and 2 present very helpful insights into the role of the mind and having certainty of faith.

PERSONAL STUDY

1 Read in the New Testament John 18 and notice especially verses 28-40. What meaning or significance do you give to the following sentences?

Jesus said: "Every one who is of the truth hears my voice" (v. 37).

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Pilate asked: "What is truth?" (v. 38). How would you answer his question?

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2 List the major weaknesses of the first eight criteria for testing truth.

Instinct

Custom

Tradition

Consensus Gentium

Feelings

Sense Perception

Correspondence

Pragmatism

What is the primary strength of Systematic Consistency?

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3 Read in the New Testament Matthew 15:1-9 about the dangers of dead tradition. Write down in a few sentences your immediate reaction to this account.

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4 After thinking about it, which *one* of the four causes of doubt would be most suitable in your case? Why?

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5 State briefly why you are (or are not) interested in accepting the challenge discussed above.

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PERSONAL STUDY RESPONSES GUIDELINES

The answers to these questions may vary with the student, but the following elements should be found in your answer.

- 1 a. Jesus is saying that if you really understand the *nature* of truth, you will recognize His claims to be the *revealer* of truth.
- b. Pilate shows his inability to define truth or to understand its nature. In the context of the passage there is the suggestion that truth was *relative* for Pilate--Pilate was a Roman and the truth announced by a Jew had no personal meaning for him. My answer would include the concepts of coherence and consistency and would have some reference to truth as it is found in the mind of God.

2 The major weaknesses of the first eight criteria for testing truth are as follows:

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| <u>instinct</u> | — | <u>provides no guidance for distinguishing between alternatives; can be modified by environment; cannot evaluate claims to truth.</u> |
| <u>custom</u> | — | <u>varies and in fact may conflict from place to place or time to time; provides no final answer.</u> |
| <u>tradition</u> | — | <u>dependent upon sources and the transmission processes; can be as good or as bad as the sources and the transmission.</u> |
| <u>consensus gentium</u> | — | <u>may show widespread misunderstanding or lack of knowledge, not necessarily general acceptance of truth.</u> |
| <u>feelings</u> | — | <u>too vague, often fallible, and subject to the state of physical or mental health.</u> |
| <u>sense perception</u> | — | <u>easily deceived and limited to personal experience.</u> |
| <u>correspondence</u> | — | <u>fails as a test since it is incapable of actually establishing correspondence; also inadequate for measuring intangibles.</u> |

pragmatism — man 5 limited perspective fails to detect what *is* actually “working” and what only *seems* to be “working;” also, what works (is true) for one may not work (be true) for another.

The strength of systematic consistency is that it embraces all of the preceding and in addition provides the means for finding agreement between fact and experience and for showing how things fit or hold together.

3 Truth can be twisted for one's own benefit. Jesus was more interested in the *purpose* of law and tradition than in their precise execution. He understood that if one sought to act in accord with the reasons behind the law or tradition, there would not be the problem of using it for one's own end.

4 This is a totally personal answer, but you should be able to identify at least one of the causes given in this lesson. You might have other reasons as well, but you should be able to trace the origins of these doubts.

5 Again, this is a totally personal answer, but honesty is necessary.

Thought provoker: What criteria for truth do you most commonly use in matters affecting behavior and belief?

3 Which of the following statements indicate the advantages of the systematic consistency test for faith? Circle the letters for the answers you select.

- a) It embraces the other tests.
- b) It is based on paradoxes.
- c) It examines the relationship between facts.
- d) It establishes whether or not there are contradictions.
- e) It shows that God is self-consistent.
- f) It tests the cohesiveness of ideas.

Thought provoker: We all desire greater consistency and coherence in our thinking and in our relationships. What areas do you feel need most attention in your case?

4 Match the definition with the obstacle to clear thinking. Write the letter of the appropriate obstacle in the blank provided.

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| a Prejudice | 1) <u>unquestioning acceptance of</u>
testimony from a respected
source |
| b Propaganda | |
| c Authoritarianism | 2) misuse of words or mistakes
in the reasoning process |
| d Logical fallacies | 3) emotional predisposition to
judge without full
consideration of the facts |
| | 4) deliberate choice of facts or
ideas to favor a particular
viewpoint |

Thought provoker: Since it is impossible for anyone to be entirely objective, you have detected the author's bias. Have you been able to identify your own?

5 What causes of honest doubt would be presented by the following statements? Write the letter of the appropriate cause of doubt in the blank in front of the statement.

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| a | <u>Everyone knows the Bible</u>
<u>is</u> full of errors | <u>1) Inconsistency</u>
2) Information Shortage |
| b | I just don't see the point of
believing in God | 3) Moral Resistance
4) Spiritual Insensitivity |
| c | The Christian churches are
full of hypocrites | |
| d | If you're a Christian,
you're not allowed to
think | |
| e | I'm having too much fun
to become a Christian | |
| f | Christianity is for old
people and children | |
| g | Prayer is a psychological
cathartic | |
| h | Jesus was a great teacher,
but I don't know what He
said. | |
| i | Christians are no different
from other people. | |

Thought provoker: If you have ever held any of these
views, can you honestly defend them
now?

SELF-CHECK REVIEW ANSWERS

1 a), d), and e)

2 **a** $\underline{2} \div 9$

b $\underline{3} \div 8$

c $\underline{1} \div 6$

d $\underline{7} \div 10$

e $5) + 4)$

3 a), c), d), and f)

4 **a** $\underline{3}$

b $\underline{4}$

c $\underline{1}$

d $\underline{2}$

5 **a** $\underline{2}$

b $\underline{3}$ and 4)

c $\underline{1}$ and 2)

d $\underline{2}$

e $3) \text{ and } 4)$

f $\underline{2}$, $\underline{3}$, and $\underline{4}$

g $\underline{2}$ and 4)

h $\underline{2}$

i $1)$