

**Credo**  
**Robert C. Newman**

In looking around for a means by which one may learn what, if anything, is going on around him, one is naturally led to a sort of practical empiricism. We find that consistent, repeatable results are obtained by empirical methods, which results we will optimistically call "knowledge." Empirical methods seem to be the only means we have of *confirming* the validity of this knowledge, although individually we obtain most of our knowledge on the authority of others.

Let us define the empirical method as a sort of procedural three-step: (1) collect information (observe what is going on); (2) construct a hypothesis which (a) fits the data, (b) is as simple a hypothesis as we can think of, consistent with (a), and (c) it would be nice if our hypothesis also predicted what certain as yet uncollected (but collectable) information would look like; (3) don't change hypotheses until required by (a) conflicting data, or (b) a simpler suggested hypothesis. Also, one should be on the lookout for alternative hypotheses which might be more amenable to predicting the nature of future data.

As we venture forth armed only with our practical empiricism, we make what seems in this day of naturalism an astounding discovery. Lo and behold, a book written more than 1800 years ago makes statements consistent with the latest scientific knowledge, and even more strikingly, delivers the goods promised by its claim (e.g., Isa 48:5-6) to predict events in advance of their occurrence! Furthermore, this book (commonly known as the Bible) claims to be infallible in the area of prophecy. And this claim (though necessarily unprovable) seems to be consistent with the data. Some of this data is presented in S. I. McMillen, *None of These Diseases* (Revell, 1963) and Peter W. Stone, *Science Speaks* (Moody, 1958), and John Urquhart, *The Wonders of Prophecy* (Christian Publiscaitons, n.d.).

As described in the Bible, the men who made these recorded prophecies were chosen by the Israelites on the bases of having made no mistakes in their short-range prophecies, of consistency with previous revelation, and of their emphasis on the God revealed to the Israelites (Deuteronomy chapters 13 and 18). Yet the inerrancy of their long-range predictions is astonishing, and no other serious explanation for these phenomena has appeared which fits our present knowledge as well as the straight-forward one adduced by the prophets themselves: that there is a God who revealed to them these things which otherwise man could not have known in advance.

The method of authority should be mentioned here. Practical empiricism, as opposed to more dogmatic forms of empiricism, does not deny the possibility that there may be knowledge which cannot be obtained by empirical methods, but only that empiricism seems to be the only way of confirming the validity of a hypothesis. If in some situation we have to take one's words for the accuracy of certain statements, it would be well to have evidence that this person is in a position to obtain that information which we cannot, and that he has no reason to deceive. The Bible presents a great deal of information

which is, by its nature, not subject to empirical test, accompanied by empirically verifiable statements of a prophetic nature which, as far as I know, are not matched elsewhere. Having been unable to discover any evidence for deceit herein, I have been led to accept the Bible for what it claims to be, an infallible record of God's revelation to man, presenting necessary information obtainable in no other way (Matthew 5:18, Luke 24:25, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:16-21, John 14:6).

At this point, one has his ethics and philosophy (and goal in life, depending on his reaction to the situation) handed to him on a silver platter, so to speak. One uses the same empirical method described above to interpret the scriptures and finds that the resulting picture obtained from the bible is in marked agreement with that of others using the same approach – a rather surprising result in view of the diversity of positions found in historic and present-day Christendom.

My personal experience also confirms the accuracy and relevance of the Bible's picture of God and his dealings with men, which is an encouragement in my own search for the meaning of reality. However, as nearly everyone finds that their personal experience supports (or even determines) their religious convictions, it doesn't appear that this has much evidential significance.

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