

GLEANINGS — March 29, A.D. 2015
How Do We Know What We Know?

The following allegory was originally written for a debate between the author and an evolutionistic agnostic. It is an attempt to underscore the folly of godless reasoning, using the transcendental and presuppositional method.

This is the continuing saga of Captain Long Dan Carbon, epistemological adventurer on the Sea of Revelation. Today, Cap'n Dan, his pilot Mr. Reason, and the rest of the crew of the SS Empiricus are trying to weather tropical storm Relativism, and find haven in the Harbor of Knowledge.

Mr. Reason has little to go on, to set a true course. The storm has totally blackened the night sky, rendering his sextant useless. One particularly violent wave swept overboard the ship's log and compass, making dead reckoning impossible. No familiar land is visible.

Cap'n Dan looks proudly at his pilot and other worthy seamen (Mr. Evolution, Mr. Pragmatic, Mr. Assumed-Cosmogony, et. al.) as they battle the elements. Suddenly Mr. Reason is struck with a sense of the dire nature of their plight. He asks and is given permission to go below. In moments he is back. A sickly grin flickers on the pilot's face, and there is what seems to be an almost deranged look in his eyes. Nevertheless, Cap'n Dan smiles back, his heart filled with assurance that Reason won't fail him.

"I've got the answer!", screams the pilot through the howling wind. "This was given to me by an old salt called Mr. Philosopher." Mr. Reason opens a box, then removes and unrolls a large, heavy piece of fabric. One side is adorned with a needlework lighthouse. The title below this artist's conception reads, 'The Absolute'.

"Avast there...Mr. Operating-with-Success! Mr. Biochemical-event! Lend a hand, mates!" The sailors hoist the great banner-like objet d'art to a high point on the prow of the ship, the colorful image facing inward. "All we need do, sir, is set our course by this lighthouse", continues the pilot.

Desiring to show confidence in his first mate, Cap'n Dan replies, "Of course! 'The Absolute' will guide us through this storm Relativism, and bring us to the Harbor of Knowledge!"

Suddenly a powerful beam of exceedingly great candlepower sweeps across the deck of the Empiricus. It is coming from the Real Lighthouse, firmly founded on a high promontory of the land that is not far off, high above the power of the storm Relativism.

"Don't look at that", cries Mr. Reason. "It might make us lose sight of our woven guide, 'The Absolute'!" Cap'n Dan shouts, "consider that an order, men!" Although some are sorely tempted to investigate what this amazing illumination might be, the crew resolutely refuses to turn away from that which their superiors have assured will guide them to the desired haven.

Those already in the harbor watch as the Empiricus continues to be tossed, ignoring the Mighty Light, and coming dangerously close to the Rocks of Perdition...

There is indeed an absolute! He is the personal, revealing (light shedding), eternal God of Scripture! A so-called absolute that reason projects is no absolute at all, and cannot even account for knowledge (reach the harbor). Such an "absolute" actually leaves us adrift in relativism. The principles of logic and the trustworthiness of experience are intangible, transcendent realities for which relativism can not account, but rather destroys. In other words, relativism "throws overboard" the ship's compass and log. Our vessels were indeed meant to be guided by reason, but reason must be undergirded from the very point of self-consciousness itself. "I" must be related to the "Transcendent Thou", as reasoning begins.

Only the Self-Revealing, Self-Authenticating, Eternal, One True God Who has come to us in the flesh in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ is "absolute". All else reduces to absurdity!