

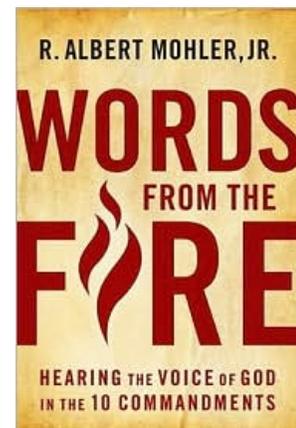
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Words From the Fire — Just Released From Moody Publishers

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The great philosophical crisis of our day is an epistemological crisis – a crisis of knowing and a crisis of knowledge. It is a challenge for the Christian thinker, the Christian theologian, the Christian minister, the Christian preacher, and the Christian institution – the whole of Christianity. The crisis can be summed up in one question: How do we know and teach what we claim to know and teach?

Francis Schaeffer well understood the epistemological crisis and accordingly titled his most significant contribution, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*. I first read this classic as a sixteen-year-old. To be honest, I think the greatest assurance I got from the book at that age was that some really smart person believed in God. But even at that age, lacking the vocabulary to understand what I was experiencing, I understood the epistemological crisis. How do we know anything? How would we speak of anything? Furthermore, how do we jump from the empirical knowledge of what we can observe to speaking of God whom we cannot see?



The claim to know anything, certainly in terms of empirical and scientific observation and study and phenomenology, is audacious enough. But then to speak of the “immortal invisible God only wise”—that is a new leap of audacity altogether.

Dr. Schaeffer understood the epistemological problem that is silence – the claim and the implication that we can know nothing. And he understood that there is only one epistemological answer—revelation. Christianity depends upon a Christian epistemology, a Christian theory of knowledge based in revelation alone. There is no greater challenge than this—to make certain we know on what authority we speak, and know, and teach.

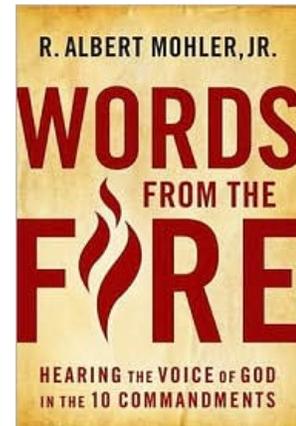
In Deuteronomy chapter four, Moses reminds Israel of the authority by which they were to live. They heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire and survived. This great sermon concludes the introductory section to Deuteronomy, and stands as a unit all to itself. The sermon begins and ends with a parallel structure, and in the midst is itself a large component of a suzerainty treaty. Such a treaty was a common form in the Ancient Near Eastern world, giving the conqueror the right to set down the terms of the treaty. In the book of Deuteronomy, the conqueror is none other than the Lord God Jehovah and the conquered is none other than His own chosen nation Israel. God sets down terms, and they are very easy to understand. It comes down to a very simple formula: hear and obey and live. Refuse to hear, disobey, and bear the wrath of God.

Looking back to the covenant at Horeb, it is clear that obedience led to blessing, disobedience led to God’s curse. The generations that survived, kept alive through forty years of wandering in the wilderness, witnessed the death of their own parents who disobeyed and did not trust the Lord.

And now, as the Lord prepares His people for the conquest of the Holy Land, they hear exhortation and memory mixed together. Lest they forget, they are being reminded that they heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire and survived. They share in the memory of God’s great saving work in bringing Israel out of captivity to Pharaoh in

Egypt, and His keeping the children of Israel alive through forty years of wandering in the wilderness. They were led by smoke and by fire – Moses says, “Remember, and live!”

These words are from the introduction to my newest book, *Words From the Fire: Hearing the Voice of God in the Ten Commandments*, which was released this week by Moody Press. The book is a theological exposition of the Ten Commandments with a special concern for the meaning of these commandments for the Church. You may find out more about the book [here](#).



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