

Church of God, The Eternal

**P.O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440**

The Two Facets of Divine Revelation—Part VI What Can Man Comprehend?

January 1981

Dear Brethren:

A very warm, heartfelt greeting for the beginning month of a new year. 1980 has come and gone. And what a year it was! More rapidly than any previous year—for that matter, any combination of years in the past—the last-day events are unfolding before our very eyes. Even though we cannot specifically identify any of these climaxing events in advance, we do see the general conditions and necessary atmosphere taking shape. These generalized observations tell the overall time of prophecy. From them, Jesus said we would know that His Second Advent is near.

A deep, troubling feeling indicates we are going to see very distressing days before 1981 closes. These inevitable events cannot be postponed indefinitely. The realization of the time in which we live ought to be a sufficient prod upon us to maximize our spiritual growth and personal overcoming. For, as the Bible clearly indicates, it will not be the people who mean well but the "overcomers" who will be afforded the privilege of avoiding many last-day traumas and entering the Kingdom of God at Christ's return.

Economically, the whole world will soon become controlled. Instability will be generally manifested. Is anything more apparent right now?

The moral fabric of the world has just about come apart completely. Lifestyles and thought patterns of the day are shocking only to those who still have some roots in the past. What is socially and morally acceptable today would wrench the hearts and minds of our very recent ancestors.

The most disturbing factor of all is the loss of will. Few people can stir themselves up for any cause or principle. And when they do, the activity is only temporary. The sleep of indifference is so comfortable and devoid of effort.

The world cannot stir itself up to recognize the physical causes which will most adversely affect them in their own time. But brethren, can we be stirred up to a more comprehensive and meaningful purpose? We surely are aware of the time—it is NOW upon us. We are not unmindful of the specific knowledge and instructions related to our successfully coursing this changing, erratic and distressing time. Therefore, our area of concern, as in the case of people in this world—for many are knowledgeable in a physical sense of what is happening—is the will—will to stir ourselves up to action and to demonstrate faith and belief.

Brethren, NOW is the hour! This is our appointed time. We must not fail! To some extent, the world of the future actually awaits the manifestation of the true Children of God. Surely the truly enlightened of God's spiritual purpose will not disappoint those of this world who hope and anticipate some future change! The world may not presently know who we are or our ultimate purpose, but they unknowingly wait for our perfection. They need us. The whole world cries out and groans for our personal mastery and the true manifestation of the divine character. Once the called of God prove their worthiness to Him, they will be granted the right to teach the whole world that marvelous way of life.

For the present, the real proof of worthiness is the ability to resist the aggressive pulls of the flesh, the alluring temptations of this society, and the tendency to "non-commitment" (lack of will). The will of the true Christian is not manifested in political and social involvement today. Rather, it is apparent in the determination for personal mastery despite adversity and difficulty.

In patience, we must endure these trying times—times of gloom, doubt and violence. For it is in the cauldron of trial that true character is produced and refined. And true character is the essential ingredient for the inheritance of everlasting life.

Now for the continuation of the subject, "The Two Facets of Divine Revelation."

Thus far, we have covered five basic sub-topics related to this subject. The last one covered was "What Is Man?" In relationship to the overall subject, the last topic covered naturally brings us to the succeeding question: What things can man comprehend?

What Can Man Comprehend?

Animals are limited by instinct and brain design. What knowledge and responses they can acquire are incredibly limited. Who ever heard of any animal's planning, designing,

computing or carefully evaluating concepts and making judgmental decisions? An absolute impossibility!

Despite a vastly superior capability to that of animals, man is also limited by design. He cannot naturally exceed his inherent limitations. As a human being, subject to his own nature, he has absolutely no eternal life within himself. Whatever mental and physical achievements are realized lie within the natural limitations inherited at creation.

What Are the Created Limitations of Man?

God is man's Creator. He designed and produced the finished product. In His *Holy Bible*—the instruction manual accompanying that finished product—God makes it clear what man's potential and responsibility is. He said: ". . . Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . ." (Gen. 1:26). Human beings are created in the image [shape] of God. They bear the likeness (form and shape) of God. What was God's intended responsibility? He continued: ". . . let them have *dominion* over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, *and over all the earth*, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).

Verse 26 indicates the design and purpose of God. In verse 27 we are again told God created man according to His own design. It says: "So God created man in his own image. . . ." Then He instructed them regarding their functional purpose and created limits: ". . . God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

Succinctly stated, we are informed of our beginning. We know the source of our shape and likeness. And we know the charge and responsibilities of life.

To have dominion simply means to *bear responsibility*. Human beings were designed and created to bear responsibility over all the physical creation of God. They are responsible for subduing the earth—caring for and using properly the whole physical earth. And on the basis of God's intended purpose, man will be judged. Has he abused the physical, or has he properly used it?

In no way do we see, within the initial instructions to man, any responsibility given beyond the realm of the *physical*. Therefore, any mental assumption manifested *outside this limitation* originates from a contrary spirit source.

Since flesh and blood is not eternal, a system of inherited responsibility must exist. God also created this process. He designed man to reproduce himself. In that way the change of dominionship and earthly care is transferred from generation to generation.

A test of character was deemed requisite. To accomplish this, God utilized the beautiful garden in Eden. In this garden God caused all manner of fruit-producing trees to grow. All were good for men, with the exception of one. It is called the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9).

After the work of God was completed, He took man and put him in the garden. As his Maker, God instructed the man relevant to the upcoming test. He could partake of all the creation of the garden, with the exception of that one tree.

But man partook of that one forbidden tree. The lessons of misery, experience and sorrow have plagued him from that day forward. Man was induced, by reason as well as by an adverse spiritual influence, to delve into areas he was not equipped to handle. Man simply did not have the character. He attempted to assume and manage a God-plane responsibility he was not designed to control (Gen. 3:22). He did not accept the instructions of God concerning his limitations. By not accepting these limitations, man was (and is today) directly and indirectly influenced by forces outside his own physical realm. He is being fed a constant diet of occult and illegal *spiritual* knowledge. It is the perverse, distorted, corrupted and evil knowledge of rebellious spirit beings—beings who rejected the authority and rule of God and who rebelled against absolute Truth.

Man does not know the illegitimacy of what he has assumed to be accurate—regarding knowledge of another realm. He is limited, so he cannot know. Consequently man has assumed, by influence of the rebellious spirit world (perverse knowledge of the spirit world), the right to interpret the Bible to suit his own conceptions or ideas.

Man can accumulate much physical knowledge by experimentation, study, observation, reason and testing. But by the usage of the same methods of study, he cannot know the spiritual knowledge. Such knowledge must be *revealed*. It must come from God—and only to those who are called of God to understand.

Man chose the path of *good and evil knowledge*. He rejected the way to character, by failing to recognize his own inherent limitations. Character would have been evident in the *right* choice. It would have indicated *acceptance* of his created status.

Adam and Eve's status was comparable to that experienced by all children who are *now* born of the flesh. As our created parents (Adam and Eve) had to make a choice, so will all who are physically born. From infancy children do not know the difference between good and evil (Deut. 1:39). Choice, therefore, is imperative. Choice will be made on the basis of parental teaching, ever-expanding experience, and external influences.

Physically, even though devoid of spiritual orientation, human beings can choose to pursue a way of existence which is pleasant, kind to them, and more favorable than other ways which—while most appealing to the natural lustful inclinations—are most harmful. By experience, most people eventually come to recognize the value of a controlled, disciplined and principled life. They come to know the difference between good and evil—an understanding not indigenous to babies or the very young.

At this point, clear definitions of the terms "good" and "evil" are deemed imperative. Acquisition of knowledge, without understanding, is of little lasting value and worth.

As determined by Biblical usage, the word "evil" means: adversity, affliction, calamity, distress, grief, harm, hurt, mischief, misery, sorrow, trouble and wretchedness. By the same determination, the word "good" means: beautiful, best, bountiful, cheerful, fine, goodlier, goodliest, gracious, joyful, kindly, loving, pleasant, pleasure, precious, prosperity, sweet, wealth, welfare and well.

Adam and Eve chose the way (tree) of good and evil. It was a *mixture*. Human proclivities are not generally bent toward immediate, absolute and total evil. However, the Bible clearly reveals that the natural tendency of man is toward degeneration and dissipation—perversity. Men have become progressively more evil. They have not improved (grown better) despite the accumulation of knowledge, whether by experience or by direct study. Generation after generation, men have grown more corrupt and perverse. Those of the last days are rapidly becoming the dregs of society—the epitome of evil, perversity, corruption, carnality.

But, are not people supposedly becoming more religious? Almost constantly we are hearing, there is a great resurgence of religious interest.

The Natural Attitude of Man

God is Spirit (John 4:24). Man is flesh. That which is flesh cannot comprehend spiritual things. However, that does not mean men are willing to admit their total spiritual

ignorance. Much of their time is spent structuring a philosophy and discussing their own ideas about the existence of God and what they conceive as obligatory upon man.

Many people are like Job. They loudly and confidently discuss things they do not really know or understand. Of them God says: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2).

Why do they not possess true knowledge? First, as previously mentioned, the knowledge of the spiritual must be *revealed* (Matt. 11:25–27).

And, since it is revealed only to a very few people, what the majority presume to discuss is that which they do not really understand.

Second, people generally say to God (by action, if not verbally), "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (Job 21:14–15).

On the basis of Biblical instruction, we are informed that the fabric of man's society is structured by two philosophies: 1) He refuses to accept any concept or knowledge of God. 2) If religiously motivated, he resists the will of God and devises *his own way*, appropriating only the usage of the name of God. As Paul explained, these people do sacrifice and have dedicated themselves zealously to serve their God but are devoid of the true and genuine knowledge (Rom. 10:2).

Only by God's divine intervention can they come to realize the futility of their own mental fabrications (Job 42:3–6). With God's revelation, men can see and understand themselves. They can then repent and truly accept God for what He is. Until such conversion, all men will employ the natural powers of the carnal mind. They either reject the idea of God—manifesting atheistic or agnostic tendencies—or they devise their own religious concepts, which are devoid of all true spiritual knowledge. They cannot possibly employ the spiritual dimension, of which they are not partakers naturally. They are flesh, naturally. They are not spirit. As partakers of flesh, they can carnally know and understand things of the flesh only.

What, then, is the way of flesh?

Man Comprehends the Way of Flesh—Sin: Things of the Earth

The nature of man contains a natural law. It resides in his very flesh being. It is his *very motivation*—mentally and physically. He is ruled by this power resident within him. He is subject to and bound by that law. It is called the law of sin (Rom. 7:23). Sin is the way of flesh. It is the way which seems right to man. By creation man was made subject to it. By physical birth he inherits this nature—the law of sin and death.

Paul understood that man, of his own volition, could not extricate himself from that way to which he was naturally subjugated. He said: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24).

Man cannot lift himself by his own bootstraps. He cannot resolve to perform capabilities outside his own inherited nature. He cannot perform spiritual things, as long as he is bound by the physical. Before he can comprehend spiritual knowledge and perform spiritual obedience, he must destroy the carnal self and be granted a spiritual mind.

As long as man remains in his natural state, he can only serve the way of sin (Rom. 6:6). He knows only the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:5). He is bound by them. To be freed from the shackles of his own nature, he must figuratively die. Until that time, the motions of sin will work in him. And death is the result of the matter (Rom. 8:6).

Even the good that naturally proceeds from man tends to selfishness. And generally, over the whole history of man's existence, the evil characteristics tend to dominate. Human beings progressively become more evil and degenerate.

The nature of man abuses him (Eph. 2:3). He is driven by his own lustful, insatiable nature. He can fulfill only the natural expectations, both of the mind and of the flesh.

Man is limited, then, to the domain of the flesh. Anything outside of this dominion is totally beyond him as long as he remains a natural being. What he KNOWS, he knows only naturally.

Such knowledge is definitely limited. It is a limitation of earthly things (Ph'p. 3:19).

Man's Knowledge: The Imaginations of Evil Hearts

As stated earlier, the natural mind does not always recognize its limitations. Because of its inherent vanity and arrogance, it frequently attempts to intrude into areas of which it

is not knowledgeable nor possesses the capacity to understand (Col. 2:18). The influence for such perversion, of course, proceeds from the illegitimate spirit world. Of himself, man has no recourse to such knowledge.

Though they do not realize their condition, men are ruled by their hearts and minds that are twisted, perverted, warped and hostile. As a necessary prelude to establishment of the Millennium—under the rule of Jesus Christ—mankind has been made subject to this vile nature (Jer. 3:15–17). Before man can be taught the right way, his whole nature must be changed. He is flesh—carnal. He is limited to that perspective. Outside of direct intervention by God, man cannot think, act and respond in any manner other than that which comes naturally. He is bound by the parameters of the carnal flesh. By study, experience and observation, he can understand the physical realm. However, the tendency, due to his nature, is to pervert, twist and warp all true knowledge—according to the imagination of his fleshly heart. By nature he is hostile—wrathful (Jer. 3:17; Eph. 2:3).

Babylon on earth is the *physical manifestation* of Satan's philosophy. Satan is the god of this world—having deceived all nations, languages, tribes and peoples. Satan appeals to the carnal mind and to the lust of the flesh. By his evil influence, he *perverts* all knowledge. Regardless of the type of philosophy or concept, the whole world pursues the way of perversion. The only exception to this general deception is the handful of faithful servants whom God has called (Matt. 7:13–14).

The knowledge of carnal things, then, tends to perversion and corruption. Isaiah wrote: ". . . Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee . . ." (Isa. 47:10). Revelation clearly indicates that Babylon of the last days encompasses *all peoples* of the world!

Solomon understood the limitations and grief of physical knowledge (Eccl. 1:16–18). Only the *real truth* will allow men to understand the truth of their purpose and present difficulties. That knowledge must come from a source outside of man.

The way of peace, contentment, confidence and purpose is not known by man naturally (Isa. 59:8). His natural ways are perverse and crooked. Those who walk in the way of flesh (there is no other way to walk until God calls and instructs) will never find or realize peace. But the spiritual way of life is peace. The consequence of a fleshly pursuit is sorrow, grief, perversion and every evil and bad thing. Yet, there is not one thing any human being can do about that condition until God calls and provides the power and mind by which one can objectively evaluate (Jer. 10:23 and Jer. 17:9–10).

God must give man the ability to know Him (Jer. 24:7). Why? Seeing someone physically is not equal to *knowing* him. Jesus, the very Son of God, stood in the midst of the people, yet they knew Him not (John 1:26). Human beings cannot see spiritual things, neither can they see or comprehend the work, operation or manifestation of the spirit. Flesh is a veil of blindness to the carnal mind. If natural man could not comprehend (know) the Son of God in the flesh, why should we assume that the carnal can know the Children of God, who live and walk in the veil of the flesh today? What a revelation yet to transpire!

Paul knew that man of himself could not know God (2 Thess. 1:7–8). God must be *revealed* (Matt. 11:25–27). Yet, some men do not will to retain the knowledge of God they do have. Because of the fleshly tendency to perversion and hypocrisy, men are willing to appropriate the name of God, but reject the revealed knowledge—knowledge of the way of life (2 Thess. 1:8; Titus 1:16).

To repeat: As a flesh-born entity, man does not possess the knowledge of the spiritual—of God. Men are limited to mundane knowledge until called. Once they are called, continuity of belief and knowledge can be maintained only by faith. Being subject to the lustful appetites of the flesh and the prey of a perverse spirit world, men tend to lose the knowledge of God they do possess. Once that knowledge is lost, it cannot be reclaimed.

Jesus stated: ". . . it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but *to them it is not given . . .*" (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). Natural man cannot know or understand spiritual things. Until revealed, he cannot know (Compare Rom. 11:33; John 4:32; and 1 Tim. 4:3). By nature men are liars. Their word cannot be trusted (Titus 1:16; 1 John 2:4). For that reason, we are instructed: "Wherefore by their [men's] *fruits* ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20).

Let us make it plain, clear and understandable. No matter how great the human intelligence, regardless of intellectual aggressiveness, some knowledge is completely beyond the natural mind.

Even By Reason, Logic, Experimentation and Study, Spiritual Knowledge Yet Beyond Man

Solomon was greatly blessed, initially, with unusual knowledge and wisdom. At one time, due to God's blessing, he was the epitome of wisdom. Yet, he recognized the natural division of knowledge and the limitation of the physical mind. He recognized that physical aggressiveness and study did not make available spiritual knowledge—knowledge of God and His purpose. He said:

When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth . . . Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea farther; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it (Eccl. 8:16–17).

Luke understood this human limitation of knowledge. In the book of Acts he wrote: "And he [Christ] said unto them [12 Disciples], It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7).

Spiritual knowledge cannot be known until it is revealed (Acts 22:14). However, the arrogance and pride of men do not keep them from assuming a capability resulting in sheer guesses.

God made the above principle very clear to the Apostle Paul. He was inspired to write: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man [mental and intellectual capacity] which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth *no man*, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11).

By mental capacity, men can know those things of their own domain—the dominion of flesh. By application of the mental capability man can acquire much physical knowledge. However, he cannot know the things of the spirit world. They must be revealed. They are revealed to those called of God and at His appointed times only.

Succinctly stated, what man can know is that knowledge which is limited to this physical domain. Of himself, he cannot go beyond the bounds of those limitations.

Further, tragically, there is little continuity of physical knowledge. This is especially true relevant to knowledge acquired by experience. Men seemingly never believe the experiences of others. Each generation must learn by their own personal trials and difficulties. History is virtually meaningless to humankind. Carefully read and ponder Ecclesiastes 2:18–23. *The Living Bible* (paraphrased) will greatly aid you in understanding.

The natural man can comprehend *physical knowledge* only. Though he may ponder, he cannot comprehend the knowledge of the mysterious spiritual realm. God willing, in the March 1981 *Monthly Letter*, we will make this point completely clear.

Must close for this time. Again, thank you dear brethren for allowing us this privilege of serving you. Thank you for your dedication and loyalty to the Truth. We appreciate your

love and concern. Our love is deep and strong. We sincerely desire your good health, prosperity and abundant life in Christ Jesus and God, the Father.

Let us all go on to perfection. What a hope God has given to us! It is indeed joy unspeakable to be a part of this last-day activity with you. You are priceless to God and us.

In much love and respect,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

Raymond C. Cole