

Church of God, The Eternal

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Our Very Dear Brethren of the Common Faith:

Months come and go with almost the speed of lightning. One month has passed since the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles. It surely is our prayer that the spiritual development of all of you is keeping pace with the evaporation of time.

God gave us a most meaningful Feast. Comparisons are unwise. But surely God intends that we should grow more mature, spiritually stronger, more faithful and more like the Author and Finisher of our faith yearly. This year seemed to manifest much more stability, dedication and purpose. We are indebted to you all for the magnificent effort you exerted in personal mastery. When human beings are together, there are always times of trial and difficulty. How we handle such times is the very circumstance observed by God and by which we are tested.

On the basis of our knowledge, both of that which God requires and of the actions and behavior manifested at Seaside, we were very pleased. You made the Feast for us. We are so happy to see the oneness and accord required of God coming to pass. Thank you for the control you manifested. Thank you for letting God and Christ rule your lives.

Now, brethren, let us use the past as the stepping stone to the future. We must continue to improve and manifest even greater faithfulness. Let us prove we can grow strong and stable. Let us manifest the true light that will shine more brightly into the lives of those of this world as the last-day cataclysmic events begin to transpire. Let us be the examples we should be.

For this month we will submit the last half of the Monthly Letter dealing with the subject, "What Is Man?" Though the information is not basically new, it is essential as a significant part of the overall subject, "The Two Facets of Divine Revelation." It is our hope you will find the information helpful and inspirational.

What Is Man— Continued

Man is the central physical being to this life system as we humanly know it. Although human beings are central to this organic structure, they

are seriously handicapped. They are significantly limited regarding every possible pursuit. Among these limitations is the protraction of life. Man's longevity has been decreed by God—approximately 70 years. And by circumstance man often lives short of his allotted time. Yet, by will, favorable disposition of life, physical intervention or other forms of determination, he generally does not exceed that allotted time by more than a few short years. And those years are a perpetuation of life's frustrations, agitations, sorrows and anxieties.

Why? Why is this a life of brevity, sorrow, human misery, disappointment and calamity? Is it all an exercise in futility? A physical manifestation of vanity?

He Is Subject to Death

The seed of decay is inherent within man. From the beginning—immediately following Creation—this characteristic of decay and degeneration was operative. If in no other way, it was manifested in the reduction of man's own life span. Initially, man lived to attain the maturity of approximately 1,000 years. By post-Flood time—following the days of Noah—his tenure of physical existence had been reduced to approximately 120 years. A further reduction was yet to be experienced. For by David's time, he was inspired to write, "The days of our years are threescore and ten [70]; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore [80] years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow . . ." (Psa. 90:10).

Both the reduction of physical longevity and the termination of physical existence (interruption of chemical or organic existence) are natural consequences of inherent decay. For, it is impossible for man of the flesh to live eternally. That is the decree of our own Maker (Creator). He said, ". . . of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17).

The man and woman both ate of that forbidden tree (Gen. 3:6). The consequence was death, because God had decreed it so. It was the law of natural degeneration. Years later, the apostle Paul was inspired to write the following about that natural process: "It is appointed unto men once to die . . ." (Heb. 9:27). That is an appointment all men will keep. They cannot escape it, no matter what is their philosophy of life or practice.

Resorting to human reason, both Adam and Eve ushered in death for the whole human family (Gen. 3:6 and I Cor. 15:22). Of and by himself there is absolutely no way man can get out of that consequence. It is the price paid

for fleshly existence. Though man can plan, and create concepts involving protracted periods of time, his ability to act upon them is strictly limited by the law of natural degeneration.

The pall of death hangs over man as long as he exists. From a physical perspective he cannot circumvent it. It is an appointment he will keep.

However, we need not despair. There is a way of altering this finality. But for that, we must wait till later.

As an ephemeral entity, man exhibits many unique traits. These characteristics mark him as a carnal, temporal being. What are those characteristics?

His Own Base Carnal Characteristics, by Which He Is Held in Bondage

"By their fruits you shall know them," said Jesus Christ. The works of the flesh are manifestations of that base carnal nature. And being manifested, these works are humanly observable. They can be seen. And when seen, they announce to the enlightened spiritual mind that those producing such fruits are subject to and influenced by the flesh, by man's own carnal nature.

Briefly, in outline form, what are those natural traits—traits which manifest this carnality? These traits may be classified in two broad categories. First, there are fruits of natural composition. Second, there are fruits of the will—or volition.

I. Fruits of Man's Natural Composition

A. He is a tangible entity: seen and handled.

I Cor. 15:44— ". . . a natural body"

B. He is subject to natural degeneration:

1. I Cor. 15:42— The human body ". . . is sown [buried] in corruption"

2. Rom. 7:5— ". . . the motions of sins [inherent in flesh, v. 23], which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."

3. Gal. 6:8— ". . . he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption"

C. He is devoid of inherent glory and value— at best he is altogether vanity:

1. I Cor. 15:43— "It [the natural body] is sown in dishonor . . . it is sown in weakness"
2. John 6:63— ". . . the flesh profiteth nothing"

II. The Fruits of the Will — Volition

A. By nature he is rebellious against God and His way:

1. John 3:19— ". . . men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."
2. John 3:20— ". . . every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."
3. Rom. 8:7— ". . . the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."
4. Gal. 5:17— ". . . the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would [those things which transpire naturally]."

B. By natural volition he is incapable of obeying God:

1. Matt. 26:41— "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
2. Rom. 8:3— ". . . it [the law] was weak through the flesh"
3. John 6:63-65— "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing . . . Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."
4. I Cor. 15:43— ". . . it [the natural body] is sown in weakness; it is raised in power."
5. Rom. 7:18— ". . . I know that in me (that is, in

my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."

6. Rom. 7:5— ". . . when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."
7. Rom. 8:8— ". . . they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

NOTE: Consider also Gal. 5:17 and Rom. 8:7, mentioned in point number "A" above.

C. He is subject to his own natural pulls:

Rom. 8:5— ". . . they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."

D. He is naturally subject to outside adverse evil pulls:

1. Eph. 2:2— ". . . ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."
2. James 3:14-16— ". . . if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish [Satan utilizing our natures]. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion [Babel] and every evil work."
3. Jude 18, 19— ". . . mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual [catering to the natural pulls of the flesh], having not the Spirit."

E. He is immoral, opinionated, defensive and enamored with self:

1. Gal. 5:19-21— The works of the flesh are categorized here.

2. Col. 3:5-9— The same as point number "A."
3. I Cor. 5:9-11— More works of the flesh listed.
4. I Cor. 6:9, 10— Other works of the flesh listed.
5. Col. 2:18— ". . . vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind."

NOTE: These were people who deceived themselves into believing they were serving God. They were determined and adamant in their convictions. Regardless, they were serving their own minds as influenced by angels (probably fallen angels—demons).

6. II Pet. 2:10— ". . . them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled"
7. Eph. 2:3— ". . . the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath"

Man is a physical being. He possesses a natural carnal mind. And he is subject to his own weaknesses and vanities. Of himself he is incapable of performing the will of God— living the spiritual way.

As a natural being, he cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:50). Some transition (operation of God, for man cannot lift himself up to do that which he is incapable of performing) is imperative. This concept will be thoroughly explored at the appropriate time.

Though flesh, subject to degeneration and death, he is intelligent. He possesses the capability of reasoning, learning and acquiring knowledge. He can think, plan and execute those plans.

Yet, with all the intellectual capability, there is one area where he has never learned. Because of it, he habitually repeats costly and painful mistakes— the mistakes of former generations as well as events and incidents which transpire in his own life.

Men Seem Never to Learn from Generation to Generation

Men have lived— generation after generation— for approximately 6,000 years. That is a long chronicle of human experience. Those experiences

have occurred because of cause and effect. They did not just happen. Something precipitated an action, caused the result and left the mark of experience. Perhaps the greatest experience of all is the fact specific behavior patterns of men have consistently and continually produced the chaotic, troubling, injurious and bewildering circumstances of life. Yet, to this day men fail to weigh the past and to reap a beneficial result from the long mosaic of human history.

Why? Are men incapable of reading and comprehending history? Have they willfully rejected the reason, the cause of their experience? What is the real cause of their blindness and willful pursuit of a way which still results in tragedy, despair and heartache?

Let us understand. A recognition and understanding of these causes and results may be a significant step in the right direction of life for all of us.

In a certain definitive respect, God commands all human beings to review and respond to the lessons of history (Deut. 32:7 and Heb. 10:32). In God's eyes, history—the true recording of fact, the orderly and chronologically recorded occurrences of nations and peoples—is essential. But history must be viewed objectively and with a willingness to learn. The causes of the events, as well as their results, must be understood. To say merely that nations and empires have risen up against other nations and combines is in itself woefully inadequate. What are the causes of unrest? Why are peoples in revolt? Since all behavior commences with the human mind and heart, we are forced to ask what happens to the thinking of man.

Literally, a plethora of questions could be asked—questions which have seldom been addressed. For carnal man—this includes all historians and others who chronicle the affairs of men—can see things from a physical perspective only. What one cannot see one cannot address.

To those called of God (the only ones who can read and comprehend the past), God emphasizes the necessity of reading, comprehending, and recalling the significance of recorded history. Why does God want us to read and understand man's past actions and consequences?

By looking at our past (near and far), we can evaluate cause and effect and thereby give better direction to future actions (II John 8). If we never weigh the past and the results of actions taken, how can we possibly make meaningful and beneficial corrections in our present course of life (Gal. 3:4)?

Men record history from various vantages. Economic. Military. Political. Religious. Social. The Arts—culture, etc. History is always written with evidence of bias, which is indigenous to every man. Secular history is therefore of questionable value. Why? Because man, of himself,

cannot understand his own actions—the influences exerted upon his life. He records the action, but he does not generally comprehend the causes beyond the physical involvement. Herein lies the value of the Bible. Many of the historical events of the Bible have been recorded also by profane historians. But little do they understand the real causes behind the events. Those reasons are revealed to those called of God—revealed by an understanding of the Bible (II Tim. 3:16-17). For example, how many secular historians know the reason for Egypt's economic greatness? How many know the real cause of Nebuchadnezzar's banishment?

It is one thing to record events of history and it is quite another to understand those events. The Bible is the revelation of the real causes of historical events. From that revelation we can give direction to our lives, by understanding the past.

We should look back—gain a historical perspective—for the purpose of avoiding the mistakes of our ancestors. At no time and for no reason should we ever look back for the purpose of desiring to return to error. Israel's desire to return to Egypt serves as a classic example of such degradation. Jesus aptly taught us, ". . . No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

We must look back. God commands it. But we had better take heed that we do it for objective and beneficial reasons. Anything less could cost us our hope of everlasting life.

Generations of history have been written. Why is there a consistent degradation, degeneration and dissipation of humanity? Have men never learned from the past? Perhaps Bildad the Shuhite, when answering Job, gave us an insight. Could it be a failure to read properly history or to read it at all (Job 8:7-13)? One thing is certain: for anyone to misjudge human responses is as bad as, if not worse than, not reading it at all. Benefit can come only when due consideration is given to the past and action taken in a corrective direction.

Yet, the future is destined to be a repeat of the futile past. Men refuse to weigh and consider (Eccles. 1:11). Obviously, human beings do not believe the causes of human woe or their repetition. It is difficult to believe all men are sadists. That leaves only one alternative, what happened to former generations has little, if any, relevancy to them. What is interesting is the consistency of men's response to history. Perhaps that should tell us something. For not one generation has profited from the experiences of previous generations. Men consistently make the same mistakes. Due to those mistakes, they are still reaping the same consequences. Paul succinctly stated this principle when he wrote, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

The physical universe speaks a common language to all mankind. It is a universal language (Psa. 19). In the same way, music is a kind of universal language. In precisely the same way, the adverse as well as the beneficent experiences of men speak a universal language. Yet the utterances are seldom heard. Indeed they are not generally even acknowledged. Note carefully examples of God's people in the times of Isaiah and Jeremiah (Isa. 48:1-8 and Jer. 6:16-19).

Men repudiate the true lessons of history by setting about to misinterpret them on the basis of their own rationale and reason. Yet, man continues to pay the same price. It is an awful price of rebellion and defiance—the spirit which works in the children of disobedience, NOW as well as in ALL previous generations.

Man's total allotted time is short, both individually and collectively. In the sight of God, the whole of human existence has been but a few short days. How different our total environment could have been, one generation after another, if preceding generations had learned and profited from the lessons of history (Job 20:4-5).

The real motivations and purposes of man are hidden with God. By man's own intellect he does not even understand himself. Such comprehension comes only by a revelation from God. God's revelation is the revelation of the real forces at work—that which really motivates man; that which really blesses and safeguards him.

Secular history may be read and studied, resulting in the acquisition of specific data. But real comprehension can come by Biblical revelation only. Please note the following texts: Psa. 44:1-3; Psa. 77:1-12; Psa. 143:1-10; Isa. 46:3-13; Isa. 41:20-23.

Men record and read history. But because of their tendency to prejudice, self-appraisal and deception, they wrongly interpret history (Eccles. 7:7-10). All the lessons necessary for the careful observation and appraisal have been written, yet humanity continues to pursue its heedless way. Why? Because they either reject the lessons written or read them with prejudice, disbelief or ignorance.

In appointed times and to those called of God, comprehension can be realized. Others will remain in their darkened ignorance.

How will the select come to understand?

As stated earlier, the Bible is the real half of recorded history. Secular history is the recording of data, information and other specifics. The Bible is the half which reveals causes, motives and other unseen aspects. As the revelatory aspect of history, it is recorded for the benefit of generations of human beings who suffered the consequences of the unfolding events.

Paul makes the above statement clear in three places in the Bible. He wrote to the Roman Church, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime [secular history records them as well as the Bible] were written for our learning . . ." (Rom. 15:4). To the Corinthian Church he wrote, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. 10:11).

In another vein, Paul wrote of the value of history. He wrote, again to the Roman Church, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom. 4:23-24). The example of the faithfulness and obedience of Abraham is written as a positive example. For the most part the object lessons are recorded from the negative vantage point. That is, the price of rebellion and unfaithfulness is recorded. From these examples we clearly see and understand the result of unfaithfulness.

One more example should suffice—the example of Sodom and Gomorrah (II Pet. 2:6). This event of history should make all called of God and enlightened shrink at the very thought of turning from the truth which God reveals. Peter wrote of the incident, ". . . making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly" (v. 6). The nature of that rebellion is conclusively explained in the first three verses of II Peter 2.

The very hope of mankind rests with the ability and willingness of God to remember. To remember conditions of former years (Isa. 63:10-19). At the appointed time God will remember and fulfill all His promises to Israel. And in Israel will be found the hope of the rest of mankind.

If only men could read history and comprehend. The unconverted cannot be expected to do more than the imposed limitations of mind. But the tragedy of all is the failure of the called of God to remember until keen and purposeful adversity strikes.

If called of God, we should read and be able to comprehend history. A task the uncalled are utterly incapable of performing.

Ultimately, the lessons of adversity and trial are to be forgotten (Rev. 21:4). For, the conditions necessary to achieve the purpose of God can be forgotten once the product is finished. God is a purposeful Father. Continuation of trial and testing would be an exercise in futility—completely out of character with God.

Natural man has never really profited by the experiences of his predecessors. Until called, he cannot correctly evaluate history—the chronicle of man. Why?

Truth, the Way of Life, Is Hidden from Him

The Truth is a way of life. Conversely, the way of death is indigenously a part of man. He chose the way of death. The result was a natural blindness and defective reasoning. Man cannot of himself, comprehend the way of life—the principles of life.

But this ignorance was willed by the decree of God (Gen. 3:24). It was willed by God because man had rejected the knowledge of God and desired to accept a defective philosophy espoused by Satan the Devil,

God deliberately willed ignorance to man in his natural state (Eccles. 3:10-11, read from Moffatt tr., also Eccles. 8:17). Until intended by God, man cannot comprehend the lessons of history—lessons which punctuate the principles of truth hidden from man.

In God's own time and to whom He wills, the Truth will be made known (Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:3-4). If the Truth must be made known, it, then, is obvious that man does not naturally comprehend. He writes the lessons of history by experience and adversity. But he does not know or understand what he has written. Even as the Bible, a record of past experiences, cannot be understood until God wills (Rom. 16:26).

Man lives. He gains experience. But he does not comprehend. Because of this weakness, he is destined to repeat his mistakes over and over.

Man, devoid of spiritual perspective, cannot understand the lessons of history. He cannot profit from them because he cannot comprehend.

In another way man is further limited. How?

He Does Not Even Know Himself

Spiritual ignorance is one thing—a fact of the Bible. But man is more limited than he thought. He does not even know himself (Prov. 20:24). He is driven and controlled by his own nature (Jer. 10:23). He is captive to his passions—in bonds and chains until delivered (Rom. 7:23-24). And, at best, his reasonings are sheer vanity—useless (Psa. 94:10-11).

No wonder Solomon was inspired to say, ". . . all is vanity" (Eccles. 1:2). And David opined, ". . . verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity . . ." (Psa. 39:5).

Men philosophize. They write long books about their behavior. They study each other. They experiment and test. Yet they do not know themselves

or others. For as was once written, man of his own natural self is "a mystery wrapped in an enigma." And such is his natural state until God calls and reveals to him what he is and where he is going.

Yet man is intelligent. He possesses the capacity to think and reason—but not adequately. What is the real basis for his difficulties?

Man's Conceptions Are Not of God

Isaiah bluntly records God's evaluation of man's thoughts. He stated, ". . . my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9).

The thoughts and ways of God and man are not the same. God's thoughts are vastly superior to those of man. There is no worthy comparison.

The thoughts of God are purposeful. He can bring all His will to pass. But the thoughts of man are vanity—futile, useless (Psa. 94:11). And what he does comprehend comes from his capacity for intelligence (I Cor. 2:11).

Whatever the ability of man to comprehend himself, it is extremely limited. For we are plainly informed God alone knows the hearts of men (II Chron. 6:30).

When did this darkness envelope man? Why? Has man in part been responsible for a deliberate camouflage?

Job, when rationalizing his problems, implicated Adam. He said, "If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom" (Job 31:33). Compare Job's thought with the story of Genesis 3. Here Adam chose to rationalize his error rather than be candid and honest. That human trait has never ceased to manifest itself down through time to this very day. Men are deceptive. They rationalize to obtain personal advantage. Then when caught, as they usually are or at least will be in due time, another trait manifests itself—anger. And this anger manifests itself in abuse, denigration, ridicule and contempt against those who are knowledgeable.

Why do men behave in such ridiculous and personally injurious fashion? Because their responses in life are deceptive, defective and lacking real substance. As a result, when exposed they adversely react (John 3:19). Notice God's evaluation of a chosen nation of people who had received the codified form of His Law (Isa. 29:13-16). By plain Biblical statement, these people lived lives which were recorded as examples for us. That is, what happened to them is common to man. They feign a love for God and His Truth. But secretly they

live hypocritical lives— ever hoping that others will not find them out. The necessary justifications along the line are always engineered and designed to deceive others.

Such is the natural state of man. But only by conversion and the help of God can man recognize himself for what he is, admit it and then begin the enormous responsibility of overcoming.

It is obvious, the average man of the street does not comprehend his guilt before God. He lives in ignorance. An ignorance which will be lifted in God's appointed time. But do his natural ignorance and responses eliminate guilt before God?

Though Natural Man Does Not Understand, He Becomes Increasingly Guilty Before God

God created man subject to his own carnal nature. He created him with a nature antagonistic to the law and way of life (Rom. 8:7; Gal. 5:17).

All man's rationalizations, reasonings, complaints and disagreements do not change the facts. Man is guilty before God. For God's way speaks to all humankind even though they cannot naturally understand it (Rom. 3:19). They are guilty as long as they live (Rom. 7:1).

Since man cannot live a day without sinning, it is plainly obvious his guilt before God only mounts. He becomes increasingly guilty before God— under a great weight of sin.

There is no way of "unloading" this mountainous guilt by our own volition. For repentance— the forgiveness of guilt— cannot come until granted by God (Acts 5:31 and Acts 11:18).

Man is born with a nature which is very much against God. But his problems do not end there. He is subject to another adverse and very powerful influence.

Man Is Subject to Satan and His Demons

Satan is the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4). He is the adversary. He appeals to the base characteristics of man.

Though the way of error is diverse and multi-faceted, there are only two broad general ways of living. They are the ways of truth and error (I John

4:6). The way of error is that which comes naturally— a way of living which results from the adverse influence of Satan the Devil (compare Jas. 3:14-15; Jas. 4:5 and Gal. 5:19-21). Paul makes this point very clear in Ephesians 2. He writes, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan], the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation [conduct] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath . . ." (Eph. 2:2-3).

Simply, Satan appeals to the weaknesses of the flesh. He uses the strength of these weaknesses in us. He has repeatedly used these weaknesses to effect his own nefarious ends and ultimately to destroy man, who is his future nemesis (Gen. 6:5).

A part of his adverse influence is directed against the true doctrine (I Tim. 4:1). He wants the way of God ridiculed, rejected and ultimately destroyed. If we are not extremely careful, those holding the Truth can become the chief targets of Satan's influence. And those who falter, along with those who have never known the way of life, are classified as the children of Satan the Devil (I John 3:8-10).

When called by God, we are separated out from Satan's kingdom (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). But by being separated we thenceforward become targets of Satan's vicious aims. We can remain loyal to God who calls only by the exercise of absolute faith.

Until God calls, man, because of his own carnal nature, is buffeted about by Satan at his will. He is subject to the pulls of his flesh— weaknesses to which an unseen force appeals to keep carnal man in his grip.

His weaknesses are obvious. Yet man in some respects evidences characteristics of God.

Man Manifests Characteristics of God

Man was created in the image of God. He was created with intellectual capacity— mind. He was made with emotional capacity. He can evidence love, joy, pleasure, good. Or he can manifest hate, sorrow, sadness, evil.

With this mental capacity, man reached out and assumed a challenge too great for him to handle. He wanted, because of that Satanic influence mentioned above, to delve into all levels of knowledge— both good and evil (Gen. 3:22). His problems developed because he did not possess the necessary character to handle the knowledge at the same time he acquired it. Until embraced

with the will to do right, man would have been considerably better off to have avoided certain facets of knowledge. God is not tempted by the knowledge of evil—wrong! But man is (Jas. 1:12-15). Because of this temptation, he has stumbled into error—error which has been handed down to us generation by generation.

Now we who are called must resist those temptations and thereby live according to the perfect will of God. By the exercise of this God-like character, we can qualify to enter, by birth, into the family of God. And when born into the family of God, we will no longer be subject to the weaknesses of flesh—the temptations which afflict us daily. At that time we will possess not only the knowledge which God possesses, but also the ability to handle it. At that time we will become God's children and be just like Him. We will inherit His substance. We will inherit His character—His perfection! We will possess His mind. Add these traits to those God-like characteristics which we already possess, and we will be complete in Him.

Why, then, does man exist in this frail body?

Man Learns by Experience

Experience may or may not be the best teacher. Yet, it seems to be the only way man really learns. As generation after generation comes and goes, man is compounding the results of his way—the ultimate result of experience. At some given day, the sheer weight of that experience will compel man to think soberly and correctly. That day of reckoning is not far removed.

Man, therefore, is here on earth to gain that requisite experience (Eccles. 3:10). And at the same time he must come to recognize just who and what he is, despite the natural arrogance of mind and heart (Eccles. 3:18).

Man was created, given mental capacity, and allowed to exist for the sole purpose of learning. He must learn who and what he is. He must learn the consequences of wrong. He must experience the value of right.

He has much to learn—but even more to unlearn, because of his tendency to reason improperly and to misinterpret the results of history. But with the necessary patience, in due course of time he will recognize the value of his trials (Rom. 5:2-5).

Lessons are being taught. Experience is accumulating. What is the ultimate purpose?

Man Has a Hope Beyond the Veil of Mortality

Men need not despair. God is a purposeful Creator. As He has allowed trials and difficulties to exist for a meaningful purpose, so has He created human existence for a purpose.

Man's real hope lies beyond the veil of this present fleshly existence (I Cor. 15:19). The present is the arena and time period during which we qualify for the inheritance of tomorrow. It is the time during which we must master the self—to come out of (crucify, mortify) the natural self and to begin acquiring the divine nature (II Pet. 1:3-4). This operation of God is called the mystery of godliness (I Tim. 3:16). The beginning step in revealing the operation of God—the mystery of the Kingdom—is understanding the part Christ played in preparing the way for us (Heb. 2:14-18).

Christ having paved the way, salvation will be afforded to all men (I Tim. 2:4; John 1:29). However, repentance and the opportunity for life will not be granted to all at the same time. There is a definite time order (I Cor. 15:22-23; Rev. 20:5-6, 11-12). Any who keep the Holy Days and are obedient to God understand this time order. It is pivotal in the plan of salvation.

Human existence, with its present inherent trials, is the proving ground. It is the time to gain all necessary experience. And that experience is necessary to teach us the validity of all God's Law (Deut. 8:2-3). These experiences are as applicable to New Testament Christians as they were to Israel, the people of God (Matt. 4:4).

Now that we have been called of God to come out of darkness—servitude to fleshly lusts and adverse influence of Satan and his demons—to become recipients of repentance and inheritors of the Holy Spirit, we are required to walk in the way of the Spirit and to nullify the pulls of the flesh (Gal. 5:16, 24).

Once he is called by God, has the Truth revealed, and is given the power of the Holy Spirit, man can master the flesh. He can live the purposeful physical life God intended. He can become an overcomer. As a result of faithfully fulfilling that marvelous purpose, man can lay aside the weaknesses of flesh and take up the nature of God (Ph'p. 3:21; I John 3:1-2; I Cor. 15:42-44, 50-54).

God is man's Creator. He can do with him as He pleases.

God Works with Human Clay As It Pleases Him

God is a wise masterbuilder. He works by a system, plan and order. The very plan of God has been written into an annual requirement imposed upon man, to be rehearsed yearly by the called and obedient. By obedience to this system—God's annual Holy Days—man is kept aware of God's plan.

The principle taught is that God employs order. He does not call and afford eternal life to all at the same time. God has a perfect right to work with men as it pleases Him (Rom. 9:18-21; Jer. 18:6). He is their Creator. He is the Author and Finisher of their salvation.

Conclusion

Though created in the image of God, we physically and materially bear the image of the earthy. We experience the weaknesses of the flesh. We all have paid the price of this fleshly existence. We have gained experience.

With this experience well written and understood, man is allowed to comprehend an awesome spiritual purpose. Man can break the barrier of this fleshly existence. He can be born into the heavenly image (I Cor. 15:49).

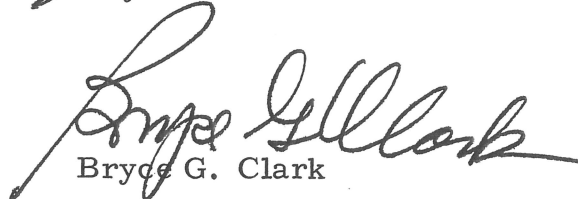
Up to this point we have come to understand a number of concepts regarding man and his intellectual capacity. We have previously seen that not all knowledge is one and the same. There are two classifications of knowledge: spiritual and physical. We have also come to realize that mere truth is not the Truth. For, the real Truth is the Word of God, which must be revealed before man can comprehend it.

Next, we want to thoroughly analyze the knowledge which man can acquire and comprehend. The comprehension of that knowledge is a part of the truth not naturally understood. Understanding is a source of joy and excitement. What a privilege to be granted the right to understand! We truly are among the greatly blessed of this earth. Let us never lose faith.

Our love and prayers are always with you. We trust all are well, happy, and greatly blessed of God. How fondly and affectionately we remember you all! Take care and remain strong in the faith.

With profound love and appreciation,
your servants in Christ,


Raymond C. Cole


Bryce G. Clark