

Two Books of Revelation and Their Relation to Knowing God

Ps. 19:1-4 The heavens are telling of the glory of God. And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech. And night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

Rom. 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

1 Cor. 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not {come to} know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

I. Characteristic of Book 1: Nature

- **Universal and Common to All**

Men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him... He has engraved unmistakable marks of his glory, so clear and so prominent that even unlettered and stupid folk cannot plead the excuse of ignorance.
John Calvin

- **Insufficient In Itself**

Although the Lord represents both himself and his everlasting Kingdom in the mirror of his words with very great clarity, such is our stupidity that we grow increasingly dull toward so manifest testimonies, and they flow away without profiting us. V.11

We ought not to rack our brains about God: but rather we should contemplate Him in His works... no long or toilsome proof is needed to elicit evidences that serve to illuminate and affirm the divine majesty... we are called to a knowledge of God; not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and if it takes root in the heart. V.1.9 *John Calvin*

II. In Relation to Book 2: Super-Nature Explained in "Word"

The book of revelation and the book of nature are both from God and will be found when both are adequately interpreted to coincide perfectly.... The one (revelation in the Bible) was designed and is admirably adapted to lay the foundation of an intelligent faith in Jehovah as the absolute Creator and the immediate former and providential ruler of all things. But it was not designed either to prevent or to take the place of scientific interpretation of all existing phenomena and of all traces of the past history of the world which God allows men to discover. Apparent discrepancies in established truths can have their ground only in perfect knowledge. God requires us both to believe and to learn. He imposes upon us at present the necessity of humility and patience.

A. A. Hodge, *The Confession Of Faith* (1868)
(On Chapter 1, IV, Section 1 "Of Creation")

- **Issues in Faith and Science (Infallibility and Fallibility... a partnership) (Acts 17)**
- **Issues in Apologetics: "Another Playing Field" (1Cor. 2:9ff)**
- **Issues in Piety (Gravitas and Faith) (Ps. 148)**

Insufficiency of Nature In the Knowledge of God: Two Illustrations:

1. Descartes:

- a. I have an idea of God in my mind.
- b. The idea of God is infinite and perfect
- c. An infinite and perfect idea could only come from an infinite and perfect being.
- d. God must exist in order to be the origin of the idea of God

The only alternative is that it is innate in me, just as the idea of myself is innate in me. And one certainly ought not to find it strange that God, in creating me, placed this idea within me to be like the mark of the workman imprinted on his work; and it is likewise not essential that the mark shall be something different from the work itself.

Descartes, *Meditations: IV*

2. Locke:

Though God has given us no innate ideas of himself; though he has stamped no original characters on our minds wherein we may read his being; yet having furnished us with those faculties our minds are endowed with, he hath not left himself without witness; since we have sense, perception, and reason and cannot want a clear proof of him, as long as we carry ourselves about us. *Nor can we justly complain of our ignorance in this great point; since he has so plentifully provided us with the means to discover and know him.*

John Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Chapter 10.1

"Teleological Argument" (Argument from Design)

1. All design implies a Designer
2. Great design implies a great designer
3. There is great design in the world.
4. Therefore there must be a great Designer of the world.

Seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand... as the Prophet Isaiah has said, "You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive.

Matthew 13:13

The Two Playing Fields:

1. God is the final court of appeal
2. Man is the final court of appeal

Sin will reveal itself in the field of knowledge in the fact that man makes himself the ultimate court of appeal in the matter of all interpretation... Man has declared his autonomy as over against God.

When we say that sin is ethical we do not mean, however, that sin involved only the will of man and not also his intellect. Sin involved every aspect of man's personality. All of man's reactions in every relation in which God had set him were ethical and not merely intellectual; the intellectual itself is ethical.

C. Van Til

A Confessional Approach:

Speculative Schemes and systems have their intrinsic interest, but none will do justice to what occurred through Christ until we view it from within Christ, from that position in which a saving trust has placed us, a position created by the Holy Spirit in the presence of faith in accordance with that Word which the Holy Spirit himself inspired. In Christology, then, we can only philosophize from faith, not to faith, and our thought must resonate with what Christ reveals himself to be through Scripture with the revealed purpose of his coming and not with the ways we might like to see him as modern people. This means that to understand Christ aright, we must also know something about our own guilt. We must know ourselves to be sinners. We must have hungered and thirsted after righteousness. The New Testament, after all, was not written for the curious, for historians, or even for biblical scholars, but for those in all ages and cultures who want to be forgiven and to know God. David Wells, *The Person of Christ...*