

Church of God, The Eternal

P.O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440

November 2, 1975

Dear Friends:

Here it is, time for another *Monthly Letter*. A routine responsibility, such as the writing of this letter, surely illustrates just how rapid is the evaporation of time. However, this time, the letter is far from routine. Time and circumstances are urgent. We need to be praying, fasting and studying such as we have never done. What we are doing is a matter of faith. The faith, as provided by Christ, must be the faith manifested by us all. Success is dependent upon our close personal relationship with Christ and God the Father.

The passing of each day, week and month ought to impress upon us the need for diligent preparation for the return of Christ. Surely that momentous event cannot be far away. So many of the Biblical indications of the times preceding the advent of Christ are either a matter of history or are presently transpiring. Only the foolish will mock the veracity of the times in which we live. The faithful will not lose hope and direction because of the ridicule of others. God is faithful.

Indications are that some of us are growing restless, troubled and perplexed. A natural consequence of experiencing a major disappointment such as we all have gone through in the past months. But, must we remain in such an unsettled condition? Can we know what it is all about? Are there answers to these perplexities?

Most definitely! We need, indeed must, understand. How imperative understanding is to the fulfillment of that awesome purpose for which God has kept some from faltering. God is a very purposeful Being. He reserved some from the darkness of "change" to complete a significant responsibility—or perhaps better stated, "many responsibilities."

Christ, through His end-time apostle, called us to the knowledge of the truth. We heard the voice (John 10) and we responded to it. That voice conveyed truth. We accepted truth—the Way of life. As a result, we became convicted, subsequently repented, and then were baptized into the body, the body of Jesus Christ, the Church of God. It was not a name or physical organization to which we responded. No. It was the voice of truth.

The activity involved in the above response is the Work of God. The very phrase "Work of God" implies what God is doing. He is calling and working with those individuals who respond to the truth. He is training them for significant responsibility in His Kingdom, but also for a work in this end-time.

What is that work? How does it affect you? There is a very real personal involvement. Every one of us will bear responsibility.

First, we need to understand why the sobering necessity of comprehending the scope and purpose of God's Work! For us to drift aimlessly is both futile and unrewarding. God is purposeful always. Why, then, are we experiencing these unique problems of our day? The reasons are profound.

A test was administered. In fact, it is still heavily upon us and will continue to the return of Christ. All our personal trials, the great tribulation to overcome the whole world, advent of false prophets, change of doctrine, change of personal life-style, as well as many other factors form a part of that test. The scope and extent of that test will depend upon us individually. Just how much of God's correction do we wish to receive? If we become willing and obedient, we need suffer very little of the punishment prophesied for our time. But, if we will not be corrected by the direct chastisement of God, He will bring more severe punishment upon us. The great tribulation is not the venting of God's wrath. It is intended to bring human beings to their senses—to come to the knowledge of what is right and wrong, the ability to differentiate between truth and error. God is a very purposeful Being. He will have a desire to the workmanship of His hands. For the most part, in process of time and by the administering of requisite punishment, most will come to the knowledge of that way. Rejection of that way of life to which we were originally called is evidence that contact with God became very limited or lost altogether. But God's purpose will not be thwarted. Through the multitudinous trials mentioned above those called to be His Sons will be brought back to the fold.

God wants to know where our loyalties lie (see Deuteronomy 8:2; Deuteronomy 13:1–5; 1 Corinthians 11:19; and 1 John 4:1).

Did we become completely physically oriented? Did we place total trust in human beings and mundane institutions? The shock of the past couple of years reveals the answer to be the affirmative. Had we had our eyes fixed solely upon Christ, had we truly believed what we read Biblically and had we accepted the profound pronouncements of God's Ministry over the past several years as the revealed Word of God (See 1 Thessalonians 2:13), we would not have experienced the doubts, frustrations and agonizing mental pain. We would have known! We would have understood the terrifying events of our day. We would have been mentally equipped to cope with the situation.

Then, what is the "Work of God"? A review of parts of Jeremiah 23 will best explain a part of that work.

Remember, what happened in times of old were written and preserved for our admonition and learning. They are listed as object lessons because man's nature has never changed—the one thing which should have changed. But rather than change the nature, it is easier to change the doctrine and life-style.

Therefore, what happened to God's People, Israel as a nation, is recorded as a warning of what will happen to us. When? Note verse 20 of Jeremiah 23; "In the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly." Jeremiah 23 is written for this generation. Its historical occurrence in the time of Israel does not alter that fact.

What are the lessons for us?

1. In the very "House of God" was found the source of wickedness—the way of adultery and a whole "course" of evil (vv. 10–11).

2. The very servants of God who should have been responsible for leading the people in truth actually *caused* His people to err (v. 13).

3. The ministry became the source of deception—lying—and the very foundation of evil-doing, encouraging others in the practice of evil (vv. 14, 15).

4. The people are encouraged—by decree from God, for our time—do not give ear to the words spoken by the ministry from Jerusalem, the headquarters of that day (v.16).

5. God said the responsible ministry despised Him yet continued to use His name as an influence to hold the people (v.17, 25–27, 30–33).

6. As a result of ministerial departure from the truth, the people became strengthened in "individualization" (v. 17).

7. Some are going to remain loyal to the Word of God—The Word which God gave to them through His own chosen Apostle (v. 18).

8. We shall assume no greater responsibility than "holding fast" to the TRUTH and encouraging others whom God has chosen to remain loyal and faithful to that way of life (vv. 22, 28).

9. No special mission or activity will be undertaken until God very directly instructs and dispatches (vv. 33–40).

10. Our responsibility is to hold the pure Word of God as He revealed it to us. We cannot pervert what we did not originally receive. The TRUTH (God's Word) first came, perversion obviously followed (v. 36).

John tells us very plainly that the *Work* of God is to believe on Him whom He sent (John 6: 29). When that text is coupled with the instructions of Matthew 28:19–20, it is obvious that the real intent and purpose of any activity on the part of the ministry is to bring people to repentance and aid them in the required spiritual growth necessary for inheritance of eternal life. *Presently*, the emphasis of responsibility has swung from evangelizing to stabilizing and helping those whom God has already called (John 4:31–38). The actual Biblical instructions relative to this requirement are too numerous to give in an article much less this letter.

Suffice it to say, the following should strengthen our understanding:

1. We are told to leave the body and hunt the lost sheep.
2. We are encouraged to exhort one another daily while there is yet time to overcome and be properly oriented.
3. We are told to forsake not the assembling of ourselves together. The need of contact with one another is imperative. Much strength may be derived from a close and mutually warm friendship. Further, the need for spiritual nourishment is imperative. God has not altered His way of feeding the flock.
4. We are told that we must endure to the end. Such endurance obviates a struggle with faith, belief and conviction. Such a struggle surely indicated unusual pressure to forsake that way to which we have been called.
5. We are told to overcome—to become perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. This is a life-long process. It requires not only the ultimate effort on our part but the supernatural help of God. Even so, the righteous are just barely going to squeeze through. But God promises that the righteous will make it. Do we have time to wonder what our mission and purpose is in this *time of trial*?
6. We must be proclaiming the value of God's Holy Days when Jesus Christ returns. For some reason, this must be a very significant factor in the days to come. Note carefully the instructions found in Matthew 24:45–47.

7. We are to be a light, the proper example to others. It is by the life we live that others will be persuaded. Our words are of little value unless supported by the example of conduct.

Should we overly concern ourselves about responsibilities which must not be arrogated to self?

In the past we had become accustomed to rallying around the idea of an international work. But few, if any, had taken the time or expended the effort to "PROVE" that concept. Proof from God's Word is far more than a claim . . . though Biblical texts are cited. Why? The questions of When? Who? etc. must be answered. Further, if a Work is claimed, it must be substantiated in content and purpose from the Bible. When the past concept is subjected to the above test, it falls far short of an irrefutable concept. No way can one "PROVE" Matthew 24:14 to be fulfilled at this time. The time concept alone indicates a future fulfillment. Why should it be lifted out of context, be applied to an earthly activity long ago commenced; whereas, the basic time of Matthew 24 applies to events of the future?

When we are asked, "What work are you doing?" our present answer is: hold fast to the truth which God gave us (Revelation 3:11; Hebrews 3; Titus 1:9; 2 Timothy 3:14; 1 Timothy 1:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; and 2 Tim. 1:13–14) and "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17). Those God sends to us we will attempt to pull out of the morass and reconfirm their love for the truth which God gave them at the time of their call and for which they were baptized (Ephesians 1: 13–14).

When God is ready for a specific work to be done, He is most capable of calling, training and dispatching the personnel to fulfill that charge. Our purpose must be that of qualifying. Then we are told to wait patiently for God.

How can we ever be used for any really significant spiritual responsibility unless we can again develop that oneness of mind and heart Jesus Christ experienced in His own physical life when here on the earth? The Body must be in good health to do its work. Far too many rejected the truth of God, the way of life, because of the personal sins of men. Others, looking to the problems of the past, refuse to ever commit themselves again. How can we justify taking that attitude toward Christ? He was not responsible for the difficulties. He became a willing sacrifice for us. Through Him, we have been given the opportunity of life. He is the truth, the way and the life. By the receipt of the knowledge which God gave to us, Christ literally lives within us. That fact has not changed. We need to continue to look to Christ and forget what men have done.

Some place, there will be found a small group of people who will obey God and His Son at all cost (Matthew 7:13–14). They have truly counted the cost. Regardless, they hold not their lives dear to themselves. Our purpose must be to determine just where that group is. How can we be one if torn apart mentally? We may be scattered geographically but not spiritually. God will not allow His truth to drop to the ground.

There is an awesome responsibility upon each of us. We must know—and know that we know—what and where the truth is. Even if men again falter, that truth will never change. The truth is Christ. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. There is not even the shadow of turning in Him. Why can't we have implicit confidence in that fact? That very confidence is the basis of our salvation.

Brethren, for the very purpose of determining the direction which we all should be traveling, the ministry is convening this coming Monday through Thursday (November 3–6). None of us ever intended to pre-empt God—or to assume any special mission. We all knew that God held us accountable for holding fast to the truth. That we have done despite the ridicule, verbal abuse, character assassination, public humiliation and other forms of trial. Relative to that action there have been no regrets. We knew the truth, and we knew that we knew it!! The Bible is most plain for those who will stop in their mental and physical hurry and give God an opportunity to instruct them. But as the Bible reveals, ". . . strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it (Matthew 7:14).

We, as ministers, confess we have not known just what direction God wants us to take. No doubts have even been registered respecting the truth. We know that God gave the truth initially to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. For that reason, the highest honor and respect we can show him is to cling to that way he was taught.

Further, our prayers have always been that if God did not want us to exist as an entity, He would graciously show us our wrong. All our personal opinions are useless. We wanted the manifestation of those fruits which make it apparent what God's will is. As time progressed, God added and added to this fledgling operation. We were blessed greatly. Nine ministers were sent. Several hundred people have responded to The Truth. The great assurance to us as ministers and personnel here in Eugene comes from the fact not one has been coerced. God sent them all. Each one has had to independently determine his course of action. In every case, God sent them. For that we give all the praise to Him who is worthy of all respect and worship.

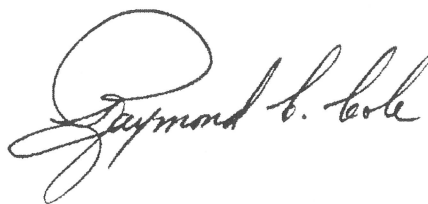
When those who are troubled effect the initial contact, we will serve and help them with all we possess. The unfortunate factor is this: most are not aware of just what is

happening. They are literally blinded or kept in darkness. This we know as a fact due to the many discussions we have had with others throughout the country.

But there is great hope. God said there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed. There is a great day of revelation coming. All people are going to be forced to make a decision—a decision predicated on facts. At that time, will they look to men, a physical organization or will they look to Christ? We all should be very earnestly praying about this very matter. The salvation of many may be entirely dependent upon the prayers of those of us who understand.

There is so much more to say about this marvelous work. It will be continued in a subsequent letter. We, as ministers, want you to know the results of our conference, plans for the future and ways in which all of us will become personally involved. You are a part of the whole responsibility. We look forward to the development of that "oneness" and total cooperative effort. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your continued love and concern.

In deepest love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'R' and 'C'.

Raymond C. Cole