

Church of God, The Eternal

P.O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440

May 11, 1976

Dear Brethren:

First, I want to apologize for the lateness of this monthly letter. In the future, considering the present moves, we should be able to avoid such delays. Timeliness and punctuality are certainly godly characteristics. It is our fond hope to achieve those lofty ideals shortly.

Passover and Unleavened Bread seems to have been most successful despite the many difficulties we all feel and sense. Who has not had questions and doubts about many things? However, the one anchor of hope for us all is the unerring accuracy of God's Truth—the way of life to which we were all called. Faith in that way—in God's absolute revelation—has been the only sure footing which we mutually possess. At this point in time, the big question is: is that faith sufficiently strong and viable to see you through the storms of doubt, turmoil and persecution of every description indicated for the upcoming months and maybe years? Remember: "The just shall live by faith."

Too many have begun to question doctrine. It makes little difference whether we change with the thrust of the parent institution or whether we use defective human relationships to attempt a justification for our departure from the Truth which God revealed, it all amounts to the same result. That result is a departure from the Truth, a priceless way of life which God graciously and kindly gave the called and elect of these last days. We, who have had our eyes enlightened, cannot hope to be the recipients of God's continual mercy if we trample upon that way—the WORD which He allowed us to understand.

It is fitting that we all reconsider the reconfirmation of the covenant which we made with God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Partaking of Passover is not an end in itself. There is a significant purpose for the ingesting of the bread and the drinking of the wine. In no way does an ethereal, nebulous concept of accepting Jesus Christ fulfill the requirements of the sacred service. Jesus Christ was the word of God personified. He was the Word of God made flesh, John 1:14. But, how does that fact affect us? Only by allowing that same Word to abide in us—through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Our only hope of everlasting life is Christ in us. Since Christ does not change, and life is the presence of Christ in us, it naturally follows that we must be doing the same things that Christ did when He was here on the earth.

Being required to deal with specifics, it is most difficult to justify activities or beliefs predicated on ambiguities, personal conceptions or supposed faith. Faith of one type is vain. True faith can be substantiated. How? James wrote, "faith without works is dead." Conversely, works which are a mere manifestation of man's attempt to justify himself are equally vain. Then what is the proof of faith? Faith cometh by the hearing of the Word of God, Paul wrote. Therefore, true and effective faith is manifested by obedience to that Word—the same Word which was made flesh and dwelt among us in the person of Christ. The obvious conclusion is this: effective and genuine faith is Christ in us, the very WORD of God living in us individually instead of in His own physical, flesh body.

How did Christ live? Did He keep the LAW? Was He obedient to the totality of the Word (Luke 24:44)? How, then, is man to live (Matthew 4:4)?

What Christ became in His own physical body, we cannot become. He was the PASSOVER Lamb. He was the total embodiment of the sin-offering structure. He was the Word of God. He was all in all. We cannot become these things. But, by allowing Christ to live in us, we sacrifice our lives to Him. Then by so doing, we allow Him to live in us as a sacrifice for our sins, *as the Word of God in action* (in our lives) and our only hope of eternal life. Why? Because the way into life has never changed. Man is incapable of self-mastery! He needs the help of one vastly superior to himself—A great need for Christ in us. Since man was already condemned to death for disobedience to the law, he had to be redeemed from that curse. But notice! He was redeemed from the curse, not from the law. The law is spirit and perfect. It will never be changed. For that reason, Christ was made flesh to pay that penalty. The law took His life. By accepting Christ, the past is obliterated (Romans 3:25). But what of the future? Man's nature was not changed! Therefore, it is essential for man to accept Christ and then allow Him to live His life in us individually (Galatians 2:20).

Passover will be of little value to you unless you are mastering the self, living by the entirety of God's Word and developing the perfection of God. We must overcome day by day. It is a lifelong process. For it is only he who endures unto the end that shall be saved. At some point in time, there must be a beginning. That beginning was quite precise for most of us. We heard the Truth. We willingly responded to it. We loved and cherished that way of life. And God said, many shall depart from that way of life because of the presence of iniquity or the manifestation of abject carnality. But can we justify turning our backs on God because of the behavior of any man or group of men—either within the original body or outside? Most certainly not! I seriously wonder just how many are going to plead with Christ at the time of His return for clemency and a reconsideration, but to no avail. If we know our Bibles, we most assuredly know that some are going to fall into that category. We would all do well individually to take inventory of our own lives. Just where do we stand? What is our attitude? Towards the LAWS of God? Towards one another? What about God's

Holy Days? Prophecy shows that far too many would begin to trample upon, and in other ways desecrate those holy sacred times. Will we? Victory can be claimed only when we cross the finish line! The greatest part of the race, the most difficult component, is negotiating the last part. With the finish line in sight, now is no time to give up, to turn to ways and customs that cannot bring salutary results.

In summary: Do Not Lose Sight Of The Meaning Of Passover For This Entire Year! Never has it been more significant.

Mr. Paul Royer was able to spend time—Passover and Unleavened Bread—with the people in Toronto, Canada and Youngstown, Ohio. The time was mutually rewarding and helpful for all who were privileged to attend. I conducted services and visited with brethren in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Maryland area, Alabama, Texas and California.

The occasion was a truly memorable experience. What joy to meet together with those who are truly attempting to remain loyal to the Truth which God gave them. That joy can only augment as the times become more critical and circumstances more devastating. Such occasions indicate how great the need for all of us to have mutual fellowship in Christ and God the Father. Our spiritual existence is predicated on our persevering, continual love for the Truth of God. We need the exhortation and help of others continually.

It is always refreshing to see some of God's chosen people come to their spiritual senses, realizing just what is happening in the parent institution. We are always thrilled to see people hang onto the Truth which God gave to them. So few are even making an attempt to be loyal to God.

All in all, the trip was a very inspirational one.

This past week was the time of a brief conference for all the ministers. It was a very sobering and serious conference. We had come to the crossroads. Decisions had to be made.

What are our purposes? Every move—though carefully studied out—made in the past had not produced results—at least the kind of results which we were looking for. Early in the activity of this fledgling group, we had decided to act on faith. If directions were not of God, surely He would allow us to understand by virtue of the circumstances and conditions which followed. Each new minister who had made his stand for the Truth was accepted on the basis of that faith. But the growth pattern and potential did not warrant the number of men whom we had accepted. It certainly was no discredit to the men. For whatever the reasons, God just had not elected to add numerically or bless in other ways to the extent the sustaining of those newer employees would economically demand. For the present, it is

imperative that a logical perspective be maintained. This meant the termination of some of the men. But how was such a choice to be made?

Since both Terry Anderson and Scott Royer were young, it was deemed necessary to start with them. Further, due to the fact the growth of the "activity" was not localized in specific geographic areas—rather, it was broadly scattered over much of the United States as well as other parts of the world—it was obvious that the real work load was here in Eugene, not in other parts of the country. It was essential for us to have most of the help here. The decision was left to the men. As it turned out, Messrs. Bryce Clark and Jim Doak will relocate here in Eugene. They will be retained for the work here.

It is most sad to see such situations arise. But, we have been attempting to circumvent this problem for months. We could no longer delay. Even with this present configuration, none of us knows just what God has in mind. Of course, it is our fondest hope that the above configuration is a temporary one. Even though temporary, the decision to reduce the numbers of men actively working in the ministry does not mean they are no longer a part of us. They are still ministers of Jesus Christ. Their counsel and help will be sought. I would love to see all who really love the Truth of God be able to work together. All of us really want to know the will of God and be privileged to perform it. Please continue to pray earnestly that God will make His will abundantly known to us. Brethren, there are far too many presuming to know that will. But, it just might be that what they are doing is a presumption of their own making. Our God is sufficiently capable of letting us know. We do not have to guess. We must be careful that we do not find ourselves preempting God and will later be embarrassed when the real Truth is known.

As I have repeatedly indicated, we are not doing a work as people commonly think of it. We are scattered (estranged) sheep from the fold. We, by circumstance or literally, have been forced out of the church. The only justifiable activity as of the present is, "Feed my sheep"—the estranged ones who have lost their way and are unsure of just what they should do. We must have faith in the Truth which God gave to us. *That* we can know. IT IS THE TRUTH. It is the way of life. Obedience to that way should not be a subject of doubt. No matter what any one of us may do, the Truth will always be the Truth. Make sure you have that confidence and determination. The Truth does not stand or fall on the basis of what human beings do.

For the present we would stand guilty before God if we did not attempt to feed those who are crying out for that help. In no way does the idea of a famine for the hearing of the Word of God justify our voluntarily turning our backs on people who want help. That famine will affect most people regardless of the efforts—in some cases honorable—of ministers trying with all their hearts and minds to aid and help people to remain loyal to the Truth.

The greatest activity required of us all is merely working and praying to get our spiritual feet back down on good firm ground—the foundation which we were initially given. There is no greater need. So many are judging all others on the basis of their own individual conceptions. Every one is a law unto himself. When will we learn tolerance and a sense of fairness to others? We have become troubled, doubtful and bewildered. The need: get close to God. Have faith in God. Love one another.

We all know that awesome things are to transpire in the future. Prophecy reveals that fact. But, the question is: where do we stand in this configuration of time? What should we be doing? As indicated earlier, the only acceptable stance for the present, is to be loyal to the Truth and attempt to help one another. That is our purpose!

Therefore, our purpose is to be lights to others. To live fully and abundantly the Truth as we know it. To be loyal and faithful to that way of life with which we were blessed.

But, in attempting such obedience it behooves us to be most tolerant and kind to others. So many are troubled and perplexed. Further, others do have opinions about things which are personal to them. These things do not necessarily affect the major doctrine—the past foundation on which we have grown since our call, conversion and baptism. Learn to study and apply Truth in your lives without becoming opinionated. Why argue about Truth? It is an art to be tolerant and kind. For someone to disagree with us is all too frequently taken as a form of personal rebuff. Each must defend his conceptions and beliefs—they are sacred to him. The only way which is sacred is the one which was given to us—the Truth which we were taught.

Because of the smallness of the group, if we are not careful, individual conceptions—not even related to the real Truth—may become points of divisiveness. Are we concerned about the Law, the Holy Days and other major points of doctrine? These are the things which count. Beyond that, we must consider all elements of character. After all, character is what God is creating in us. As an awesome purpose of God, such character development must be given substantial priority in the conduct of our lives.

Our real work is to obey God, cling to the Truth, overcome our own faulty natures through the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit and then learn to be tolerant and forgiving toward one another. Why be opinionated? The distrust and suspicion of one another generated because of past experiences are not of God. We must learn to overcome the fruits of our past traumas. Truly, let us become the lights of godly character. Let us be the salt of the earth. Let us live the principles of Matthew 5.

There are a few other things which I would like to mention in this monthly letter. First, because both Messrs. Bryce Clark and Jim Doak are moving into Eugene, it will be possible for us to generate many more Bible Studies in print, more special tapes covering specific and needful subjects, answer more personal letters and do more article writing. Soon after their settling in Eugene, sometime in the month of June, we will be busily working on the above items. At that time the material will become rapidly available. We will keep you informed of the progress and availability. For the present, there are certain articles which

have been completed and are now being printed and readied for distribution. The information necessary for requesting these articles will be sent in the June letter. Holding things up for that period of time will allow us ample time to stockpile and perform other duties before receiving the requests. Thanks for being so patient and understanding. It is genuinely appreciated.

Second, for the present, the concept of "Area Representatives" is being held up. We want to review the whole concept once the other two ministers are present. Too many people assumed that office bore certain responsibilities which were never intended at the time of its creation. All will be thoroughly explained at a later date.

Finally, Pentecost is fast approaching. The date is June 7, on a Monday, of course. It is the only day God originally revealed to His Church. Hopefully, a specific tape, or perhaps more, will be made and sent to all in outlying areas. It is our fond hope this service will be of significant service and help to you. It is one of the ways by which we can serve the people in the far-flung places of the United States and the world.

If it is possible to arrange for any specific meetings of the brethren in other parts of the United States, we will make such arrangements and subsequently inform you. Perhaps it will be possible to send one man out for the occasion. It is something about which we all should pray. Must close this letter for this month. Remember, we have great love and respect for you all. We earnestly desire your continued love and concern.

In deepest Christian 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