

# Church of God, The Eternal

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February 1, 1977

Dear Brethren:

Today, February 1, is the date to extend another warm, monthly greeting to all. Time seems to move so rapidly. But of more significance than the mere flight of time, are the conditions and difficulties which seem to be mounting this year. Weather is most erratic. A generally uneasy feeling prevails all across the country. Economic woes are unparalleled. Continual degeneration of morality, religion and nearly all social relationships. And, most importantly, people have lost heart. Resignation and a "Who cares?" attitude are rampant.

These conditions must not be allowed to adversely affect us. Of all people, we have much for which to be thankful. Surely the return of Christ cannot be too far removed. Brethren, the clouds of turmoil, doubt and fear are going to become much worse in the days which lie ahead. But our light and hope are God's Word and a very close relationship with our Father. There will be no other way to weather the storms which will incessantly assail us in these critical times. Your confidence will be buoyed up only in the determined pursuit of the way of life which God gave you (Heb. 3:1-19). In trial, all physical things seem so useless and futile. Deprived of these physical things which had become so meaningful, most people can once again look up to a Creator. It is our responsibility to exhibit, in an exemplary fashion, self-negation now.

Most of you are aware of the fact Mr. Jim Doak suffered a massive heart attack just a little over two weeks ago. He was in critical condition for a few days. But, it can now be reported: he has magnificently recuperated. He is being released from the hospital today. Mr. Doak was hospitalized for purposes of monitoring his heart, receiving oxygen and abating the pain. There is little else which could be done in such a circumstance.

We are most grateful to our God for this quick recovery. Many of you have prayed from the beginning that God would intervene. God has heard, and the recovery has been nothing short of miraculous. It is their desire to thank you for your concern — for your cards, letters and calls.

A long period of convalescence is absolutely necessary. He has sustained extensive damage to the heart. Conditions and circumstances which were responsible for the attack will have to be weighed very carefully.

Changes in those circumstances are mandated. As time progresses, these decisions will be made. Mr. Doak and his family will thoroughly evaluate all factors. I know they will greatly appreciate your continued prayers, for his continued recovery and that the necessary decisions will be made in accordance with the will of God.

Should we become involved in some major evangelistic work? Some are concerned with the fact we are not "reaching out" to the unconverted of the world. They view us as being unconcerned for the welfare of the world — others who are not converted.

Why would such a conception traumatize people — in some cases, even those who do understand the truth and are attempting to be faithful and loyal to that way of life to which they were called? Our past has a great deal to do with that conception. We were literally nurtured and fed on the conception of a gigantic work. And there is nothing wrong with the belief in a work. However, a work has specific time and purpose limits. If we are not cognizant of these limitations, we could easily assume some God-chosen servant failed. For example, Christ was cut down after a ministry of three and one-half years. The number of servants chosen and who responded to Christ was about 120. Yet, at the conclusion of His life, He said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

In Christ's statement are found the answers to all the questions which perplex us presently. 1) Christ was specifically chosen by God the Father to do a work. 2) He was told the scope and extent of that work. 3) There was a completion to the work — a completion which did not involve numbers of people.

Were Christ and God the Father derelict because they did not call the whole world to understand the truth?

Is not obedience to God of greater significance than a presumptive, though humanitarian, activity? God has all power and authority. He can do as He pleases! Being an all-powerful and knowledgeable entity, He can commission a work, terminate the activity, change its course or do whatever He pleases. However, even as Christ — our example — could not teach what He pleased, when He pleased, but only that which God the Father gave Him to do, so also we must wait for instruction from Him. He is no less powerful and concerned today than He was in the past. We must be careful never to assume responsibility when none has been given.

There is abundant Biblical evidence of a work which would exist in the latter days. But, in the process of time, a major defection from that truth was to transpire. I, personally, believe we have seen that defection. Every

minister in the Church, at one time, firmly believed such a rejection of truth would occur. In fact, many articles were written as a major warning to the brethren. Yet, by the hypocritical statements of a few, the majority of the ministry was influenced to renounce its former faith and conviction. These very men are the teachers of the members today! How can anyone place confidence in a ministry which has turned 180 degrees from its original belief and practice? At one time or the other, they were less than honest. That fact will manifest itself in the future. But the time may be too late for many!

The revealed teachings of the Bible are plain. There was a major activity in our day. Jesus said, "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen" (Matt. 20:16). We became comfortable in the dimension of that activity. In the numbers of people called. All these called ones were afforded the knowledge of the truth. Their eyes had been opened. Their ears were unstopped. They could see and understand. But the proof of character and faith is not found in the comfort of size and numbers. Tests were inevitable. God was determined to ascertain the solidarity (spiritually) of each individual. He wanted to know the scope and extent of our love for that truth. Compare Jeremiah 17:9-10 and Matthew 7:13-14. In the final analysis, of the many called (Matt. 20:16), only a few will find — because of turmoil, deception, trickery and wholesale rejection of truth — the way of life (Matt. 7:13-14).

In the times of these conditions, there is absolutely no indication of a major work — a work behind which we can hide in confidence and trust. On the contrary, the spotlight of purpose and conversion is brilliantly shining upon us individually. How will each of us score in that test? Do we have the faith to endure — individually? As scattered sheep, we are going to need all the fullness of God's Spirit. Each of us must have made the necessary resolves in his life — individually.

The future belongs to God. Because of a failure on the part of a chosen instrument, no other servant may legitimately choose to fulfill or carry out the charge of the one who failed (compare I Kings 12:21-24 with I Kings 14:7-10, and John 13:18 with Acts 1:15-26). Remember the example of Uzzah (II Sam. 6:6-11). He felt completely justified in an attempt to steady the Ark of the Covenant. What was his fate? His example is sufficient for me! I have received no direct commission from God or His Son Jesus Christ. I will not presume! There are some who, understandably, would like to see us commence some major activity in the interest of the unconverted and troubled. God knows their state. He knows their need. He is responsible. But their unconverted and troubled state must not cause us to presumptively reach out and "steady the ark." God, having all power, can choose and send at any time He so wills. Our problems usually stem from the fact we do not

have sufficient faith in God. Presumption is always an indication of man's arrogating to himself responsibility and position because he cannot trust God or he fears God may by-pass him in making necessary choices.

As I have stated before, there are indications of major interventions by God yet to transpire. Whom God will choose, and when, are two considerations which rest in His hands alone. He will choose and send! But one thing is certain, He will reveal His purpose to those whom He chooses to send. The revelation will not be given to another human being who will, in turn, instruct the one to be sent. Consider the examples of Christ and Paul. Christ was given the very words of God before being sent. He knew the scope and extent of His work. Paul was directly called and taught by Christ. He was obligated to teach only that which he had been taught. He could not change or alter his instructions. He knew to whom He was sent, as did Jesus Christ. The limits of time and purpose were absolute!

In God's own time, He will remove the blindness of those whom He chooses and allow them the privilege of understanding priceless truth — the Bible. This is knowledge which He will give to all whom He calls. There is, however, a very different call. That call is for a specific work. Such a call requires revelation of a very special nature. Those receiving such revelation are then sent to the intended recipients of that message. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was chosen by God as the end-time servant. The past fruits prove it. But, as indicated above, a servant cannot change the word or purpose of his call. No one may assume such specific responsibility. All such charges belong to God. Whatever takes place must be literally the Work of God. Not a work of men who claim to be doing the will of God.

In the light of the above, what are we doing? What are our purposes and objectives?

First, we have not created a separate church. If we can but grasp the past configuration, we can understand the above. Let us use an example. God made His covenant with Israel. She rebelled and went into atrocious idolatry. The results were national captivity for a period of time. Next, a restoration of identity and purpose. Following the death of the liberator, a return to idolatry and captivity. This cycle continued for several hundred years.

During these cycles of national greatness and captivity, in all probability a few individuals remained faithful to God. In some cases, the faithful were spared captivity. When separated from the nation of Israel, were they any less Israelites? Of course not! In the same way, the Church of the early First Century departed from the faith once delivered. The faithful of God were forced out of the physical body! It is a matter of history. Were they



no longer members of the TRUE Church — the body of Jesus Christ — because they were separate from the physical body? Certainly not!

When a body ceases to be the body of Jesus Christ — the Church of God — is determined by God only. At some point in time, the TRUE Church of God, as a physical organization in the First Century, ceased to be the Church. But, during the times of Biblical record, the faithful servants were put out of the Church. Once outside, were they out of the true, spiritual body of Christ? You know the answer! The Bible makes it clear.

God alone, or Christ by the authority of God the Father, can create a church. Further, any transition from era to era must be by God and is not subject to the speculations of men. Compare Revelation 1:1-3 with the second and third chapters of Revelation.

We are estranged children — forced by conditions and circumstances to live separate from the organization which nurtured and taught us. If we cannot accept this simple fact, we must also recognize the fact we have no authority for anything which we do.

As estranged children, we are attempting to hold fast to that truth which we were taught. The very beginning of our joy and confidence. We are holding out a helping hand to all who are troubled and who are beckoning for help. And, finally, we patiently wait for the major intervention of God in the last days. We await His specific instructions — instructions related to any work which He wills to be done through us or anyone else who will remain faithful and loyal to the original call.

As ministers, we must never pressure. We were called and ordained as ministers to tend the flock. For the present, none of us was called to restore truth by effecting a major evangelistic work. We will continue to help troubled and perplexed people — of the flock of God — to restore and uphold truth internally. We are ever willing to instruct and help those who are willing to listen. Our great purpose is to study, pray and be prepared for the future. In what ways will God use us in the future? We do not now know!

What are your responsibilities? Literally dozens of times, God stresses the need for all to be faithful to the truth. To have faith in God. To honor Him by continuity of belief. He stresses the stern need to subjugate the self. Blessings and rewards are promised to those who overcome — overcome self, its innate nature. The underlying requirement of all whom God has called is to become perfect, even as He is perfect. To develop the same nature and character which He possesses. All are to develop and daily manifest a genuine love for one another. A love and concern that eradicates

contempt and hate. A concern which will eliminate distrust for the ministry and for one another, despite our past experiences. What we have and will experience is allowed by God to develop us, not to destroy us. We are to watch conditions and events of this world. But "watch" does not mean interpret. Our obligation is to read and observe. A requirement which in itself implies we will not know the times and to whom they will necessarily apply. As required, let us read and then patiently wait for their fulfillment. Many Biblical statements make it clear, understanding will come when the events transpire. Patience is a vital ingredient for us all. Let us wait on Him.

In conclusion, the principal duty of man is to obey that which God gave to him. He is to be faithful to the small charges and responsibilities presently borne. If we can be faithful in small duties now, who knows what opportunity God will grant in the future? Do not interpret. In faith and confidence, accept the responsibilities which God gave originally. Keep your eyes fixed upon Christ — the very personification of Truth, the Word and the way of life. What human beings God may use in the future, does not change the continuous need for obedience. Follow men only so long as they remain faithful and loyal to the way of life given. Your hope of life is not predicated upon the purpose, direction, faithfulness or unfaithfulness of any man. It is in the PROVEN Christ.

A great work has come and gone. What God has in mind for the future, remains locked in His mind. He will reveal and bring to pass His purposes, in His own time. Let us have the good sense, patience and character to wait on our God. The testing of and development of such character continues. Let us pray for His guidance, the ability to overcome and the development of that character required to be effective instruments in His hands when and if He should choose to use us.

The great TEST — a test of FAITH! If we could place our trust in some grand or aggressive activity, we would little realize the need for faith. Faith and confidence become more than hollow-sounding words when we are forced to step back and patiently wait for God.

No one has denied the certainty of last-day activities. On the other hand, no one, who desires to be faithful and loyal to God's purposes, can reach out and grasp responsibility never assigned to him.

All Bible history shows how God has fulfilled His past purposes. How He has done His Work! Is He any different today? No past, chosen servants of God assumed any responsibility. God called and specifically commissioned them! What makes us feel we must "assume" today? Is it not our lack of faith and confidence in God? Confidence that God can and will make His purpose known to us in our day — NOW?

God has given each of us unbelievable opportunity! Despite the sore trial of the past few years, we still see the truth. I am sure God is well pleased with that faithful determination. What value will you place on that fact alone? I am sure God knows we would be eager to fulfill whatever He specifically requires and instructs us to perform. Let us be grateful for and remain steadfast in that spirit and attitude of willingness and patience.

Now, before closing, two final comments. We are working on plans for Passover, Unleavened Bread and Pentecost. It is our desire to send one man out to other sections of the country. At the present, there are only two of us.

Probably, the arrangement will allow the traveling man to spend Passover and Night to Be Observed in one area. By moving on quickly to another area, the same individual could then spend time with brethren on the first High Day of the Days of Unleavened Bread. Again moving on to another geographic area, he could spend the last High Day of Unleavened Bread with still other isolated brethren. The same type of arrangement will be made for Pentecost.

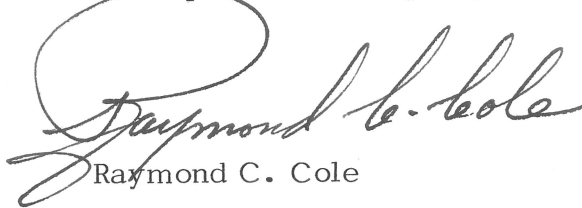
As soon as the schedule is completed, and the determination of whom should be sent, we will inform you — probably in next month's letter.

Passover is Sabbath, April 2, observed the previous evening — April 1, Friday evening. Night to Be Observed: Saturday evening, April 2. First High Day of Unleavened Bread: Sunday, April 3. Last High Day of Unleavened Bread: Sabbath, April 9. Pentecost: Monday, May 30.

Let me take this opportunity to personally express my appreciation for the magnificent way you have responded to my request for tapes to be returned. This has been a gigantic savings because of the number of tapes which are sent out each week. Keep up the good response; it is sincerely and greatly appreciated.

Thank you for this opportunity of serving you again. All our love and prayers are with you. We look forward to seeing many of you soon.

In deep love and respect,



Raymond C. Cole