

# Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775  
Eugene, Oregon 97440

Switzerland  
Case Postale 2 701  
CH 1002 Lausanne

Canada  
P. O. Box 76946, Station "S"  
Vancouver, B.C. V5R 5T3

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Dear Brethren:

Warmest regards to all. The need for continued prayers for one another is urgent. Let us all fulfill our loving obligation in beseeching God for His intervention in the lives of His chosen children.

Has man's direction and purpose ever been more uncertain and precarious? The economic picture seems so perverse and unstable, those adversely affected are unsure of direction to take or where to go geographically.

Never has absolute faith in God been more mandated. There is absolutely no way out of the morass of society as it has developed today except by unadulterated faith in God.

Do we have the luxury of time to become personally defensive -- second-guessing initial faith and conviction? Somewhere the people of God are going to have to stand tall and firm in their resolve to live a quality life uncluttered by doubt and suspicion.

This month's Letter should serve as a good starting place. What each of us does with it will depend entirely upon our grasp of the times in which we live and the seriousness of the issues at hand.

We hope and pray all will intellectually and spiritually seize the challenges with which we are confronted. It would be tragic to pursue our own mental demands only to find we totally missed the mark at the time of judgment. The converted love light -- the knowledge of Truth and the Way. Those who are personally defensive will seek for darkness (ignorance relative to the issues) which Christ said men so greatly love.

The study and challenge are yours. Be honest in your endeavors. The rewards are very great.

Now to the topic for the month.

### WHAT IS AN EMOTIONAL REACTIONARY?

Life is a series of events, experiences, trials, adversities, and joys. To each situation or circumstance we respond in some manner. To all forms of beneficence we express jubilation and great satisfaction. On the other hand, when negative circumstances are encountered, the tendency is to allow harmful emotions to dominate our thinking and course of action. Such people become emotional reactionaries. Common sense, mundane wisdom, and intelligence are aborted. If when in such literal and very real physical situations of this world we allow reaction to occur, how much more must be the negative response to spiritual things which require strong consistent faith in order to maintain stability, purpose, and understanding -- faith because spiritual truths and concepts cannot be seen. This unseen aspect leaves the proverbial door open for every conceivable perversion, corruption, and change of absolutes -- the Truth. Yet, in every case, the party effecting such a perversion or change is convinced in his own mind he is right in the new concept generated or the action taken.

Reactionaries never think they are wrong. In their own minds they feel as right and justified as anyone else who manifests any other conviction -- just as right as Jesus Christ. Each reactionary "knows" he is right before God. Herein lies the basic problem. Such people have forgotten the true meaning of conversion. Conversion is initiated by God at the time of call. The premise for true and genuine conversion is the knowledge of and the ability to see ourselves in the light of human nature. Conversion is a process by which called human beings are reducing the power, influences, and control of their base natures while at the same time experiencing the change of that nature into the divine nature.

To really grasp the significance of the above problem and to properly evaluate ourselves in light of the existing trauma, let us return to the beginning of our Christian experience. We must retrace our steps from the beginning to the present and thereby see if we have carelessly or unwittingly erred from the straight and narrow path of Truth. For this review to be meaningful and helpful to each one, it is imperative that honesty, candor, and a willingness to face reality as it is be underscored. We must look into the perfect Law and way of liberty and maintain that position regardless of how the view may adversely affect us. The view must change only by a change of the self, not by effacing the Way of Life!

Where did we begin?

### THE NATURAL INCLINATIONS

In the beginning God created man! He made him flesh, of the dust of the ground. Created of the most base of all physical substances.

With what kind of a nature was he created? The best description of man's natural inclinations is found in Ephesians 2:1-3. He is wrathful, obeying the demands of the natural flesh and mind. He is subject to and naturally pursues the way of the prince of the air (Satan) -- walking in the way of disobedience. Human nature is volatile, hateful, opposed to spiritual things (Rom. 8:7). Of itself, it cannot be subject to things of God. In all respects it opposes the knowledge of Christ (II Cor. 10:3-5). As a directive force it ruthlessly tyrannizes mankind (Mark 7:21-23). Yet, it deludes men into believing that they are just, holy, and good.

It is obvious we cannot arbitrarily accept all thoughts, concepts, and beliefs which proceed from the natural heart. A true, genuine, and honest beginning (Christian endeavor) commences with a serious question about one's motives and purposes. The rightly oriented man does not accept, at face value, everything which proceeds from his own natural heart and mind. He no longer trusts his own mind.

### MAN'S STATE AT TIME OF CALL

When God calls anyone, he is at that time living according to the natural inclinations -- both good and bad. For the very first time he begins to hear spiritual things. He recognizes the fact that all is not well in his own personal life. Answers to perplexing problems and situations begin to emerge.

On the basis of what he hears -- the Truth -- a response occurs. As this conversion proceeds, rewards are experienced. Excitement and enthusiasm -- a genuine love for the Truth -- take hold of that called individual. The "joy unspeakable" of which the Bible makes reference. This is the enthusiasm of new life and hope.

Eagerly he attacks the task of self-mastery. A great amount of understanding does not exist, but there is no brevity of aspiration and purpose. An intense love for the new-found Way of Life prevails. Self-censure is carried out with a vengeance. Spiritual growth is considerable. And even in this struggle a certain buoyancy, optimism, hope, and purpose dominate.

During this period of excitement and self-mastery, the called and chosen of God are "all ears." They joyously hear the instruction of

God, given through a chosen messenger of His. Contention, argumentation, strife, and heretical tendencies are far removed. Such people are teachable and responsive. They are not selfishly evaluating every concept and truth taught. In simplicity they have accepted His will and Way of Life. They love the Truth and seemingly cannot obtain sufficient amounts to satisfy their hunger and thirst. What a life of joy and privilege!

During these growing years "authority" was not an ugly word or concept. The open rebuke and correction of God's Holy Word was cherished. The helpful counsel, guidance, and teaching of a chosen servant of God was not resented, ridiculed, held in contempt, or reevaluated on the basis of individual feelings. On the contrary, such help was affectionately sought. New beginners were afraid to trust the impulses, concepts, or thoughts of their own minds. They respected the more mature spiritual orientation of those chosen of God to proclaim the Way of Life. Intellectual challenges and manifestations of carnal arrogance did not exist.

But, in the process of time, something happens. And this turn of events is not totally for the good of those involved.

#### **INTERNAL PROBLEMS GENERATE A TEST**

Sometimes our understanding is enhanced by using a physical example by which to illustrate the spiritual. In the case of this Letter, the need is imperative.

When children are born, they are innocent, totally responsive to parents, and without skepticism and cynicism. They want to be taught and loved. They are eager recipients of all knowledge and instruction imparted by parents.

This simple trust is transferred to others as children grow. Young friends, teachers, and other people are equally accepted.

As these children mature, an examination process commences. From peers, parents, and others a series of conflicts emerges. They begin to realize parents frequently do not live by what they attempt to impart to their children. Civic officials, teachers, and others are not as pure and trustworthy as children were led to believe, or as acceptable as the images generated by the children themselves.

From the moment of the above discovery, a form of callousness, indifference, and contempt begins to develop. Progressively, rebellion takes root. Revolt against all that appears to be authoritarian is now

"justified." Facts, absolutes, evidence, responsibility -- nothing is meaningful or persuasive. The rebellious totally form their own opinions -- justified by the concept of "liberty." Historical basis or social need for rules or regulations becomes irrelevant. Their thoughts are cut from whole cloth, that is, fabricated.

In exactly the same way the children of God can emotionally react. Sometimes their initial enthusiasm, as mere babes in Christ, becomes dampened because they see defects in others. They feel that brothers and sisters of the common faith are not working as hard to master themselves as they are working. They begin to toy with the idea of partiality. It appears that others are being treated differently than the manner in which they are being handled. Resentment and a "comparing ourselves among ourselves" begin to develop.

Next they, with horror and disbelief, may uncover an element of hypocrisy in the Church. Some who teach the Word of God may be found to be living a totally different lifestyle from that which they teach. "The straw that broke the camel's back" has been discovered. Such an eventuality is too great for them to bear or accept. So, what was once the profound Truth of God is "no longer Truth." Though most reactionaries would not admit it, their determination of what Truth is largely depends on the character of the individual teaching it.

We, spiritually, like our carnal counterparts, can grow cynical, indifferent, and rebellious. Because of defects in those spiritually older, as children toward parents, we can refuse to listen or abide by any teaching which they give to us. We become reactionaries. We turn to our own minds and hearts. We justify our reactions on the basis of what others have done. We form our own opinions. Worst of all, we reject everything we were taught. Not all at once, but over a period of time, we set aside those things our carnal minds do not want to accept. The very nature of deception is initially to challenge those things most subject to doubt or misgiving. This very action is only the prelude to a rejection of major doctrine and then, ultimately, the total Truth.

Why does God allow such trying circumstances to confront His children as they begin to mature spiritually? Surely there must be some reason, for these conditions have presented themselves to every group of people chosen of God, regardless of time in history.

The only way we can prove faithfulness to Truth is by adhering to that Way which God revealed. All Truth is revealed, regardless of who besmirches it, or how many turn from it. Such a test is inevitable because it is purposed by God! God actually sets the stage and administers the test. The promise of a test of faith is given in

Deuteronomy 13:1-5. If within ("among you") arises a minister or teacher who teaches a way of life not given initially by God, and even produces miraculous support -- miracles and signs -- do not give ear to those heretical words. "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet. . . ." Why? ". . . for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (vs. 3). Verse four clearly requires that the chosen of God must faithfully adhere to the words initially delivered. The basis of determining the conditions of the first three verses of Deuteronomy 13 is the Truth -- the Words of God -- which had been delivered to them prior to the time of the test. From that time forward everyone who taught was tested by that absolute, unalterable standard.

In the last days, a called group received that same priceless Way of Life. Arrogance and perversity, however, manifested their ugly heads in the form of doctrinal changes. New Testament Scriptures, warning us, are loaded with statements to this effect.

The result of this manifested arrogancy is a sizable group of people whose faith was made shipwreck. Their lives were shattered. They became embittered, hateful, and disillusioned. The majority, however, looked to a man during this period of upheaval (II Pet. 2:1). They simply followed whatever they were told.

In both cases significant mistakes were made. The first group became reactionaries. The Truth of God was judged by the "character" of a man. The second group failed to employ the absolute, delivered Way of Life as the standard of judgment. The consequence was that they totally followed a man.

Because faith had been destroyed, the first group of people, who once loved and respected the Truth, began to compromise with those principles once held dear and meaningful. They became reactionaries. Those truths somehow became identified with the one who taught them. They reasoned, how could Truth be the Truth if taught by one of such questionable character? The reactionary tendency was to change or alter those principles which were reminders of the failed man. The effected change was a return to those ways which seem right to the natural mind. The natural mind is in absolute opposition to the faith once delivered. The foundation of the faith once delivered is the doctrine revealed to the chosen of God in the last days.

#### **WHAT IS THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED?**

In a future Monthly Letter we will extensively and clearly examine the faith once delivered. For the present, our efforts will be

confined to the basic doctrines the Body of Christ was taught in the last days, the doctrines against which many people have greatly reacted.

By way of introduction to a list of these doctrines and comments, allow us to make a few generalized statements. It is imperative that we carefully think on these statements.

First, we are not going to legislate your faith or obedience. This was a very serious administrative problem of the past. Second, personally try to avoid all emotional reactions to specific topics.

Third, before addressing an issue or subject, be sure you have done the required study necessary. The nature of that study should be threefold. (A) The faith once delivered to the Church in the last days. What was the doctrinal teaching of the Church? (B) A thorough technical study of the Bible (the written Word) itself regarding the issue being addressed. (C) An exhaustive historical study of the material which relates to the subject.

Fourth, at all cost avoid evaluating the subject on the basis of what any other human being did, either good or bad. Fifth, avoid the tendency to react emotionally because a specific conclusion is desired in order to satisfy the dictates of self. In other words, do not allow yourself to formulate a conclusion until you have employed fully the three study requirements mentioned above.

We must be intellectually honest. Steady growth into the Way of Life is definitely acceptable. We all must be tolerant, compassionate, and helpful toward each other. But, let us not manifest the common attitude of indifference; that is, I know what "I think" or what "I want," "I do not see that this or that action makes any difference." The people of God know what they are doing and why. As a result of this approach they live very confident and assured lives.

Now to the issues:

1. Doctrine in General: Many have rejected everything they were taught because of unsavory conditions of the past. Can this be justified? Al Capone loved his mother! Because he loved his mother, shall we assume that loving one's mother is wrong? I am sure you get the point!

What is the doctrine once delivered -- delivered in the last days? What is the letter evidence (the written Word) of the doctrine delivered by an unchanging God -- past, present, and future? And what is the record of secular history?

Arbitrary, emotional responses are not justified. Integrity demands that we know whereof we speak and act! And why!

2. Healing: What was the faith once delivered relevant to this subject? Let us forget the administrative nightmare and rank hypocrisy which developed around this doctrine! The veracity of this doctrine does not stand or fall on the basis of what someone else did or did not do. What is the historical evidence? What is the written evidence of the Scriptures?

Emotional or reactionary response never justifies anyone. Exercise of faith results in blessings and rewards. Rejection of the Truth and fearful reaction always result in misery and wretchedness. Only honest application of faith individually will stand us in good stead in the day of the final judgment. Remember, the application of faith is an individual matter. It cannot be legislated or coerced.

3. Feasts of God: In this matter, what was the faith once delivered? The faith of Christ, the unchanging Christ, which now lives in those called to be His servants in the last days?

What is the recorded evidence Scripturally? What is the historical information regarding this subject? Christians know the Truth and obediently act on that Truth. They do not turn from Truth because of any emotional response -- because feelings have become sensitized due to any disagreement or confrontation. Such behavioral response does not change the unchanging Word of God.

Will we always remain intellectually honest? Will we always refuse to judge God's Ways on the basis of our own personal emotions? To some, the Truth remains the Truth when all goes well with them personally; but, the Truth ceases to be the Truth when their safeguarded and protected feelings have been injured or violated.

4. Tithing: What is the doctrinal faith initially delivered? The knowledge of His will given to His people in the last days? What is the Scriptural evidence? The historical evidence?

This is a subject presently evaluated and reevaluated on the basis of past abuses! Does the abuse of a spiritual principle make it wrong? Do human emotions and reactions at any time make a subject either right or wrong?

Again, to whom and what is the faith once delivered, in the last days, regarding the subject of tithing? Have any of us conditionally adopted a premise regarding this subject; or, do we know -- by faith and Scripturally recorded evidence?



5. Marriage: Husband and Wife Relationship: In this very important personal area of our lives, what is the faith once delivered? Are our memories clouded because of chaos and confusion which developed as a result of change? Have we forgotten that resentment, hate, and rebellion are not fruits of the Holy Spirit? Or, that we as the children of God were called to do battle with our own carnal natures rather than to use them as a justification for every evil action against a mate?

What is the historical evidence undergirding the veracity of this teaching and the substantiation of its positive value to all who apply it?

Reaction to this simple, revealed Truth will not change the basic requirements imposed upon us all by a benevolent and kind Father. Most marital problems stem from our own inability to control the self.

If we as the people of God are going to be exemplary in this most significant area of our lives, we must now determine to live the whole Truth of God. We must make our marriages examples of what the Kingdom of God is all about. That takes determined effort on the part of both.

6. Child Rearing: This area of Christian responsibility has also been challenged -- subjected to reactionary evaluation and response. It is a duty now almost totally forgotten. This state of affairs exists primarily because of a harsh and unmitigated application of a Biblical requirement as administered in the past. But, past mistakes do not justify a total abdication or rejection of parental responsibility.

True, no area of human relationships and responsibilities suffered more from an erroneous concept of administrative duty. Yet, we must remember the doctrine is a part of the faith once delivered. The doctrine was not wrong. Children must be taught and instructed and when necessary corrected commensurate with the mistake. This is a duty which when properly carried out results in the deepening of children's love for parents. When wrongly administered or not administered at all, it results in the development of resentment, bitterness, and rebellion. Needless to say, it is a duty which requires much thought, prayer, and deep concern on the part of parents.

Have any of us reacted to the past? Are we aware of what is happening in the lives of our children? Do we know what they are thinking, saying, and doing when not in our immediate presence?

Teaching is a fundamental requirement! It is a duty ordained of God. Reacting to previous abuse or mistakes of others will not cause

the duty to vanish. All of us are going to be judged by how well we have fulfilled those duties.

There is no absolute guarantee children will always walk in the footsteps of their parents, religiously. Yet, if the duty has been carried out judiciously, there is a promise that aging will produce a favorable response.

Again, what is the faith once delivered about child rearing? What is the historical track record of parental failure to carry out this God-given responsibility? The record of successful teaching, instructing, and correcting of children? What is the literal teaching of the Bible? By that Word we shall all be judged!

7. The World: What is the original teaching about our relationship with the world? Our natural desire to be like the world? Our desire to appear to be in harmony with them in thought and deed?

Remember, God indicted the people in the last days for departing from the faith once delivered. This indictment is leveled regardless of the fact the ways, doctrines, and Truths of God were poorly administered. The faithful must abide by the original teaching, but scrupulously avoid bad administration and all inclinations to hypocrisy.

Do not casually lay this concept of worldliness aside. Weigh the matter carefully. Make decisions on the basis of the original revelation -- the past original teaching -- what the historical evidence reveals and the Word from the Bible.

8. The Faith: Perhaps no subject has become more perverted and corrupted. As a spiritual principle, Truth is not subject to human evaluation or test. It is a gift from God delivered to man one time only. It can be maintained by active daily employment only. Once doubt has set in, once we turn to carnal tendencies of the mind, and once we react against cardinal principles of Truth due to past abuses, it is almost impossible to catch ourselves and turn around again, pursuing a way of confidence and faith.

Today former members exclaim, "I'll never trust a man again." Yet, they trust their own minds. They are trusting themselves -- a man! Can anyone who remembers his own carnal tendencies turn to himself?

In truth, the exclamation "I'll never trust a man again" means a rejection of the Truth which always comes through men -- Moses, Christ, the Twelve Apostles, and Paul. Indeed, men should not trust men. But

that has nothing to do with the revelation of Truth, it has to do only with the fact men cannot be trusted to remain faithful to that which is given to them.

The true doctrine was delivered in these last days. By faith we will consistently obey it, regardless of what untrustworthy man does.

9. The Ministry: God is the Creator of the ministry. From the days of Moses, the ministry, including the New Testament ministry under Christ, was ordained, inspired, and directed by God.

God has never forced anyone in the ministry to remain faithful. Each one must individually choose his own direction. Many prophets and religious leaders of old were led astray by the influence of the world about them, as well as the pulls of their own lustful and carnal minds. Yet, these servants were initially ordained and inspired of God. Their failure was not the problem of God. Their own natures "did a number on them."

The New Testament ministry is the continuation of a responsibility given to Christ. Some failed even in the days of the apostles. Yet there are those who remained faithful, for God inspired the Apostle Paul to declare that those ministerial responsibilities would remain in force until the day of Christ's Second Coming.

Let us soberly and seriously consider: What is the faith once delivered about the ministry? What is the long historical track record of the ministry of God? What is the explanation of the recorded Word of God? Do not emotionally or by negative reaction jump to conclusions! You must know the Truth. Failure to know and positively react may lead to a major disappointment in the day of Christ's judgment.

10. Authority: Because of generalized and broad abuse of authority, the concept in general is suspect at best and at worst is defiantly rejected altogether. Is such reaction and emotionalism justified?

What about the husband-wife relationship? What about the parent-child relationship? What about the employer-employee relationship? The government-citizen relationship? Is anarchy acceptable to God? Or, does God do things decently and in order?

Today, people reject the authority of the Word of God! They reject the authority of all ministers! Is this reaction justified? We must know -- know from God, by revelation and the plain letter record of the Bible.

Please do not negatively react! Accept this challenge as a study. Seek the will of God! How? By understanding the faith once delivered. By the whole course of human history. And by the simple written record of the Bible. Study and act on the Word. God substantiates honesty and effort, not the exercise of emotion or reaction.

11. Diet: What is the faith initially given to the people about diet? What is the medical history of dietary abuse of our own bodies?

Do not allow emotion and physical lusts to dictate. Be the recipients of knowledge. Act on the facts recently made known. Let us all use the mental intelligence which God gave to us.

Again, brethren, what was the faith delivered? What is the correct understanding from God's Word? What does history reveal?

Let us not be "ostriches." Seize the challenge. Learn what is right and what is wrong; then, act on the knowledge accumulated. Be honest with your study.

As stated from the beginning, do not force obedience or legislate action. You must act on your faith -- the faith once delivered. Action is an individual responsibility. At the same time, however, we must remain aware that an ultimate day of judgment, based on the absolutes of God, is soon coming.

12. Dress and Customs: Perhaps no areas of life and study are more charged with personal sensitivities than these. But, can we really rely on personal taste and likes? Is God going to judge man on the basis of his (man's) own thoughts and feelings? If not, would it not be wise to consider fundamental evidence of right and wrong regarding these matters? Does not personal intelligence and wisdom cry out to be heard and understood?

What was the revealed doctrine regarding dress (men and women), makeup, social customs, and all the other customs to which we have been subjected by natural birth and growing up in a world which has rejected God and His Way wholly? What is the historical evidence of the nature of these subjects?

In our reactions, today, have we predicated our responses on study -- Biblical and historical? Or, are we reacting to the past, attempting to justify our behavior on the basis of past defective administration? Any response which says "This is the way I look at it" without sound Scriptural or historical substantiation is a negative reaction.

Remember, brethren, we in the ministry are not entitled to pass judgment on your faith and growth! But, we are charged with the responsibility of teaching the Truth. In the finality, each one of us must give account of his actions and thoughts in the day of appointed judgment. Does it not make sense to study carefully and evaluate ourselves in regard to the unalterable Word of God, revealed in the last days to the chosen, by which all shall be judged?

Avoiding this spiritual responsibility will not help anyone! Use the threefold guide mentioned earlier. What was the faith once delivered regarding this subject? What is the technical record of the Word of God? What is the historical record involved? The wise will hear and respond. They will be guided by human intelligence (now the mind of Christ), not by emotion and reaction.

13. Music and Recreation: Are we also sensitized regarding these issues? Do we react on the basis of past teaching, local custom, or our personal involvement? Or, do we reject the thrust of personal concepts and look only to the revealed Word of God, the Way of Life, and the faith once delivered?

In essence, do we hunger and thirst for Truth only -- the desire to know and understand proper music and recreation so that we can confidently walk in knowledge, not human emotion or volatile personal reactions?

What we want all to accomplish is the basic requirement to know and understand from God's perspective so that our faith, by which we act, is not built on the conviction of another but that which proceeds from our own convictions. One cannot stand the test of the times unless such faith prevails.

For this reason, we are not giving historical or Biblical proof for any of the above points in this letter. We want your faith to stand on the basis of your own study and subsequent conviction. Remember, the only acceptable basis for such a study is: (A) The faith once delivered, the revealed Word of God to His servants in the last days, (B) the written record of the Bible, God's Word, and (C) the tangible record, negative and positive, in history.

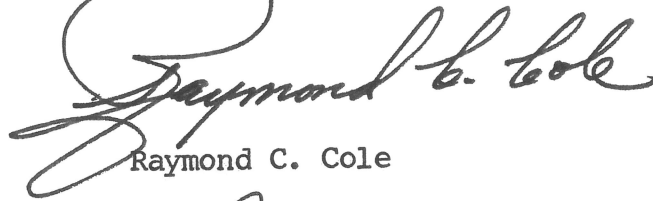
Please try not to use the expressions: "The way I see it," or "I think." We are not concerned with what any one of us, individually, thinks. We want only the faith once delivered, the documented written record of the Bible and the historical evidence as lived by man.

Our togetherness, oneness, and acceptance by God can be achieved by no other means. The responsibility is now ours, individually.

14. Obedience: In conclusion, we need to ask ourselves if obedience to God has become dulled by emotion and reaction. Are we gaining the maximum, spiritually? If we are encountering trials and difficulties, now is the time to begin the serious charge of self-introspection. God will guide and help if we will honestly approach Him asking for our secret sins (those we are not aware of in ourselves) and attitudes to be made manifest.

Once again all our love and thoughts of warmth and kindness. We want with all the heart and mind to be one with all who love and honor the faith delivered to us in the last days. God helping us, we will never depart from that original faith and conviction.

With profound love and respect,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Raymond C. Cole

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bryce G. Clark". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Bryce G. Clark