

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

The subject of this month has been a long and exacting one. Perhaps even tedious to those who manifest little interest in detail. Yet, no matter how thoroughly and exhaustively one covers a given subject, someone will contend. It is a law of human nature. Perhaps the desire to complete the subject stems from a "non-compromising" orientation of the author, a sincere desire to help those who want to learn, truly, and/or the satisfaction of knowing that at some given day, we may be able to refer others back to a complete analysis of the subject. For whatever the reason(s), this issue of the *Monthly Letter* will again address the subject, "What Is the Reason for the Written Word of God?" In due time, with required patience, the subject will be completed—in its exhaustive format. Now to the material slated for this issue.

In the March, 1996, issue, we asked the question: "Who Alone Really Understands and Obeys?" It is that classification of people Biblically called—spiritual Jews. Those in whom resides the Holy Spirit of God. They appear no different, physically, than any other human being. Yet, within operates a power of mind and purpose no human being can manifest. It is the power of change—from that natural orientation of the flesh and mind to the mind and character of God. Who, then, really understands and obeys? Spiritual Jews who hear the words, receive the message given, are instructed in the perfection of God's ways of life, and finally, act on that which was delivered. By those fruits (manifestations) we can know both those of this world and those who are the called and chosen of God. The Spirit of God does not, indeed cannot, bring forth evil, wicked, diabolical fruit. Conversely, the carnal spirit, aided by the mind of Satan, cannot bring forth good fruits. These two orientations are in opposition to one another (Gal. 5:17).

The way of the flesh, agitated by the mind of Satan, or a demon, is always assertive, self-protective, hateful, and even seeks in some way to eliminate the presence of that which offends it. Modern "scribes" continue to walk in the footsteps of their ancient counterparts. What happened to Christ? That which occurred to Him is an example of what to expect in our time. As Christ and His disciples journeyed to Jerusalem, Christ emphasized this hateful contention. He said: ". . . [A]nd he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things

should happen unto him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the *scribes*; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him . . ." (Mark 10:32–34). Those with "technical" knowledge hated the One who possessed the knowledge of the Spirit. And as an act of utter condemnation, their hate and contempt knowing no end, they turned Him over to the Gentiles for a decision—an unprecedented legal mistake.

The called, the twelve, were teachable and responsive. They did not contend with those truths which Christ was commissioned to teach. In time their technical ignorance was displaced with the perfection of truth which Christ was capable of delivering. On the other hand, those who had technical knowledge, and were great in their own eyes, hated the truth. That which Christ proclaimed did not match that which they had come "to see and accept" as the meaning of that which they felt most capable of reading and understanding for themselves.

Who alone will understand? Only those called and chosen by God.

The consequence? Often, one of the most precise means of identifying a particular group or class of individuals is to note how others not included react to them. Those arrogant of mind and heart will hate and persecute them. Even killing them to quell the fire of mind which they cannot control. Since they did it to Christ, He said they would do such to those who walk in His footsteps—regardless of the time (John 15:18–20, Matt. 10:16–26). The foregoing is a barometer by which to determine those who do truly love the truth of God—those whose hearts and minds are in tune with the Spirit of God. Contention, hatefulness, rebellion, argumentation, and strife are simply not of God. The called are those who heard the truth, remain faithful to the way delivered, and effect within themselves the required personal mastery. These are those who are free—free in mind and heart—and who live the abundant life—lives of joy and spontaneity. They can be taught and instructed. They are the ones who do not seek to hide, deep within themselves, the defiant and rebellious spirit of the flesh. They hunger for truth.

By contrast let us take an example of how determinedly some will seek to hide the real motives of heart and mind. Speaking of the scribes, chief priests, and other "learned authorities" Christ said, (in response to, 'By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?') ". . . I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto

them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things" (Mark 11:27–33). Indeed, scribes and learned men of Christ's day. Hypocritical to the ultimate degree. But, is human nature any different today? Any individual claim of righteousness, responsibility, integrity has no inherent merit. What do the fruits manifest? Why were not the above men honest with Christ? And more particularly, with themselves?

The above words come from the Holy Scriptures. They are written for you and me. Our hope of eternal salvation revolves around implicit and faithful obedience to those specific instructions contained therein as well as the object lessons made abundantly clear through the examples given. Their inclusion in the Word of God is so that the called—called to understand—may by creditable examination of the self avoid the same devious, hateful, hypocritical tendencies. Of what value is the example if we, by deception within our own minds, avoid personalized application by ascribing guilt to others? Biblical instructions are of a spiritual nature. The called apply the instructions to themselves. They *never* use the truths of God to indict others.

Who will understand? Those who are not fighting others. Those who sincerely seek to hear and understand the words of God and in turn apply the instructions to themselves.

Who, then, does not understand? Those who rely on the rationalizations of the human mind. Truth is a gift—a gift from God. There is not one example of a human being coming to the knowledge of the truth by personalized study. Adam and Eve were given the truth. Abraham received it. Noah received it. Moses was called and given the truths which he was obligated to teach to the chosen people of Israel. The prophets received that message which God intended that they should convey to the people. The Father gave that message which Christ was to deliver to the people. The apostles, including the Apostle Paul, received the message. They delivered that which had been given to them.

Without exception those who received, believed, and practiced the truth were resisted by, subjected to contention, ridicule, and contempt, and in general made to suffer at the hands of those who in their own minds were intellectually superior. They had studied out the truth and they *knew* they knew. They had confidence in the powers of their own minds.

Truth is absolute. It can stand the intense light of logic, purpose, or whatever. On the other hand, the fallacious reasoning, logic, of the perverted, twisted, and disoriented mind cannot stand the possible revelation of deceptive and compromising premises. Human nature has a myriad ways to handle such potentially embarrassing situations. One is to simply get rid of the threat. This is the course of action the Jews were planning to take against Christ. Christ was the truth personified. He stood in their very midst. He was an eloquent speaker. The people, in a general way, were hearing what He had to say. The powers that be were at a crossroad. Silence this personality of tremendous appeal or lose the control which they had

constructed over the people. It does not take a rocket scientist to determine which course of action men of position and/or power would take.

Who can understand? Hear the truth? Respond? It is not the men of "great mental power." They have too much confidence in human intellect—especially their own. Nothing, concept or objective, would ever be accepted by "educated" minds if it did not have the primogeniture of human origin. Men bow in obsequious adoration to their own intellect. The power of Christ's mind fascinated those with whom He came into contact. His ideas were novel and unique—even to the minds of men. The problem? Christ was claiming to be speaking for the Father in heaven and asserting that what He was saying was absolute—that there was no room for argument or discussion. Human minds simply cannot accept such a premise. In their best endeavors to protect their own minds, human beings will use a system of critique. Such a system invariably makes them feel either equal to or superior to the one being critiqued. Can you give us any other reason for such endeavors of any and all human beings?

Christ is subject to an endless array of critical evaluations. Can you think of a single area of that priceless life that has not been subjected to examination, review, evaluation, critical assessment, or whatever form of human endeavor you can conceive? If they are attempting to evaluate, is it possible that they can at the same time be responding unequivocally to the content? Hardly! How many do you know who sincerely and without rationalizations, simply do that which He taught? On the contrary, they have become judges, not willing and obedient servants.

As backdrop information, let us quickly note the type of individual who can and will respond to truth. The Apostle Paul was inspired to write: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:26–29). Generally speaking, the educated cannot see the simplicity of truth due to the "brilliance" of their reasonings. They have come to conclusions on subjects affecting many areas of man's life. Why should they question that which they have ascertained for themselves through study, research, experimentation, and a host of other endeavors of men? They have confidence in the flesh, the conclusions of the carnal mind. Infrequently do men begin to doubt themselves.

Who knows the truth? The one—and that one only—who received the delivered way of life and refuses to doubt his call and orientation. Certification? The educated will hold him in contempt. They will challenge, deny. They will demand "proof" and "reproof." The

concept of faith will have become twisted and perverted. Loyalty to truth will become besmirched with every twisted accusation of man.

Brethren, as Christ said, only a few will find the truth in these troubling and perplexing last days (Matt. 7:14). It will never be found when one turns to the powers of his own mind. A return to faith and conviction is the imperative. A virtual impossibility for too many in our time (Heb. 6:4–6).

Perhaps of greater concern is the fact, there are people who by nature abide by many of the letter principles which proceed from God (Rom. 2:13–16). Make no mistake about this fact. Those who obey physically will gain much good. However, among those benefits will not be found anything of a spiritual nature. Only things of the letter. The end of any such orientation is still death. But, to the untutored mind, such individuals are considered called and converted. They are not. In all probability there are millions upon the face of the earth who for conscience sake and some element of physical goodness do try to live by letter application of many Biblical principles. These are indeed a law unto themselves.

Converted? No! They are people of principle. Only those called of God are truly called. When called they hear—hear the laws and truths of God. They hear the message of God. They *know* that they heard the truth. They recognize the called and commissioned servant of the Eternal (John 5:38). They do not question the source of that call and the message delivered. They believe from the heart, through absolute faith, and become the recipients of the promised Spirit (John 7:38–39). Acceptance of Christ as the Messenger of God is imperative. A difficulty even for those who lived in the days during which Christ lived within His own physical body—He walked among them. Today, the same faith and confidence are essential. After ascension back to the Father, He promised to come again and make His abode with the called. He would live within them. How would these people hear? How would they know and implicitly believe the message? In summary, we will cover that concept later.

Let us note another common misconception of human beings. Most would guarantee you that they could and would believe if adequate physical evidence were given. Such is not the case. Christ was the literal Son of God. He stood in the very midst of the people. Did they believe? Was it due to a lack of miracles and wonders performed? Who has ever performed more? Could it have been because He was not a perfect example? On the contrary, Christ lived without sin—being perfect in every aspect of His life. Is there an answer to the failure of the people—not accepting Him as the very Word of God, the personification of the way of life? Indeed, the deficiency is belief and a continuing confidence in that assurance which first existed in the minds and hearts of those called (Heb. 3:6–14). All others cannot believe regardless (John 6:44, 65). Seeing is not believing (John 6:36). Believing does not come from any man's academic prowess or intellectual

confirmation. Believing comes by a mysterious revelation, substantiated then by conviction, trust, and faith—gifts of the Holy Spirit. Those who lose that initial faith and conviction are destined to total failure. In the last days many are going to be tried and found wanting. Others will be restored to faith and conviction only when subjected to the ruthless tyranny and hatefulness of an enemy who is determined to destroy every vestige of that perfect way of life.

Indeed, the development of such faith and conviction is difficult and fraught with hazards. The disciples who were blessed with the direct teaching of Jesus Christ had much difficulty coming to a perfect belief. Note one significant example (John 2:22). Christ had several times emphasized the time of His death, burial, and resurrection. The written Word of God was clear and precise. Believing it was quite another matter. Sustaining belief and conviction does not, indeed cannot, come from an intellectual grasp of what is technically written. Such belief can come only when the heart and mind are miraculously opened and an understanding given. Notice how difficult it was for Thomas to come to such a belief (John 20:24–31).

Who only can know and understand the truth? Let us succinctly review the whole process of the call, hearing the message, believing and accepting that which is heard, covenant agreement with God and Christ, assignment of responsibility, and the requirement of faithfulness.

### **The Natural Man**

Created by God. Made of flesh with all its weaknesses. Living in accord with the dictates of natural feelings, desires, and aspirations. Manifesting all the natural evil traits which are called the works of the flesh. Of course, some live more fully the ways of the flesh than do others. Even, some, by a more beneficent nature, will live according to specific letter obligations—becoming a law unto themselves. Yet, in every case they know not God. They are flesh, devoid of the Spirit. On one particular occasion when Jesus was unusually pressed with the multitudes who followed Him, He made the natural condition of man quite apparent—if only to those called to know. When asked by His disciples why He used parables to address the people He said: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13:13–15).

Man of himself cannot come to know God. He cannot find out God in His great glory, power, love, and perfect will. He lives, moves, has his being at the discretion of God. Before that condition can change an awesome miracle must occur!

### **Only by a Call**

Out of the mass of humanity indicated above, in the process of time and according to the will and purpose of God only, some are called. In Hebrews 3:1 the Apostle Paul refers to them as follows: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling . . ." When writing to the young evangelist, Timothy, Paul spoke in this manner, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose . . ." (II Tim. 1:9). To the Philippians, Paul called it a "high calling" (Ph'p. 3:14). And finally, for this letter, let us refer to Paul's statement to the Romans: "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints . . ." (Rom. 1:6-7). No man makes the choice according to his own volition to be a child of God. Men remain just a part of the masses until called of God (John 6:44, 65).

### **Called by God**

In God's infinite wisdom, at the appointed time, He makes selection. God does the calling. How, we will ascertain later. For the present we want to concentrate on the fact that what is occurring here on this earth is in accord with the will of God. To the Corinthians Paul stated: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Cor. 1:9). James wrote: "Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" (Jas. 2:7). Peter stated: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation . . ." (I Pet. 1:15). Elsewhere, Peter said: ". . . [T]he God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus . . . make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (I Pet. 5:10). God, by and through Jesus Christ, calls all according to His purpose. In Him can be placed perfect confidence and trust (I Thess. 5:24). He is absolutely faithful.

### **Whom?**

As we have seen earlier in this letter, the intelligentsia is not called. For purpose, God has called a different class of people. He calls, fundamentally, the base of this world (I Cor. 1:26-28). The poor—those who have not achieved great things by and through the power of their own minds (Jas. 2:5). However, they are the heirs of the kingdom. The children of God. A unique and special people.

By some distillation process, perhaps known only to God, out of that group designated "the called" occurs a further refinement. Though many are called (Matt. 20:16; 22:14) only a few are chosen.

The scope and intent of this statement is not clearly understood. Is it possible that many of those who are given opportunity to obtain everlasting life will fail? That the powers of the flesh and mind and influence of both the world and the god of this world are too great to master? Or, perhaps, that those to be included in the first call are very special and that the average individual will not possess the necessary qualities for inclusion? There is obviously an explanation. But, do men know and understand all things at the present time?

### **The Base—Called According to Purpose**

God created nothing in vain (Isa. 45:5, 7, 18–19). There is a very great purpose unfolding daily here on this earth. Men simply do not—indeed cannot—see it. In accord with that purpose certain human beings are called and mysterious and miraculous things begin to happen in their lives. Paul, to the Romans, explained it in this manner. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:28–29). That purpose? The creation of a special family. His own children of the Spirit. Christ was the firstborn. There are to be others who will likewise be born into that family in a comparable fashion—each one in his own time and order.

Birth into that glorious spiritual family is the ultimate. What is happening to the called children of God at this present time? Unique things which can be understood only by those enlightened by God and made knowledgeable of His great plan and purpose. Things which are a complete mystery, and totally disavowed, by those who continue in the darkness which is called flesh. Though not observable by human eye a major conversion is occurring. A unique creation. The Apostle Peter put it this way: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (I Pet. 2:9–10). A unique nation which is being formed in the very midst of the nations of this world. A holy nation. Comprised of constituents who will be of the Spirit, not of the flesh. At present their call is to come out of darkness into light. Darkness is frequently employed to describe the condition of natural man. At the present time, the chosen of God are growing into greater light while the masses of this world are sinking ever deeper into the ultimate darkness prognosticated for these last days.



There is one other aspect of God's purpose—being unveiled in this dark world—which we want to convey at this time. Let us reemphasize a text given earlier. God has not, and indeed will not, call the great and mighty of this world. Why? Since God is an Almighty One of purpose and determination, there must be a reason. The Apostle Paul, by inspiration, succinctly stated it. He wrote, ". . . God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:27–29). The natural arrogance and conceit of man will not prevail. In God's wisdom and time, human arrogance will be brought to nought. What is occurring on this earth is by the will of God. To achieve His purpose, the arrogance and will of man must be eliminated.

### **What Are Those Purposes?**

Human beings are called to become saints (I Cor. 1:2). One who lives in accord with the revealed will of God. They are possessors of the divine nature, evidencing some mastery over the flesh and carnal mind. They are called to live lives of peace and contentment (I Cor. 7:15, Col. 3:15). Peace, despite the fact that all who will live godly lives are called to suffer for their conviction and faith (I Pet. 2:21, II Tim. 3:12). The above endeavor carries with it reward. The reward of eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15, I Tim. 6:12). And an ultimate position in the Kingdom of God (I Thess. 2:12). God is the Rewarder of them who diligently seek Him—honorably, honestly, and in accord with revealed knowledge.

### **Specific Purposes**

God, the Father, made choice. He chose Jesus Christ, His Son, for special purpose (Matt. 12:18, Luke 23:35). The twelve apostles were called with special responsibilities in mind. Christ chose them (John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16, 19, Acts 1:2, 24). Paul was chosen with special responsibility in mind (Acts 9:15; 13:2, Rom. 1:1, I Cor. 1:1). And were not all the specific servants of God from Abel to John the Baptist chosen? Indeed! All who are chosen are selected for purpose (Eph. 1:3–4, I Cor. 12:18, 28).

Some were specifically called to preach the gospel—the message of the Kingdom of God (Acts 16:10; 26:15–18, Gal. 1:15–16). And no assumptions are allowed (Heb. 5:4). Yet, tragically, many, even though once called, assume that God deals with them directly. That He must make His message and purpose plain to them individually. This has never been, and will never be, the case. God calls those whom He specifically trains and then commissions. Those so called then have the responsibility of adding to the structure such as

will complement the whole and make possible the performance of that work for which the entity is called. Some fail. Some assume. Others grow weary in performing that purpose for which they were called. All must give an accounting to God. The day of revelation is inevitable. At that time much embarrassment and anger will prevail.

### Called Just Once

The way of God is priceless. The purpose for which one is called is awesome. The revealed truth of God is the most profound item any man can, or will, ever possess. If any human being fails to grasp, appreciate, and cherish that invaluable gift another opportunity will never come. The Apostle Paul said: "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29). God does not regret the call which He makes and the responsibilities tendered. But, if we, through disrespect or dallying, fail to comprehend the gravity of call and responsibility, and turn aside from or in some way reject that call, only a frightening future remains. To the Hebrews Paul wrote: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy [Spirit], and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6).

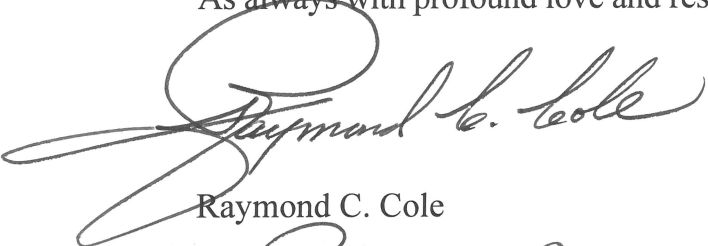
Is it possible that any man would so frivolously regard such a gift and thereby surrender the only hope he will ever have? Indeed! Some have already done so (Gal. 1:6-8). Others will follow. The orientation away from that gift of truth is insidious. Most, until the day of revelation, would not even remotely realize the course of action chosen. They are in the condition mentioned by Paul when writing to the Corinthians. He said, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that *are lost* [should be, 'are perishing'—Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown]" (II Cor. 4:3). The same expression is used in I Corinthians 1:18 where we read, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish ['are perishing'] foolishness . . ." How can called servants of God sink to this level of thinking? Let us return to II Corinthians 4. Paul answers the question. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (v. 4). Satan is at work. He is inspiring those minds. A frightful circumstance which is relevant to our day. Paul warned the ministry: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him *at his will*" (II Tim. 2:25-26). A condition of the last days (II Tim. 3:1).

Who can and will understand the "real" truth of God? Few indeed! There are thousands who claim to know—to understand. But, a claim means nothing. The world lies under virtually total deception.

Before we will totally understand the subject under consideration, other issues must be addressed. Time and space are again limiting. Will continue, God willing, in the next allotted issue of this letter.

For this time we convey all our love and respect. Let us take seriously our call and make the necessary preparation. Time is very short.

As always with profound love and respect,

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

Raymond C. Cole

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bryce G. Clark". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'B'.

Bryce G. Clark