

Church of God, The Eternal

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Announcement Letter
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Dear Brethren:

Feast time has come again. The Fall Feasts of God will begin in just a matter of days. Now is the time of mental preparation. Obedience should never be perfunctory.

Little generalized information is available for the Letter this month. The major portion of this issue will be taken up with two categories—(1) "Spiritual Principle" and (2) "Current Events."

The section for "Spiritual Principle" is longer than I wanted and hopefully will be reduced in future issues. The *Announcement Letter* is not the forum for carrying long Biblical issues. It was intended to make opportunity for covering short issues which arise frequently. Therefore, my apologies for the length of that section of this Letter. Even so, longer issues may surface from time to time. We will try to avoid them as often as possible.

Spiritual Principle: A God of Contention

The world is replete with gods. The Apostle Paul said: "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many) . . ." (I Cor. 8:5). If, as the Apostle Paul emphasizes, there is one true God only, who or what are these many gods to whom he makes reference? What is their nature? Who created them? What is the basis for their existence?

One fact is certain, all gods of this world are the creations of man. And for the most part they are designed on the basis of natural traits or characteristics of natural man. What man fears he has made into a god. That which he loves intensely he has made into a god. The mysterious and unknown have become the premise for many of the natural (pagan, heathen) gods. The mystery of conception and birth became the foundation of innumerable gods. Elemental issues of life produced a significant share of created gods.

There is another factor which has fathered a plethora of mutable and changeable gods. The natural traits of man's nature have been idolized in many and remarkable ways. The carnal orientation of the mind has been revered and made into a host of gods—varied, of course, on the basis of how man, community, nation, or other specific demarcations may have influenced these creations. Often, these conceptual gods are substantiated on the premise of "rights"—the very premise of what is commonly called humanism. However, no god or idol can long last unless it is developed on the foundation of experience and trauma. It is precisely in this arena that the god of contention has come into being. Because faith—the act of relinquishing self-rights—was made shipwreck by hypocrisy in high places and other devious traits of human beings, many have turned to the god of contention, invariably justified by an interpretation of the Bible and as expression of "my rights." Succinctly, what does God reveal about this problem?

The two principle Greek words used to express contention are ἔρις (*eris*) and ἐριθεία (*eritheia*). Since they relate to one another, I shall make no distinction between the usage of the two.

Contention is a work of the flesh—as is the basis of all "natural gods" (Gal. 5:20). The words "variance" and "strife" are translated from the Greek ἔρις, (*ēris*) and ἐριθεία (*eritheia*), respectively. For whatever the reason, such contention manifests its natural self in the church among the brethren. In Corinth (I Cor. 3:3) there was division and *strife*. The members of the church—although yet carnal—were contending and arguing about something. They were walking in the footsteps of natural men. They were idolizing the concepts of flesh. The fruits of the flesh were a dead giveaway. Note, also, the word "strifes" in II Corinthians 12:20.

Worthy of special note is the fact that religion is the basic matrix for the development of false gods. Contrary to accepted opinion the greatest and most fervently worshipped gods stem from those once called, converted, and who understood the Truth. For individual reasons they turn from faith and begin to trust the self and end up creating gods of their own. Religion, therefore, is the basis, not the end result.

Paul was constantly faced with this realization. He was grateful for the fact Christ was preached, even in contention and even if the wrong-spirited were responsible (see Ph'p. 1:15-16). In this text there is no stamp of approval upon those who are involved. The approval was in the fact Christ was preached—and that only. In comparable fashion the Apostle Paul warned Timothy about some who had lost their orientation. They were contending about doctrine. The basis of their arguments was pride, their ability to reason, the love of debate, and supposition (I Tim. 6:4). Please read the context in verses 1 through 5. Titus was likewise warned by Paul. The Bible, revealed Truth, and the very laws and statutes of God are not to become the basis of argumentation. There is a significant reason, as we shall see later.

Perhaps the most significant question is: Why would anyone turn from the Truth to conceptions of his own devising? The best answer seems to lie in an understanding of the first chapter of Romans. Here are people who once knew and understood the Truth of God. But, because of both internal and external pressures—conditions of the times—far too many members turned bitter and sour. They began to manifest all the abominable characteristics of the flesh. They turned to hedonism and humanism. The result? They created a god of debate—contention. Now the work of the flesh—contention—was worshipped. And, not only did they demand the "right" of self-expression, but like anyone who turns to self, they could not stand alone on the basis of personal conviction. On the contrary, they wanted others to walk in their nefarious ways. (See verses 17, 28–32).

How does God want us to conduct our lives? Paul succinctly answers. He said, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering [sexual exploits] and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh . . ." (Rom. 13:13–14). We are to walk in spiritual principles. We are to crush and eliminate the works of the flesh—among which is the god of contention. How?

If we are converted and called, there is a way of avoiding the worship of the false god of contention. It is the belief and practice of the "faith once delivered" for which we must legitimately contend. In this contention we are struggling with the work of the flesh, which manifests itself in two ways. First, the work of doubt which troubles too many. Second, the desire to underscore the "right" of individuality. The answer given by the

Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is found in I Corinthians 1:10–11. Here Paul emphatically emphasizes, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you." Jude stresses that the one mind is found in the "faith once delivered." Since faith is highly personalized, that faith is that which was delivered to us in these last days, not something—even if absolutely correct—delivered in another age. The substance of that faith—the doctrine—of course is the same in all generations and times. But the faith is that which is manifested by the believers—in their own respective times. Therefore, the faith delivered in our day, to which Jude makes reference, is the faith in the doctrine which was delivered to us. Any departure from that is to bow before the god of contention, or "my right." And the basis of that which was delivered to us is the mind of Christ—the mind, one only, which is to reside within us (Ph'p. 2:1–5).

How can one tell the difference between the Spirit of God and the spirit of contention? The answer lies in a comprehensive understanding of James 3:14–18. Only the god of contention acts in an irascible fashion. The Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from God, is a Spirit of harmony, one-mindedness, peace, and faith—the faith given.

In conclusion, let us note a couple of premises for the creation of the false god of contention. First is the intense desire to be in control—to be over others. This is in direct contrast to the acceptable attitude of humility, teachableness, and service. See Luke 22:24. The Greek word here for "strife" is φιλονεικία (*philoneikia*). It is defined as an intense desire for, or a great love of, argumentation. The second premise is the often-demanded right to argue, contend with, or question established policy within the church. See I Corinthians 11:16. The Greek for "contentious" is φιλόνηκος (*philoneikos*). The first part of the word comes from the Greek word for "to love." It is therefore the love of argumentation.

Let us be children of the Light. To be the true servants of God, we must reject all false gods—including the god of contention.

Current Events

If you were to call a fly a dog, the Truth a lie, or a lie the Truth, would that change the basic nature of the issue? Of course not. Yet the gullible are so easily led astray by the mere usage of deceptive terminology. The credence of such deceptive expressions is often enhanced by the usage of a name of prominence, underscored by a successful and influential organization, and/or espoused by "legitimate" and generally accepted media. Would those entities generally accepted as being reliable espouse falsehood? The average person has been taught, and readily fallen for, the concept that if the source of the material is "accepted," it need not be questioned. Such an attitude can only apply to revealed Truth, which we must accept on faith—not human faith, but faith in God.

That the United States is a bastion of democracy is an oft-held and frequently repeated statement. Is it a statement of fact or a broadly popularized myth? If concepts, practices, and beliefs are to be used as the only criteria, then we—the United States—are as socialist in our character as most or all countries who openly admit to being socialist. If we practice and believe the same concepts that others, who admit to being socialist, do, one conclusion is self-evident. Either we are deceiving ourselves, or those other countries are

deceiving their own people. Black is still black and white is still white, regardless of the country in which we find the colors.

An absolute: In the 1930s, one by the name of Norman Thomas wrote the platform for the Socialist Party. By 1970, the United States Government had adopted every one of those concepts. If those are the marks of a socialist, what does the practice of those beliefs make us? In a very real sense we are more functionally socialist than the vast majority of other nations we believe to be unabashedly socialist. Such a form of socialism is more dangerous by far than one called "structurally socialist." In functional socialism we, the people, can be led to believe that we are what we, in reality, are not. This is the inherent danger of deception—calling things, ideas, what they are not.

Facts are facts. Merely accepting what someone else espouses does not make the concept true. Satan, as the god of this world, is a deceiver. Could it be possible that the American people have been led to believe, deliberately, something which is not, in basic fact, true?

In general, because of the lust and greed dominant in man's nature, and the acceptance of a welfare concept, we have been led to accept a system which will eventually oppress and tyrannize us all. We are truly free only when we are left to care for ourselves. When others assume that task for us, there is invariably a dear price to be paid.

As much as lies within us, let us take care of our own responsibilities in life. We are free so long as we honestly bear our own burden of life.

Articles

The new article will be made available for distribution at the Feast of Tabernacles. We hope that you will enjoy it. Now work will begin on an expanded issue of the Sabbath subject.

Prayer Requests

[Omitted for confidentiality]

General Requests

[Omitted for confidentiality]

Feasts: Holy Days

In all probability, necessary arrangements have been made for the observance of the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement in all locations across the nation and around the world. If not, these arrangements should be made now with a view to the local need. If we can help in any way, please call us. We are to help and assist in any way we can.

This year I will be here in Eugene, sharing the pulpit with Mr. Robert Sloneker. I am sure Mr. Leeman has made his arrangements, and that the requisite information was included in the last issue of the *Announcement Letter*. Mr. Bryce Clark will be in the Austin, Texas, area. We trust that all will have wonderful and rewarding occasions on both holy days.

Tape Schedule

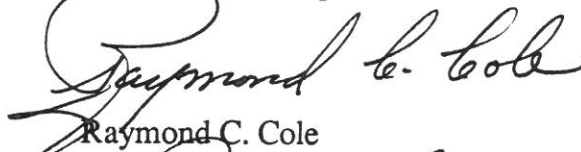
Tape series:	Mailed on:	For:	Title/tape #:
WSE-RC 39	9/20	10/7	Confrontations and responses of Christ #17
		10/14	Feast of Tabernacles: No tape is scheduled
		10/21	Feast of Tabernacles: No tape is scheduled
WSE-RS 2	9/20	10/28	The ABCs of life
WSE-RC 39	10/11	11/4	Confrontations and responses of Christ #18
WSE-BC 122	10/00	11/11	Great men of the Old Testament #20
WSE-RC 39	11/01	11/18	Confrontations and responses of Christ #19
WSE-BC 122	11/01	11/25	Great men of the Old Testament #21

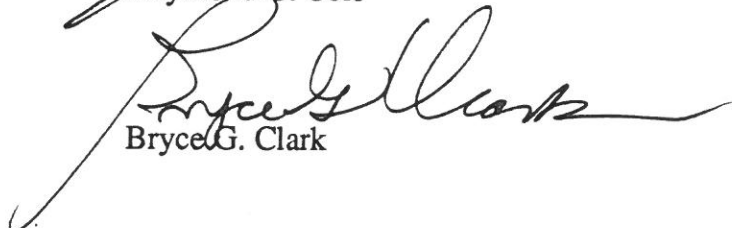
Comments

We are always grateful for the privilege of serving the people of God. Further, we are most appreciative for the continued interest of others who are still in the wilderness of confusion and doubt. These people need our continued prayers. In due time they shall find their way and will, as God wills, return to the fold of the genuine believers.

Much love until we see you at the Feast. Our love and prayers always,

With love and respect,


Raymond C. Cole


Bryce G. Clark