

Church of God, The Eternal

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The Two Facets of Divine Revelation—Part III What Is the Word of God?

May 1980

Greetings Brethren:

Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread have come and gone for another year. With their coming, we once again embarked upon the annual rehearsal of God's great and awesome plan for mankind.

We now look forward to Pentecost 1980, which occurs on Monday, May 26. By Biblical law we commenced our counting vigil, leading to Pentecost, on the Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread—April 5. By *Hebrew reckoning*, the Sunday (first day of the week) following the Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread is the first day of the count. It follows that the countdown (a full 50 count) commenced on April 6, the first day of the count, and will end on May 25, the last (50th) day of the count. Pentecost follows the completion of the count. It falls on May 26 this year.

With Passover, we were reminded of the covenant agreement which we made with God at the time of baptism. In symbol, we vouchsafed our determination to crucify the self. At the same time, Passover pictured our acceptance of Christ to replace the self.

The Days of Unleavened Bread once again depicted our intent to come out of the domain of spiritual Egypt and to repudiate the self. Partaking of unleavened bread symbolized our willingness to accept the revealed will of God and repress the self. Joyously we all anticipated the spring festival. We knew and understood its purpose. But, following its observance, each passing day made us more aware of the reality of our natures. It seems utterly impossible for us to bring our carnality under control—compel it to do the bidding of a spiritually activated mind, the mind of Christ.

But, thank God, we need not despair. The next solemn, God-appointed feast is that of Pentecost. And with its advent comes the *assurance* of help. That help, in the form of God's Holy Spirit, is sufficiently powerful to lift us out of the morass of human carnality.

In glorious anticipation, we await the coming of that day. Pentecost 1980 will be observed on May 26 by those remaining faithful to God.

Now, before commencing to explain the next subtopic of the current series (subject: "The Two Facets of Divine Revelation"), a brief review of the past Holy Days is in order.

What reports we have had from the various areas! Truly, this Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread were as meaningful, rewarding, and inspirational as any we have ever experienced. God knew the needs of us all in these troublous times. He always fulfills our needs.

Groups, though small, were able to meet in Vancouver, B.C. (Canada); Portland, Oregon; Eugene, Oregon; Sacramento, California; Sierra Madre, California; Bend, Texas; Knoxville, Tennessee; Baltimore, Maryland; Wayne, New Jersey; Boston, Massachusetts; and other areas.

I was privileged to be in Knoxville, Tennessee, for Passover and the first part of the Days of Unleavened Bread. Excited and inspired by the conclave of harmony and love, those people termed the convocation "a mini-Feast [of Tabernacles]." God gave us absolutely beautiful weather. The time was so rich and meaningful. What a blessing from God!

Next, I experienced a mutually rewarding time on Sabbath, April 5—in Baltimore, Maryland. The same spirit of love, dedication, and purpose prevailed there. For these miraculous benefits, I can only thank God and you people who have willingly allowed God to rule in your lives.

The Holy Day trip concluded with the observing of the last High Day in North Jersey. All the people from that general area came together and observed God's commanded assembly. The response there was equal to that experienced throughout the entire trip.

One sad event, however, occurred at the end of the first High Day—when Mr. Bill King died. He had longed to partake of Passover before death came. God granted his wish. And from the reports, that Passover is one which will long be remembered.

Mr. Bill King did not fear death. He had known and understood the Truth of God for many years. Now, asleep for a short while, he does not have to face the terrible times pending for these last days. We can only rejoice in his safety. At the same time, we must pray that God will fill the void created in the family (both physically and spiritually) by his death.

May God's rich love and blessings be upon you all as you yield continuously to Him. God knows those who are His. He is ever mindful of His chosen children.

One other topic needs mention before we begin the subject of this letter. As it ought to be evident to all, we are now facing trying economic times. The indications are that conditions will become much more aggravated and frightening, in the next few months, before they moderate—if, indeed, that happens at all. These are the times of "the trial of our faith." How strong is our faith—our belief? What conditions, if any, will cause us to abort spiritually? To fail is to prove that our strength—the strength of faith—is small! For, the real purpose of trial is to cause our faith and resolve to grow strong!

Because of the times and conditions, there are three things we need to do daily. First, let us pray for one another, that our faith does not fail. Second, due to the severity of the economic picture, please pray that God will intervene on the behalf of His chosen children. Third, each one of us should endeavor to grow closer to and develop more confidence in God day by day. These needs have never been greater.

Now, let us again direct our attention to the subject, "The Two Facets of Divine Revelation." To thoroughly comprehend the next section, effect a good recall of basic principles covered or superficially scan the material for highlights. To help, the following brief synopsis is given.

Review/Synopsis

We have come to realize that knowledge—all knowledge—is acquired. But not all knowledge is of the same type. Human beings, from time of birth, acquire *physical* knowledge by study, experimentation, observation, etc. But *spiritual* knowledge does not come by any form of human endeavor—it must be given by God.

In some respects, the two types of knowledge are worlds apart from one another. This astounding fact will be made more comprehensible as we progress in the analysis of the subject.

Next we became aware that spiritual knowledge is *the Truth*—not just facts versus false information. For, *the Truth* is absolute—it is that form of knowledge which never will be changed by time, conditions, or circumstances.

What and where is that knowledge which is absolute—knowledge which cannot be added to or subtracted from? To continue our study, then:

What Is the Word of God?—Absolute, True Knowledge

In the final hours prior to Jesus' betrayal and crucifixion, He instructed the disciples concerning their call and mission. His concluding remarks were in the form of a prayer to God the Father (John 17). In this prayer Christ said: ". . . *thy* [the Father's] *word is truth*" (John 17:17). Logically, this implies a contrast with words from other sources. The words which proceed from the Father are absolute truth, whereas those words which proceed from men are not always to be trusted. Paul put it another way when he was inspired to write:

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them [ancient Israelites] were committed the *oracles* [words, instructions, commands] of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith [margin: 'faithfulness'] of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true [in His Word, the Bible], but *every* man a liar . . . (Rom. 3:1–4).

All concepts, rationalizations, theories, and beliefs of men contrary to the absolute, unalterable Word of God are falsehoods. The one and only standard is the Word of God—the Bible.

So absolute is the Word of God that it is frequently referred to as "the Truth"—not just truth, but *the Truth*! Note the following quotes of Jesus:

Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto *the truth*.— John 5:33

And ye shall know *the truth*, and *the truth* shall make you free.— John 8:32

But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you *the truth, which I have heard of God*.— John 8:40

Ye are of your father the devil [god of this world—deceiver of all humankind], and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in *the truth*, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.—John 8:44

And because I tell you *the truth*, ye believe me not.—John 8:45

In addition, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write:

Who changed *the truth* of God into a lie . . .—Romans 1:25

But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey *the truth*, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.—Romans 2:8

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in *the truth*.—1 Corinthians 13:6

As *the truth* of Christ is in me . . .—2 Corinthians 11:10

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey *the truth*—Galatians 3:1

Finally, the Apostle John was inspired to write:

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not *the truth*.—1 John 1:6

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and *the truth* is not in him.—1 John 2:4

And hereby we know that we are of *the truth*, and shall assure our hearts before him.—1 John 3:19

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in *the truth*; and not I only, but also all they that have known *the truth*.—2 John 1

For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of *the truth* that is in thee, even as thou walkest in *the truth*.—3 John 3

As stated in previous letters, many things can be true yet not absolute. Physical things change by time, conditions, and circumstances. But, the Truth is absolute and eternal. It cannot change. It never will be altered. That is the promise of God to those called and chosen of Him.

From the above texts, we have seen clearly that God's Truth is not *merely* true. It is THE Truth!

What, then, is "THE TRUTH"?

Note again, Jesus Christ said: ". . . *thy word* [the Bible, as the codified form of that Word] *is truth*"! Paul elaborates on this principle in the book of 1 Thessalonians: ". . . when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13).

What those called of God heard was *the Truth*. Paul made this point clear. He wrote, "In whom [Christ] ye also trusted, *after* that ye *heard* the word of truth . . ." (Eph. 1:13).

The Word of God, *the Truth*, is understood by a call from God. That Truth is the Bible which we *NOW* understand. Furthermore, that Word is "right." That is, the Truth is specific, certain, and absolute. David said: ". . . the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth" (Ps. 33:4). The word "right" means "upright, righteous, straight, equitable, convenient." The Word of God is the word of perfection. It cannot be improved. It is *the way* which is truly good for man.

What are some of the specifics of that Truth—*the Truth*? David wrote: ". . . take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy *judgments*" (Ps. 119:43). Further, he stated: "Thy righteousness is an *everlasting* righteousness, and thy law is the truth" (Ps. 119:142). Again, he amplified: ". . . *all thy commandments* are truth" (verse 151).

David, inspired of God, *knew* the scope of the Truth. He was aware that God's statutes, judgments, laws—all His ways—comprise Truth. He knew them to be right—good, equitable, and just for all mankind.

The Truth is the Word of God. It is a total mystery to all who are not called of God, and becomes a mystery to those who turn away from it due to weakness of faith.

Why is God's Word—*the Truth*—so binding and absolute? Why is it unalterable and unchanging, regardless of time or conditions?

The Word of God Is Tried and Proven—To Be Preserved

There are some things men will never know. These things must be accepted by faith—the very premise of salvation for those who truly believe! One of those areas is the trying and proving of God's Word.

The Psalmist David wrote: "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever" (Ps. 12:6–7). In Psalm 119:140, David amplified the above statement. He stated: "Thy word is *very pure*: therefore thy servant loveth it."

At some time, God tried and proved His Word—His way of life. Because of that purification process, God's Word is perfect. David said of this same principle: "As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried . . ." (Ps. 18:30).

As noted under the previous subhead, the Word of God is RIGHT—and, as THE TRUTH, it is specifically categorized. Let us note how God specifically tried and proved all those categories. We read:

The law of the Lord is perfect [how can it be improved or changed?], converting the soul [changing the nature of man from rebellion (Rom. 8:7) to obedience]: the testimony [spoken words] of the Lord is sure [unalterable], making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right [apropos, acceptable, purposeful, equitable, and without defect], rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure [tried and proven], enlightening [giving spiritual discernment to] the eyes (Ps. 19:7–8).

In God's order of time and circumstance, He developed and proved a way of life. Through this operation of God, that way—the Truth—became perfect. And because it is tried and proven, it will be preserved for all eternity. The eyes of those called and chosen rejoice in the perfection of God. Only those ignorant of His ways, or those who lack faith, manifest defiance against the perfection of that way.

God's Word is *the Truth*! It is tried and proven. Therefore, it will be preserved for all eternity. It cannot be broken or abrogated (John 10:35; Matt. 5:17–19). As a tried, proven, and indestructible instrument, the Word—*the Truth*—forms the basis of the Gospel.

The Basis of the Gospel

The Gospel message was the good news given by God the Father to Christ. When sent to the earth, Christ was commissioned to preach that Gospel. For 3-1/2 years He faithfully and authoritatively taught the message God had given. He also called and prepared disciples to continue the proclamation of that way after His ascension into heaven. These disciples (commissioned as apostles) taught the same, exact concepts which Jesus Christ had proclaimed.

What made up the Gospel? As mentioned above, it was the way of life which Jesus and the apostles proclaimed. But at the same time, it was much more. What else, then, was it?

The Apostle Paul, who taught exactly the same things the original twelve apostles taught (Rom. 15:19; Gal. 2:1–2, 6–10; 1 Thess. 2:13–14; Matt. 28:19–20), said *the Truth* was the Gospel (Gal. 2:5, 14).

Both Jewish and Gentile sources manifested a strong urgency to change the revealed way of life—the Truth. Jesus, who earlier encountered these forces, unhesitatingly branded such people—though avowed religionists—as instruments of Satan the Devil. Why? Because the Devil is the father of lies—the same lies which these religionists were proclaiming and for which they had set themselves in opposition to the Truth. Whereas, God's Truth is absolute. It is the Gospel message that Jesus brought, personally proclaimed, and subsequently commissioned His apostles to proclaim. And since all issues seem to have two sides, there appeared a second side to the proclamation of *the Truth* of the Gospel. That second side was the opposite of truth—it was a lie.

The "big lie" has been espoused for hundreds of years—in all of its divergent forms. Regardless of shape, concept, belief, or practice, the roots are common. Those who depart from Truth (*the Truth*) do by natural inclination subscribe to, support, defend, live, and manifest the fruits of the way of opposition.

To comprehend the Gospel requires a revelation. Once given, it must be maintained by faith. The perceiving of that Gospel is in itself a miracle. By receiving that message, those called of God become the recipients of *the Truth*. For, the Gospel is the Truth.

The Bible clearly prophesied concerning those who would receive the Truth in the last days. Though the majority were destined to depart from that revelation, a small number would remain faithful to God's purpose. They would hear the Gospel message and will to remain loyal. What benefits accrue from such loyalty?

Source of Eternal Life

The Word of God is the way to eternal life. How? Why? Jesus understood, for He said: ". . . the flesh profiteth nothing: the *words* [the Gospel message] that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

The people did not come to understand this message on their own. They were called and taught by the Messenger whom God had sent. The basic requirement of those called was to believe. Keep in mind, however, that not all who physically associate themselves with the Messenger and the message (the Gospel, *the Truth*) are necessarily converted and true believers. For Jesus said: ". . . there are some of you that believe not (John 6:64). Genuine conversion and belief manifest themselves in true *faithfulness* and appropriate *works*.

Why is a mere declaration of belief insufficient? Because the words which emanate from human lips must be subjected to the rigorous test of *time*. By time, fruits are borne.

Jesus said: ". . . Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65). A profession alone is woefully inadequate. By our *faithful behavior*, only, do we manifest belief in the words received.

Those who are oriented carnally will turn back to human rationale, beliefs, and practices. They did in Jesus' day. Note carefully verse 66 of John 6: "From that time [when Christ explained (verse 65) that continuity of faith and belief are not possible except God calls and sustains] many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." They wanted Christ to be much more flexible and tolerant toward them. Their reasoning was: Why could not their conceptions and beliefs, also, be acceptable as a means of life?

But what is the attitude of those truly called and faithful? How do they view the words of those commissioned by God? At the time many were turning back from the revealed way of life, Jesus said to His twelve disciples: "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:67). Peter, the impetuous one, spoke up quickly, saying, ". . . Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

The Gospel—*the Truth*—contains the words of everlasting life. Those words are given to a chosen instrument, who in turn is commissioned to proclaim them. The called of God will respond, and those who maintain faith will not waver from that belief. Conversely, those whose faith has been made shipwreck (due to human mistakes) will turn back. The one group will believe the words of life in perpetuity, to the saving of their souls; the others will resort to human reasoning and Scriptural perversions (deviations).

The Truth is the source of salvation (2 Thess. 2:13). How is this? Because the very words of Truth are spirit and life. Such words cannot be believed, acknowledged, or practiced until given by God.

Spiritual Knowledge Must Be Given

In due time, God will bring all men to the knowledge of salvation (1 Tim. 2:4). That knowledge is revealed truth—the Truth. It is not naturally comprehended by men; it cannot be known or understood until revealed. So our obtaining the knowledge of eternal life is entirely at the discretion of God. It comes only by the will of God, manifested in His time. But once that knowledge is revealed, the recipient then has the sole responsibility to hold to it by faith.

The unconverted do not know or understand the Truth. In their natural darkness, they cannot spiritually acknowledge the Truth as the Word of eternal life. Only those called and enlightened of God have this choice. It is they who must recognize, acknowledge, and believe the Truth (Titus 1:1). For, *the Truth* is the Word—the Spirit of truth which God gives (see 1 John 5:6 and John 16:13).

Addressing the Father, Jesus said: ". . . thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Elsewhere, He said the words of eternal life are spirit. Since the spiritual words of God are truth—*the Truth*—they *must* be accepted, acknowledged, and believed by men. But they can be believed only by those men whom God calls and to whom He makes known the words of life. In summary, knowing and understanding the words of God and remaining faithful to them is not an automatic endeavor of men. It is a test of faith.

What, then, is the consequence of losing faith and turning from the revealed Truth?

Paul, who frequently dealt with this problem, was inspired to write the following:

. . . if we sin wilfully after that we have received [by God's call and revelation] the knowledge of the truth [remember Jesus' statement, ". . . thy word is truth'], there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins . . . (Heb. 10:26).

The elect of God must first be *called*. Then, they must be given *God's revelation* of the Truth. Next, they must *acknowledge* that Truth. Then they must *act* on the Word. And finally, they must *remain faithful* to it—faithful unto the end (Matt. 24:13).

Truth *is* the Word of God. Since that Word is spirit, it is spiritual knowledge. Spiritual knowledge is a comprehension foreign to the natural mind. It can come only by the will of God, and within the time He determines.

God's spiritual knowledge is *revealed* knowledge. How does it differ from physical knowledge—the acquisition of which is completely natural to man?

The Truth Is Unchanging

God says physical things are temporal (secular, mundane, carnal, profane, transitory, temporary, enduring for a short time only). But spiritual things are eternal. That is, spiritual things exist for all eternity in an unchanged manner.

What is so unchanging, so enduring and unalterable? The things of the Spirit. And what is *of* the Spirit? THE TRUTH, THE VERY WORD OF GOD! And all the carnal mockery in the world will not change that fact.

One of the first signs of conversion is the willingness to say "Yes, Lord" to God's Truth, rather than seeking avenues of self-justification and rebellion against *any* portion of the inspired Word of God. For, those words are spirit and life.

To have a changing God (this does not refer to what God instituted for a specified period of time—carnal, fleshly things) willfully effaces the character of our Maker and Ruler. Character cannot be separated from the principles which produce it. Character is not some ethereal, nebulous concept devoid of practicality. When one speaks of the character of another human being, he does not refer to indefinable concepts. Character refers to trustworthiness, integrity, honesty, self-control, consistency, and other well-defined and lofty principles. Such is the character of God.

Moses wrote of God's character. He said: "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). He has bound inexorably His word to all His servants since the beginning of human history. He cannot change! True, by His very character He does not change. But it is impossible to separate the actual manifestation of character from the principles which produce that character! Those principles are truthfulness, consistency (stability, not vicissitude), and upholding the integrity of His own Word—the spiritual words of life.

Those words—which compose the way of life—have never changed. The Apostle Paul made this clear when he wrote to the Hebrews:

For unto us [all to whom Paul preached, for there is no difference between Jew and Greek] was the gospel preached, as well as unto them [ancient Israel]: but the word [spiritual words of eternal life] preached did not profit them, not

being mixed with faith [the added ingredient necessary for eternal life] in them that heard it (Heb. 4:2).

The Apostle John wrote:

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment [the same message given to Israel initially] which ye had from the beginning [from the inception of conversion]. The old commandment [antedating the time of Christ and the apostles] is the word [the same unchanging Truth] which ye have heard from the beginning [time and circumstance had not changed it] (1 John 2:7).

Those called and chosen have been privileged to understand the eternal, spiritual principles of God. These truths are unrecognized by those living in spiritual darkness. What, then, is the special value of those spiritual concepts to the called?

The Truth—Our Guide and Direction

Walking according to the flesh (or in carnality) is called *darkness*, spiritually speaking. Human beings generally are buffeted about by circumstance. For many, there are no sure and satisfactory answers to life's troubles and difficulties. Yet these same people, while plagued and distraught, continue to manifest conceit and recalcitrance in their daily lives.

How can such mortals come to the light of God's purpose?

David knew and understood. He wrote: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105).

God's Word is our source of guidance and motivation. By accepting the words of life, we can come out of darkness into the glorious light of Truth—*the Truth*. Jesus, who preached these words of life, represented the transition from darkness to light. Matthew wrote about Jesus' entry into Galilee. He said:

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee [thus fulfilling the prophecy] . . . The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up (Matt. 4:12, 16).

Until God calls and opens our minds to understand, the Bible is a closed book (Luke 24:45). Once our minds are opened, the shadow of darkness disappears and we begin to understand what life is all about.

The conclusion is this: Living in spiritual darkness, man does not understand his purpose until it is revealed to him. His real source of help—God's Truth—is a mystery to him until it is opened up. Therefore, because of inability to comprehend, man normally remains in a state of total perversion, corruption, or rejection of Truth altogether.

For the called of God, the Word is a light. It illuminates the way of life. Through it, uncertainty and doubt disappear.

Since man in his natural state is opposed to the Truth, how can he be made pliant, teachable, and obedient? How can he be made into the image and character of his Maker—except by *revelation* of that Truth?

The Called Are Begotten by the Word

The Truth is not a mere external conforming which we pursue. It is, in its most practical terms, God's way of life. By the conversion process, we are being changed from the carnal entity (the natural birth) to the spiritual (a new birth). In James we read: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (Jas. 1:18).

Our natural conception was by a corruptible (perishable) seed. Now, by the will of God, we can be begotten by an incorruptible seed—the spiritual Word of God. Then, by growing to full maturity, we can be born into the spiritual domain—forever leaving the weaknesses of the physical flesh.

Just as any naturally conceived child requires time to mature sufficiently for birth, so those spiritually begotten (to a new and lively hope—1 Pet. 1:2–7) must properly develop and mature. The Word of God is not only a lamp to guide the path of those who comprehend; it is also the very impregnating force of eternal life. Being begotten by that which is spiritual, we will be born spiritually—if we do not abort—just as surely as we were born physically.

The Word Magnified Above His Name

When one considers the awesome purpose revealed in God's holy, righteous Word, it should not seem strange that such glory, beauty, and meaning are attached to that Word. David, who was deeply moved by the Word of God, said: "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Ps. 138:2).

If we truly understand the purpose of God, how can we fail to feel likewise? The very Word of God should enlarge our minds, hearts, and whole beings.

Brethren, it is that Word—the Spirit of God; the eternal Truth; the hope of life; the seed by which we are begotten anew; the multi-refined and preserved Word; the unalterable, eternal way of life—that resides within us. How can we *ever* be repressed, troubled, or doubtful? Only if we do not recognize the *value* of the gift God revealed to us.

How can we then be sure? Has anyone ever instructed us and given us an example to follow? Indeed!

The Example of the Way in the Flesh

Jesus said: ". . . I *am* the way, *the truth*, and the life. . ." (John 14:6). Of Him John wrote:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:1–2, 14).

Later, that same apostle wrote as follows:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For *the life* was *manifested*, and *we have seen it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you*, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1–3).

Jesus was the first begotten *and* born Son of God. He is the elder Brother of all who remain faithful to *the* call (Rom. 8:29). He was the Word made flesh—the very spiritual, eternal Word of God living in the flesh.

For us to have eternal life, we must completely renounce the self—crucify the flesh. Then we must allow Christ to take up His abode in us. Through Christ in us, we receive the living Word of God. That is our hope of glory.

In conclusion, let us understand that to receive Christ is to receive the Spirit. This is the Word of life, which is eternal and unchanging. Christ is the physical example of God's Word living in the flesh. Since He does not change, whatever *He was* in the flesh is precisely what *He will be* in each Christian (one who receives Christ into his life).

The Word is spiritual. It is eternal. It is absolute. Christ was that living Word in the flesh. Our hope of eternal life comes by negating the self and allowing Christ to live in us.

But, why is it necessary for man to crucify himself? What is man, that he of himself cannot obtain life? These points and others will be thoroughly covered in the next installment of this series of letters.

Now, finally, let us take this opportunity to convey our deep and abiding love. Our prayers and thoughts are always with you. May we all endure unto the end and receive the full reward for our endeavors. God sincerely desires to bring to fruition the works of His own hands. Let us become more pliable clay, for His glory and honor.

In much love and concern,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the closing phrase.

Raymond C. Cole