

Church of God, The Eternal

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What Is the Purpose of the Written Word of God?—Part I

August 1993

Dear Brethren,

Time marches on. Only a few weeks until the Fall Holy Days will be here again. The wise are well-advanced in necessary Feast planning.

The subject selected for this *Monthly Letter* cannot be adequately covered in a single issue. What is commenced in August will be completed in October. For August a historical survey of how God called His servants and revealed His truth to them will be given. In the future we will cover the reasons for personal Bible study.

Talk to just about anyone and you will be assured that it is the duty of all who profess to be Christian to perform daily Bible study religiously. The reasons advanced, however, will in all probability be as varied as the doctrines which form the presumed foundations of the represented organizations themselves. Even among those who know, or in some cases once knew, the real truth as revealed by God, there will be a host of differing justifications advanced. Considering this maze of conflicting ideologies, how is anyone expected to arrive at correct conclusions? Are all these "reasons" advanced just *that*—the *reasonings* of carnal minds bent on conceptual justification? Is it even possible for the carnal mind to come to correct spiritual conclusions?

Can personal Bible study lead anyone to unalterable faith, uncompromising conviction, and a trust that such an individual is motivated, inspired, and directed by the perfect mind of Christ and of the Father? If such an orientation is truly of God and of Christ—of the Holy Spirit—why does that mind supposedly manifest itself in the lives of human beings contrary to that singleness and unity which is indicated in the Bible as a manifestation of the lives of the Father and the Son themselves?

In practice today, nearly everyone will infer, or tell you outright, that he came to his beliefs on the basis of his own study. Of course, he will quickly add, the Holy Spirit led him in his search for truth. If the above is true, then the Holy Spirit is the most confused of all influences or powers. Is not each one right in his own eyes? If each one is right, then the Holy Spirit behaves differently in the lives of all individuals, and there is no *one mind* which

proceeds from the Father. He would be a manifestation of a more severe split personality than anyone of us has ever encountered physically.

The Human Mind

To comprehend the manifestations of the spiritual mind, it is absolutely necessary to understand the behavior of the carnal mind. Without such an understanding it would be very easy to confuse the two and therefore come to erroneous conclusions. The mind of the flesh is obvious in its orientation. It is of the flesh; its interests are those of this world (Rom. 8:5; Phil. 3:19). It, therefore, is anti-God (not necessarily anti-religious) and is, regardless of a pseudo-religious orientation, opposed to God and His ways (Rom. 8:7). In fact, it does not even know God (1 Cor. 1:21; 2:16). It is wrathful, vain, and divisive (Eph. 2:3; 4:17; 1 Cor. 3:3). And worst of all, due to its inclination toward religion of its own devising, it is corruptible, faithless, and reprobate (2 Cor. 11:3; 2 Tim. 3:8). Is it not obvious that such a mind would make every effort to substantiate its own religious concepts? Therefore, diligent study, with its attendant conclusions, is not evidence of an acceptable mental orientation. How much study has been undertaken to support fleshly conceived notions? Most would agree that the majority of study has this orientation. For all men are always right in their own eyes. But, once again, such conclusions are not evidence of, proof, that such a mind is spiritually oriented. Again, we need to ask ourselves, if such fleshly mindedness is possible, and personal Bible study is required, how can anyone avoid mental corruption and for what real and genuine purpose is daily study required? Why do the recorded Scriptures exist in the first place? The reasons will soon be clearly understood.

As designed and created by God, the natural, carnal, mind cannot comprehend genuine spiritual things. Physical and spiritual things are 180 degrees from one another. The natural mind understands only physical things (1 Cor. 2:11). However, the spiritual things, things of God, are known only by God. Man of himself does not know them (1 Cor. 2:11).

Since the natural mind is an incredibly arrogant and self-assertive mind it refuses to accept even the existence of any domain outside of itself, let alone the concept that it is limited in its natural comprehension. This arrogance manifests itself in a number of ways. To the humanist there is no world outside of the physical. To the religionist mind there is a "god" and a way of life—both, however, designed and created from natural concepts of man. In their own natural minds religionists believe themselves to be both called and converted—they emphatically assume that they, too, understand spiritual things. Such is the nature of deception—a condition which prevails over the whole earth. And finally, for the vast majority, they simply refuse to think about the issue. They are totally consumed in

their earthly endeavors. And what they refuse to think about they subtly believe will never affect their natural lives anyway.

Until some special event occurs, man is, and will remain, limited in his understanding to things of the flesh. He cannot receive—admit into his mental consciousness—things of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14). He will resist and fight them in every conceivable manner. By his natural nature he is opposed to the things of God. It takes no genius to understand that a change of mind is essential before comprehension of spiritual things can occur. What is that change of mind? How does understanding of spiritual things come?

Divine Revelation

Earlier in the second chapter of 1 Corinthians the Apostle Paul makes most clear the changing process necessary for man to understand the things of God. He said:

... Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit [vv. 9–10]. . . . Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might *know* the things that are freely given to us of God" [v. 12].

Two things must occur. First, the chosen of God must receive a revelation. Second, those chosen must receive the Spirit (mind) of God. With this miraculous occurrence, the chosen of God can for the first time begin to understand (know) spiritual things.

The question now is: how do the chosen of God hear the things of the Spirit? Does God deal directly with each individual He has purposed to call and give an opportunity for everlasting life? Is it not whosoever will may come to God and seek His truth? We know that there is but one Mediator between God and man—the man Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5). Does this mean that there is no human agency through which the revealed truth is taught and heard by those called of God?

Until called by God, man lives in the natural ignorance of flesh (Matt. 13:11–15). Then, in the process of time, as designated by God, he hears the word preached (Matt. 13:19–20, 22–23). How did he hear that word preached? Far too many believe that such knowledge and comprehension came as a result of their own personal study or by some personal intervention on the part of God in their lives. Perhaps this is truly the way *their knowledge* came to them. However, the genuine truth of God does not come by such means. Any such claim can generally be evidence that another source has inspired and given the

knowledge received. Aside from the individual selection and training of one chosen by God to be commissioned for a specific work, there is not one single indication or example of an individual acquiring a knowledge of the spiritual truth by such a process. This may come as a surprise to many.

For the people *in general*, how does a knowledge of the truth come? The Apostle Paul makes it very clear. Let us take his word, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, at face value. He wrote: "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (Rom. 10:14) Plainly, God sends and commissions servants to preach His word and by the proclamation of that word the people hear. Is it the duty of those people called and who heard the truth through the one commissioned to check the veracity of that word heard? In this context the historical word of God will be most revealing.

The Historical Word

What is the Bible? The inspired Scriptures themselves? They are a record of God's direct intervention in the lives of individuals and nations. In all cases, those words were addressed to individuals, specific peoples, churches, etc. Those words were codified and became the inspired word of God relevant to all mankind, regardless of generation or time. They are the basis of our very hope of salvation (Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3). Those words are absolute and inflexible (Deut. 4:1–2). They are valid for mankind for all generations (Deut. 7:9). Being the unalterable words of God, for all generations, what perpetual examples do they convey to those called?

Adam

God created the first man, Adam, and his wife, Eve. That very first couple was instructed and commanded by God (Gen. 2:15–17; 3:1–24). Though the recorded words are limited, without doubt God spoke much more to Adam and Eve about duties and responsibilities, both physical and spiritual. Does it seem reasonable to assume that Adam merely listened to the instructions of God and then, in his heart said, "I must prove the validity of what has been given to me"? "No," we probably would respond, "because God spoke directly to the first human couple." Does such a response imply that every individual is required to verify "the word" when it comes through a human agent? If so, logically one must ask, just how is the man who is the hearer in any better position to verify, substantiate, the word heard than the one who proclaimed it? Some will reply, "we have the written word, the Bible, so that we can evaluate all assertions of those who claim to preach that

truth." How can you accept your interpretation of such claims when you did not accept that of the other individual? Is not everyone right in his own sight? A ponderous problem is involved. We shall address the issue later.

Noah

Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5). His actions were predicated on faith, not sight, "proof" (Heb. 11:7). Faith is the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). What if the people in his day had asked for tangible evidence—the ability of the people to read the warnings of God from "the Book" so they could verify the pronouncements of God's servant Noah? The average individual could never have understood. Only those endowed with faith could have responded. And those possessing such faith would have had no need of tangible, physical, proof—evidence. Only those who possess no faith in that which was heard have need of, and therefore demand, proof.

Is the historical example of Noah's faith valuable for and pertinent to our orientation today? If not, why does it occupy a central place in the Ever-living Word of God—a part of that word upon which our hope of salvation is dependent?

Of course, we all know that Noah was a chosen and faithful servant of God. The problem is this: Those now who emphatically know of his godly orientation live hundreds of years after the fact. Is it possible these modern-day believers know because they put Noah into the context of their own conceptions—not in the reality of the issues as they existed hundreds of years ago? Why was it that virtually no one believed Noah's proclamation in his own day? Was it simply a manifestation of the natural disbelief of all mankind, the same disbelief which pervades all thinking today?

Abraham

In the process of time, God chose another servant, Abraham. To this spiritual giant, God gave His priceless way of life. Abraham believed God, accepting that which he was given without question. Because of this he became the father of the faithful. Abraham did not demand proof—evidence. He believed, taking God at face value. Please read and understand the following: Gen. 18:17–19; 22:1–2, 12, 15–18; Rom. 4:1–5, 11–13, 17–24; Gal. 3:1–6, 22, 26–29.

Many people think in their hearts that such an act of belief on the part of Abraham was not really difficult. In their own minds they feel that they themselves would have

accepted the voice of God without question. How deceptive the human mind really is. The real concept conveyed in the Scriptural record is that his feat of acceptance was miraculous and exceptional. For that reason he is classified as the father of the faithful. Christ plainly taught that if man cannot accept that which is seen, things of the physical realm, how can he accept things of the spiritual domain?

The principle point to keep foremost in our minds is this: How could Abraham have proven the voice of God? There were no recorded Scriptures in his day. By faith only he knew. As we shall soon see and realize, that same faith is essential for those called of God in our day and time.

Moses

In yet another time, a man was called and commissioned to perform a very great work—a work which typifies the very work to be performed by Christ. That man was Moses. His actions were entirely predicated on faith. And faith is not predicated on tangible evidence—that which is studied out and ascertained mentally. It is the evidence of things not seen.

God called Moses and proceeded to put him through a long and arduous training program to prepare him for a mission of awesome significance. The manner of his training and the means by which he received the instructions and truths of God had little, if anything, to do with the call and training of the people he was destined to serve. Would it not seem totally ludicrous to believe that every Israelite was required to go through the same training and experiences encountered by Moses? If every Israelite were to receive the truth in the same way as Moses did, why his special selection and subsequent commission to lead and teach them? The following texts will clearly indicate the purpose of Moses' call, his work, and his relationship with the people whom he was to serve. Please read: Ex. 2:2; Acts 7:17–27, 35, 37–40, 42; Heb. 11:23–28; 3:2; Ex. 19; 25:22.

Moses was a man called and commissioned by God. The word received was the unalterable word of God. Can you imagine the people assuming the right to check out the veracity of the words of God which he received? Consider the matter of the Ten Commandments. God gave them. Moses taught and proclaimed them to the people whom God had chosen. The duty of the people was to accept and believe. And why did they not believe? Because they were a people in whom was no faith (Deut. 32:20). Are we a people in a comparable situation today? These object lessons were taught by the example of ancient Israel, and were given for our good. They are a part of the word of God.

Up to this time, there was no recorded word, such as we possess today. As Moses received the words of God, he was commanded to write them down in a book and to preserve them. For what reason? When we address the reasons for the recorded word of God, then we will understand.

Based on the words given to Moses, by God, the children of Israel received instruction and regulated their lives. As long as they remained faithful to the teachings of Moses they were blessed. They prospered: The promises of God were received. But the hearts of the Israelites were never convinced of the veracity and accuracy of the words which they heard, if—in some cases—they heard them at all. Within a very short period of time, Israel—the physically called of God—lapsed into rebellion and idolatry. Evils and misfortunes came upon them. They moaned and complained of their circumstances: adverse trials, persecution, hunger, ill-health, and disease. They remembered their former glory and beneficences. Remembering their former state, they returned to God and were again blessed in marvelous ways.

Good times and favorable conditions tend to rob men of their basic moral principles. Soon Israel was back into captivity suffering every want and deprivation. Again they sought God and were received. This was a pattern repeated not once or twice in the time of their national existence but an incredible twenty to thirty times. These national experiences form the foundation of a very significant part of the Bible. Words and instructions which were actually recorded and preserved for us, upon whom, these last days have come (1 Cor. 10).

The Prophets

The troubling conditions of Israel resulted in the development of another system by which a very large part of the holy word of God came into existence and formed a basic part of the recorded instructions for us in these same last days (1 Peter 1:12). God called, trained, and commissioned specific prophets whom He sent to Israel with definite and well-tailored messages. These messages had a peculiar relevancy to the people during the time in which they were spoken. Yet, according to Peter, the real significance of those messages was reserved for the people of God called to understand in the last days.

Was it possible for the people themselves in the days of those prophets to verify the messages delivered by the prophets of God? If so, how? Were not the people continuously instructed to evaluate on the basis of the word God had delivered—that which they had already received—to the people by the hands of His chosen servants? There were only two avenues of verification. One was a firm conviction that the initial word received was from God—though delivered to them by a man. A word when violated resulted in adverse

difficulties. That was the cause of all their problems and unfavorable circumstances in life. The second avenue was the reality—fulfillment—of the prophetic pronouncement (compare Deut. 18:15–22 and Deut. 13:1–5).

God had delivered His message time and time again to Israel through His chosen prophets. Many of their specific messages became a part of the Holy Bible. They are written and preserved as a part of the sacred Scriptures because they apply equally to someone in these last days. Yet, no man may presume to interpret arbitrarily the significance or meaning of those prophecies (2 Peter 1:19–21). Only God knows the inherent prophetic intent of those prophecies which were written and preserved for us of these last days. In God's own time and accurately—not second-guessing through the arrogant minds of men—through the power of God's Holy Spirit, the truths of those prophecies will be made known to those men chosen, of God, and no others. Even though written in the letter, the spiritual intent cannot be known until revealed by God. For that reason, the brazen spirit of men has led many into error. They are called false prophets—men who assumed they had the call, commission, and power of insight to unravel the mysterious meaning of God's prophetic word as it applies to mankind in these last days of this closing generation.

Many have run with their perceived messages. They have caused the multitudes to manifest great confidence in that which they have heard. Soberingly, however, the thinking mind is compelled to stop and ask: Why are there so many Biblical indictments—from God Himself—leveled against these men who presumed such prophetic capability? God says, they ran but I did not send them. Further, many times, God says of their messages, they are deceptions of their own hearts. Just take the time to read the last-day messages recorded by Jeremiah alone.

The point here is this: Without doubt the messages—words of God—were written in the book called the Bible, the sacred Scriptures, but the natural mind could not comprehend that which was written. What proceeded from their own minds and hearts were words and thoughts which seemed right to those carnal, unconverted, minds. In all probability they felt themselves to be honest and sincere. Yet, the messages conveyed were not of God—they were concepts and ideas which proceeded from their own minds and hearts. And what they conceived was not in accord with the inherent spiritual meaning contained in those words of God written and recorded for this last generation. When initially delivered to His chosen prophets, God had an innate and specific purpose in mind—a purpose which relates to events yet to occur in our day. Until that purpose is revealed, even an attentive and careful reading of those prophecies will not unlock the spiritual intent and purpose. By design, God had His holy word recorded in such a manner that it would both bewilder and confuse men (Isa. 28:13; Matt. 13:10–15). Though the words of God given to Moses to deliver to Israel

were fresh and heard often, Israel remained in complete spiritual darkness (Deut. 29:4). Only by miraculous circumstances and the determined will of God will the people of Israel become the approved witnesses of God in these last days (Isa. 43:8–13). In the actual occurrence of the prophesied events of the last days there will be a revealing of purpose. No place in all the holy word of God is there even an indication that some "chosen servant" will become privy to the hidden intent and purpose prior to that fulfillment—thus preempting the purpose for which mystery enshrouded those prophecies in the first place. In all cases the actual revelation of the prophetic will of God seems to occur only at the time of the event itself. Did not Christ Himself say, when ye begin to see these things come to pass, then shall you know?

Does this condition imply or even hint that the children of God should not read and make a part of their consciousness these prophetic words of God? Indeed, no! If we were not aware of the specific pronouncements of God, how would we recognize their fulfillment in the day of revealing? The called of God are commanded to read and to know the Scriptures. But, the reasons for these commands are vastly different from those presumed by most men. These concepts we will come to see and understand later.

What is apparent up to this point is this: The words of God were given and recorded for future purpose—though their spiritual meaning and purpose was not revealed to those who initially received and recorded them—but the recipients were held responsible for the preservation and safe delivery of those words to the called in the last days (1 Pet. 1:12). The children of Israel could read that which was written but they could not understand. And above all, the mind and heart of real character necessary for spiritual obedience had not yet been given. Historically, however, there is an abundance of evidence that men were perpetually busy interpreting and perverting the recorded words into doctrines and concepts which were pleasing and acceptable to their natural minds, compromising belief and practice to such an extent that the chosen of God—Israel—could interface comfortably with their Gentile neighbors and their practices. They had the written word as delivered by God to His chosen servant Moses, but the reading and study of that word did not keep them in the knowledge of the truth. The long, arduous, pointed, and powerful warnings of God's chosen prophets, called and commissioned by God, were categorically rejected. This, of course, is exactly what was anticipated (Deut. 18:15–22).

The Appearance of Christ

From the time of Moses (c. 1487 B.C.) God called and commissioned prophets with specific messages to warn and teach Israel. Their rebellion and rejection only grew more intense and complete. Then, as determined by God, the time of Christ's first appearance

came. He appears on the scene not bearing a message as studied out by Himself, but rather bearing a message given to Him by the Father (John 12:49). He emphasized to those who confronted Him that He taught only that message—the truth—of God as it had been given to Him. How many of mankind, living in the geographic area of His appearance, could hear and understand what He was saying? (Matt. 13:10–15; Luke 16:31; John 5:36–47; 6:43–45; 8:43–47; 10:24–27; 12:47–49; Heb. 3:7–11. Compare Matt. 7:13–14).

What Christ was teaching/preaching was written in what we commonly call the Old Testament—called the Scriptures in Luke 24:44–45. Though the Jewish people (also all of Israel) had much of the recorded and preserved word of God they did not understand what they were reading and intensely studying. That understanding came only to those called to hear and understand and only after a special miracle had been performed (Luke 24:45). Such comprehension had nothing to do with personal Bible study, technical research, or any other physical/intellectual capability of human minds. Those called (the disciples) had been listening to the preaching of Christ for a considerable period of time. Yet, understanding came only after a special miracle had occurred. Christ opened their minds and hearts to hear and comprehend what He had been teaching. Interestingly, this understanding came to the disciples not from the proclamation of a new and differently oriented gospel advanced by Christ but from an enlightenment of their minds regarding the real spiritual significance of that which is called the Old Testament—that which was written and preserved for centuries, the first part of God's holy and inspired Scriptures. The truths of those early words had been locked in—made mysterious—by the will of God until read, proclaimed, and manifested by Jesus Christ (John 1:1–14; 1 John 1:1–3). The Apostle Paul, several years after the time of Christ, was inspired to write:

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God . . . (Rom. 16:25–26).

The written Scriptures had existed for many centuries. Without doubt they had been read and exhaustively and intensely studied. The spiritual understanding, however, was completely unknown until the time of their revelation by Jesus Christ. No amount of study, technical research, or other human endeavor did, or ever could have, opened to man the understanding of those Scriptures which were recorded, written, in their letter form (Rom. 2:27–29; 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:2–6)—sincere endeavor notwithstanding. The purpose and plan of God, laid out from the foundation of the world, will not be changed. Physical man, by power of mind, cannot, nor will ever, understand spiritual things. The physical and spiritual worlds are distinctly two different worlds. The physical mind is of this physical world. It

cannot comprehend things of the spiritual world (1 Cor. 2:4–16). The spiritual mind—the mind of the God-realm—can understand all things both physical and spiritual.

Christ came to make spiritual understanding possible. That understanding was possible only to those called to receive it. However, from that point in time, since spiritual things cannot be seen (2 Cor. 4:18), Satanic deception was spawned and began to grow rampantly after Christ's return to heaven (Matt. 24:2–5). Such conditions necessitated judicious care on the part of the called—care in the preservation of that which had been heard and received by faith. Tragically, few were able to sustain that faith and effectively endure the mental onslaught generated by Satan and his cohorts.

The Twelve Apostles

After three and one-half years of proclaiming the way of life, Christ completed His earthly ministry by becoming obedient unto death—that which was essential for the salvation of man. However, the planned purpose for a ministry was not terminated by the death of Christ. On the contrary, a greater need than ever existed. Christ's purpose did not include the immediate call, conversion, and salvation of all living mortals. Salvation is offered on the basis of predetermined times. For that reason "the foolishness of preaching" as Paul called it remained valid and imperative. The first level of the commission to preach the word of God—following the work of Christ—was given to the twelve apostles (John 15:16–21).

The apostles were chosen by Christ (v. 16). They were ordained by Christ. They did not assume position or responsibility. By faith they had accepted Christ as the Messenger—Son of God—sent by God, the Father. They did not develop their own message—by study or any other way. They literally received the words the Father had given to Christ and which He had preached Himself (John 17:8). They received them in faith. There is no evidence they set about a technical substantiation of that which they had heard and received. They simply accepted, believed, and in due time taught the same message.

At the appointed time, the conclusion of the responsibility imposed upon Christ, the disciples—now apostles—were ordained and commissioned to preach the same words Christ taught (John 17:18). Note the emphasis given to this commission (John 20:21). The Twelve were given their assignments, which did not include a proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. They were instructed to go to Israel only. The geography was limited and the message was predetermined. Years after the commission was given, the Apostle John, who alone was alive at that time, could emphatically say: "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 1:3). From 31 A.D., the date of the commission, to the early 90s A.D. the apostles proclaimed, unchanged, the gospel which Christ had brought and later transferred to them. It was never subjected to any kind of review, proving, or other testing. What the apostles had received was accepted in faith. That was the crucial test in the first place. Continuity was the proof of that faith and conviction (1 John 2:7, 22–28). This is why "the faith" is the doctrine lived (Rom. 10:17; Acts 6:7; Gal. 1:23; 6:16; Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 4:6; 6:12; Jude 3). In all the texts just listed the definite article "the" occurs just preceding the Greek word for faith. This emphatic arrangement denotes this fact: "The faith" means the doctrine—the way of life given by God. Faithful—continuous—obedience is possible only by a spiritual infusion of the spiritual fruit of faith.

Christ taught what He received from the Father. Obedience on the part of those who heard was possible by faith only. There is no Biblical indication of a spiritual responsibility for those who heard Christ to test, and prove, the veracity of His message. In fact, the test was on those who heard—would they in faith accept *Him* as the Messenger of God?

In like manner, the same message was given to the chosen apostles of God. No place in all the Bible can one find a Biblical responsibility of those called to "check out," prove—in the sense of technical substantiation—the message delivered. It was accepted by faith on the part of all who were later commissioned to proclaim the same message. In like fashion it was proclaimed from the premise of faith. How is it possible for those called to hear by faith to effect a physical proving process whereby the faith manifested in the acceptance of the truth can now be technically substantiated and verified? If such were possible, faith would no longer be faith. Yet, we are emphatically taught: "the just shall live by faith."

The Bible clearly reveals no other way by which to understand the truth. It is accepted by faith. And faith is ". . . the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Miraculously God calls those foreordained to hear and understand. They respond. In time, however, if the faith is not kept strong and vibrant, the tendency of the human mind is to grow weary, return to its former carnality, and seek physical substantiation for concepts and beliefs. For this reason we are admonished through the book of Jude, ". . . it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (v. 3). What they once accepted joyously in faith, they were beginning to doubt. That doubt led to a host of church problems (Jude; 2 Pet. 2).

Christ's chosen apostles received the word directly from Him. They had finally come to accept it in faith. Following the ascension of Jesus Christ they were sent to proclaim the message which they had been given. Their domain of responsibility was limited—limited

to the Israelites. Several years later God made choice of the servant to be sent to the Gentiles. How was he taught? By what means did he receive the truth?

The Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul was specifically called of God (Acts 9:1–22). He was called to be a minister. Much knowledge was given to him almost instantly (vv. 20, 22). The people called of God heard Paul's message. By faith they responded. No hint of checking out Paul here. Those called of God knew; those living yet in carnality wanted to kill him. The people responded either by faith or by emotion.

Years later Paul recounted, synoptically, to church members in Asia Minor his call, conversion, and commission (Gal. 1:1–24). He was being called into question on the doctrine he taught. He emphatically stressed that the gospel he taught was not based on human study. It was the product of divine revelation. Those who questioned him, or in any way whatsoever sought to pervert the message were severely rebuked. Not one indication of any proving—technical substantiation. He received his training from Christ (Gal. 1:16–17; 1 Cor. 15:1–8). The people were required to believe by faith. As the called servant of God, he delivered (taught) what he had received (v. 3, and 1 Cor. 11:23). The truly called heard, understood, and responded to what Paul taught. The uncalled, carnal, could not understand. The chosen ones knew. There was no physical substantiation sought. Spiritual things cannot be proven, tested, by physical things. Paul was called to preach spiritual things which he had received miraculously (Acts 22:13–21). The things of God are not subject to man's verification. The called minister receives and is sent. The called servant—member—hears by faith and responds. As long as faith continues, no doubt surfaces. Both know and are firmly convinced.

That which was given to Paul was not subject to the evaluation of any man. On the contrary, it will form the basis of the future judgment of those who heard him (Rom. 2:16). Is it possible that the basis of man's future judgment is subject to man's approval? How absolutely lacking in reason or conceptual soundness.

Up to this time—from Adam to Paul—we have not found a single incident where the revealed truth of God was exposed to human testing—a testing of veracity (the test of value is another matter). How can carnal minds test spiritual things? The converted mind has no need to test. It knows and understands by faith.

Generally, people will accept the fact the servants of God mentioned in the Bible were divinely inspired. Their message was accurate. It is only the present which is perplexing

and troubling to them. But remember for those people who lived in the days of those servants, their time was the present to them. They found acceptance and belief just as difficult as we do today. Only faith will sustain us following the initial call to hear and know the truth. For the circumstance affecting the call and commission of the last day servant of God, we will wait for the December issue of the *Monthly Letter*. That part of the subject fits more precisely with the real purpose of the second letter. The intent of this present letter is to give sufficient historical evidence of how God calls and commissions and what the responsibility of the people who hear it is.

Please keep this letter handy so that it may be incorporated with the next issue on the subject. In that issue the reason for personal study and an explanation of texts frequently perverted to justify exaggerated claims of individual responsibility will be given.

Much love and respect to all. Remember, what is said is not a personal indictment against anyone. Upon the ministry falls the greater charge of faith and loyalty. Those who do not remain faithful to the initial doctrine—that which was received before the "work" could be done in the last days—have their reward coming. A steward of the truth must remain true to his call.

Again, love and respect to all,

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

Raymond C. Cole