

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
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January 1, 1977

Dear Brethren:

Another year has just passed. And what a year it has been. There have been many awe-inspiring incidents, as well as some disappointing circumstances. Living in the climactic times of the end, affords us the opportunity to see many of the events indicated for that period of time begin to transpire. Seeing many of these things come to pass is, at one and the same time, both inspirational and heart-rending. Inspirational to see some manifest loyalty to God, instead of to human beings or organizations; to see the courage and conviction of those who are honest and "awake" and to see the miraculous ways by which God intervenes in the lives of those who really do trust Him. Heart-rending because of the tragic things happening to those who have forgotten their call; because so few have any real love for the Truth of God which they once embraced, and because of the critical attitude toward anyone who sincerely desires to live by the Truth he was originally taught.

1977 is now a reality. Obviously, this will be a year of many unknowns. To a great extent we are the recipients of those things destined to happen in our time. Yet, in another very real way, we can partially dictate the conditions and circumstances which will affect our lives. By diligent effort in our studies and prayers, as well as fasting, we can determine the manner by which we must course this span of time. If we allow the inevitable to trouble and perplex us, we will only hazard our lives. Through the knowledge of God's will, the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit and a generous gift of faith, we can benevolently, confidently and in a Christian manner accept our lot, whatever that may be. As is always the case, the decision is inevitably ours. We may not always be the masters of our fate. But we can most assuredly determine how we accept those conditions with which we are daily confronted. It is precisely this decision which most affects our relationship with God. We are told, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" (Prov. 24:10). What God desires in us is the kind of determination which would accept any and all adversity rather than turn from the most priceless commodity we have ever been given — the unbelievable call to become the Sons of God, to be born into His own divine family. If we do not have the courage to accept and the faith to believe what God has done for us, we cannot hold Him responsible. Not only has God paid the price of sin through the suffering of His only Son and selected us, through a special call, to understand and remain faithful to that priceless way of life — but, in the final analysis, He also has given us the necessary power and help, through

the gift of the Holy Spirit, to overcome and ultimately inherit that awesome potential. Our part? To make the necessary determination in our lives to yield wholly to God. We are His workmanship. It takes much effort on our part to subdue the self and confidently step out, in faith, to perform those requirements imposed upon us — the basics of the very nature of God, that nature which we hope to ultimately possess. As we step out in faith, God unfalteringly aids in our achieving the highest possible goals. There is no other way of salvation. Faith is imperative.

But, faith in what?

We know, having studied God's Word, that ". . . faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). That we presently walk by faith, not by sight. And finally, that we can hope (manifest faith) only for that which we do not yet have. Why should we hope for that which we have obtained or can presently see?

From the above, it is obvious that faith is a conviction which is not demonstrable immediately. It is a belief to which we cling without scholarly substantiation. It defies scientific or historical proof. It is that conviction received as a result of God's call and a subsequent revelation of His way of life. That revealed truth is called "The Faith." In virtually every respect, it is contrary to the basics of life adopted by man. For instance, by natural law, how is it more blessed to give than to receive? Or, that he who refuses to tender aid to the needy subjects himself to penury? The rejection of spiritual values does not bring immediate results, necessarily. Many times, the results will come years later. God said, there are times during which the wicked will spread forth their influence and power as a bay tree spreads its limbs and leaves. But what will be the ultimate state of that man? The merits of a man are not found in how he begins, but rather in how he concludes his life. To live with that view in mind is a real manifestation of faith.

Having been called and given, by revelation, a priceless way of life, we will ultimately receive the rewards of power and greatness through obedience which is accomplished by faith. Many people have given their all for causes of this life. They manifest a kind of blind faith which transcends what many of God's own chosen exercise in the realm of spiritual reality.

We have lived through some of the most trying times. Many have been shattered by these conditions. Perhaps some are so disillusioned that it may be impossible for them to regain spiritual composure. The Bible is replete with warnings about such conditions which would adversely affect us. We need to focus our attention once again on Jesus Christ — that One who does not change. We need to firmly establish our thoughts in that way to which we

were initially called. If you cannot trust that which meant so much to you for years, how can you have confidence in any subsequent changes? Remember, the recent doctrinal changes did not form any part of your original belief or conviction.

At the time of your conversion, you had found the pearl of great price. You made many sacrifices to obtain it. Were all your initial efforts expended in vain? Why should any of us allow these physical circumstances to destroy our confidence in Jesus Christ? Why should we again become enamored with this life — with any of its alluring temptations? If not careful, too many will allow the trials and circumstances of this life to distort their conceptions and beliefs. If we will be honest with ourselves, we must recognize the fact that just such conditions have caused some to turn from the way of life to which they were called. They lost faith. But Jesus Christ does not change. You can be called to truth only. Therefore, by faith, you must be consistently loyal to the call God gave you. To fail to do so can mean only that you do not have a real love for the truth.

Do not allow things of this life to rob you of your "right" to the tree of life! God called you and gave you the most priceless possession anyone could be given. Hold to it as men would a physical "pearl of great price." Life everlasting does not consist of those things which men possess. The physical circumstances of this life are the medium through which God tries and tests us. He is desirous of determining just what is important to us. The true servants of God will forsake all today, to obtain the rewards of tomorrow. The physical was placed at man's disposal to provide for his necessities. They are not an end in themselves. Even the life of man is not an end in itself. Therefore, we may be tried with the ultimate. Each of us must answer the question, Is there anything, of the physical realm, which we would allow to dissuade us from pursuing the way of truth? Will it be position, health, glory, recognition or even life itself? The true Christian has given his all — including his life. The Apostle Paul put it this way: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb. 12:2-4). Why would anyone turn from such a reward? Because of the lack of faith — and that faith can come only as a result of much studying and praying (Rom. 10:13-18). Like Abraham, we must through faith see the reward — realize its certainty. Faith is a solid conviction — it is knowing that what God has promised us, He will bring to pass. Truly, if we can produce the evidence of our faith and conviction — of our love for the truth — without having to go through intense persecution (the purpose being to awake us to God's intent and plan), God has promised to keep us from the hour of such trial (Rev. 12:14; Dan. 12:1).

Brethren, let us believe unto salvation. Let us not deny Jesus Christ. To change or turn from that way of life given us, is to deny Christ. Christ is the Word of God resident within you. He does not change. If you were called and received Christ, you received the truth. If you received the truth, you cannot change it. If you allow any change, you have denied Christ. (The above does not preclude spiritual growth. This subject will be covered completely in a subsequent article.)

So many are troubled by the fact we are not performing an aggressive "Work" — a fulfillment of Matthew 28:19-20, or other texts. The very concept of a "Work" has so locked in most people, they are incapable of seeing other activities God has ordained for our time. Further, they fail to consider the fact no man may presume to commission himself to perform any specific work.

The Bible is replete with warnings against anyone's arrogating to himself title, position or responsibility. Whatever the work is, it must come from God. When God is ready to perform a specific work, He is capable of calling and commissioning. No individual, regardless of what may have happened to a previous servant of God, is allowed to assume — with God's blessings — any responsibility. God must appoint and send.

But, brethren, let us be most careful about assumptions predicated on the above statements. We have never said there will be no future activity. God has indicated a number of activities which are to transpire in the last days. As of the present, we do not know when. And it would be folly for any one of us to assume he is called and chosen by God to perform any specific work. At the appropriate time, God will make His will known. There will be no doubt! For the present, we need to learn to have faith and be patient. God is still on the job. He can ordain and send at any time He so wishes. Our part is to be ready — ready in heart and mind. Let us forever erase from mind the idea that man can figure out these duties for himself. That is precisely the problem of the last days. Far too many men are assuming just such responsibility (Matt. 24:5, 24). The Bible makes it abundantly clear what God thinks of such assumption. We must never become involved in such rationalizations. Be sure of this! God is most capable of calling, training and sending any one whom He may choose to use. We do not need to assume. Consider, if you were a highly responsible individual, I am sure you would not appreciate a subordinate's arrogating to himself, by assumption, any activity he may wish. This is just how God feels about it. We must leave His responsibilities up to Him. He is perfectly capable of handling them.

We need not be distressed about the "Work" situation. God is always at work. Though there may not be a specific work at any given time, the overall

work of salvation continues. (For a clearer explanation, please read our article entitled, "What Is the Work of God?") For the present, this work of His may be of greater significance than any other activity which could be performed. So few are willing to exercise faith and be loyal to the way of life given to them. Through the trials and conditions of these days, most faltered. They were bankrupt in faith. They manifested little respect for the truth which God had given them. Under such circumstances, it would seem aiding and instructing such bewildered people is of awesome significance! After all, the greatest purpose of all is to be born into the Kingdom of God. To perform some specific work which does not directly relate to this awesome purpose must, at best, be secondary. We are grateful to be allowed by God, by a set of most unique circumstances, to help troubled and perplexed people. We are working long and hard to answer the hundreds of questions generated by all the changes and activities of the past few years. Articles are coming out at a very rapid rate. Special tapes are being made to help distressed people. Surely, no one can say this is not a work. But, for the present, that is all God has made known. I say made known by God, because that is precisely what has happened. We have sought not one individual. Our purpose, from the beginning, was to leave up to God the calling and sending of troubled people — and God has done just that. Those who have come, have come because they were sincerely seeking explanations of the many difficulties encountered recently. Once God has sent them, we are morally obligated to aid in any way we can. For that reason, we do work long and hard to have the necessary material and study helps available. Let us all be grateful for what God has given to us.

There are many unique and specific activities God will perform in the days to come. When, we do not know. Let us have patience and wait on God. He can and will perform in His own time. Let us be about the business of our Father which He has given to us for the present. It is a most demanding responsibility, in itself.

You have a work to perform right now! What should you be doing? This responsibility should be of far greater interest to you than wondering about what God has not yet done.

What, then, is required of you now? 1) Hold fast to the truth. A far more difficult task than most realize. By nature, human beings are impatient. They want to see things happen now. We are the "now" generation. Yet, Israel, our example, when at the very threshold of safety and at the same time under the most trying circumstances, was asked to wait patiently. Why? So that they might see the salvation of the Lord. God's purpose is most frequently accomplished in just such times and conditions. God is never under pressure. He has all power. It is never too late for Him. But impatient man must learn, by hard circumstances, the divine virtue of

patience. If all consistently went well with us — if we were never confronted with humanly impenetrable obstacles — we would never learn to trust implicitly and wait patiently for God. How magnificent are His ways!

2) We must be consistent. Vacillation is a sign of weakness and doubt. At some point in our lives, we need to arrive at settled conclusions — in our case, the revealed truth — from which we will not veer. All of us are aware of people who are as changeable as the wind. They have become the object of comparisons. No one trusts them. On the other hand, everyone trusts and admires someone who is consistent — the same in temperament and belief, regardless of conditions, circumstances or other factors of adversity. But no one admires "fair-weather" friends. Christ had much to say about such characteristics. Did He not say, ". . . if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" They were inconsistent. But we are obligated to behave consistently (day by day), regardless of conditions. We must manifest the same temperament daily. No circumstance manifests valued consistency more than the manner by which we live — in the principles of our conduct and belief. It is on this basis Jesus Christ said He was the same yesterday, today and forever. If we are to possess His character, we must become just as consistent in our conduct and belief.

3) Once we have made requisite resolves in our lives, we then must manifest another vital ingredient. We are told not to become "weary in well doing." Human tendency is to lose interest when action is not apparent. But God requires faith — the belief, even in times of inactivity, that His purposes will not vary or change. Our "well doing" must be the constant pursuit of the nature and character which God requires for entrance into His Kingdom. It is in such consistent practices, patience is shown. Therefore, let us never lose patience. Let us develop the necessary faith to inherit life. For we can prove ourselves only by continuing faithfully in that way which God gave us.

4) Next we need to overcome our own personal defects — defects of character and attitude. An energetic pursuit of this personal mastery is directly related to our love of the truth and unflagging belief that God will keep His promises. It is predicated on the firm belief, He did give us a way of life and we can trust Him implicitly that we were not taught error instead of truth.

Brethren, let us not blame God for the difficulties of these past few years. Changes have come because of human defects — not because God failed to perform that which He promised. He promised to give us the truth — the very purpose for His sending the Holy Spirit. Consistency in your faith and belief is a manifestation of your confidence and trust in God.

5) Watch and be sober! Why? No people are more openly the pray of divisive and subtle influences of Satan, than are those who love and cherish the truth they were taught. If deceptive intents and purposes were announced before applied, few of us would have any difficulty resisting them. But such is not the case. Deception comes in a very pleasing and acceptable package. It comes in ways which appeal to our desires and wants. The influence is often seen in rationalizations which will permit us to do or say the things we secretly want to do or say. However, never does the real intent or purpose of those rationalizations come to light. No one would admit such subtlety of motive. Every effort is made, on the part of the individual, to make the whole endeavor appear to be predicated on a premise of sincerity and honesty. But let us remember: Truth does not change. If we had the Truth of God, the way remains consistently the same — regardless of the times and circumstances, regardless of what may be happening in our lives. Only two avenues are sincere and without hypocrisy. The "hot" way (Rev. 3:15). A dedication to the truth which you were given — a refusal to depart from it. Or, the "cold" way. Though completely wrong, this way has a premise of honesty. The way of one who knows what the truth is but refuses to make any further effort to conform. All other ways are the manifestations of some form of rationalization or deception. There is no way to justify any one of them. Therefore, brethren, the called and elect of God, let no form of deception, human rationalization, take you out of the Truth of God. By carefully watching, you can manifest the consistent, unswerving character of Jesus Christ and His Father. You will not be taken in by any "justifications" which mask themselves under the guise of "new truth" or "reasons" for rejecting the truth which you once held.

In summary, we are presently completing a series of articles which will help you to understand the conditions and circumstances of these past few years. By carefully reading them, you will be equipped to handle the influences of Satan — to resist all the temptations which will come to depart from the truth God gave to you. Nothing can be more important than "holding fast" to that way of life. It is God's priceless gift to you. Do not count it a thing of little value. For, indeed, it is priceless.

The six articles in this series are designed to explain why we left the Worldwide Church of God, why we refuse to depart from the originally revealed truth and why and by what authority we presently exist. You will find them "must" reading. We are sure they will help you to understand, more comprehensively, just what has happened and what you should do about it.

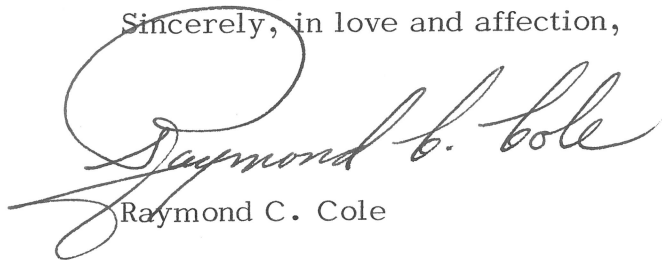
One final word — a word about the tapes. Many are very conscientious about returning the tapes. They are aware of the urgent need for their week-by-week usage. Each time we do not receive sufficient tapes in the mail for

a new mailing, we are forced to purchase new tapes to fill the requests for the weekly Sabbath tapes. However, some have not returned any of the tapes — though they have received them for a considerable period of time. For the present I want to make only this general appeal to all. Please take as much time as needed to thoroughly digest the material. Then, after you have completed your study, please return the tapes to us. By your returning the tapes, we can effect a cyclical pattern and thereby be afforded the opportunity of continually sending the weekly Sabbath tapes to you.

Let me again thank you for allowing us the privilege of serving you. We count it a great blessing. Thank you for your continued love and mercy — your manifest kindness. It is our hope to see many of you periodically throughout the year — especially at the times of the annual feasts. No schedules are yet worked out; but as God provides, we will be journeying out to see you from time to time. Until such time presents itself, we will count on your continued loyalty — loyalty to truth and purpose. We dedicate ourselves to your service. As always, if there are other ways by which we can help you, please do not hesitate to write to us about such needs.

Our deepest love and respect to you, always. May God's great and generous blessings always be yours as you more perfectly yield to Him.

Sincerely, in love and affection,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely".

Raymond C. Cole

Our Trip to Switzerland

Many have asked about the trip to Switzerland. For that reason, I have decided to make the summary of that trip a part of the general letter to the brethren in January 1977.

Myra and I spent three weeks with our brethren in Switzerland. We met all the brethren there who have elected to remain loyal to the truth which God gave to them. We were accompanied by our good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Myron Dressler.

What a joy to spend time with those people! They are thoroughly dedicated to the way which they were taught. They are most sincere. What a feeling of confidence and trust. Their hearts are right.

Without mentioning names, for obvious reasons, I will state I had the opportunity of discussing current events, their feelings and convictions, and of answering many specific Bible questions of each one who attends the small, but warm and courageous, group meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland. They are your brethren in every way. They do earnestly desire an interest in your prayers as they frequently mention you in their prayers.

Being there for three weeks, I had the opportunity of speaking to them six times. Mr. Aviolat had arranged for two meetings on each of the three Sabbaths we were present. Using translators is a far more difficult task than one might initially realize. It is imperative to maintain two different thought patterns. While remaining cognizant of what was previously said, the speaker must be planning his future comments. It was a most fatiguing experience. But, at the same time, a most encouraging and inspirational one.

Relevant to subject matter, I took the time to explain to them just what happened in the Church, from a Biblical premise. As all of you are aware, I am not interested in villification of individuals. Nothing is achieved by such practices. There are true principles, from a Biblical vantage point, by which to explain just what happened. If one does not act on the basis of truth, his foundation is weak, indeed. No one has remained faithful to God who did not act for the right purposes. Those who have reveled in "garbage" have not found the value of principle and true conviction.

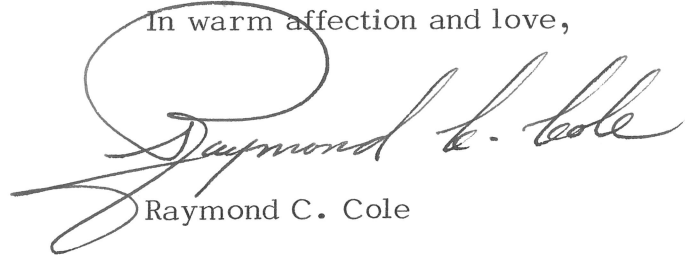
After taking a total of four sermons to explain the happenings (a total of two Sabbaths), I began a series on "prophecy," what its purpose is and what we can expect. This series will be greatly amplified in the current series which I am covering via tape, to be sent to the entire mailing list.

There are many interesting things under consideration. But, it would be best to announce them as they materialize. For the present, let me state: There is a very real, fledgling activity going on in Switzerland at this very moment. Weekly Sabbath services are conducted. Our articles are being translated into the French language. Counseling and a real ministry are being carried on. Indeed, we are greatly blessed. God has provided everything which was needful to begin the small work there. From that small beginning, we do not know what God will add as the days and weeks pass. However, this much we do know: The future of every phase of the activity God has given to us, entirely depends on our prayers, fastings and concern.

They are with us, as we are with them. The future is God's.

It was their desire that I should convey their special love and affection to you all. Their prayers are always with you.

In warm affection and love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the phrase "In warm affection and love,". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large loop at the beginning of the word "Raymond".

Raymond C. Cole