

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
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August 1, 1977

Dear Brethren:

A very tardy greetings. Eventually, I hope to see our operation so streamlined that all activities are completed on schedule. But — as I am sure you all can understand — this will be a major accomplishment, considering the fact there are two of us to perform the initial work. We can heartily thank God for the addition of dedicated personnel who willingly pick up the slack at the secondary level. God knows exactly what He is doing. None of us complain about the work load. We are grateful God has deemed us worthy of performing such a service for Him. Your patience toward us, relative to occasional tardiness, will be greatly appreciated. Sometimes, with the press of urgent duties, it is impossible to do everything at one and the same time.

For this month, the letter will be two-faceted. First, a cardinal spiritual principle will be covered. Second, basic instruction relative to the Feast of Tabernacles will be given. With a change of area comes the necessity of instruction revision.

FIRST: WHY DO WE NOT ENFORCE DOCTRINE?

God is the Creator of all that exists. Innate in that creation is design and purpose.

It is not too difficult for most human beings to observe and understand the physical purposes of the biological creation. In part, he understands the reasons for animals. The reasons for land masses. The underlying significance of geographic locations of oceans, seas, lakes and rivers. He can understand the interrelated purposes for all vegetation. Yet, with all this learning — accumulated knowledge — he has never understood the purpose for his own existence! The "whys" of suffering, experience, sorrow, death, etc.

Why can he not understand? Because these purposes can be understood spiritually only.

In the beginning, God created man — male and female created He them. He is the designer of marriage and the natural procreation of children. From this first union proceeded the millions of children who have filled up the earth.

Briefly, let us understand, biographically, the course of human existence. It is imperative to understand this history to comprehend the reasons for our initial question.

From Adam and Eve came natural children. They were devoid of the Spirit. They were animated, influenced and impelled by those physical things which affect them. They were subject to their own natures — natures which were, by design, completely anti-God and flamboyantly disobedient.

These natural peoples populated the earth. In course of time, as predetermined by God, the natural people — because of iniquity and rebellion — had to be separated and thus slowed-down in their aggregate efforts — aided and abetted by an archenemy, Satan the Devil — to conspire against the long-range plans and purposes of God.

Initially, the earth was being peopled by individuals. Yet, designed in the initial marriage relationship (Adam and Eve) was the potential of nationality. In process of time, these peoples were separated into their respective nations.

The history thus far is this: Man, individually, could not be obedient to basic and fundamental instructions received from a benevolent and kind Father and Instructor.

The only oneness or accord (superficial, at that) they could achieve was opposition to God, their Creator. The success of such bonds is, at "best," short-lived and transitory. History makes it abundantly clear that "togetherness" of any peoples is limited to the time and existence of a common enemy. In this case, because of their carnal natures and the adverse influence of Satan, that one common enemy was thought to be God. No, they did not say it was God. Surreptitiously, Satan transferred the blame (in their thinking) from the name of God to His way of life. But, natural men did not realize that the rejection of God's Way of Life was tantamount to the rejection of the personage of God. To reject love is to reject God. Because God is love.

Many years after man individually failed — but in accordance with the pre-Creation plan of God — God created a nation, hammered out by the caldron of bondage and servitude. Because of the severity of experience, the people were responsive to an offer of freedom. This physical freedom was undergirded by a greater and more intrinsic freedom: freedom from mental anxiety — fear of enslavement, famine and want, despoliation, illness and injury to family. The people commenced with a high hand. They were optimistic and excited. But, they lacked a very vital ingredient: faith. Without faith, they were not consistent in their pursuits and attitudes. It was not long before the people, as a whole, rebelled against their own new-found freedom. They wanted to return to Egypt.

Despite this negativism of Israel, God continued His efforts to establish them as a nation. They were given a promised inheritance — a land of superabundance. They were given His spiritual Law — codified so that it could act as a constitution to the new nation. Angels were assigned to protect all ramparts. Kings who attempted to take advantage were rebuked.

What else could they have sought? They were possessors of every providential blessing. They inherited the most beautiful and glorious form of government possible.

Yet, the balance of the "Old Testament" (earlier writings) is a sobering chronicle of a nation in defiance of God — going into captivity, temporarily repenting, being reassigned to lost possession and subsequently going back into captivity. Finally, God temporarily rejected them as a people.

Historically, we have proof that man individually and as a welded national entity cannot be obedient to God.

Where to now?

Surely God's purposes — thought out before the creation of the world — have not been thwarted and thereby rendered futile.

Indeed, not!

In the beginning of the "end time," Jesus Christ — as an individual — was sent to this earth. He fulfilled many purposes. He was the Word of God, personified — that is, the actual Word made flesh. That Word was basically composed of five parts: the spiritual laws, commandments, statutes, judgments and ways. A history of human defiance and rebellion, individually. A history of human defiance and rebellion, nationally. The institution of a system by which man could be forgiven and reinstated in his national, social order. And the promise of a system by which his whole nature could be changed and he could thereby be afforded the opportunity of being born into a different order — an order of the Spirit, not of the flesh.

Jesus was all that, personified? Indeed! He was The Way living in the flesh. He was the totality of human corruption — living in the flesh (II Cor. 5:21). Yet without personal sin. He took all man's sins upon Himself. He died because of those sins — not His own, for He lived sinlessly. As a sacrifice for us, He became the sum total of that which is required for our cleansing and redemption. These additional ordinances are not abrogated, in the sense of writing them off as a past experience which was used for a specific span of time or because they were ineffective. Absolutely not. They were, and are, a pictorial example of what Christ had to and does

assume as a requirement for our cleansing. Christ was all of that physical redemptive system, personified, in the flesh. By the viable life of Christ — our only hope — living in us, we have active and living within us The Way of Life — obedience, the necessary sacrifice and redemptive offering for forgiveness and reinstatement into the spiritual purpose of God, the physical life lived without mistake. He was made flesh, after the order of Adam, and the hope of a basic nature change. Christ was and is the fulfillment of all. In us, He is obedient to the eternal way. He cleanses and washes us from all our guilt through His own blood. He was the totality of God's Word, living in the flesh.

In Christ's physical existence, He not only lived an individual life, but He was mysteriously the totality of Israel in the flesh. Therefore, as we individually are called, we are inducted into the body of Christ — the Church and Israel. The Church is spiritual Israel. It is, at one and the same time, the body of Christ.

Now, why do we not enforce doctrine — the same way of life given to ancient Israel (Heb. 4:2)?

What was the basic requirement imposed upon man from the beginning? Moses was inspired of God to write: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its [sin's] desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen. 4:7, RSV). Paul said, "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him [God] who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself [man] also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:20-21).

By nature, man could not obey the eternal, spiritual way of life. He was not created subject to that way. Rather, he is subject to his own carnal, rebellious nature. But God's purpose is that man must gain the mastery over his own nature. It is for that very reason Christ came, lived and died for us. We cannot of ourselves effect such mastery. But Christ in us can. He is the hope of our salvation — salvation from ourselves.

Individually and collectively, human beings could not obey God. A change of character is necessary. That change is what the Christian life is all about. It is not a change of the eternal ways of God, but a change of character in those called to understand and live that way of life.

If each of us stands firmly and stalwartly in that way of life, we are collectively united in oneness of purpose and obedience. It is the only absolute way of accord, harmony and peace.

God is the author of free-moral agency. It is absolutely essential to the development of spiritual character. We can collectively stand only if we can individually manifest unalterable character.

Any interruption on the part of man — regardless of whom — is an arrogant tampering with the plan and purpose of God. Yet, there is definitely authority in the body. What is the purpose?

To fully understand requires a survey of God's purposes, revealed in the establishment of the New Testament Church. We will begin with the appearance of Jesus Christ.

Christ came as a fulfillment of all things. He is the epitome of God's plan and purpose.

Jesus Christ was the very Word of God personified. He was the personification of absolute obedience — a living example. He was commissioned by God to perform a work. He came teaching only what the Father had given Him in commandment.

At one and the same time, Christ was the embodiment of Israel, the Church, the life, the resurrection: of everything. He was all in all.

While living this comprehensive life, He — having been given such authority by God, the Father — set in motion the system by which mankind was to be redeemed. He did not elect to do it all personally. Therefore, as He was sent by the Father, so He sent chosen representatives — ministers — empowered to proclaim that way of life and fulfill other ministerial requirements. That ministry was ordered and commissioned to preach the exact same message He was empowered to proclaim by the Father. Then, since man's allotted lifespan would not allow one generation to exist until the time of the second coming, provision had to be made for transition of that responsibility. Compare Matthew 16:18; 28:19-20; John 17:18 and Ephesians 4:11-13. That was, and is, the New Testament ministry of reconciliation.

The appointment of a ministry was for the purpose of preaching the truth as a witness. Then, as God calls, to feed the sheep.

Innate within this call is the "right" to accept or reject. However, any rejection does not allow for a second call. Such cannot and does not exist (Rom. 11:29; Heb. 6:4 and 10:26).

With the stakes so high, why does not God want the people forced into obedience? Because the whole concept of enforcement is contrary to character. Obedience requires faith. And we should — indeed, must — live up to that faith (Rom. 14:23).

That faith can come only by revelation. It is a spiritual dimension. And that revelation has, and will, come only through the appointed ministry. Once received, it must be judiciously guarded. It is delivered — made available — only once.

All this makes it abundantly clear why no one should be forced to live up to any standard. Character demands personal initiative. None of us will ever be allowed to point a finger at others — regardless of station or responsibility. You alone must decide to act on faith for healing. For the courage to reject this world — family, friends, social customs and all other components.

It is the ministry's responsibility to powerfully and convincingly proclaim the truth. Your responsibility is dual. You must accept or reject. And, if you accept, it is your secondary responsibility to examine yourself daily and thereby grow into perfect character.

You have heard the truth from the beginning of your call! You accepted it! It is imperative that you go on to perfection. Do not, for any reason, begin to slip back into unacceptable concepts or lifestyles.

The only areas in which the ministry does possess control authority are those areas which affect others. True liberty does not afford any individual the right to be divisive, injurious or condemnatory of others. The peace of the body must be maintained. Act upon your own faith. Such action does not require contention and bitterness. All we need do is simply remember lines of responsibility. The ministry must preach the truth given. You must continue to accept or reject. You must live in accord with the faith given you. Ultimate oneness is achieved as we all allow God's Spirit of oneness to flow freely in our lives. There is but one Spirit. One doctrine. One God. One truth and way of life. Contained in that Holy Spirit is no argumentation, no bitterness, no resentments — only love, peace, tolerance, understanding and godly concern.

Enforce doctrine in your own personal life. If each of us does that, it will enable us all to live completely unified. It is the only way of oneness.

SECOND: FEAST OF TABERNACLES '77 INSTRUCTIONS

Registration

As in the past two years, you will be making your own reservations. All the information essential for this responsibility was sent to you earlier.

If in any way we can assist you with reservations, please do not be reluctant to ask us. We will be most happy and thankful for the opportunity.

Site

This year we are scheduled to meet in the National Guard Armory, situated on the southern edge of Newport, Oregon. The building is quite a

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nice one for this type of convocation. Though I do not have the actual address, it is prominently located adjacent to the Chamber of Commerce building on South 101 Highway.

Recreation

Needless to say, there is an abundance of recreation. Emphasis is, of course, on the ocean and beaches.

There are a number of other types of activities and interests. I am sure there is sufficient to satisfy all.

Weather

Coast weather can be quite unpredictable. However, September and early October can be some of the very best available on the Oregon coast. But for your health and comfort, when selecting clothing to bring, count on almost anything. Be prepared. But pray that God will bless us as greatly this year as He did in the past two years. When it is beautiful, it is absolutely superb.

Evenings will not be as cool as we experienced in Redmond. By our prayers and the manifestation of faith, I am sure God will give us what is best for our good.

Meetings

The schedule is enclosed. As you can see, we are limiting the number of evening meetings. The overall number of meetings we have scheduled this year will be kept as a constant for future feasts.

Annual Meeting

As required by law, we will have our annual Church Business Meeting immediately following the P. M. service of Thursday, September 29, 1977. The beginning time should be about 3:00 P. M.

Then, a brief Board Meeting will be scheduled for either Friday P. M., September 30, or Monday P. M., October 3, 1977. Time and date will be indicated in the early part of the Feast.

Family Day and Night

We are designating Sunday, October 2, as a day of family activity. It will culminate in the usual evening of family activity. Schedules of activities

will be made up. Mr. Tom Lawrence, of Portland, will be coordinator for all these activities. As in the past, the Family Night will be under the direction of George King, although he will coordinate with Mr. Tom Lawrence.

In conclusion, let us all redouble our efforts to serve God. We must not grow weary with well doing. For our good, God set apart these special annual occasions. He commanded our attendance. If at all possible, we should be present. Time seems to be so short. Conditions are growing worse yearly. Of course, we do not know the specific year(s) of the end-time prophetic events. Yet, Peter was inspired to write that only those who have lost faith will begin to say the general time cannot be understood.

Surely, we all need the love and encouragement of one another — more now than ever before. Each of you is a vital link. In a sense, now you are the chosen. First, called — but by the manifestation of courage, faith and conviction, you are now chosen. Let us go on to perfection. Let us remain faithful and loyal — to be found doing the works of God at the time of Christ's second coming (Matt. 24:42-51). Holy Days come in seasons.

I know distances are great. Because of the need for greater second-tithe outlays, it may require coming every other year only. God knows the conditions and circumstances.

There is another way to cut costs. God commands all males to appear before Him. Perhaps, if the need exists, only the husband could come certain years and the family on alternate years.

I think all will agree, there is a major loss by not being present for the Feast. We all should pray for the health and financial needs of each other.

Our love and prayers are with you always. Please take care as you journey to the Feast.

In deep love and respect,



Raymond C. Cole

P.S. As a special note: Our travel agency has been able to greatly help a number of you — effecting substantial savings. I do not want to make it a habit to advertise for anyone. But in this respect, I feel it mutually warrants a mention of the agency. It is: Viking Travel Agency; 1234 Pearl Street; Eugene, Oregon 97401. Call collect (503) 686-1234. Contact: Anne. If not available, any of the other personnel is most capable. R.C.C.