

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

Only casual observation of conditions and circumstances as they exist today compels the thinking mind to ponder: Why such economic disparity, individually and nationally? Why the utmost unbelievable geographic diversity? Why the apparent favor shown to some and the paucity of favor to others? Why health problems which stagger the minds of civilized men? Is all that we see about us a mere accident? Did we, as human beings, have something to do with the heartrending, traumatic, and seemingly unanswerable conditions which we are forced to confront and reluctantly accept today?

As we have seen so many times previously, this earth and its environment was recreated—see Psalm 104:30—for the habitation of man (Psalm 115:16). When God created this physically beautiful planet, and the entire glory in which we reside, He had an absolutely awesome plan, purpose, in mind. This earth in its recreated beauty and abundance was a fabulous gift from an unbelievably benevolent God—the God and Sustainer of Israel. And in a more spectacular way, the spiritually chosen of God today—through a gift of the Spirit—possess riches and confidence which excel all physical blessings combined. They have learned to trust God. And, in that trust is found incomprehensible freedom.

The natural mind of man cannot understand the things of the Spirit. They are above all his powers of comprehension. What, therefore becomes evident is this: There are at least two ways of thinking. First, the way of the carnal mind. It is convinced that the way to "get" and to "have" is to acquire and atone for the self. It seems very practical and logical to the natural mind, does it not? Yet, there, indeed, is a much more excellent way as we shall soon see.

But first, let us observe and contemplate some of the ways of the carnal mind.

## The Natural Outlook of Men

Generally speaking, the man who has not accumulated great wealth, and thereby power and prestige, is held in contempt and disrespect (Ecclesiastes 9:14–16). What does he know? Of what value is his counsel or thoughts? Even his presence on earth is considered a waste of resources and a burden to the environment. How frequently we are oppressed with such dribble today. Indeed, there is nothing new under the sun. Human nature is the same today as it was in the days of Solomon and other authors of God's Word. Evil-minded men are incessantly working on plots to subdue the poor and less fortunate (Isaiah 32:6–7). As God implies in many places in His word, the vile person finds limited happiness only when exercising some kind of control and exploitation of his prey.

No nation of this world could have had a more glorious foundation than did Israel. Called of God out of the midst of another nation and personally regaled by Him in myriad ways, she was gifted with a divine constitution, borders and property protected by a heavenly army. She was promised life and health as a people—nationally and individually—along with virtually countless other divine favors. Yet, in just a few short years all the people had plummeted to the baseness mentioned in Jeremiah 5:1–20 (*The Living Bible*):

Run up and down through every street in all Jerusalem; search high and low and see if you can find one fair and honest man! Search every square, and if you find just one, I'll not destroy the city! Even under oath, they lie. O Lord, you will take naught but truth. You have tried to get them to be honest, for you have punished them, but they won't change! You have destroyed them but they refuse to turn from their sins. They are determined, with faces hard as rock, not to repent. Then I said, "But what can we expect from the poor and ignorant? They don't know the ways of God. How can they obey him?" I will go now to their leaders, the men of importance, and speak to them, for they know the ways of the Lord and the judgment that follows sin. But they too had utterly rejected their God. So I will send upon them the wild fury of the "lion from the forest"; the "desert wolves" shall pounce upon them, and a "leopard" shall lurk around their cities so that all who go out shall be torn apart. For their sins are very many; their rebellion against me is great. How can I pardon you? For even your children have turned away, and worship gods that are not gods at all. I fed my people until they were fully satisfied, and their thanks was to commit adultery wholesale and to gang up at the city's brothels. They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's mate. Shall I not punish them for this? Shall I not send my vengeance on such a nation as this? Go down the rows of the vineyards and destroy them! But leave a scattered few to live. Strip the branches from each vine, for they are not the Lord's. For

the people of Israel and Judah are full of treachery against me, says the Lord. They have lied and said, "He won't bother us! No evil will come upon us! There will be neither famine nor war! God's prophets," they say, "are windbags full of words with no divine authority. Their claims of doom will fall upon themselves, not us!" Therefore this is what the Lord God of Hosts says to his prophets: Because of talk like this I'll take your words and prophecies and turn them into raging fire and burn up these people like kindling wood. See, I will bring a distant nation against you, O Israel, says the Lord—a mighty nation, an ancient nation whose language you don't understand. Their weapons are deadly; the men are all mighty. And they shall eat your harvest and your children's bread, and your flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, yes, and your grapes and figs; and they shall sack your walled cities that you think are safe. But I will not completely blot you out. So says the Lord. And when your people ask, "Why is it that the Lord is doing this to us?" then you shall say, "You rejected him and gave yourselves to other gods while in your land; now you must be slaves to foreigners in their lands." Make this announcement to Judah and to Israel.

The plight of Israel is a dire warning and illustration of that which will befall all men who pursue the way of carnal nature. Though they are not cognizant of their incarceration, they are imprisoned with unyielding bonds of restraint and deprivation. It is simply a different spirit.

### **The Root of Babylonianism—a Spirit of Greed and Selfishness**

No one contends with the evident fact men are motivated and driven by a spirit of purpose and determination. They will work tirelessly to achieve mundane goals. Yet, one must ask, why do only a few realize even a partial fulfillment of those objectives? Did most fail to work sufficiently long and hard? In the final analysis, did those with more realistic purposes fare any worse at the conclusion of life? Why do some work a lifetime only to lose everything in the end? There is something wrong, unbelievably wrong, with such an orientation. The called of God must understand why!

From the beginning of time, the spirit of greed has dominated the thinking of men. Since the beginning, they have paid a horrendous price even though they don't realize it. The cause of their woes has not been seen and accepted. In the day of that recognition, joyous exultation and tears of relief will prevail (Isaiah 14:1–32). In the day God takes an active hand in effecting a whole change of heart and mind, it will be done. Therein lies the confidence and assurance of the called. They know and firmly believe in the providence of

God and His benevolent purpose. In that glorious day, all people, regardless of station, will experience for the first time the opposing spirit—the spirit of self-sacrifice and giving.

Babylonianism is a kingdom. It is an orientation of carnality. It is the opposing way to that which is called the way of life. The called are chosen to come out of the way of Babylon. The spirit of Babylon is the spirit of the god of this world, Satan. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of life, the antithesis of the spirit of Satan. What is the premise of man's natural orientation to life? In a very concise but far-reaching statement, the Apostle Paul was inspired to say, the *love* of money is the root of *all* evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Interestingly, as though to punctuate the matter, Paul's usage of the word "money" here in 1 Timothy is the last usage of the word in the Bible. Could such placement indicate its limits? Its power will come to an abrupt end; the opposing side of the spirit of Babylon, God's way, will exist for all eternity.

The physical nations of Israel wrote lessons for God's people today. They could have been the national recipients of all the promised blessing of God—blessings which would have continued if obedience on their part had prevailed. Instead, they turned to the natural carnal way which in turn resulted in the fulfillment of promised curses (Deuteronomy 28:43–52). Prosperity and abundant blessings would befall foreigners and Israel would be reduced in every way. How many today are paying, in some oblique way, the price of that ancient curse? For a nation to fall nationally, it must also be reduced individually. In all probability there are specific areas which relate to that curse. Until God reveals specifics we simply cannot know the historical premise of that which we are experiencing. Our lack of understanding does not alter the fact that such events are occurring in our very presence. The fundamental orientation—Babylonianism—of these last days is destined to fall. Until the actuality occurs, the initial stages of the event can be very traumatic and unsettling.

What is imperative is this: As the chosen of God, have we ourselves effected the necessary changes of orientation? Are any of us still living on the basis of that orientation of greed—the love of money, a manifestation of insufficient faith? Christ addressed this matter when here on earth—about 2,000 years ago.

### **The Way of Babylon Antithetical to Faith**

In Matthew 6:19–34, Christ made statements which must surely agitate those who are physically oriented. He said:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where

thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

The prioritization given to one's life is strongly indicative of that individual's orientation, the fruits of his heart and mind. A Gentile is one who exists without God and hope. Genuine riches are manifested in faith—a wealth which cannot be destroyed or abused. Great care must be exercised by the child of God. Deceptive compromises are so natural to the carnal mind. Simply put, the two fundamental requirements are: 1) Seek a good, personal relationship with God daily. 2) Manifest a growing faith and trust in the Heavenly Father. Such an individual is indeed very wealthy. Nothing can take from the necessary provisions of life. Life is both secure and abundant.

God wants us to be rich. But such wealth can come and be sustained only by pursuing the proper orientation of life. The great blessings of God came to spiritual giants of the past only as a result of evidencing that confidence and assurance in God. The failure of Israel—both nationally and individually—is a double testimony of the veracity of God's word. Successful blessings result when one is faithful, and a great loss of blessings when one turns to the natural way. The force of the lessons intended is mitigated due to a Satanic

deception: Due to a loss of identity, Israelites do not even know who they are. For that reason most people are not aware of that One from whom all their blessings come. In like manner they are not cognizant of the source of their problems.

When God blesses, He does so with purpose in mind. Out of His great abundance He lavishly—where warranted—gives to His chosen. Such gifts constitute a major test. Will the recipients be as kind and benevolent with that which God has given to them? Solomon spoke of this fundamental principle (Proverbs 10:4; 13:7).

Money is a power—for good or evil. Prosperity is a means of testing. In fact most conditions experienced are a source of testing. Solomon well understood this concept (Prov. 30:7–9). Christ illustrated it when the rich young man came to Him (Matthew 19:16–30). Money and power are not in and of themselves wrong. God is the owner of heaven and earth. What did He do with much of it? He gave—gave it to men. Christ existed in wealth and splendor. But, for purpose He emptied Himself and thereby became poor for our benefit. Now He exists in even greater and more resplendent glory. The chosen servants of God who trusted and believed Him, retained their power and wealth. Those who did not trust God—Israel for instance—lost their greatness and wealth. The question: Have we learned and understood the principles involved? The author of these words has found that they work, far beyond what could have been expected. The Bible is a succinct recording of the spiritual principles of God and His character as well as a history of their application. Peter was made to comprehend the value of God's way (Matthew 19:27–29). Again, the value of God's way was impressed upon the disciples (John 12:5–8). An example in the ministry of Paul illustrates the spiritual value of God's allowing both abundance and want (Romans 15:15–28).

As indicated earlier, God is Creator and Owner of heaven and earth. Man, an inhabitator of the earth which God gave to him, can neither add to the wealth, stature, and power of his Maker, nor subtract from Him. We can glorify God only by recognizing His Word and purpose (Isaiah 66:1–2). Therefore, the attitude with which we respond to God is most significant to Him (2 Corinthians 9:1–15; Luke 6:20–38; Romans 12:1–21). The object of our largesse should be those in need, never those who would add to our own self-image (Proverbs 14:20; 17:5; 19:4; 18:23; 28:27; Ecclesiastes 5:8). For the poor to forget his station and thereby abuse others in want is the epitome of hypocrisy (Proverbs 28:3). Orientation and purpose are pivotal. To do anything from a wrong motive is simply not acceptable in the sight of God (1 Corinthians 13:3). Here we are reminded of the man who once wrote emphatically regarding the obligation to tithe: "God promised to bless me greatly, and I am going to give Him just so much time to fulfill that promise." We could have written to him assuring him that his exercise was futile. With his attitude, he was not going to be blessed. The truly called find great satisfaction, contentment, and happiness in the

privilege of responding to the instructions of a benevolent Father. It is always a joyous experience to see the literal manifestation of acceptable faith and conviction (2 Corinthians 9:1–15). A historical example illustrates God's concern for mankind Please read Deuteronomy 23:3–8.

### **Abuse of Power Not Acceptable**

The greater part of David's sin with Bathsheba was the fact that he, being rich and greatly endowed, took advantage of one who was poor and lacking in many respects (2 Samuel 12:1–15). God does not look kindly upon anyone who takes advantage of others. By extension, surely this includes the abundance which God has given us if we fail to use it in faith and benevolence. Such action is a manifestation of the divine nature. God called us to come out of the selfish orientation to partake of His way—the way of giving and love. God wants us to enjoy the abundance which He promises. How we obtain such plenty is either by the legitimate avenue of giving and serving, or by men's attempted counterfeit means—accumulating and stockpiling for himself. Lest we should be misunderstood, let us quickly emphasize that gaining wealth is not wrong. What is at issue is the question of "how." And how and if we retain it is entirely dependent upon how we use it. The example of David clearly indicates the need to honestly evaluate motives. Objectively, David reacted quickly and as one would have expected; yet, subjectively, until pointed out to him, he was acting hypocritically. He did not see himself involved in the warning. True to the nature and heart of David, he accepted indictment and then genuinely repented. Years later, the depth of that repentance manifested itself. He was so concerned for those who had helped him in his earlier struggles that he personally sought out all who had been involved and decreed that they should eat at his table. He gave back many times that which he had taken.

### **Why Fast?**

Of great significance to God is the motive for which we do things. Do we obey mechanically? Or, do we obey from the heart? Fasting is a case in point (Isaiah 58:1–7). Our fasting can have both a direct and indirect purpose. That which we save by fasting we could give to the poor and hungry. Also, we should make central in our fast a real, genuine concern for the needy. God is greatly concerned with how we respond. Of course, God could change the conditions of the world in a dramatic and miraculous way. Why does He not do it? Because the diversity of conditions we are experiencing are allowed to exist as catalysts requisite for our spiritual growth and change. God could do everything that is necessary for life. But such action would not allow for the training and exercising of faith

necessary for the inheritance of the phenomenal responsibilities God has in mind for His sons and daughters. And so much of that training involves the power of the physical realm—money. The power of God comes through faith. Faith, therefore, is the antithesis of money. How we handle the physical power is indicative of how we will be judged (Psalm 37:21–22). The Macedonians earnestly sought, by personal desire, to contribute to the poor saints (2 Corinthians 8:1–15). Their response typified the gift of Christ. He desired to give Himself that we could be lifted from want of poverty to the unsearchable riches found only in Him. In fact, so awesome is giving to the needy in the sight of God that He gave those who do so a spiritual promise (Proverbs 19:17). We are not talking about interest. We are assured of replacement, if our motive is to do good and not to increase monetary reserves (Proverbs 19:17). To do good to the poor and needy is to contribute to God. Is not this the principle God set out for Israel? (Deuteronomy 28:1–14). One of the conditions was remembrance of the poor.

### **Why God Requires Such Sacrifice**

The called are being trained to handle wealth and power beyond their comprehension (Matthew 19:16–30). It is the application of the old expression most of us have heard: "If you can't take care of a dime, you cannot handle millions." What God is giving to us today is the "dime." The "millions" are representative of the true riches, the kingdom of God. The question is this: How do we handle the dime? Let us repeat. There are only two ways. The way of flesh, manifested in greed and other characteristics which revolve around the selfishness of flesh, or the way of God, which is giving that stems from heartfelt concern. God is observing us daily. Remember the example observed by Christ—the poor widow? (Mark 12:38–44). Her spiritual value was in excess of the others. Spiritual value is dependent upon the level of sacrifice and the attitude involved. The same object lesson is emphasized in the example of the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18–30). We know that having wealth is not wrong of itself. Did not God promise wealth to Israel? What is wrong is that men set their hearts on their reserve—they begin to trust their wealth and not God. Money (an objective of men) replaces faith (the riches of God). This is idolatry.

### **Attitude is Everything**

How many examples did Christ give to teach us the value of attitude? There are many: 1) The value of humility (Luke 14:7–33). 2) Do we assume responsibility? 3) Do we make sure the less fortunate have privileges and opportunities? 4) Are we totally committed to God—ready to sacrifice all? 5) Do we sow abundantly? Or, are we protective of ours? Remember, God gives abundantly of all that belongs to Him. Consider the air we breathe,



the soil we use, the wealth we mine and otherwise extract from the earth. It is all God's. He owns all. Yet, He gave it to men. If we would be like God in character, what will we do?

## The Sixth Year

Those who are long-time members in the church are aware of God's command regarding the first tithe. They, too, are aware of the second tithe—used by the laborers for observing the Feasts of God. Further, they are aware of third-year requirement—for the homeless, widow, orphans, etc. As the faithful respond to these commands, so God blesses them. He pours out abundantly from His great storehouse those things which men need.

All of this effectively and brilliantly manifests concern for specific components of the fabric of society. God promises to bless us as we joyously accept our part of that responsibility. Yet, there is one area not addressed above. What about the church member, or Israelite, who encounters some economic problem? God did not overlook that need. We, perhaps, have! During the sixth year of a cycle of seven, God commands us to take note of the need of other members (Deuteronomy 15:1–6). Interestingly, the sixth-year responsibility is part command and part voluntary (Deuteronomy 15:1–11). We are commanded to be aware of the needs involved. On the other hand it is not a tithe. The converted give in accord with God's blessing to them. It must be given voluntarily and with joyous satisfaction. Some will choose to use the sixth year as the time they elect to give. Others may choose to give smaller amounts on a more consistent basis. The author has found the reward and satisfaction so great, he prefers to give consistently. There is nothing like the reward of seeing someone lifted up from despair and an incalculable weight. Can we imagine how God must view the changes in our lives when we do well and He can rightly reward us? It is with exuberant joy He promised to share all things with us for all eternity. Can the value be comprehended?

## The Program

At the office we have set up a program by which we can receive and properly disperse to the needy brethren among us monies sent for that purpose. Please mark your contributions as sixth-year contributions. Usually we have more knowledge of such needs than the scattered brethren. Also, such contributions made to the church can be a monetary advantage to you.

There is a sixth-year requirement; but *it is not a third tithe*. It is a voluntary offering from the hands of the blessed for the assistance of brethren who have by circumstance fallen into need (Deuteronomy 15:1–15).

These monetary requirements are not curses. They are the foundation of God's promised blessings to the faithful. There are those of us who can testify to the reality of those blessings.

The words of God are most reassuring:

Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked. He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame. Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked (Proverbs 10:2–6).

There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches (Proverbs 13:7).

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul (Deuteronomy 10:12).

With great love and affection,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned centrally below the text "With great love and affection,".

Raymond C. Cole