

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren,

In the July '99 issue of this letter we began an explanation of demonism in the last days. In that issue we came to understand some of the technicalities of the subject. Now, for that material to be helpful and instructive, we need to enhance our understanding. We need to see how demonism is a serious and troubling concept for those called of God to understand the truth. The lives of most, if not all, are—or will be—touched by these devious and hateful manifestations. If the called do not understand, and carefully apply the instructions of God, the future not only could, but will be, damaged irreparably. Our strong appeal to you is this: Make sure you read and understand every word of this letter. We do not want anyone to say later, "I wish I had taken things more seriously when I first heard about these troubling conditions to occur in the last days." Now is the time to read, hear, understand, and act.

First, let us understand, and *know*, demonic conditions are prophesied for these last days. In one way or another every member in the Church of God, must face and hopefully resist the subtle and hateful pulls of these unseen powers of the spirit world. We need to recognize and understand a couple of the sobering prophecies God in His benevolence has given to us.

1) 2 Timothy 2:24-26, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

Several things are obvious. The faithful ministry must be trained and qualified to help "sheep" who are snared by Satan and any of his cohorts. We must quickly recognize, however, God is talking about sheep, not wolves in sheep's clothing. There is a gigantic difference between the two. A wolf in sheep's clothing can never be made into a genuine sheep regardless of the effort expended.

Further, carefully note the work is tenuous at best. There is no assurance God will grant repentance and unqualified return to the fold. Why? Because it is very difficult for one who has questioned the doctrine—the Truth—of God to ever gain a true love for it and an appreciation for that which had obviously lost interest and appeal in the first place. If it had such little value and worth initially on what basis would a second opportunity increase the inherent worth? Is it possible that the "impossibility" of Hebrews 6:4 relates more to the capability of flesh—mind and body—to change than to the profound judgment of God? That is, can a man really manifest contempt for self and the wretchedness of flesh the second time?

Third, they are members who once knew the Truth but were adversely affected by an unseen force—demons. The faithful ministry is attempting to restore the recalcitrants to faith and conviction even though acts of opposition still prevail. They are to some extent still in the grip of Satan as his servants. Those for whom there is some hope still manifest some independent will—"that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil." Up unto the time of this final endeavor, these recalcitrants have been open and unprotected prey—"taken captive at his will."

The final and perhaps more significant factor we need to recognize is this: There is a significant amount of demonic activity occurring in the Body of Christ about which few, if any, are really aware. Remember, brethren, this is a prophecy of what will happen in the body of Christ—not a warning of probability. We are clearly informed that demonic activity exists and that such activity will adversely affect members—"those that oppose themselves."

As we shall see, in the second text used to cover the subject of last-day demonic activity in the Church, those so influenced will depart from the body, and the Truth.

2) 1 Timothy 4:1-7, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness."

Allow us to emphasize specifics. A) The Holy Spirit is speaking authoritatively—"the Spirit speaks expressly." It is a form of verbal emphasis. A fact

about which to remain cognizant. A reality in these last days. There will be (was, depending upon the point of time) an apostasy to occur in the body. Some will depart from the Truth which was originally revealed. B) The Bible speaks only of a remnant who remains faithful to the Truth. There is no remnant of the remnant. Consequently those who depart from the remnant have departed from the Truth—they have departed from the faith. And C) As the *Interpreter's Bible* says: "The heretical teachings have a demonic origin. Man is subject either to God or to the devil: there is no neutral ground on which he may stand." Those who depart from the faith have been, and continue to be, under the influence of demons. In honest realism we must face the fact, some who were once called to understand the Truth have turned or will turn, from the faith. They will hear ministers who have turned to Satan and are espousing doctrines of the wicked spirit world. Finally, D) Those who have departed will propagate hypocritical lies. Even ordinary milk of human kindness is missing. They have consciences seared with a hot iron. Empathy and feeling are wanting.

What are some of the manifestations of this hardness? The Apostle Paul makes mention of a couple prominent items. One, these departed individuals will be advocating concepts which will hinder marriage. The word for "forbidding" is the Greek word which basically means "hindering." Their concepts will hinder marriage rather than enhance marriage. Two, these individuals will command others to refrain from eating foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving. This concept relates to an attitude toward food; it has nothing to do with a day or time. At this juncture there appears to be no specific application. However, at some time in the future, someone will arise who will condemn the eating of foods which God created to be received. The source of that condemnation will be demons. The faithful will be instructed, forewarned, and equipped to make necessary decisions at the time of such an occurrence. At this time we can ascertain a few specifics. First, such an attitude will occur among those who have departed from the faith—the doctrines—God gave to us. Second, the premise of such a command appears to be based on an unfeeling, hardened orientation—a hypocritical lie from a seared conscience. Third, the faithful who know the Truth will not be troubled by the proscription of those who have departed from the Truth.

The above prophesies make it clear much demonism will prevail among the called in the Church during these last days. Those not exercising responsibility as ordained of God will be abused at will.

As God instructed, the true ministers will be warning the members on a consistent basis (1 Timothy 4:6). Further, the true children of God will not be mesmerized by fables. They will be absolutely loyal to the faith once delivered—the

words of God, not the ways of Gentiles, the ways of this world. They will have learned from the example of ancient Israel.

### **Israel Called of God—But Turned to Demons**

Could a call have ever been more unique? Founded upon a plethora of tangible miracles, Israel saw daily evidences of God's power, intervention, beneficence, and love. They had no reason to doubt or rebel yet such acts were virtually as frequent as the miracles which they saw and/or experienced.

A people among whom God walked. A people blessed with the perfect laws and truths of God. A people not much different than we are today. Civilized people. Not a people who had become degraded—a people who had lost the powers of intellect, reason, and self-worth. From the premise of human status, they were of good breeding, of high caliber, mentally capable. They were a people with whom God had worked personally. Could we not have expected them to favorably respond to God? To have made considerable effort to live up to promises and agreements? Yet, tragically this was not the case. They turned to demonism. Of those most favored people Moses wrote, "They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith" (Deuteronomy 32:16–20). They turned to demonism. They had the perfect way of life. God Himself walked in their midst. Yet, they turned to demonism.

Surely we should not expect such a situation to occur today. But many years later God inspired His servant, the Apostle Paul, to write, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:1–6, 11). What was a major concern of Paul? "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no

temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (vv. 12-21). Demonism had crept into the Church. Should we think it impossible that such a tragedy would occur in our day? On the contrary, the warnings of God tell us clearly demons would play a major role in the lives of far too many in the last-day Church of God. They would abuse the human beings over whom they had gained a control, they would create unbelievable chaos in the Church, they would induce multiple changes in doctrine, and they would eventually leave—depart from—the body. At such a time all members must make a choice. Compromise is totally unacceptable. At which table will you be found—the table of demons, or the table of Christ?

### **A Sobering Responsibility**

The called of God must worship God in the Spirit. To the woman of Samaria Christ said, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:22-24).

The worship of God is from a spiritual premise only. Letter and/or physical obedience is insufficient. The called must worship Him in Spirit. If multiple demons are masquerading as the Spirit of God, how can anyone determine which is which—a demon or the Spirit of God? Indeed, a sobering responsibility is confronted. To remain true and faithful to God, a differentiation is imperative. In reality, a part of the equation is the fact God Himself is allowing these conditions and circumstances to occur. And, for good reason!

## **The Problem Compounded**

During Christ's ministry, He frequently spoke of conditions relevant to these last days—days leading up to His Second Coming. On one occasion He revealed a factor which of itself makes the necessary choice of the true servant a much more complex and difficult task. He showed that within the Body itself will exist "tares." A tare may look like wheat but it is only a weed. As Christ shows, such entities were put into the body by Satan. Christ said, "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matthew 13:24-30).

In some respects the presence of tares may serve God's purpose. Any aggressive effort on the part of men could be disruptive to the stability and growth of the wheat. It is best to leave matters of such a nature in the hands of God. However, what must be obvious is this: The true wheat must recognize who and what they are. They must use the presence of tares as an impetus for self-mastery. They must make every effort to gain stability and footing. To do any less could result in failure although they started out as good seed, totally acceptable to God.

To underscore and make more relevant the content of this letter, let us again emphasize the following. There is much demonic activity prognosticated for these last days. Many spirits are active. Can you tell the difference? Will you allow yourself to be influenced by the spirit of error? A very stern and demanding responsibility rests upon the shoulders of all who are called of God. As we shall see, God has made all necessary provisions for the called to be successful.

## **Christ Our Example**

Man of himself cannot live the spiritual life which the truth and way of God requires. He failed as an individual. He failed as a nation. Yet, man was created for purpose. That purpose will not be thwarted. Knowing the incapability of man to live honorably, Jesus Christ was made a sacrifice from the beginning of the creation. We

are informed He was slain, in the plan of God, from the foundation of the world (Revelation 16:3).

In the end of time, as determined by God, Christ was begotten as a human being. As a child of God, He suffered all the indignity and humiliation of one called of God. Men of the flesh, not recognizing or accepting Him as a begotten child of God, persecuted and abused Him. It is almost impossible to describe wholly and properly the level of abuse and humiliation He suffered in the flesh. And, even beyond that He was subjected to the wiles and cunning of Satan and his demons. Matthew says, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matthew 4:1). Then, in chapter four, verses two through eleven, Christ Himself was subjected to three broad areas of human nature which generally rule human beings. Those areas are: 1) What he will give or do to satisfy hunger. 2) The driving tendency to extol the self—to substantiate his personal greatness. And 3) An insatiable desire for power, prestige, image.

Christ did not yield to the temptations. On the contrary, on the basis of plain Scripture He rebuffed Satan. The result? Satan departed from Him. Did Christ in this act set an example for all those to be called later? He resisted Satan and Satan fled from Him. See Luke 4:13.

### **Satan and Demons Must Be Resisted**

A complacent and indifferent attitude will not keep anyone free from the negative influence of evil spirit beings. Only aggressive and determined effort can and will assure hearts and minds of freedom from the powerful negative influence and sway of evil spirit beings. It takes conscious effort.

In general, the entire world is under the sway of Satan, including many demons. Once called, the servants of God become prime targets for personalized ensnarement and abuse. The example is that of Christ. Satan hates the Truth of God and will do anything to destroy it. He knows the consequence of allowing anyone to remain faithful. He is destined for eternal banishment and will do all he can to pull any potential children of God into oblivion. Despite the fact he has to know that God will be victorious, he continues unabated in his efforts to destroy. As we have seen, his activity grows more aggressive and intense as time runs out. The called of God must daily resist him (James 4:7). If we resist him, we are given a promise. James wrote, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:7-8). To the Ephesians the Apostle

Paul elaborates upon the need to resist. He says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:10-18). To remain complacent and indifferent is lethal. And to refuse to recognize the times in which we live and the ubiquitous activity of Satan is worse. For that reason, brethren, we are attempting to do all that can be done to stir each and everyone into the active fulfillment of every requirement in Ephesians, chapter six. To do any less is to put no value upon your one and only opportunity to obtain life. Now is the time—the opportunity. Seize it with a spiritual vengeance.

### **How to Be Free**

God's way has been unaltered since the creation of man. It is the same—for Jew and Gentile alike. It is timeless. What occurred at any time, historically, is exemplary and applicable. The called of any subsequent generation must profit from the lessons written. James writes clearly about how the called of God, possessing the Holy Spirit, can be freed from and remain free from the adversarial influence of the spirit of this world. He writes, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. Speak not evil



one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" (James 4:1–12). Nearly all translators and commentators are convinced verse five is speaking of the Holy Spirit. It is working hard to keep us true to our call and purpose. Note Romans 8:26–28, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

### **Orientation Revealed**

Under a different heading in this letter, the story of Christ being confronted by Satan was covered. Yet, it is necessary to call your attention to it again, Luke 4:1–13. There appear to be three basic areas of human weakness—areas to which Christ was submitted. They are areas of weakness upon which Satan and demons will play. He will take advantage of man's interest in food. The fields of medicine, nutrition, and health are awash with occultic, and mystical manifestations. In fact, health seems to be second only to religion as an area of demonic activity.

A cliché tells the story. "No one wants to play second fiddle." The natural arrogance, conceit, and self-exaltation of man is a prime target of Satan. This trait uncontrolled is a manifestation of the evil influence of Satan. He will take hold of this defect for the destruction of man. Though born to rule he cannot properly rule until he recognizes the purpose for position and authority (Matthew 20:20–28). Real power, position, and authority are for service—service to others, not for the self. Money is one of the great powers. The orientation of man is quickly seen in how he uses this awesome and marvelous power of God. Short of an acceptable mind and heart, man will quickly reveal his true motivation. He is selfish. He caters to the self.

For reason, God allowed human government, He created marriage and the family relationship, and He structured society. In all these areas God is evaluating man's orientation. Until he learns to serve he cannot qualify to rule in the Kingdom. In every one of these areas Satan is hard at work. All human governments are his cohorts and rule contrary to the will of God. Women are in revolt against the will of God. Children have risen up against parents. Workers are in constant rebellion against management. All areas of life are in turmoil. The ubiquitous manifestation

of this rebellion is an equally ubiquitous manifestation of demonism. There is both a general manifestation of hatefulness and rebellion, and the more personalized activity which seems to be growing exponentially in these last days.

The above three areas are both a manifestation of demonic activity and a manifestation of human weakness by which an evil spirit can gain advantage. If the called of God do not recognize these weaknesses and effect necessary self-control there is every chance they will be exploited by demons at some time in their lives. The truly converted will manifest self-discipline—control on the basis of Biblical instruction. The carnally oriented will live by the weaknesses inherent in their flesh natures.

### **Reason for Confidence**

Demons, and Satan himself, are subject to the power and authority of Jesus Christ. That same power and authority is given to Christ's true ministers. What a blessing to know and have confidence in the fact good is still supreme. Can we imagine what life and living conditions would be like if evil were to gain the ascendancy? It is a horror unimaginable. We are assured that good and righteousness will prevail. Much of Christ's life revolved around the exercise of just such control and at the same time teaching His disciples the principles involved (Matthew 17:14–21, Luke 8:26–40). When these disciples were ordained and commissioned they were given the same powers and abilities (Mark 16:14–19). Such power and authority will exist until the Second Coming of Christ. At that time, if we have heard the significance of the Atonement message, we are aware all evil spirits will be banished into exile. They will be restrained—unable to exercise any evil, nefarious influence upon the lives of human beings. Thank God for the promise of that day. There is great reason to rejoice. For the present, the called of God—those called to be a part of that glorious coming day, called to be rulers over the people during the time of the great harvest—must resist all influences of these evil spirits. They are a people called to be pliable and teachable, to be subject to the will of God only.

### **The Children of the Devil**

We live in a physical world which at times is both complex and confusing. Often there seems to be no rhyme or reason to events which occur. Violence and general behavior seem to be inexplicable. The thinking man is nonplused by a host of actions and events. How frequently men attempt to comprehend it all. But every

"answer," every form of action, seems only to increase the perversity, the depth of despair, and ultimately some form of resignation.

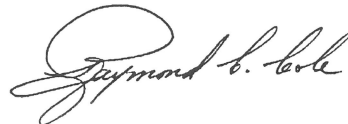
Why do such conditions exist? What is going on in man's society? Is there any way the people of God can know? Indeed, there is!

In the day of Jesus Christ, many foundational principles were revealed. On one occasion He made mentally plain what otherwise would be unobservable and therefore incomprehensible. On this occasion He revealed the fact there exists in this world a breed of people who not only would be responsible for His physical death but who, also, are responsible for much of what is happening in this world. They are called the children of the devil (John 8:24-69). Unsuspecting human beings have yielded to another voice, and therefore have become the children of that force and power. The earth is filled with just such children. Short of a special call, miraculous intervention on the part of God, a new begettal, and wise and judicious cultivation and training, all human beings would be prey to that unseen force and power. He is the god of this world. Few people are the children of God though nearly all, if not all, will claim to be the children of God. They are of the god of this world. Tragically, this is the state of "many" who once knew and understood the Truth. They are walking in the way of destruction. As we shall see later, God Himself is forcing the called to make choice (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

### Conclusion

Once again we must bring this letter to an early conclusion. Space will not allow us to cover adequately the remaining material. The subject is so critical, another issue will be devoted to it. We want you to understand. Failure to do so could be very costly to you.

As always much love and respect. Your servants in Christ,



Raymond C. Cole



Jon W. Brisby