

April 2010

Dear Brethren:

Warm greetings once again from the Luzon area, Philippines.

"I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

These inspired words from the Apostle John have always been a beacon of hope in my life, but with even more significance at this period in time. I hope that it comes to you in the same manner as you read this *Monthly Letter*.

The year 2009 was a period of turmoil, disaster and natural calamities in the Philippines. We thank God for His divine intervention in sparing His children from more serious sufferings or injuries to health and property. Still, we did not escape that feeling of concern for others as we helplessly empathized with the sufferings of those who were in hard-hit areas. Some victims in the strong typhoons and devastating floods were rescued from rooftops, while others were carried away by floodwaters that reached the second or even third floor of their houses. In our case, the strong storms left us with destruction that needed major and immediate repairs.

At age seventy-seven, deterioration of well-being sets upon me. Even with weakness due to arthritis and diabetes God has blessed me with peace and hope, holding onto the truth that we share with the brethren in joy. It is this passage from John that inspired me to write this letter with the same wish to all of you brethren around the world. You may be in various and different situations during these so-called end-time difficulties, that might have affected you to different degrees; yet, when we realize that God cares and wishes prosperity for us above all else, we rejoice with His remnant children walking in the truth.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth," said the beloved Apostle. The length of time that I had been in constant attachment to the truth, gives me confidence to testify how essential and rewarding it is in this lifetime and in the life to come to walk in the truth.

The time when I first came in contact with Mr. Raymond Cole was just before the Passover in 1993. Although many things were still vague with me concerning the faith once delivered, the desire and love for the teachings of Jesus Christ from the preaching of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong remained in me, which brought me to where I am today. From that time on, I stood and walked without wavering from the Truth that is God.

It is the same truth that the Apostle John mentioned in his second and third epistles. It is the same truth that is embodied and personified in Jesus, the Son of the living God. It is the same light that is the Father, where there is no darkness at all.

What Does It Mean to Walk in the Truth?

Sadly, the great majority of the people in this world are deceived into believing they are walking in the truth. Most have mistakenly associated sincerity with having the truth. They think that as long as they are acting with sincerity they are walking in truth. Others think that honesty is always a warranty of truth. Yet, at closer look, a person could be honestly wrong no matter how sincere he may be in his own opinion. Take the example of thousands and thousands of sincere and honest people who participated in the procession from the Quirino Grandstand in Manila to the Quiapo R. C. Church last December. Their sincere belief and honest conviction was that they were walking in truth and doing what is right. Devotedly, they were joining a yearly religious tradition in honor of their patron saint, the Black Nazarene. What a pitiful sight as these devotees clamber on top of one another just to gain access to the statue, touching it with kerchiefs, then rubbing their bodies with them. They did not care to evaluate the end result of such confusion where many were seriously injured and even a couple or more die yearly in similar activities. Could this be a manifestation of the God of peace and order?

How about us, brethren? How can we know we are walking in truth? How can we evaluate our own steps daily? Are we walking in the truth once delivered to the saints?

Every day we make decisions. Every decision we make brings us a corresponding result. Our sufferings today are results of decisions we made yesterday. Whatever blessings we will have tomorrow are the fruits of our decisions today. "He who plants abundantly shall reap in abundance, and he who plants sparingly shall also reap sparingly." This principle works hand in hand with that one revealed truth.

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth (1 John 1:5–6).

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him (1 John 2:3–5).

Walking in truth is determined by how close we are related to Him who is Truth. It is only when we are walking in the light as He is in the light, that we can have fellowship with Him. It is only when we are in Him and He in us, that we can be the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).

Like other kinds of relationships, as that of marriage, this kind needs warmth, careful understanding and devotion; without which often ends in presumptive profession of fellowship:

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth (1 John 1:6).

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee (2 Timothy 1:6).

Constancy in the truth, as well as passion to obey, are essential ingredients of such a relationship. Whether in human relationships—such as husbands and wives, as brethren in true fellowship with one another—or as our relationship with our heavenly Father and Lord Jesus Christ, we need those same essential ingredients to be in constant fellowship with our Maker. God, who is in supreme command, is to be obeyed, and the only benchmark by which we can know Him and be in the truth is total obedience (1 John 2:3–5). And what is total obedience? Does it imply perfection in our own ability to keep the commandments? (1 John 1:8–10). No. It is the totality of the Truth, and our heartfelt desire to walk in it that makes Him rejoice (3 John 3).

It is the Lord who said to love one another. He is the one who (through Paul and Peter) also commanded: "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church" (Ephesians 5:21–25, read all four verses; 1 Peter 3:1, 7). The truth will become clear as we understand and catch the vision from the Apostle John.

The Inspired Vision From the Epistle of John

Do you realize, brethren, that the third epistle of the beloved Apostle brings an end-time vision of what our beloved Father wishes for us? He, too, is wishing for us prosperity in life, in health, and in being—a vision of security towards the coming end.

Did you have that personal understanding and vision from the beginning of your calling, so that even earlier world-shaking events did not affect you in any way? It is my desire that all true children of God come to see the wisdom in John's Epistles as a vision to acquire in these last days. The trials that seem to escalate in these perilous times (2 Timothy 3:1–9) are actually God's vehicle to let all realize that He meant for us to prosper, not only in physical things, but also in health; even our "souls" to prosper in faith, virtue, understanding, wisdom, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity, wherewith we should abound (2 Peter 1:5). Many who do not catch the vision, when faced with ongoing disasters caused by either human error or natural calamities, are prone to assert with helpless resignation—if not with fear—that no one could prosper and be in health amidst such calamities and disasters. The terrible earthquakes that happened in Haiti and Chile and the economic recession in many countries, coupled with terrorist activities, are just the increasing worldwide catastrophes entailing human sufferings and economic failures. Still God desires His children to have prosperity and health both in body and soul. Do you believe that?

The Prosperity God Intends for His Children

1) ". . . that thou mayest prosper. . ."

In the Philippines, floods and mudflows destroyed crops and lives during the past rainy season. Today, widespread deprivation caused by the *El Nino* phenomenon is a general concern in every place. Three months without rain now has caused enormous agricultural losses. Fish culture and other livestock industries have been affected to alarming levels due to a lack of water. Failure of hydroelectric plants to supply power in many places has been causing apprehension due to widespread brownouts, which can have alarming repercussions in industry, commerce, health and other concerns. To all appearances, prosperity is a remote possibility which happens to a very few individuals dispersed all over the world. How could prosperity occur if sufferings and death happen in the same area? So many do not believe it, and even blame God for the sufferings and death of so many people caused by natural disasters. They casually say: "It's God's will."

Yet God wishes us, His children, "to prosper and be in health." Our Father in heaven *means* that, my brethren! He is a God of truth and never lies. He is light and in Him is no darkness at all. He does not leave any of us, His true children, hungry or destitute amidst these times of trouble. Do you believe that?

Unbelief! That is the very reason you may fail to prosper and be in health. Remember that *hoped for* prosperity to God's children is predicated upon "walking in truth" (3 John 3–4), which means: a total obedience to His law, a personal relationship with Him, and a childlike confidence in His words. These are all prerequisite to the

promised blessings. Has He not confirmed: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10)?

Brethren, be not envious when you see the wicked flourish, but consider the light in which you are walking. The fellowship wherein you are related to Him is worth much more—a prosperity God prepared for His children throughout eternity.

Many "believers" seem not to prosper during hard times, and even in normal times find themselves inhibited from receiving blessings like their neighbors. As mentioned earlier, walking in truth is prerequisite to gaining God's desire for His children to prosper and be in health. As we have been instructed to examine ourselves before taking the Passover, we should also examine why we may be failing to prosper. Seek first all of God's commands (righteousness) as they are directed to you; obey them with the spirit of truth and all these things will be added to you.

2) ". . . be in health . . ."

Earthquakes of different intensities and in divers places are becoming more frequent and frightening. Death tolls increase, and the after-effects are diseases, epidemics and widespread hunger and crime. These may even result in war, pestilence and famine, as foretold to happen in the last days.

In the Philippines, outbreak of measles, dengue and skin diseases in different areas have been announced by the Department of Health. Cases of sexually transmitted diseases and other viral infections are reported to be present in some hospitals. The rising temperature that is affecting both livestock and people are indications of more serious health problems to occur. In the midst of all these occurrences, do we permit ourselves to lose the vision of God's prosperity and health for us? Nay, we rather expect and believe in divine intervention and healing. Walk in the light of His word, as all scriptures inspired by His Holy Spirit are true.

God desires us to have health and strength even in the midst of our weaknesses. Even in our old age He provides us vision to wait for Him as His very elect; willing to shorten the days just ahead for our sakes and give us power to prosper and be in health.

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isaiah 40:29–31).

He promised us not only protection (Psalm 91), but also to provide our healing in Christ, for He is a God who heals (1 Peter 2:24; Exodus 15:26).

Again, the faith of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22) that is in us plays a vital role as we walk in truth and verily have fellowship with the Father. Walking in truth is walking by faith, by the words of the Lord. It is completely obeying Him *even* in terms of our diets to be healthy (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14). Unfortunately, the majority fail to see the truth of God's desire for us to be in health because of religious prejudices. Instead of obeying the simple health laws, they discount them as unnecessary ceremony among some religious groups.

So you see man's "faith"—professing to have fellowship with God yet at the same time willfully disobeying those simple laws for wellness. He walks in his own way with a determined confidence ingrained in his own mind by some cultural background: ("*que sera sera*—what will be, will be"; Filipino "*bahalana*").

3) ". . . even as thy soul prospereth."

Prosperity of the soul, if considered in terms of an increase in knowledge, is not usually what religious people fluently profess. It should be the words of Him who called us, translating into habits and attitudes whereby we live *His life in us*. These following examples should suffice to illustrate how we have prospered in soul. Let these guide questions test in our minds how we have prospered in knowledge and wisdom of Jesus Christ.

Have we learned the blessedness of being "poor in spirit" in order to see the coming Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3)? Have our souls prospered to accept consolation in times of sudden sadness or terrible devastation, and been blessed with comfort (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18)? Have we learned to humble ourselves and be meek in order to be worthy to inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5)? Are we filled, because we do always find ourselves hungry and thirsty after righteousness (Matthew 5:6)? Have we developed a merciful and forgiving heart to obtain mercy before His throne of grace (Matthew 5:7; Hebrews 4:16)? Have our hearts been purified, ready to see our Lord at His coming (Matthew 5:8; 1 John 3:1–3)? Have we been peacemakers and therefore fit to be called sons and daughters of God (Matthew 5:9)? Are we ready to face and suffer persecutions and be reviled and abused before the world for His sake (Matthew 5:10)? If so, then we can truly rejoice and be exceedingly glad at His soon coming—the true prosperity of our souls.

Brethren, may I repeat God's vision to us: "I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, as your soul also prospers." Many people do not recognize wisdom from this inspired word of the Apostle John.

Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." God's blessings of prosperity and health, even in body and soul, are all based on total obedience to His law. The beloved Elder said: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. . . . I rejoice greatly that I found thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father."

May I end this message with a parable to help zero in on the concept of "complete obedience": Think about the example of a wife who is well-employed while the husband is not. Every time her salary comes, she pays her tithes before spending any part of it. Every Sabbath she comes to church with her whole family. These are all positive fruits of obedience, but once at home she has the final say on most important decisions and asserts her will over her husband, who has no choice but to follow. The loving husband does not complain, so there is no problem between them. But both are wondering why after many years they receive no increased blessings. They do not realize they are violating cardinal principles concerning husbands and wives. Of course, we expect them to "prosper and be in health, even their souls to prosper." But they first have to obey the commands they have been missing as well as obeying the other commandments from the heart (Ephesians 5:22, read through verse 33).

May the good Lord bless us and keep us and prosper us as we walk in His truth.

Lovingly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corsino C. Canta". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Corsino C. Canta

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon W. Brisby". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Jon W. Brisby