

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440
www.cogeternal.org

Raymond C. Cole
Director
Jon W. Brisby
Assistant Director

Offices in:
United States
Philippines
Switzerland

Our Purpose in These Times of Distress

January 2001

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

For many people this time of the year is the turning of another worn page with its share of joy for some and its share of sorrow and misery for others.

I have before me a newspaper dated May 2000 in which I read an article from the UN stating the following:

Today more than 1.3 billion people are surviving on less than one dollar per day and this figure is increased by the addition of 25 million each year.

One third of the inhabitants of the earth have less than two dollars a day to live on.

In the industrialized countries more than 100 million people live below the threshold of monetary poverty; more than 5 million are homeless and 37 million are unemployed.

More than one billion inhabitants of the developing countries do not have adequate housing and the number of the homeless is estimated at 100 million.

More than 840 million adults are still illiterate.

About 160 million children suffer moderate or serious malnutrition; 100 million do not have primary education.

Some 1.2 billion people do not have access to drinking water.

In the developing world 500 thousand women die every year from consequences of pregnancy or childbirth.

There are 110 million unexploded landmines in sixty-eight countries.

In 1995 the world defense expenses reached about 800 billion dollars; the expenses of South Asia alone were 15 billion dollars, that is to say more than what it would take to provide basic health care and good nutrition in the entire world.

The patrimony of the top three billionaires of the world is worth more than the combined gross national product of the forty-eight least advanced countries with their 600 million inhabitants.

These are a few items among others of this article entitled, "*Poverty—the figures.*"

So many things show us that this world is in distress and the time will come when human distress is so great, "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time," says Jesus Christ, speaking of His return. "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:21–22). Without the intervention of God, as it is scheduled according to His plan, all that has the breath of life would be lost. The results show us that the fundamental principles which have become dominant in the kingdom of men are bad and injurious. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25).

The same applies spiritually. We are living in a time when there is a great spiritual distress among the called of God, because many are choosing their own way which seems right to them. And yet we could all say at one time what the prophet Jeremiah wrote: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

When God created this earth so that man could live on it, He considered His work! "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). God established a perfect balance. Man was to follow God's instruction to maintain what God gave to him. The same applies to us spiritually. God gave us the way of life with many instructions so that we—with the help of His Holy Spirit—could apply ourselves to doing what He expects of us. His purpose is to train us so that we are part of His elect—for when Christ is going to shorten those days of distress. Through our training we will be made able to collaborate with Christ in the restitution of all things.

We can be grateful for these years which God is granting to us so that we can perfect our living in this way of life. As we read in Proverbs 16:31: "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."

But since the creation of man very few persevered at living in that way of righteousness, most submitted to the influence of Satan our enemy. And we see the consequences thereof physically in this world and spiritually among the people of God. That is why there "shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time" just before the return of Jesus Christ on this earth. In that day when God looks at the work which He undertook in our lives, as we have applied ourselves to the best of our abilities in doing what God expects of us, will He be able to say of the finished work, "Behold, it is very good"? Will Christ be able to say to us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34)?

It is sad to see so many people who received the privilege of being the blessed of God the Father but are growing weary of walking in the way of righteousness and building their lives on the eternal principles established by Him. The principles which Christ lived in His own flesh body can live in our own flesh bodies through God's Holy Spirit so that as He was and still is, so are we in this world. To what end? To the end of accomplishing a great and good work—teaching all mankind to build their lives on the way of God's righteousness so that they will be delivered from this great physical, mental, and spiritual distress.

We all understood God's purpose for mankind when we were called. We also understood that obedience and faithfulness to God's way of life were things God required of us. What we did not know were the trials which we would have to go through, the adversity which we would encounter during this life in order to prove our faith to the purpose of God—to the way of righteousness until the end of our lives in these flesh bodies. "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14). Then we will be able to take part in that gigantic work of the renewal of all things by teaching people to build their lives on God's principles. Principles which will be applied in daily work, in marriage, in training of children, and in all areas of life. And then the result will be what God promises—a society which will be a marvel in its perfection, its beauty, its success, and its glory. God will again be able to look upon this earth and say, "Behold, it is very good." The work which will have been accomplished by His sons will give complete satisfaction. "For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations" (Psalm 22:27–28). The result will be an abundant life for all people.

Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing (Psalm 65:9–13).

When we see the result of the principles of man's way and when we understand the result of the principles of God's way and that God chose us and gave us many instructions in order to prepare us to fulfill such a responsibility under the authority of His Son Jesus Christ, it is sad that many yet choose the way of rebellion and resistance to satisfy momentary unwholesome ambitions which will only lead again to future painful consequences.

Man always seeks to justify himself; whatever his conceptions are, he believes that what he does is right in God's sight. But God does not think so, for He says to us through the prophet Jeremiah:

Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD. How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways (Jeremiah 2:21–23).

What are we doing with our call and with the instructions which God has been giving to us for many years? Are we putting forth a splendid effort to achieve the purpose thereof which is the oneness of heart and mind in the Truth of God and in a good relationship with one another? For that will be the entire structure of the world of tomorrow when Christ has put down all rebellion. Our society today is a structure which is impregnated with turmoil, distrust, hate, contempt, and rebellion. And the result is a human distress which is becoming greater and greater and will actually become "such as was not since the beginning of the world." And Christ adds: "no, nor ever shall be."

So those who willfully adopt and take pleasure in an orientation which is impregnated with resistance, insubordination and rebellion against God and His principles of life will not take part in the restoration of all things tomorrow with Christ. For all that is unpleasant, all that creates division, all that is at the root of misery will not be allowed.

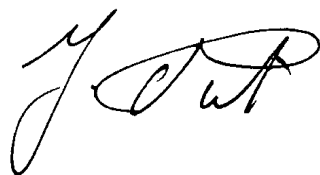
The day is coming when many called will be forced to consider their wrong orientation. If they want to have a part in the world of tomorrow, they will have to recognize the depth of their rebellious nature which has caused so many difficulties, such trouble, such suffering, such affliction among the people of God and in their families. They will have to repent of it. The prophet Isaiah wrote: "O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name" (Isaiah 26:13). Yes indeed other lords or other masters beside the One who gave His life for our redemption have dominion over the called of our time. They will have to repent and submit again to God's authority, for the time is coming when all must show great respect for God and His purpose.

God is giving us all the privilege of making progress so that we can ultimately inherit His perfection, His peace, His patience, His mercy, His love. Let us work to make these characteristics take root in our lives. Jesus Christ gave us this command: "Be[come] ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, let us continue to take care of the knowledge which God has given to us. Let us use with wisdom the spiritual tools which He puts at our disposal so that with His help we accomplish a magnificent work in our lives. Let us not live this life in vain—only for the present; but, let us know that God called us not to slide towards despair but to take part in His glory.

And when you are in the Kingdom of God, then in turn you can consider what you did with your life despite all the trials and the adversities which you had to face, and you can say, "It is very good!"

To you all my affection and my most fraternal thoughts,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Aviolat', written in a cursive style.

Jean Aviolat