

# Church of God, The Eternal

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## God's Truth or Man's Traditions?

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Dear Brethren:

This is another chance for me to greet everybody with warmest regards. My schedule to write this *Monthly Letter* through the Eugene office is very timely, to wish you all a solemn and meaningful Passover, authorized by God.

We have entered again the season of God's festivals. In a very special manner we come together to worship God in these commanded solemn assemblies. In so doing we need to examine ourselves, especially before we partake of the Lord's Passover. In this act of introspection we consider not only our tainted relationships to and with one another but also our attitude and frame of mind with which we worship God. For, worshipping God is not confined to our gathering together in these solemn assemblies, nor in the time and specific place where we assemble, but also in all the activities anywhere we are and whatever we do prior to and after our gathering together to praise our God. Just as Christ affirmed to the Samaritan woman in John 4:21, 23: ". . . believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . 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 worshiped in our daily lives as we keep His commandments in thoughts, in words, and actions through His Spirit that dwells in us. For God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. And worshipping and honoring Him in Spirit and in Truth is to live with Christ, in Christ, and through Christ in faithful and willing obedience to the will of the Father. Paul also said, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). So worshipping God in Truth is actually obeying Him in *all* our ways.

How easily man becomes involved with the society around him in attempting to worship God, however in vain, through keeping the traditions and human commandments (Matthew 15:9), instead of worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth. Only through His indwelling Spirit and willing obedience to His word can we truly honor and worship God.

Just as I began to write this letter my telephone rang. As I said hello, a crisp voice said, "Uncle, Happy Valentines!" That day every caller that rang, and every acquaintance I met said the same thing. Even the loud speaker mounted on top of a church tower nearby, pronounced the same greeting as part of their worship service that was then going on. Bulletin boards in some offices, in schools and colleges, were written and decorated with the same greeting—often with a portrait of a heart or two pierced with cupid's arrow. The mails also increased in volume with Valentine cards. Town and barrio plazas were decorated for Valentine parties.

Traditions and human will are blended together teaching young minds as though they are giving God's commandments. These traditional practices are perpetuated all over the world while unmindful of God's commanded feasts. "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts" (Leviticus 23:1–2).

In one of our Bible studies a question was raised, "What is wrong with traditions such as keeping town fiestas, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter, and the like, when they are done in the name of Christ and for the purpose of socialization, especially to our young children and teenagers?"

Jesus was confronted with similar questions during His life on earth. His answer was precise and conclusive: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? . . . This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. . . . teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:3, 8–9). In another instance He said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). And again He said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21–23).

As we observe the feasts of God this year let us be aware of our minds—thoughts and attitudes—lest they be tainted with traditions of the changing times. Lest we attend these commanded assemblies as though they did not come from our Great God but from annual religious rituals and traditions or doctrines of men. For instance, the Passover: Our Lord Jesus Christ observed this event on the evening part of the 14th day of Nisan, (this year 2001—the evening of April 6) in obedience to God's commandment. He observed it at the appointed time and called it Passover. But why did He not use a lamb according to the commandment? Being Himself—the Passover lamb of God—He used the unleavened bread and wine to represent His flesh and blood. Then He commanded His disciples to do the same, as they will commemorate His death in remembrance of Him.

Discernment between tradition commanded by men, and that which was commanded by Christ, is a crucial matter. Tradition calls this event, The Last Supper, Holy Communion, or The Holy Supper. Observed during any part of the year or any time of the day, as agreed upon by their leaders, some using leavened bread and carbonated drinks to represent the body and blood of Christ. Without regard to the time and season as commanded by God—which Christ Himself observed—the world commemorates this occasion on any day and time or as specified by tradition. Let us commemorate this occasion as commanded by God, as Christ did, lest we fail to discern the body of Christ and then with the world worship Him in vain in this solemn occasion. Let us read carefully the words of Paul as he received them from our Lord Jesus Christ:

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:23–29).

Brethren, what causes us to discern the Lord's body? What helps us to understand His will? What helps us to obey His commandments? What makes us worthy to partake

of the flesh and blood of Christ? It is His indwelling Spirit. This also gives us the true knowledge of the true God whereby we worship Him in Spirit and Truth. Let us return to that conversation of Christ with the Samaritan woman in John 4:22. Let me underscore a point which Jesus made, "Ye worship ye know not what . . ." From time immemorial, man has been worshiping god. Even those who did not know the true God had worshiped their gods in their own traditional ways. Knowledge of the true God is essential for how and when we worship Him according to His will.

Many worshipers of God today do not really know Him. They partake of the Passover in many different ways and manners not discerning the Lord. They celebrate the Passover and other feast days, like the Sunday Pentecost, as traditions and commandments of men and not according to God's commandment. Not keeping God's commandment is a sign of not knowing who God is. It is a sign that one does not have His Spirit dwelling in him (1 John 2:3–6). But as we know God we worship Him obeying His laws and commandments.

Way back in 1992 when changes in doctrines were subtly creeping into the local churches in the Philippines, something struck me as I entered the hall where our Feast of Tabernacles was held. A nicely carved image, more than a life-sized lion and child, a replica of the seal of Worldwide Church of God, was placed at the center front of the platform. It so resembled an altar of pagan worshipers surrounded by curtains embroidered with dancing, naked natives with only G-strings as coverings. All at once the second commandment flashed in my mind and I could not help but comment about the facade and center of worship in that Feast of Tabernacles. I knew that someone heard my comment, for in the following morning service, in the announcement portion, the leader gave a rationalization on the graven image in front with a mild but firm scorn upon the one who made the comment. Sure enough, after that Feast of Tabernacles, a full blast of changes in the doctrines on "Born Again" and "God Is," was expounded by our ministers. The very teachings that I agonizingly unclothed before my baptism into the Church of God, were the very teachings that were taking the place of the doctrines I learned from Worldwide Church of God. I then knew by experience, from ten years as a Protestant minister, that once the traditional doctrine of the Trinity was accepted, all other doctrinal changes would also follow. Could I still worship God, in Spirit and in Truth, if I should go along with the changes? I decided to seek those who remained faithful to the faith once delivered to the saints. I decided to stop attending Worldwide Church of God and later came in contact with Mr. Raymond C. Cole who readily assisted me in that Passover of 1993 to keep the feast with four others through taped instruction from him. God willing, I will endeavor to let you know how Church of God, The Eternal reached and is established in the Philippines in future issues of the *Monthly Letter*.

Eight years ago, today, we reaffirmed our faith in the true Passover—as we have continued every year since—in obedience to God's command, grateful for the love of Christ in us and our unity in Him all over the world.

My wife and I, as well as the brethren with us, send our greetings for a joyous Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread.

Yours in His Precious Name,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corsino C. Canta". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Corsino C. Canta