

Church of God, The Eternal

P.O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97401

The Premises of Our Existence as a Remnant Group

March 1976

Dear Friends:

March of 1976 is here. A careful look about you nationally, internationally, religiously, domestically and in every other way is sufficient to give you a good idea of the times in which we live. Though we cannot give you specific dates or times relative to the prophetic events of the last days, certainly the conditions which exist give us a general impression of the time. Nothing could be more obvious.

These are the times for all who love the truth and are sincere in their efforts to serve their God to be more consecrated and zealously affected in the pursuit of that way to which they were called. Now is, above all, not the time to become discouraged, neglectful, resentful and generally disturbed. Somewhere there must be a small group of estranged Christians who zealously pursue the truth into which they were baptized. Do any of us have doubts? Have we done our homework well? Have we performed that basic responsibility of determining those who are the true servants of God—those who are sincerely determined to serve the flock? That service is to be one of dedication and humility—without the trappings of self-defense and arrogance. At the same time those servants who are genuine in the sight of their Maker are looking for a people who are SOLD on the TRUTH. A people who have their hearts wholly yielded to God—who cannot be dissuaded by the antics of enemies. Remember the parable of Jesus (Matt.13:1–24).

For this month's letter, I would like to discuss a number of matters which affect you all. Hopefully, these points will aid you in answering all the questions which may have arisen in your minds relative to the matters affected.

First: PREMISES ON WHICH OUR PRESENT RELATIONSHIPS EXIST: While in Coquille, Oregon, I was forced into a long and serious study of the problems which were becoming more apparent in the church. I could not understand just what was happening. But as the study progressed, it became apparent that there were several defective areas. These are areas which needed to be rectified—a proper and harmonious relationship created with one another. These studies were reduced to seven basic principles. These principles

need to be repeated again and again. Though given in various ways in times past, they are worthy of repetition quite frequently.

They are:

1. God's true doctrine was revealed to us. The rash of changes abundantly prove the fact. Prophecy and Administration are two quite different things.

2. There is no place for mystery and intrigue. We must live open, candid lives of honesty and integrity—manifestations of mutual respect and regard—regardless of station or rank.

3. Presumption and self-claims are out. Honesty will bear the test of time and circumstance.

4. My objective: To serve the people without concern for money or defense of self-image.

5. We are estranged—by circumstance within—from the physical dimension of the Body. Bound together by a common objective—"to hold fast to the truth which was delivered to us."

6. No attempt to be made to build any form of organization—no proselytizing. We will serve only those whom God sends.

7. People must be free to make all decisions affecting their lives. Only when bound together by common fear of God, His Son and The Word are we truly one in mind, heart and spirit.

Conclusion: Therefore, whom God sends, we will serve, giving our lives in loyal and dedicated accommodation to others—seeking "the One" by means approved of God. But in all other matters patiently waiting for the specific direction of God.

Second: THE WORK OF GOD *IS* THE WORK OF GOD: There are thousands who are making claims to be doing the work of God. But, if I can understand the simple English language, the term means that the work is done by God. Surely, He may use certain men to aid in that operation. But, it is quite apparent, that it will not be a mere claim to the work. The activities involved will attest miraculously to the fact that God is doing the work even

though men may be employed. In essence, such a work will not be a mere claim. It will be substantiated by power and divine intervention.

Our work for the present is to be obedient to that truth which God gave to us. If we cannot be faithful to that way of life, how can He possibly use any of us in the fulfillment of major and definitive works yet to be done? Historically, false claims have been a major problem. You know the test. God says of most, "I did not send them." When God sends there will be no questions or doubts. Those being sent will know and those who continue to love the truth will likewise understand.

Third: MINISTERIAL STUDIES IN DOCTRINE, PROPHECY AND ADMINISTRATION. Doctrine was revealed. There is no other way by which such knowledge can come. All of us know how clearly God spells out that fact in His Word. Much has been said about it in tapes and writings.

If truth were not revealed to us, then why do we not honestly admit that all are involved in a labyrinth of anarchy? Who knows? All claim to be right. Each professes to take his interpretations from the Bible. But any sound mind knows that the Bible does not say as many different things as people profess to believe.

Further, if one holds to the truth, it cannot be changed or altered. Truth is singular. There is not even a shadow of turning in God the Father or Jesus Christ. They are consistent—the same day by day. Truth has never changed from the beginning. There is not one way for one person or people and another way for someone else or a different people. Time does not change the truth either.

Doctrinally, we believe that God revealed that truth to us. It formed the basis of our baptism. It was the premise of our covenant relationship with God. It is unfaithfulness which leads us into change. Such a behavioral pattern is bitterly denounced by God.

On the basis of our belief in Divine revelation, we will study doctrine only for the purpose of shoring up that belief. It is in no way open for any form of destructive consideration.

Prophecy is quite another matter. We are told how to check these matters. Such a responsibility is incumbent upon every one who understands.

But what of our study? There is nothing wrong with studying the prophecies. In fact, man is to live by every word of God. Therefore, it is essential to study the prophecies—to be aware of what God has said. Then it is absolutely mandatory to wait patiently for God

to supernaturally intervene and permit us to understand the meaning and specific application. God has many ways by which He can inform us of times and circumstances—dreams, visions, angels and others. We need not assume. To assume will most assuredly put us in the same category of others who have attempted to explain and were found wanting. For time and circumstance are most revealing. Then, is it not better to study the prophecies—to be aware of content—and simply wait for fulfillment or specific revelation from God?

Administration, the third point mentioned above, is an area which needs much overhauling. Administration involves our internal and external relationships. In fact, it is judgment in action. Each of us is responsible for those relationships. The bases of that administration are clearly indicated in the Bible. No one needs to stand in doubt about such responsibility. It is in the area of personal application that the difficulties arise.

Much study is yet indicated. We simply do not fully understand all those relationships. For us to attempt an explanation at the present would be folly. We want to wait for further study and confirmation. At some future date the requisite information will be written or taped.

Fourth: ADMINISTRATION CUT BACK HERE IN EUGENE: In no way does this curtailment reflect any disinterest in you, the people. On the contrary, we want to see more of the tithes and offerings go back to you in service. We do not want to see the development of a gigantic administration such as happened in the past. We want to remain more mobile by keeping the administration (office responsibilities here in Eugene) as limited or compressed as possible. I am sure you will heartily agree. Administration with which most of us are familiar is the basis of strife, resentment and every evil practice and attitude.

Fifth: BOARD AND THE CHURCH: Due to the study of Acts, Paul's writings and the General Epistles, it is quite obvious that the church as a whole must be more involved. This involvement does not indicate individualization. Absolutely not. It indicates the need for close harmonious working among all. Unless care and caution are exercised, it is obvious how each can begin to assert himself, claiming to practice the principles of Acts. Carried to its logical end, you can readily see how such practices would lead to anarchy. God is not the author of confusion. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to work together very closely—always deferring to the other individual. In this way, only, can it become apparent which ones truly are motivated and guided by the Holy Spirit. Oneness is developed through the voluntary submission of each. Independence has no right in the true bond of Christian fellowship. Only the mind of Jesus Christ must be allowed to dominate.

The Board does have its legal responsibilities. But, legal areas only. The major responsibilities and activities must be the concern of the whole church—a church not

operating on the basis of individuality but individuals working as a complete team—in the harmonious relationship of the mind of Jesus Christ. How many minds did Christ have? Then there must be one mind among those who are working together as the body of Christ.

Sixth: Literature: Some have been concerned about the lack of literature. We are, too. However, it takes much time for a limited number of people to write, edit and print literature which will be delivered in quantities. I am sorry for the long delay. But keep your patience. We are aware of the needs. Your prayers will be very greatly appreciated.

Following another conference in California, we will set about the completion responsibility of several articles which will be of great help to those seeking answers relative to many of the challenged doctrines. We want them to be submitted and printed as nearly complete and perfect as possible. I am sure you share our feelings about this matter.

Seventh: PASSOVER AND UNLEAVENED BREAD PLANS: As soon as the plans are completed for Passover and Unleavened Bread, we will be submitting the material to you. Some of the men will be journeying out to outlying areas. We are aware of the need for personal contact. We are looking forward to those contacts.

Eighth: WORK ON THE PHYSICAL OFFICE: As a result of the administration retrenchment, I am building a facility for the physical office here at our home. In this way, the cost can be greatly reduced. It does take some time to do such construction. Please be patient. As soon as this work is done, we will be facilitated in our service to you. Because of the work, which I am personally doing, I have not been able to answer the many personal letters members and others have written to me. I am trying to keep current with new correspondence. The others I am planning to answer just as soon as I return from California. I very much appreciate your patience and prayers in the matter.

Ninth: LOCAL ANNOUNCEMENTS: I am aware of the fact many of you would like to receive the announcements made here in Eugene on the Sabbath. I would like for you to have any and all information which is given at any time. But there are major problems. The tapes do broadly circulate. Some information, if put on the tapes, would do injury to others who may not want names or circumstances known for the time. It is imperative that we exercise all confidentiality where required—for the safety and protection of parties involved. We are not attempting to hide anything from you. It is just that I want to be a little wiser than some who would play into the hands of those who peruse the tapes and literature for nefarious purposes. I am sure you will understand this need.

We will attempt to make any and all information available to you which we can safely do. Please have that confidence in us.

Tenth: GROWTH OF NEW REQUESTS: The past two or three weeks have indicated a considerable interest in the truth once delivered. We are receiving many new requests for literature and tapes on a weekly basis. God is very greatly blessing us in that respect. Now is the time for all of us to begin pulling together. Success—not for self, but for the truth—is beginning to appear. All of us working harmoniously in a genuine and self-sacrificing way will result in great good for people who are troubled and need some form of reassurance. We are in a position to give it only if we have resolved our own doubts and fears. Where do we stand? Are we ready to render a service to others? God has allowed us to see and understand the truth early for some purpose. That purpose is to help others—not to defend the self or satisfy the peculiar wants of our own. We must together—united in mind and heart of Christ—be about our Father's business. I am sure we are all ready to do our part. Let us set about that responsibility now with purpose and dedication. On my part, I want to thank you for that confidence and assurance that you will be so doing.

Eleventh: UNEMPLOYMENT: The unemployment picture has been a very drastic one for many months. This fact alone has very adversely affected the income of the church—perhaps better said, the fledgling operation of "holding fast to the truth which we were given."

In due time God can, despite all physical factors, greatly bless. We must learn to leave that up to Him. For the present, it is a matter of wisely using whatever God provides. Please pray for that kind of guidance and direction for us. We want to be wise stewards. Only with the very direct help of God can this be accomplished.

Twelfth: REFERENCE BOOKS: All who have previously ordered any books through us will be receiving them in the future—near future we hope. But, since we are not able to maintain the volume of ordering required by the companies involved, we will not be able to continue with the discount arrangements indicated at the Feast. Due to that fact, it will be just as economical for you to order locally as it would be for any future orders to be placed through us.

As time passes, perhaps the picture will change with respect to the ordering of books. When, and if, this transpires, you will be appropriately informed.

For the present, if you have already ordered and paid for books, you will be receiving them. If you have not paid, though previously ordering them, our suggestion is that you reorder locally. There is no economic break by ordering through us. However, if you are not able to secure a specific book locally, we will be most happy to render this service despite the fact there is no economic break. Please advise us if we can render such a service for anyone.

Thirteenth: OUR SPIRITUAL STRENGTH: Never should we become "locked-in" by name or organization. The real force of our strength and purpose is the priceless truth which we have been given. Had people looked to Jesus Christ and The Revealed Word of Life, they would not have been deeply affected by the past difficulties. Our problems relate specifically to the degree by which we were physically oriented—organization or personality.

The truth is the means by which anything should be evaluated. If we are not careful we will find ourselves using differing yardsticks by which we will evaluate others—as well as responsibilities, operations and actions.

REMEMBER: Only the truth revealed to us is a proper yardstick for evaluating. That truth involves the character and purposes of any individual. Paul impressed upon the congregations, which he had served, the fact that they had known his manner of life and belief. I, too, have wanted to be a completely open book for all. Yet, brethren, I feel that being open and candid should not become the avenue of adverse criticism. We should judge by the standard of God's Word only—not by the personal conceptions which we hold. I am most happy to be evaluated by the standard of God's law and the perfection of Christ. Do I keep the law? Am I morally clean and honest? That is the only appropriate yardstick. Personal fetishes and beliefs of others may be tolerated, but must not become the basis of evaluations and judgments. I am sure we all understand.

Fourteenth: QUESTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE: Questions do arise. This is a very obvious fact. But the area of problems stem from the action which we take. Do we go directly to the individual involved? Or, do we discuss matters with others before going to the party or parties involved? To discuss any such situation with another individual before going to the one about whom the question may have arisen is absolutely contrary to the scriptures.

Nothing would please Satan more than to drive wedges between the people whom God has reserved for Himself. He would love to use gossip and false reports to bring about suspicion and hate. All too frequently, we still manifest too much of the fear syndrome of the past. When we fail to go to one another in the fullest realization that any question or comment will be received with openness and candor, we manifest the basic carnality from which springs differences, doubts, and suspicions. From the beginning, I have attempted, in every way I know how, to assure you that any contact here will be received with warmth and genuine interest.

We, as human beings, are so prone to procrastinate until we build up resentments, after which we effect contacts, making our comments in an atmosphere of fear, wrath and contempt. This is the perfect circumstance for castigation, malignity and accusation rather

than an open warm and convivial discussion in which mutual interest and respect are manifested.

Let us all develop that love, courage and deep feeling of respect for one another which will allow us to casually, in honor, deference and abiding interest, communicate unobtrusively, honestly and confidently with each other. If a question arises, do not hesitate to ask it—IMMEDIATELY, AND direct the question to the party involved—not another person. Do not wait, out of fear of reprisal, until the intent or purpose, initially, is entirely warped and reconfigured mentally. The issue then becomes an emotionally charged one. In no way can we hope to arrive at a premise for mutual respect and confidence if we allow such situations to exist.

Further, be careful about listening to the voice of an enemy. Remember, he may have his own ulterior motives. If we listen and consistently evaluate on the basis of what an enemy states, we will be fighting windmill battles as long as we live. This is not very productive usage of time or energy.

He who destroys with the sword of bitterness and contempt will set the stage for his own destruction by the same means. This is a self-evident truth.

Finally, brethren, let me restate what has been said time and time again. What you must watch is doctrine! If anyone does not speak according to that truth which was originally taught him, then you must take notice. Where is the promise anyone of us, as individuals, is automatically destined for immortality? Is it not possible for anyone to falter? Our hopes, our faith, must not be predicated on the faith, the continuity, of any other individual. Our hopes and faith must be predicated on the continuity and perfection of Jesus Christ only. He does not change. The standard of judgment does not change. What confidence we can have!

What others do must not affect us. What if I faltered? Would you lose interest in the truth? The same truth for which we have made our present stand? The truth is not affected, altered or changed in any manner by what I do, think or practice. The same is true with respect to every one who practices it. That truth must be foundationally adhered to—not a man or an organization.

Brethren, let me take this final opportunity to express my thanks to you for your continued loyalty and help. We continually devote our efforts to you in love and service. Joyously we look forward to seeing many of you during the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread season.

Let us all look up in confidence and hope. Time is short. As stated earlier, the factors all about us indicate the seriousness of the times. Now is the time for greater urgency, togetherness and purpose. I know we will all remain loyal to God and His way of life. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. We look forward to hearing from you—by whatever means.

In deepest Christian love and respect; I remain your dedicated servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Raymond C. Cole