

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

What is the proper way to decide where God is working in these last days? It is a critical question greatly debated over the last thirty years among those who once accepted the efforts of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong as the work of God. But why is it now so confusing? At one time we all fellowshiped together as unified brethren in the Radio Church of God—later named the Worldwide Church of God (WCG). Back then we had confidence we had truly been called into God's one true church, and we believed God was guiding and blessing that body as His own. But in the early 1970s, problems began to develop that led to the ultimate splintering and division of that once cohesive assembly. The repercussions of that tumultuous shockwave continue to reverberate to this very day.

In the last three decades, the greatest majority of those 100,000 baptized members simply folded their tents and gave up on organized religion. But among those who still value some part of the foundation they first learned within that parent organization, there is still no agreement today on where a faithful remnant may still exist, if at all. In previous writings we have covered material to show God promised to preserve a faithful remnant (see the December, 2001 *Monthly Letter* on our website entitled, *A Faithful Remnant—Accept No Counterfeits*). It is not the intent of this letter to repeat that material, but to expand upon one particular aspect which continues to be extremely relevant to God's people.

As background, a couple of years ago, someone advised us that a prominent former evangelist—leading his own group today—made an oblique reference to Mr. Raymond Cole and Church of God, The Eternal in some comments given in a Pentecost sermon. Listening to those comments personally on tape was very revealing. The speaker related there was one well-known former evangelist of the Worldwide Church of God who refused to go along with the change in Pentecost from Monday to Sunday in 1974, defending the original teachings of Mr. Armstrong as divine revelation. This was no doubt a reference to Mr. Cole. But instead of then addressing the technical accuracy or flaw in keeping a Monday Pentecost—or the concept of divine revelation of Truth—what was the evidence this minister

advanced to assert Raymond Cole could not be correct, and was not a faithful minister of God? It was 1) the fact Church of God, The Eternal is a very small group—lacking thousands of members and not growing by leaps and bounds—and 2) that Raymond Cole was not carrying a gospel message to the unconverted world, fulfilling the command in Matthew 28:19–20. By these two assertions alone, it was concluded Raymond Cole could not be leading a faithful remnant. By this rationale, Monday Pentecost could not be correct. No need to look any further or deeper. Existence or absence of an evangelistic "work" and great numbers of members trumped any other criteria for confirming God's Truth. It is also interesting that this two-pronged criteria for evaluating and confirming the work of God is not just the yardstick used by this one former evangelist. That criteria is actually very prevalent among *many* former members of the parent body. How did that come to be so? How did so many become conditioned to look at growth in numbers and a worldwide work as their basis for finding God?

God Confirmed Mr. Armstrong's Work Through Growth

There is no question that one of the key ways God proved His support and favor for the efforts of Mr. Herbert Armstrong and the Radio Church of God was by blessing it with incredible growth over several decades. What started as a small and vulnerable operation by Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong alone, grew consistently by leaps and bounds from 1933 through 1968. Notice just a few of Mr. Armstrong's own comments about the source of that unparalleled and monumental result. First, from the *Co-Worker Letter*, July 27, 1966:

This is not MY Work—nor even ours—except that the Creator God grants us the glorious PRIVILEGE of being used as His instruments in what HE is doing! It is GOD'S WORK here on earth. And God has put the living Jesus Christ at the HEAD of it. He guides, directs, inspires, and blesses this Work. And for 32 years, He has caused this Work to GROW at the rate (on the average) of 30% every year over the preceding year! EVERY YEAR He has caused HIS Gospel to be heard by 30% more people than the year before. Today, approximately FORTY MILLION people are hearing it EVERY WEEK—over every continent on earth! Every year the living Christ has caused 30% more precious lives to be CONVERTED—CHANGED—begotten as children of God—made HEIRS of the KINGDOM OF GOD and eternal life—than the year before! NOW several THOUSAND are converted annually through this very Work! The POWER OF GOD is in it! The SPIRIT of the living God EMPOWERS IT!

Next from the *Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong*:

The only reason this work survived—and grew—is that I was not, after all, "on my own." Pitifully small as this effort was during those first few years—still it was, though assuredly not then apparent, the very WORK OF THE LIVING GOD. The divinely imparted dynamic spark was in it. People have asked, in recent years, what makes this now great work "tick." The vital energy and life that the living CHRIST has imparted is what makes it tick! Looking back, now, over the actual physical circumstances, conditions, and happenings of those years, it seems utterly incredible that a work started in such a humble, crude manner without any visible backing could have survived, let alone continued to grow at the pace of 30 percent a year. Of course this work did not double in size every day, every week, or even every year. But doubling in number of people reached, in number of precious lives converted, in radio power, and in scope of operation every two years and seven and a half months is, after all, a very rapid and almost unheard-of rate of growth. And that rate of redoubling continued nearly thirty years! Yes, truly, this has been "Mission Impossible"—ACCOMPLISHED! And still being accomplished in ever-increasing magnitude! It has been and is, as stated above, an example of what the living God can do, has done, and is doing through human instrumentalities yielded to Him and obedient to HIS WAYS! . . .

But, from that moment when we began to rely solely on God for financial support not only, but also for guidance, direction, and results, the Work began a phenomenal yearly increase of nearly 30% for the next 35 years. It doubled in size, scope and power on the average of every 2 2/3 years. It multiplied eight times every eight years—64 times in 16 years. Today it is an immensely larger and greater Work than then. WHY has this Work leaped from virtually nothing to worldwide power and scope, multiplying itself continually over and over again? Certainly I had not the ability, the resources within myself, to have planned, directed, and accomplished anything remotely like the phenomenal development into the worldwide enterprises that is reality today. . . . The DIFFERENCE between THIS Work of GOD and others is just that—this is the Work of GOD and not of MEN. It started, and continued, to rely on GOD, not on MAN.

So we see Mr. Armstrong asserted repeatedly it was the work of God—not man—and that a substantiation of the divine nature of its results was found in monumental growth, as that message was carried to the whole world with great power. Over the years, when challenges were made to Mr. Armstrong's teachings or authority, he very often pointed to those very things as substantiation of his credibility. He would challenge anyone to identify

another work that was going out boldly to proclaim Jesus Christ's gospel of God's coming Kingdom, or was producing the fruits of 30% average annual growth, year after year.

No wonder then that most members of the church had these two tenets—necessity to do a worldwide work and confidence in membership growth—drilled in to their thinking. Those two pillars were thundered by Mr. Armstrong as the proof of his own authority as the last-day servant of God, and so he certainly was.

How Was That Great Work Later Destroyed?

The Bible is very clear that an apostasy—a departure from Truth—would occur in the last-day church of God, even as God's people historically have always departed from the original revelation. The ancient Israelites did it time and time again, never able to remain faithful to what God gave them from the beginning. Neither could the first century church hold on, corrupting the original teachings of the Apostles within the first forty years (Acts 20:28–30). Likewise, the last-day church proved it could be no more faithful than any of its predecessors. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away [apostasy] first, . . ." (2 Thessalonians 2:3). As we came to understand, apostasy does not mean departing from membership in a physical organization. It means literally a departure from *the Truth*! Most had no idea the physical organization we identified with God's Church would itself turn from God's revealed doctrines. When the first major doctrinal changes began to be implemented in the early 1970s—including a change in Pentecost from Monday to Sunday, and allowance for divorce and remarriage—most members accepted these by apostolic authority. After all, we were strongly admonished that leaving the WCG would be synonymous with leaving the Church—the spiritual organism which is Christ's Body. We were also told that if the ministry was wrong, God is the one who would correct them in time. The laity was responsible only for upholding obedience to church government. Therefore, the majority continued to stay, even when more and more fruits of that organization continued to become distressing.

Finally, after Mr. Armstrong's death in early 1986, the final repudiation of other core teachings came in short order, including corruption of the Sabbath and nature of God doctrines. Many could no longer stomach this flagrant corruption of God's truth and did what they never thought they would: leave "the church."

Since the early 1990s, a massive exodus has taken place which has literally destroyed what we once knew as the Worldwide Church of God. Over the last thirty years, there have sprung myriad assemblies which have their roots in that parent organization. Hundreds of groups have now laid claim to being "a faithful remnant" of God's end-time church. And many of these groups have been vigorously attempting to do what Mr. Armstrong did—prove

their authenticity and authority by 1) doing a great evangelistic work to the world, and 2) seeking exponential growth in membership. They feel if they can duplicate the success Mr. Armstrong experienced in these two ways, they can make a case for being the legitimate continuation of his spiritual work.

From the time early members of Church of God, The Eternal were forced out of the WCG—because they knew no man had authority to change what God gave the Church by revelation (Galatians 1:8–9)—they were consistently quizzed by former brethren about their credibility. The two most prevalent questions asked were: "What 'kind of work' is Raymond Cole doing?" and "How many members do you have?" For most people, the lack of one or the other was an automatic indication we could not be an authorized body, just as that former evangelist suggested recently. But are these two criteria really the appropriate yardstick for proving where God is working today?

Assumptions About God's Work

The problem begins by accepting major assertions which have no Biblical substantiation. First, that any legitimate assembly of God must at all times be doing a worldwide, warning work, and second, that a legitimate continuation of Mr. Armstrong's work will be growing exponentially today, even as it did in the early years. Let us address each one of these assumptions in turn.

Does every individual becoming a Christian have a right to attach himself to Christ's command in Matthew 28, and go out to do a grand work? (Please refer to our article entitled, *What Is the Work of God?*) What did Jesus Christ actually say, and to whom was He speaking?

And Jesus came and spake *unto them*, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. *Go ye* therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:18–20) [emphasis mine].

Who was the "them" to whom Christ was speaking, when He said "go ye"? Did that apply to every Tom, Dick, and Harry who volunteered to become a teacher in Christ's name? Or do we accept that Christ has the prerogative to commission whomever He chooses! Yes, God has the same right to selectively commission those who will speak in His name, even as you and I would reserve the right to hand-pick someone acting as our personal agent. We would never allow someone to tell us he was making himself our agent. That would be

ludicrous. No one has the authority to speak on your behalf unless you approve. Does not God have the same authority? Or is He duty-bound to back-up everyone who appoints himself to do a "work" in His name? It simply does not make sense. How would there be such a thing as a "false prophet" if all were truly authorized to do God's work?

No, Jesus Christ specifically was addressing His hand-picked disciples, the ones He had worked with personally for three years and prepared to become apostles. Jesus said, "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: . . ." (John 13:18). It is to apostles *only* that this task was assigned, to go out and to proclaim that Truth to the world, making converts of those God would call. The Apostle Paul also became such an authorized agent because he was personally selected by Christ for that commission, taught directly in the wilderness through divine revelation, and then sent to his assigned area with a specific and definable mission (Galatians 1:15–18). These are all attributes of authentic apostles and will exist wherever an authentic "work" is truly commencing in God's name.

Herbert Armstrong was likewise a commissioned apostle in these last days because he also was called and selected by God, given direct—divine—inspiration concerning the plan of salvation and coming Kingdom of God, and then commissioned to proclaim that same gospel to the world. And as we have already noted, the fruit of that grand work confirms his commission was authentic—and believed by many whose lives were changed by that incredible message.

How Long Does God Support a Chosen Servant?

How long does a commissioned servant continue to be blessed and backed by God? Once chosen, does he have "tenure" for life? Or does God support only as long as that servant holds true to the *inspired* message? What about Jesus Christ's own ministry? Christ said:

For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (John 12:49–50).

What if Jesus had decided to amend His Father's message and customize it to fit times and circumstances of human beings He encountered in Jerusalem during the first century? Would the Father have been duty-bound to back-up such customization? Remember, if the initial message really emanates from God, that message must be right and true as it is first revealed, else we accuse God of being fickle and shift. Jesus had no need to amend the message from His Father. It was the perfect representation of Truth *as given*! Therefore, the

only test was whether Jesus—as fully human and having a carnal mind, yet possessing a full measure of the Holy Spirit—could resist the urge to corrupt the revealed message and remain a true Ambassador of the Father. By speaking that revealed message faithfully—without corruption—He proved His worthiness. A faithful ambassador delivers the message *as given* by his master. He never arrogates to himself the right to amend it in any way.

Likewise, notice again the strict command Christ gave those trained disciples whom He had selected to become apostles:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:19–20) [emphasis mine].

Once each of these men was christened with the office of Apostle, did he then receive authorization from Christ to modify doctrines in future years according to Matthew 16:19? Or did Jesus Christ mean just what He said, "teaching them to observe all things *whatsoever I have commanded you*"? Notice the condemnation of those pastors who were certainly legitimate shepherds of Israel but turned away from teaching what God gave them:

Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD . . . Thus saith the LORD of hosts, *Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you*: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? (Jeremiah 23:1, 16–18) [emphasis mine].

That God of the Old Testament is the very same Being who became Jesus Christ. How can any prophet or apostle ever take liberty to change the message of that God? Even the Apostle Paul confirmed he had no such authority from Jesus Christ, his Master!

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again,

If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:6–12).

If Herbert Armstrong were likewise an authentic apostle in these last days, then it is true because he received *divine doctrine* directly from Jesus Christ *by revelation*. That is the way *all* legitimate servants have *always* been commissioned. Those arguing that he taught us a mixture of truth and error from the beginning are only building a case to reject him as a false prophet altogether. But if you believe Mr. Armstrong was legitimately a chosen servant of God, then that means the message he taught us *from the beginning* was not his own, even as Paul's was not his own, and Christ's was not His own. That continuity *must* be there, or else we have no spiritual foundation whatsoever!

When Did God's Initial Last-Day Work End?

If it is then true Mr. Armstrong was a legitimate apostle, what must we conclude about his decision in 1974 to approve the corruption of Pentecost and divorce and remarriage at the urging of liberal ministers? He resisted those attempting to strong-arm him in his old age—including his own son—for quite some time. Notice his statement in an April, 1973 Bible Study in Pasadena, CA, in the midst of the doctrinal committee's attempt to dismantle revealed doctrines held by the church for forty years:

So I will just tell you now, that I myself, cannot see one centila of an argument so far that is going to overthrow the teaching of God's Church on divorce and remarriage. . . . If we would do that, brethren do you know what would happen in less than another three months? I'll bet you nearly hundreds and hundreds of members of the Worldwide Church of God would divorce and they would go out and marry someone else. And that would be the end of the Worldwide Church of God—and Jesus Christ would spue us out of his mouth. And anyone who does go and do that will get spued out. I have to warn you.

Mr. Armstrong probably had no idea at the time he was actually speaking a prophecy through God's Holy Spirit of the coming destruction of that church. For only one year later—in May, 1974—he finally capitulated and signed-off on that very same perverted teaching he had condemned so strongly before. And then afterwards, just as he had

prophesied, hundreds *did* divorce and remarry within months, and that church then *did* begin a downward spiral that eventually ended in its repudiation of almost every foundational doctrine we had once held dear. It took twenty years for that deterioration to culminate to the point most members could recognize it, but it happened nonetheless, exactly as Mr. Armstrong prophesied it would.

The problem is, very few recognized when that departure from God actually occurred. Most accepted the changes in doctrine Mr. Armstrong approved until his death in 1986 under "apostolic authority," but rejected those initiated by his successors thereafter. They think the prophesied apostasy occurred in the early 1990s! But as more are having to face—as time goes on—the roots of that corruption began *twenty years previously*, under the watch of our own beloved Apostle! Although no one knows what was in his heart but God, we think it very likely Mr. Armstrong may have repented of allowing those changes, even if it was too late for him to truly bring that organization back to God in the 1980s. In any case, we will always hold him in high esteem for the powerful work God did accomplish through him in building the last-day church.

What About "The Work" After 1973?

God never continues to sanction a chosen servant who allows corruption of his charge to uphold the Truth. From the time Jesus Christ was rejected as the Revelator of Truth to the Church in 1974—and human scholarship was elevated instead—God ceased to bless and inspire that work. Even Paul confirmed it was not impossible for an apostle to fail. He had to be ever vigilant to keep himself in check. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:26–27). This shows that even an end-time apostle must likewise keep himself in subjection, else lose the inspiration and blessings of God. Did that happen with Mr. Armstrong? It did indeed!

In the June 19, 1978 edition of *The Good News* magazine, Mr. Armstrong provides a chart showing the actual percentages of growth in the church as far back as 1955. This chart confirms that the monumental growth of 30% annually ended in 1968. What else is amazing is that the first year the church actually *declined* in membership was 1973, just months before the announcement of the Pentecost change. From 1968 to 1977, the church experienced an average annual *decline* of 1.8%! Of course, this was explained at the time as a result of his liberal son being in charge in Pasadena. But what steward can ever blame failure on his subordinate when the ultimate approval for each of those doctrines was made

by he himself personally? Yes, it is also true that the High Priest Eli was handicapped by age and a father's weakness for his sons, but that did not absolve him from responsibility for failure in the eyes of God. Notice the condemnation God uttered toward Eli through Samuel. "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity *which he knoweth*; because his sons made themselves vile, and *he restrained them not*" (1 Samuel 3:13) [emphasis mine]. So the High Priest was responsible for allowing God's house to become corrupted, even as the last-day Apostle was held responsible for the destruction of God's temple on his watch.

Notice something else very interesting. The time around 1968 seems to be a focal point for many different reasons in the history of God's church. First, Mrs. Loma Armstrong—who had been such an anchor to her husband through all those decades of blessing of the work—died soon before then, in 1967. Notice what Mr. Armstrong said about her in the May, 1967 *Plain Truth*, Personal From the Editor:

Through the wife God gave me, He called me—and us together—into His service. He chose us as a husband-and-wife TEAM. Through us He built His end-time WORK, proclaiming to the whole world the GOOD NEWS of His coming world-ruling Kingdom, as a witness to all nations. He used us to prepare the way for Christ's coming in supreme POWER and GLORY to rule all peoples, and to bring to earth PEACE, prosperity, happiness and joy. He used us in bringing many thousands to CHRIST, to be begotten as God's own children, to be BORN into His divine Family!

Notice what followed soon thereafter with the loss of that critical team member—Mrs. Armstrong—in God's work: In 1968, the name was changed from Radio Church of God to Worldwide Church of God. As we have seen above, that was also the very last year of the tremendous annual growth of the church. From that time forward, the growth was meager, until it began to decline in 1973. Also, it was 1968 when attention was turned to accepting invitations from kings and prime ministers of the world, and Mr. Armstrong handed over the reigns of direct leadership in Pasadena to his son. It was during this time that Mr. Armstrong ceased being the personal voice for the World Tomorrow program. In spite of the feeling this marked the time of a great new leap forward in the work of God, it is apparent now these events actually marked the closing of God's powerful work through Mr. Armstrong. In the late 1960s, the seeds of apostasy were already working, as ministers who did not truly love the original doctrines—or believe God had revealed them to the Church—were looking for their opportunity to introduce change. It took seven years after Mrs. Armstrong's death for the first major changes to be approved, but that activity started immediately after Mr. Armstrong lost his wife. Is it any wonder the evidence now points to the winding down and ultimate termination of that grand work in 1974?

Support for Any Work Contingent Upon Obedience

The work of God to spread the gospel requires a commissioned servant to proclaim the *unadulterated* words of God. That is such a simple concept, but one that most seem to overlook. How can one go out as an authorized agent of Jesus Christ, yet proclaim a corrupted message, not reflective of God's true character? From the time Mr. Armstrong approved doctrinal corruption in 1974 by accepting a Sunday Pentecost, God withdrew His Holy Spirit—which is ironically the very significance of that very Holy Day. This marked the end of God's blessing of that grand and glorious work. With fits and starts of attempted resurgence—trying to recapture the glory of the past through efforts like "Back on Track" in the 1980s—the Worldwide Church of God nevertheless continued on a steady decline. The effort during those same years to do the work of Elijah—to warn the kings of the world in preparation for Christ's return—was equally lacking in real fruit. None of those kings ever received a real warning at all! And not a one of them was ever left shaking in his boots, the way Ahab did after the original Elijah's visit. The fruit of those visits was to make the WCG more visible and acceptable to the pagan world, not warn that world of its need to repent. (See our July, 2002 *Monthly Letter* on this topic, entitled on our website, *Herbert W. Armstrong—Was He an Apostle and/or the End-Time Elijah?*) He was certainly the Apostle God raised up to build His Church of the last days. *That* he absolutely accomplished. But he did not fulfill the unique commission *yet to be given*, to prepare the way for the literal return of Jesus Christ.

Will the Faithful Remnant Grow Exponentially?

We have seen that a legitimate work of God must be predicated upon a revealed and uncorrupted message from God, and proclaimed by an authorized *and faithful* instrument. Lacking either initial authorization, or adherence to the revealed doctrines of God invalidates any "work" from God's blessing, no matter who it is.

But what about a remnant still holding fast to the faith once delivered? Is the proof of such a remnant the continuation of monumental growth on an annual basis? Not at all! Notice God prophesied the church would be scattered, and it would become difficult to find any faithful vestige of truth whatsoever.

Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of

cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us *a very small remnant*, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:7–9) [emphasis mine].

This is a prophecy for Israel of the last days! God confirms the body of those holding fast to the original revelation would be *very few* in number. "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14).

God used Mr. Armstrong as an apostle to do a grand work to *build* the last-day Church. But that major building ceased in the late 1960s! Yes, many more were called after that time, but never to the extent we had seen in its earlier heyday. And of all those men now trying to duplicate Mr. Armstrong's work, which of them are growing at 30% per year? Not a one. The WCG stopped growing like that, and no one since has grown like that either. That phase of God's work ended according to His will. The reality is, most of these men have tied their own credibility to growth in numbers, so they now feel great pressure to deliver, even though God is not blessing. For all their claimed growth in new members, the truth is, nearly as many people are leaving by the back door as are coming in the front. They are all spinning their wheels, desperate to prove that they are the ones God is blessing with growth, yet failing in every way by their own measure of success. The evangelist mentioned previously—who claimed Raymond Cole's efforts were not legitimate because he lacked "numbers"—was applying his own self-induced standard to Church of God, The Eternal. But we have *never* asserted great numbers and growth as the substantiation of our legitimacy. Yet ironically, that very evangelist is failing himself in relation to his own standard!

The truth is, Raymond Cole understood that the prophesied remnant of God's people was never pictured as having a carbon-copy growth pattern of the early parent organization. All who have assumed the continuation of God's faithful today—after the prophesied apostasy—would be *many* in number and *growing* exponentially, are honestly misguided. We are now in a very dark period of time for God's church. The remnant is just that, a small piece of the original—leftover and remaining. God never asserted that after the parent body went apostate, a very large remnant would come out of it with thousands of members, and then begin growing by leaps and bounds, doing a warning work to the world. In fact, just the opposite. What was the prophesied result of that apostasy?

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And *many shall follow their pernicious ways*; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they

with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not (2 Peter 2:1–3) [emphasis mine].

Was it only *a few* who were to be deceived by the introduction of false doctrines into the church by the ministry, or was it the many—the majority? It was the many. And yes, God's Truth *did* become "evil spoken of" by men who had their trust in human scholarship rather than the divine revelation of Jesus Christ. They belittled Mr. Armstrong by saying he was not a scholar, and therefore did not understand how to decipher proper doctrine regarding the Pentecost count and the technicalities of divorce and remarriage. And unfortunately, Mr. Armstrong lost confidence in his old age in the fact God *gave him* that Truth as a gift, irrespective of man's scholastic abilities and credentials. The majority of God's people bought that deception, unfortunately, and followed a man into error under the false notion of adhering to church government. It was only a very small remnant who, after being forced out, held fast to the original teachings Christ had delivered. And for the last thirty years, it has still been few indeed who have been able to put all those pieces together and get it right.

Since 1974, God's last-day church has been in a spiritual wilderness, and a legitimate manifestation of the Truth has been very scarce and difficult to find. God said the gates of hell would not prevail against His church, and so, in spite of the mass corruption of doctrine by the majority, a small remnant has been preserved all these past years. But its certification cannot be verified by the false expectation of finding them doing another grand warning work to the world, and having thousands of members. Note how God recorded the state of His church in the last days, after the apostasy commenced:

And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it (Amos 8:10–12).

There has truly been a famine of the hearing of the word since 1974. It has not been a total *absence* of that word, but it has been scarce. God ceased to back and support that parent organization, and God's unadulterated doctrines—from that time forward—continued to be preserved only by a very small remnant.

What Is the Real Work of the Remnant?

If we are not trying to duplicate Mr. Armstrong's apostolic commission to go to the world, what is the work of a faithful remnant in these dark times? Let Jesus Christ answer that, as He did when asked how to do a legitimate "work" in God's name. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, *This is the work of God*, that ye *believe on him whom he hath sent* (John 6:28–29) [emphasis mine].

Christ confirmed that the first and most important work is to *believe* Him! How do we believe Him? Is it just by saying the words, "I believe"? No, the proof of one who truly believes Christ is one who acknowledges that God puts doctrine in the Church by revelation, and then believes God never lies!

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ *is come* in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ *is come* in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (1 John 4:2–3) [emphasis mine].

The Apostle John was not saying the proof was agreeing that Christ *had come* to this earth almost 2000 years ago. The test is admitting that "Christ *is come* in the flesh." The term is definitely present tense in the Greek, not past tense. It is an admonition for the last-day church—upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Corinthians 10:11)—that we accept Christ *did* manifest Himself by divine inspiration of a chosen human servant in these last days, and that His revelation was true from the beginning of that work. All those now claiming we had to change doctrine forty years later to correct errors by Mr. Armstrong, are only admitting they think it was a man's work, and not God's work after all. Whether they know it or not, they are actually saying they do not believe Jesus Christ *is come* in this last time, putting His doctrine in the Church! And that is calling Him a liar.

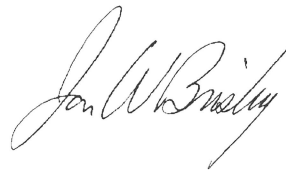
By contrast, a truly faithful remnant first believes that Christ is the one who established the last-day Church in this time, building it upon a foundation of Truth—His own Truth! All others who have accepted a Sunday Pentecost, the allowance of divorce and remarriage, and every other perverted doctrinal change since the early 1970s, is calling Christ a liar, and they can never represent Him to do a work. He will not allow it. The legitimate remnant is therefore holding on to the faith once delivered, first and foremost. They refuse to corrupt what God revealed, and count it as a pearl of great price. Furthermore, that faithful remnant is then doing their work to reach out to the lost and scattered sheep, who have been so decimated by the apostasy over these last thirty years.

Allow Raymond Cole's own words from the February, 1977 issue of the *Monthly Letter* to define what the current work of Church of God, The Eternal really is:

As estranged children, we are attempting to hold fast to that truth which we were taught. The very beginning of our joy and confidence. We are holding out a helping hand to all who are troubled and who are beckoning for help. And, finally, we patiently wait for the major intervention of God in the last days. We await His specific instructions—instructions related to any work which He wills to be done through us or anyone else who will remain faithful and loyal to the original call. As ministers, we must never pressure. We were called and ordained as ministers to tend the flock. For the present, none of us was called to restore truth by effecting a major evangelistic work. We will continue to help troubled and perplexed people—of the flock of God—to restore and uphold truth internally. We are ever willing to instruct and help those who are willing to listen. Our great purpose is to study, pray and be prepared for the future. In what ways will God use us in the future? We do not now know!

That mission is still the very same today, and we are still working to help all whom God sends to us, to establish them again in the foundation of real Truth. We will still not be presumptuous to run when we have not been sent, but wait patiently for God to lead us according to His perfect will.

Your devoted servant in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Jon W. Brisby