

Church of God, The Eternal

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

The late Raymond C. Cole
Founding Pastor
Jon W. Brisby
Pastor, Director

Offices in: United States
Philippines
Switzerland
Kenya

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Dear Brethren:

Here we are in the weeks leading to another Pentecost observance. This will be the thirty-fifth observance of a Monday Pentecost by Church of God, The Eternal since our group's official formation in early 1975. When the Worldwide Church of God changed Pentecost from Monday to Sunday in 1974, they broke a thirty-seven year history of Monday observance begun in 1937 after God first revealed that priceless truth to Mr. Herbert Armstrong. Because they remained members of that parent body through the end of 1974, Mr. Raymond Cole, Mr. Jean Aviolat, and a handful of other scattered brethren in the United States and Europe were forced to observe a Monday Pentecost in their own homes that year, given that the organized body provided no authorized place of assembly on the correct day. This means that 1974 became the unique year in this era of time when God's church sustained a Monday Pentecost *only in secret assembly* by those whose consciences would not allow them to abandon it. There was no public assembly of the church keeping the true Pentecost that year. Only when Church of God, The Eternal formed and then instituted formal assemblies of Monday Pentecost observance in 1975 did the light of that example shine more publically once again.

The majority of God's people accepted the proclamation that year, asserting that certain men have authority to change God's past revelations. Based upon that claimed authority, approximately 100,000 members worldwide forsook the true Pentecost in 1974 and began to keep Sunday. Those who refused to do so were branded as heretics because they repudiated the authority of God's ministry who sponsored the change. Monday Pentecost observance became a joke, recast as a relic of the past, bespeaking our infantile understanding of advanced Bible scholarship. All but one lone evangelist in the United States and one local elder in Switzerland (to our knowledge) embraced the new teaching. The majority could never be wrong, could they? Almost the entire church changed to a Sunday Pentecost without reservation. Those few holding to the original teaching were scorned and rebuffed. Who were these few to resist our "progress" to *grow in grace and knowledge*? But how did God view the actions of that majority?

Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, *turn aside out of the path*, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us (Isaiah 30:8–11) [emphasis mine].

. . . they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men (Isaiah 59:8–10).

A Sojourner's Analogy

So the majority of the church turned onto their newfound path, taking them on a divergent course from those few who continued trudging along the original track. At first, those two paths—though diverging—were yet near enough to each other for us to share most things in common still. In essence, we could still see each other across the way, and the two paths looked almost like they were running parallel to one another. But the paths were really never parallel at all. They were truly diverging, meaning they were angling away from each other slowly but surely, so that little by little, the people on each path were getting farther and farther apart from each other. Some of those on the new path became increasingly uncomfortable as years went by, the further afield that new path strayed from the original path. They had no problem with the first changes in doctrine, but became anxious in later years as they began to see where that new path was actually taking them.

After Mr. Armstrong's death in 1986, the real nature of that new path became more apparent. The essence of that *new course philosophy* begun in 1974 was to grow in grace and knowledge through changing "selective" teachings over time. But once you embrace such a philosophy, how can you ever control it? How can you set a precedent to permit changing "some" past teachings, but limit those changes to "just a few" in future years? Once you crack that door open even a little bit, how can you prevent it from opening wider and wider over time? It was the *locked door* which safeguarded the real treasures inside the vault (God's revealed Truths within His Church). Unlock that door and open it "just a crack," and see if you can hold back the swell of pressure trying to fling it open wide. It is impossible, and such was proven within twenty years of the 1974 change in Pentecost. Once the precedent of change based upon "better" human scholarship was embraced, more and

more original teachings were challenged and overturned, one by one. By the force of Mr. Armstrong's own personality and devotion to the *overall* truth of God, those changes were limited to a certain degree until his death. But after that, someone new held the power and discretion to determine what "new truth" would be adopted based upon the 1974 precedent.

It was reinforced over and over again that the Pastor General had the authority of God to change doctrine. Well, if Mr. Armstrong had that authority, and then he used his authority to appoint a successor, then that decision likewise had to be backed by God. And so if that *new man* then used his "God-given" authority to make even more changes, how can those changes be refuted? It is all part of the same chain of rationale which began in 1974. How can you accept some changes early on, but then reject other changes later on, if they all come through a "legitimate" head of the church under God? In 1974, they told us the head man under God held the authority to reject teachings first proclaimed to us as Christ's divine revelation. Well, is that true or is it not? Either believe it and swallow the entire buffet of changes coming down the line, or else reject that premise as defective from inception. But in either case, it is disingenuous to try to have it both ways—justifying *Mr. Armstrong's* authority to approve change, but then denying that same authority to his legitimate successor.

Within just a few years after Mr. Armstrong's death, the very most foundational doctrines of the Church were thrown out by the new Pastor General, including the Sabbath, the nature of God, and the entire God-Family plan expressed through the annual Holy Days. Those chickens of 1974 came home to roost in a very significant way.

Once Lost, Then What?

In the early 1990s, after the natural course of that new path—begun in 1974—had diverged so far from the original path, many sincere brethren who were unwilling to abandon the Sabbath and Holy Days finally said "enough is enough." A dramatic shift in direction was necessary for them. The road they had traveled somehow left them in a place they did not want to be. They began to look around to try to get their bearings once again. The present course they were on was leading them "too far" away from the original teachings for their comfort. They needed a radical *course correction* which would keep them more parallel to the original path, not allowing them to get any further afield than they already were.

Now those brethren and their ministers did not view it that way at all. That is not what they *perceived* themselves to be doing. They believed they had all been on the correct course up until Mr. Armstrong died, and they interpreted the changes sponsored by the new Pastor General after 1986 as the *first* and only unauthorized course deviation. They concluded that the prophesied apostasy from truth (2 Thessalonians 2:3) began in the 1990s, not recognizing

that the only reason they wound up so far afield was because of permitting the Pentecost change twenty years earlier! Most of them have still not come to that realization, but it is true nonetheless. They thought by leaving the Worldwide Church of God in the 1990s and setting up new fellowships that they were "preserving" the correct course for the church which had been abandoned by Mr. Armstrong's successor *after* 1986. Not true.

Their Predictable Point of Arrival

The rejection of the Sabbath and Holy Days was the *logical resulting destination* of the path they all took beginning in 1974! It is Mr. Armstrong's successor who really just kept steering the Worldwide Church of God on *the very same course* it had begun to tread in 1974. The only thing he did which really caused such alarm was to *speed up the pace* of the journey down that same erroneous path! Rather than continue to make changes only a few at a time over a protracted period (the hallmark of the 1974 philosophy), he accelerated the pace so that they all experienced more dramatic change even more quickly than ever before. That was not a new course direction at all, regardless of what most believe. In 1994, they arrived at *the very same destination* which the 1974 path would have taken them eventually anyway had they simply plodded along at the previous rate of speed. Changing Pentecost in 1974 actually *set the stage* for rejection of the weekly Sabbath, even though they never realized it at the time. Who would have ever believed in the early 1970s that the church raised up through Mr. Armstrong would ever renounce the Sabbath day? Impossible! But it happened nonetheless. How did it occur? In 1974, the church turned onto a new path whose only possible eventual destination was a rejection of the Sabbath day and return to Protestantism. Most of the sojourners simply arrived at their chosen destination far too quickly for their own comfort levels, and therefore many jumped ship en masse in the 1990s to begin new groups to retard that pace of change once again.

Those groups who formed in the 1990s (keeping a Sunday Pentecost or any other day but the original—Monday), have made at least *two* course corrections thus far. The first was embracing the 1974 change. The second was the *later correction* made necessary when they realized finally they were headed for total wilderness. What should they have done at that point, in the 1990s, when it became obvious something was dreadfully wrong? They should have looked back and considered that the real source of their problems was a wrong turn taken *way back in 1974!* It was *that very turn* which brought them to this arrival point.

Once you find yourself on the wrong road, how do you get back on the right road? You have to chart a revised course which will get you back onto the original path! It sounds so simple, yet so few seem to grasp it. This is precisely what God has always beseeched Israel to learn to do—retrace her steps after a wrong turn and get back on the original path!

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do *the first works*; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent (Revelation 2:5) [emphasis mine].

If the location of the original path is not your benchmark, a revised course will be little better than the erroneous one you have already been traveling. You will still end up lost, just lost in a different place than before. You might be closer to the original—correct—path, but you will still be far afield of where you need to be. The only sure way to get squared away is to *retrace your steps* to the point where the first navigation error was made, and then start treading the correct path from that point onward. Corrections of corrections of corrections—without consideration of an *initial* reliable waypoint—will never solve the orienteering problem.

Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; *I have not spoken in secret from the beginning*; from the time that it was, *there am I*: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, *which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go*. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me (Isaiah 48:16–19) [emphasis mine].

Did Christ or did He not establish that Church upon Himself—the Rock—from the beginning? He said plainly, "There am I." He did *not* speak in secret from the beginning, meaning to allow the Church to get started upon a faulty foundation which had to be "corrected" years later. Jesus Christ *did not* allow His own Church to keep Pentecost on the wrong day for nearly forty years! That whole idea is simply absurd.

But most of those lost brethren in the 1990s did not recognize this truth. They are still wandering about today with faulty compasses trying to figure out why they keep winding up in a place which is "just not right." The fruits of their choices tell the tale, for any of them willing to appraise it honestly.

Waypoints Along the Wrong Path

The first change made after the 1974 course deviation was a corruption of the marriage teaching. This was the *first stop*—a waypoint—along the new path they chose back then. In May 1974, three months after the announcement of the Pentecost change, the

Worldwide Church of God opened the door to approve divorce and remarriage for God's people, probably doing more to destroy families with that one act than any other change. The fruit of that change has become obvious. It has left the church devastated. Thirty-four years of history since then tells the tale. How can anyone claim in good conscience that change was of God? Aside from all of the technical sparring over Greek and Hebrew words to justify it, the fruits themselves are undeniable. Just look at it!

For the land is full of adulterers [those violating marriage vows]; for because of swearing [curses from breaking promises] the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, *in my house have I found their wickedness*, saith the LORD. Wherefore *their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness*: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD (Jeremiah 23:10–12) [emphasis mine].

Close upon the heels of that diabolical change was the next stop along their new path. In the mid-1970s, the doctrine concerning divine healing was changed to encourage members to go to doctors and hospitals just like everyone else in the world. Gone was the original teaching that God is our Healer, meaning that God jealously defends His healing gift quite separate and apart from the counterfeit therapies of men. From that time forward, miraculous healings which had been so common within God's church virtually ceased, and church members became cursed with the same diseases of Egypt plaguing the peoples of the world. It was another sign that they had departed from the true path, if they only had eyes to see.

About the same time came the change concerning the nature of man. No longer were they taught that God gave us an inherently evil nature which had to be crucified and overcome. No, the revised teaching said we were basically neutral by nature (neither good nor bad), and that we only *acquired* an evil nature after birth from exposure to Satan's influence. That very subtle change encouraged members to relax their efforts to fight sin, because, after all, they were not really that bad if it were not for Satan. One after another, the results of the initial Pentecost change in 1974 rippled outward to produce a domino effect, one doctrine after another falling to the reinterpretation of human scholars in our midst. Is it any wonder the whole church wound up in such a spiritual wilderness?

And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? (Luke 6:39).

Monday Pentecost—the True Benchmark

Those still keeping a Monday Pentecost are the only ones with the opportunity to worship God legitimately in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:24). All of those who have forsaken the beginning revelation and have begun to offer polluted sacrifices have been rejected.

And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even *the dung of your solemn feasts*; and *one* [a Holy Day which was corrupted] shall take you away with it (Malachi 2:1–3).

Did the change from a Monday Pentecost set the stage to separate the people of God from Jesus Christ? Pentecost represents the gift of the Holy Spirit to those of the firstfruits harvest—the Church. Rejecting God's revealed knowledge of the correct day for Pentecost is a slap in His face. Rejecting the Truth which Christ fed to us through the Spirit is the same as cutting ourselves off from that life-giving vine:

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned (John 15:5–6).

Refusing to keep the correct day of Pentecost was a refusal to abide any longer in the True Vine. From that day forward in 1974, Jesus Christ was kicked out of the Worldwide Church of God. They did not want Him anymore. They discovered a new path of their own making which interested them more. That faulty path ended in a great pit—a snare to them.

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination. Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession (Proverbs 28:9–10).

Thereafter, only a very small remnant continued to observe the revealed day of Pentecost. Only those few have been able to approach unto the Eternal God over the past thirty-five years and offer before Him an acceptable sacrifice. It is these who have continued to tread the one true path upon which that church first began to walk in the 1930s:

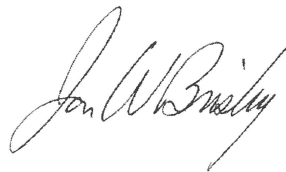
Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way (Psalm 119:35–37).

Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. . . . Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil (Proverbs 4:14–18, 25–27).

Are we—Church of God, The Eternal—seeking to be *exclusive* by advocating that only those observing a Monday Pentecost will be accepted of God? Not at all! We are not preventing any of our former and beloved brethren from coming back to a Monday Pentecost. They once kept it with us. They can likewise return to it anytime they choose. The opportunity to correct their faulty course from the last three decades and to come out of that spiritual wilderness is *entirely in their own hands*. Their current fellowships do not even have to join us to accomplish that. Their ministers could start offering acceptable sacrifices again anytime they chose to, if they only would. The true and reliable map and compass are at their own disposal. But until they are finally brought back to that reality, only a small remnant will be observing Pentecost correctly.

May all of you, dear brethren, be part of those few still shining your lights in this dark time, and may your Pentecost celebration on Monday, June 1, be a blessing indeed.

With love and deep appreciation,

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

Jon W. Brisby