

November 2012

Dear Brethren:

In the July *Monthly Letter* we continued our focus on the history of the Radio Church of God under Mr. Herbert Armstrong to learn lessons that can still help us today. We began to examine why many events took place over time to *transform* the underlying philosophy of Mr. Armstrong's work through those years. What were the *hidden forces* at play which produced a change in focus and direction within that organization over time?

We saw evidence that the organization did indeed change its *personality* and internal *culture* as it grew rapidly through the first forty years. Ultimately, Mr. Armstrong wrote to the whole church that control had been wrested from him during the 1970s, and then he spent the last few years of his life trying to put that church "back on track." How and why did this late work of reformation become necessary? Herbert Armstrong was the consistent head of that organization through all of those years. How did it ever "get away" from him? The answers provide a revealing case study about the forces of competing personality and philosophy that subtly produced very unexpected results. Our examination is not just *rehashing* the past. The very same forces exist today and can affect *any current church or enterprise* if they are not recognized, understood and actively countered. *Organizational drift* is the natural, *defaulting* result when active and aggressive leadership is not employed to steer a purposeful course.

In this installment, we want to highlight two particular individuals from that early church history who personified—ultimately—two very opposing ideologies. It is the tug-of-war between these two divergent ideologies that would later destroy the Worldwide Church of God as we know it today. Some very strong similarities—and yet even more significant differences—in these two particular individuals will serve to explain the dynamics of the organizational drift which eventually manifested, and the very different responses that each of these men made to it. Those two men were Herman L. Hoeh and Raymond C. Cole, two of the very first four students enrolled in Ambassador College for its inaugural year in 1947.

Special Note: Most of the quotations used herein from Mr. Armstrong's autobiography cannot be found in the "book" version (Volume II) assembled by the WCG in 1986/1987. By that time there was a clear intent to expunge Raymond Cole's name from that history as much as possible, as well as to eliminate statements that, in hindsight, might not reflect well upon Herman Hoeh. To get the true words of Mr. Armstrong *unedited*, you must go back to the original "Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong" published serially in *The PLAIN TRUTH* from 1957 to 1968.

The Purpose of Ambassador College

Recall that Ambassador College was conceived by Herbert Armstrong to be a Liberal Arts institution, not specifically a "Bible school." Here is how he described the purpose of that new college when recruiting students for the first time in the January-February 1947 issue of *The PLAIN TRUTH*:

But why should we establish and conduct a college in connection with this, God's Work?

The reasons are concrete and vital . . . the work has grown to a scope where *called*, consecrated, properly educated and specially trained assistants, ministers and evangelists to follow up this work in the field, have become an imperative (sic) need.

The time has come when we must lay definite PLANS for carrying the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God into *all nations*, in *many languages*! . . . Yet, the active ministry is *different* from every other profession in one very important respect. No man ever should enter it of his own volition . . . A true minister of Jesus Christ must be specially *called* of GOD. And how can we *know* whether one is really called? Experience has shown human nature to be such that most who *think* they are called are mistaken, and those who really are called invariably try to run from the calling! Jesus gave us the only test—"By their *fruits*," He said, "ye shall KNOW."

But the fruits are worked out by experience, and that requires time. For this very reason, our college *cannot be a ministerial college*—though it is being designed so that, should we be fortunate enough to find one out of twenty really and truly called to the ministry, that one will have been prepared and properly trained.

So the plan was to use the new college as a pool from which future ordained helpers would be recruited, but never guaranteeing a ministerial commission to anyone merely by virtue of enrollment or graduation. In reality, most of those initial male enrollees went on to become ministers (and many of the female students became ministers' wives), but over time, as the college grew, Mr. Armstrong's vision of ordaining only selected, hand-picked men from the larger pool of graduates became a reality.

Who was it, then, that responded to this initial advertising campaign and became accepted as part of the inaugural class in the fall of 1947?

The Student Body of 1947

While some forty students had applied for the fall of 1947, because of delays in getting the campus prepared and the buildings approved for occupancy, most of those applicants went elsewhere by the time Mr. Armstrong finally contacted them to say it would actually open as

scheduled. The only ones left by then were Mr. Armstrong's eldest son, Richard, a young woman named Betty Bates, Herman Hoeh, and Raymond Cole.

Let Mr. Armstrong introduce those first four students:

Ambassador College did finally swing open its big front door to students October 8, 1947. But by that time nearly all applicants had gone elsewhere. Besides our son Dick (Richard David), there was only Raymond C. Cole, who came down from Oregon where his family had been in the Church for years; Herman L. Hoeh, who came from Santa Rosa, California; and Miss Betty Bates from Oklahoma—four pioneer students—with a faculty of eight. ("Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong," *The PLAIN TRUTH*, June 1963)

Among these four, Richard Armstrong became an ordained minister and key instrument in the work of his father, yet died from injuries in a tragic car accident in 1958, thus limiting his long-term influence upon the Radio Church of God. After graduation in 1951, Betty Bates became a college employee and instructor for women students for about seven years under Mr. Armstrong before finally focusing instead upon her own family. Only Herman Hoeh and Raymond Cole—from that very first year—would become long-term, ordained evangelists whose influence would reach into the tumultuous years of the 1970s.

What They Shared in Common

The young Herman Hoeh and Raymond Cole actually had much in common. In spite of the fact that they were two years apart in age (Raymond, the older), and one was rather tall (Herman) while the other rather short in stature, they were both hard workers, came from strong families, and were both regarded as being very mild and unassuming in personality. They were each driven to achieve, but both gained reputations over time for being outgoing and considerate to others, and for "quiet" acts of benevolence toward those in need.

Although Herman Hoeh gained the more prominent reputation for being "brainy" (as Betty Bates was reported as having called him), he and Raymond Cole were both very scholarly-minded, and each was very *professorial* in his thinking and speaking style. In time, both would be known as very good speakers, but neither of them had the natural, "entertaining style" of Mr. Armstrong (or later, his son, Garner Ted Armstrong), although both would aspire to emulate it. A Herman Hoeh sermon on some point of history, the calendar, i.e., could be excruciating for one not inclined to meaty scholarship, and Raymond Cole could exhaust one trying to take notes, citing voluminous scripture references to document his point. Both men loved knowledge, read avidly, and "studied" for a hobby. Raymond Cole's vocabulary was incredibly extensive because, from his youth, he loved to study the dictionary "for fun." Mr. Armstrong had to teach both of these young men to try to speak on the level of their audience, given it was something which came naturally to *neither* of them.

While Herman Hoeh first heard Mr. Armstrong on the radio in his native California, Raymond Cole was raised by parents who had migrated to Oregon from Oklahoma in 1936, in part, to learn more from this unusual radio preacher. So in this the two men differed. Raymond was taught at the feet of Mr. Armstrong since he was eleven years old, and of parents who came from a tradition of Sabbath-keeping. Herman Hoeh was breaking new ground from his upbringing by responding to this unique teaching. Yet both of these men proved an early and determined commitment to that way of life—and also to the man through whom they had first learned it.

Another quote from Mr. Armstrong will give more details about that very first year at Ambassador College:

We had no facilities for housing students. Our own son, Richard David (Dick), lived with us in our new home (new to us, that is). Betty Bates had rented a room out in the east end of Pasadena, some five miles from the college. She used the city bus service for transportation. The other two students, Raymond Cole and Herman Hoeh, rented a room together some 2½ miles from the college. They used less expensive transportation—shoe-leather. They managed to prepare their own food, somehow, in their room.

Those pioneer students had to "rough it" in a way I am sure our students of today do not realize. They certainly did not live in luxury. We did manage to employ these pioneer students for part-time work, at \$40 per month. But they had to pay \$31.50 room-rent—per each! In order to have enough to eat, they often picked lamb's-quarter—in place of spinach—where it grew along certain sparsely settled streets and in vacant lots, then prepared it after returning home from school.

Herman Hoeh received weekly packages of food from his parents to help out. Raymond Cole sometimes had a meal with his sister, who was employed in our office. And, many times, they simply went hungry. They were more hungry for an education than for physical food.

Yet they never mentioned any of this, and I have only learned of it myself very recently.

They heard talk from others about "when this thing folds up." But there was no thought of the college "folding up" in their minds—even as there wasn't in mine. They had faith. They were there for a *purpose!* It was a mighty serious purpose! It was the one goal of their lives, and they concentrated on it and worked at it with all their energies! That is why these men, all three, became top-ranking ministers in the greatest activity on earth today!

The part-time work these pioneer students did was janitor work. ("Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong," *The PLAIN TRUTH*, July 1963)

Not mentioned by Mr. Armstrong was the fact that before Herman Hoeh and Raymond Cole were employed eventually by Mr. Armstrong part-time doing landscaping and janitorial work on campus (funds being very limited at first), they each supplemented their meager

living by "setting pins" in a local bowling alley. These two men roomed together, studied together, went to church together, worked together, and suffered deprivation together, all for the mutual love they shared for what they were being offered through Ambassador College.

These two men also shared something else in common. In spite of the fact that they would each take very different paths once the troubles within the Worldwide Church of God emerged in the early 1970s, they each maintained a personal respect and regard for Mr. Armstrong till their dying days. While others became quick to criticize and to denigrate because of painful experiences over the years, neither Herman Hoeh nor Raymond Cole subscribed to that orientation nor gave in to such feelings of offense.

The Differences

For all of the early similarities which would dominate most appraisals, Herman Hoeh and Raymond Cole actually differed in ways which would become more and more pronounced as the years unfolded.

First, in spite of being mild in demeanor and personal expression, Herman Hoeh was very motivated to make a splash as a writer, and to bring his scholarly abilities to the fore. He had ideas, and he yearned for those ideas to become part of that visible work which was growing under Mr. Armstrong. Again, let Mr. Armstrong provide that perspective:

But 1951 was the year that produced the first "fruits" of the new college.

In April of that year we began the first activity toward an enlarged PLAIN TRUTH. I was still unwilling to publish in *The PLAIN TRUTH*, articles written by students. Yet something had to be done.

Herman Hoeh had submitted a few articles for *The PLAIN TRUTH*, but none had been used. They were not written in what I termed "Plain Truth STYLE." Yet young Mr. Hoeh did not give up. Every month or so another manuscript was handed to me. . . . I mentioned, a while back, that Herman Hoeh had turned in to me a number of articles, before any were published. Shortly before we began the GOOD NEWS, in April, 1951, I began to realize that Mr. Hoeh showed considerable promise as a writer and editor. Even though I never published them, he persisted in writing articles. But they simply were not written in what I called PLAIN TRUTH *style*.

So one day—it must have been February or March, in 1951, I stopped him beside my car, parked between the Library and the Administration buildings. Possibly he was handing me another manuscript just as I was about to leave in my car.

"Herman," I said, "I have only a few moments' time—but let's see if I can explain to you the PLAIN TRUTH *style* of writing." . . .

I probably did not devote more than five or ten minutes to the explanation. But that alert and scholarly mind of Herman Hoeh's grasped immediately the style. He began to examine a number of my articles from a new angle. He captured the method. He began to write in *The PLAIN TRUTH* style! ("Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong," *The PLAIN TRUTH*, January 1964)

Raymond Cole, by contrast, presented no such inclination to pursue a particular personal, predetermined role, but left that to Mr. Armstrong's judgment. He, too, would eventually contribute some few articles to *The Good News* and *The PLAIN TRUTH* magazines, but very few over the ensuing years. Instead, Raymond Cole's long-term role would be defined by filling *immediate necessities* of the growing church. Another statement by Mr. Armstrong concerning events in autumn, 1950, will help capture this early trend:

That school year Raymond Cole, one of the four pioneer students, was student-body president. However, the local churches I had left up in Oregon, at Eugene and Portland, these years without a Pastor, were in serious need of leadership. And so in February, 1951, we sent Mr. Cole to Oregon to pastor and revive the flock. This was the very first beginning of a ministry produced by Ambassador College. After three and a half years at Ambassador College, Mr. Cole was able to repair the situation in Oregon, and start building up again.

Since we had operated on half-schedule in the 1948-1949 year, it had been made virtually impossible for students to graduate in four years. Mr. Cole returned to Pasadena in August, 1951, and graduated in 1952, along with our son Dick. However, by taking a heavier-than-normal load the last two years, both Herman Hoeh and Betty Bates graduated in June, 1951—completing their college work in four years. ("Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong," *The PLAIN TRUTH*, November 1963)

Raymond Cole fills in more details about this church crisis of 1951, which required attention outside of Ambassador College. It actually involved a serious dispute about one of the Radio Church of God's fundamental doctrines concerning observance of the Holy Day of Pentecost. In the year 1999, two years before his death, Raymond Cole wrote this:

Although the subject of Pentecost had become sensitive and divisive even in the 1940s the intensity of the subject was growing in the latter '40s and was also geographically spreading. Unrest had developed in as diverse areas as San Antonio, Texas; Wichita, Kansas; Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; as well as Eugene, Oregon. Satan was intensely at work. He hated the real truth about Pentecost. An alarming effort was made to destroy the fledgling church before trained and loyal ministers could be sent to the growing number of areas across the United States where the Truth was taking root. For a number of reasons, I was chosen by Mr. Armstrong, even before ordination, to go out to

these troubled areas and quell the unrest about Pentecost. These defensive measures took me to Portland, Oregon for a year—prior to graduation. My matriculation from college was postponed for one year. (*An Open Letter From Raymond C. Cole*, December 1999)

We will have much more to say about the doctrine of Pentecost in a future chapter, since this same teaching (as well as others) became the lightning rod of division in the early 1970s. At this point it is primarily important to note that Raymond Cole was the individual entrusted by Mr. Armstrong, even as a young man of twenty-five years and not even officially "ordained," to tackle this serious threat to the church and to quell the unrest. It was a very distinct assignment from that which was given to Herman Hoeh:

Consequently, in April, 1951, *The Good News* was re-born!

Now, for the first time, our students began to make active contributions to the activities of this expanding Work!

That same year, Herman Hoeh—our "straight-A" student—began to remove some of the teaching load from my shoulders, by assisting in the teaching of the Bible courses.

Also, for several months during 1951, Raymond Cole acted as Pastor of the church at Portland, giving it a spiritual "shot in the arm." ("Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong," *The PLAIN TRUTH*, January 1964)

Future Roles Are Set

What is described here is the beginning of two very distinct roles which these young men would begin to fill within the church over ensuing years. Both men became *Evangelists*—a level "second in command" under Mr. Armstrong. But Herman Hoeh became immediately involved in teaching at Ambassador College and writing for the church publications. He would be the first to complete a Ph.D. in theology at Ambassador College, would become known as the "church scholar," and would emerge as one of the most visible and popular personalities within the Radio Church of God. His scholarly *backing* would become counted upon to give "legitimacy" to Herbert Armstrong's doctrinal teachings over time.

Raymond Cole, by contrast, would be used much more *in the background* of that great work, continuing to be assigned by Mr. Armstrong to handle *immediate and challenging needs* of an organization adding *thirty percent* to its membership on average *each year* through all of the 1950s and most of the 1960s. It is one thing to have a successful radio and print operation which is generating great response. It is quite another to successfully *manage* the influx of those new members and actually provide an effective structure for their care and nurture. Raymond Cole would spend most of his career with the sheep—in "field operations"—as a Regional Director in various areas of the country, away from "Headquarters" in Pasadena. His *name* would be recognized by many, but he would be largely "unknown" by most personally, except for those with whom he had worked and served directly. (In fact, his younger brother,

Wayne Cole, would become better known to the church in time, being assigned ultimately to more visible roles, as was Herman Hoeh.)

In addition, because of the practical building skills he had learned from his father as a youth, Raymond Cole would also be assigned by Mr. Armstrong to a monumental, long-term construction project for the church: to develop large-scale, church-owned convention properties and facilities to accommodate the exploding attendance each year at the annual fall Feast of Tabernacles assemblies. It became impractical and unwieldy for even the most sophisticated commercial convention operators in the largest cities to accommodate over ten thousand attendees in multiple sites around North America for eight days each year. So even as Mr. Armstrong chose to take advantage of the economies of scale to start his own college, his own printing press (the Ambassador College Press becoming one of the largest on the West Coast during the 1960s), so, too, he met this daunting challenge of convention planning by buying property across the United States and Canada and building his own self-contained infrastructure. The scholarly-minded Raymond Cole would probably never have predicted the direction of his activities to help the church through those dramatic years. But even as Herman Hoeh devoted his all to fulfill his visible and more "glamorous" role, so Raymond Cole willingly gave his all to his own calling—in perhaps the more obscure, but equally critical role—in the background of that unique and incredible work.

The stage had been set; the individual players had become icons in their respective roles through two decades of incredible growth and organizational success. But the early 1970s would see the beginning of serious cracks in that institutional armor, and no one would be left unaffected. The divergent choices made by Herman Hoeh and Raymond Cole during those very volatile years would mirror the very same tug-of-war faced by every other member—sooner or later—and the outcome of those choices would reveal a previously hidden, deep-seated ideology concerning Herbert Armstrong and his work.

In the next chapter of this history, we will examine another very fundamental difference between the young Herman Hoeh and the young Raymond Cole as documented by Herbert Armstrong himself, which would later surface to influence events from the 1970s through the 1990s in the Worldwide Church of God.

Dear friends, may the lessons of our past be a tool giving you power to face the challenges ahead of us and to make choices that will be pleasing to our Righteous Judge.

Always with love and sincere devotion,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial "J" and a stylized "B".

Jon W. Brisby