

Church of God, The Eternal

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

Raymond C. Cole
Director
Jon W. Brisby
Asst. Director

Offices in:
Philippines
Switzerland

Announcement Letter September 2001

Dear Brethren:

To the faithful of God in these last days, we send our greetings and heartfelt expression of love and affection. It is the thought of each one of you—as God's precious children—that spurs our commitment to continue this work of service, and provides us such great satisfaction for our effort. Though we are dispersed around the globe in so many remote places, we are bound together by a oneness that the world cannot begin to fathom. We pray that you are being well blessed by our Heavenly Father, even in the midst of manifold trials and difficulties.

I know all of you are very anxious for the latest news of Mr. Raymond Cole's health. Since the last *Announcement Letter* update, we have very good news to report. Mr. Cole has continued to improve slowly over the last month. He has a very healthy appetite, and is receiving plenty of nourishment, not to mention devoted attention from family and brethren at home. He is still unable to use his right side for the most part, but those of us who have been with him regularly can see a gradual return of strength and overall alertness. He is sleeping much less during the day than he did the first few weeks, and his overall appearance, movements, and responses all give us much hope for a significant recovery. Although we still cannot understand most of what he says, he is speaking quite a lot now, endeavoring to communicate and respond to those around him. It is obvious to anyone who visits him that he possesses all his mental faculties, and one can sense he is thinking deeply and reflecting as he works to communicate. We are also seeing much more of his familiar mannerisms and expressions, which is very encouraging. Mr. Cole has just begun to receive physical, occupational, and speech therapy in the home, to exercise his limbs, help him take strides in becoming physically independent again, and to recover his capacity to communicate. Already, we have seen dramatic improvements, and he is now trying more and more to sit up and even stand by the bed on his own. I know we can count on each of you to continue to pray earnestly for God's intervention, and for the strength of Mrs. Cole and all of the family.

Mr. Cole's sudden physical disability is certainly startling, and incredibly meaningful to all of us. But the truth is, no one knows at this moment why God has allowed—or even

prompted—this trial. Many will presume to interpret God's purpose as they see events occur in the lives of others, but this is always a foolish and dangerous activity. Remember how Job's friends indicted themselves before God, by attempting to counsel Job about his personal trial through their own human wisdom?

And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job (Job 42:7–8).

There will always be those who foolishly attempt to judge events according to their own thoughts, but if we can learn from the mistakes of others—especially those examples recorded in the Holy Scriptures for our admonition—we can avoid such folly.

What is the real reason Mr. Cole has been stricken with disability, and why at this particular juncture in time? Those who despise what we stand for will say God is showing His displeasure with our doctrines and orientation toward the Truth, or else claim this is a punishment for some hidden personal sin. But is that not exactly what Job's self-appointed counselors asserted? On the contrary, is it possible there might be another purpose, which not only helps confirm that we are truly part of God's legitimate remnant, but also speaks of His protective guidance and sustaining power?

This writer's hypothesis is no more sure than any other at this time, but knowing that you will all be hearing—sooner or later—the critical postulations of the detractors, consider the following facts as we wait patiently for God to grant us His true understanding:

The state of this small remnant group is very secure at this moment, thanks to the blessings and protection of Almighty God. In spite of Mr. Cole's sudden disability, He has continued to provide all of the resources we need to uphold this work of service, and without skipping a beat. As much as Raymond Cole has been so integral and apparently indispensable to this work for the last twenty-six years, how is it possible that his serious stroke has not absolutely destroyed our ability to continue?

This author believes it began back in 1996, at the time Mr. Cole was sixty-nine years of age, and only months away from achieving his "three-score and ten." He had become convinced it was time to start grooming one or more younger men to begin assisting with future ministerial duties, but he was still focused on carrying most of the load himself. (It

was during the 1996 Days of Unleavened Bread near Austin, Texas, that Mr. Cole first approached a particular young man about ordination into the ministry. Another candidate was also identified a few months later, and the process of training, grooming, and testing began.) But while many at that time were urging him to begin slowing down, and to avoid putting so much pressure on himself, he was still looking for ways to expand his service to the scattered brethren. As some of you will remember, he had recently begun writing a monthly *Widows Letter*, as well as a new *Leadership Letter*, on top of the aggressive travel schedule he was keeping, and the regular duties of writing, speaking, and counseling. He not only was rejecting any slow down, but was intentionally increasing his own workload! Mr. Cole felt compelled that God expected him to give all of his energies for the benefit of the sheep. As he had told me so many times before, there is no such thing as voluntary retirement for a minister of Jesus Christ.

Then, in January of 1997, he suffered what appeared to be a mild hemorrhage in the brain which affected his eyesight alone. Although he could still read and work, this event forced him to totally change his priorities and reassess his personal workload. He was forced to abandon the new projects, and to begin limiting his travel as well. The detractors sought to imply God's disapproval of Raymond Cole because of this minor disability. But were they correct? Or, is it possible this was God's way of confirming it really was time for him—now being in his twilight years—to begin focusing on a succession plan for the future of the last day remnant? This was the literal result of Mr. Cole's reduction in sight.

Plans moved forward more swiftly than before in preparing the new men to assist. Ordinations occurred on the Feast of Trumpets in 1997, and a gradual delegation of ministerial responsibilities to younger helpers began to occur for the first time in over twenty-two years.

One year later, the spirit of division manifested itself bluntly in the orientation of Mr. Cole's longtime Assistant Director (as well as the second of those newly-ordained men). We have since traced the seeds of this divisive spirit to at least as early as 1993. When this man left to set up a competing work in 1998, what was the effect on this Body? It was traumatizing to see some of our beloved brethren turn to that rebellious spirit, but their departure did not cripple or even hamper our ability to continue God's work in any way. Within nine months of that departure, God miraculously intervened to pull Mr. Cole's remaining assistant out of a full-time secular career, and move him and his family to Eugene, Oregon. During the last two years, God has provided the opportunity for that man to work side by side with Raymond Cole and complete the training necessary to take on an expanded role in feeding God's scattered flock.

With these chronological facts in mind, is it merely coincidence that a needed assistant completed his training over a five-year period, and gained enough direct experience to

assume the mantle of responsibility at a critical time? What would have happened had Mr. Cole suffered this serious stroke in 1996, rather than 2001? Remember, at that time, he was carrying the lion's share of the service to God's people on his own back. His Assistant Director was already evidencing fruits of divisiveness and departure from the original teachings of the Church, if only in very small ways. There was no one at that time to be trusted to carry on defense of the faith once delivered, save Raymond Cole himself. If God was so displeased with Raymond Cole in 1997, and intended to strike him down, why only the partial loss of his eyesight, and not a truly debilitating illness? A serious stroke at that moment would have left that former Assistant Director as leader of the church. But that obviously was not God's will.

No, the real result of the minor disability God allowed Raymond Cole to suffer in 1997 was not only confirmation of the need for more helpers, but more specifically the training of a successor, something that was not even in his thinking before. Even though God knew that the seeds of eventual division were already sprouting by 1996, Mr. Cole was not aware the problem was that serious, and certainly not planning for it. Yet God provided the circumstances to assure a trusted helper would be available to share that ministerial load, once that defection ultimately occurred in 1998.

But why his serious stroke now? As stated before, no one can say for sure. But if it was God's will for Raymond Cole to finally take a rest from the front-line burden of the ministry at nearly seventy-five years of age, is there any more effective way for him to receive that message from God? Remember, Mr. Cole has never been the kind of person to shirk responsibility or seek personal leisure. He has always sought to take on more work himself, to make the way for others easier. If God had continued him in absolute physical strength, it would likely have been very hard for him to ever focus on training a helper to share that load, let alone turn over the reigns of responsibility. He would always have worried that he was being a hireling, and not sacrificing himself as God required. But what result has this serious stroke produced? This writer feels it is very possible God has used physical disability as a means to assure Raymond Cole he can rest now, without worrying that he is shirking his obligation to the Church. If God takes away the physical capacity, then there should be no crisis of conscience in finally resting the body. Most of us would prefer to have God speak to us miraculously in a dream or vision. But if He chooses to direct our paths through circumstances of trial, is this any less the benevolent guidance of our Creator?

My dear brethren, had God been truly against us, our vulnerabilities in so many ways over the last decade could easily have led to our destruction as a physical entity. Yet, through all the difficulty and trial—including the betrayal of some we love dearly—God has preserved us along the way. We did not see most of the storms coming, yet even in our naivety, God was leading us safely through dangerous waters.

If anything, the facts of these events which have transpired over the last five years should give us renewed hope and excitement, that God is with us, and is lighting our path. What dangers yet lurk in the future? We know that more critical and terrifying trials wait the faithful remnant of Jesus Christ. But our past experiences should convince us that it will not be our own wisdom or clever insights that will position us for protection. No, it is God's merciful and miraculous intervention that will be a lamp unto our feet as we traverse the treacherous roads ahead. May we all take heart in the blessings we have already received, to bolster our faith for the demanding journey that yet awaits.

Holy Days

Feast of Trumpets: Tuesday, September 18.

Atonement: Thursday, September 27.

Note: Appointed leaders should make necessary arrangements for services in all areas.

Correction

In the August *Monthly Letter* we inadvertently wrote that Mr. Cole's stroke occurred on July 25. His stroke actually occurred July 18. Even though the stroke is the newsworthy item, not necessarily the date, we want to make sure we relay to you accurate information. We hope our error has not caused any confusion.

Death

We were saddened to hear of the death of Ms. Yetta Rubinstein of Clifton, New Jersey. She died the latter part of July. She was a long-standing member of the church and will be missed by all who knew her. We express our condolences to her family and friends.

Whole Food Recipes

In light of the recent sermons encouraging all to enjoy vibrant health through consumption of non-processed, whole foods, many discussions have resulted about wholesome recipes or adapting recipes to become more wholesome. Mrs. Danya Chance has offered to compile a recipe book containing favorite whole food recipes of church members. The brethren are welcome to send Mrs. Chance their recipes or tips and she will

put them together in a printable format ready to be printed and distributed. Her address is: 189 LaSalle Rd, Oak Ridge, TN, 37830. Her e-mail address is: dtdanya@aol.com.

Slide Show

This year the slide program Mr. and Mrs. Turlington are preparing for the Feast in Townsend, Tennessee, is titled, "Following the Footsteps of Jesus." The slide show is a pictorial timeline of Jesus' activities and travels. Archaeological digs have uncovered places and structures that date back to the time of Jesus. These discoveries are linked to Biblical references. Surprising facts related to the timeline of the calling of the Twelve Apostles is found in the following scriptures:

John 1:35–51
Matthew 4:18–22
Mark 1:16–20
Luke 5:1–11
Luke 5:27–32
Matthew 9:9–13
Mark 2:13–17
Mark 3:13–19
Luke 6:12–15

Trip Schedule

September 18, Trumpets Modesto, California J.W.B.

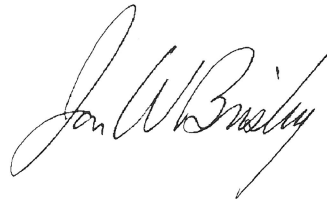
Monthly Letter

Since the Feast falls too early in the month to allow enough time to prepare a *Monthly Letter*, there will be no letter for October.

Tape Schedule

Tape Schedule	Mailed	Played	Title/Tape#
WSE-RC 6	08-15-01	09-08-01	What Are the Basic Requirements for Salvation?
WSE-JB 22-34-15B	08-15-01	09-15-01	Fund. Of Belief (The Cause Of War).
WSE-RC 9	08-29-01	09-29-01	What We Should Believe and Practice?
WSE-JB 33-1	08-29-01	09-29-01	What Is the Unity of the Spirit? #1
_____	_____	10-06-01	FOT— No tape
WSE-RC 15	09-12-01	10-13-01	The Hope of Tomorrow.
WSE-JB 33-2	09-12-01	10-20-01	What Is the Unity of the Spirit? #2
WSE-RC 20	09-26-01	10-27-01	The Whys of Today, the Purpose of Tomorrow.
WSE-JB 33-3	09-26-01	11-03-01	What Is the Unity of the Spirit? #3

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby



Raymond C. Cole