

Church of God, The Eternal

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Announcement Letter April 2002

Dear Brethren:

Now that Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread are completed for another year, we each have the chance to reflect upon the personal value of this experience. We pray that each of you had a very rewarding and inspiring Holy Day season, and that you have been renewed in mind to continue that spiritual battle of growth, no matter what obstacles confront us in the flesh. Your brethren in Eugene, Oregon, keep you ever in mind, and value the thought of God's faithful remnant holding fast to His truth in these difficult last days. No matter how much we are scattered about the earth, we continue to be one cohesive body through the Holy Spirit we share in Christ Jesus.

As we look forward now to the approach of Pentecost, and then the fall Holy Days of this quickly fleeting new year, the world we live in seems to be changing more rapidly than ever before. Although we recognize Christ said there would be great persecution upon His people before His Second Coming, it has been more difficult—until recently—to visualize how that persecution might actually develop. But the United States-led war on terrorism is now taking on ominous dimensions that will likely have grave implications for God's people somewhere down the road. How can this be, since we could never be mistaken for terrorists, could we?

It depends upon how "terrorism" is defined. But does not everyone generally agree on what constitutes an act of terrorism? Hardly. Many of you have probably noticed the differences being espoused by various nations around the world, even among those who have joined a coalition to fight this common enemy. Notice what Boaz Ganor, Executive Director of the International Policy Institute of Counter-Terrorism, states in his Internet article: "Terrorism: No Prohibition Without Definition":

The terror attacks in the U. S. on September 11th, and the subsequent efforts of the United States to build a broad-based anti-terrorism coalition, have

thrown into sharp relief the question of what constitutes terrorism. Most researchers tend to believe that an objective and internationally accepted definition of terrorism can never be agreed upon.

But even if various nations around the world might not agree upon the definition, surely the peoples within each country—like the United States—should have a clear idea of the scope and limits of terrorism, should they not? Surprisingly, the question of a definition of terrorism has haunted the debate among states for decades. The Terrorism Research Center admitted: "Terrorism by nature is difficult to define. . . Even the U.S. government cannot agree on one single definition."

What we find then is that terrorism is a very subjective concept indeed. We have already seen a rush to define it—by many different nations and institutions—to justify demonizing those whom they oppose. In essence, the idea is this: If you become my enemy, you automatically become a terrorist, because my cause is just, and yours is evil. With this in mind, look at the official Federal Bureau of Investigation definition of terrorism:

Terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.

On the surface this definition seems very reasonable, but that assumes we agree upon the intended definition of sub-terms like "force" and "violence." Violence is a common component of virtually every definition of terrorism. If we understand violence to be a physical act of assault or attack, we would expect the FBI to be focusing only on individuals who pose a direct physical threat to the Nation's population; i.e., suicide bombers and anthrax distributors. However, the definition of "violence" has been expanded to encompass much more. Notice the "official" policy of the U.S. Department of Justice concerning what constitutes violence and "hate crime":

Hate crime is the violence of intolerance and bigotry—Rose Ochi, Director, Community Relations Service (USDOJ). (Article: "Hate Crime: The Violence of Intolerance"; www.usdoj.gov/crs/pubs/htecrm.htm).

If intolerance and bigotry are now classified as violence, even when no physical acts are perpetrated to actually harm or molest another individual, can you begin to see how this "War on Terrorism" could eventually be expanded to target anyone who holds ideological beliefs that are considered dangerous or out of accepted norms of today's society? More clues about these evolving definitions can be seen in comments by Martin L. Green, an influential scientist and president of the Materials Research Society. Of the September 11 atrocities, he states:

It seems that these heinous crimes were perpetrated by fanatics who perverted religion into terrorism. That any religious teaching could be the source of evil is a sad commentary on human civilization. . . . My dictionary defines a fanatic as a "person with extreme and uncritical enthusiasm or zeal, as in religion or politics. . ." Normally, fanatics' activities are of no import to people outside their folds. However, if adherents of such groups are given the proper indoctrination of hatred and intolerance, terrorism may follow. Fanatics, of any stripe, are the same—all are certain they are right. There is no room for debate, logic, or discourse. To me, it is very simple. Fanaticism, when borne of hatred and ignorance, is the enemy (*MRS Bulletin*; October 2001; www.mrs.org/publications/bulletin/2001/oct/pres_letr.html).

Now it becomes apparent how Satan—as the god of this world—is driving world events to set the stage for the very persecution of those he hates most—God's Church! Who would have ever dreamed—even a decade ago—that political ideology would have developed so rapidly as to make God's faithful children appear to be dangerous terrorists? Dr. Gary Sanders, a psychiatrist for the Phoenix Adolescent Sexual Offenders Program at the University of Calgary, gets right to the point. According to Sanders, the Phoenix program—a government-sponsored activity—officially defines "violence" as:

[T]he holding of a belief to be true such that another's is untrue, and that the other's opinion must change (www.familytherapy.org).

If you believe God has hidden real Truth from the world and given it only to a selected few at this time, that the laws of God are immutable, that most who claim to be Christian are not, that truth is absolute and incompatible with the ideas of men, that homosexuality is an effrontery to God, and that all religions of the world except yours are inspired by Satan the devil, you are already classed as a religious fanatic, guilty of the violence of intolerance, bigotry, and hatred. It matters not that you have no intention of ever taking up arms or resisting the government, let alone harming another human being. Your fundamental religious beliefs are viewed inherently as the cauldron of hate, and assumed to result sooner or later in physical acts of terror. With the new Department of Homeland Security increasingly widening its net in an attempt to *prevent* future acts of terrorism, how long will it be before those who refuse to renounce their exclusivist religious ideas about God and Truth will become prime targets in the name of counter-terrorism? That day may be closer than we even imagine.

If people are truly scared for their lives—from the acts of *real* terrorists—how long does it take for paranoia and panic to set in within a population? If we have one or more new attacks in this country in the near future, how quickly might we see the initiation of witch-hunts to seek out scapegoats in the name of national security? Can we begin to see

how our current political environment is swiftly heading toward the very circumstances God said would exist before the great tribulation?

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. . . (John 16:1–4).

If populations are now being conditioned to view exclusive religious thought as dangerous, where will God's faithful people stand in the wake of this new political reality? Those who are willing to compromise and make allowances for the beliefs of others as being just as valid as their own will receive acceptance in this world. But those who refuse to deny the absolute nature of Jesus Christ as *the Truth* will be hated and despised. Are we truly ready to stand firm in our convictions? God helping us we can weather whatever storm lies on the horizon, knowing the value of what we have received from God, and valuing it above anything else—even our very lives. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24). May we all be focused on preparing for these critical tests of faith.

Second Passover

Anyone needing to partake of the second month Passover, please be advised that it is April 26, to be observed the previous evening, April 25, after sunset. If instructions are needed, please contact the church office as soon as possible.

Death

Mrs. Ethel Felts: We were saddened to hear of the death of longtime member, Ethel (Sue) Felts of Liberty, Missouri. She died Sunday, March 17, of age-related causes. She was 98 years of age. We extend our condolences to her family and friends.

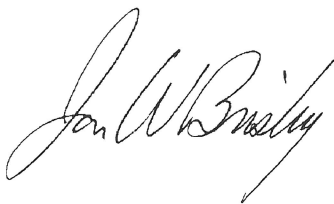
Trip Schedule

May 18	Lausanne, Switzerland
May 20	Grenoble, France
May 25	Albertinia, South Africa

Tape Schedule

Tape Schedule	Mailed	Played	Title/Tape #
WSE-JB 22-38-16D	03-07-02	03-30-02	Fund. of Belief: Jeremiah's Commission
WSE-JB 22-39-16E	03-07-02	04-06-02	Fund. of Belief: The Mysterious Breach
WSE-RC -1	03-21-02	04-13-02	Can You Know the Truth?
WSE-JB 22-40-16F	03-21-02	04-20-02	Fund. of Belief: The Planting of the Throne
WSE-RC -2	04-04-02	04-27-02	Can You Know the Truth?
WSE-JB 22-41-16G	04-04-02	05-04-02	Fund. of Belief: The Promise of Grace

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby