

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

Announcement Letter December 2003

Dear Brethren:

It is such a blessing to have the chance to address all of you again in this issue of the *Announcement Letter*. May God continue to preserve each and every one of you, wherever you may be on the face of this earth. It is our continuing honor and privilege to serve those who hold God's revealed truths in such high esteem and have made so many sacrifices to put Him first. You are a continuing inspiration to this ministry, and it is a pleasure to pour out our energies to help you in every way we can. Thank God for His mercy to safeguard us as a body in these difficult times and to keep us as His beloved children. In spite of the many trials experienced in these physical lives, what gifts we have been given, and how much we have to be grateful for, especially the hope we have in the future which awaits.

Spiritual Principle

Because of the recent departure from our fellowship of an individual who had attended with us for the last couple of years, I wanted to address a particular topic which should actually be beneficial for all of us. As this individual departed with accusations against this ministry, an e-mail was sent to a number of the brethren he knew. (I do not expect further problems, but if such should arise, I will certainly name him publically and instruct the entire body to avoid all contact. I have not done so to date because leadership in the local congregation involved is well aware and handling it with the affected members. We prefer not to make broad, comprehensive announcements of disfellowshipments unless absolutely necessary to safeguard the body. If it becomes necessary to do so, we certainly will.)

The accusation involved a statement I made in the taped sermon for the Feast of Trumpets this year, which most of you heard. In it, I made the following comment concerning those presuming to draw ill-advised conclusions about the return of Christ:

So brethren, we don't even conclude that Christ *must* return on the Feast of Trumpets. There are a lot of people doing that. It seems that most people formerly a part of God's church are either claiming one or the other: they're just debating whether Christ has to return on Trumpets or whether He's going to return on Pentecost, and they're all fools for making that kind of conclusion. We do *not* need to know, and Christ is *not* going to *allow* us to know.

The accusation is that my statement calling them "fools" is a direct violation of Christ's warning against calling any man a fool:

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire (Matthew 5:22).

Was I wrong to phrase the comment as I did? To answer that, let us first review the original church teaching on this subject for context. It is an interesting study indeed. From Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's 1967 booklet entitled, *Military Service and War*, we read:

Jesus said: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: *But I say unto you*, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:21–22). Here, killing, murder, war, is traced to its source—*hate, anger*, self-centeredness of carnality, greed, lust, spirit of competition, spirit of aggression. Christ declared that if personal anger filled the heart of one of His subjects, such a person is in danger of *judgment*. If that anger leads a man to have utter derision and contempt for his fellow human being, that man shall be "in danger of the council"—of God's *punishment*. If in bitterness and scorn a man shall say of his fellow, "Thou fool," an expression which in the original Greek marked *condemnation*, such a man shall be "in danger of the hell of fire." This is Jesus Christ's application of the Sixth Commandment to you and me respecting individuals. If we harbor *hate* and *anger* in our hearts, we are harboring the "spirit" of MURDER!

Therefore, what we see from Mr. Armstrong's teaching is that Christ is specifically speaking about the relationship between hate and murder, and anyone guilty of hating someone else is breaking the sixth command. We know that no unrepentant murderer will be in God's Kingdom, but will suffer the second death (Revelation 21:8). When the phrase "thou fool" is used as an expression of hate toward another person, it is tantamount to murder. When it is used in hateful condemnation, it is the same as assigning someone to the lake of fire and saying they have absolutely no hope of being saved. No man has been given the authority to judge. Christ is that Righteous Judge who will determine who will be counted worthy for salvation and who will not. No one else is to put himself in the place of God and think to condemn anyone to hell fire. This is the proper interpretation of Christ's words, which is part of the faith once delivered.

Christ was not saying that literal use of the words "thou fool" conjured some mystical or magical curse upon the speaker. That kind of thinking is a strong part of witchcraft and sorcery, which we adamantly are to avoid. When men ascribe magical powers to use of specific words, you can be sure that is a principle not of the living God. Otherwise, if that is really true, the Apostle Paul became guilty of the greatest sin.

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die (1 Corinthians 15:35–36).

In speaking to the Corinthian church, Paul used the very phrase—thou fool—which is supposedly forbidden. Did he sin by saying it and bring upon himself the curse of damnation? How could this statement be recorded as part of God's Holy Word for admonition to the church if that is the case? Furthermore, what about Paul's strong statement to the Galatians?

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? (Galatians 3:1–3).

What about Peter's comments to the church? "For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Peter 2:15). He was obviously considering some specific individuals who were espousing contrary doctrine as being foolish men—fools.

Neither Paul nor Peter were violating Christ's instruction because they were not expressing hatred toward any man, nor condemning anyone to the lake of fire. They were

not lashing out in anger to get back at someone. Instead, what they were doing was calling a spade a spade and pointing out to God's people the difference between the true doctrines and those false concepts that put men in danger of spiritual destruction.

When God's ministers clarify the difference between behavior and beliefs which lead to life eternal vs. eternal destruction, we are not saying anyone currently on that path of destruction is beyond redemption. Anytime they choose to put away those *foolish* concepts and embrace the truth, they can do so! God's ministers are commanded to preach boldly the truth, without holding back. "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isaiah 58:1). To do that, we must not pander to those demanding conformity to political correctness.

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Timothy 4:2–4).

With these principles in mind, I can confirm with a clear conscience that within my heart I have not consigned anyone to the lake of fire, including these ministers who are today preaching that Jesus Christ *must* return either on the Feast of Trumpets or on Pentecost. However, such notions of theirs are indeed very foolish. That is a fact! Anyone who will not give up that thinking and accept that God—no one else—will determine what day of the year His Son will return, is asking for trouble. By pointing that out, we are not saying they are incorrigible, and we are certainly not expressing hatred for them personally. We are simply highlighting the errors of human wisdom which can easily threaten the people of God.

Perhaps if I had said, "they're all speaking foolishly," rather than, "they're all fools," it would have reduced the potential for criticism. But the reality is, the thought behind the words is exactly the same, and that is what God is judging anyway. Either it is a principle inspired by God or it is not, regardless of the specific words selected. However, given the potential misunderstanding, I certainly apologize if in any way others became uncomfortable or concerned by my choice of words. We want to avoid undue confusion and make the doctrines of God as straightforward as possible. Even if the human instruments God has chosen are very foolish by nature (1 Corinthians 1:21), we hope you are able to recognize the voice of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit in our messages, in spite of that natural weakness. We do not want our own words, but only those things God has revealed.

Prayer Requests

[Omitted for confidentiality]

Office E-mail Address

As most of you know, we have phased out our old qwest.net e-mail address. Our new main email address is cogeternal@cogeternal.org. If any of you have not changed it to the cogeternal.org address, you will soon find that your e-mails to us will be undeliverable.

Also, each of the staff members in the office have unique departmental e-mail addresses. Please feel free to use these to direct your mail more specifically, if desired, or else e-mails sent to the main account will continue to be forwarded to the proper department. The appropriate mailboxes/departments are as follows:

Jon Brisby:	jonbrisby@cogeternal.org	Ministry, administration.
Connie Silvers:	csilvers@cogeternal.org	Administrative assistant, office coordination, scheduling, Sabbath announcements, Feast preparations.
Garner Kirby:	hgarnerk@cogeternal.org	Accounting, tithes, budget.
Timothy Sherwood:	tsherwood@cogeternal.org	Website maintenance, recording/mastering, current events, emcee coordinator.

Angela Silvers: angela@cogeternal.org

Receptionist, tape duplication, mailings (tapes, letters, requests), change of addresses/phone numbers/e-mail addresses, anointed cloths.

Tape Department

To be cost effective we send our bi-monthly tape mailings out as bulk mail. The United States Postal Service has made many recent changes in their bulk mailing process. They are changing to a computer system called Merlin, which they say will help everything work more smoothly, but they did ask us to let our mailing list participants know to expect possible delays in shipment of the tapes. If you have any trouble getting your tapes, please let us know, and we do ask for your patience as we work our way through this new postal computer system. Also, please be sure to keep us updated on address changes as soon as they occur.

Office

The cutoff date for 2003 tithes will be January 4, 2004. All 2003 tithes must be received at the office by this date. Please keep this in mind for those contributions you wish to have included in your 2003 statement. Remember, they must be dated 2003.

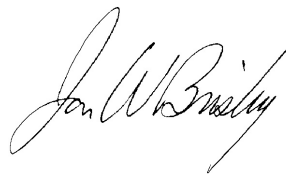
Trip Schedule

December 27	Don Carlos, Philippines
January 3	Burnie, Tasmania, Australia

Tape Schedule

Tape #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-JB 55-4	10-08-03	11-29-03	Peace of Mind, Do You Have It? #4
WSP-RC 6-1	11-13-03	12-06-03	How Good Is Our Hearing? #1
WSE-JB 58-1	11-13-03	12-13-03	Signs and Wonders—What Must We Know? #1
WSE-RC 6-2	11-26-03	12-20-03	How Good Is Our Hearing? #2
WSE-JB 58-2	11-26-03	12-27-03	Signs and Wonders—What Must We Know? #2
WSP-RC 4-1	12-11-03	01-03-04	Satisfaction: What Is the Premise? #1
WSE-JB 58-3	12-11-03	01-10-04	Signs and Wonders—What Must We Know? #3

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby