

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

Announcement Letter November 2007

Dear Brethren:

In this first issue since our return from celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, we express our continuing love and warm personal regards to all of you holding firm to the faith once delivered. We are so very thankful once again that God provided the blessing of a joyous and inspirational Feast in all of our sites around the world. We have had so many of those blessed convocations in past years, it is easy to take them for granted. But we know without God's divine intervention to guide, protect, and inspire through His Holy Spirit, those holy occasions would never produce the spiritual fruits which we have enjoyed. So we thank God most of all. We also thank all of you who made yourselves a living sacrifice to serve your dear brethren at this Feast. That kind of commitment to the welfare of others certainly generated even more benefits to those quiet and unassuming servants. You are all much appreciated.

Spiritual Principle—Lessons From the Past

It is now almost ten years since a particular test arose within our group which provided significant lessons for all of our members. That test centered on the very man-made holiday which many Americans are preparing to celebrate again this month—Thanksgiving Day.

In November, 1997, Mr. Raymond Cole was asked in a local Bible study here in Eugene, Oregon, whether he felt that the American tradition of Thanksgiving Day was OK for members of God's Church to celebrate. Mr. Cole answered honestly that in spite of the church's ruling decades before that it was all right, he had come to have serious personal doubts about it, and had chosen as a matter of conscience to quit keeping it himself. He was not intending to make this an issue in the church, since Mr. Armstrong had given approval so long ago, but he certainly was not going to be evasive when asked about it directly. Who could have predicted what would be generated from such a seemingly "small" issue at the time?

Within our midst in those days was a contingent of members who had come to believe Mr. Cole was not speaking or judging with the authority of Jesus Christ. They each had their own personal reasons, but their disrespect had been festering for several years in some cases. Even though he was the sole minister in North America who had held firm to defend the original doctrines when the Worldwide Church of God began to apostatize in the early 1970s—and by whom we all found refuge in a faithful remnant where the real Truth was being preserved—Mr. Cole himself began to come under insidious attack by some, including his own ministerial assistant. These individuals immediately leapt upon Mr. Cole's revelation of his feelings about Thanksgiving Day and began a "back-room" campaign to say Raymond Cole was rejecting the "faith once delivered" about Thanksgiving. Ultimately, when their attempt failed to sway sufficient members to take over Church of God, The Eternal, they left and started their own little group. When asked by a reporter—from a paper devoted to Church of God group news—immediately afterwards about the reasons for his separation, the number one reason given by this minister was Raymond Cole's bizarre new teaching against Thanksgiving and other "acceptable" days (Mother's Day and Father's Day). All other reasons descended in importance from there.

In short order, they seemed to discover that this reason was very flimsy, and began to emphasize other points instead. Why was it flimsy? For one, when our international members heard about the controversy, they were understandably confused. After all, they had never kept any of these uniquely American holidays. How could "not keeping" a man-made holiday—observed in only one part of the world anyway—be grounds for separation? Should not any true grounds for separation affect the entire body, not just the Americans?

This remnant group had been founded upon the premise that God's Truth which had been revealed to Moses, confirmed by Jesus Christ, and taught in the New Testament Church, included the very same doctrines later *inspired directly* and taught in this period of time by Mr. Herbert Armstrong. Mr. Cole had always stated he accepted only that which came by divine revelation *through that chosen servant* (Mr. Armstrong), and not any teachings which were inserted later through the scholarship of his underlings. That revealed way of life also transcends customs and practices of men in any particular era of history. This was the truth we counted as "the faith once delivered," and we were determined to hold to it without fail. That belief, therefore, discounts the "approval" of any man-made observances, including Thanksgiving Day. (It also nullifies other changes that occurred well before 1974, like the acceptance of duck meat as being clean. Mr. Armstrong originally said in 1952 it was unclean. Through outside pressure he relented a year later. Likewise, the original land sabbath command was corrupted in about 1971.) As a group, we believed that once you found a ministry holding fast to those *divinely revealed* doctrines, this was proof Jesus Christ was working there through top-down government, and that there is no justification for separation unless that ministry begins later to repudiate those eternal, revealed teachings.

In the end, God made plain by this Thanksgiving issue who among us really believed that premise and who did not. The ones who had already stockpiled their personal grievances

against Mr. Cole simply used the issue as a catalyst to attempt a coup, and when that failed, they left. (One interesting phenomenon was that before resigning, several of them requested an entire set of our sermon tapes—hundreds—for their personal use. Once they received the shipments, costing us a huge amount which we provided willingly, they resigned.) They claimed afterwards to be keeping the exact same doctrines as we did, but said they were forced out by our lack of spiritual fruits, which then justified their creating a separate new administration.

What were some of the key lessons we learned from this difficult experience?

- 1) Many people can claim to love "the faith once delivered," but their actions under pressure tell the real story. After the rebels departed, they declared their own *revised definition* of "the faith once delivered." Contrary to Mr. Cole's consistent definition, they defined the faith as the "corpus of doctrine" that was most widely heard and accepted by the church at large, up until 1974. This basically means they accepted all the *smaller* changes which occurred before 1974 in which human scholarship overruled divine revelation; they just would not accept those which occurred after 1974. We can document this philosophy surfacing in our midst as far back as 1993, five years before the separation actually occurred. So repeating the phrase, "holding to the original truth," means nothing if they change the definition in midstream.
- 2) We also learned a lot about what we each believed concerning church government. The very minister who departed was on record as saying there was no justification for separation except for doctrine. So he must have thought the right to keep Thanksgiving was a "doctrine of Jesus Christ" worth defending. How did his orientation differ from that of Mr. Cole? In spite of "smaller" corruptions in doctrine in earlier years before 1974, Mr. Cole did not become separated from the parent body until it became impossible for him to stay within and keep the original truth. And while he was there—although he knew of many things in those years immediately preceding the major apostasy that were not right—he never accused Mr. Armstrong or sought to wage an underground campaign within the Worldwide Church of God. He always remained respectful and supportive of the office, and did his best to fulfill his role in the ministry. He was not looking to find an excuse to point a finger. Even when he was finally forced out and had his ministerial credentials revoked because he would not compromise on Pentecost and divorce and remarriage, he never accused Mr. Armstrong or sought to malign. By contrast, the assistant minister who left us in 1998 wrote very disparaging things against Mr. Cole (we have copies), revealing a very different orientation to church government than Mr. Cole ever did. His was a "gotcha" scheme, waiting for an issue to arise which would justify the *real agenda* contemplated all along—to discredit Mr. Cole.
- 3) Our members were all forced to apply or ignore the principles we had been admonished to heed over so many years. When accusations arose from disgruntled

ones in our midst, would we recognize the very spirit of Satan in such attempts to sow discord among brethren? When personal accusations are made against a minister (as they did with Mr. Cole), would we focus upon what was being confirmed from the pulpit, or would we engage in "he said-she said" tittle tattle? When such contacts were made in secret, would we resist and cut off such clearly unchristian talk, or would we listen and thereby encourage the accuser to become more emboldened?

- 4) When accusations were made against a minister's teachings from the pulpit—with his every word being scrutinized for ammunition against him—would we be able to recognize the wrong spirit involved in such an exercise, or would we be dissuaded by claims that selected sound bites were indicative of creeping apostasy? Would we be able to recognize when someone was grasping for straws with the intent to assassinate a minister's character?
- 5) When a minister made a judgment call which did not support the personal conclusions of a disgruntled member, would that member countenance that Christ was giving special inspiration through that minister and therefore subjugate his own private interpretations, or would he allow his emotions and personal pride to insist upon his own viewpoint and become bitter?

During that time, God allowed Satan room to attack us, to prove who in this fellowship had actually listened to sound principles and could apply them in the heat of battle. Based upon the decisions that each one of us made—either to stay or to go—God forced our individual fruits to the fore. The crucible of that trial was painful for us all, but through it, God sifted out those who were only paying lip-service to the faith once delivered, or belief that Jesus Christ was literally working with power through Mr. Raymond Cole, to bind and to loose in matters of administration and judgment.

Sooner or later, God seems to allow the very same principles to be reemphasized again through new challenges in our midst. Are you ready to pass these tests when you face them again? We certainly will face them, and if we have all learned the lessons from ten years ago, we can be absolutely prepared to make right choices in those coming battles.

New Moon Dates

This month we will begin the practice of publishing the upcoming date of the new moon on God's calendar, so all of you can be aware of them. This is something we have announced for many years in the Eugene, Oregon, Sabbath service each month. The reason is not that we keep new moons as Sabbaths. They are *not* sabbaths. But God required His people to be aware of them. Why? Because you cannot know when His annual Holy Days fall unless you know when the beginning of months occur on the calendar. Holy Days are

counted from the beginning of the months at new moons (except for Pentecost). We hope this new offering in our letters will be an added service to you all.

New Moon

The new moon, Kislev (ninth month), will begin on the evening of November 10. The new moon day is November 11.

Birth

Mr-s. Roy Pell of Phoenix, Arizona, wish to announce the arrival of their second boy, Jordan Austin who was born Wednesday, September 18. Jordan weighed seven pounds, ten ounces, and was twenty inches in length. We congratulate them on their new arrival.

[Omitted for confidentiality]

Feast of Tabernacles Reports

Mindanao, Philippines: Mr. Corsino Canta and Mr. Mario Roque are glad to report that they rejoiced before their Father with unity among the brethren. They had an attendance of

ninety-two, with their highest attendance reaching 105, seven coming from the Luzon area. They were blessed with nice weather and very comfortable temperatures. Everyone experienced another of God's joyous commanded Feasts.

Suna-Migori, Kenya: Mr. Isaya Owak reports that the Feast in East Africa went very well and there were 120 people present plus children. He said that the members were happy all day long and that God also gave them peace the whole time. They were happy to have Mr. Leon Whitaker and Mr. David Brandenburg with them. They are looking forward to the soon-coming Kingdom of God, and wish all of the brethren happy and prosperous lives. They would like to welcome anyone interested to be with them at next year's Feast.

Kandersteg, Switzerland: The Feast went very well for the brethren gathered in Kandersteg, Switzerland. The French-speaking group totaled twenty-three adults and five children. Everyone truly feasted on the spiritual food, the inspiring special music and the close fellowship. The weather was nice with a dusting of snow in the Alpine valley one morning. The snow-covered mountains around them stood majestically in the blue sky. Mr-s. Aviolat and the brethren send their affectionate regards to all the faithful.

Hermanus, South Africa: Everyone had a superb time and are very thankful for the sermon tapes that gave them much needed and life-sustaining spiritual food, which was the true value of the Feast, much more than all the abundant physical food. There were fourteen people present, with Mr. Leon Whitaker performing three baptisms and his first marriage ceremony of Mr-s. Milton Bergstedt.

Port Sorrell, Tasmania, Australia: The Feast was held in this beautiful coastal town with nine people present. Their weather was mild and varied with sunshine and rain nearly every day. The Australian brethren enjoyed having Mr. John Byrd and Mr. Keith Gordon with them the entire time. It was a warm, inspiring Feast.

Townsend, Tennessee: The Feast in Tennessee was perfect, weather-wise, temperatures in the 70s and 80s every day with one brief, needed shower. There were 141 in attendance, with three baptisms. Everyone enjoyed the family night. Mr. Richard Litz played the accordion and recited a story for the children, also there was some guitar music and singing provided by the Setser/Sisney families. Mr. Charles Armstrong and his family provided another pancake breakfast for the church and Mr-s. Litz had a lovely sports day and picnic at their home during the Feast. All in all, it was a very successful and uplifting Feast.

Newport, Oregon: There were ninety-four present at the Feast on the beautiful Oregon coast. The weather was mild, with some days of light rain. There were activities, meals spent together, an enjoyable potluck/family night, and close fellowship throughout the Feast. It was a very warm, peaceful and positive time, filled full with encouraging, inspiring spiritual food.

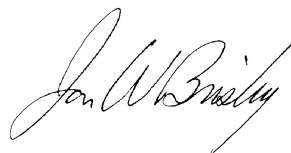
Trip Schedule

November 10	Sulamay, Mindanao, Philippines
December 22	Sidney, Australia
December 29	Summerset, Tasmania, Australia

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-JB 80-37	09-20-07	10-27-07	A Survey of the Book of Job #37 Elihu's Speech #6
WSE-RC Q-3	09-20-07	11-03-07	Have We Learned to Live With One Another? #3
WSP-JB 78	10-18-07	11-10-07	Judgment, Crossroads, and Choices
WSE-JB 80-38	10-18-07	11-17-07	A Survey of the Book of Job #38 God Addresses Job #1
HFT-RC 89-1-1	11-01-07	11-24-07	Love Is a Basic Requirement #1
HFT-RC 89-2-2	11-01-07	12-01-07	Love Is a Basic Requirement #2
WSE-JB 80-39	11-15-07	12-08-07	A Survey of the Book of Job #39 God Addresses Job #2
WSE-JB 98	11-15-07	12-15-07	Are Any English Bible Translations Holy?

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby