

Church of God, The Eternal

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Announcement Letter April 2008

Dear Brethren:

In this first month of God's new year, we greet you and express our love and continuing devotion to all of you who are holding fast to those principles revealed in this age through the ministry of Mr. Herbert Armstrong. How would we ever have understood all that we do if not for God's work through Mr. Armstrong, and how would we ever have weathered the storms of the past decades if not for His inspiration of Mr. Raymond Cole to preserve that priceless way? So it is a joyous time again as we anticipate the keeping of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread once again. It also requires much work to prepare, both physically and spiritually, but when that work is done, what a blessing to participate in those meaningful holy occasions and reflect again upon the significance of these days in God's plan for our salvation. We are truly blessed indeed above all peoples on the earth for the unmerited gifts we have been given.

Spiritual Principle—Use of God's Name

Many of you who have been in God's church for a long time will remember being taught that we should avoid using many common expressions that have become so much a part of the world's language. But because there are an increasing number of newer brethren in our fellowship who may not yet have been taught these principles, it may be helpful to reiterate the basic principle.

The third commandment states, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain" (Exodus 20:7). Mr. Armstrong taught us that any frivolous use of God's name or reference to God's power was a violation of this command. A very common example of such misuse today is the exclamatory phrase, "Oh my God!" It is one thing if someone is truly crying out to God in a personal prayer and makes this thoughtful exclamation. In that instance it would be very acceptable. But that is not how people are using it today. The

phrase is most often repeated as an automatic, unthinking exclamation, and carries no real consciousness of God at all. And because it has become so very prevalent, it is very easy for us to absorb such things by exposure and to begin to parrot these inane phrases if we are not very careful.

For the most part we are talking about *minced oaths*. Minced oaths are euphemisms used to avoid swearing when expressing surprise or annoyance. Rather than ask which ones are OK, God said we are to avoid depending upon such expressions at all in our communications.

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation (James 5:12).

Making a frivolous oath is wrong. So mincing—cleaning up—those oaths is just as wrong. What are some examples?

Most of us have been taught—even in the world—that it is wrong to use the word "damn." Interestingly, this word is not wrong in and of itself. The words "damnation" and "damned" are used a number of times in the New Testament (i.e., Matthew 23:14; Mark 16:16; Romans 14:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:12). Damnation refers to a guilty verdict in God's judgment. Anyone who is rejected from receiving eternal life in the final judgment will be damned by God. So speaking of these facts in God's plan is not wrong. But again, that is not the way most human beings speak when they use the words. It is most often used as an indignant exclamation, or as a curse towards someone else. In those cases, it is definitely taking God's name in vain. No man can judge (or damn) someone else. That is the prerogative of God alone. Therefore anyone who uses such exclamations are either claiming power they do not possess, or else calling upon God to curse someone else. In either case, it is a serious effrontery to God and should never be done.

But what about so many seemingly innocent words and phrases? The word "darn" is accepted by most as an allowable word, but it is simply a derivative of the word "damn" and means exactly the same thing. The same is true of the word "heck" as a replacement for "hell." If it is not appropriate to use one, it is not appropriate to use the other. It should be obvious that it is wrong to say, "For God's/Christ's sake." Again, it is a vain exclamation which shows a total disrespect to God. But what about, "For Pete's sake"? This expression derived from the days when it was considered blasphemous to use God's name, but thought OK to refer to a "saint." Those who worshipped saints (like the Catholics), substituted the name of "St. Peter" for that of God to make it more acceptable. But we know that Peter is not now a "saint in heaven," and it is no better to appeal to some "saint" for divine help than it is to appeal to God in a frivolous manner. They are both equally blasphemous.

Here is a sample list of "minced" phrases and what they really mean: by golly—"by God's body"; by gosh, by gum, and by jove—"by God"; crikey, criminy, cripes—Christ; Dad gum, dagnabbit, doggone—"God damn"; drat—"God rot it"; for crying out loud—"for Christ's sake"; Gee, gee whiz, gee willikers—Jesus; gadzooks—"God's hooks" (referring to the nails on His crucifixion stake); good grief, goodness gracious—"good God"; Jeepers Creepers, Jiminy Cricket, Jiminy Christmas, Judas Priest—Jesus Christ; suffering succotash—"suffering Savior"; tarnation—damnation; zounds—"God's wounds."

These are just a very few examples to give you an idea of how many "innocent" terms are not innocent at all. Another common expression, especially in the southern part of the United States, is "bless his heart," or "bless his soul." These phrases are not used to curse, but to many people they signify affection and sympathy for someone else. Yet, once again, who can bless except God? Using one of these phrases either implies the ability to conjure a blessing for someone else, or else is asking God to use His power to perform the miracle of a blessing. It is not wrong to ask God to bless someone who is in need by saying, "Please bless him." It is also not wrong to tell someone you are asking God for a blessing, as in, "I pray that God will bless you." But if this is not what you are specifically intending to communicate, be sure to avoid using these euphemistic phrases invoking vain blessings.

It is much the same with many customs like saying "bless you" after someone sneezes. We were always taught in the church to avoid such expressions. In centuries past, people held to the superstition that a sneeze was caused by the body trying to expel demons seeking to inhabit that person. Therefore, a sneeze was cause to ask God for a special blessing to ward off demon attack. Catholicism is full of traditions involving priests dispensing blessings with a sign of the cross. Why should we partake in customs that derive from such pagan rituals? Not only should we not condone such superstitions, we should never think ourselves in the place to conjure God's blessings for anyone.

Although it can be very difficult to purge out these automatic expressions of minced oaths and vain blessings once they have become strong habits and second nature, it behooves us to take up that fight. The alternative is to continue breaking the third commandment and showing disrespect for God and His power. We need to prove through control of the tongue that we are indeed respectful of God as our Holy Sovereign.

New Moon

The new moon, Iyar (second month), will begin on the evening of April 5. The new moon day is May 6.

Holy Days

Lead men should be making appropriate preparations for these days:

Passover	Friday, April 18
Night to Be Much Observed	Sabbath, April 19
1st Holy Day—Days of Unleavened Bread	Sunday, April 20
2nd Holy Day—Days of Unleavened Bread	Sabbath, April 26

Second Passover

Anyone needing to partake of the second month Passover after ministerial approval, please be advised that it will be May 19, to be observed the previous evening, May 18, after sunset. If instructions are needed, please contact the church office as soon as possible.

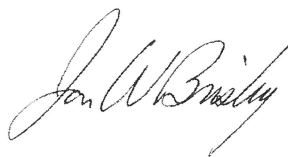
Trip Schedule

April 18, 19, 20	JWB	Providence, Rhode Island
April 26	JWB	Baltimore, Maryland
June 7	JWB	Cape Town, South Africa
June 14, 16	JWB	Lausanne, Switzerland; Grenoble, France

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
(Holy Day Sermons	03-13-08	Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread)	
WSE-JB 102	03-20-08	03-29-08	The True Legacy of Mr. Raymond C. Cole
HFT-RC 10-14-92	03-20-08	04-05-08	What Are Our Weaknesses?
WSE-JB 22-89-24B	03-20-08	04-12-08	Fund. of Belief: Divine Revelation Overview of Divine Revelation
CL2 51 (RC)	04-10-08	04-19-08	Principles of Christian Living: Gentleness #1
(Holy Day Sermons	03-13-08	04-26-08	2 nd High Day of Unleavened Bread)
CL2 52 (RC)	04-10-08	05-03-08	Principles of Christian Living: Gentleness #2
WSE-JB 22-90-24C	04-10-08	05-10-08	Fund. of Belief: Divine Revelation Bible Study and Divine Revelation
WSE-JB 22-91-24D	05-01-08	05-17-08	Fund. of Belief: Divine Revelation Two Facets of Divine Revelation

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby