

Church of God, The Eternal

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The late Raymond C. Cole
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Offices in: United States
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Announcement Letter September 2008

Dear Brethren:

Greetings to God's children around the world once again whom we love and strive to support with all our might as a remnant Church of God. Hopefully you do not get tired of these expressions of affection and appreciation. They are sincere and heartfelt. After all, you are among the few people on the face of the earth today who are manifesting a true regard for the original teachings of God through Mr. Herbert Armstrong's early ministry. We love those doctrines. You love those doctrines too. Does that not give us a basis for real unity and affection which is beyond words? The world is descending into ever-increasing shades of darkness, which makes your lights shine brighter and brighter with every passing year. At the risk of seeming repetitive, we will therefore continue to remind you of your individual importance, no matter how small or insignificant you may feel yourselves to be. Never underestimate the value of your simple faithfulness to cardinal principles of God's law. As we draw nearer to the return of Jesus Christ, those manifested fruits will become even more prolific as a witness in these last days.

Here we are in the final days of preparation for keeping God's Holy Days in the upcoming seventh month of His revealed calendar. The Feast of Tabernacles continues to be a source of great anticipation for the people of God. What would our lives be like without that element of annual Holy Day observance? What if we were left to anticipate only the counterfeit occasions of man from year to year? How absolutely empty would our lives become? May we all remember to thank God for the knowledge of His Sabbaths, and stir up once again our appreciation for the hope of the future pictured in those coming festival days.

Spiritual Principle—Do Opposites Attract?

When God calls His people out of the world, the truly converted become compelled to distance themselves from past religious influences which they now recognize as deceptive counterfeits. Whereas before that call they felt comfortable in worshipping in churches of this

world, once knowing that the Holy Spirit is not really there and becoming compelled that, in fact, the opposite spirit is manifest there, they cannot wait to get as far away from that former influence as possible, and then avoid that environment in the future. Is this not true?

The same was true when we first came to understand about the apostasy of God's true church from the foundation of Christ's revealed doctrines. Whether we were among the first to understand that apostasy in the 1970s, or whether we only recently became aware of that history, once God opened our minds to those facts, we could not wait to distance ourselves from that corrupt body. Why do we no longer feel comfortable in fellowshiping with those brethren in other configurations? Because we have come to believe God is no longer among them, given their leaders have repudiated His Holy Spirit through their perversion of doctrine—in essence slapping Jesus Christ in the face. We believe God is not in their midst during weekly and annual Sabbath observances, and we choose not to be anywhere near them or their polluted sacrifices if we can help it. This is not an expression of hatred or disrespect for those former brethren. We are simply calling a spade a spade, as Jesus Christ did when confronting religious perversion among His people.

This strong impulse to get away from a polluting influence is the way Mr. Raymond Cole's conscience certainly affected him in the aftermath of his departure from our parent organization in late 1974. When Church of God, The Eternal kept its first Feast of Tabernacles as a remnant body in 1975, through God's direction Mr. Cole selected a site as far away from any conclaves of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) as possible. That year, the site was Redmond, Oregon, well away from any of our parent body's Feast sites. Mr. Cole and our brethren felt—concerning the WCG—as many new converts originally felt about escaping the pollutions of false religious bodies subsequent to their initial callings. We were no longer of the same spirit with them, and therefore we did not feel right in being in those areas where they were convoking. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

What is the point? What about the orientation of other brethren who have since made lateral moves by separating from various splinter groups? While some of them likewise feel a strong urge to distance themselves from the influence of assemblies which they now feel are teaching perverted doctrines, many other individuals seem to have no such compunction. Having left a group they claim to believe is not led by God's Holy Spirit, they nonetheless seem very comfortable in getting just as close to those former assemblies as possible. In fact, they seem to seek them out.

We are not talking about the many today who believe there is truly no faithful remnant, but believe that all of the splinter groups have God's blessing to one degree or another. Such brethren feel comfortable in attending many different groups, and even plan their Feast of Tabernacles itinerary to go into an area where they know several different groups are meeting close by. This allows them easily to attend one group's service one day,

another group's service the next day, and so forth. (We do not object to visitors attending our Feast-site services who may be curious about our group. As long as they are respectful, we are happy for them to attend.)

No, these are not the ones we are speaking about. We are talking about the ones who *claim* they have decided that a particular group is not operating according to God's Spirit, and accuse the ministry in those fellowships of gross abominations. Yet for some reason these individuals still seek to be as close to those former group assemblies as they can, especially during the Feast of Tabernacles. It is a fascinating phenomenon, and we have seen it play out time and time again over the past three decades.

In years past, Mr. Raymond Cole dealt with former members who separated from us—accusing Mr. Cole of everything in the book—and yet these individuals still showed up in the remote places where our brethren were keeping the Feast. If they truly believed Mr. Cole was such an apostate, why would they choose to "keep the Feast" in the very location where "those apostates" had designated it to be? If you do not believe God is inspiring a particular ministry, how can you believe that those locations they choose are where God will choose to manifest Himself? It simply does not make sense. Yet it has happened repeatedly.

In the US, we have had much more of an issue with this phenomenon on the West Coast, at our Oregon Feast site. How common it has been for our brethren to run into former members in stores and restaurants in Newport, Oregon, who just cannot seem to stay away from us. In spite of their claim to believe we are so abominable, there they are trying to get as close to us as possible and initiating contact whenever possible.

Brethren, that is nothing short of the evidence of a very contrary spirit. It is never the manifestation of God's Spirit. One led by God's Spirit never seeks to stir up contention by "toying" with those of a different mind. Those truly of God's Spirit avoid such potential confrontations and seek a place away from those who are antagonistic. Trying to use the Feast as a platform to confront former brethren whom you *claim* to believe are apostates is a clear indication of a spirit of agitation. The evidence of that spirit is easy to discern if you know what to look for. If Church of God, The Eternal is truly that bad, the last place our detractors should select for a feast site is anywhere near where their brethren might come into contact with us. Why would they even allow it if their qualms about us are so sincere? After our separation from our parent body, we never behaved that way. It certainly was not the example of Mr. Raymond Cole.

We are also not speaking about members of other group fellowships who may choose to have their feasts in the same vicinity as us, but who really do not even know we are there. We are a relatively small group, with less than two hundred members at any one of our US sites. It is always possible that a much larger group may select our location, without any regard to our existence at all. That happened last year in Newport. There were quite a

number of "feast keepers" there last year, especially one large group of over three hundred, but they probably had no idea we had been meeting there for years, and it is certain our presence was not significant to them one way or another.

But what about a minister who departs from our fellowship, accusing Mr. Cole of every evil under the sun, but then chooses to have his feast in a town just up the road from us year after year? It certainly does not fit the scenario of Feast-site selection which Raymond Cole used himself after leaving Worldwide. But again, our long-time members who attend the Feast in Newport know what to expect and take it all in stride.

For the first time this year, however, an element of that same phenomenon is likely to take place at our other US Feast site. We are aware that certain ones who claim now to believe we are operating by the power of Satan may yet choose to rub elbows with us in Townsend, Tennessee. Amazing. What these dissidents choose to do will never affect our own choices, as we have ignored this same spirit of confrontation in Newport for many years and have been blessed with very rewarding festival observances in spite of them. But it is valuable for all of you to be aware, so that you are less likely to be taken off guard.

Simply be aware that you may be confronted by ones who you know have left our fellowship because they claim this ministry is apostate, and yet they will insert themselves in a place they know you will "run into" them. Do not fret or be concerned. Nod, be civil, but be prepared not to allow them to force you to become a pawn in their game playing. If you do not know what to say and are being forced into contact, rather than being rude and turning away, simply say, "I love you dearly as a brother/sister and wish you were still with us. Once you get things straightened out with the ministry, I would love to renew our friendship again." That is exactly how we feel about them, and we pray for them continually. It is the most honest and diplomatic approach we know, which confirms our sincere love for them, but which asserts our determination not to be pulled into their traps for sport.

Why should we not embrace them with open arms? Because believing what we do about God's truth and the role of this remnant body in holding firm, we believe that ones in their position have put themselves into serious spiritual jeopardy. If a beloved brother has been deceived into turning onto a path toward destruction, how are we showing love to him by patting him on the back and making him feel that his decision was acceptable? That is exactly what some brethren have done previously in the name of being loving and more "Christian." We can take that approach if we choose, but to be blunt, it flies in the face of the instructions God gave very plainly to all Church members, and that which was also part of the faith once delivered, confirmed by Mr. Armstrong as well as Mr. Cole (2 John 1:10; 1 Corinthians 5:11; Romans 16:17). God gave these instructions for a reason. It has nothing to do with being spiteful towards those who now oppose us, and it has nothing to do with being afraid of their contact. It has everything to do with defending what is right, and showing *real love* for such a beloved brother by *refusing to condone* his deadly choice to

separate. Perhaps if you stand up and do the right thing in love—meaning to politely resist fellowship—you might help that individual rethink his erroneous path and save himself from eventual destruction. Your very example might make all the difference in time. But how many in the past—in the name of love—have actually *encouraged* one of those weak brothers into a more *hardened defiance* of God by making him feel accepted for his rebellious actions? God help anyone who hangs a millstone around his brother's neck that way through such application of false love. Do not worry. This ministry will not be your judge. As we learned from Mr. Cole's example, we are not going to police any of you in what you allow or do not allow. Our job is to instruct you in the principles so that you understand how God views these matters, but then it is up to you to either apply them seriously in faith, or else to choose to ignore them. God—not this human ministry—will be the One we each answer to for our choices.

There may be others in and around us at the Feast who are not defiant like the ones described above, but who have drifted away from our fellowship in the past for various personal reasons. Yet they may still choose to be around us because deep down they still believe that is where God is present. These individuals should not be shunned, but instead encouraged as much as possible. If there is anything we can do to help them find their way back, even by being kind and welcoming, what a wonderful opportunity that would be. So we need to be thoughtful in making these decisions, and make sure we do not lump everyone into the same category.

We are anticipating another very blessed and inspiring Feast of Tabernacles in all of our sites around the world. As we grow closer to the time of Christ's return, the apparent threats mount for the people of God in Satan's world. Never worry. Never fret. God has promised to take care of those who put Him first and honor Him by holding fast the faith once delivered. He has always blessed and sustained this little remnant in the past, and we have confidence that He will grant us another very successful Holy Day season. Just remember not to take His past blessings for granted, and be sure to pray for His help, His defense, and His wisdom through the Spirit to make the correct decisions in whatever we may face along the way. You can walk in absolute confidence, and God will show the light of His Spirit by your very fine examples.

Feast of Tabernacles Festival Coordinators

This is just a confirmation of the individuals who have been appointed to key positions to help coordinate the physical aspects of our Feast of Tabernacles meetings in the US sites. In Newport, Oregon, Mr. Delmer Marsh is once again responsible for everything related to the physical set-up and day-to-day functioning of the Feast. He is helped as always by a very competent team including Mr. Robert LeBleu and Mr. Frank Sheffold, not to mention the scores of volunteers who so willingly manage many important functions.

In Townsend, Tennessee, Mr. David Brandenburg has been assigned to fulfill that same role as Festival Coordinator. He too will be supported by an array of volunteers who fill key roles. Up until the Feast begins, Mr. Richard Litz is the man in charge of helping you with your accommodations, etc. in Townsend, because he is the one who lives in the local area and is most able to address any preparatory needs on-site throughout the year. (Anyone who needs help with accommodations may contact Mr. Litz at: 2213 Wilkinson Pike, Maryville, TN 37803, (865) 984-0649.) But since Mr. and Mrs. Litz will be flying to Newport to keep the Feast, another man is required to take the reigns and exercise responsibility for all activities while we are actually assembled together for that eight-day period. (In addition, it is always our desire to keep the ministers free from physical responsibilities during the Feast so that they can focus instead on the spiritual aspects of your support without distraction. It was always Mr. Cole's preference to delineate these physical Feast duties from the spiritual ones in a comprehensive plan which helps share the load.) Mr. Brandenburg has been coordinating closely with Mr. Litz in the run-up to the Feast, to assure that all of those requirements for your convenience will be met in Townsend this year.

If you have any questions or need help in solving a problem in these final days before the Feast, and if you are not sure who is assigned to that particular responsibility, please feel free to contact us here at the church office in Eugene, and we will be happy to help direct you to the one who can serve you best.

New Moon

The new moon, Tishri (seventh month), will begin on the evening of September 30. The new moon day is October 1.

Holy Days

Feast of Trumpets	Tuesday, September 30
Atonement	Thursday, October 9
Feast of Tabernacles	October 14–20
Last Great Day	Tuesday, October 21

US Feast Site Addresses

In Newport, OR, the Feast will be held at the Elks Lodge, located at 45 John Moore Road, to the left, off of Highway 20 just as you are entering Newport from the east.

In Townsend, TN, the Feast will be held at the Townsend Municipal Building at 133 Tiger Drive. This building also houses the police and fire departments and is next to the Townsend Elementary School.

If you need further information please call the church office at (541) 344-8880.

Death

We are sorry to inform you that Mr. Martin Hendrix of Woodstock, Ontario, Canada, died Sunday, August 31 of unknown causes. He had been losing weight rapidly before his death. He was 53 years of age. Martin was devoted to God's truth and he will be missed by all. We send our condolences to his children, Peter and Dana; parents, Peter and Mary; sisters, Liz, Nelly, Joanne, and Wilma; and all his extended family and friends.

Trip Schedules

Mr. Jon Brisby:

September 27 (Sabbath)	Stephenville, Texas
30 (Trumpets)	Stephenville, Texas
October 9 (Atonement)	Townsend, Tennessee
11 (Sabbath)	Townsend, Tennessee
October 13–17 (FOT)	Townsend, Tennessee
18–21 (FOT)	Newport, Oregon

Mr. Leon Whitaker:

September 30 (Trumpets)	Eugene, Oregon
October 13–21 (FOT)	Townsend, Tennessee

Mr. Robert Litz:

October 13–21 (FOT)	Townsend, Tennessee
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Mr. Richard Litz:

October 13–21 (FOT)	Newport, Oregon
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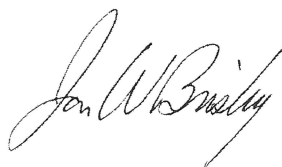
Correction: Tennessee Family Night Social

It was stated in the August *Announcement Letter* that the family night potluck social in Tennessee would be held on Thursday evening, October 16. That is incorrect; it will be held on Wednesday evening, October 15. Please be sure to check the registration desk for any other activities sponsored by the brethren during the Feast.

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-JB 22-98-24K	08-14-08	09-06-08	Fund. of Belief: Divine Revelation Divine Revelation Through False Prophets and Donkeys
CL2 46 (RC)	08-14-08	09-13-08	Principles of Christian Living: Longsuffering #6
Holy Day Tapes	08-20-08	—	Trumpets/Atonement
WSE-JB 22-99-24L	09-04-08	09-20-08	Fund. of Belief: Divine Revelation Divine Revelation and Christ's Example #1
CL2 47 (RC)	09-04-08	09-27-08	Principles of Christian Living: Longsuffering #7
WSE-JB 22-100-24M	09-04-08	10-04-08	Fund. of Belief: Divine Revelation Divine Revelation and Christ's Example #2
CL2 48 (RC)	09-25-08	10-11-08	Principles of Christian Living: Longsuffering #8
CL2 49 (RC)	09-25-08	10-25-08	Principles of Christian Living: Longsuffering #9

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby