

Church of God, The Eternal

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The late Raymond C. Cole
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Offices in: United States
Philippines
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Announcement Letter June 2009

Dear Brethren:

We greet all of you again in this new month with much outgoing love and affection. These letters have been a source of connection for our scattered faithful for a very long time, and we continue to seek to make them helpful and uplifting for all of you whom God is preserving through these difficult days. We are devoted to you because we recognize who you are in the plan and purpose of God. No matter what your struggles in this life, we hope you know and feel our support. We really do desire to be helpers of your joy (2 Corinthians 1:24). It is our very humble pleasure to do so.

We pray that you all had a very inspiring Pentecost observance. What a privilege to know and have confidence in the true day which God hallowed as part of the sign between Him and His people. Now that Pentecost is past, we cannot help but look forward to the next Holy Days before us. The fall festivals will arrive very quickly, so it behooves us to be planning and making provisions now. The Eugene office staff is already engaged in much activity toward that very end, and we pray for God's help to assist us in covering every necessity. With that in mind, there is one principle which is important for us to cover now, since it affects attendance at the fall Feast. Other principles will likewise be covered in future letters, but months ago it was determined we would cover the following principle immediately after Pentecost.

Spiritual Principle—Who May Attend the Feast?

Church of God, The Eternal has always used a rather "relaxed" approach as far as who may attend our Feast of Tabernacles assemblies. We have never opened the door wide to invite anyone and everyone (as some other groups have done through targeted advertising campaigns), but neither have we acted heavy-handedly to make it difficult for those *who approach us* to be able to attend. We do not subscribe to the idea of trying to unify scattered former members of the parent body through an ecumenical outreach. The doctrine of Jesus Christ is most important to us, and there is only one doctrine which God accepts. Anyone who attends our Feasts should understand what we believe about revealed doctrine. We are

not interested in debate. We accept no other concepts than those which we were all first taught through Mr. Armstrong. Anyone who seeks to attend a Sabbath or Feast service with us needs to understand that and be respectful of it.

That being said, we do not go to the other extreme of applying a stringent litmus test to those seeking to attend with us. Over the years we have often had "visitors" attend one or more of our services, who admittedly do not profess all of the same doctrines we hold dear. That is OK. Mr. Raymond Cole never assigned deacons to watch the doors and bar entrance to any visitors or strangers. As long as such individuals do not create a problem, we are happy for them to sit quietly in a service if they so choose. It is always possible that one who is searching might find fruits in us that may help them somewhere down the road. We will continue to use this same *balanced* administrative approach to welcome them, even as we always have done.

But because we have always made it so easy for people to attend our Feast services, some of you may have acquired false notions about the true scope of ministerial authority to approve or disapprove someone to attend a service. That principle we want to clarify now so that there is no misunderstanding.

The ministry does indeed carry the authority of Jesus Christ to decide who may and who may not convoke before God among us. Those appointed shepherds have the obligation to assure that the collective sheep are protected from those who would seek to devour or to spread heresy in our midst. If there is any individual whom the ministry deems to be a threat, it has not only the right, but the obligation before God to keep such a one at bay. (These principles are all covered in detail in our articles and past sermons on the topic of church government.) Therefore, in spite of our "relaxed" administrative approach to allowing attendance in our worship services, the reality is that every one of you attends with the *express permission* of this ministry. Not one of you has the *inherent right* to attend if we do not approve it. Does this cause alarm or offend anyone? Is anyone concerned that this is a departure from the orientation of Mr. Raymond Cole while he led this group as Pastor and Director for twenty-five years? Here are a couple of historical accounts which should verify what Mr. Cole taught and practiced:

A number of years ago, Mr. Cole disfellowshipped a woman who had caused problems in our midst. She later sought to come back with us, and Mr. Cole wrote to her and outlined a very specific program of requirements for her to accomplish toward that end. Included in that list was a prohibition for her to attend the Feast with us that particular year. She would have to stay at home. This was one of the tests she would have to pass to prove whether she was truly repentant and willing to submit to Mr. Cole's authority. However, she defied his instruction and showed up where our Feast was held anyway, checking into a hotel room in the very midst of our brethren. Not only that, she tried to attend one of our services. She arrived after the service had begun while Mr. Cole was already speaking to the assembly. Because we had advanced warning of her intentions, Mr. Cole had instructed us to station

men at the doors and prevent her from entering. We simply stood in front of the door so that no one could get past us. As she stood there facing us, demanding for us to step aside and let her in, this is what she said: "I have *a right* to be here as much as anyone else. This is *my church*, and these are *my friends*. No one has a right to keep me out." Ultimately, we called the police, who escorted this woman away from our lawful, "private" assembly. But this demonstrates the attitude of one who is inspired by Satan, and one particular way he influences some to think about the church. Some of you were witnesses to this event and can testify to it. It should be clear evidence of Mr. Raymond Cole's orientation toward this issue of *the right* of service attendance.

In another case about twenty years ago, soon before the Feast, Mr. Cole had been forced to disfellowship a particular married couple. According to his judgment, they were a threat to the body with their vitriolic spirit of rebellion. Mr. Cole specifically instructed the entire body to have nothing to do with this couple, exercising the very same authority used by the Apostles Paul and John (1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 John 1:10). Yet soon afterward, Mr. Cole received secondhand information that another member had defied his instruction and intentionally traveled up to meet this couple to "get their side of the story." Because the Feast was at hand, there was no time to address it in advance. This individual was attending at one of our sites where Mr. Cole would not be attending personally. Therefore Mr. Cole instructed the minister assigned to that site to confront this member at the first opportunity. That first opportunity came just before the opening night service of the Feast. As soon as this member entered, the minister was waiting. I happened to be standing there to witness what took place. The minister—by Mr. Cole's authority—asked this member directly, "Did you travel up to meet with 'so-and-so' after Mr. Cole told us not to?" The man was flustered, but rather than lying, he at least answered honestly that he had so done. The minister replied immediately, "Then you are out!" That man was escorted off the premises.

These two examples should help confirm what was always Mr. Cole's orientation toward this issue of "right of attendance." Church of God, The Eternal continues to welcome at our services members, unconverted family members, visitors, and even strangers who might be curious. We will always make it very easy for someone to fellowship with us without making him jump through a lot of hoops. But please do not infer from this administrative behavior that we have *no right* to keep someone out. Again, anyone who attends one of our services needs to understand that he does so with the *express invitation* and approval of the ministry.

Why is this principle being enunciated at this particular time? Because there have been subtle behaviors manifested in times past which are troubling, which this ministry does not intend to allow to continue. It is not our intent to embarrass anyone. We desire, above all, to see a correction of behavior which negates the need for direct ministerial involvement. By publishing our intentions in advance to the whole body, it provides ample insight into how these decisions will be made in the future, so that everyone understands. There is no "gotcha" orientation with us. All which we are doing is aboveboard and open to the light of day.

Anyone who outwardly, *or even subtly*, has been thumbing his nose at the ministry will not be welcome at our festival services. To allow such a one to be in our midst while manifesting disdain for the leadership of the group is not fitting. If one does not believe God is inspiring those ministers, why would they want to attend one of our services anyway? God is not present there unless the ministry is legitimate. But some seem to believe—like the woman of the above example—that they can despise the leadership and still have a right to fellowship with the people. *Not so*, and we will not permit it.

Specifically, there are some few who have been members in good standing with us for a number of years, but who have begun recently to change their behaviors. It shows. How so? They are ones who live in an area where they *can meet* with other brethren every Sabbath during the year, and in fact have *done so consistently* in past years. Yet now they seem to be boycotting those local assemblies. They have changed. Perhaps there is a legitimate explanation, but if so, none has been offered. If what they are doing is making a "silent protest" against this ministry, should such a one be allowed to attend with our brethren at the fall Feast? Should someone who used to be an active, supportive member—but who now shuns commanded Sabbath and Holy Day services all year long—be allowed just to "show up" with us at the Feast, as if nothing is amiss? What kind of message does that send? Without the use of a single word, that very example sports *a false doctrine* in our midst, asserting that they could not care less about honoring God's assemblies the rest of the year, but desire to take advantage of the Feast, when many friends have gathered there from all over the country. This is an advanced warning that such will not be allowed.

Anyone who falls into this very narrow category at this time has a choice to make. (Again, this has nothing to do with true visitors—even from other groups, unconverted family members, or those who cannot meet throughout the year because of distance or health restrictions.) The only thing that needs to be done to rectify his/her status is to begin attending again at local weekly Sabbath services, renewing support for this group by simply showing up, just like he/she once did. Nothing will be said, and that beloved brother or sister will be welcomed again with open arms. That action would send a very good message to the rest of the Body. That is the choice we encourage and pray for most heartily. But the individual who refuses to do that will not be allowed to attend the fall Feast with us this year. He will not be allowed to have it both ways. As Pastor and Director of this group, I will not allow anyone to appear in our midst, radiating heretical doctrine by that very appearance, with or without words used. I can spot such subtleties a mile away. If there is a legitimate reason why one has ceased to attend regular local services as he used to do, all I need is for that individual to contact me and to explain. But some to whom I have written—to kindly ask about their intentions—have thus far refused to give me the courtesy of a reply.

Right before the Feast arrives this year, I will be providing each festival coordinator in the US with a list of individuals (hopefully none) who are not allowed to attend with us. Without such an individual contacting me personally in advance for permission, he/she will be turned away at the door of our assemblies. This notice—being made as early as June—of

my administrative policy gives *everyone* advanced understanding of the principles involved, and those specifically affected have *plenty of time* to rectify their status with us. If there is any misunderstanding and you feel you might be "on this list" in error, simply contact me. No one should be surprised or unsettled if the worst case scenario becomes necessary. But I am praying for true reconciliation and unity with those dear and priceless children, not exclusion. I am very anxious and willing to restore them to the fellowship if they desire to be with us—*truly* with us. If anyone has any questions about this policy, please feel free to contact me. You each deserve incredible respect and accommodation because of who you are in God's glorious plan.

Death

Our long-term member, Mrs. Helen Broyles of Lafollette, TN, died May 18, from a massive stroke. We offer our sincere condolences to her sons Robert, Ronnie and Donald and her extended family.

New Moon

The new moon, Tammuz (fourth month), will begin on the evening of June 22. The new moon day is June 23.

Trip Schedule

July 4	JWB	Maryville, Tennessee (This is a change from the original plan to be in Youngstown, Ohio.)
July 11	JWB	North Bend, Washington

Scheduling Emcees, Opening and Closing Prayers

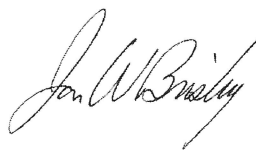
We are beginning preparation of printed schedules for the Feast of Tabernacles, so we need to know as soon as possible if any will be attending at a different Feast site than usual. We must soon begin work on the scheduling of emcees and those who give opening and closing prayers. We thank you in advance for your help.

Part of our preliminary work involves the music program for the two Feast sites. Any member who has attended one of our Holy Day convocations in the past is eligible to participate in the fall Festival music program. Information is included with this letter for any who qualify and are interested. Mr. Richard Meyn and Mr. Timothy Sherwood are already working on this year's performance material. They would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in participating at either Feast site.

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
Holy Day Sermon	04-28-09	06-01-09	Pentecost
WSE-JB 22-106-24S	04-30-09	05-16-09	Fund. of Belief: Divine Revelation Does God Repent?
WSE-CL2 70	04-30-09	05-23-09	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #3
WSE-CL2 71	04-30-09	05-30-09	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #4
WSE-CL2 72	05-21-09	06-06-09	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #5
WSE-JB 22-107-24T	05-21-09	06-13-09	Fund. of Belief: Divine Revelation The Only Legitimate Changes
WSE-CL2 73	05-21-09	06-20-09	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #6
WSE-JB 115	06-11-09	06-27-09	Avoiding False Love
WSP-JB 114	06-11-09	07-04-09	Passive Resistance
WSE-CL2 74	06-11-09	07-11-09	Christian Living Series #2 Kindness #7
WSE-JB 116	07-02-09	07-18-09	Is There Truly an Organized Remnant?

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby