

Announcement Letter November 2010

Dear Brethren:

Greetings again to those of God's beloved household who have made your home within this little remnant flock. We continue to thank God daily for each one of you, and appreciate so much your example of continuity to hold fast to those precious truths which God gave to His last-day church in the early twentieth century. Your personal struggles are many, but your focus to acknowledge that revealed way of life—even when it is very difficult and inconvenient to perform—is something that sets you apart significantly from so many others. May you always find strength to make those necessary sacrifices to show your love for God and His work—a work which is still unfolding before our very eyes.

When people ask how our fellowship differs from so many other groups that share a common origin in the Worldwide Church of God, it is easy to focus upon particular doctrinal teachings, like a Monday Pentecost, the sanctity of marriage, etc. These technical points of law certainly distinguish us from the majority of those still claiming respect for the work of Mr. Herbert Armstrong. But how else might we describe the difference?

Have you ever stopped to think that another key distinction might simply be the degree of arrogance—either present or absent—involved in what we each are doing? What is meant by that? Just stop and evaluate all that these groups are teaching (us included) according to the following yardstick: Do their teachings, either intentionally or unintentionally, give glory to men, or to God only? To what extent is a group's philosophy either overtly or subtly staking out positions which result in enhancing *the personal image of a man* for his own personal legacy?

The most extreme examples of this phenomenon include those ministers who claim to be fulfilling one or more specific *prophetic identities* from the Bible. Whether it is one of the Two Witnesses, Elijah, Elisha, "That Prophet," The Breaker, The Watchman, Joshua, Zerubbabel, or one of the others, in every case, the very idea of ascribing such a title to oneself is the very height of arrogance. But you might argue, *someone* has to fulfill these roles *at some point* in time. In spite of facing and enduring many imposters, why would it be wrong for *the true servant* whom God will call *legitimately* to do one of those prophesied works to actually acknowledge who he is? The point is, Jesus Christ was the only One who spoke about His own prophetic role while conducting His earthly ministry, and then only as a means to certify the accuracy of the Bible. None of the other human servants called by God ever did so. Case in point: John the Baptist. John most definitely came in the Spirit of Elijah. Jesus Himself said so (Luke 1:17; Matthew 17:11–13). But John himself never made such a proclamation about his own role in God's plan. When asked, he claimed only to be "one crying in the wilderness" (John 1:19–23). He refused to get entangled in assigning titles to

himself, even though he *was indeed* fulfilling one of those very prophesied roles! What this shows is that it was not important for John to focus upon the prophetic role he was playing in God's service. All he needed to do was go where God sent him, speak what God inspired him to say, and then let history take care of itself. This is the *meek and humble* orientation of a legitimate servant, refusing to get caught up in trying to prove "who he is" in God's great plan as a means to get others to respect him. The true servants of God do not fall into this trap. No, they simply go where God sends them, do what God instructs them to do, and then they leave the rest to God. By taking this humble orientation, what is the result? The focus of worship and admiration remains *toward God*, not the human servant through whom God speaks! The other approach removes the spotlight from God and shines it upon the man. It is the height of arrogance to do so. So when a minister seeks to convince others to accept that he is fulfilling some specific prophetic role, watch out! That very orientation is proof itself that he is not behaving as the true servants of God always acted.

But is this the only example of ministerial or organizational arrogance among many splinter groups? Hardly. Besides claiming prophetic titles, what other acts diminish focus upon God and place it instead upon men? How about the assertion of "new truth" which repudiates our collective spiritual foundation? What occurs when a doctrine which was once accepted as a gift from God to the Church comes under attack through the proposal of a man with a "new theory"? Regardless of the technical arguments involved, the underlying dynamic is to remove focus from God as the Revelator of Truth, and turn it toward a particular man, as a professed "corrector" of past error. And what do these "new truths" invariably include? Either a claim that this particular man has better *scholarship skills* to *ferret out* hidden truths of the Bible, or else that he has been the recipient of God's *divine enlightenment* through a vision, dream, or some other direct communication. Again, in each of these cases, what is the underlying effect of such a claim? Whether intentional or not, it takes attention away from God and puts it upon a man. The same dynamic is true whether the topic is a doctrine, speculation about the future fulfillment of prophecy, or any other new proposal advanced by these men.

What they all share in common is a desire to be recognized as being important *today* within God's plan. So we have many self-proclaimed scholars, historians, prophets, and apostles, sometimes using statements which *sound* humble, but by their very actions screaming that what they really want is personal attention and recognition. It is quintessential arrogance, and an affront to the only Being who deserves such accolades.

O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing [lying, falsehood]? (Psalm 4:2)

This lust for acclaim and recognition is truly at the heart of many of the works currently being performed among the churches of God at large. And it is not only within the ministry. In the aftermath of the destruction of that parent body, many within the laity

have now become *a law unto themselves*. By repudiating the need for church government or an inspired ministry, they seek to attract a spotlight for themselves as self-proclaimed Bible scholars. They decide *for themselves* what God requires of us to please Him. They need no instruction, not when they can read and interpret from their own Bibles. But again, is that orientation one which gives glory to God, or does it instead point to *a man*? In truth, anyone—minister or layman—who claims authority to decide the correct way to worship God, apart from the revelation God gave through the authority of His chosen servant of the last days, is being highly presumptuous and engaging in an act of disrespectful personal arrogance.

By comparison to these bad examples, what should a legitimate orientation reflect? The Apostle Paul stated it well:

For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness: Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2:3–12).

Your ministerial servants within this remnant body do not claim to be perfect. Far from it. Like all of you, we are each struggling day by day to put on more of God's Holy Spirit and to root out those carnal weaknesses which still remain. But according to *our philosophy* about the work we are doing to serve you, like Paul, we can sincerely claim to be free of deceit and covetousness in our orientation. Our purpose is not to bring attention to ourselves to garner admiration. Thanks to the very fine example of Mr. Raymond Cole—who set the standard in leading this little flock for twenty-five years before his death—we were all taught how a truly humble and dedicated servant in the ministry should behave. He was not interested in a personal following. How many times he thundered that his focus was *to preserve God's Truth*, even if he had to stand absolutely alone to keep it. He sacrificed much over the years to prove that he really *loved the doctrine* as a priceless gift from God, and he devoted all of his energies to

confirming those truths to those whom God sent. He refused to change them or to claim any prowess to "correct" formerly revealed tenets. He acknowledged Herbert Armstrong—not himself—as the man through whom God had revealed those truths. He had no *pride of authorship* in any of those doctrines he defended. He never claimed to be an apostle or a prophet. Mr. Cole was a better technical scholar of the Bible than most, and yet he never used that ability to promote himself, only ever *to reconfirm* what we had all received previously through Mr. Armstrong.

That was one of the legacies which Mr. Cole left to us all. It was an example which your continuing ministry today values highly, and one which we strive to emulate. And how reassuring it is actually to know that our role as ministers of God is not to presume prophetic capabilities which we do not have, or to try and strengthen your confidence by claiming Biblical titles to ourselves which we do not deserve. No, like Mr. Cole, we refuse to do it. We refuse to draw attention toward ourselves and away from God, or to try and bolster our authority in your minds by engaging in political chicanery and slight of hand. We are here to point you toward *Jesus Christ*, who was the foundation of that Church, and is the only One who deserves such acclaim. He is the One through whom your salvation will come. He is the Shepherd. We certainly claim authority in His name to care for and to defend the flock, but we see ourselves more like those trusty sheep dogs who assist the Shepherd, who love the sheep, who will lay down their lives to defend those sheep against wolves, but who do not seek at all to steal the spotlight away from the true Shepherd. Our purpose is not to make a name for ourselves in this life. By serving you today we are investing our energies with the hope of being rewarded—along side each one of you—in the Kingdom to come. We do not want the sheep to bow before us or to fawn over us like celebrities. A good sheep dog seeks mostly the appreciation of his master, and likewise, your ministerial servants in this remnant body value most of all a simple pat on the head by our Master, who holds our future reward in His hands.

Aside from all of the myriad technicalities concerning contested doctrines (which are all very important in their own right), sometimes it might be valuable just to back away from the jumble of trees and seek to appraise the forest as a whole. Christ said, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). What are the real fruits of these various ministries and self-proclaimed scholars? What do their philosophies communicate to the sheep about their true purposes and values? Are their works really intended to glorify God and to confirm *the revealed Truth*, or are they showing instead a tendency to make merchandise of the people of God for their own selfish ends? If you know what to look for, you can identify every key element which is necessary for your own personal choice. Try their fruits according to the proper yardstick. Then act in faith upon the path in which God is leading you. All of the tools you need for success are at your disposal. Once you find it and are sure—because *you know* that you know—stand firm and defend it with your all. To God only be all honor and glory and reverence.

Feast Reports

Suna-Migori, Kenya: Mr. Isaya Owak reports that the Feast of Tabernacles in Kenya was the best they have had and the members were very happy to come together to share the Word of God and meals for eight and a half days as one family. There were eighty-five people and God blessed them so much with His Word, rain, and above all, with physical health—nobody fell sick during those days. They had two services each day and in the evening a Bible study. No baptism took place this year, even though there were some attending who have not been baptized. They thank the brethren who sacrifice their second tithe for them, and invite them to come to Kenya to keep the Feast with them, and not to wait till we meet in the Kingdom of God. Thanks, and may God bless all.

Kandersteg, Switzerland: The brethren had a very good Feast with everything going well. There were twenty-four present including the children. It was warm and sunny at first, then after a rain the temperatures dropped to more autumn-like weather. Mr. Aviolat spoke every day. In order to keep up with that schedule he made sure he was in bed early every evening. His health stayed good throughout the Feast. Activities included their yearly family afternoon social and a fondue evening. They send their love to all the brethren.

Hermanus, South Africa: Everyone traveled safely and arrived in Hermanus in time to attend the opening service of the Feast. A few came down with the flu on the journey and spent most of the time battling unpleasant symptoms. Others became ill during the Feast. Due to this, they cut out some of the planned outings and activities. Despite all of this, the Feast was a great success. The sermons were all inspiring, and the series on getting to know God better gives us a deeper understanding of God's character and helps us cancel out wrong concepts and ideas. There was a total of twenty-six people, including the youngsters. Various families sponsored meals. Great fellowship was enjoyed and there was a lovely foretaste of the peace and oneness of spirit. The annual Ladies Tea Party was attended by fifteen and was an enjoyable afternoon. The weather was a little cool, even though it was sunny most days. Everyone traveled safely back to their homes after the Last Great Day, geared up for the year ahead, with much food for thought and inspiration to persevere and endure until the return of Christ. They are so grateful to their Heavenly Father for the fact that He has blessed us all with a faithful ministry in these days. They look forward to next year's Feast days when they can all meet again.

Townsend, Tennessee: The group of one hundred thirty-seven attending the Feast celebration in the Smoky Mountains was much rewarded with edifying spiritual food, good fellowship and beautiful weather. Although it rained for a couple of days near the middle of the Feast, sunshine prevailed for the remainder of it. As in past years, there were many opportunities for fellowship and getting to know one another better, including a steak and eggs meal cooked by the Armstrong family, the Family Night potluck (complete with musical entertainment and group games), as well as activities catered

specifically to the teen group. Once again, it was a peaceful and encouraging experience shared by all the brethren.

Yachats, Oregon: In Yachats, there were one hundred two brethren present on the beautiful Oregon coast. They were blessed with good weather, with only a couple of days of light rain. The activities were horseback riding, deep sea fishing, beach combing, meals spent together, and an enjoyable potluck/family night. This year for family night they had a square dance caller and everyone had a great time. There were two baptized. It was a very warm, peaceful, positive and inspiring time with close fellowship and unity throughout the Feast.

Port Sorrel, Tasmania, Australia: At the Feast this year in Port Sorrel, the brethren experienced rigid 12°C (53°F) cold, strong wind and rains. They did enjoy sunshine on the journey there. They thank God for His tender mercy, the great kindness of God's love in that Mr. Raymond Cole gave us the understanding that we are to come together in holy convocation—the privilege to come into His presence. The ministry's example of fierce conviction is inspiring and contagious. The reality is, the truth, the beautiful goodness and love of God, is manifested and expressed by inspiration for the remnant of His children. Truly as the Lord said, to know God is life eternal. They express deep love and gratitude.

Mindanao, Philippines: Mr. Corcino Canta and Mr. Mario Roque are very happy to report that they had a very joyous commanded Feast in Mindanao. They had very fine weather and one hundred twelve brethren attended; seven from Luzon and two visitors from Cebu. Six were baptized. They would like to express their gratitude to the brethren who made it possible for them to enjoy this occasion through their second-tithe assistance. They offer their greetings and best wishes to all the brethren.

New Moon

The new moon, Kislev (ninth month), will begin on the evening of November 7. The new moon day is November 8.

November Monthly Letter

The *Monthly Letter* for November is a reprint of a two-part letter that Mr. Raymond Cole wrote in June and July of 1977.

Trip Schedule

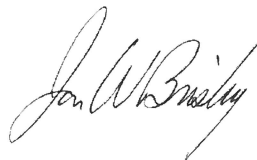
Mr. Brisby:

December 11 Don Carlos/Sulamay, Mindanao, Philippines

Recorded Sermon Schedule

| Sermon # | Mailed | Played | Title |
|---------------------|----------|----------|--|
| WSE-RC 12-5 | 10-21-10 | 11-06-10 | Concepts By Which God's Truth Is Denied #5 |
| WSE-RJL 1 | 10-21-10 | 11-13-10 | Continued Spiritual Neglect Leads to Unpardonable Sin |
| WSE-JB 22-116-25E-2 | 10-21-10 | 11-20-10 | Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: God's Marriage in a Song #2 |
| WSE-RC 12-6 | 11-11-10 | 11-27-10 | Concepts By Which God's Truth Is Denied #6 |
| WSE-JB 22-117-25E-3 | 11-11-10 | 12-04-10 | Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: God's Marriage in a Song #3 |
| WSE-JB 22-118-25E-4 | 11-11-10 | 12-11-10 | Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: God's Marriage in a Song #4 |
| WSE-RC 12-7 | 12-02-10 | 12-18-10 | Concepts By Which God's Truth Is Denied #7 |

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby