

Announcement Letter May 2012

Dear Brethren:

It is a sincere pleasure to greet the children of God in this new letter and to affirm our continuing love and devotion to each one of you. All reports thus far are that our brethren were very blessed in their assemblies to keep the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, and we are very thankful for God's special protection to make those convocations possible once again. Many of you are dealing with very serious trials in this world right now, and such burdens surely make it more difficult to put spiritual things first. But those of you who have persevered and honored God from the heart to fulfill His commands in spite of those trials are an inspiration to us all. May your lights continue to shine and to demonstrate the fervency of your belief in the faith once delivered. There is no better way to do that than to fight through every obstacle and to put God first, even under great physical duress. Those trials are likely to get more difficult as we approach the very end, so it behooves all of us to renew our focus upon *pulling out all stops* to put God first. Thank you for your very inspiring examples to date.

This will be the last letter you receive before we all keep Pentecost at the end of this month. Our observance of Pentecost on Monday, May 28, will mark the thirty-ninth year in which this little remnant group has kept Monday since our parent organization abandoned it for Sunday in 1974. It is hard to believe in some ways that so much time has already elapsed, but on the other hand, what a rich—if tumultuous—period it has been. Those who really love that Truth are richly blessed in spite of physical difficulties. What price can we ever put upon peace of mind—knowing with confidence that we will be assembling on *the one and only day* which God ordained to represent the gift of His Spirit? We have no way of knowing how much longer we have before God begins to intervene mightily to get the attention of the whole world—or the Church—but we know we are nearer to that time than ever before. Our diligence to hold to a Monday Pentecost today is just one way the light of that revealed Way continues to burn brightly in a very dark world. May your Pentecost convocations and celebrations indeed be a fitting sacrifice which God will accept and honor, and may we hold firm together through the power of that very Spirit which He has given to feed us.

Spiritual Principle: How to Become a Member

A common question we receive from new contacts who express interest in being part of Church of God, The Eternal is, "What do I have to do to become a member?" The answer to

that question includes a number of very important principles which are valuable for us to review.

First, to become "part of" Church of God, The Eternal, there are no membership applications to complete, no written exams to pass, and no allegiances to affirm. (It is interesting, but from the frequency by which we hear this question, it appears other groups must be requiring some such process before admitting new "members.") However, there are certainly other more subjective manifestations which do indeed distinguish our "members" from "non-members." What might they be?

A real *member* is one who demonstrates belief in whatever a group stands for fundamentally. That definition applies universally to any association. For our group in particular, that "belief" means agreement with the doctrines we fervently proclaim to be "the faith once delivered" by Jesus Christ through Herbert Armstrong in the twentieth century. Those particular doctrines are the reason for our existence as a group, so anyone wanting to be "with us" should value the same things that we hold most dear. That also includes belief that Mr. Raymond Cole became the servant through whom God preserved the original faith after the 1974 apostasy, since that likewise is a cardinal principle which makes us unique. Comparing the other groups who came out of our parent affiliation, our overriding premise makes us most identifiable with 1) a Monday Pentecost, and 2) defense of the original teaching about marriage and divorce. Someone who believes that Pentecost is on Sunday (for example), or that a bound marriage can be dissolved without the death of a mate, is hardly a good candidate for true "membership" with us. Otherwise, it would be much like someone who hated guns or the principle of public rights of gun-ownership seeking membership in the National Rifle Association (NRA). The fundamental orientations are totally incompatible.

With that in mind, what are some "evidences" that someone is a *real member* of this fellowship?

1) He chooses to attend weekly and annual Sabbath services with us when those convocations are available to him. Since Sabbath-keeping is *the sign* between God and His people (Exodus 31:13), the individual choices we make concerning worship on those High Days says much about our true orientation. Someone can claim to be a member of this fellowship, but if he chooses to keep those precious Sabbaths with a different group, or *anywhere separate* according to his own private choice (even though he has a Church of God, The Eternal convocation site within reach), then such claim of "membership" becomes rather hollow.

Likewise, one of the best "evidences" that a previously devoted member has since changed his mind about us is that he *ceases* joining with us for those Holy Days. Someone may be hesitant to declare outwardly that he is "leaving" our group, but even if it takes a while to manifest, the coming of that very next Holy Day season will often "push the issue." How

many times over the years have we seen someone slowly becoming estranged from us, but still asserting he is "with us." Interestingly, Passover often becomes a time of true revelation. If someone begins to doubt that we are "the right group," he may still attend weekly Sabbath services with us for some time, even when his heart is not in it. But for some reason, the conscience will not allow him to partake of Passover with us if he is no longer convinced we are legitimate. So many times we find that members pick the Passover season as the time to "come clean" and renounce their membership with us. They do it, not necessarily by any official letter, but by simply failing to show up at our services. The other very distinctive occasion is the Feast of Tabernacles. Barring physical disability, when one who has been a regular attendee at our Feasts suddenly fails to show up, it is often the means by which we are notified that he has finally chosen not to be a "member" any longer.

2) He chooses to pay tithes and offerings to Church of God, The Eternal. This is in no way as strong an indicator as certain others, because a number of people choose to make financial contributions to several different churches, even though they claim membership in none of them. Nonetheless, it is true that for many, where one chooses to give his hard-earned money can reveal in part where that person's heart really lies. Especially if one believes those tithes belong to God and is determined to pay them only to a *legitimate* representative of God, then the choice to pay them to this group can be a strong indication of belief that we are the "right church." Given that this ministry does not audit the contribution records of any who contribute, we do not "peek" at your tithing history to draw conclusions about which people are "faithful members." Unless one of you volunteers information to one of our ministers about what you are contributing (or not contributing), we will usually never know. But God knows, and so it is certainly an identifier which can indicate whether one *considers himself to be* a member, or not.

3) Over time he manifests behaviors which demonstrate respect for the authority of our ministers as true spokesmen for Jesus Christ. Another one of our cardinal beliefs is that a faithful remnant of God's true Church is led by Jesus Christ *through human agents* who act with His authority. There are many other groups today that do not believe in top-down church government. That is fine, and that is their free choice. But we are not one of them. We believe that God feeds His flock through the foolishness of preaching (1 Corinthians 1:21), not just through someone's individual Bible study. We believe that there is no way to fulfill the commands to convoke on Sabbaths, pay tithes, receive anointing for illness, become baptized, or to receive Christ's correct interpretation of spiritual principles without the activities of an authorized, organized ministry. We believe those ministers have absolutely no authority ever to change God's Truth, but they do have inspiration to confirm the Word, and to make administrative decisions required for the orderly conduct of the assembly.

If someone is truly a "member" of this fellowship, then a key proof of that is his orientation toward the ministry. There are some who value *the assembled group* of brethren most, but view the ministry only as a "necessary evil" to put up with in order to have access to

the group. There are even some who appear to many to be *long-time members* of Church of God, The Eternal, but who really only *tolerate* the ministry begrudgingly. In God's eyes, this is not a true member at all, because he does not really have his heart in believing God is *leading actively* through those chosen servants.

A *visitor* is one who may seek to assemble with us to test our fruits, or perhaps just to go along with a family member who is part of the church. Visitors are always welcome, as long as they are willing to respect what we stand for and to preserve our peace. When one is searching for the Truth and desires to attend with us to see what we are like, that is always very fine. Some of those visitors ultimately choose to become members, while others continue to go on their way. Some who resist affiliation with any one group like to "spread themselves around," attending services of many different splinter groups. Many of these do not believe there is such a thing as a "faithful remnant" which they must find, but choose to exist independently. These may be very happy with the idea of "keeping" God's laws on their own at home, even though they may venture out now and again to visit one of the organized assemblies. We have never turned such away, even though we do not agree with that philosophy at all. However, what we do not tolerate is one who seeks to attend with us as a way to gain access to our members to espouse his own concepts. If we see fruits like that, he ceases to be a "visitor," and we will treat him instead as a "wolf." Many over the years have claimed the desire to be members, when in truth they were only seeking access to our people in order to carry out some personalized agenda. We will not permit it.

What all of these points demonstrate is that the real proof of membership is not certified by producing a laminated membership card, or even by making any kind of verbal declaration. Talk is cheap. Even as the Body of Jesus Christ—the Church—is not a physical denomination but a *spiritual organism*, so a *member* is likewise certified by spiritual fruits, not by any bold, outward *professions* of fidelity. In the end, we know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:16–20).

So when someone asks us, "What must I do to become a member of Church of God, The Eternal?," we tell them they need simply to make the free choice to be part of us, receive our letters and sermons, make provision to attend our assemblies when possible, and respect our doctrines and administrative structure. Whether one truly *becomes* a member will not be dictated by this ministry. It will all be controlled by the *choices* that individual makes to demonstrate where his heart really lies. We are not interested in gaining "members" for the *physical group* called Church of God, The Eternal. This group exists as a vehicle to fulfill God's commission to feed the *spiritual organism* of the Body of Christ. To the extent that choosing to fellowship with this physical group allows one to grow spiritually and to draw closer to the God who ultimately will judge us all in a resurrection, then we are fulfilling our purpose.

What about those who have been "members" in times past of Church of God, The Eternal but then begin to separate themselves? How should we deal with them? That depends upon their behavior when they left, and their orientation since leaving.

Did he drift away because he was weak and overcome by the cares of this world? Is he one who always stood firm in believing our fellowship was "God's Church," but just had trouble doing what he knew was right? In such cases, a beloved member may drift away and then feel guilty about trying to come back. How will he be received? Will the brethren look down on him? Will they shun him? In this case, one such should be received with open arms, and we should do everything we can to encourage him to become an active "member" of the fold once again.

But there are other cases which must be handled very differently. If he left us because he disagreed with the doctrines or administrative policies of this group, what if he later wants to return? Well, we certainly want him back, but only if he is coming for the right reasons. Has he truly changed his mind, now believing that this ministry *is indeed* acting with the authority of Jesus Christ in our doctrinal interpretation and administrative judgments? We want that to be declared to us before he is allowed to fellowship with us again. Why make him jump through such hoops? Is it because we just want to shame him? Not at all! Once someone has manifested resentment toward this ministry and what this group stands for, it is *very reasonable* for us to ask for a declaration that he has since *changed his mind* about that. It is one thing to be a "visitor" who never made a commitment to what we stand for and who simply wants to attend a service now and then. It is quite another to have been a "member," meaning one who *committed* to believing this was a faithful remnant where the Truth was being preserved, and then later *to separate*, espousing strange doctrines and showing disdain for our ministry. Such an individual can certainly "catch himself" and return, if there is true repentance involved. But we have not only *good reason* to ask a few questions first, but an *obligation* to do so, to make sure we are not letting a *spiritual wolf* into the midst of God's dear flock.

It is Christ who warned His children that a diabolical spirit of deception would prevail in the last days, and one manifestation of it would include acts to *separate* from the body:

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us (1 John 2:19).

But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. *These be they who separate themselves*, sensual, having not the Spirit (Jude 17–19) [emphasis mine].

Perhaps they had reason to leave us. Maybe Church of God, The Eternal is really not a faithful remnant of God's true Church. Maybe we are just another deceived group led by a deceived ministry. Maybe our fruits are so bad that God wanted them to get away as quickly as possible. If that is how they truly feel—so that they cannot in good conscience continue to attend our Holy Day services, partake of Passover with us, or honor the administrative judgments of our ministry—by all means they should follow their consciences. But for those of you who *strongly disagree* with those conclusions and believe that membership in this remnant fellowship is part of your respectful worship of the true God, then you certainly do not share the same spirit with those who choose to separate. Maybe they are right and we are wrong. But what is true is that we are not being motivated by the same spirit! If we were, we would be together! The act of separation proves that there are *dissimilar* spirits involved. Right or wrong, if we are convinced that we are being led powerfully by God's true Spirit, then one who separates from us is necessarily being seduced by a different spirit. There is no other conclusion. And having once been enlightened and first *joining this fellowship*, only later to renounce us and go somewhere else, it is very reasonable for us to ask questions to discern if a change in spirit has really taken place. If such a one seeks to "return" without going through the ministry, that is an indication that he still does not believe Jesus Christ is acting through those servants. If you are contacted by one who wants to return, please point him to the ministry. If he is sincere, we will gladly restore him to our fellowship with great appreciation. But if he just seeks to come and go as he pleases, you should be ready to discern the spirit being manifested and do what God requires of you (1 Corinthians 5:11–13; 2 John 1:10–11).

Special note about ministers: In years past we have had—not only former laymembers of our parent church (or one of its other splinter groups), but *ordained ministers* as well from one of those groups seek "membership" with us. God has not given us the ability to read hearts and minds, so we accept these new contacts at face value, hoping that their interest in becoming "members" is sincere. Only time will tell, and so the fruits demonstrated will slowly but surely manifest. Mr. Raymond Cole had much experience with former ministers of the Worldwide Church of God "joining us," only to find out that they did not really believe God was leading and inspiring us. A number of them turned out to be "guns for hire," men who were not really convinced of the revealed doctrines—the faith once delivered—but willing to ascribe to a Monday Pentecost, i.e., to have their office as a minister ratified. That is why our policy came to require such men *prove themselves* over sufficient time before considering accepting them as shepherds within this flock. Mr. Richard Litz and Mr. Robert Litz are examples of men who have passed that test. They each spent two years in our fellowship as laymembers before they were ever allowed to teach as ministers. During that time we had ample opportunity to prove that they were really here because they loved the original doctrines. Neither of them was insistent upon becoming a minister for us, and in fact would have been happier to be told they should remain as laymembers! This is an example of allowing *time and fruits* to manifest, proving the *true reason* for seeking *membership*. There is no way we will ever allow an *untried man* to stand up as an elder to teach in this fellowship without going through this *vetting process*, no matter what his past "credentials." The day

may come when more of those former ministers with a Church of God history may come our way. It would be wonderful to have them as devoted "members," because they are indeed part of the called of God. But we will never be "obligated" to accept one of them as a teacher if he has not proven a love for defending the faith we love so much.

What then is required to be a member of Church of God, The Eternal? Demonstrate over time that you love what we love and are finding power to draw closer to the true God through being fed and nurtured within the structure of this little remnant. It is always your choice to become a member. And we will do all that is within our power and ability to serve those of you who seek the inspiration of Jesus Christ through the activities of this little group.

Contributions

When sending in tithes and offerings on checks or money orders, some of you have written a new check for each category (one for first tithe, one for third tithe, one for love fund, etc.). In order to save you time and effort, our bookkeeper, Kari McIrvin, has suggested that if you would like, you may consolidate them all into one check if you make sure that you list how much goes to each category. She can then break down the check or money order into the proper accounts when she does a deposit. But please make sure to let her know how much you wish to go into each category.

New Moon

The new moon, Sivan (third month), will begin on the evening of May 21. The new moon day is May 22.

Holy Day

Pentecost Monday, May 28

Trip Schedule

Mr. Brisby:

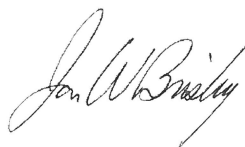
May 19 Carlisle, England

May 26, 28 Lausanne, Switzerland

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-RC 23-5	03-22-12	04-28-12	Hope: Its Purpose, Power and Potential #5
WSE-JB 22-143-25-I3	04-12-12	05-05-12	Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: Technicalities of Divorce #3
HFT-TT RC 83-1	04-12-12	05-12-12	The Biblical Concept of the Ministry #1
WSE-JB 22-144-25-I4	04-12-12	05-19-12	Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: Technicalities of Divorce #4
HFT-TT RC 83-2	05-10-12	05-26-12	The Biblical Concept of the Ministry #2
Holy Day Sermons	04-19-12	05-28-12	Pentecost Sermons
WSE-JB 22-145-25-I5	05-10-12	06-02-12	Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: Technicalities of Divorce #5
WSE-JB 22-146-25-I6	05-10-12	06-09-12	Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: Technicalities of Divorce #6
HFT-TT RC 83-3	05-31-12	06-16-12	The Biblical Concept of the Ministry #3

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby