

THE LATE RAYMOND C. COLE*
FOUNDING PASTOR
JON W. BRISBY
PASTOR, DIRECTOR

Announcement Letter February 2015

Dear Brethren:

Special greetings to all of you who receive this letter in every place that God has preserved you around the globe. We are most thankful for your seriousness about God's Truth, and the support that you have contributed to this little remnant—both spiritually and materially—making it possible for us not only to survive, but to thrive during these past years. It is God who has worked in your individual lives to foster that sincere conviction, and it is that spiritual conviction that has manifested collectively to permit this small remnant fellowship to be sustained. May we never forget or take for granted the operation of that Creator God.

As promised last month, this letter will highlight a very significant anniversary occurring at this very time. This month marks the fortieth anniversary of the legal formation of Church of God, The Eternal. Below is an image of our Certificate of Incorporation, showing the date of February 26, 1975.



Department of Commerce Corporation Division

Certificate of Incorporation

OF

CHURCH OF GOD, THE ETERNAL

The undersigned, as Corporation Commissioner of the State of Oregon, hereby certifies that duplicate originals of Articles of Incorporation, duly signed and verified pursuant to the provisions of the Oregon Nonprofit Corporation Act, have been received in this office and are found to conform to law.

Accordingly, the undersigned, as such Corporation Commissioner, and by virtue of the authority vested in him by law, hereby issues this Certificate of Incorporation and attaches hereto a duplicate original of the Articles of Incorporation.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed hereto the seal of the Corporation Division of the Department of Commerce of the State of Oregon this 26th day of February, 1975.



Frank J. Healy
Corporation Commissioner

By 
Clerk Clerk

In the last forty years, so much has transpired. When this group first formed in 1975, our parent organization—the Worldwide Church of God—still seemed strong and viable. It was yet "on top of the world." But today, where is it? Likewise, in the 1970s this remnant fellowship was made up primarily of long-time members of that parent body who were *personal witnesses* to all that transpired—including hearing Mr. Herbert Armstrong speak live at the fall Feasts as one example. Today, forty years later, very few of our members have such personal history. Even more interestingly, an increasing number of our current members today *did not even meet Raymond Cole in person!* Since his death in September 2001, a steady trickle of new brethren have continued to gravitate to this little remnant, and now are beginning to be the majority. That fact tells us two things: first, there is something compelling about the teachings *in their own right* of this little group, separate and apart from the personalities of the original human sponsors in the twentieth century; and second, without having been personal witnesses to those critical events forty years ago, it is needful that we endeavor *to remind you* of that history by repeating it in summary. There is no better time to do that than at this very noteworthy anniversary.

There is also no better way to remind us all of why we became an organized fellowship in 1975 than to allow Mr. Raymond Cole to tell us in his own words. Here are excerpts from his *Open Letter*, written in December 1999, which later became our article, *Church of God, The Eternal—Who We Are*:

Meetings: Eugene and Portland

For years I had served the people in both Eugene and Portland. I knew the people—the sheep—well. Out of frustration, doubt, and even fear, hundreds were seeking answers. I had made several trips speaking to families and groups who had asked me to explain events, and changes, which were occurring. Inevitably the day came when several wanted to formalize our independent and personalized meetings. They wanted to arrange for a place to meet where all who were troubled could come together to hear and understand and to fellowship with one another. I was very reluctant at first. No man has a "right" to create a separate entity—a body of followers for himself. In my exhaustive study to understand the events of the last days, I had uncovered an abundance of evidence that a number of ministers of these last days would carve out a following for themselves espousing their unique brands of dogma. Plainly God says they are doing what seems right to themselves, but He further says, "I did not send them" (Jeremiah 23, Ezekiel 13, Ezekiel 34, others).

Through the weeks and months of intensive study which had been undertaken, it was obvious that those who willed to remain faithful to the revealed doctrine could not continue to fellowship with those who had departed from that truth. That factor was clearly understood. But, what was I supposed to do? I was very familiar with Christ's warning against hirelings. Now I was between a rock and a hard place. I did not dare establish a work of my own. Only God has the right to establish and commission a work. On the other hand, I did not dare forsake my ministerial duty. It is absolutely impossible for me to put in written form the fearful trauma which I experienced during that period of time.

The Test

Many people here in Oregon, and across the country continued to urge me to speak, write, and publish my convictions. They were troubled, confused, and deeply distressed. I wanted to help them with the knowledge I was gaining from very intensive studies—backed with much praying, and beseeching of God. As strong as the desire to serve was, I was still more concerned about taking any action unauthorized by God. Anyone who really takes the time to study God's Word and allow it to sink down deep in heart—fearfully respecting it—knows he cannot legitimately appropriate office or assume a commission to do a work. Any such activity must come from God. It must be His Work. He alone calls, and commissions.

In my studying I had uncovered the fact that there not only was an emphatic statement by Christ that He and the message which He taught would continue until He returned, but that the body—the church—would go apostate and only a remnant would remain faithful. That discovery gave me considerable courage and hope. I knew that God had Himself indicated there would be a remnant. One small group who would remain loyal to the original teachings of Christ. I had already come to understand and truly appreciate the fact the message which Christ taught would be proclaimed by someone just prior to His Second Coming (Matthew 28:19–20).

But, all the above did not completely solve the problem of what I was required to do. In desperation I had decided to pull a Gideon. I, in my prayers, told God if He really wanted me to serve His people, if He would send members from both Eugene and Portland the following Sabbath, I would consider that an indication it was His will for me to serve them. (All

previous contacts were made by my driving to Eugene and Portland.) That following Sabbath I was amazed to see the arrival of carloads of people from both areas.

The Church Forms

Based on my understanding that a remnant only would continue to exist until the return of Christ, I was adamant about the fact we were not a separate group—only estranged brethren. Our lawyer was informed of this concept at the time of incorporation. He personally told me he understood exactly what I was saying.

Before the actual incorporation I had addressed in prayer a couple of things with God. Being aware of the apostasy of the church in the last days and seeing and hearing the anguish, sorrow, and fear generated by those changes, I had attempted to impress upon God—and perhaps myself—the desire and fact no future departure or change would be accepted or permitted within the body of Biblical doctrine which had been revealed. I simply could not see myself allowing the people to go through once again what they had already experienced. . . .

My Promise to God

After nearly eighteen months of study many concepts became very plain. The faithful who had come through the apostasy of Second Thessalonians two were under obligation to remain faithful to that which Mr. Armstrong had taught initially. What God had revealed to him was truth. It would not be compromised, changed or altered in any way. In my feeble way, I had tried to assure God that if He willed that I help these confused and troubled sheep, I would not deviate from that way of life which had been proclaimed first to Adam, then Moses, the prophets, Christ, the apostles—including Paul, and finally to a chosen servant in these very last days. The Bible is a historical chronicle of man's failure to remain faithful to any charge or responsibility given. Being deeply convicted by this undeniable fact, I personally did not want to see my name added to the list of unfaithful servants. There was absolutely no one else across the country, and to my knowledge around the world, who was even attempting to adhere to the truths revealed and taught by God's end-time servant. I had

attempted to find someone who still believed and practiced what we had believed and taught for nearly forty years. There were other groups, but, not one which was still practicing the revealed truth. That fact of itself was a grievous shock to me. I remember wondering, "Did anyone believe the truth over the years?" I later realized there were individuals isolated and scattered across the United States and around the world who still believed. What a joy to find each one. . . .

Back to my promise to God. In my prayers—seeking both the will and substantiation of God—I had expressed my determination to remain faithful to God. I knew what I had accepted was the Truth of God. I knew, also, truth cannot change. That basic concept was driven home while in my first years of college. Though I had no broad concept of what the future held for me, I knew I did not want to mislead anyone. Knowing that many hundreds would be calling, I felt compelled to come to specific conclusions about the unalterable truth and my relationship to it. I did not initially plan to be a separate entity. In fact, I urgently tried to get members to remain in the church but to be absolutely faithful to the Truth which they had accepted at the time of baptism. This effort proved futile in a matter of weeks. Seemingly, people cannot remain faithful to the Truth while at the same time abiding in a body which is not teaching that way of life. Most either soon accepted the perverted doctrine which was taught or they simply disappeared from the Worldwide landscape altogether. My efforts, consequently, seemed to be so useless. Many calls coming yet, bundles of cards and letters, but all efforts seemed to be of little value.

It was on the basis of the above I felt compelled to present the test mentioned earlier. The results were startling. I felt I had to help the people in some way. So, if God wanted me to be a servant of the people, I was willing to teach them and to set an example of faithfulness in my own life. Earlier God had made it very clear He did not intend for me to go back into the field of construction. I had tried that avenue because I did not want anyone to say, legitimately, that I went into the ministry for a paycheck. I had enough training growing up so that I knew I could make a living in this world on my own. To make the story short, God had other plans. He made the fact plain in short order. Based on that experience, along with other circumstances, I laid out the test mentioned earlier. Being very fearful of going contrary to the will of God, I made every effort to see His hand and direction before proceeding. I was convinced God gave His approval. I, therefore, was willing to step out in faith. If God sent the "sheep," I would

serve them. I had come to the conclusion no one was authorized to do a traditional "work." But, I felt comfortable doing that work mentioned by John (John 6:29). I wanted to shore up the belief and faith of those who had been called but were shattered by their recent experiences.

Dear friends, that is how we all came to have a part in this entity called, Church of God, The Eternal. Whether you are one of the few remaining who can speak of those events firsthand, or whether you are only recently finding a home with us, this history is for you.

And even though Raymond Cole has now been dead for fourteen years, what is also true is that our mission, our focus for the future, and our devotion to those very same revealed Truths *has not changed one iota*. What we stand for today, in 2015—and are defending fiercely—was never the doctrine of Herbert Armstrong or of Raymond Cole, but the very doctrines of Jesus Christ, *the true Founder of that Church in this age*. That is why those teachings still resonate with a new audience today, and that is why this little fellowship can still offer a spiritual refuge to just as many as in any previous decade.

Many ministers and former members have come and gone through our fellowship during these past forty years. Many began to think that after they gained acceptance and familiarity among our members over a few years, they could begin to influence our teachings, our administrative philosophy, our orientation toward a Work, or whatever. They were wrong. All those who held deep-seated disagreements with *some aspect* of Church of God, The Eternal, small or great, discovered eventually that we would not be "nudged" in any way from our initial premise. The fact that we can release forty-year-old documents and sermons and demonstrate that it is still the exact same premise of our orientation today should confirm the fact that we have resisted every attempt to alter it. Raymond Cole never allowed any "drift" from that initial premise, even though it caused periods of trauma within our fellowship because of influential ones who demanded "change." And since Mr. Cole's death in 2001, we have still resisted every influence—subtle or otherwise—to facilitate a *transition of orientation*.

All of you are aware of the significance of the number "forty" as God has revealed it in the Bible. Forty is a time of trial. Forty years has often been the maximum time that a called-out people of God have ever been able to hold fast to God's instructions. Forty years has often been the time period that God has allowed His rebellious children to suffer for their apostasy from Truth before initiating a reformation. Ancient Israel cycled through many periods of apostasy and restoration in forty-year increments. The New Testament Church in the first century went into apostasy within forty years of its establishment in 31 A.D. God's true Church in our day also went into the same kind of

apostasy within forty years of its establishment in 1934. Therefore, it is expected that many of you might look for something significant to occur at this particular time also. But please do not jump to ill-advised conclusions. Avoiding past traps of prophetic speculation has been an integral part of our wise admonitions over the years of our existence.

The most I am willing to say to you, dear friends, is that I am cognizant of that forty-year historical pattern of Israel (both physical and spiritual) to forget God's instructions and to begin to depart from Truth. I take it very seriously. Even as Raymond Cole was quoted above as knowing adamantly that his own salvation was at stake for how he discharged his duties to preserve that Truth and to serve the sheep of God, so too this continuing ministry understands the gravity of that charge and is just as adamant not to give in to spiritual slumber.

None of us knows how long it is before God will step in to begin that promised Work right before the return of His Son. How long will He sustain a small remnant of the faithful in virtual obscurity? We do not know that either. We must trust that His timetable is being executed right on schedule. It has never, and will never, be delayed or altered. Our task—individually and collectively—is to hold firm to those revealed Truths no matter how long is required. If need be, why cannot we be among those who *break the past tradition* of apostasy after forty years of faithfulness? God has warned us of the need to endure unto the end (Matthew 24:13), and there is no reason we cannot do exactly that if we are willing to learn from every historical example of failure. Those examples were written for you and me (1 Corinthians 10:11), to the intent that we *should indeed* set an example of faithfulness—to be an *ever-brightening light* in an ever-darkening world.

May God grant us all to continue to hold fast for as long as required to complete our mission. What a blessing we have received through Jesus Christ in this sheltered little fellowship for the past forty years. Thank God for His mercy and true benevolence.

Death

The oldest son of Mr-s. Gary Arnebeck, of Modesto, CA, died Tuesday, January 13, in an automobile accident. Though not a current member of the church, Gary Jr. had been raised in the church and was known by many. We offer our condolences to Gary, Elaine, and their surviving children.

New Moon

The new moon, Adar (twelfth month), begins Thursday, February 19. The new moon day is Friday, February 20.

Holy Days

Lead men should be making appropriate preparations for these days:

Passover (evening)	Thursday, April 2
Night to Be Much Observed	Friday, April 3
1st Holy Day—Days of Unleavened Bread	Sabbath, April 4
2nd Holy Day—Days of Unleavened Bread	Friday, April 10

Trip Schedule

Mr. Jon Brisby

February 21 Cape Town, South Africa
February 28 Suna-Migori, Kenya

Mr. Richard Litz

February 21 Phoenix, Arizona
February 28 Stephenville, Texas

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-RC 59-46	01-15-15	01-31-15	Despair or Glory, Which? #46 Habakkuk Chapter 3 #16
WSE-RC 59-47	01-15-15	02-07-15	Despair or Glory, Which? #47 Habakkuk Chapter 3 #17
WSE-JB 138-26	01-15-15	02-14-15	Family Handbook #26 Pregnancy and Childbirth #2
WSE-RC 59-48	02-05-15	02-21-15	Despair or Glory, Which? #48 Habakkuk Chapter 3 #18
WSE-JB 138-27	02-05-15	02-28-15	Family Handbook #27 Pregnancy and Childbirth #3
WSE-RC 59-49	02-05-15	03-07-15	Despair or Glory, Which? #49 Habakkuk Chapter 3 #19
WSE-JB 138-28	02-26-15	03-14-15	Family Handbook #28 Pregnancy and Childbirth #4

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby