

February 2022

Dear Brethren:

This month of February marks the forty-seventh anniversary of the founding of this little remnant group called Church of God, The Eternal. It was February 1975 when this assembly was legally registered by Mr. Raymond Cole. Many of you may know that basic history—either because you lived through it personally or else because you learned about it from our writings over past decades—but it is still important to remind ourselves from time to time of our origins so that we might never forget our premise for existence. Unlike other groups whose tenets "evolve" over time, this group has remained faithful to our founding principles. That means that when you revisit the specific events leading to the original formation of this remnant church, you will discover that it involves *the very same body of beliefs* that we are defending today, forty-seven years hence.

Much of the following history has been highlighted before, but rather than merely repeating exactly the same information provided to you in years past, this *Letter* will also provide new specific details recently gleaned from our home-office archives which have never before been published. We hope that this material will be meaningful for all of you who feel a vested interest in this remnant body.

A Brief Background

The years from 1972–1975 in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) were times of volatility and unrest. Recall that the year 1972 had been touted by leading ministers of the church *for decades* as the moment when major Bible prophecy would begin to unfold, and the church would be taken to a physical *place of safety* to await the imminent return of Jesus Christ. When 1972 arrived and it became apparent that world events were not aligning at all with these past prognostications, church members became restless and lost confidence in the ministry. Many members began to leave or else to withhold tithes and offerings. Panicked leaders of the church under Mr. Herbert Armstrong began to clamor for a "solution."

The key problem—as many of these leaders viewed it—involved unpopular and hard-line doctrines that were too burdensome for the laity, especially the prohibition against divorce and remarriage. When members had believed that the end truly was "near," they had been willing to bear the weight of difficult teachings *for the short term*, like remaining single and celibate to avoid committing adultery. But when it became clear that the end of the age was not truly at hand, many balked at staying single for perhaps the rest of their lives. They demanded relief, and the most liberal of those powerful church leaders were all too eager to

take advantage of this unrest in order to effect major doctrinal changes. Many of these ministers had never truly liked or agreed with key doctrines to begin with, and they had only supported them because Herbert Armstrong was adamant that they were inspired by God and were *revealed Truth*. Finally, they had the opening they needed to challenge many of these past teachings and to get the changes they craved.

That is why a new *Doctrinal Committee* was formed in 1972—to go back to the drawing board and "re-prove" key doctrines from a *scholarly premise*. The underlying inference was that Herbert Armstrong had never been a true Bible scholar, and therefore he had made many mistakes in his early interpretation of Scripture. This new team of "experts" was now going to identify these "past errors" and help the church to "grow in grace and knowledge."

Mr. Raymond C. Cole was one of those top-level Evangelists under Mr. Armstrong during that time, but he was not at all one who was clamoring for change. He was considered one of the "conservatives" who was resisting all efforts of the "liberals" to undermine established church doctrines. In the end, the liberals got what they wanted, and many church doctrines began to be toppled, one after another.

Raymond Cole wound up outside of the church, stripped of his ministerial credentials. Church of God, The Eternal formed in February 1975 as a result of those events.

Leading up to his expulsion from the church, Mr. Cole had been on a one-year sabbatic leave which had begun in November 1973.

The question is, what really happened during these tumultuous months? Who did what—and for what reasons—and was Raymond Cole actually a good guy or a bad guy in the final storyline?

Many have drawn their own conclusions and have decided that Raymond Cole was only looking for an excuse to separate from the WCG—that he merely used *defense of the original teachings* as a pretext to start his own church. They claim that he was disloyal to Mr. Armstrong because he would not accept changes that were eventually approved by "God's Apostle," thereby making himself a heretic. In other words, many were willing to assert that they knew what was in Raymond Cole's mind, and what his true motivations really were all along.

On the other side, Raymond Cole asserted strongly that his only motivation was to defend the *revealed doctrines* that Jesus Christ had given through Herbert Armstrong as a chosen servant of God.

The question is, what is the real truth, and is there any real evidence to support it one way or another?

The Interpretation That We Believe

Raymond Cole always explained that he was convinced that Mr. Herbert Armstrong would never approve changes to key doctrines and that Mr. Armstrong had assured him of such in private meetings. Mr. Cole participated in the 1972 Doctrinal Committee as one defending the *sound scholarship* that supported what Mr. Armstrong had always taught to the Church. The counting of Pentecost was the first doctrine taken up by that Committee. He stated later that it became evident in short order that the true purpose of that Committee was not to entertain the idea of *reconfirming the original teachings* of the church at all, but it was merely a ploy to legitimize *a gutting of past teachings* in favor of new interpretations. In other words, the fix was in, and they only wanted his participation as a means of making it look as if "all sides" were being represented objectively.

By the end of 1973, Mr. Cole could see the writing on the wall, as far as the intent of the majority of members on that Committee.

How then did Raymond Cole wind up on sabbatic leave in November 1973? By late 1973, the liberals had the momentum, and it appeared that Mr. Armstrong was not yet willing to confront his son about this virulent agenda or to shut down this *scholarly farce*. Raymond Cole claimed that he had spoken frankly with Mr. Armstrong about all of this, and that it was Mr. Armstrong who did not want any rash decisions made, or to have Mr. Cole take any action either. Rather than to have this doctrinal stand-off come to a head at that particular time, Mr. Cole asserted that he was asked to take a sabbatic leave. The sabbatic leave was to be for one year. It actually lasted from November 1973 until he was ultimately terminated by Garner Ted Armstrong in January 1975, as you will see.

Regardless of the "unsubstantiated" aspects of this testimony by Mr. Cole, what is certain is that during all of 1974 he was still very much a member of the WCG. While he and Mrs. Cole were on that sabbatic leave, he was quietly attending Sabbath and Holy Day services at WCG assemblies in Oregon, and even coming back to Pasadena for certain scheduled meetings. Some of those meetings included Doctrinal Committee meetings, at least until the announcement of the approval for the change in Pentecost from Monday to Sunday (which was made to the church in a letter by Mr. Armstrong in February 1974). After that, and knowing that they were next going to attack the marriage doctrine, Mr. Cole refused to have any more part in those meetings, or to give them any air of legitimacy. He was still part of the church, and he was still being paid his salary while being on sabbatic leave. But he believed with dread that his days were numbered.

What Can We Prove?

Rather than to play the "he said, she said" game, let us look at some verifiable facts from history. First of all, did Raymond Cole choose to leave the WCG on his own accord, or was he *put out of the church* much against his own will? There are many over the years who have insisted that they are certain that Raymond Cole *chose to leave the church*.

Enclosed for you is an exhibit that should remove all doubt about this question. Since the death of Mr. Cole in 2001, we had not previously laid hands on physical evidence to convince the gainsayers who have claimed that Raymond Cole was lying when he said he was put out of the church. But recently we discovered in our archives the attached letter copy, dated January 23, 1975, which provides positive proof to support exactly what Raymond Cole always stated. In part, the letter signed by Mr. Frank Brown (Division of Financial Affairs/Personnel Department of the WCG at Pasadena Headquarters) states:

It was with the utmost regret that Mr. Garner Ted Armstrong has found it needful to terminate you as an employee of the Worldwide Church of God, to disfellowship you, and to revoke your ministerial credentials and license to preach as a minister of the Church. You should no longer in any way represent or hold yourself out as a minister of the Church or as one authorized to act in its behalf.

In the past, this author had always remembered Mr. Cole's testimony, but was under the impression that this termination letter had arrived sometime in late 1974. That was close, but now we are certain that it was actually January 23, 1975. Until the time of this termination, Mr. Cole was still being paid by the WCG, even though he had been on sabbatic leave from the headquarters in Pasadena, California, since late 1973. This letter was addressed to him at his home in Coquille, Oregon, where he and Mrs. Cole had chosen to take that sabbatic leave.

Of what real value is this letter? Besides confirming that Raymond Cole never voluntarily left the WCG, it also proves the timing of his departure, which is critical for other reasons that we will soon demonstrate.

Lumped in With Dissidents

As documented in a three-part *Monthly Letter* series published from November 2013 to March 2014, there were a number of high-ranking ministers who chose to leave the WCG in early 1974, during the same time that Mr. Cole was still on sabbatic leave. Approximately thirty of them—led by an Evangelist in the church named Kenneth Westby—most definitely

chose to depart and to set up their own churches because they disagreed with Mr. Herbert Armstrong on a number of fundamental teachings, including tithing and church government. Dr. Ernest Martin was another one who had resigned from the church *just one month before* this larger rebellion—in January 1974—because he was frustrated that Mr. Armstrong was not changing enough doctrines fast enough to suit him. Here is an excerpt from Dr. Martin's resignation letter to Mr. Armstrong:

. . . Pentecost is on a Sunday'. Yet, the Worldwide Church of God has Pentecost on a Monday.

Changes are necessary! But even the changing of one wrong doctrine is far short of the mark in reaching the fulness of the teachings of Christ. As you are aware, the church has taught that it "has kept my word, and has not denied my name." This belief has given many people the conviction that the church hardly needs any changing at all in most doctrines. However, there are numerous teachings that desperately need alteration to bring them into conformity with the true doctrines of Christ. . . .

Really, it is not fair to you for us to remain in the Worldwide Church of God when we feel responsible to teach the doctrines of the Bible which are not accepted by you or the church. This is a very regretful decision to make but our conscience allows us no alternative (Ernest L. Martin, PhD, January 24, 1974).

So what we see is that Raymond Cole was not even remotely part of this major rebellion in early 1974, since he was still on the payroll and was not terminated by Garner Ted Armstrong until an entire year later, in January 1975. Likewise, Raymond Cole had nothing in common—doctrinally—with these other men. Ironically, three and a half years after Garner Ted Armstrong terminated Raymond Cole, Garner Ted Armstrong himself would be terminated by his own father, in mid-1978.

By that time (1978), Mr. Herbert Armstrong was reeling from the upheaval that he had experienced through most of the 1970s, especially the final estrangement from his own son, and his frustration was very evident in the letter that he wrote to the whole church in September 1978. Sadly, in that letter—while lashing out at his son for setting up a competing church and seeking to poach members away from the WCG—Mr. Armstrong chose to lump Raymond Cole in with all of these other rebels, even though Raymond Cole had *nothing at all in common with these men*. Here is an excerpt from that September 25, 1978 *Co-Worker Letter*:

There is no Apostle in Garner Ted's "church;" there is no real church!

Again: "that there be no division among you" as Garner Ted caused division, getting rid of, by demoting, shanghaiing away or nullifying those who did not follow HIM instead of God's Apostle—"but that ye be perfectly JOINED TOGETHER in the same mind and in the same judgment." Ted was of DIFFERENT judgment—never agreed with Christ's Apostle.

God forbids and condemns going off separately, one being of Paul, one of Apollos, one of Cephas—one of Garner Ted, one of Raymond Cole, one of Ernest Martin, one of Ken Westby.

Is it really true that Raymond Cole was just like these other men—all of the ones who wound up outside of the WCG because of disagreements with Mr. Armstrong about the original doctrines and seeking more power to have things their way?

After this letter went out to the whole church, Raymond Cole wrote a rebuttal to members of Church of God, The Eternal. Here is how Mr. Cole addressed it in his own words, in his November 1978 *Monthly Letter*:

Perhaps the oldest form of ridicule is guilt by association. If one wants to make an individual or group look bad, simply list him or the group along with those whose actions are obvious and disapproved.

The real issue is doctrine. By Mr. Herbert Armstrong's own admission, the Worldwide Church of God should return to its original teachings ["Get Back on Track"]. Therefore, as a group, we cannot be ridiculed and impugned for remaining faithful to the original doctrine. Those ministers who have ridiculed us for our doctrinal stand are now embarrassed. So, they now resort to character assassination. But if character defects are the criterion we should use to substantiate men or organizations, by all means the *last place* we should look for an example is Pasadena. Those who say we are holding this posture because we want a following, or want to be important, or want to be the head of a church, are imputing motives. They do *not* know the mind and heart. We all have faults, brethren, but there is a vast difference between character defects which lead to blatant sin and doctrinal changes, as opposed to personal faults and shortcomings which do not. Let us be honest and look at the doctrinal issue, because this is the real and only issue.

What will be said here has nothing to do with lifestyles, character defects, or any personality quirks. It is strictly limited to doctrine, convictions, and beliefs.

Mr. Armstrong's September 25, 1978, letter lists me (including the estranged brethren) in a list of defectors from the Worldwide Church of God. He writes: ". . . God forbids and condemns going off separately, one being of Paul, one of Apollos, one of Cephas—one of Garner Ted, one of Raymond Cole, one of Ernest Martin, one of Ken Westby."

The immediate impression is that all these groups left the church for the same reasons. That impression is absolutely false. All the others listed *wanted* doctrine changed. In fact, they were the forerunners for the actual changes made within the Worldwide Church of God. If the doctrines finally adopted by the Worldwide Church of God were truly the "new enlightenment"—the revealed Truth of God—these men received the revelation before the Worldwide Church of God did. Was God confused? He must have sent the new revelation to the wrong people.

On the other hand, we believe God gave the truth initially to the Church—and it could not have been the true Church unless there were a called, end-time servant to whom the truth was given and who was commissioned to proclaim that way of life. Therefore, the instructions of the Bible—*hold fast that which we were taught*—had to apply to us. We are holding to that revealed truth.

May I ask why that difference was not noted? Regardless of the plain instructions of the Bible to hold fast to that truth, should we forsake God in order to be loyal to a man or a physical church?

Next, the impression is left, with all who blindly read the contents of that letter, that we *deliberately left the Church* in order to pull a following after ourselves. Nothing is farther from the truth! *We were forced out of the Church*. We were told to compromise beliefs, preaching the strange heresy the Church had adopted, or be terminated from employment and from the Church. Relative to this demand, the Bible was explicit. Hold fast to the truth. This we did.

Finally, the impression is left that we *created or established a separate church*. This impression is deliberately created! From the beginning, we have never regarded ourselves as a separate church. Being put out of the Church, either literally or by circumstance, we became estranged brethren because of *our belief of the truth*—truth which Mr. Armstrong, by his desire to return to it, admits was the Truth of God.

If Jesus Christ were the embodiment of the Word of God—the truth—and He could not change, how can we be wrong to hold fast to the truth initially given

to God's servant of the last days? For, the only way the Worldwide Church of God could have been the true Church is by having received the unchangeable Word—Jesus Christ, the Truth and the way of life! By our continuing in that way, we continued in the body of Christ, the body of Truth. If this is not true, then not one single person called of God prior to the doctrinal changes was in the body of Christ—the true Church.

We do not mind being condemned for what we believe. But to falsely accuse by association is certainly NOT of God. Is it not time, for those who presently claim to be the servants of God, to be honest? Let them admit the fact we are still doing precisely what we were taught—taught by that very servant himself [end of citation].

So what we find is that Raymond Cole claimed that his separation from the WCG was *never voluntary*, and that it was forced upon him—not because he sought to have his own say in church teachings or to generate his own following—but because he trusted that God had *already revealed divine Truth through Mr. Armstrong*, and that Truth can never change.

Mr. Armstrong's Reevaluation Before His Death

As documented in years past, Mr. Armstrong seemed to have adopted a very different perspective about all of these events in the final months leading to his own death in January 1986. In his final major writing to the whole church in July 1985, he summarized that history this way in *The Worldwide News Special Edition*, June 24, 1985, "Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the Worldwide Church of God":

A small few Ambassador graduates who had become ministers in the Church were somewhat scholarly inclined, especially one who had a specific problem [He is referring specifically to Dr. Ernest Martin]. He suffered from an inferiority complex. Because some of our graduates at the time were enrolling in outside universities for higher degrees, a few came to conceive that a "scholar" was in the loftiest position of humanity.

If this inferiority sufferer could feel in his own mind that he was a scholar he would feel elevated above the other people and therefore delivered from feelings of inferiority. He began to question some of the established doctrines of the Church of God, such as counting the day of Pentecost, divorce and remarriage, tithing and others.

Soon he [Ernest Martin] was entering into what he considered a scholarly research to DISprove some of the Church's basic teachings.

Stopping right here for the moment, notice that Mr. Armstrong—after more than ten years of hindsight—chose to include the *pre-1974* teaching about *the counting of Pentecost* (confirming a Monday observance), as well as the doctrine of divorce and remarriage, as "*established doctrines of the Church of God*," and also called them "*the Church's basic teachings*"! That was exactly the position that Raymond Cole was defending from 1972 to 1975!

Continuing Mr. Armstrong's quote from June 1985:

. . . Gradually, one or two others, then even more, joined in a self-appointed "scholarly research" to DISprove plain biblical truths.

It became evident that those attending other universities came to consider Ambassador College as inferior and substandard intellectually and academically because of our belief in God. Secularism and the anti-God approach of evolution seemed to them far superior to the revealed knowledge of God.

Notice once again how Mr. Armstrong portrayed those pre-1974 teachings. From where did those doctrines derive their authority? From man or from God? He labeled them as "*the revealed knowledge of God*"! That is exactly the way Raymond Cole treated them, and it did not take him until 1985 to see it that way. He understood it *at the very time* that Satan was attacking the church in the early 1970s! Continuing in Mr. Armstrong's assessment from 1985:

This brought controversy into the Church. These self-professed "scholars," influenced by teaching in universities in which they were enrolling for higher degrees, were becoming more and more liberal. They wanted to skirt as close as possible to the precipice of secularism, falling off the cliff into Satan's world.

These were the years when my commission required that I be absent from Pasadena, and traveling overseas to almost all parts of the world as many as 300 of the 365 days of the year. This liberal group, small at first, came to be in executive positions at Pasadena, surrounding and influencing the one responsible for day-to-day administration at headquarters during my absence. Much of what they did was carefully kept from me.

Those of higher rank [including Mr. Raymond Cole], but subject to the one in day-to-day executive administration at Pasadena [Mr. Garner Ted Armstrong], who were steadfastly loyal to the Church and its true teachings, were suppressed or gradually removed from Pasadena and sent "into the field," pastoring single churches in other locations. So much of what was going on in Pasadena was kept from me that I did not realize the direction the Church

was actually traveling into controversy, liberalism and either Protestantism or total secularism.

This mirrors very closely the testimony of Raymond Cole concerning the very same events. If Raymond Cole's account is not trustworthy, then neither is Mr. Armstrong's final assessment in 1985.

Testimony Under Oath

Other documents unearthed recently include copies of transcribed depositions taken in April 1977 involving another former WCG minister who had joined Church of God, The Eternal a few months after this group formed in 1975. It appears that Mr. Cole was testifying on behalf of this other minister concerning a dispute with the WCG over severance benefits. Mr. Cole is documented as a "hostile witness," meaning that he was sympathetic to the minister in dispute with the Worldwide Church of God, so that the attorneys for the WCG were treating Mr. Cole as hostile to their position. Treating him as hostile gave them the legal right to question Mr. Cole aggressively, as an adversary.

Why does any of this matter? The bulk of the questions asked of Mr. Cole had to do with *his own reasons* for separating from the WCG, making Mr. Cole answer for his personal motivations for major events that transpired. The value of this transcript is to confirm Mr. Cole's *true purposes and intents* concerning events that forced him out of the church. It is one thing to make claims in word and in writing when addressing people informally (or even addressing church brethren in sermons or letters); it is quite another to provide *legal testimony under oath*, which carries severe penalties for perjury. People do lie under oath, so the naysayers might still claim that Raymond Cole was not being honest in his testimony, but if nothing else, the following excerpts from that nearly three-hour deposition show that Mr. Cole was *absolutely consistent in his answers*, no matter when or to whom he was speaking.

From the *DEPOSITION OF RAYMOND C. COLE*, Johnson, Harrang & Mercer, including questions by Mr. Ralph Helge (attorney for the the WCG), April 26, 1977:

Q. Were you—were you terminated by the church?

A. Yes.

Q. And when were you terminated?

A. The first part of 1975 I received a letter. I think the actual date was January 20, but I'm not absolutely sure of the date.

- Q. And is it fair to say you were discharged for cause?
A. I guess that's a matter of interpretation. The reasons they put down there are not valid.
- Q. But the church did terminate you for cause, did they not?
A. As I say, qualifying that, I would say it would depend on what they mean for cause. In, in—in my mind, cause of course would mean that there would have to be some form of defiance or infraction or whatever. And in their particular case it was primarily felt if I couldn't—as I was told directly and very pointedly by two men—if I couldn't subscribe to the changes, and so on, that were going on, why we have no recourse for you then.
- Q. Who are the two men?
A. Dr. Hoeh and Ray McNair.
- Q. And that meeting was about what date?
A. Probably November of 1974 at my home in Coquille.
- Q. Then I gather that behind this is that you had developed a disagreement with the doctrines of the World Wide Church of God; is that correct?
A. I did very emphatically disagree with many of the changes.
- Q. And you were unwilling to accept the doctrines as, as they were stated by the leaders of the church; is that correct?
A. I was not willing to accept them; that's correct.
- Q. Would you state briefly what the doctrinal changes were that you were unwilling to accept?
A. Well, the initial one of course was the change with respect to Pentecost, and then that was followed by—
- Q. Would you just tell me what that is?
A. It's one of the holy days within the calendar of the church. It's one of the—
- Q. I understand what Pentecost is, but what is the change in respect to Pentecost?
A. A change from Monday observance to a Sunday observance, because we had always observed Monday for a great number of years. And then it was changed over to a Sunday.
Then, following that of course was a very definite, definite liberalization of the law with respect to divorce and remarriage, which I did not subscribe to at all [Page D-22, line 4 through Page D-23, through line 24].

- Q. Were there doctrinal changes that you refused to accept; is that true?
A. Yes, right.
- Q. And you felt that you were unwilling to teach under those doctrinal changes or advocate them to the people within your congregation?
A. Which of course I didn't have a congregation at that time, being on sabbatical leave, but had I had one I could not conscientiously do it.
- Q. And you were asked by those gentlemen either to accept the doctrine of the leaders of the church or not to continue to work for the church; is that what you're saying?
A. I was left, as stated by one party, either I would compromise on those points or my future stood in jeopardy.
- Q. So you discussed those disagreements with these two men. Did you discuss them with any others?
A. Frequently of course with—at the time the whole disagreement was building up I had discussed it with Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong a number of times in which he had assured me—before I ever left down there he said, "Raymond, you don't have to worry, because they are not going to be changed," and I had left with that assurance. And to my surprise, of course, it did come. So then I attempted through written form as well as a couple of other contacts to discuss them with Mr. Armstrong although without any real satisfaction from that vantage point. But also I discussed them with my own brother who at that time had assumed the responsibility of, of director of ministers.
- Q. That's Wayne Cole?
A. Wayne Cole.
- Q. Did he accept the doctrinal changes?
A. Well, I guess that's for him to answer; but as far as I know, he did. However, I had a, a personal meeting with my own brother just before I left on this sabbatical leave in which he candidly admitted that the problems were insurmountable, and so on, but he wasn't going to let it affect him, so. . . .
- Q. Can you tell me how this discussion with these two men who came and talked to you before you went to leave, just how that discussion of doctrinal changes came up?
A. How it came up?
- Q. Yeah.
A. They just wrote to me and said they wanted to come up and review the whole situation.

Q. Well, had there—there must have been some prior disagreement or communications by you.

A. Oh, yes, many circumstances prior to that which I had submitted information to them. I had spoken to them personally, so they were all aware of it. As a matter a fact, I had a very brief visit with Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in his office when I was called down to go over the whole thing with him after I was already in Coquille, Oregon. So they were aware of the, of the difficulties, and they wanted to of course take as much time as possible. That's why even after I asked for a definite resolve of the whole thing I had done so via letter as well as telephone conversation much, much earlier in the game when I had asked them for a clarification and get this whole thing cleaned up, which they had refused to do, obviously gaining time until they knew that the period of my sabbatical leave was about over. And that was the reason they were sent up. So they were personally sent by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong as well as G.TT [*sic*] Armstrong.

Mr. Palmer: May I ask a question perhaps to clarify this?

Mr. Cole, I believe you testified that you'd asked Herbert W. Armstrong for some clarification. Now, it was my understanding that you asked him this for clarification, assurance, that doctrinal changes wouldn't be made sometime previous to the date that those changes were made.

The Witness: I never asked for a clarification, if I gather your question correctly. I had—I had called in at the time the traumatic experience was going on in the year preceding the change.

Mr. Palmer: Could you perhaps describe that and explain what was going on?

The Witness: Well, to the point that—I would say for the entire year, because I was on the Hall of Administration in Pasadena, California. And during that period of time scarcely any work was being done, but one man was going into the office and another trying to line them up.

Mr. Palmer: Well, that doesn't really answer my question. I want to know more why were you going to Herbert Armstrong and asking him for assurances that doctrinal changes weren't going to take place?

The Witness: I didn't ask for any assurances. I went to him because I got called in to Mr. Armstrong in that particular year, 1973, by Mr. Armstrong, when he found out these discussions were going on by various people, and he wanted to know what in the world was going on because I was—at that time I held a responsibility over the entire area.

Mr. Fechtel: I'm going to object to more than one attorney asking questions.

Mr. Johnson: All right. That's agreeable. Let me pick up from there, because I don't think—we don't want to sandbag you with different people asking questions.

Q. (by Mr. Johnson) But in answer to your earlier question you did say that you received assurances from Mr. Armstrong that there were not going to be doctrinal changes, and I guess that raised the same question in my mind. I gathered from that that you wanted assurances that there were not going to be changes.

A. I wasn't seeking any particular assurance. What it was, I was called in by Mr. Armstrong, and I think it was the summer of that year, 1973, after he had come from a trip. And he had just returned from England and Europe, and he had heard about those things. So immediately he called me over and he wanted to know what was going on. So I merely explained to him some of the questions that had been generated and what people were saying.

It was at that time he told me, he said, "Raymond, God Almighty revealed these things. They will never be changed."

Q. That was Herbert?

A. Herbert W. Armstrong, yes.

Q. And did you have a later conversation with him concerning—

A. Then the following year in June I was called down once again.

Q. And you discussed it with him?

A. The one subject.

Q. What was that subject?

A. The subject was Pentecost.

Q. And what was said?

A. It was at that particular time that he told me, "Well, Raymond, I see you do have a great deal of information. I want you to write it up."

So we wrote a rather expensive [*sic*] exposition of the whole subject. And at that particular time I also made it very, very clear not only to Mr. Armstrong but also to a number of other men that what I wrote up was for his observation and evaluation only, which was categorically violated in the fact that they made several copies and distributed it to a number of other people.

Q. Did you discuss with him whether there was a doctrinal change or would be with respect to Pentecost?

A. The doctrinal change had already been transpired.

Q. Did you discuss that with him?

A. He brought it up.

Q. What did he say?

A. The fact that I disagreed with that particular. And he said, "I want to know why, Ray." And I said, "Well, I just don't agree with it." And he said, "Well, now, certain reports have come back." And I said, "Well, that's fine. The people from all over the United States are calling."

I was supposed to be there on a sabbatical leave doing my own thing, and I had—I spent as many as ten or twelve hours a day on that phone where people were calling and so on. So this was the reason for my being called down. And he said, "Well—

Q. Did he tell you why the change had been made?

A. No, we didn't go through that part of it at all.

Q. All right. But you did not accept that change and that was one of the reasons, one of your basic disagreements with the church; is that correct?

A. That was a doctrinal disagreement, yes.

Q. And it was because of those doctrinal disagreements ultimately that you were terminated by the church; isn't that correct?

A. That was—yes, that was the point that they emphasized was that if I couldn't go along they would terminate me, yes.

Q. And then you refused to accept the doctrinal changes. You were terminated then for that reason, for refusing to accept the doctrinal changes; isn't that correct?

A. Right.

Q. So in that sense you were terminated for cause.

A. Well, as I said, if that's their view of it. It is not my view of it [Page D-24, line 11 through Page D-30, line 22].

This testimony provides a fascinating window into very specific events that took place between 1973 and 1975. It verifies that toward the end of Mr. Cole's sabbatic leave, in November 1974, Dr. Herman Hoeh and Mr. Raymond McNair were sent to visit Mr. Cole in Coquille, Oregon, to verify if Mr. Cole was yet willing to amend his position on the church doctrinal changes. Finding that Raymond Cole was just as adamant as ever, they returned to Pasadena headquarters and made their report. The formal termination of Raymond Cole then followed on January 23, 1975.

Are We a Separate Church?

Raymond Cole always claimed that he was not setting up a "separate church." But how can that be, after he registered this group formally in February 1975 with the name, Church of God, The Eternal? Let Mr. Cole answer that himself, from his open letter entitled, *Church of God, The Eternal—Who We Are* (1999):

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. . . .

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. . . .

Who are we? We are estranged members—a remnant (Romans 9:27–33; 11:1–5, Isaiah 1:8–9, Revelation 12:13–17)—from the apostate body (2 Thessalonians 2:1–3) who sincerely love God's revealed Truth from the heart (2 Thessalonians 2:10), willing to remain faithful to the end (Matthew 24:13). That Truth which was taught by Christ (John 14:6; 12:48–50), that Truth which Christ commissioned the Twelve Apostles to teach (Matthew 28:20). Which was the same message taught by the Apostle Paul (Galatians 1:6–16, 1 Thessalonians 2:12–14). Which was the same message taught by an end-time servant (Matthew 28:19–20). Which had significant beginning with Moses (Hebrews 4:1–3). The Truth which is now obeyed from a spiritual premise (2 Corinthians 3:1–11).

These are the people that God's true ministry desires to serve. It is our purpose to give you our energy and our love [end of citation].

Forty-seven years after the formal beginning of this remnant group, we still do not consider ourselves to be a separate church. We are still merely *estranged brethren* seeking to hold fast to a body of doctrine that was delivered by Jesus Christ to his chosen servant in our day, Mr. Herbert Armstrong. Raymond Cole did not make any changes to that revealed Way of Life, and even since his death in 2001, this remnant group has continued to hold precisely to that very same set of doctrines.

There is no greater proof of our sincerity than the fact that we refuse to change our teachings. For Raymond Cole, it was always about the doctrine. For those of us who are left to carry on toward the return of Jesus Christ, it is still about the doctrine.

May God grant each one of you the will and the determination to hold fast, even according to the marvelous examples that have been given for our inspiration.

Most sincerely in love and heartfelt appreciation,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the text "Most sincerely in love and heartfelt appreciation,".

Jon W. Brisby