

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97401

June 1, 1977

Dear Brethren:

Greetings to all of you during this Pentecost season. I am en route to Youngstown, Ohio. I will spend the Sabbath preceding Pentecost in Youngstown. Then on Sunday, May 29, I will fly on to Newark, New Jersey, and from there on to a central location where the brethren from the Northeast will meet for Pentecost (Monday, May 30).

All monthly letters are dated the first of the month. Obviously, the actual writing, editing and printing transpire days before that date. Result? This is dated June 1 — yet the actual writing, en route to Youngstown, is a few days prior to Pentecost.

For this month, as promised in last month's letter, the subject of specific "identifying signs of a Christian" will be covered. I sincerely hope you will find the contents informative, helpful and encouraging.

1) "Not my will, but thine, be done." A Christian lives his beliefs and convictions. They are far more than mental conceptions. As spiritual principles, they fully inspire, animate and control the subject — the Christian. Then as moving, aggressive and dynamic ways, they can be read and observed by any and all onlookers. Truly, a light is shining. There is abundant evidence of a Christian's modus operandi.

He has brought his body under control. The mind of Christ gives direction to his life. He is performing the will of God, not his own. By the help of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian's life is ordered. He overcomes all weaknesses of the flesh. Becomes obedient to concepts which were once irrelevant to him. In essence, he lives the will of God — NOT his own.

The whole demeanor of the individual bespeaks a total God-orientation. By the exercise of volition and personal character, he restrains the self with all of its appetites and objectively practices the principles of the Spirit. His claim of conversion is substantiated by behavior. He does not speak one thing and live another. The practice of self-deprecation is obvious. He is known for his efforts. His reputation (not to be compared with the villifications of antagonists) is spoken of broadly. His community image is not clouded. He will be disdained for his beliefs and practices, but he will be admired and respected for his integrity and honesty.

He is condescending. He is impartial. His station is with people of ordinary background. He truly walks in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. He is humble, self-sacrificing. One who has divested himself of all selfish and self-aggrandizing goals. Yes, he is the epitome of God's will being wrought in the flesh. It is the life of Christ again, through the Holy Spirit, being lived in the flesh.

2) An outgoing concern for others. Christ came to serve mankind. He came not to please Himself. He gave His life, in both life and death, for mankind.

Christianity is a way of life. A way not possible by the individual efforts of man. It can be achieved only by Christ's life being lived within us. That life does not change. It is consistent — the same yesterday, today and forever. There is no hint of turning or change. It is completely trustworthy. And since it is the same life Christ lived in His own fleshly body, it presently manifests itself in the same outgoing concern for others and trustworthiness. Christianity is to be Christlike. It means to live, think and act as Christ did. In fact, it is the self crucified and the present life lived by Christ — through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The life of Christ was the Word of God — the Bible — personified. The very spiritual intent of God's Word, made in animate form. How can you know if you are living up to the requirements of Christianity? Compare yourself with Christ — the living, animate Word of God. Never compare yourself with another human being. To do so is unwise and the height of folly. The standard of life is Christ! He is the perfect example. If He lived it, if He practiced it, if He taught it and if He embodied it in His own fleshly existence of some 1,950 years ago, then He will do exactly the same thing in your life. To do any less than Jesus did is to deny Him. You know the consequences of denying your Savior and Master.

How do you manifest concern for others? How did Christ?

1. Do you love all humankind — even those who persecute and spitefully use you? Christ did!
2. Do you have a sympathetic and heartfelt concern for widows, fatherless children and orphans?
3. Do you really love the brethren?
4. Do you pray and fast for all humankind?
5. Do you give advantage and preference to others?

6. Are you a peacemaker? (Being a peacemaker does not mean you condone, accept or practice error.)
7. Are you cautious and careful with the usage of the tongue?

To that list could be added many other requirements, but it is sufficient to give all an idea of what it means to manifest a genuine, outgoing concern — love — for others. But knowledge is of no practical value except as it is applied. You must practice and live — day by day — the principles listed above. The abundant rewards and blessings are yours for such obedience.

3) Family in harmony. The family unit pictures the Kingdom of God. That kingdom will be a family — the family of God. The very hope of salvation is the promise of being born into His family — a spiritual family.

Until the time of Christ, that ultimate objective was hidden (Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:24-26). In Christ's life was found the fulfillment of every member of a family unit. He was the husband personified. A loving, compassionate leader (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:21-33). The one who bore authority and responsibility. Yet, at the same time, He was the wife personified. The Church is the bride of Christ (II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 19:1-9). And the Church is the body of Christ (Col. 1:24; Eph. 1:22-23). Obviously, the body and life of Christ pictured the responsibility of the wife in the marriage relationship. And that marriage relationship pictured the covenant relationship with His chosen people. First, God called Israel as a peculiar people to Himself. They became the wife by entering into a covenant relationship with God — the one who became Jesus Christ. That physical relationship, then, pictured the forthcoming spiritual relationship. Christ had to die — to absolve the bonds of that first marriage. With His death, He then became free to marry Israel of the spirit — those called and begotten by the Holy Spirit — the Church. By the understanding of this great mystery (Eph. 5:32, then the entire chapter), it becomes obvious that Christ was the complete picture of oneness — the oneness required of us to be the bride prepared for the marriage of the Lamb at His return.

Christ, in the flesh, was an example of the husband and wife. But there is yet more! He was the representation of a perfectly obedient child — in this case, a son. (Compare Revelation 12:1-5; Acts 7:37-38; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:10; I John 3:1-2; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 5:8; John 5:30 and John 6:38.)

In the final analysis, Christ was the personification of a perfect husband, a perfect wife and a perfect child. He was — and is — all in all. Regardless of station, responsibility or component of the family relationship, Christ is a perfect help. Each of us, knowing station or responsibility, can look to Christ

and implicitly rely upon Him for the help needed to live perfectly that station and charge. And when we, of our own volition, will to live the obedient life — the results are a oneness of heart and mind. The extent to which we are not in total harmony, is proportionate to the defect which yet exists in our lives. The only way to improve that harmony is to evaluate the self and effect the necessary changes in that one life for which you are responsible — YOURS. Each member of the family (or the Church as the spiritual family), fulfilling individual responsibilities, will bring about harmony and oneness. The results of those changes are observable. They are the fruits by which we are KNOWN.

A family in complete harmony, each member fulfilling his God-given responsibility, is a perfect example of the soon-coming Kingdom of God — and, for the present, the foundational principles of Christianity. Indeed, such a harmonious relationship is perhaps the most significant of the identifying signs included in this letter.

One clarifying point needs to be made. Obviously, the perfect example involves a unit where both are converted and the children are yet teachable. Then, from that standard, all forms of possibilities develop. A divided home. Children are nearly grown — before conversion of parents. In every case, God knows the times and the circumstances. You will be judged on the basis of how well you have done with the possibilities presented, once the understanding is achieved. Even in a broken home, the mate can live the Christian life as near perfectly as possible. And you are judged only on how well you perform in your physical station — not on how well you can compel your mate to live up to your expectations. Remember, the one life for which you are judged is the one and only life over which you CAN have perfect control.

May your family be exemplary — each member exercising his personal responsibility. The fruits cannot be hidden.

4) Keep the physical body under control. The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the laws and ways of God. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. The feet lead us to do much evil. Our hands are problematic. Eyes are never satisfied, and create much trouble for the individual. Ears are far too quick to hear evil. Then there is the epitome of trouble and heartache — the tongue.

The Christian, through the help of God's Holy Spirit, has partially brought and continues to bring the WHOLE body under subjection. The act of conversion is, in essence, the beginning of a mind transplant. The carnal mind is being replaced with the mind of Christ (Ph'p. 2:5). Christ's mind was an obedient mind — obedient to the Father. It was a mind of self-control, a mind by which He kept Himself in total submission to the will of the Father.

By that mind He was completely obedient to the laws, statutes and judgments of God the Father.

Beginning with the mind of Christ as our chief weapon against the weaknesses of the flesh, the Christian can conquer himself. He not only eliminates the carnal thoughts — but gives positive direction to eyes, ears, feet and hands. He uses these bodily instruments for real spiritual and humanitarian purposes. With this control, the tongue — the chief mischiefmaker — is brought under complete control. It is no longer a ravaging fire — setting the whole world aflame with the flame of hate, resentment, bitterness, contempt and self-justification.

The tongue becomes an instrument of kindness and love. Eyes are quick to observe good. Ears love to hear the praise of others. Feet are quick to aid. And hands labor for good only. A conversion process is observable. The physical is being replaced, in an orderly and systematic manner, by the spiritual.

Again, a very easily observable mark or identifying sign of Christianity. As Paul said, anyone who practices the weaknesses of the flesh cannot and will not inherit the Kingdom. But, those practicing the fruits of the Spirit have no law against them. They are walking in the way of life. It is not difficult to observe the fruits of either way. Such is not a matter of judgment. It is a matter of fact. Our problem is in the acceptance of God's Word at face value. (The matters of repentance, overcoming and spiritual growth are matters of another concern. They will not be explained in this letter.)

5) Be inflexible with principle. God is a God of character. The sum total of that character is contained in the statements of Numbers 23:19 — "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" "Repent" means to change. Eternal values do not change. Of course, God has at times expressed willingness to change a degree of justice toward man. This attests to His compassion and mercy, only. No place, in all the Bible, even hints that God changes principle — His standard of perfection, righteousness. That which was abolished at the death of Christ was never intended to be eternal. It was added (no past eternity) until the reformation (no future eternity) — at the second coming of Christ. But His Law is spiritual. It is for all time, eternal. Spiritual things are eternal. And the eternal things of God are not seen — are not observable — except in their manifestation through the lives of the human recipients.

Because of moral upbringing and a dimension of integrity, many "old-timers" lived principled lives of honesty and trustworthiness. You could count on them. They could be trusted. Today, nothing but change is held to

be sacred. Society is mobile. Friendships are ephemeral. The end justifies the means, in any and all situations. Revolt is the order of the day. There seems to be nothing basic or foundational. And anyone who dares to practice and cherish inflexible principle, is considered "odd" and not quite "with it." How tragic!

Carnally, many people can be a law unto themselves. The physical dimension of right can be ascertained and practiced. By principle, all human-kind can restrain themselves from lying, cheating, committing adultery, killing and — in general — taking advantage of neighbor. It is the spiritual dimension which must be revealed and accomplished through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Once the spiritual dimension is revealed, the most significant principle of all comes into play. Continuity! Can we be faithful? Can we become as God and Christ — possessing their very nature — the same YESTERDAY, TODAY and FOREVER? In whom there is not even the slightest hint of turning?

God's priceless Truth will be delivered to His chosen people but once! And once given, it must be loved and respected. It must be cherished with life.

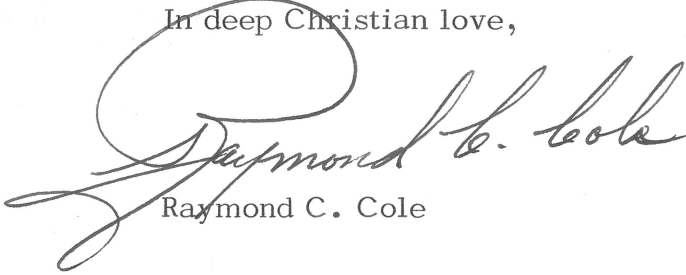
At every era of time, God has called those whom He pleased — stripped the blackness of ignorance and error from them, made them pliable and teachable by experience and given them His most priceless possession — the TRUTH — with the Holy Spirit as the essential ingredient to stabilize character. Brethren, just as Israel received God's message and the first-century Church of God had that way of life imparted to them, so has God called us — as well as thousands of others who have turned from it — and imparted that same message (Heb. 4:2). Now, for the \$64,000 question: Do we have the character, the courage, the will, the spiritual discernment, the dedication, the vision, the faith and the purpose to continue in that way which we were taught? Can we, in the midst of turmoil and spiritual darkness, remain inflexible with that revealed way of life? Can we suppress the forces of our own carnality, to which Satan appeals — and which, if subscribed to, would lead us into the way of destruction? Now, as never before, is the time to resist Satan and all his cohorts. Do not second-guess your conversion, baptism and relationship with God! Truly, now is the time of the trial of your faith. Believe unto the end. Be inflexible in those spiritual ways — the ways God delivered to you. Your life — for all eternity — depends upon it. It is another mark of Christianity.

Lest this letter become too long, I will give you only the first five of those identifying signs. The remainder will be covered in next month's letter.

Also included, in next month's letter, will be some preliminary information relative to the Feast of Tabernacles for 1977. Please be praying about this most significant need.

So, until next month, all our love and respect. Our thanks for your love and prayers. We are filled with gratitude and appreciation for the fact some do still love the Truth — God's way of life, to which they have been called.

In deep Christian love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Raymond C. Cole

P.S. We are enclosing additions to "The Faith Once Delivered about Marriage and Divorce." Eventually, there will be one more chapter (Chapter VII) to insert before the Conclusion.

If you did not receive the original article and wish to request it, please refer to this letter and we will send the part you are lacking.