

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440

Switzerland
Case Postale 2 701
CH 1002 Lausanne

Canada
P. O. Box 76946, Station "S"
Vancouver, B.C. V5R 5T3

July 1983

Dear Brethren:

Unbelievably, July is now approaching us. Scarcely is one Monthly Letter completed and time inexorably comes along when we must begin preparation for the next. That time is upon us once again.

For those whose eyes are at least halfway open, culminating events of the last days are manifesting themselves with greater alacrity than ever before. Remember, the very nature of deception implies surfacing of events which are not commonly observed. If these events never surfaced, how could the reality of prophetic events of these last days ever be experienced? Make no mistake about it, the events which will shape the future, not only for you but also all that live upon the earth, are relentlessly progressing to that end. And since nothing just happens, someone or something must be generating direction, fervor, and purpose.

If we now understand any of the spiritually prophetic intent, if we can understand any of the technical information (Biblically) which relates to these days of ours, it is most obvious that much of that Word relates to things which are happening in the Church to whom the Truth was once given. The meaning of words has not changed. Grammar is still quite precise. There is no mistaking that fact. Many of the events prognosticated for our days occur within that Body which once knew the Truth.

The significance of the above is this: You must keep your eyes fixed upon events which transpire within that Body. Dramatic events have already occurred. But, do not be fooled, much greater and more significant events are yet to transpire. But let us not force prophecy. In patience, just wait and observe what God brings to pass. Your salvation does not depend upon knowing and understanding all prophetic events before they transpire. On the contrary, your salvation depends entirely upon the mastery you effect in your own personal lives -- in living the Truth which you know. It is to that end that we devote our efforts.

The May issue of the Monthly Letter, related to the series on the "Two Facets of Knowledge," covered the beginning of the subtopic, "Rejection of That Faith Is a Rejection of What or Whom?" For this month, the last half of that particular subject will be submitted.

Christ, in His own fleshly body, was the manifestation of the Word. That Word remains unchanged to this very day. But, how did that Body continue?

IV. By What Means Did The Body Of Christ Continue?

Man is born of flesh. He possesses no inherent eternal life within himself. As a fleshly body, he can naturally expect to live only an allotted time after which the normal course is to die and fade into complete extinction.

How is it possible for Christ's death, of approximately two thousand years ago, to change this inevitable picture of man? Salvation is promised through Christ. Something changed making it possible for man to be saved from his eternal fate.

Christ was born of flesh (Heb. 2:14-18). In His physical birth He assumed the same station of life as mortal man. Yet, He did not sin. He lived God's Way of Life perfectly. Having lived His life perfectly, He did not have to pay the ultimate price of sin -- death, death for His own sins. Therefore, He could take upon Himself the price of mankind's sins. His death, as Creator God, was worth more than the sum value of all mankind put together.

But, how did this change the condition of man? Was he not still guilty of the sins which he had committed? Indeed! And the penalty -- death -- still must be paid -- the first death. But by God's plan of salvation, man -- called of God -- can voluntarily lay down his own natural flesh life -- the life of sin and guilt. How does he lay this life down? In the symbol of baptism (Rom. 6:3-4). By acceptance of Christ we are crucified with Him (Gal. 2:20). To accept Him is to accept the necessity of the price being paid for our guilt.

When we are baptized into the death of Christ, we, at the same time, are baptized into His life (Rom. 6:3-5). Once baptized into Christ, we no longer need to subscribe to the weaknesses of the flesh -- sin. The body of sin is dead; we can now live the new life of Christ (Rom. 6:6-10). For when Christ lives in us the body of sin is dead (Rom. 8:10). The guilt of past sins is completely removed. There is no further condemnation (Rom. 8:1). We are freed of our inherited liability unless we are reprobate -- unless we frustrate the purpose for the death of Jesus Christ (II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:16-20).

By true baptism we die to the old self. We are no longer dominated by the natural pulls and lusts of the flesh. We have come to abhor the self and all its manifestations. Baptism is a voluntary act -- a voluntary destruction of the self.

At the same time, we accept a new power, (not the weaknesses of the flesh) by which we evidence a completely new orientation in life. It is the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Being baptized into Christ we have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27). The old self is dead and a new life is now living in us (Gal. 2:20). We cannot see that life; it is spiritual. And spiritual things cannot be seen by human eyes. But we can see the results of the new spiritual orientation.

In a collective sense, the called of God unitedly form the Body of Christ (I Cor. 6:15; Eph. 5:30). As Christ was a single body in His

human form, so the Body of Christ (the Church) which followed His human existence is one Body only (Rom. 12:5).

When called of God and begotten by the power of the Holy Spirit, the chosen have Christ living in them (Col. 1:27-28). The trials and difficulties the converted encounter -- against which they must wrestle both mentally and physically -- are likened to the development and birth of a newborn baby (Gal. 4:19).

If Christ in His own body was the Word of God living in the flesh, the Truth animated, the Way of Life in action, eternal life personified, and the resurrection revealed, what is He in the collective lives of those who compose the continuation of the Body? Remember, Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever! Then, is He not the same, living in the called servants who comprise His Body?

The called of God must grow into the perfection of God (Matt. 5:48). Becoming perfect is a lifetime process of growth and overcoming. It is "putting on Christ" (Rom. 13:14). It is a voluntary submission to the will of God -- expressed in the totality of His Word -- a submission true and genuine, proceeding from the heart (Col. 3:16). It is obedience from the heart (II Cor. 10:11). The observable manifestation of Christ living in His called and chosen servants -- members of His Body -- is continuity of belief and action (Heb. 3:14). That continuity of action manifests itself in two distinct ways. First, it is observed in the progressive death of the old self. Second, it is seen clearly in the change of nature -- from the old carnal self to the nature of God -- occurring in the lives of those responsive to the call (Rom. 5:21). In the lives of those called is observed the nature and characteristics of Jesus Christ which He manifested in His own life when living in the flesh. Those called of God are yet living in the flesh -- but not to the dictates of the lust of that flesh. They are now living according to a new spirit of life -- the life of Christ in them. They are now the manifestation of the Word, Truth, and Way in their fleshly bodies -- collectively the Body of Jesus Christ. The intent and purpose is that they should eventually measure up to the stature of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:12-16).

The life of Jesus Christ continues. It is now manifested in the lives of those who collectively comprise His Body -- those who are living the same unalterable Way which He lived when walking on this earth in His own physical body. Indeed, the Body of Christ continues. All who are called and will to destroy the old self and allow the unchanging Word of God to reside in them are members in particular, and are the continuation of the life of Jesus Christ.

In the symbolism of baptism, the old body is dead. That is, the body of flesh is seen for what it is, and willingly planted in the likeness of the death of Jesus Christ. If dead, it is therefore no longer oriented to its own weaknesses and animosities -- such as the animosity against the laws, statutes, and judgments of God (Rom. 8:7). The life of the called servant is now the life of the unalterable Word, Truth, and Way lived in them -- Jesus Christ.

Today, we are removed approximately two thousand years from the actual days of Jesus Christ. The long elapse of time and the changing circumstances of the day allow for much perversion and corruption of the Word. It allows for human beings to reinterpret the very Words of God. How can we know who or what is the continuation of the Body of Christ? Is it merely the claim of people? Or is it manifested in the most popular concepts of the day? Perhaps it is manifested in the divisiveness of international Christianity?

The promises of Christ make it certain that somewhere the Body of Christ continues today. In the realm of Satanic deception, how can one know where or what that Body is today?

V. The Absolute Manifestation Of The Body Of Christ

If the Church is the continuation of the Body of Christ, surely He made some system or means of verification available. Even if the world is to be left in total darkness, there yet must be some means by which those called can know. What is the distinction between those who truly know and those who only presume?

We have clearly documented what Christ is. That is, what Christ was in His own fleshly body. He was the Word of God, from the beginning, which was made flesh (John 1:1, 14).

The Church which He promised to build is identified as the continuation of His Body. Then, how can we identify the Body of Christ (the Church) subsequent to His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension?

Jesus said, ". . . If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). And what was His Word? The Words which the Father had given Him, for He did not speak a single word which the Father had not delivered to Him.

Who are the disciples? Members in particular of the Body of Christ. They are specific individuals chosen to form part of the Body of Christ -- the Church.

How can we know the Body of Christ and the members in particular who form that Body -- the Church? They are individuals united -- for the Body is not dissected, scattered -- in doctrine, faith, word, or belief. They are members who are doing exactly the same things Jesus did in His own physical body. They are the collective manifestation of the same principles, faithful obedience, and ways of life which Christ manifested in His own life.

How will the called know the value of the Truth? By living it (John 8:32). Those called in Jesus' day were given the Truth. It was revealed to them. Jesus emphasized, "If ye continue in my word . . . ye shall know the truth . . ." (John 8:31-32). Certitude and absolute conviction come from faithful obedience to that which is revealed, and not from any scholarly or astute study by the individual involved.

The manifestation of the continuity of the Body was faithful obedience to the very same things which Jesus taught and lived. "If ye continue in my word," said Jesus. Then you are my disciples -- members of the Body.

Paul put it this way. Jesus Christ is the foundation. A foundation which has been laid and cannot be altered or changed. Those called subsequent to His living, personal activity are required to build on that foundation. But they are sternly admonished to take heed how they do so. As any builder knows, the foundation dictates the form and shape of the superstructure. Without changing the foundation, the shape of the building above is precisely determined by the foundation which has been laid.

It follows to reason, if one cannot change or alter the foundation -- that foundation which is Jesus Christ -- the subsequent building cannot be changed or altered either. And, once again, what was Christ? He was the Word, Truth, and the Way of Life. That which He was and is cannot be changed. That means simply the Truth, the Way, and the Word of Life cannot be changed. What was the Way of Life? The Truth was from the beginning and remains to this day. In Old Testament times, those called and used of God obeyed in anticipation of the day of Jesus Christ. Subsequent to His day, those called to obey are responding in faith to that which He was in His own life. The Body of Christ can be traced, for it has never changed. What it was initially, it is still the same today.

Natural men cannot comprehend the above facts. The facts must be revealed. Then continuity of belief is essential for steadfastness. The natural veil over men's minds results in perverse and varied concepts regarding Truth and obedience to Christ (II Cor. 3:14-16). So long as man remains in the blindness of the flesh, he will devise his own explanations of life, the Truth, and the Way. But, once God calls a man, the veil is removed from his mind and heart and he can begin to understand the Way of Life and the Truth. The way or means by which a called individual can know if he is a part of the Body of Jesus Christ is if he is doing exactly what Jesus did in His own physical body. Why? Because Christ does not change. What He did in His own body He will continue to do in the collective Body of the Church today.

In the collective Body of the Church -- the Body of Christ -- will be manifested the rejection of self. As the Apostle Paul put it, "the old passes away" (II Cor. 5:17). That is, the old natural self is being destroyed -- the carrying out of the symbol of baptism. From that point onward, all things are becoming new. That is, the called and converted ones are beginning to manifest the obedient traits and characteristics Jesus Christ manifested in His own physical body. They are manifesting absolute mental control. Compare Philipians 2:5 and II Corinthians 10:5. The mind of Jesus Christ is becoming dominant -- in faithful obedience -- and the old mind of the flesh is being reduced -- the mind of hostility toward God (Rom. 8:7).

When called, the responsive individual knows of his relationship with Jesus Christ and the Father. He knows that he is the

recipient of Jesus Christ -- that the Son of God resides within him (I John 5:12). How? He has been given that understanding. And continuity of that conviction is found in faithful obedience to that which is initially given.

As Christ is manifested in the individual who continues in the Way, the Truth, and the Word which is given, so, collectively, Jesus Christ is manifested in those individuals united in the same faith and action which were initially given to them. This concept is very important because of the enormity of the perversion and corruption of the Word in the last days. The Apostle John clearly explains the problem. Let us state it exactly as he was inspired to write: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 1:7-9).

One cannot always accept what he is taught or what he hears. There are too many corrupters of the Word of God. How, then, can an individual know? Those who continue to do exactly the same things Jesus Christ did are the continuation of the true and legitimate Body. They are abiding in the doctrine of Christ. That is, they are teaching and acting on the same Truths which Jesus Christ lived and taught. If Jesus Christ was the Word manifested in the flesh; if He was the same yesterday, today, and forever; and if He has returned to abide in the called and chosen by the power of the Holy Spirit, what kind of a life is He living in them? Can it be any different from that which He lived in His own body? Of course not! Obviously, the continuation of the Body of Jesus Christ is observed in the pursuit of exactly the same things which He has done from the beginning. What He instituted in the times of the Old Testament, what He lived and practiced and taught in the days of His own fleshly body, and what He now does in the collective Body of the Church (His Body) are all exactly the same. Truth does not change. He is Truth. His Word is eternal. He was that Word made flesh. He is that Word still lived in the collective Body of the Church. For those called to understand and who have kept their faith active, it is a simple matter of observing those activities. Indeed, the Body does continue. For He is empowered with an endless life. And that life is exactly the same as it was from the beginning.

The absolute proof of that Body is the continuation of the Truth, The Word, and the Way which was given from the beginning. Any attempt to explain a break from such continuity immediately earmarks that individual or organization as false. And there is a plethora of false ones. An unchanging God cannot change. Change is a defect of character. Men must change because they are defective -- so created from their inception. But God does not possess such a defect. For we are told that God is not a man that He should change (Num. 23:19). In Him is not found even a shadow (hint) of turning (Jas. 1:17).

As we saw earlier, Jesus Christ in His own body was not rejected as a mere human being. He was a very popular and interesting being. Multitudes followed Him. They were aware of His charm and

capability. Why, then, did they reject Him? Because of what He was and taught -- the Word of God, the Truth, and the Way. They rejected Him because He spoke with absolute authority and conviction -- a message which was totally contrary to that which was designed by human beings. The rejection of Jesus Christ was the rejection of the Word, the Truth, and the Way.

After the ascension of Jesus Christ, approximately two thousand years ago, how was He rejected? We are plainly informed that, even in the last days, many would reject Him and thereby adhere to their own conceptions.

VI. After Christ's Ascension, How Did People Generally Reject Him?

Regardless of philosophy or concept, all Christians believe they have accepted Jesus Christ. But, obviously, one cannot merely rely on the statements of professing Christians. Yet, the fact still remains that some few Christians have accepted Him while the vast majority have rejected Him. This is a simple statement of fact.

Before we attempt to understand the rejection of Christ in our day, let us carefully note the rejection of Jesus Christ in His own day -- as a human being walking this earth. Such rejection was prophesied. Isaiah was inspired to write, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isa. 53:3).

Concerning the prophecies which were written about Christ, He Himself said, ". . . These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Was Christ rejected in His own lifetime? By whom?

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:10-11). As long as Jesus lived, He did not visit or work with any other element of humanity other than the children of Israel (Matt. 15:24). For the most part, His work and endeavors were confined to the people of Judah. Christ is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Those to whom He came rejected Him, just as the Bible had prophesied many years earlier. He was despised! Why? Not because of His physical presence. On the contrary, He was rejected because of His message and teaching. For Christ was the Word made flesh. He was the Word, the Truth -- life itself, made flesh. Men rejected that Way of Life. For man was created, naturally, in the way of death, contrary to the Way of Life. In Luke 17:25 we read, "But first must he <Christ> suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." Rejection, yes, but that did not alter or change the plan and purpose of God. For Jesus said, ". . . What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?" (Luke 20:17.) See also Mark 12:10 and Matthew 21:42.

Jesus was rejected by His own generation. He was not received by almost the entirety of the world. Yet, He lived a faultless, sinless

life (Heb. 4:15). What about people subsequent to His own personal physical life? Was He accepted of succeeding generations?

First, it is imperative that we ascertain just how Christ was either accepted or rejected. A special, select number of people did accept Him. How? By understanding how one accepts Him, it will become obvious how others reject Him. Jesus, predicating His statement on the fact that His own, plus the whole world, rejected Him said, ". . . as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

How does one accept Christ? Conversely, how does one reject Christ?

In a simple and plain statement of Jesus Christ, He said that men reject Him when they refuse to accept the very Words which He was sent and commissioned to preach. Note the clear Words of Jesus Himself. ". . . He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak" (John 12:44-50).

To accept Christ is to accept the message -- the very Words of Life which are delivered by God, the Father. To reject Christ is to reject that message, the same Words of Life everlasting. It is just that simple. What Christ taught and lived is the Way of Life.

How did men reject Christ in the days of the apostles? Was it any different than the circumstances which prevailed in the time of His own physical existence?

After Christ's death, burial, and resurrection He ascended to heaven, where He had existed from eternity with the Father (John 17:1-5). But before leaving this earth, He promised to return in the power of the Holy Spirit. By that powerful influence man would be given a sense of orientation which he otherwise would be unable to achieve. What direction would that be? John wrote, "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost <Spirit>, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:25-26). When Christ returned in the power of the Holy Spirit to take up His abode in us, He would be inspiring exactly the same Words -- the Way of Life -- which He taught while here in His own physical body. One need not doubt whether he possesses the power of the Holy Spirit or not. The evaluation can be very simple. Note the Words inspired by the Spirit and given to John, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of

truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). "He shall testify of me" -- that is, the Holy Spirit will be saying exactly the same things I (Christ) said when here on earth in my own physical body. Why? Because the Words proceed from the Spirit of Truth. The Truth cannot change. It is eternally the same. It is by that very fact we can easily determine the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error, all perversions and corruptions notwithstanding.

Generally speaking, how did men reject the Gospel -- the very Words of Jesus Christ -- in the days of the Apostle Paul? They accepted the name of Christ, but perverted the Words and the concepts of Truth. In fact, such perversion usually follows an initial call to understand the Truth. The knowledge of Truth can come only by divine revelation. Once such a miracle has happened, the test of continuity is found in the exercise of continuous faith. But all men do not possess such faith. What happens when men turn from that faith initially delivered?

In Asia Minor -- Galatia -- just such a situation developed in the days of the Apostle Paul. He wrote to the Galatians: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7). They did not reject the name of Christ. They did not even reject the basic fabric of Christianity. Rather, they rejected the force, efficacy, and authenticity of the Gospel received. They made the Truth over into a body of belief which was pleasing and acceptable to themselves. By so doing, they had rejected Christ. They had perverted the Gospel -- the very Words of Christ, Words which He said were given to Him by the Father. Such perversion of the Gospel makes it impossible to use the name of Christ or even the belief in the general concept of Christianity, as a basis of judging the spirit of error from the spirit of Truth. Any perversion is an absolute rejection of Christ. Conversely, any acceptance of Christ is the acceptance of the absolute Words first delivered by Christ in His own life, and subsequently in the lives of those chosen to carry out the same spiritual responsibilities. The TRUTH is absolute. It cannot change. It will never change. For the Truth is of the Spirit. It is eternal.

From the above we have seen a clear rejection of Christ in His own life as well as a subtle rejection -- through the perversion of the Gospel -- in the times of the apostles -- even as late as the time of the Apostle Paul. And this rejection occurred in the lives of the Gentile converts. Both the Israelites -- including the Jews -- and the Gentiles rejected Christ in their respective times of call. But, what about the called of God in the last days?

Through the prophet, Amos, God recorded a very significant prophecy relevant to the last days. Though, from the tenor of the prophecy, the Word of God had initially been made abundantly available to men in our day, it was to be little honored or respected. Amos wrote, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11).

The actual physical Words of God are more proliferated today than ever. Bibles are sent into every part of the world. Today, the Bible is on cassettes for use while people travel, rest, or for listening to while performing other duties. Truly, the actual Word is broadly scattered abroad upon the face of the land. What, then, does God mean by the prophecy of Amos?

Note carefully, the prophecy relates to "hearing." Though the Word is everywhere in the written form, it is not "heard" or "respected." People simply do not really understand what they are listening to or reading. For the most part, the Words of God are automatically reinterpreted in the minds and hearts of those reading or hearing. That reinterpretation is occurring according to previous teachings or on the basis of the personal demands of the flesh and mind of those hearing or reading.

Because of this total disrespect for the real meaning of the Words of God, the Eternal has determined to send a complete dearth of hearing or understanding in these last days. And one must remember, we can only be referring to those who once understood and responded to the message which they heard. In other words, someone once had the message and subsequently, for whatever the reasons, rejected it -- thereby rejecting Jesus Christ. To reject the Word is to reject Christ. For Christ was the Word living in His own fleshly body. Today, Jesus Christ is still the same Word, being lived in the collective Body of the Church.

Now, let us note the prophecies which directly relate to these last days. God inspired much to be written regarding these last days -- things which relate to the rejection of the Word, and in turn to the rejection of Jesus Christ.

In II Timothy 4:1-4 the Apostle Paul wrote of these last days. To the ministry of the last days he gave charge. That charge was that they should continue to proclaim the Word delivered -- both in and out of season. Why? ". . . For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." Because of natural inclinations -- lusts -- those who once held the Truth turned away from it. But, they continued to practice a perverted form of the Truth. They found preachers who would proclaim the things which they wanted to hear. But, by this perversion they had rejected Jesus Christ. How was such perversion possible for those who once understood the Truth?

Paul explains, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are <being> lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:1-4). Because of the subtlety of the lust which resides within them, those who once understood the Truth, in the last days, began to handle the Word of God deceitfully. In turn, the god of this world,

Satan, blinded their minds to the real Truth which they once understood. In turn, they rejected Christ. For Christ was the Truth initially revealed. The rejection of that Truth is the rejection of Jesus Christ. Once again, let me refer you to John 14:26. ". . . the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost <Spirit>, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Those who speak by the Holy Spirit of God will be uttering exactly the same Words which Jesus taught when He was on the earth in His own physical body. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ is within us. Then, that unchanging Spirit within us will be speaking exactly the same Words it spoke while residing in the physical body of Jesus Christ Himself. The rejection of that message -- those very Words -- is the rejection of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, let me refer you to just a few of the main texts which show the rejection of Jesus Christ in the last days. In the reading of these texts we will see how Christ is rejected today.

"He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16). The Greek word for "despiseth" literally means "to reject." The meaning, therefore, is clear. The rejection of Jesus Christ, subsequent to His ascension, is by the rejection of those commissioned and sent to proclaim the same message which He taught -- that message which the Father gave to Him. Today, the rejection of Christ is by a refusal to honor those bearing the same message which God delivered to Christ.

". . . we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." "He therefore that despiseth <rejects>, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit" (I Thess. 4:1, 8). By rejecting the Apostle Paul, who had been commissioned to proclaim the same message (Gospel) which Jesus Christ brought and taught, they had despised (rejected) not Paul, but God. This is because the Words were of God, not man. In precisely the same way, Christ is rejected today. Rejection of the servant and rejection of the Word is rejection of Christ. People see only the man, but the man is rejected only because of the message, in the same way Jesus Himself was rejected.

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: <but> he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" (I John 2:22-24). People profess to be Christian even though they have denied the Word initially received. These are liars. They claim to be true Christians, but in reality they are liars. This is a spirit of antichrist. They are human beings who once possessed the true Spirit of life. But they had rejected that Spirit for another, which allowed them to practice things which were more appealing to the carnality of the flesh.

To deny the presence of Christ in that Word initially received is to deny the Father, also. It is incumbent upon all called and chosen of God to retain that which is initially given -- given at the time of call and conversion. As John said, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning." Those Words apply to us today, as well as to others in their respective times of call and conversion.

Simply stated: Rejection of Christ is to reject the way initially given. When God calls anyone, He gives the Words of Life. One cannot be called any other way. Once called and possessing that priceless Way of Life, it is imperative that we remain faithful to it. To reject it is to reject Christ and in turn to reject the Father.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them" (Rom. 1:18-19). Here are people who knew the Truth. But, they have allowed their minds to warp and pervert the Word on the basis of the carnal lust innate in them. They did not reject the basics of the message. But they perverted the Truth and thereby rejected Jesus Christ. For the rejection of the message is as real in any form of perversion as it is in absolute and total rejection. As a result, those under such indictment from God are destined for terrible punishment (see vss. 21-32). They knew God. But their lustful natures held sway over their lives. They did not like to think on godly things. They found pleasure in the morbid and wretched. And they find satisfaction in swaying others to walk in the same lustful ways. Indeed, misery loves company.

The above are a few of the many New Testament prophecies which relate to the last days. It is in this climate that the faithful must make decisions -- decisions respecting their lives for both the present and the future. It is not an easy task, but God made it possible for those who sincerely desire to be faithful to have a basis of judgment, and in turn to make the correct decisions. How?

VII. Because Of Rejection By The Majority Who Once Knew The Truth, How Is Faithfulness Possible?

Christ was rejected in the time of the ancient Israelites. He was rejected in the time of the prophets! He was further rejected when He dwelt here in His own physical body. And He was rejected in the times of the apostles, as well as in the last days. By whom? By those only who can reject Him -- those who once knew Him, and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, had Him abiding within themselves.

Such an element of confusion makes it much more difficult to determine who and where Christ is today. Yet, God would not have left us without some means of determining this matter. At the time of the major perversion of the Truth in the days of the apostles, God gave us the guiding principle. John was inspired to record it. He wrote, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is

come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (I John 4:1-3).

Who is Christ? The Christ which is presently come today, in the flesh -- the collective Body of the Church! The Word! The Truth! The Way of Life! The unchanging One -- the same yesterday, today, and forever. What He was in His own flesh, He is in the collective Body of the Church today. The spirit which speaks of the necessity of change or that implies that Christ lived differently in His own body than He does in the Body of the Church today is not of God. It is the spirit of antichrist. It is a denial of Christ, the true Christ.

Then, how is faithfulness possible? By adhering to that which is given at the time of conversion. For when God calls, He delivers the Truth. The responsibility from that time forward is a duty of faithfulness.

Your duty? Try the spirits. How? By using the delivered message as a yardstick. Not men's interpretations of what was delivered. For what is delivered in our day is exactly the same as God delivered to Christ. Compare what you believe with what Christ taught and practiced.

The seriousness of this matter is clearly illustrated by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 12:25-27. The Word was originally given at Mount Sinai. But it was rejected. The result was a history of misery and wretchedness -- a condition which is still not yet comprehended. But, more significantly, the message is clear and precise for those who have been called in these last days. We must not refuse (reject) Him who has spoken to us -- even though the message was heard through a defective human instrument.

Many troubles, adversities, and questions of faith will arise to test and try us. Because God is performing the shaking-out process. Only those who can weather the storm of doubt and turmoil -- by implicit obedience to the faith initially given -- will be afforded the right of entering into the coming glorious Kingdom. To reject the initial faith is to reject Christ. But that faith is going to be tried as by fire. Can you retain your faith -- faith in the Truth initially given -- until the end? Or, will anyone of us be a part of those things which God will shake out because of weakness of faith and conviction?

For those living in the days of the Apostle Paul, this principle was made quite clear. To the Galatians, Paul wrote, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:8, 11-12). What Paul wrote to the Galatians is a part of the Bible. That Bible is written for us today. Simply stated: What Paul wrote to the called of God in Asia Minor is also applicable to us in this day. The Truth of God was delivered to His called in these last days. But, many turned away from

that Gospel -- turning to a gospel which was not originally delivered, but rather is the interpretation of men.

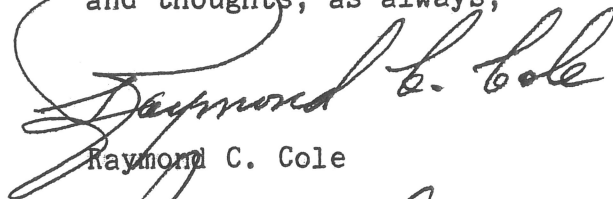
Faithfulness is possible if we will retain the message which was originally taught. In fact, that very concept becomes the basis by which we must evaluate all that transpires (I John 4:1-3). If we turn to our own rationalizations, we have rejected Jesus Christ. Thus says the Word of God. For any perversion is also a rejection of Christ.

Faithfulness is possible only if we truly fear our God and His Way of Life (Heb. 10:23-29). Let us hold fast to our original profession. Let us never waver in our faith and confidence. But, above all, let us keep our faith alive by honoring God in faithful obedience -- by convoking before God as He ordained. If we grow weak and indifferent regarding the summons of God -- the weekly and annual convocations -- we subject ourselves to unusual jeopardy. This is the only call you and I will ever receive. For us to fail now means sure extinction. Let us weigh the matter most seriously. Let us keep God uppermost in our minds and hearts (Rom. 1:28). By attempting to blot out remembrance of God's Truth and Way of Life, we are most surely walking the path of destruction. Remember, ". . . he that shall endure <the tests and trials of faith> unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

God has called you. He has kept you faithful. Now the task of remaining faithful to the end is yours. If vision prevails, you will be successful. Keep yourselves alert and in the center of that faith and purpose originally revealed. It does not appear that the wait will be long. The days of darkness seem to be closing in much faster than we realize. Keep praying. Keep yourselves clean and pure before God. Do not lose out at the last hour. What a tragedy that would be for you and all of us.

Again, all our love and thoughts of well-being. We love and admire you all. Please do not allow the trials of faith to repress your faith and conviction. Keep the joy of the Spirit and the purpose of God. Manifest the joy of our salvation day by day. Real faith will not be seen in dejection and trouble. Rather, it is seen in confidence and happiness -- even in the time of trial and difficulty.

With hearts filled with love
and thoughts, as always,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Raymond C. Cole

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bryce G. Clark". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Bryce G. Clark