

# 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

September 1984

Dear Brethren of the Common Faith:

International, national, domestic, economic, religious, and other circumstances point to the nearness of the fateful last days. A mere ten years ago none of us would have believed present conditions were possible. Yet, they are reality today. What will the next decade bring to the consciousness of mankind?

In "Christian" America, who would have ever believed the present occult explosion possible? Its advent and urgency show no stagnation. There are plans to "easternize" religion in the Western world. And that threat is a far more serious one than almost anyone realizes or believes.

Rather than attempt to interpret prophecies of the last days, God specifically commanded us to keep our eyes and ears open to world-shaking events occurring all about us. We may not have specific knowledge about those events, but we can most certainly know of their occurrence and understand the general nature of their fulfillment. Isaiah spoke of the fact the Western world would be "replenished from the east." This, today, is a fact beyond challenge or doubt.

The economic situation is a most tenuous one. The banking world seems to be moving from one crisis to another. Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico have been "saved" from financial ruin. But for how long? Now the fright seems to be rearing its ugly head closer to home. Look at the size and influence of some of the banks which are toppling under the weight of bad practices -- Continental of Illinois, the eighth largest international bank here in the United States. So serious was this default that both the Treasury and the Federal Reserve became involved in this essential bail out.

Where is the next troubled area? What will be the consequences? It is anybody's guess.

The loss of a bank seems so innocuous until it happens to us personally. At that time the hurt becomes very real. It is entirely conceivable to lose most of what we have accumulated economically. Many have already sustained very great loss.

Now to the purpose for this Monthly Letter.

In the March 1984 Letter the subject of judgment was covered. In that issue we clearly explained the fundamental responsibility of judgment, why the act of condemning one another is wrong, what God has purposed for mankind, why trials and experiences are vital to the purpose of God, and why legislated faith is so abominably wrong. But, due to a lack of space we were not able to cover other aspects of the subject which are equally imperative. Those issues will be covered in the next two Monthly Letters.

Man is created of the weakness of the flesh. He has no inherent ability to control himself fully or to live a completely exemplary life. Until God calls, man is restricted to his natural domain. He cannot change himself by his own native ability. These factors show that man must have outside help -- help which proceeds from a different domain. Then once called, the rate of change is influenced by the elements of time, will, determination, circumstances, and others. Therefore, all men do not live at the same level of faith at any given period of time. Within the Body of Christ -- the Church -- are called servants striving for complete mastery from spiritual infancy (I Pet. 2:1-3) and those who are "approaching" maturity (Heb. 5:12-14). The "elders" of the faith are required by God to bear the weaknesses and infirmities of the newly called and those who are weak in one way or another (Rom. 14).

Tolerance is vital to a healthy atmosphere in our interpersonal relationships with one another. Without absolute tolerance we cannot hope to manifest any true spirituality in those relationships. But, before we attempt to explain those areas in which tolerance is imperative it is equally necessary that a thorough explanation be given regarding those things which we must not tolerate within the Body of Christ.

#### **WHAT MUST NOT BE TOLERATED**

Though man was created with the weakness of human nature, he was (or if yet uncalled, will in the future be) called to overcome himself. That is, he is chosen to crucify the natural traits and to begin living the principles of Truth -- the Way of Life.

For the above reason, the first thing which must not be tolerated in the Body of Christ is blatant (willful) sin. Willful sin does not manifest any degree of conversion or spiritual purpose. It is infectious and damaging to others who may be influenced by the manifestation of such an attitude. Such an attitude must not be

accepted or tolerated in our own personal lives or in the larger body of believers, the Church of God. Condoning such rebelliousness is not the exercise of tolerance toward those who are weak or new and may need time to grow and effect required mastery in their lives. Being an infectious disease within the Body of Christ -- the Church -- it must be excised as surely as modern doctors remove offending growths in a human body. Blatant sin is a manifestation of defiance and human nature in the raw. It must not be tolerated at any time, by anyone within the Church.

Several of the New Testament writers spoke of this matter. Let us take the time to closely analyze their writings.

In II Peter 2:12-14, the Apostle Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, spoke of this matter. He said: ". . . as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you [in the Body]; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children."

In the time of the Apostle Peter these people had become a very real factor in the Body of Christ. By permitting them to remain in the Church initially, they gained the advantage and later caused endless problems for all those called. Peter's concern was that their attitude could become an obstacle to the spiritual growth of those who did not subscribe to their devious behavior. Because of the adverse influence of those who are in a foul attitude (spirit) we are told in other texts that such wicked persons must be put out of the Church. No doctrine is to be discussed with them, that is, by lay-members of the Church.

Paul informs us of the ultimate fate of those who are willful in their wickedness. He says, ". . . if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:26-27).

Of course, we, as mere human beings, cannot judge and ascribe to anyone that ultimate fate. This is what condemning others means. That responsibility belongs to God and Christ. But, we are admonished to have no company with one who is pursuing that way of behavior. The principle is clear. Why should anyone converted allow himself to be adversely influenced by another party who once knew and understood the

Truth but has elected of his own volition to turn against the Way of Life?

Exercise of that spiritual responsibility puts a very heavy duty upon each one who wills to be faithful to God. We must remember that one who is weak, making mistakes not from the heart but as a result of the flesh, should be tolerated and assisted in his struggle against himself. On the other hand, we must be able to determine when one is in a very foul spirit and attitude and willful in his rebellion against the Truth. That individual must not be accepted or condoned in his wrong. Much more will be explained on the matter of what we are obligated to tolerate later.

In I Corinthians 5:1-13 the Apostle Paul gives a very clear example of dealing with blatant sin. In this example the parties involved were actually making light of the basic Truth which had been violated. They were glorying in their iniquity, thinking that they were getting by with this obnoxious sin. Yet, in this case, the ultimate attitude of rebellion had not been reached. By putting this party out of the Church, allowing him to bear his own shame, Paul hoped that he would be brought to his knees in repentance and return to the faith which he had been given. As we know from later information given by Paul, this man did repent and became an example used by Paul to teach an equally important Christian principle -- the art of forgiving and accepting back into the fold one who had so grievously sinned. The ones who determined the sincerity of the individual and the depth of his repentance were the ministry. In this case, the Apostle Paul forgave him in the name of Christ and asked the people to accept him back unequivocally into the Body of Christ.

In the book of Proverbs, the wise man Solomon was inspired to reveal an element of this blatant sin category. In Proverbs 6:17, we are given some of the seven things which God hates. The first point mentioned is that of "a proud look." Arrogance of man in no way fulfills the basic necessity of contriteness and humility. Blatant sin is a manifestation of human arrogance, the proud-look attitude. When one, for either physical or spiritual reasons, manifests flippancy, arrogance -- a "know-it-all" attitude -- he is not teachable. He cannot be accepted or tolerated. God wants a contrite and humble attitude. This attitude stems from a correct knowledge of the heart and mind of man. Such a man does not trust himself. Arrogance, on the other hand, manifests a complete trust in the self.

Blatant sin must not be tolerated. It is odious to God and is equally offensive to the converted Christian. But the determination of who has committed blatant sin is an awesome responsibility imposed upon the ministry. When that determination is made it must be honored by



all within the body. Remember the example of the fornicator given by the Apostle Paul.

The second thing which must not be tolerated or condoned is division and/or heresy.

God is the Author of peace, harmony, and order. He is not the creator of confusion and disorder. Therefore, division cannot be of God.

Further, the Way of God, the doctrine -- Truth -- is perfect. It is singular. There is only one Way of Life. If only one way is right, then all others must be wrong and completely unacceptable to God. How does one come to know the certainty of that one Way of Life? By revelation only. Man cannot come to the initial knowledge of God and His Way of Life by personal study or any ability inherent in himself. One can know the Truth only when God calls and gives him the knowledge of that absolute and perfect Way of Life.

Division, therefore, cannot be acceptable because at least one of the contentions inherent in the division must be wrong. It is a possibility that both parts, or more if other ideas are involved, are wrong. In such a case, human nature in the raw is being manifested.

Division being wrong makes obvious the fact that the one true Way of Life must be revealed or given to men. That one Way becomes the basis on which all judgment is made regarding the nature of division. Once called, any separation from the revealed Way is called division. Heresy is the espousal of any concept contrary to that Way which is revealed. It follows that any heresy which generates division (separation from the revealed Way of Life) must not be tolerated or allowed within the Body of Christ.

The instructions of God are quite plain regarding this matter. We will review and analyze just a few texts which specifically address this subject.

Being a God of deep emotion, although controlled and wisely used, He manifests a distinct aversion to certain actions employed by man. Concerning this matter of heresy and division, God has distinct feelings. We will do well to consider carefully just how God views this problem.

In Proverbs we find that there are seven things which God hates. And if God manifests a hate for them, men would do well to avoid them at all cost. Of the seven things which God says He hates, not one can be excluded from the matter of heresy and division. In a direct or indirect manner every one of the concepts applies. In division, human

arrogancy, a proud look, is made manifest. A lying tongue is obvious since knowledge of the Way is absolute in the initial revelation. Any departure is a departure from that which was once understood and believed. It follows that the espousal which is contrary to the initial revelation is the creation of error, a lie, even though the nature of deception allows one to think himself to be sincere in his difference.

One called is chosen for salvation. Any concept taught which would lead others out of that Way of Life must be one of the underlying concepts involved in the shedding of innocent blood. The one guilty of wrongly influencing another to depart from the Truth, the Way of Life, is most certainly guilty of committing spiritual murder.

He who creates division, any separation from revealed Truth, is without doubt devising wicked imaginations. He is creating his opinions from whole cloth -- from the desires of the natural, carnal mind. These deceptions cause others to act in a way which is contrary to the principles of faith and conviction. They are indeed wicked and injurious.

When men are convicted of any thought or belief, they are never content to keep these conceptions to themselves. They feel compelled to espouse them and influence others to pursue or practice those same beliefs. Their feet are indeed swift in running to mischief. They are content only when they compel others to do the same things which they have generated out of their own minds (Rom. 1:28-32). God hates the actions of those who energetically espouse and compel others to act on their conceptions of division -- heresy.

The only absolute witness is the revealed Truth of God. Any conceptions which are contrary to that revealed way are false -- a false witness. When those contrary ways are taught, it is the publication and proclamation of lies -- regardless of how sincere the individual may appear to be. Remember, men are liars; but God is Truth, a faithful witness because His Truth is absolute. Men can be absolutely truthful only when they are in agreement with the Way which God has purposed to reveal to those called.

Can there be any question about one who sows discord among brethren? He is creating division by teaching, or advocating, concepts contrary to the absolute Way. (In this Letter we are addressing the matter of spiritual things only.) One who sows discord, deliberately, within a group or organization is also anathema in the sight of God. But, we are not concerned with that situation here in Proverbs.

God hates heresy and division. We must be careful not to become involved in such situations. God will not hold us guiltless.

The Apostle Paul, when writing to the Church at Rome, made the seriousness of heresy absolutely clear. He wrote to them as follows. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). Through chosen servants God makes His Way of Life known to the called. Once called and made the recipients of that knowledge it is imperative that faithfulness be manifested. The doctrine cannot change. As a result of the steadfastness of the Way, God requires that the chosen carefully evaluate every concept which they hear. Those beliefs or points of argument which are advanced contrary to the initial doctrine given must be categorically refused.

Why?

Though the people who are advancing these concepts which are contrary to the original doctrine may not realize it, they are pursuing their own natural rebellious way -- a way which in all probability seems right to them. By pursuing the way which seems right to them, they are not serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice Paul's follow-up thought in verse 18 of Romans 16. "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [apparently doctrinal moves and changes were made for economic and emotional reasons]; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

Not only were changes made for economic reasons, but to justify themselves emotionally and mentally they were most willing to work on others in order to change their doctrinal convictions so that they might feel "justified" in their own minds. Those who will listen to others proclaim doctrines contrary to that initially received are classified as "the simple" by God. Wisdom manifests itself in faith and conviction regarding the Truth. With patience and faith, the reality of the facts involved will be made manifest. Those who remain faithful and courageous to the Way taught will be blessed beyond their greatest expectations. Those who felt it necessary to "re-prove" the Truth -- those who alter beliefs on the basis of their own natural mental capability -- will be greatly disillusioned. Indeed, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in the day of judgment.

The purpose of God which must be evident in the Body of Christ -- the Church -- is harmony, agreement, accord, and humility of attitude. The Apostle Paul made this point extremely clear when writing to the Corinthian Church, where divisions and strife were beginning to develop. In I Corinthians 1:10-11 he wrote: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the

same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Why this strong, personalized indictment to the members of that Church? "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you."

Contention and unrest among the brethren of the Body of Christ is contrary to the will and purpose of God. Such manifestations do not evidence the presence of the Holy Spirit. For when the Holy Spirit is present there is peace and harmony. The Spirit is not divided against itself. Therefore, division and contention are manifestations of the carnal nature of man. Any protection and justification of the carnality of man must not be allowed to exist in the Body of Christ. That which is espoused, as well as those who create division and contention, must not be permitted to remain within the Body which holds to the "faith once delivered."

Once it is determined that the attitude is wrong -- that the problem does not stem from a lack of growth, misunderstanding, or other understandable situations -- the offending parties must not be allowed to convoke with those of FAITH until repentant attitudes are restored. The hallmark of the Church of God must be peace, harmony, agreement, and a humility of mind.

The above concept must not be confused with the spiritual principle of growth. All people are not called at the same time. Some are spiritual babes in Christ. They do not understand, nor do they practice all things which the elders in the faith know and believe. These requirements will be thoroughly explained in my next Monthly Letter.

The third problem which must not be allowed to exist in the Body of Christ is internal conflict among brethren.

In this situation we are not talking about doctrinal differences. On the contrary, we are addressing the problems of physical differences. How many strifes are generated because of personality differences? How many generated because of differences of likes and dislikes? How many created because of unrealistic expectations of others? How many are created because our methods of doing things are widely divergent? Indeed, the variety of obstacles to human harmony is virtually limitless in both scope and magnitude.

The offending individual, in the above cases, is usually the one who refuses to be tolerant and understanding regarding the differences of others. God is the Author of individual differences. We can only assume that He created these differences and subjected us to them in

order to develop character, patience, and understanding. Further, if we saw ourselves as God does, why should we want anyone else made over into our own image?

Solomon tells us that God hates that which creates discord and unrest. God wants peace and He wants us to learn to create peace and harmony. When we assume a "know-it-all" attitude, we usually manifest our smug satisfaction toward others in the form of instruction, reproof or reminder. Of course, ostensibly, the advice is given to help and "enlighten" the recipients of our comments. But, those who are receiving our "benevolence" may not view it in the same way. Their "negative" reaction is incomprehensible to the givers of advice and help. But, why should anyone be shocked by this reaction? Should we not take a good look at ourselves? How do we react to those who are offering "friendly advice" to us? We feel that they are meddling in our own personal affairs, do we not? In this regard, what is the meaning of the golden rule? Should we not do unto them as we would that they do unto us?

In Proverbs 6:16 and 19 we read: "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: . . . A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." Certainly, what God hates men ought to fear. Perhaps if we weighed the feeling of God regarding each situation with which we are confronted, we might be inclined to be more judicious and careful in our actions and reactions.

If we will consistently remember our natural station in life we will not be carnally induced to generate strife and conflict based on our image of self (I Cor. 1:27-29). How can we when we see ourselves for what God says we are? Indeed, seeing ourselves as God does would remove almost all temptation to generate conditions or circumstances which will in turn create division, conflict, or strife.

People who refuse to accept instruction based on the teaching of Matthew 18:15-17 must not be permitted to continue to convoke with the brethren of a common faith. Once they repent, they can be allowed to return to the fold. The Body of Christ is characterized by peace, harmony, and oneness. That which offends must not be allowed to continue its devious work.

The fourth thing which must not be tolerated or accepted in the Body is hypocrisy. Christ manifested a very strong feeling toward the element of hypocrisy.

What really is hypocrisy?

By definition it is the actions of a hypocrite -- the feigning of beliefs, feelings, or virtues that one does not hold or possess (The American Heritage Dictionary). This is distinct from one who fails to live up to his convictions as a result of spiritual weakness.

Hypocrites are always self-righteous. They are quick to condemn others; but they never seem to find time to work on themselves. Regarding hypocrites, Christ commanded, "...first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:5). In a word, Christ implied that a hypocrite always magnifies what he thinks he sees in the lives of others; but he never sees what he is doing himself. The mistake of the brother is as a mote; whereas, the real problem of the hypocrite is as large as a beam.

Hypocrisy, in its own right, is the major sin of a hypocrite (Luke 12:1). Due to the subtleties of the natural heart and mind, hypocrisy can become a way -- practice -- of thinking (Isa. 32:6). Only with the aid of the Holy Spirit can we see ourselves as we must. If we cannot see our hypocritical selves, how can we master these tendencies which proceed from hearts and minds?

Paul wrote to Timothy: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith [obviously a faith was given to which we are obligated to adhere], giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils [demons]; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Tim. 4:1-2).

God makes it very clear. We must adhere to the original faith -- doctrine -- which we were taught. That faith will be required many times to evaluate what others are teaching. The things which they espouse are called lies. They may appear to be right to the individual teaching them; but we must always remember that the ways of a man are always right in his own eyes. We cannot trust what comes from our own minds and hearts. We must trust the faith which we initially received -- a faith given at the time of our call. Usually doubts and concerns come as a result of our educating ourselves into them through our own historical and Biblical study and personal application.

As the Bible clearly tells us, if any come to us bringing not the doctrine which we were originally taught, we must not give ear to their concepts or beliefs. These people may be hypocrites, teaching and espousing their own concepts for some personal reason. There is a terrible price which must be paid for this form of behavior.



Hypocrisy is not acceptable to God. It manifests itself in the nature of and desire for doctrinal change or alteration. So said God when writing to the people of the last days specifically.

The big question with which we all are confronted: Can we wait patiently in the original faith given to us -- wait for the coming of Christ who will reward those who have found the courage and conviction to remain strong and firm in their initial resolve?

Blatant sin, division and heresy, internal conflicts among brethren, and acts of hypocrisy must not be tolerated in the Body of Christ. God requires definitive action.

Why?

Because the leaven of such sins will affect adversely many other people. It is an evil contagion. In I Corinthians 5:6 the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, reveals the reason. He wrote: ". . . Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

What action is required?

". . . Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (I Cor. 5:13). The wicked persons intended are defined in verse 11. The four broad categories which we have discussed include all persons listed in verse 11.

How do the mistakes and weaknesses of those who are called differ from those who are not allowed to convoke with the members of the Body of Christ? In attitude. In the one case the intent is to destroy, confuse, and gain personal advantage. In the other, the attitude being right, the action does not become leaven which adversely affects the Body. There is a very great difference.

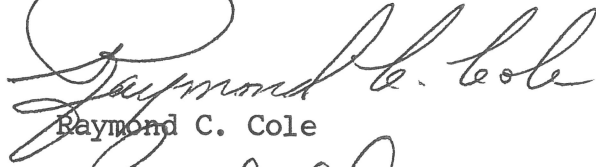
For this Letter we have covered those actions which must not be tolerated in the Body of Christ. In the next issue, the second component of this subject, those things which we are obligated to tolerate if we act as Christians will be explained. With these two issues, it is our hope the subject will have been reasonably explained and that none of us will have difficulty differentiating between the two responsibilities.

Again, we thank you very much for your continued interest and faithfulness. You are to be honored and respected as the children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ.

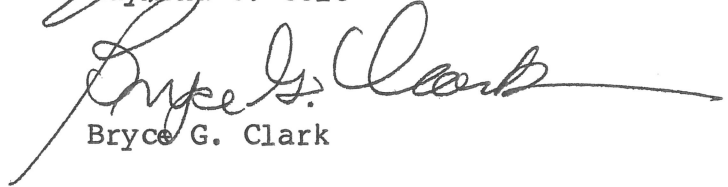
We do commend our love once again. Please continue to pray that God will guide and help us in fulfilling the duties incumbent upon us during these trying times of the last days. Our prayers will continue with and for you, always.

Much love always. In deep love and with thoughts of kindness toward you all.

Affectionately,

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