

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

In the February issue of this *Monthly Letter* we became aware of the promise that Christ would build His church. What is that church? How does it relate to the physical existence of Christ as He lived in His own physical body, prior to His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to assume once again the glory which He shared with the Father from the beginning? This is a concept revealed by God, but it is frequently misunderstood by most and at best is only faintly realized by the majority of those who aggressively pursue their call. Despite the generalized misunderstanding by the majority of the called, the subject is of prime significance and a thorough comprehension mandatory to an understanding of just what has occurred since the days of Jesus Christ, especially with regard to these last days in which we live.

A Statement of Fact: Christ Continues

As the Christ lived and worked in His own physical body, He continually emphasized the fact He would ascend into heaven, at an appointed time, and that He would return to be with His chosen. Let us note His assurances to those He had called and with whom He personally worked in His own physical body.

In John 17:24 we note a very interesting statement of Christ: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me. . . ." Both from Biblical and secular records we know that the disciples were not in heaven following the ascension of Christ. Where were the disciples, now become the apostles? They lived, until their physical deaths, on this earth. Had Christ failed to fulfill His promise—"they . . . be with me where I am . . ."? Absolutely not!

Further, years later the Apostle Paul said: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ . . ." (Rom. 6:3). Men who yet abide on this earth are baptized into Jesus Christ. Obviously, since men remain on the earth, even after baptism, then Christ must yet be on this earth. Where? How? Paul explains, in part, in Romans 8:10. We read: ". . . if Christ be in you . . ." The Apostle Paul emphasized this concept in Colossians 2:2-7. Specifically, Paul makes it plain that self-mastery of the called and chosen of God is the growth and development of Christ in us (Gal. 4:19). The fullness, the perfection, and the manifestation of the Christ is still occurring on this earth. What is Christ? Where is Christ? How can one be baptized into Christ?

Unless we understand—comprehending the answers to the above questions—we are most likely to be found in deception which is to prevail also in these last days.

Remember, the real purpose of this *Monthly Letter* is to know who the real Christ is and thereby avoid the denial of Christ which is prophesied for the last days.

How Does Christ Continue?

A physical church existed from the time of Moses (Acts 7:38). Yet, in Matthew 16:18 Christ is promising to build another church. Why? Paul explains in Hebrews 3:1–6: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling [as opposed to the physical calling of ancient Israel], consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose *house are we*, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." The house of Israel, the church of the wilderness, is a type of the new house, church, which Jesus said He would build. Since all things were created for the honor and glory of Christ (Col. 1:18), a new church had to come into existence. Without delving deeply into this change, let it be stated that the transition was from the physical, flesh, to the spirit. The new house which Christ promised to build was the house of the Spirit, as opposed to the house of Moses which was and is of the flesh. What is that church?

The continuation of Christ is through the means of that body, church, which He promised to create. Let us carefully note how clearly that concept is made in the Bible.

In Colossians 1:24 the Apostle Paul wrote: ". . . his body's sake, which is the church." Paul's statement seems to be sufficiently clear and capable of human understanding. The church is the body of Christ. But, how can diverse human beings become the single body of Christ? This concept, also, must be understood. In Galatians 3:27 we read: ". . . as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." By baptism the called of God are made partakers in Christ; therefore, by extension they become a part of the church, the body, since the body of Christ is the church. Note also Ephesians 1:22–23. It states emphatically, ". . . the church . . . is his body. . . ." We know emphatically that the body of Christ is the church; but we do not yet know what the church is. That we shall soon see. First, however, let us note that Christ Himself forms a part of that body, called the church. He is the Head of the body (Col. 1:18 and Eph. 5:22). The word "head" carries two concepts. We need to understand both. In order to grasp the meaning of this term "head" we must comprehend another point which is of imperative significance. That is, how can called human beings who are baptized comprise the single body of Christ? In Ephesians 5:30 we read, "We are members of his body. . . ." Further, Paul states in I Corinthians 6:15, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ . . . ?" As Christ consisted, in His physical body, of many component members, so the church—His body—consists of individual members, human beings called and added to the body, thereby bringing closer to perfection the complete body of Christ.

Becoming a part of the body of Christ is not automatic or arbitrary. Those called to become a part of that church have their responsibilities, too. Individual volition is required.

When writing to the Romans, Paul stated: ". . . put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). In essence what Paul said is this: The church, His body, is of the Spirit, which is in opposition to the flesh. Even though, after baptism, we remain in the flesh, we are required to achieve a mental orientation which is of the Spirit, not of the flesh. In this way, many human beings can become one in orientation and direction. Considering a few other texts will make this concept quite clear. In Galatians 3:28 we are told, ". . . ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Physically, many individual bodies, yet one in Christ. Since it is obvious that many bodies will remain many bodies physically, the only explanation of Paul's statement is this: When we have become truly a part of the body of Christ, we are all one mentally, spiritually. Interestingly, that is exactly what Paul said to the Corinthians. He wrote, ". . . he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit [mind]" (I Cor. 6:17). The duty to become one is ours. We are instructed: ". . . put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. . . ." By will and determination we become one in spirit and mind. Or, as the latter part of the above verse says, we "make . . . [no] provision for the flesh." See Romans 13:14. To become one in mind is a matter of will and determination. God calls those foreordained from the foundation of the world. Christ made the sacrifice necessary to allow us to become one in Him. Our duty is to destroy the carnal self, mentally, and thereby become one in mind and heart—the mind of Christ (Ph'p. 2:5). As we individually are the repositories of the Holy Spirit, so the body, singular, of Christ, the church, becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19).

Let us put it all together by carefully analyzing I Corinthians 12:1–31. First, one who possesses the Holy Spirit will not justify division, contention, or separation from the body (v. 3). Further, it is impossible for one who resorts to personalized concepts, justifying the self for any reason, to call Jesus the Lord. By studying and understanding the remainder of this chapter, we will quickly see that Paul is referring to the church and the necessity to recognize that that body is one. In verse 4 we are informed that there are different gifts, yet only one spirit. In verse 5 we are made aware of the fact that there are different administrations but still only one spirit. Verse 6 informs us of the plurality of operations and yet only one spirit. Note carefully, in verse 7, the Spirit is manifested. The term "manifested" means visible, seen, observed. We shall see how this applies just a little later.

There is a plurality of gifts, administrations, and operations, but always only one spirit (mind). And that Spirit is responsible, under the direction and care of the Father, for assignment of responsibility to the individual members (v. 11). Indeed, many members with differing responsibilities, but always one body only (vv. 12, 14). That body is Christ (v. 12). And how do we, the called of God, become a part of that one body? By baptism (v. 13). Then, by that one Spirit, we are afforded the privilege of having one mind, though physically numbering many members (v. 13). Ideally, it is hoped that the body can be complete and in good health. But this condition may not occur (compare vv. 15–23 and Matt. 18:7–9). How clearly Paul explains this principle in I Corinthians 1:9–10. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren [the many members of the body], 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." God does not desire any division in the body of Christ, the church. The mind which must dominate is that mind which Jesus Christ possessed here on this earth. And as we have seen, that body does not believe nor contend that Christ is divided (v. 3). Though not divided,

the one true body of Jesus Christ will have within its confines people who are allowed to continue there for specific reasons (I Cor. 11:19). Many last-day prophecies indicate that wrongly motivated men do, indeed, exist in the last-day body of Christ. See II Thessalonians 2:9–15, I Timothy 4:1–2, II Timothy 4:3–4, Jude, and II Peter 2. The faithful are those who maintain their faith and doctrinal conviction, received at the time of call and baptism, unto the end. Thank God that He has given us the conviction and faith to continue in the way to which we were called, at the beginning, and have refused to allow our heads to be turned by those who have turned from their original faith and are making merchandise of the people for personal advantage. We have never claimed to be a separate entity. We are estranged brothers and sisters from that body commissioned and sent to do "His work" in the last days.

Let us complete the evaluation of I Corinthians 12. Note carefully, God does not approve division (separation). It is He who is tempering the body together. Why? So that there should be no division in it (vv. 24–25). Any separation is not of God. The only justification for departing from the body is false doctrine. No other legitimate reason can be advanced. The body of Christ is singular. There is but one. As in the case of the Apostle John, we are estranged from the body because we were either put out for doctrinal reasons or separated ourselves due to false doctrine which surfaced in the body.

One final point needs to be addressed at this time. That is the concept, held by many—even some who once knew the truth—that the church, the body of Christ today, is a spiritual entity only. That is, since it is spiritual in nature, it does not have any physical dimension. Nothing is or could be farther from the real truth. Paul made that point very clear. He wrote, "For we are members of his body [the church], of HIS FLESH, AND OF HIS BONES" (Eph. 5:30). The body is visible, manifested. It can be seen. Using an form of mental, or spiritual, justification is a clever design of Satan to induce men into believing that separation and division are acceptable. If you noted carefully what Paul said, you became aware that the life and vitality of that body is not blood, as is the case of a natural, human being (Lev. 17:11, 14). It is of the Spirit (Rom. 8:8–9). The body of Christ, the church, then, is composed of physical beings, those who can be seen, but empowered not by the life of the blood, but of the Spirit.

The physical, flesh-and-bone body of Christ does exist somewhere on the earth in the last days. It is being tempered together by God. It manifests a oneness of mind and heart. It is evidencing self-mastery and the growth and development of the divine nature. And, it is subject to the ridicule, contempt, and evil-mindedness of those who once knew and understood the truth.

Why?

Can Be Accepted by Faith Only—Revelation

By revelation, Simeon was informed that he would see Jesus Christ (Luke 2:26). Yet, the people in general did not know (Luke 3:15). However, angels, including even fallen ones, knew who He was (Luke 4:41). Being the liars that they are, the demons—fallen angels—attempt to deceive people (John 8:44). Their purpose is destruction. They do not want human beings to know and obey Christ. By deception, human beings are induced to worship their own created Christs.

It requires a divine revelation to know and obey Christ (Matt. 11:25–27). Such knowledge is imperative; it is the essence of everlasting life (John 17:1–4). Such initial knowledge must come from God and Christ. Therefore, more importantly to us, to remain faithful and obedient to the initial call, is the faith requisite for continuity of belief. Compare Galatians 2:20 and Jude 3. Christ expressed this faith and orientation in a rather novel way. He said: ". . . When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he . . ." (John 8:28). By call from God we hear the truth and then in faith come to know that Christ is truly Christ. That Christ revealed will never change. By faith we will always know. And what is it that we will know? The manifested body of Christ, the church. In no way does the above text refer exclusively to a personalized concept of who and what Christ is. They saw and heard the individual who stood before them. But, little did most realize that they were talking to the very Son of God who had been born into humanity. In like manner, few see and know the body of Christ today. Continuity of belief is requisite to faithfulness (John 8:31). When God calls a chosen disciple He imparts the initial faith for belief. The responsibility of that individual is that of maintaining consistency of belief, faith. Today, how can one maintain faith in the manifestation of the body of Christ without knowing who and where He is? Remember, we have already come to see that the Bible speaks of a manifestation of Christ in the last days.

That manifested body is a church, one body, which has many members (I Cor. 12:11–12, 14, 20, 25). It is a physical body (Eph. 5:30). Deceptively, Satan has led or inspired many to believe that Christ abides in the spiritual domain only. Absolutely not! He is a manifested body somewhere on this earth, in the end times. Christ as an individual is the Head (member of the body) of the church. In the usage of the Greek word for head there are two concepts. First, the term refers to a physical member of a human body (Matt. 10:30; 14:8, John 13:9; 19:30, I Cor. 12:21). See also Colossians 2:19. Second, the term "head" refers to responsibility or position (Eph. 1:22 and 5:23). By the very fact the term "head" is used to designate superiority of position and responsibility, we are informed that that physical member of the body holds a superior position and responsibility as it relates to the entire human body. Is anything more self-evident? Please consider both Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 4:15–16. The physical head of the human body typifies responsibility as it relates to the body in general.

Christ existed in His own physical body. That physical body continues to exist even unto the time of Christ's Second Coming. It is manifested in the body of His church. Acceptance of the above facts requires just as much faith as it did for humanity to accept the fact Christ was the literal manifestation of the Son of God. As there existed many false Christs, so there will be many groups who will claim to be the bodies of Christ today, or at least claim to be a part of it. Knowing which one is the real body of Christ is the essence of everlasting life (John 17:1–4). Continuity of such confidence and belief is a major trial, test.

Some Who Once Knew, in Last Days, Will Deny Him

Though called and chosen by God, Peter, out of fear for his physical life, denied Christ (Matt. 26:69–75). Yet, only days earlier he had emphatically indicated that he knew who Christ was and that he accepted Him without reservation. Denial is possible for any human being. It is human arrogance which causes men to deny such possibilities.

In His own time, what was the cause for His rejection (Mark 8:31)? It was that which He taught. In many ways and at various times, Christ emphatically stressed: If they have rejected me, they will also reject you. Since Christ was the Truth, the Way, the Word made flesh, as well as the personal manifestation of the body, we are made aware that His body manifested in the last days would be rejected for the same reasons. Because of a resolute will to remain faithful to the body and the doctrine, those who compromise will manifest contempt and an aggressive behavior toward the faithful. The last days will be no different from the days of Christ Himself.

In a very real spiritual sense, the Bible makes it quite clear that denial cannot occur unless there has first been a revelation and acceptance. Those in Christ's own day were held accountable only because they said that they saw, believed, and understood. For that reason, their sins remained unforgiven. When we make a claim, by words, we are responsible. The called really know because God has revealed the truth to them. What is revealed? Who and what Christ is. Therefore, a liar is one who denies Christ. He knew and then for some physical reason turned from that knowledge. Let us note what John said about this matter. In I John 2:22 we are told: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." What was/is the source of this perversion—turning from the Truth? John explained in His gospel: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). Satan knew the truth from the beginning. He turned away from the way of life. He began to deny that which he once knew and admitted. He, consequently, became a liar and the father of the same traits manifested in human beings. From the days of the apostles down to our own time, it became possible to know Christ and then, due to arrogance of human mind, to pervert the revelation given and deny Christ. The denial of Christ is not a mere rejection of name; on the contrary, denial is a rejection of what Christ is—a manifestation of the Truth, the Way, the Word. It is the inability to see and recognize the physical manifestation of the body of Christ, *today*. Let us note John's explanation of this principle. In II John 7 we are instructed: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess [admit] not that Jesus Christ *is* come in the *flesh*. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." The Greek word used here demands a present tense consideration. That is, in whatever time it is read and understood, Christ exists in the flesh. Even in John's day that was some 50 to 60 years after the ascension of Christ. In our day, it means that Christ is manifested in the flesh over 1950 years after He existed in His own body. A liar is one who knew and then through mental perversion begins to claim the body is fractured, not one, and that the called can be found in separate bodies, because they will to be separate for personal reasons, or for doctrinal reasons.

Since the instructions of the Bible most specifically relate to these last days, it is obvious that what the Apostle John wrote applies in a significant manner to the body of these closing days.

Let us note how the above instructions specifically relate to our time. Because of craftiness some, once called of God, begin to pervert the way originally revealed to them. Satan, who is a liar, has perverted the minds of those who knew the truth (II Cor. 4:1–4). The faithful do not handle God's Word in a dishonest way. The ministry, faithful, remain loyal to the truths

which they were taught initially. The faithful members continue to hear that word. Others, though once understanding, are pursuing the way of destruction. The gospel message is hidden from them. The actual verbiage requires a progressive tense in the following: ". . . it is hid [being hidden] to them that are [being] lost." They are in the way of destruction. They have rejected the revealed truth. What truth? That Christ, the body, is one. That is the denial of Christ to which we refer.

Because of the turmoil generated in the body due to perversion, God has permitted a series of tests upon the called to ascertain their loyalty and faithfulness to the original divine revelation (II Thess. 2:9–12). Though, for doctrinal reasons, the faithful cannot remain in fellowship with the body which went apostate, they cannot form separate bodies. It is for that reason, the Church of God, The Eternal, has never claimed to be a separate body. We are, and have been from the beginning of our existence, estranged brethren only. In a comparable manner, we are in the same category in which the Apostle John found himself when he was unceremoniously put out of the body (III John 9–11).

In the last days a certain disruptive and evil attitude developed in the body—the church—which was the fleshly manifestation of Christ. Though the basic apostasy occurred at the time of the major disruption in the church, that fact does not imply that the attitude and mind which generated such a departure ceased to exist following the break. In all probability Satan intensified his spirit and influence of rebellion. We know that wrong-spirited agents would continue to generate strife, division, rebellion, and contempt to the end. In II Peter 2 the apostle makes these matters quite clear. Within the body would arise men who would pervert the truth in order to gain adherents (v. 1). These men would deny Christ—that is, they would assert that the called of God do not have to fellowship in *one* body, that they can remain separate for personal reasons. Many will follow this pernicious pronouncement because the real truth will be denigrated (v. 2). The real reason for their rebellion is an abhorrence for authority and responsibility given by God (vv. 10–11). They will concoct "believable" stories which the gullible will accept (v. 12). They were once a part of the body, or are still nominal members (last part of v. 13). They forsook the way of truth (v. 15). The strength of their appeal to unstable souls is their appeal to the dictates of the flesh (v. 18). Even while they continue to practice the way of flesh, they promise the rewards of obedience to the gullible (v. 19). They literally have turned from the way delivered to them (vv. 20–21).

The real objective of those who do not deny Christ is best indicated in Ephesians 4:13–14. In simple terms, that objective can be explained as follows: They are striving for the unity of *the* faith, reaching for the character (perfection) manifested in Christ's own life, stability and resistance against evil influences, and doctrinal consistency.

Knowing and accepting the facts is our first line of defense. Being forewarned is to be forearmed. What are the conditions which will prevail in these last days?

Last Day Claims

When speaking of the last days, Christ told us what to expect. His foremost concern was with deception. Deceptions which involved the creation of a host of false Christs. Interestingly,

these perverted individuals have appropriated the very name of Christ. But they have rejected doctrine, the Word (Matt. 24:4–5, 11). Since the Word—the doctrine—is Christ, in denying the Word they have denied Christ. Because of this absolute fact, the Apostle John gave us a stern admonition. He said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets [ministers] are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). Because the above command demands an absolute yardstick by which to evaluate, surely the called of God were given such a means of making that determination. Indeed, they were.

How can the called of God know what Christ they worship?

The Test

Wrong doctrine is sin (Matt. 16:6–12). Presumption is sin (Deut. 18:19–22, Num. 15:30–31, Deut. 17:8–13, Ps. 19:13). There are other forms of sin, such as ignorance. However, the first two are of greater significance to God because they involve rebellion, unfaithfulness, and will. Such sins are evidence of a spirit of rebellion and defiance. This is a factor which must be understood to apply the test which God gave us whereby we will be able to determine who Christ is—the real Truth.

Christ came in the flesh—Christ incarnate. Except by divine revelation He was not known by those who saw and communicated with Him daily. They saw Him merely as a human being. Not having their eyes opened to comprehend spiritual things, how could they know? There simply was no way they could realize His divine origin—that He was the Son of God, as well as existing in the flesh.

Remember the promise of Christ. That He would continue, not as a spirit being, but in the flesh. This time not in His own physical body, but in the body of the church, physical members molded into one body, one mind, one way. These members are called-out human beings who know who they are because they were called and through baptism have buried the old self—human nature—and now believe that their continued life is by the life of Christ in them (Gal. 2:20). They must believe that Christ *is* manifested—*now* (I John 5:1, 4–5). As we shall soon see, at issue is both who and what Christ is. For those called must believe that they are the body of Christ or hold God to be a liar (I John 5:9–13). The real test is believing that Jesus is manifested even *now* in the flesh. This time He lives in the body of the church—a continuing body of flesh. Those truly called and who remain faithful to the way *know* who they are—a part of the physical body of Christ (I John 5:20).

Knowing who they are empowers them to master their own carnal natures and thereby put on the character of God and His Son Jesus Christ. They overcome the natural inclinations of the flesh (I John 5:4). At one and the same time the called and faithful form a part of the manifested Christ and overcome themselves. As a part of the body of Christ they must deny themselves, not Christ (Mark 8:34–38). This status change occurs at the time of baptism with subsequent impartation of the Holy Spirit—the receiving of Christ. From that point onward the faithful must hold fast to the initial revelation (Col. 2:6–12, Heb. 3:14). (In no way does this requirement of steadfastness imply perfection from the beginning, with no need for growth. Growth does not mean doctrinal change.)

There is only *one* manifested body of Christ—the church, not churches. If we are not a part of that *physical* body (I Cor. 6:15), we are not a part of Christ. Even if in the last days, due to apostasy, the faithful are put out of the body, or cannot associate with members who have allowed themselves to become corrupted, the body remains the body. When Israel as a nation went corrupt, apostate, did they cease to be a nation? Hardly. Neither did the church. It simply became apostate. The faithful may be temporarily separated, but only because of doctrinal aberrations. Those loyal to the doctrine, though separated from the apostate body, will seek fellowship with one another. Any attempt to justify separation, other than doctrinal reasons, is another subtlety generated by Satan. For, anyone joined to Christ is one spirit (I Cor. 6:17). In just a moment we will see how this very principle is the one and only means by which the called and faithful can and will know where Christ is and what the truth is.

God's Spirit is not divisive, rebellious, contentious. Those who seek separate status do so because of a contentious spirit. That spirit is not of God. It is the spirit of Satan the Devil which is destructive and divisive. The Spirit of God seeks harmony, accord, agreement. The above reasons are the basis for our pursuit of the same way which we received at the beginning of God's special work in these last days. As the Apostle Paul explained in Ephesians 4:1–5, 11–14, the faithful tenaciously hold to the irrefutable truth—that God's body, the church, is *one*, that the doctrine does not change, and that the ministry must remain loyal to its initial call.

The faithful Christian cannot sleep today. Deception is ever present. Your confidence in what God is doing and those whom He has chosen will be tried severely. Note II Timothy 3:13–14. ". . . Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Your safety and hope of the future rests exclusively upon your faith and confidence in the truth which you were initially taught. Any watering down or deviation from that way is a sure recipe for failure and disappointment. How beautifully John explained this concept. "Whosoever transgresseth [takes the lead], 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. If there come any to you [your trust and confidence will be tried, because deceivers will arise right out of the midst of the people of God], and bring not this doctrine [that the church is one body, that the love of God is the fulfilling of the laws and statutes of God, that only the called and commissioned ministers of God through the one body are acceptable to Him, and that divorce and remarriage, including separation from one's mate, is a violation of the law of God], receive him not into your house [including telephone calls], neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Is it possible to make the principle any more clear?

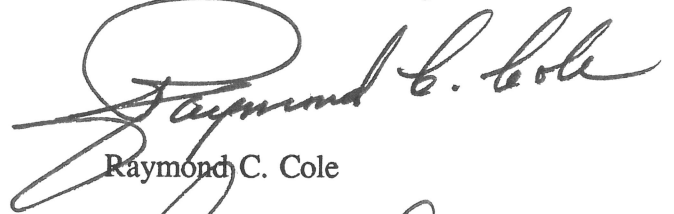
God does not want us to exist with any form of doubt. He wants us to know. We must *know* the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. If we do not know, how can we ever make the necessary decisions regarding orientation and direction? Again, the Apostle John, who lived in the days of the First Century apostasy, gives us the only guideline. He wrote: "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 4:2–3). The Greek language demands a "present tense" application. It

is not that we recognize and admit that Christ did come in the flesh. Not at all. It requires a belief and admission that Christ is *presently* here in the flesh. How? He is here in the body of the church—in the fleshly bodies which individually make up the body of Christ. Since the body of Christ was *one*, the body of the church can be only *one*. Individuals are members of that body as long as they retain their original faith—the doctrine. But, there are not differing bodies all forming a part of the one body of Christ. For anyone to claim that it is not necessary to be a part of the one body automatically identifies him as a part of the antichrist. Therefore, let it be fully understood, this body does not claim to be a separate body. We are estranged brethren from the apostate body because of their change of doctrine. When that body is refined and they return to the faith initially given to them, we will again be a united body. Any other "reason" for separation is not acceptable to God.

Much more will be said about this concept in the future. It is hoped that sufficient has been given to make the concept clear for this issue of the *Monthly Letter*.

Thank you for your continued loyalty—first and foremost to the truth of God and then to the purpose for which you were called to that knowledge. We count it a privilege to continue to serve you.

With much love and respect,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is fluid and connected, with a large loop at the beginning.

Raymond C. Cole

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bryce G. Clark". The signature is long and sweeping, with a prominent horizontal line at the end.

Bryce G. Clark