

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

Now that we have advanced more than a quarter century beyond the time God's Church began to apostatize from revealed Truth in these last days, the picture of that splintering body at the close of 2001 is amazing indeed. While the majority are still defending their personalized views about doctrine and truth, there also seems to be an increasing number becoming painfully aware of the lack of positive fruits overall since the early 1970s. For all the fervor about getting the church "back on track" in the late 1970s and early 1980s, that never really materialized. And after Mr. Herbert Armstrong died in 1986, things only went from bad to worse.

Since then, there are more and more who have become increasingly dissatisfied with the shifting foundations of the splinter groups springing from the Worldwide Church of God. While most claim legitimacy to carry on the work of God begun in this age by Mr. Armstrong, there seems to be little commitment to staying the course toward any definite heading, except the concept of doing a work. But which one of those "works" has even remotely been successful in impacting the world? Most have restated Mr. Armstrong's original claim about the proof of God's true work, and then tried to apply it to themselves. He said for years if a work is truly being backed by God it is first, effectively reaching the world with the gospel message and secondly, growing. But which one of these many groups has really been successful according to these standards? Not one has demonstrated they are truly being blessed and advanced by God by significant growth or making a splash on the world scene. It simply has not happened. The personal work of Mr. Armstrong prior to 1974 is the only one that really bore that kind of fruit. All attempts since then to duplicate that success have failed miserably, whether or not any of them are willing to admit it yet.

When we get beyond the presumptive claims of a grand commission, in the final analysis members are left to face the reality of what each group stands for doctrinally. It is one thing to embrace a particular sect whose approach is enticing initially, but quite another to accept where that orientation eventually leads concerning the truth. How many of our former brethren have been leapfrogging from group to group, trying to find a foundation that is sure, or else giving up altogether and trying to obey God on their own? It is comparable to the sinking of a great ship. Passengers have leapt into a multitude of lifeboats of their

individual choosing, only to find in time that these boats are themselves untrustworthy, springing more and more leaks as they are tossed upon the waves. We have heard it said repeatedly, "If only the group I joined would have stayed like it was at the beginning." But all too often the teachings of these groups over the years seem to be evolving toward something more progressively foreign. Under the banner of "grow in grace and knowledge," what we actually find is a host of crumbling foundations that cannot be fortified. It is the very same disease that led our parent organization finally to repudiate every fundamental doctrine we once held dear. Many of the splinter groups renounce the total abandonment of the Sabbath, Holy Days, and adoption of the Trinity, yet they themselves are moving slowly down a similar road, customizing doctrine to suit themselves.

Why can they not stand in surety? From the inquiries we are receiving, this is a question more and more of our former brethren seem to be asking. To diagnose the real reason for the gradual spiritual decay of these splinter groups, one must first be able to identify at what point the degradation began to set in. If your home has areas of decay from water damage, it does little good to repair and replace the rotted wood, if you fail to fix the water leak that led to the initial damage. Without addressing the root cause, one is merely masking the problem and inviting not only a repeat of the problem, but even more extensive deterioration down the line. This is precisely what many of God's people are experiencing today. They know something went terribly wrong somewhere along the way within God's Church of the last days. They have no choice but to acknowledge the manifested fruits which are apparent for all to see. These fruits are comparable to that weakened, rotted wood, evident to the naked eye. But getting to the root cause of that decay is something else entirely.

Where Did the Decay Begin?

The divergent, chaotic, and contradictory philosophies extant in sermons and articles of former ministers and laymembers of the parent body, bespeak a failed attempt to diagnose the fundamental breach which initiated that spiritual decay within the Body of Christ. Most of them point to changes in doctrine that occurred after the death of Mr. Armstrong. But this ignores the fact the foundation already was crumbling years before. Why else would Mr. Armstrong publicly have lamented the destruction of the church by liberals in the 1970s, in the very last article he wrote for *The Worldwide News*, dated June 24, 1985, entitled, "Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the Worldwide Church of God"? Notice what he said:

God had blessed His Church with an unprecedented approximate increase of 30 percent per year for 35 years. As these liberals began gaining more and more control God removed His blessing. I have often said that God blesses us as we please Him. During these liberal years in the 1970s, the income virtually stagnated. In 1974 the Church experienced a 1.6 percent decrease in income under 1973, the first negative growth in the Church's history. It fell another 4.8 percent the following year.

How did Mr. Armstrong characterize the root cause of this downturn in income at the hands of the liberals? He begins earlier in the article by stating:

A small few Ambassador graduates who had become ministers in the Church were somewhat scholarly inclined, especially one who had a specific problem. . . . He began to question some of the established doctrines of the Church of God, such as counting the day of Pentecost, divorce and remarriage, tithing and others. Soon he was entering into what he considered a scholarly research to DISprove some of the Church's basic teachings. Gradually one or two others, then even more, joined in a self-appointed "scholarly research" to DISprove plain biblical truths.

Mr. Armstrong seems to admit that the first manifestation of trouble came when ministers began to turn to human scholarship as the source of truth, rather than accept the doctrines we had been taught by Mr. Armstrong for almost forty years as the revelation of Jesus Christ. Notice what Mr. Armstrong originally stated as the source for those teachings, from his own *Co-worker Letter*; November 29, 1954:

And so I say to you, as the Apostle Paul said to those at Galatia: I certify you, brethren, that the GOSPEL which is 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. . . . When it pleased God, who . . . called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him to the world; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood—neither went I to any sect or denomination or human theologian, but I went directly to the WORD of GOD, on my knees, corrected, reproved, and instructed in God's righteousness and TRUTH!

If that indeed is true, then what we heard through the voice of Mr. Armstrong from the beginning—including a Monday Pentecost and the first teaching on divorce and remarriage—was never any concoction of man, but the very revealed doctrines of the Father through Jesus Christ! And if that is true, how can any doctrinal review by men—according to the scholarship of this world's wisdom—be used to amend what God gave in miraculous fashion to a chosen servant?

Yet, though Mr. Armstrong pinpointed the root cause of the "water leak" as the turn to human scholarship, it appears he was unable for some reason to move completely to stop that leak. How can we assert this? *The Worldwide News* article goes on to state:

Since God brought me back from total heart failure, and directed me in removing these liberals, and putting the Church back on track, He has restored His blessings. . . . These physical blessings are matched by new spiritual growth and new truth added to His Church.

Yes, many of the men indicted as liberals were certainly removed (or they left), but unfortunately, the changes they initiated remained! Thereafter, did that body truly come to be blessed as it had been in the early years, after the attempted reformation of the 1980s? Did that parent body truly purge itself of the corruption of Pentecost and divorce and remarriage, the first major doctrines to be attacked based upon human scholarship? Not at all! Instead, what issues were made the focus of the "back on track" movement? Another quote from *The Worldwide News* article is revealing:

These liberals wanted complete freedom in the Church for divorce and remarriage at will. Other questions raised by the liberals were complete freedom for any type marriage, some more and some less freedom from tithing, doing away with or modifying Church teachings on healing by direct prayer as in James 5:14, complete freedom for women in facial makeup, and even the approval of celebrating birthdays (never approved in the Bible) and even of voting in elections as part of the world.

So, in the early 1980s, the real meat of the "reformation" consisted of repudiating make-up, birthdays, and voting, reconfirming tithing and divine healing, and *limiting* divorce and remarriage. Did this mean that the original teaching on marriage—which the church had taught for the first forty years as divine revelation—was re-instituted? Hardly! And did the church ever return to the original teaching on divine healing—that we are to avoid going to doctors or hospitals? It did not! And why did Pentecost never even make the list of reforms, since it was the first major doctrine perverted in 1974 under the liberal influence? In reality, what was billed as the purge of liberalism was nothing more than the replacement of the decrepit facade with something that appeared to be more conservative. But it was no different than replacing visible pieces of rotting lumber, while ignoring the water leak—continuing its hidden, seeping, destructive work. And in spite of the claims in the 1980s that God's church was now back on track and being blessed again, the historical fruits show this was simply not true. In spite of certain temporary spurts in income and membership growth, that body was consistently in a state of decline. What is left of the Worldwide Church of God today has rejected everything we initially stood for as the called people of God. What was the real "water leak" that Satan used to destroy systematically our parent organization? Amazingly, it was the very same philosophy which almost every splinter group has since adopted, which has been working just as destructively like a lethal virus in those congregations.

Divine Revelation Is the Key

The reason the splinter groups who came out of our parent organization are themselves continuing to embrace more and more false doctrine as the years go by, is that none of them are rooted in belief that Jesus Christ revealed His Truth in the last days through a chosen servant, and that this revelation can never change! Divine revelation is the solitary concept that undergirds real Truth.

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast *revealed them* unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are *delivered to me* of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, *and he to whom the Son will reveal him*. And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them (Luke 10:21–24) [emphasis ours].

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath *revealed them unto us by his Spirit*: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:7–10) [emphasis ours].

Not only was the Truth uniquely hidden from the wise men and scholars of the world—that revelation to the Church came not by the individual Bible study of each one called—but it came through a chosen servant who was commissioned as an instrument of God to preach that Way.

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is *given me to you-ward*: How that by revelation *he made known unto me* the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed *unto his holy apostles and prophets* by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:1–5) [emphasis ours].

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Yes, Mr. Armstrong always challenged us to prove it from our own Bibles, but we would never have known where to look, or even what questions to ask if we had not been instructed by a commissioned servant of God. We can attempt to deny these facts all we want. This is precisely what most have done. But then, are not their sickly fruits proof they have constructed inferior foundations, having rejected the real Christ and His Holy Spirit?

The splinter groups who came out of the Worldwide Church of God are traveling the very same road as their parent organization, howbeit at a much slower pace. Why? Because they have likewise embraced the liberal, perverted doctrines of the 1970s—including a Sunday Pentecost and the acceptance of adulterous relationships they call marriages—rejecting the idea that Jesus Christ gave His Truth to the Body from the very beginning, through the initial teachings of Mr. Armstrong.

Is There a Faithful Remnant?

Jesus Christ promised the gates of hell would not prevail against His Church (Matthew 16:18). Isaiah was also inspired to write a prophecy concerning the survival of a faithful remnant, after the apostasy of the visible church. "And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isaiah 1:8–9).

Many of those who reject the substance of this promise presume to assert there is no faithful ministry left today who can be looked to as inspired servants of God. It is fashionable instead to believe we are left to ourselves to determine what is truth. Many are now jumping onto this bandwagon, content to sit at home, subscribing to various religious publications, and selecting nuggets from each one which *they decide* have value. Many even make it their personal mission to write and tell various ministers what they need to do to be right in the eyes of God, as if they have now somehow become the source of divine inspiration. But this whole premise is a rejection of the promise Jesus Christ gave to His disciples before His ascension.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, *I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* Amen (Matthew 28:18–20) [emphasis ours].

Christ promised He would be manifesting Himself *somewhere* in the last days, even as He was preparing to work through the Twelve in the first century. And this promise cannot be made void by claiming He is simply fulfilling it in each individual Christian, as He leads us personally through the Holy Spirit.

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord *when he cometh shall find so doing* (Matthew 24:45–46) [emphasis ours].

Someone was commissioned to preach with authority in the name of Jesus Christ. The called of God were expected to hear that voice—the voice of Christ Himself *through that human agent*—and to respond. Even though the servant God used to raise up that Church in these last days himself went apostate in his old age as a fulfillment of prophecy, Christ's promise to preserve a faithful remnant *and a faithful ministry*—continuing to give meat in due season—has not been broken. Jesus Christ did not lie. The only legitimate question is, where is that remnant, and who are those faithful servants still feeding them?

Characteristics of a Faithful Remnant

Hundreds of men and groups have laid claim to legitimacy as God's servants in the aftermath of the break-up of our parent organization. But what is their proof? Where is the seal of their authenticity? By what authority do they really exist? One former Ambassador College graduate (quoted anonymously here) stated it very well, even though he himself is just as confused. "Most people who believe they must stay in a certain group simply do not want to talk about how they know that their leader is the right one." Yes, most indeed have a very difficult time showing evidence of their authenticity. Can it be done, and how would any of us know the difference? Jesus Christ gave the clear and simple answer, and those who are legitimate do not have any problem answering.

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him (John 7:16–18).

Then how can we evaluate whether any man claiming authority from God is truly speaking with legitimacy, or arrogantly speaking of himself? We must know it by the *doctrine* he espouses! But how can we know what the true doctrine is? Is it not impossible with so much confusion extant among the splinter groups today? "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:20–21).

What is that truth we are supposed to know, which we have no excuse for not recognizing? It is that which was taught from the beginning by a chosen servant through divine revelation!

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. 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. As we said before, so say I now again,

If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:6–9).

Referring to this very passage of the Apostle Paul, Mr. Armstrong wrote the following comment in his "Personal From the Editor" in the July, 1965 *Plain Truth* magazine:

Notice that well! Paul put a careful and perfectly honest control over himself! He warned those people that, even if he, PAUL, should CHANGE his doctrine, and begin living by different customs, that such personal, human change would definitely not "change" anything in the unalterable truth of Christ!

He included—and he was inspired by God's Holy Spirit to do so—Angels from heaven! So even lesser spirit beings do not have the power to change anything God has set down in His Word! God, your Creator, has said He will not change! And He has put an absolute, unshakable, unbreakable and inviolable guarantee that no other being or power can change His laws!

If this is true, and if Mr. Armstrong were truly that inspired servant whom God used in these last days, what does that tell us about the only legitimate definition of *the Truth*? It must be that which he taught and practiced from the beginning.

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and *belief of the truth*: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and *hold the traditions which ye have been taught*, whether by word, or our epistle (2 Thessalonians 2:13–15) [emphasis ours].

Anyone who claims that Mr. Armstrong initially taught a mixture of truth and error—the error being "corrected" through better scholarship of later Ambassador College graduates—is teaching a lie. They do not pass muster as one speaking legitimately in the name of Jesus Christ. If one is truly convinced Herbert Armstrong was wrong about a Monday Pentecost and the original teaching on marriage and divorce, then he is by default convinced that Jesus Christ was never the Revelator, or the one who raised up the Radio Church of God. We cannot have it both ways. Either the church had truth from the beginning, or else it never was the true Church, one or the other. Which will we claim?

Narrowing the List of Contenders

Therefore, amidst all the confusion about which group or groups are truly being led by God since the break-up of the Worldwide Church of God, what can we conclude? Anyone who does not hold to the original teaching on Pentecost, marriage, the nature of man,

divine healing, the calendar, etc. is denying the Christ who miraculously revealed these truths! Simply reviewing the splinter groups' individual teachings on Pentecost alone clears the field of most imposters. Of over four hundred offshoots today—including the very largest ones—virtually *all* keep a Sunday Pentecost. By this fruit alone, they are automatically disqualified as true representatives of God. In spite of their grandiose claims and efforts to do a work in God's name, He does not honor, respect, or acknowledge them.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood (Isaiah 1:11–15).

They are still His called people—spiritual Israel—but are now in a state of apostasy, as cut off from God as is our parent organization who has repudiated almost every original doctrine. Many of these groups have not progressed yet to the level of corruption of our parent body, but the water is yet steadily dripping within their walls, rotting their foundation from the inside out. Because they have rejected Christ as the Revelator of Truth, and turned to their own human scholarship, they will continue slowly to slip into more and more error as the years progress. Without God's Holy Spirit to guide, they cannot and will not stay the course.

Who Else Is Left?

Who is yet proclaiming the original doctrines we all once kept together for almost forty years, before the liberalism of the 1970s? This author knows of only one small remnant body who fits that description—Church of God, The Eternal, founded by the late Raymond C. Cole. This is not to say there could not be others, but only that if there are, we do not know of it. We have never tried to put a fence around ourselves. But we have put a fence around *the Truth*. Those original doctrines are the only yardstick that can be used for evaluation. We have not come up with our own creative "take" on doctrine, and then tried to force others to enter uncharted spiritual waters with us. No, we have simply held fast to the original teachings we *all* once kept together, during the years when God's church was strong and growing. We have no pride of authorship for any startling new prophetic interpretation of the Bible. We do not dabble in such empty speculation, and such has never been the basis of our confidence. We simply love what we received originally as Truth and

were baptized to believe. Growing in grace and knowledge, to us, means continuing the process of overcoming, and putting on the nature of Jesus Christ more fully in our lives day by day, not taking a jackhammer to that foundation in the name of "new truth." Every one of these other ministers had the same right to hold fast to that Truth. They were also baptized into that same Jesus Christ years ago. Why have they not held fast to what they first accepted? "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy [Spirit] which dwelleth in us" (2 Timothy 1:13–14). The fact they have not done so, and left us here alone, is not because we wanted it that way. Anyone God has truly called has a right to partake of those doctrines and keep them. In fact, they still do. We are not preventing it in any way. We simply refuse to follow them—or anyone—into error.

Even though Mr. Raymond Cole has now passed away, our confidence is not shaken, and this remnant body is as strong and viable as ever. Our fellowship has never been based upon a cult worship of Mr. Cole. We followed him for over twenty-five years since the apostasy because he was the only evangelist from the original Radio Church of God who continued to teach us those same unadulterated truths. Now that God has taken him out of the way, God has still preserved a committed ministry in the United States, Europe, and Asia, who fears Him and respects the absolute nature of divine revelation. We do not intend to depart from that Way.

Are Numbers and "the Work" the Proof?

But what about those larger splinter groups who claim Church of God, The Eternal cannot be God's faithful remnant, because we are not doing a great "work," and do not have thousands of members? The answer is, we never claimed either of those criteria as proof of our legitimacy! Those are the standards *they* adopted for *themselves*! As mentioned earlier in this letter, Mr. Armstrong's credibility as a servant of God certainly was substantiated through the phenomenal growth of that original body, and the success he had in reaching thousands around the world. But that proved *he* was the last day servant God used to raise up the firstfruits harvest—the Body of Christ! If we continue to hold fast to those same truths he taught first during those years of blessing, how can we then be called illegitimate? And where is it prophesied that the small faithful remnant of God, who came out of the great apostate body, would also be commissioned right away to do another great work? Oh yes, there certainly will be an incredible work before the return of Christ, to redeem His wayward children out of their gross perversion of doctrine, and to warn the entire world of His eminent arrival. But that work was not done by Mr. Armstrong, and neither has it been done by any other man. Whether he knew it or not at the time, Mr. Armstrong's true commission was to raise up the Church of the last days! How do we know? Because that is precisely what he accomplished! Although he thought he was also paving the way for the return of Christ—giving that final warning to the world—Christ did not return in the 1970s, and has still not returned to date. Whoever will do that work will be chosen by God, and will

perform it *just prior* to the return of Christ. The work of John the Baptist occurred *just prior* to the arrival of Christ. So shall it be in preparation for His Second Coming as well. No man has a right to arrogate to himself the responsibility to do that Work. Does not God choose His own representatives?

Raymond Cole simply continued to do that which he was ordained originally by Mr. Armstrong to do; feed the sheep. And as we have mentioned already, according to their own standards, these larger splinter groups are utterly failing! Where is their thirty percent average growth per year, if that is the proof of the faithful remnant's identity? And where is their monumental worldwide work that is commanding the attention of the world, causing the kings of the earth to shake in their boots? It is non-existent. Their small radio, TV, and magazine programs have not even created a minimal blip on the world scene. If those "works" are the divine fulfillment of last day prophecy, do we really think God is so weak? We never claimed these criteria as the proof of our legitimacy. They were the proof of *Mr. Armstrong's* legitimacy from the beginning. But if we have continued to preserve that very same doctrine for the last twenty-six years, who can dismiss us because of our size and scattered nature? But can we truly be the only ones?

Satan's Counterfeits

The only other organized groups we know of keeping a Monday Pentecost, are a few of those who were once members of our fellowship, and then for their own personal reasons in past years, departed to set up counterfeit assemblies. Unlike Raymond Cole, who only left the Worldwide Church of God in 1974–75 once he was prevented by them from obeying God's revealed law, these few other men left our fellowship for no such credible reason. We have continued to preserve those original teachings for the last twenty-six years without change, so no one can claim they were forced to depart from us because we eventually corrupted doctrine. In the end, they left because they took exception with Raymond Cole over administrative issues, and then adopted a false concept of church government to justify personalized separation. This too is the fulfillment of a key prophecy concerning the last days.

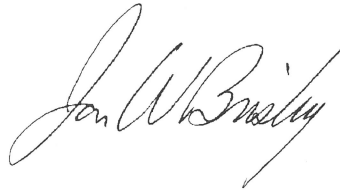
For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves (Jude 8–10).

Lest any counterfeit body be confused with the genuine article, one only need look at the true details of each man's departure to identify the difference. Raymond Cole left our parent organization only after he was forced to, in order to uphold the doctrine. He did not leave because of any personal disagreement with Mr. Armstrong or with any other man. And even after he left, for all the remaining days of his life, he never denigrated Mr. Armstrong or made accusations. In spite of the fact Mr. Armstrong approved the corruption of doctrine, Raymond Cole always respected the man through whom he had learned the truth, and spoke of him with appreciation. He never engaged in speculative hearsay about Mr. Armstrong's personal sins, or gave heed to many who thought he should write his own tell-all book. No, Mr. Cole knew that could never be the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, and refused to be seduced by such an orientation. By contrast, the men who left our fellowship have engaged in all manner of personal slander, ridicule, and disrespect. But the fact they could have remained with us and still *kept God's laws absolutely without compromise*, is the telling evidence of forgery they will never be able to shake.

Those who are truly seeking to find a faithful remnant—being shepherded by a faithful ministry—will be provided the direction of God to do so. He has not abandoned us by any means. In spite of the faulty life rafts beckoning to God's people—full of holes and slowly sinking—we can find real stability if we believe what Christ said, and look to the standard He gave as the only true yardstick—the revealed doctrine. May your faith in that simplicity of Christ see you through these treacherous days.

Yours faithfully in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Jon W. Brisby