

The Two-Headed Monster

December 2012

Dear Brethren:

I had hoped this month to provide the continuation of October's historical analysis of the similarities/differences between Herman Hoeh and Raymond Cole in the early Radio Church of God, but that will have to wait for February 2013. Because of a challenging travel schedule for November and December, I chose instead to provide you with a very different, howbeit thought-provoking historical lesson which, hopefully, will be of value to those of you truly intent upon holding to the faith once delivered.

Soon after Mr. Raymond Cole died in September 2001, I was asked by a member of our fellowship to answer some very pointed questions about Mr. Cole's teachings concerning church government. Recall that three years beforehand, Mr. Cole's long-time ministerial assistant had separated from us, making many accusations against Mr. Cole personally and forming his own small group. One of the key accusations was that Raymond Cole had perverted *the faith once delivered* concerning church government, and that members therefore were not only *justified* in separating from Church of God, The Eternal, but *duty-bound* to do so to be right with God.

What was the "evidence" of Raymond Cole's apostasy? A sermon he had given for Unleavened Bread in April 2001, addressing the principles of government, was cited as confirming the same "false teaching" he had begun espousing in the late 1990s. That sermon was compared to Mr. Cole's strong statements in another sermon series from 1976 about church government, and claimed to reveal *clear* contradictions. Mr. Cole had supposedly changed his position about the proper ministerial role in relationship to the church. What was this supposed contradiction specifically? In Tape #1 of the 1976 series entitled, *Church Government*, he said this concerning the faulty orientation of many ministers about government:

. . . [W]e have assumed there is a two-headed monster that is the guide and director of us all, because we're talking about a physical head. And I'll challenge anyone on the face of this earth to show me a physical head. I'll show you plenty of servants, but there is no physical head. Jesus Christ is that Head . . .

However, the accusers emphasize, in the April 2001 sermon for the last day of Unleavened Bread—twenty-four years later—Mr. Cole said this concerning Ephesians 5:22, describing Christ as the Head of the church:

That does not mean, brethren, that the church does not have a physical head. You see, people want to jump from the physical to the spiritual, and from the spiritual back to the physical. You can't do it. If there are fingers, if there are legs, eyes, ears, arms and so on, that are physical members of that body, so is there also a physical head.

The member who questioned me in September 2001 about this claimed contradiction had been already influenced by the minister who separated from our fellowship, and asked me to respond formally to the facts of the case. Even though I was fairly certain this individual had already made the decision to leave us—merely making it *appear* that a truly objective review was being performed—I took the time to write a detailed explanation to address the issues, with hopes that this beloved, but destabilized, member might still somehow avoid the deceptive trap being laid. Unfortunately, in spite of my best efforts to provide proof of the facts, that individual chose nonetheless to separate from us soon thereafter.

But recently, having come across the saved document of my personal, written doctrinal analysis, I thought that many of you might appreciate the lesson today, even eleven years later. Below is that detailed reply from September 2001, which I have entitled, *The Two-Headed Monster*.

The Two-Headed Monster; September 2001

What was the whole context of Mr. Cole's first two tapes in 1976 on Church Government?

- Men cannot arrogate responsibility to themselves to do a work, or act in the name of God. God chooses His representatives.
- Just because one is chosen as a minister, he is not given *carte blanche* to do what he wants. Even Christ was limited in His authority while in the flesh. He could not go where He wanted, but only where the Father sent Him.

The entire "two-headed monster" analogy is used by Mr. Cole to repudiate those who:

- 1) *Usurp authority* and act in God's name when they were not truly called, or
- 2) Worship a man, instead of Christ. Mr. Cole referred several times to the issue of "personality cults" as the main topic of this series. This is a *direct reference* to worshipping Mr. Armstrong as the "head" of the church, by following him into doctrinal error, in contradiction to Christ's former revelation.

This, then, is Mr. Cole's definition of a "two-headed monster"—a physical servant who either *usurps authority*, or *uses his God-given authority to lead the church into error*. Mr. Cole did not imply that Moses, as a physical leader of Israel, was ever a contradictory head, and neither does he imply that *a chosen human servant* today, who is a "head" by virtue of his *ministerial responsibilities*, is a separate, competing "head." Christ's agents are physical; they are "heads," but they are not *separate heads*, making us some *two-headed monster*. They are instead *extensions of Christ*, that *One Head*, but being in the flesh.

Here is the expanded quote from Raymond Cole from the sermon, *Church Government* (1976), Tape #1 which shows it all in context. Referring to ancient Israel, he said:

God is now going to begin to deal with a nation. So a kingdom is established, just exactly as He said. But in the establishment of that kingdom, . . . God was Ruler, He was their Protector, He was their Provider, He was their Teacher, and He was their Healer, as well as a whole host of other things. He was the direct Ruler. He spoke to Moses, and Moses in turn spoke to Aaron, and who in turn delivered these very things to the children of Israel. But it had to be a direct instruction from the Eternal God. He was dealing with that nation in very, very miraculous ways. Now in the process of time, what happened? Here they had—as their ruler—Almighty God. But they wanted a human being. And do you know (if I can just jump a little bit, because I want to use the comparison for right now), we have a Head, Jesus Christ, but we still don't believe it. We want a human head. And it is in that configuration alone that virtually every mistake has been made. We have presumed that we are sent of God. We have presumed the very message that is to be proclaimed. *It has been altered, changed, and everything, to suit one's own fancy*, and we have assumed that *there is a two-headed monster that is the guide and the director of us all*. Because we keep talking about a physical head. And I'll challenge anyone on the face of this earth to show me a physical head. I'll show you *plenty of servants*, but *there is no physical head. Jesus Christ is that Head. . . .* 1 Samuel 8:1, 3–5: . . . Here now is a nation, which was also the Church of God, the *ecclesia* that was established at Mt. Sinai (Acts 7:37–39). It was the church of God at that time—it was a kingdom—the kingdom of the Eternal God. It was the bride of Jesus Christ, for that covenant was the marriage relationship. But you know in the process of time, they said, "No, we don't want that. We don't want to look directly to God. We want to be like the other nations." Now if the nation at that time were God's Body—the wife of Christ—the church today is. Is there anything that indicates perhaps the church today wants to be like other churches? Just as the nation didn't want God to rule it, it wanted to be like the nations. Vs. 7–9: "And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say

unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." They rejected the Eternal God that he should not rule over them. They wanted to be like the nations. They wanted to have a human head. They wanted to have a man they could look to, to go out to war, to fight the battles, to take their taxes, to do the various things that he said would happen. They wanted to be like all other nations. . . . They wanted, now, a human head. *They didn't want Christ* (before He became the Christ . . .). *They didn't want Him to rule over them.* They wanted to be like the nations [emphasis mine].

Notice that Mr. Cole *did not imply* that Moses was like the king Israel wanted for itself. God put Moses into office. And He worked *through Moses* to communicate with the nation. Samuel was also a servant who had authority over the nation. The difference occurs when the people reject the man God is using and adopt *instead* their own counterfeit. *This* is the concept of a *two-headed monster*.

As Mr. Cole said above, Israel was the same then as the church is today.

With that in mind, what role did Moses actually play in relation to Israel? Was he not some form of a *physical head*? Not a competing, contradictory head, as Mr. Cole is denouncing above, but a *commissioned servant*, whose role was to lead Israel, *as God was leading him*:

And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, *and made them heads over the people*, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves (Exodus 18:25–26) [emphasis mine].

If the men that were under Moses' authority were called "heads" over the people, what was Moses himself? Was he not also a *head* in some way?

The difference is, Moses spoke *the words of Almighty God*, not his own words. He was not a "second head"—as making Israel's government a *two-headed monster*—fighting itself in confusion and contradiction. He was acting *on behalf of* God, but was a *physical* manifestation of that *same, singular* Head.

This aspect of leadership and authority in the Church is *exactly* what Mr. Cole is speaking of when he uses the word "physical head."

By contrast to the 1976 sermons that repudiate *leaders who arrogate authority to themselves* in opposition to revealed Truth by Jesus Christ to the Church, the subject of Mr. Cole's April 2001 sermon was "independent Christians," those *laymembers* who

think they do not need a ministry to have a relationship with Christ. [In fact, the very name of the sermon is, *Can We Be an Independent Christian?*] He was refuting the very claims they make, when they assert that "Christ is the Head," but imply *there is no physical chain of authority to which the church is subject*. Mr. Cole did not initiate the debate in 1997–1998 over what it means for Christ to be the "Head." No, those who despise government by rejecting the need for a ministry are those who began the debate on the meaning of Christ as Head. Mr. Cole merely took up what was thrown at him and refuted that false notion by reaffirming the faith once delivered.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me (John 13:20).

He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me (Luke 10:16).

Christ said He would manifest Himself through the work of *chosen human beings*, who would be His *delegated representatives*. They would be acting *in the name of Jesus Christ*. They are a direct extension of Christ, because they are not doing their own wills, but the will of the very One who sent them, even as did Moses as a "head."

Remember them which have the rule over you, *who have spoken unto you the word of God*: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. *Jesus Christ* the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever (Hebrews 13:7–8) [emphasis mine].

What will we choose to call those human beings God uses to preserve the Truth, whoever they may be? What title will we give those offices of the ones God's people were to subject themselves? Whether we use the word "head" or something else, what authority is encompassed in that role, and how is it to be exercised by those chosen human beings *in the name of Christ*?

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, *and are over you in the Lord*, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13).

How is Christ manifesting Himself to rule over the Church as its Head today? Is He ruling by inspiring each member of the Body *independently* through the Holy Spirit, and then those *hundreds of individuals* get together and compare what Christ told each one of them to do? Or instead, has He placed *chosen flesh and blood human beings* in specific offices, who bear authority to direct the work of the Church and to teach?

For though I should boast somewhat more of *our authority, which the Lord hath given us* for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed (2 Corinthians 10:8) [emphasis mine].

These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke *with all authority*. Let no man despise thee (Titus 2:15).

What shall we call one such man who has been given this authority from Jesus Christ? Where does he fit within the Body of Christ?

As an agent of Christ, speaking and writing in the name of Jesus Christ, such a man is not *a separate, physical head*. No, he is the *physical representation* of that very Jesus Christ—who is the One and only spiritual Head of the Body—and that man is doing the will of that one Head, but in the flesh, as one appointed by Christ to act *in His name and by His authority*.

Mr. Cole described the characteristics of a man ordained of God to represent Christ in the flesh as a "physical head" within the Church. What should we call this office instead, if "head" is inappropriate?

Accusations Require Proof

We are being accused by those who separated from us of *changing doctrine*. If we have indeed *changed the doctrine*, what change is it, specifically, and how has that change been manifested?

Setting aside the issue of how best to refer to the offices of authority God has instituted, has Church of God, The Eternal changed its orientation about authority and church government since its inception in 1975? What have we *practiced*, in the *structure* of this ministry, in *behavior* of the ministry, and in *relationship with the laity*? Let us put aside empty accusations and focus upon real evidence.

If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. *But if I do*, though ye believe not me, *believe the works*: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him (John 10:37–38) [emphasis mine].

Did Mr. Cole ever advocate democracy in the ministry, as opposed to having a "head" minister over a particular jurisdiction? No, Raymond Cole had *always* reserved the final authority over the decisions of this remnant body to *himself*, under Jesus Christ as his inspiration and guide. If this is a wrong principle, *we have been wrong from the start*.

Here is a quote from an August 25, 1975, letter to the Church of God, The Eternal membership, from Richard Nichols, Secretary of the Board of Directors at that time:

Annual meetings with approval by the membership of the Board of Directors are required by corporate law, and we intend to fulfill the requirements of the state, as long as they don't conflict with God's higher laws (1 Pet. 2:13–17, Acts 5:29). No, *God's government is not one of democracy or voting*, but neither is it one of rule by fiat or in secrecy [emphasis mine].

That was a description of our form of government from the beginning. And from that time until now, we have operated in this very same way. It has been consistent throughout. The ministry is vested with the authority to make all decisions, but our financial records and basis for administrative decisions have *always* been open to review for any member.

If we have changed, as accused, what original revealed doctrine—given to Mr. Armstrong—have we corrupted?

According to [the minister's name who departed from us in 1998], the "faith once delivered" is defined as that "corpus of doctrine" which was most widely taught and understood by *all members* during the heyday of the church (1960s). If that definition is true, then what was the most *widely taught* doctrine on Church Government all of those years? It was *top-down government*, with Mr. Armstrong as the "physical head" of the church under Christ. Therefore, according to [that minister's] documented definition, he must be in favor of rigid, top-down government! That is exactly *what everyone knew* as a member of the Church *from the beginning of Ambassador College*.

Next, when doctrinal corruption occurred in the church, there was a *definable result*. There is no such thing as "hidden apostasy" which does not actually affect the way the church acts. Example: When Pentecost was changed in 1974, it meant *the whole church* began keeping Sunday instead of Monday. When divorce and remarriage was changed, it meant certain members *for the first time* became free to marry, and many began to go out and marry and then bring new spouses to church with them. When divine healing was rejected, members began going to doctors en masse for the first time. Each bona fide doctrinal change had a *measurable result*. With that principle in mind, I ask again:

If Mr. Cole's use of the term "physical head" in the April 2001 Unleavened Bread sermon constitutes a *doctrinal change* from his teaching in 1976 (and on the level which requires us to act to *separate* from Church of God, The Eternal as an apostate fellowship), what is the applicable, *measurable result* that this "change" has created?

How is it manifested in a change of our practices and ministerial administration? How has the ministry's relationship with the laity been altered? There is none, and has been none!

We are still teaching *adamantly* that God's people cannot look to ANY man. It must be to *Christ*, and what Christ *revealed*. We must hold fast to those doctrines, and never let any man convince us to change. Therefore, what doctrinal perversion is in evidence?

End of September 2001 letter.

Dear friends and brethren, today in 2012 I can honestly tell you that since the death of Raymond Cole eleven years ago, we have continued still to hold to these very same doctrinal principles, and we have not wavered one iota.

We still reject absolutely the concept of men setting themselves up as "heads" without the legitimate authority of Jesus Christ. And as Mr. Cole was emphasizing in 1976, we also still reject the idea that any man—even a legitimate apostle—has any authority *ever* to change what God gave him to teach. Raymond Cole acknowledged that Herbert Armstrong was the legitimate servant raised up in the twentieth century to do God's work. We accept no other. But in the very day Mr. Armstrong gave in to vain and deceitful men within the Worldwide Church of God who had no love for the Truth—beginning to approve their "changes" to doctrine and claiming the "authority of an apostle" to do so—that church became a body with two competing heads—Jesus Christ the Revelator vs. a human leader gone apostate—a veritable two-headed monster.

It was always *that* very form of corruption which Mr. Cole was addressing when speaking of the church having only One Head—Jesus Christ alone. He *in no way* ever intended to convey that the true Church of God was not organized with human "heads" as delegated leaders in Christ's service. Not at all; and that is proven by the way Mr. Cole led this remnant body *from our very inception* in 1975. No contradiction! The proof is also in the structure and administrative actions over our *entire* thirty-eight year history to date, all empty accusations notwithstanding.

In 1997–1998, Mr. Cole was dealing with the seeds of unrest among brethren and a particular minister in our midst who had become disgruntled with Mr. Cole's leadership. They were attempting to introduce a *foreign doctrine* into our midst, advocating a form of *democracy* within the ministry. In short, Mr. Cole's ministerial assistant became dissatisfied with being under Mr. Cole's authority and began lobbying for "equality" of his position with that of his boss. Amazing how "power sharing" is always the mantra of the one who has no authority but wishes to *expand* his own power to make himself "equal." The only way for that man to have *gained* more power would

have been for Raymond Cole to *cede* some of his existing "power." Such a compromise would indeed have constituted a "change" in our doctrine that would have been unprecedented, and Raymond Cole had no intention of doing so. This is what was going on in our fellowship at that time. That is why the sermons Mr. Cole was giving then, including his 2001 Unleavened Bread message, strongly emphasized the original teaching of Mr. Armstrong about church government, and the fact that God always works through a human servant.

For historical clarity, here is another excerpt from the sermon Mr. Cole gave that very same month, April 2001, in a series entitled, *The Continuing Body of Christ #12*:

"Obey them that have the rule over you" [Hebrews 13:17]. I don't see a word in there that is that big or that problematic. We understand every word there, don't we. . . . Yet, unbelievably, one of the strongest contentions heard today is, no rules. People are constantly talking about that they don't believe in any rulership. We're all independent. We all make our own decisions and so on. I want to tell you, brethren, after almost sixty years of pretty intense study into the human body, that when you don't have a centralized control in that body, they have several terms for it. It is a body that serves you in no way. It fights itself. It's a major problem. Your body has a centralized control and there is a member of that body that controls every action of it. And when that centralized body, or centralized organ becomes defective in some way, the body becomes useless. It fights itself and it does all kinds of things. The body pictures the church. If that church does not have a centralized control, you don't have any organization, you don't have any smooth behavioral pattern, you don't have anything. It fights itself. It's spastic. It will even do violence to itself. There are many cases of it. God built a body. That body is the body of Jesus Christ and we are put into that body exactly as God intends for it to be done. Any time you violate that, you are taking exception with God and with Christ. Now who is denying Christ? Let's get the record straight. . . . Jude 8: "Likewise also these filthy dreamers (these are people who have crept in unawares) defile the flesh, despise dominion (that is, they hate authority), and speak evil of those" who are in office. . . . What was the fate of those that rejected the Mosaic administration? We just saw that the Mosaic administration typified what's happening in the New Testament one. That's very clear. Here in Hebrews 10:28: "He that despised Moses' law (the same usage), He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses." So, if they had contempt for the laws of God and despised that physical administration under Moses, they died under two or three witnesses. But he continues there, and I didn't write that out, what do you think is going to happen to those who deny the spiritual? The one is the example of the other. Everyone, brethren, must at some time recognize and accept Christ.

Whether it was the literal body of Jesus Christ two thousand years ago that preached thunderously God's truth, or whether it is that body that He promised would continue till His Second Coming. I don't care which. Some had problems and would not accept Him. They turned back from Him and would no longer listen to what He said in His own day approximately two thousand years ago. The same thing has happened in our day. They have turned away from the very voice of Jesus Christ. And I can just hear, 'cause I've already heard it, certain diabolical creatures turn around and say, Oh, so he thinks he is Christ. I never said that. But I am saying that Jesus Christ was either the one who motivated and guided that work in the last days or it never happened, and Jesus Christ was a liar. If He then did perform it, then He is continuing to perform it, and there is still a ministry that He is motivating and guiding to this day.

Dear friends, we can get all *bent out of shape* over what we call that human servant, but it is nonetheless a "head," even as Moses and his appointed leaders were "heads" over Israel, under God. There have been beloved brethren who have departed from our fellowship since Mr. Cole's death in 2001 (thankfully, very few), who are claiming Raymond Cole was faithful, but accusing myself and my helpers today of being corrupt. Ironically, they have no ordained minister but listen to historical Raymond Cole sermons, smugly believing they are "OK" in the eyes of God to be without "a head." Would that they might pay attention to his words quoted above, which absolutely condemn what they have done. Here, also, is another quote from that same 2001 Unleavened Bread sermon they would do good to acknowledge:

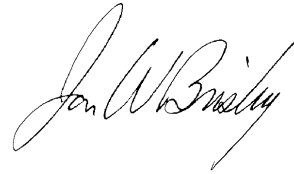
Ephesians 5:30: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Sounds to me like it is pretty tangible. We are members of his flesh and of his bones. Those are tangible items. We are members, physical members that make up the physical body of Jesus Christ, that is now empowered spiritually, doing the very work of God. But it is a tangible body. It is a physical body. It can be seen. And it is a body that is carrying out the work of God. A body that went through certain difficulties, there was to be an apostasy, but as a result of that, there was to be a remnant. A remnant that was going to exist until the Second Coming of Christ. *You can't find a remnant of a remnant. It doesn't exist.* However, you can find where there were *those who were going to depart from that remnant*, because they did not have His Spirit. So, there are those who have gone out, but they have merely rebelled against Christ. They have rebelled against God. They're not a part of that body at all. They think they are [emphasis mine].

There will always be those who attempt to rewrite history to support their own concepts. Thank God we have an ample archive of sermons and writings from Raymond

Cole which makes it very easy to confirm *exactly* what he taught consistently through all of his years of ministry to God's people.

May God grant you the fortitude *and the spiritual integrity* to discern truth from fiction and to avoid these same traps. Your very spiritual salvation will depend upon it.

Yours with sincere devotion,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jon W. Brisby