**THE MUDDY WATERS**

**INTRODUCTION**

 **Who is Bill Myers?** A simple gospel preacher. I don’t do many meetings or appear on the lectureship circuit. I’ve been a preacher, a funeral director, a businessman, a professor, a husband, and father. I don’t have the mind of Thomas Warren, Guy N. Woods, nor Gus Nichols. I have served as a minister for over thirty-seven years. Some remember me, while others may choose to forget my existence. I have made many friends, and a few enemies on my road to heaven.

 So, why is a little old country preacher sticking his nose into areas of controversy? It is simply the fact that I care for the church. It is the undeniable belief that we all have difficulties in life. These bulwarks of the faith in the past few centuries were fallible men. They lived their lives searching for truth. For some, old age diminished their capacity to think clearly.

 At a lectureship recently, a gentleman set down and began to condemn Foy Wallace. He claimed that he was a bigot and should had never been respected as a great gospel preacher. Later in this paper, I will address some of the remarks made by brother Wallace. Keep in mind that we are all capable of false beliefs, and change. Do not undermine the many writings penned by Foy, nor the contributions showered upon the brotherhood by his penmanship.

 Let us not be so quick to judge their actions or reactions. We believe in a God that changes people for the good. Like Foy Wallace whose name has been blemished by being called a bigot. However, how about his repentance through his actions that we will later discuss. What about the multitude of souls that came to Jesus through his teachings?

 What about the controversy concerning N. B. Hardeman? Who would have guessed that a college would remove his name from a library because of a rumor? First, I don’t believe the rumor, and second, does an imperfection alleviate the respect others may have for us. Brethren, I never met a perfect man. I have met great men who have done great things. I never knew brother Hardeman, but I admire his accomplishments.

 In this manuscript, I will often quote from Gus Nichols. He was indeed the Alabama gentleman. My grandmother never missed his radio broadcast. She was a Baptist turned Methodist. Howbeit she adored the sage of Jasper. Later in his life, he had been labeled a supporter of the James Bales doctrine on divorce and remarriage. When we deal with the subject, let’s remember that Gus was struggling with age. I see no evidence of his position in earlier years that would conflict with the teachings of Christ.

##  I want to make it clear that a man’s waywardness, or wrong way of thinking, does not undermine his other teachings. We read commentaries all the time that conflict with our beliefs. If you are looking up a passage in Greek, you have thumbed through **Lenski**. When researching a Hebrew word, most probably you skimmed through [**Keil and Delitzsch**](https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/kdo.html)**.** James Bales was dead wrong on the divorce issue, but some of his other books are gems.

 When Bert Thompson approached the brotherhood and confessed his sins of pedophilia, the church was appalled. However, he laid his sins open before the brethren, and repented. The obligation of every saint is to forgive those who confess and show repentance.

 Do we allow a person with such a brilliant mind to disappear into the fog of forgetfulness? When Jeffrey Dahmer was asked if God would forgive him of his terrible wrongs, he replied, “I believe the grace of God is powerful enough to forgive me of my sins!” No truer statement had ever been stated.

 If we are members of the Lord’s church, FORGIVENESS IS IN OUR BLOOD! We are the pillar of truth, and the sanctuary for the broken sinner. Our forgiveness from God is based on our forgiveness of others (Matt. 6:15).

. With these thoughts in mind, I want to fairly, cautiously, and lovingly look at the several controversial doctrines that have been debated throughout the decades.

There will be those who will view this book as dishonoring the names of great men. My motivation for writing this manuscript is for my own satisfaction and questions concerning the way we think in these modern times.

 Why is it that men like Guy N. Woods and Gus Nichols were such good friends, and yet held opposing views? If many of these great thinkers were to live in our present times, they would not be fellowshipped. So, what changed?

 One of the most empowering sermons at Freed Hardeman lectures was from Dowell Flatt in the early eighties. He spoke of three mountains that he had stood upon. Then he stated, “We need to gather on top of those mountains, look at the vast terrain, and say, ‘those are our enemies, LET US BE FRIENDS!”

 What does friendship mean in the eyes of a loving Creator? Jesus said, “*Ye are my****friends****, if ye do whatsoever I command you”* (Jn. 15:14). James wrote, “*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the****friendship****of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God”* (Jas. 4:4).

 **DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE**

 λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι ὃς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην, μοιχᾶται· καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσας μοιχᾶται.

 There has never been a more debated issue within the church than divorce and remarriage. It has divided brethren. Yet, why? How is it that a doctrine so described and identified by Christ has been so misapplied and misrepresented?

 For years, I heard the arguments from various brethren on the subject. Somehow, we draw the conclusion that the matter can be resolved with the power of the pen. Flung insults and careless rhetoric has muddied the waters of truth. I do not rest my conclusions on the fallible testimony of our greatest scholars. Jesus explained it to the simplest of men. So clearly did they digest the words of the Master Teacher. They replied, “If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry” (Matt. 19:10). This verse alone underlines the truth landing on good and honest hearts. They were not confused. Confusion is seen when Jesus rebuked Peter for not understanding the Divine plan (Matt. 16:23). Confusion is apparent when the mother of James and John pleaded with Christ for prestigious positions for her sons (Matt. 20:20, 21). It is further implied when the apostles questioned the reasoning behind the blindman’s demise (Jn. 9:2). In this event taken from Matthew nineteen, the teaching was fully comprehended from those twelve Galileans.

 The Lord’s response predicated the true evolution of the argument. The Lord said, “*All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.  For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it”* (Matt. 19:11, 12). ALL MEN CANNOT RECEIVE IT! I could add, “Most men REFUSE to accept it!”

 I want to propose several arguments why Matthew nineteen is misunderstood. First, **some men mentally block the simple truth**. The plainness of the word is fogged by a daughter or family member divorced without the proof of infidelity. The child was abused in the marriage or treated unfairly. It is almost a natural response to defend our children, EVEN WHEN THEY ARE WRONG!

 Two, **a devotion to those who advocate the doctrine, whether false or true**. Years ago, I went on a campaign with the school of preaching in Knoxville. I stayed in the home of the brother-in-law of James Bales. I asked him, “Do you agree with James on divorce and remarriage?” He affirmed his acceptance and devotion to James and his doctrine.

 I could understand his respect for James, but his devotion should had been to Jesus and truth. The brightest of men can be wrong, but God is NEVER WRONG! JAMES BALES WAS WRONG!

 Third**, some are detoured by human logic**. How often I’ve heard supporters of the Bale’s doctrine reply, “God is not going to require the guilty party to remain single?” “As long as that person repents, God will bury the sin!” Their failure is in the meaning of repentance. The term has a Greek and Roman origin. Soldiers would be told to “repent” in which they would immediately turn an about face.

 This misapplication of 1 Corinthians 7:2, 15 is often cited to defend the Bale’s doctrine, “*Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband…But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.”*

 If I were depended on human logic, Bale’s position makes sense that a guilty party could marry again if married to an unbeliever. Yet, one must keep in mind that the marriage laws established by God took place at the creation. Adam had no competition with another man desiring his wife, neither did Eve concern herself with infidelity. If God allotted for man to have more than one wife, He could had created two Eve’s.

Further, **believing that the instructions were Old Testament and vanished with the Mosaic Law.** The institution of marriage and the laws of marriage were providential laws. Animals would continue to procreate because that was instituted in those six days of creation. The sanctity, faithfulness, design, and bond of marriage was part of that creation foundation.

 The gospels unveil the teachings of the Messiah. It is His last will and testament. The legal understanding of such a document speaks of something proposed and then carried out after the death of a testator. The Hebrew writer states, “*For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the****testator****. A testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the****testator****liveth*” (Heb. 9:16, 17).

 Further, Jesus told the apostles that after His death and resurrection, He would send the Holy Spirit. John records, “*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your****remembrance****, whatsoever I have said unto you”* (Jn. 14:26).

 Nothing that Jesus spoke about in life was altered or changed after the establishment of the church. He underlined during His earthly ministry what changes would take place among the Hebrews and established the principles that would define the new kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount was His Magna Charta.

Also**, misinterpretation of the Greek language has muddied the waters in interpreting the Lord’s teachings on divorce and remarriage.** Some have suggested that the Greek points out that the sin is a one-time act. Hence, once the parties ask forgiveness, they can continue the relationship. The Greek word “commits adultery” is μοιχᾶται. It signifies a continual action. In other words, the person is continually living in adultery if he or she remains in the unauthorized relationship.

 There is no doubt those who would argue the Greek for the purpose of winning the argument. Brethren, it is not about winning the argument, but standing firm for the teachings of Christ. Something legal can be unlawful. The states have made divorce and remarriage legal. This does not supersede the law of God. The world has made the killing of babies legal, but under the law of God it is a sin and will remain a sin!

 ***Diversity Throughout History***

 I remember watching a falling star. As it quietly made its way through a nighttime sky, it became only a memory to those who watched. As wonderful as it was, the event was the death of it. I have heard many men take several views on the marriage, divorce, and remarriage issue. Many of them have faded in history.

 It is not my intent to blemish anyone’s name, or the good they accomplished. I simply want to pen the truth and satisfy my own search for understanding. It is imperative that we not put so much faith in men, creating our own diocese, and proving ourselves to be hypocrites. We tell the denominational world not to follow the traditions and teachings of their leaders, but is it possible that many of our own brethren do the same?

 First, I want to turn to **Alexander Campbell**. For many years our brethren were called “Campbellites.” Alexander writes in the Millennial Harbinger, “To…the cases before us, is [1 Cor 7:15], ‘But if the infidel party depart, let them depart; a brother or sister, in such a case, is not under bondage.’ … [Since] permission has been granted by the Apostle, and in accordance with the Spirit of God in references to such cases, it seems to me that in all cases of voluntary desertion on the side of the unbelieving party,… the believing party is to the deserter as though they have never been married” (Alexander Campbell, “Divorces.” *Millennial Harbinger*, Volume V, 1834, page 71-72.).

 Steve Wolfgang wrote the following in *Truth Magazine* concerning Alexander Campbell’s view on divorce and remarriage, “The Lord, in his own personal ministry, inhibited divorces, except in one case, and that was a palpable violation or renunciation of the nuptial covenant [Campbell had already spent several paragraphs discussing the Greek words moicheia (adultery) and porneia (fornication) - SWI ... But Paul, by his office and the inspiration of the spirit of wisdom, felt himself justified in adding to the law enacted by the Lord Jesus Christ another statute or provision, concerning an infidel man who should . . . separate from a Christian wife; and also concerning an unbelieving wife, who should . . . abandon a believing husband. In such cases, a brother or sister in Christ is not under bondage to live with them . . . . But may the believing party marry again? is the more pinching question. Not, indeed, after the unbelieving party is dead, but while he or she yet lives? Does not the declaration, that a brother or sister is not bound . . . indicate this? This is a litigated question . . . " Campbell proceeds to quote a variety of commentators (in several cases noting with appropriate sarcasm, "This is explaining the passage by quoting it" or "These certainly are noncommittal men - superlatively prudent!") and concludes, in response to a specific case submitted by a reader: "When a woman finally deserts a Christian husband, and utterly refuses to live with him, we should . . . not consider him obligated to live henceforth without a wife. . . . " (A.C., "Separation and Divorce," Millennial Harbinger, 4th series, 3:10 [September, 1853], pp. 529-533).

 Clearly Alexander believed that 1 Corinthian seven gave a Christian the right to remarry if their unbelieving husband or wife left them. In a time when there were few divorces, and laws on the subject was much stricter, Campbell speaks out on the subject.

 Bridge forward a few years to **David Lipscomb** (1813-1917). Concerning 1 Corinthians 7:15, brother Lipscomb wrote, “*There is doubt with some as to whether this means the believer is released from the marriage vow and at liberty to marry again, or if it only means he is not under obligation to live with the one who departs. I am inclined to believe the former is the true*” (Lipscomb, *Questions and Answers*, 426. *A Commentary on 1 Corinthians*).

 **J. W. McGarvey** (1829-1911), was for many years conservative on his views concerning divorce and remarriage. McGarvey writes in his commentary on First Corinthians, “Yet if the unbelieving departeth, let him depart: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us in peace. 16 For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O husband, whether thou shalt save thy wife? 17 Only, as the Lord hath distributed to each man, as God hath called each, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all the churches. [Paul first answers generally that under no conditions are the husband and wife to separate (the single exception ([Matt. 19:9](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?version=KJV&passage=Mt+19:9)) not being given, because not a point in controversy). This law, however, rests not on Paul's authority alone (which some of the Judaizers might question), but on that of the Lord himself, who plainly propounded it, repealing the ordinances of Moses which were contrary to it (see "Fourfold Gospel," [p. 242](http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/jwmcgarvey/ffg/FFG042D.HTM#Page242)). As an inspired apostle, Paul applies this law to the case of Christians united in wedlock with unbelievers, and declares that such should not separate on account of their faith; for the law of Christ so reverses that of Moses that the Christian sanctifies or removes the uncleanness of the unbelieving partner, and of the children. But such unequal marriages are not favored by God ([2 Cor. 6:14](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?version=KJV&passage=2Co+6:14)), and therefore if the unbeliever be so intolerant as to refuse to live with a converted partner, then the partner is not under bondage to the unbeliever. But God calls the believer to a life of peace which forbids any such discordant acts as tend to induce or drive the unbeliever to dissolve the marriage, for by the exercise of Christian gentleness and forbearance the believer may convert and save the unbeliever ([1 Pet. 3:1, 2](http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?version=KJV&passage=1Pe+3:1,2)). As a summary rule for all things of a smaller nature, the apostle says that each man must rest content to walk in the lot which God has apportioned to him, not making his new religion an excuse for unwarranted changes” ( J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, *Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans* (1916)).

 At the age of seventy-six, McGarvey would write the “Four-fold Gospel” along with brother Pendleton. He states, “*The innocent party to such a divorce can marry again ... the guilty party could not."*

 **H. Leo Boles** was the great grandson of “Raccoon” John Smith. The past editor of the Gospel Advocate and president of David Lipscomb College, wrote, "All Bible students know that God recognizes but one cause for absolute divorce [divorce recognized by God as well as the state]. This is adultery, or fornication. The words of Jesus, as recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, condemn remarriage of a divorced one, and condemn it in terms which admit of no misunderstanding. The Savior mentions one, and only one, cause for putting away one party to the marriage union." Discussing 1 Corinthians 7, Boles added, "It seems that for some there was given the permission to separate temporarily for other causes than the sin of fornication; but those who were separated were to 'remain unmarried, or else be reconciled' to each other. These principles should be taught, and all of God's people should abide by their teaching." ( H. Leo Boles, "Scriptural Cause for Separation," GA 75:3 (January 19, 1933), p. 58.)

 **G. C. Brewer**, “"If language means anything, this teaches that if he puts away his wife for the cause of fornication, he does not commit adultery if he marries another. This is the one exception to the rule. That sin will justify a divorce, or permit a divorce." In the article, brother Brewer rejects the misuse of 1 Corinthians 7 on trying to justify the acceptance of a guilty party remarrying. He states, “Those who offer this explanation have not examined the Scriptures on this point very carefully" (G.C. Brewer, "Christ and Paul on Divorce," GA 75:29 [July 20, 1933], p. 674).

 **Gus Nichols**: Before I say anything about brother Nichols, my grandmother, a Methodist would listen to Gus on the radio. In Walker County, and throughout the state of Alabama, he was well respected. Roy Deaver outlined an argument on the subject between his father and Gus. Nichols declared that we, as a people, have always taken the position that someone who kills his wife has a scriptural right to a new marriage, but that if we say that (1) a murderer can remarry, but that (2) a guilty fornicator cannot, we are allowing, in effect, the more guilty more right and the less guilty less right. Nichols did not use these exact words, but these words represent precisely his point. He was saying, in effect, that Deaver’s position is not fair. That is, if a man can kill his wife in order to marry another woman, but that the “guilty party” cannot remarry, then we are imposing on people a position that is completely unfair. So, he was hitting at Deaver’s argument based on the concept of fairness. I must confess that I had always taken Nichols’ position on the murderer’s right to a remarriage as the correct position, but in this reinvestigation, I think that my father was, after all, correct in his analysis of the situation. And I am very glad to now see what he and Warren affirmed in 1973. As usual I come to the truth as a latecomer. (<https://biblicalnotes.com/2015/05/07/remarriage-right-and-the-law-of-the-husband/>)

 **Foy Wallace**, said this about 1 Corinthians 7:15, 16, “verses 15-16, in the case of the abandonment of the believer by the unbeliever, whereby the believer is "not under bondage" and is therefore set free. If the bondage here does not refer to the marriage bond, then the believer would still be in the bondage of it. To advocate, as some do, that the passage means the believer is not bound to live or remain with the departing unbeliever would be a truism, for it is set forth as a case of abandonment and the abandoned one obviously could not abide with the one who had departed. It appears evident that when the unbeliever so departs it presupposes a state of adultery which exists in the principle previously discussed, and here the apostle's inspired teaching is again projected beyond the Lord's own strictures and declares the abandoned believer "not under bondage." If that does not mean that the believer in these circumstances is free to marry, then it cannot mean anything, for if the one involved is not altogether free the bondage would still exist” (The Sermon on the Mount and the Civil State; p. 45).
 "The word adultery in New Testament usage does not necessarily refer to the sinful physical [sexual] act, it is not restricted to the one way of violating the bond. In the four passages in Matthew, Mark and Luke the term adultery is given the sense of ignoring the bond, of which a man is guilty who formally puts away his wife unjustifiably and regards himself unhitched. The passages n Matthew 19: Mark 10 and Luke 16 discuss hypothetically the man who manifests this view by marrying again. His sin of adultery consisted in treating the original contract as null and void when it was not. The phrase "put away" in the verses means to formally divorce, not merely to "send away," or separate, and he thereby assumed the bond to be wholly dissolved." (The Sermon on the Mount and the Civil State; p. 42).
 "With no course of action legislated, revealed or prescribed, we cannot make one without human legislation. The course of some preachers in demanding separations and the breaking up of family relations, and the refusal to even baptize certain ones whose marriage status does not measure up to his standard of approval, is a presumptuous procedure. It reveals the tendency to displace God as the Judge of us all, and a preacher ascends to the bench. More than teaching the moral principles involved, the preacher has no course of action revealed, and to establish one would result in human legislation, more far reaching in evil consequences than the moral effects of divorcement limited to the persons involved. There are some things that are not subject to the law of restitution, things done in certain circumstances which cannot in later circumstances be undone, which remain as matters between God and the individual, and therefore reserved for the judgment. It is certain, however, that if the Lord Jesus Christ had intended a course of action in these cases, he would not have left it for preachers to prescribe, but would have himself legislated it" (The Sermon on the Mount and the Civil State; p. 41).

 **James Bales**, (Not Under Bondage, 1 Cor. 7:15) Bales believed that Matthew 19 dealt specifically with a Christian married to a Christian. Hence, they were bound by the law to be together, and had no right to divorce except for the reason of fornication. Yet, a Christian married to a non-Christian, or two unbelievers would have the right to divorce and remarry without the cause of fornication.

 **Olin Hicks** would affirm Bale’s doctrine. He would state concerning the teachings of Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7, “The actual teachings of Jesus relative to divorce are pretty simple, if read as the New Testament records them, apart from the speculative theories of men. The Lord taught the one man for one woman for life concept very precisely. He taught just as clearly that marriage involves vows which are sacred, and that breaking marriage is contrary to the will of God and always has been. He stated pointedly that the one who disrupts a marriage is guilty of sin and that one who disrupts his marriage lightly to form another commits the sin of adultery. But Jesus taught with equal clarity that marriage itself is right and is, in fact, essential for all except those who are eunuchs and have no necessity (Matt. 19:10-12) (Olan Hicks, *What the Bible Says About Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage*, Gospel Enterprises, 3rd Printing, original copy, College Press, 1987, p.63).

 **Jack Exum**: “It is a fact; this scripture says that a man who has been divorced by his wife does not sin if he marries. Of course he doesn’t. He is a single man. Jesus said that “adultery” is a wrong committed “against her,” the wife put away. This man has no wife to sin against. She divorced him in the past. This is a passive voice verb, meaning that she divorced him, not the other way around. If you can’t let the Bible say what it says here, maybe you should ask yourself why?” (Jackexum.com).

 **David Pharr**: Personally, I have appreciated the scholarly way that brother Pharr approaches the question of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Concerning the remarriage of a guilty party he scribes, “Who gives men and women the right to marry? Clearly marriage is ordained by God. People have a right to marry because God gives them that right. Jesus reminded that God's law concerning marriage was "from the beginning" in order to emphasize that any departure from the original plan was because of hardness of heart (Matt. 19:8). Simply stated, God's law regarding marriage is for one man and one woman to be married only to each other for as long as they both are alive. Generally, the right to marry is a right which is extended to every person (assuming physical and mental ability and allowable circumstances). It must be emphasized, however, that this is a right granted by God, it is not an inherent right. Since, therefore, God alone grants the right to marry, He can also restrict or remove that right.

 This is demonstrated in Romans 7:3, where Paul shows that a woman in a certain circumstance does not have an inherent right to marry as she chooses.

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| *So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.* |

A woman in the circumstance of being already married does not have the right to marry another. When she married her husband she surrendered the right to marry another for as long as her husband lives” (<http://charlotteavechurchofchrist.org/DPharr/articles-spsword/remarriage.htm>, This was printed in the Spiritual Sword, “May the Guilty Party Remarry?” by David Pharr).

 Thomas Warren and Guy N. Woods were two of the greatest thinkers of the 20th Century. Their stand on the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage should be studied diligently. I do not deify these men but find their approach to be sound and without conflict. Both men stood firmly that only the innocent party could remarry, and the law was universal. It did not vanish with the Mosaic Law, nor did it apply to Christians only.

The error of Bale, Hicks, Keeble, and Nichols, as well as many others is the failure of the response generated by the apostles after the Lord’s rebuke of the Pharisees and the teaching on the subject. For some who interpret μοιχᾶται (commits adultery) as a onetime act is absurd. The verb underlines the continued action of the transgression.

 The dialogue that continued by Jesus and His apostles is the key. “*His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.  But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given*” (Matt. 19:10, 11).

 The apostles did not interpret the Lord’s statement as being a onetime act, but a continual action. Hence, it would be better for one not to marry than to end up in this type of predicament. The Lord did not say they misinterpreted what He said. In fact, He confirmed it by His illustration of the different types of eunuchs.

 The restoration penned the motto, “*Speak when the Bible speaks, and be silent when the Bible is silent!*” The statement is not about semantics; it is about allowing the interpretation to come from the Word itself. Though at times some of the early restorationists failed because they allowed their personal prejudices or past teachings to conflict with the word. One prime example is brother Alexander becoming the president of the Missionary Society.

 This fact never made sense for Alexander to take this stand. One author writes, “*Prior to the establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society,*[*Alexander Campbell*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Campbell_%28clergyman%29)*had actively opposed missionary societies on the basis that they preempted the church's role in missions and served as a focus for division, insisting that the church itself should be the only missionary society”* (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Christian_Missionary_Society>

 There is no doubt that future generations will ponder about divorce and remarriage. Lines will be drawn, arguments will be made, and confusion will be seeded. Sadly, the complications on the subject focuses on the denial of the sacred text.

 As Herodias defied the teachings of John and demanded his head upon a platter, this same hatred of truth germinates among false teachers. The divorce and remarriage issue are one of the simplest teachings of the Lord. He did not use a parable to speak on the matter. He was direct and frank. Men, wanting so much to change doctrine to accommodate a changing world, end up opening the flood gates of rebellion. Will it be so in the future that families with homosexual teenagers will question the condemnation of the sin? (Rom. 1:26-28; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

 ***The Holy Spirit***

 ***Gus Nichols:*** This series contains the best synopsis of Gus Nichols’ view of the Holy Spirit in an orderly and concise way. Like a lawyer building his case before the bar, brother Nichols built a foundational study, beginning with the birth of man’s spirit into the world that needs saving. He explained how the Holy Spirit has revealed, through the word of God, the source of man’s salvation in God. On pages 10,11 he explained that when Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:8, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit,” that Paul explained its meaning in Colossians 1:13, when he said that it was the soul being transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God’s dear Son. He described the Spirit’s work in conversion, illustrating it with his right hand representing the Holy Spirit, and his left hand the heart of the alien sinner. Does the Holy Spirit operate upon the heart of the sinner directly (hits his left hand), or through a medium (hits his left hand with a Bible)? He, then, enlisted several Scriptures to indicate the latter.
            He continued to build his case by a fuller discussion on Jesus’ interaction with Nicodemus in John 3. This was followed by lessons on the Spirit and the spirit world, and the Spirit and Revelation. He discussed the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in a further lesson, and the miraculous gifts in another.
            It is not until page 155, the seventh lesson, before he entered into a fuller discussion on TGOTHS. This is potentially the most controversial of his discussions. Introducing it, he said there are 3 basic possibilities: The Holy Spirit either: (1) really and truly dwells in us—faithful Christians—in a personal manner, or (2) He dwells in us in some other manner, or (3) else He does not dwell in us at all. This latter position would force one to make void many plain and easily-understood scriptures. Dismisses the 3rd, and discussed in the lesson (1) and (2). But with it, he stressed the need to not be divisive, but that all must maintain unity.
            He began by talking about our spirit, saying one cannot examine his own mind with his five senses, but it is most assuredly there. Then, he quoted various passages that say the Holy Spirit dwells in us – Acts 2:38; 5:32; Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 1 Thess. 4:8; Jude 19; Eph. 1:13 – saying these all teach we have the Holy Spirit in us. Gus Nichols believed the Holy Spirit literally dwells in Christians, and followed with the fact that one cannot examine the Holy Spirit with the five senses, but like the human spirit, He (The Holy Spirit) is there. (<http://www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/alabama/holyspiritgn.html>)

**Guy N. Woods:** Guy Woods believed the Holy Spirit dwelled in the word, and when the word dwelled in the believer, so did the Holy Spirit. He did not believe in a literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but felt adamant that the purpose of the Spirit was to give the word.

 **Perry Cotham:** Like Guy N. Woods, Perry believed that the Holy Spirit dwelled in the hearts of the believer in word only. In fact, he stated to me, “Anyone believing in the direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit today is advocating Pentecostalism.”

 Perry writes, “Deity dwells in the hearts of faithful children of God. “God dwelleth in us” (1 John 4:12, 15). “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27); “the Holy Ghost which is in you…” (1 Corinthians 6:19; 3:16). In neither one of these cases does the Bible teach a direct, literal, personal indwelling. The Bible explains how Christ dwells in Christians; it is “by faith” (Ephesians 3:17), and faith comes by hearing “the word of God” (Romans 10:17). God the Father and God the Holy Spirit dwell in Christians the same way that God the Son dwells in them. It is “by faith,” representatively. Christ dwells in Christians when His teachings control their lives in their obedience to his Word (John 14:23). The Spirit indwells the faithful child of God only through his obedience to the inspired Word. Ephesians 5:18-19 and Colossians 3:16 are parallel statements; they mean the same:“…be filled with the Spirit…let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” (Christian Evidences – 19th Annual Mid-West Lectures, “Who Is the Holy Spirit?” by Perry Cotham).

 Brother Perry was my mentor, friend, and brother in Christ. I do not take the belief to the point of labeling the brother who believes the Spirit dwells within the person in conjunction with the word as an advocate of Pentecostalism. As a person who was once Pentecostal, I see no comparison between the brother in Christ taking the indwelling position, and the charismatic that believes in the miraculous.

 Pentecostals believe in the manifestation of the Spirit outside the word. Proof of their faith is by speaking in tongues. Miracles are believed to be performed in our present times, and doctrines change with the influence of those in leadership positions in the organization. This religion is false, whereas, brethren who do not go beyond the inspired message, though believing in the working of the Spirit within them, should never be identified with Pentecostalism.

 ***Heaven & Hell***

 **Perry Cotham**: Perry’s book ***Beyond the Sunset*** is the best manuscript written about the afterlife. How often had I seen brother Cotham draw those diagrams on a chalk board or unfold one of his sheet sermons to unveil the simple understanding of Luke 16, 2 Pet. 3:11-18, and 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

 The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus pointed to the past, present, and future abode of the dead. It made no sense to brother Perry if the saints went directly to Heaven or Hell. The second coming pointed to a resurrection, destruction, a cloud, casting the wicked into Gehenna, and taking the saints to Heaven.

 **Guy N. Woods:** A sermon can be found on YouTube entitled, “*Where are the Dead?”* He identifies with brother Perry Cotham on the state of the dead. His focus is on the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. He states, “The story is a parable, or it is not? If it is a parable than it speaks of what could be, and if a story, it speaks to what is! Either way it is truth!”

 **Gus Nichols**: Scott Harper wrote a book entitled, ***The Sage of Jasper***.” **It** is the biography of Gus Nichols. Gus believed that Hades existed up until the time Christ entered the realm of the dead. After that, the Lord destroyed the Hadean realm, and now souls go directly to heaven or hell. Brother Nichol’s wrote, “The inspired Paul expected and desired to ‘depart and be with Christ’ at death, which he said was ‘gain’ and ‘far better’ than to ‘abide in the flesh’ (Phil. 1:21-24). Paul also said he knew that we are ‘absent from the Lord’ only ‘while’ we are ‘at home in the body’ (2 Cor. 5:6). He repeats his conviction in the matter in the next verse and says, ‘We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord’ (2 Cor. 5:8). Of course, the Lord is now in heaven (1 Pet. 3:22). This is why Stephen said at death, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit’ (Acts 7:59). He said he had just seen Jesus up in heaven (Acts 7:55). Paradise is now transferred to heaven, and is no longer ‘Hades,’ as before the ascension. We read that the ‘tree of life’ is in the city of God, in heaven (Rev. 22:14). But again, we read that the ‘tree of life’ is ‘in the midst of the paradise of God’ (Rev. 2:7). It follows, therefore, that ‘paradise’ is now in heaven in the ‘city’ where the tree of life is. This is where the souls of the slain saints were after death (Rev. 6:9-11). Paul identifies ‘paradise’ with ‘the third heaven’ (2 Cor. 12:1-7)” (p. 396) (This is found in Gus Nichols, “Queries Answers” Gospel Advocate, 22 February 1962, pp. 116-117).

 **Christian Fellowship**

 **Carl Ketcherside**: “No man belongs to Jesus because he is a Baptist, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, a Conservative, a Liberal or a Protestant. Disciples of Jesus may create parties, but no party can create disciples of Jesus. If men will be disciples of Jesus it will be in spite of their parties and not because of them. The body of Christ consist of many parts, not parties. I can share in all that is holy, just and good in all of the parties as a Christian only, and I simply do not want to share in less than all that is good. All parties have a combination of truth and error. Of course this is also my condition, but as a Christian only I am free to adopt new truth at once when I apprehend it. I am also free to immediately reject error when I am made aware of it. This is not true of a partisan. He must subscribe to the error as well as the truth in the party creed, whether written or unwritten else he will be ejected from the party. Generally, he will be retained longer while questioning the truth than while questioning the error of the party. Parties are often quite sensitive about their error, because it is their errors rather that their truths, which serve to give them identity. Others may have discovered the truths they hold without having been betrayed into their errors. The distinctive errors of the party are always their own brainchildren and we tend to lavish more care upon our own offspring. It is true that most parties tend to outgrow their errors, or their errors outgrow them, but this takes centuries and I do not have time to wait. I cannot be saved by the truth held by others and I refuse to be damned by the errors held by others, so for that reason I insist that I shall belong only to Jesus.” (<https://housechurch.org/soundwords/sw_christonly.html>).

 L. A Stauffe,. heard in a discussion with Ketcherside, “In 1974, at Indianapolis in a second conversation, "Carl," as he was usually addressed, told me that his former ideas were unimportant to both him and God. He by this time had concluded that baptism need not be "for the remission of sins" and that "Jesus Christ didn't come all the way to earth and die on a cross to concern himself with issues of whether men should use instruments of music in worship." In reply to a question about the breadth of fellowship he brusquely refused to acknowledge that anyone among "Disciples of Christ" denied the bodily resurrection of Christ. In time he drew the circle of fellowship wider and wider - including even those who claimed devotion to Christ but denied the nature and necessity of baptism.” (<http://www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume33/GOT033204.htm>)

 **Alexander Campbell**: “What means this intolerant spirit? I ask again, what is the meaning of it? Is every man who acknowledges in word and deed the supreme authority of Jesus of Nazareth as Lord Messiah; who has vowed allegiance to him, who is of good report as respects good works, to be sacrificed upon the alter of opinion, because his opinion upon some speculation, fact or doctrine differs from mine? Because, while he admits that Jesus died for our sins, he will not dogmatize upon the nature, extent and every attribute of ‘the atonement,’ is he to be deemed unfit for the kingdom of heaven? Admitting ‘an election of favor,’ is he to be given over to Satan because of some opinion about the conditionality or unconditionality of that election? In one word, are we to understand that an exact agreement in opinion, a perfect uniformity is contended for as a bond of union? If so, let our Baptist brethren say so, let them declare to the world that Tenth, or ten thousandeth, breaks the chain alike.’ (<http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2011/12/20/alexander-campbell-the-spirit-of-intolerance-fellowship/>).

 **Ruebel Shelly**: "Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with, even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently. None of us are permitted to insist on our own way in these matters. It's God we're answerable to, all the way from life to death and everything in between, not each other. That's why Jesus lived and died and then lived again, so that He could be our Master, across the entire range of life and death, and free us from the petty tyrannies of each other. So where does that leave you when you criticize a brother? And where does that leave you when you condescend to a sister? I'd say it leaves you looking pretty silly, or worse. Eventually, we're all going to end up kneeling side by side in the place of judgment facing God. Your critical and condescending ways aren't going to improve your position there one bit. Cultivate your own relationship with God, but don't impose it on others. You're fortunate if your behavior and your belief are coherent. But if you're not sure, if you notice that you're acting in ways inconsistent with what you believe, some days trying to impose your opinions on others, other days just trying to please them, then you know that you're out of line. If the way you live isn't consistent with what you believe, then it's wrong. So, reach out and welcome one another to God's glory. Jesus did it. Now, you do it." (**A Call to Action,** Rubel Shelly, Restoration Forum XII – ACU Abilene, TX (November 1-3, 1995).

 **Max Lucado**: “Lucado said he represents a ‘movement of grace’ in the Churches of Christ, ‘a move away from legalism.’ I sense that we are seeing a movement away from the older rigid doctrinal positions of the various denominations by the younger men who have taken charge. I saw another example of this in a recent article in Charisma magazine about the United Pentecostal Church. It said some of the younger men are not satisfied with the past legalism and are willing to modify some of the finer points of their doctrinal position for the sake of ecumenism. Even the cults are joining in this movement, represented by the Worldwide Church of God. These new leaders are ecumenical and make no great issue of doctrine. Finer points of doctrine are meaningless. That is why something as important as eternal security is a non-issue with them. IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY MORE DIFFICULT TO PINPOINT THE HERESY OF HERETICAL CHURCHES. THE EASY-GOING, DOCTRINALLY-GENERIC CHURCH IS BECOMING THE NORM” (David Cloud, June 9, 1997). (<https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/max-lucados-heresies-and-ecumenical-confusion.php>)

 **Wayne Jackson: “**The spirit of denominational compromise is steadily invading more and more churches that once repudiated the disposition. Prominent personalities openly advocate that the “mode” of baptism is irrelevant, or that the rite, in terms of its purpose, may be received either as “for” the remission of sins, or “because of” the remission of sins; it does not matter. Doors of fellowship are flung open, and sectarian groups are embraced. Far too many imagine that the church is a “democracy” in which **the people decide** what is permissible procedure, rather than recognizing that Christ’s church is a kingdom. And the King is the author of its law (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). Denominationalism is wrong. There must be no compromise on this issue. Christians can and should oppose the system compassionately and courteously, but it must be resisted relentlessly. To neglect to do so is to fail in one’s responsibility.“ <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/798-denominationalism-permissible-or-reprehensible>).

 **Racism**

 I’ve made my pilgrimage to Cain Ridge. I entered the Old church building and stood behind the pulpit. Sadly, our black brethren were no allowed to enter the front door, but had to climb a ladder to the upstairs of the building. Why? Because of the racist beliefs among members.

 Even in these modern times we hear about black churches and white churches. Not once in the Bible is the church identified in this way. The First Century church had all things in common (Acts 2:44). Howbeit, they lived in a prejudicial society. Even the apostles were taught racism. When the Samaritans refused to let Jesus enter their cities, John and James responded, “Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?” (Lk. 9:54). Later Paul would rebuke Peter for his racist attitude toward the Gentiles (Gal. 2:11).

 In an article written for the Banner in 1941, Foy Wallace speaks on the subject of “NEGRO MEETINGS FOR WHITE PEOPLE.”

 "The way the brethren in some quarters are going in for the negro meetings leads one to wonder whether they are trying to make white folks out of the negroes or negroes out of the white folks. The trend of the general mix-up seems to be toward the latter. Reliable reports have come to me of white women, members of the church, becoming so animated over a certain colored preacher as to go up to him after a sermon and shake hands with him holding his hand in both of theirs. That kind of thing will turn the head of most white preachers, and sometimes affect their conduct, and anybody ought to know that it will make fools out of the negroes. For any woman in the church to so far forget her dignity, and lower herself so, just because a negro has learned enough about the gospel to preach it to his race, is pitiable indeed. Her husband should take her in charge unless he has gone crazy, too. In that case somebody ought to take both of them in charge.

 "Reliable brethren in the Valley have reported the definite inclinations of the negro man and his wife in charge of the orphan home for colored children at Combes toward social equality. They are supposed to be members of the church, and some of the white brethren are apparently encouraging them. It is said that these two negroes have privately stated that they favor social equality and are working for it. The young editor of Christian Soldier, in the valley, admits that he roomed with the negro preacher, R. N. Hogan, and slept in the same bed with him two nights! and he seemed to be proud of it! Aside from being an infringement on the Jim Crow law, it is a violation of Christianity itself, and of all common decency. Such conduct forfeits the respect of right-thinking people and would be calculated to stir up demonstrations in most any community if it should become generally known.

 "It has gained considerable currency that the colored preacher Hogan has been too much inclined to mix with the white people and to favor, in attitude, a social equality. Hogan should have had too much sense, if not self-respect, to have permitted the young white preacher to sleep with him, if the young preacher did not have that much sense or self-respect. But Hogan has been under the sponsorship of Jimmie Lovell and cannot be expected to have any too much sense about anything. I have always said that Marshall Keeble and Luke Miller could not be spoiled, but if I ever hear of them doing anything akin to such as this, I will take back every good thing I have ever said of them. Keeble should teach these negro preachers better than that, even if we cannot teach some young upstart among the white preachers. Their practices will degrade the negroes themselves. It is abominable.” (<http://www.michaelhanegan.com/blog/churches-of-christ-and-racism-time-to-listen>). (article written by Foy E. Wallace, Jr, in the March 1941 issue of the *Bible Banner*).

 I don’t condone brother Wallace’s perceptions and teachings. Yet, he voiced the beliefs of many people throughout the country. It is wrong to say that this was seeded in the South. Prejudice has no boundaries. People are not born bigots; they are taught bigotry. Racism is an evil that has greatly affected the church. I feel sorry for many good Christian mixed couples. They often see every eye move in their direction when they enter worship. We create issues. One should not forget what happened to Miriam when she questioned Moses leadership and his marriage to a Black woman (Num. 12).

 We must break the wall of ignorance and prejudice. The gospel makes all men equal. The problem with the racial issue is the redefining of terms. Many in the black community want to be called African Americans, but not all blacks are from Africa. Certain of the natives in India consider themselves black. There are also other countries that are predominantly of a darker color.

 In an article from the ***Christian Chronicle***, entitled “***An Open Letter to Members of the Church of Christ***” read, “Half a century ago, Churches of Christ faced a similar crossroads with respect to race and we did not respond well.

 Between 1955, when black Americans launched the Freedom Movement, and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s death in 1968, the leading publications serving white Churches of Christ simply ignored what was clearly the greatest moral crisis that had faced this nation since slavery and the Civil War. *The Gospel Advocate* and *The Firm Foundation* were as silent as the tomb.

 What led both those papers to finally break their silence was the death of the great African American preacher, Marshall Keeble, on April 20, 1968, just sixteen days after Martin Luther King, Jr. had been assassinated.

 The Advocate spoke first with a back-handed slap at King. Keeble, the paper said, “never led a march or demonstration . . . [and] was never connected with a riot.” Then the *Advocate* trivialized the sin of racism by calling it just one more example of the generic problem of prejudice—rich against poor, educated against uneducated, young against old, etc., that had existed throughout “the history of the world.”

 *The Firm Foundation* quickly followed suit, writing that Keeble “never led a riot; he never burned out a block of buildings; he never marched on Washington. But he marched toward heaven from the day he obeyed the gospel.”

 Then that paper made an astounding claim: “There has been an infinitesimally small amount of racial prejudice in the Church of Christ.” (By [William Lofton Turner, Tanya Brice, Sandra Parham, David Fleer,](https://christianchronicle.org/author/guest-contributor/) <https://christianchronicle.org/an-open-letter-to-members-of-the-churches-of-christ/>).

 I want to make it clear that it is wrong to judge the dead! Foy Wallace is not alive today to comment on his position. It is interesting that one of Foy Wallace’s supporter and friend was Marshall Keeble. They corresponded often, and in fact, later in his life, brother Wallace gravitated to holding meetings for non-segregated churches. Repentance is about action! His mind had no doubt turned in his later years.

 We need to remember that prejudice was something the apostle’s had to overcome. At the cries of the Syrophoenician woman, the Bible reads, “*And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us”* (Matt. 15:23). Paul rebuked Peter because of his prejudice in Galatians 2:11. And let us not forget the prejudice of the two sons of thunder when the wanted the Lord to destroy the Samaritans (Luke 9:54).

 Where did their prejudice come from? The same place it most often comes from, ONE’S UPBRINGING. We learn from our parents. Mom and dad might had been people that would never turn down a person in need. They might had done great service in the community. However, they abhorred the idea of one of their children being married to a person of color.

 Let’s keep in mind that people can change. It doesn’t come by labeling, or violent action against those who hold prejudices. Change comes by our growth in Christ. The understanding that if we take away the flesh, we all have the same organs, blood, and ancestry.

 Many religious and political leaders in the south changed their perspectives later in life. In an article written in Wikipedia, it states, “*George Wallace In the late 1970s announced that he was a*[*born-again Christian*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born_again_%28Christianity%29)*and apologized to black civil rights leaders for his past actions as a segregationist. He said that while he had once sought power and glory, he realized he needed to seek love and forgiveness. In 1979, Wallace said of his stand in the schoolhouse door: ‘I was wrong. Those days are over, and they ought to be over.’  He publicly asked for forgiveness from blacks.” (*<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Wallace>).

 During those turbulent times, there were black ministers and white ministers holding to segregation. Prejudice held the hearts of many. You can blame it on ignorance, how one was raised, or the influence of segregationists; but it should be clear it was a disease that needed to be eradicated.

 Let me speak frankly, most of the history of the south was laden with prejudice. From the days of slavery and throughout the 20th Century, bigotry was seen on both sides of the fence. Though the government tried to stop segregation in the schools, they did little to end it in the churches. You may point the finger at Foy Wallace, but his feelings were almost universal among white and black evangelists in the south.

 The only thing that saved me from being prejudice was my upbringing. My entire childhood was spent on military bases. I grew up looking at uniforms and not color. My father, a southern born democrat at the time, lost his prejudice with the wars he fought, and the foxholes he shared with men of all color.

 I remember attending a baseball game where Mohammad Ali was present. He was overtaken by Parkinson’s. He was no longer the arrogant bigot who blamed the white man for crippling the black community. He was polite, funny, and did magic tricks for the parents. Age and disease deteriorated his prejudice. The foxhole of Parkinson’s gave him a common bond with others of different backgrounds.

 My point, why dwell on the past? Most of the country was drawing lines. A decade later, soldiers coming back from Vietnam were treated like criminals. The Hippie movement brought addiction to the young. Abortion was being debated and legislated. Howbeit, prejudice was still an issue. Now there were new and old groups to hate: Muslims, Latin Americans, and native Americans. Prejudice is not a skin problem; it is a heart problem!

 The only way to eliminate racism in the church is to do away with segregated churches. We need to note that heaven will not be a segregated place. All the righteous, no matter what color they were on earth, will dwell in perfect harmony in heaven.

 What solutions should one seek to end this terrible plague? Ignoring and refusing to believe it exists is not a solution but a cop-out. Let me offer some food for thought.

 **First**, focus on saving souls and not on making enemies. We are all going to run into bigots, antagonists, and ignorant people. We should all be proud of the way God made us. He created a rainbow of colors for a purpose.

 When confronted with prejudice try to keep your composure. Treat them like any ignorant person who has been misinformed. Pointing fingers, screaming, or name calling will accomplish nothing. Do not try to make them understand what it is like to be of a different color or ethnic background. That is an impossibility. One does not need to understand but accept.

 Whether one is black, white, yellow, or red, we all share a common bond. We have been created by God, and we will one day stand in judgement. Paul wrote, “*But ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus: that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.   Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another*” (Eph. 4:20-25).

 **Second**, don’t use your upbringing as an excuse for ignorance. The teachings of mom and dad could had been wrong. Some of the instructions you received as a child could had been anti-biblical. So often we exclaim, “That is just the way I was taught!” When you apply this philosophy to the Muslim community in the Middle East, or the anti-American protest throughout the world; it is obvious that the way we think can be dangerous to the livelihood of ourselves and others.

 **Third**, remember to be kingdom faithful. We must get away from statements like, “You don’t understand!” or “We can use those words, but you can’t!” Slang, street talk, and profanity are not cultural identifiers. God’s people come from all cultures. The way they talk, present themselves, or live their lives, directly relates to their allegiance to God. The apostle Paul wrote, *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers”* (Eph. 4:29).

 Jesus said to His apostles, “*If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*” (Jn. 15:19). This kingdom we are a part of is dynamic in character, and extraordinary in its teachings. Paul said, “*This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind*” (Eph. 4:17). The kingdom walk is a walk of faith (2 Cor. 5:7).

 **Fourth**, do not judge the multitude because of the few. To say that all white people are prejudice is ludicrous. Even to imply that all southern white people are bigots is unwarranted. Prejudice has no barriers. Yet, I believe that most people in general detest bigotry.

 **Next,** do not draw conclusions based on opinions. To say that poor people are that way because they are lazy, or blacks live in the ghetto’s because they desire it, is ridiculous. Take a privileged child of any color and send him or her to the best schools with the best tutors, and you have a better chance of that child being successful. Opportunities are those little moments in life that allow great things to take place. Howbeit, we must take hold of those opportunities that enable us to be better Christians.

 What about that young black child that is raised in the ghettos, and does not have the advantage of a great education, what is most likely the outcome? Those who do succeed tower above the privileged.

 I have great friends of all colors. I don’t dwell on my lack of understanding concerning what culture they were raised in, whether privileged or in poverty. I focus on the warm feelings I get whenever I am with them. I don’t need to understand them, or them me; my objective is to look to the heavens at the Savior that sits on the throne of righteousness.

 I have no quarrel with mixed marriages. When you have lovely women in the church like Monica Gray. A lady of color, charm, and charisma. She is just one of many. We need to quit counseling them on the difficulties involved and rejoice in the blessing of finding love. My Bible tells me that God is the one that joins two people together (Matt. 19). Lord have mercy on any soul that tries to destroy that relationship!

 Those who have problems with mixed marriages must not always be classified as prejudice. The concerned parent, no matter what race, may be cautious about the situations that arise in mixed marriages. Prejudice shows its face when parents refuse to accept the marriage and goes so far as to ex-communicate their loved one.

 Often mixed marriages have nothing to do with color but culture. A girl from Asia married to a man from America will face many challenges. Not only is their diets going to be different, but the rudimentary teachings will become apparent.

  ***Theistic Evolution***

 **John Clayton**: "Genesis 1:1 is an undated verse, no time element is given and no details of what the Earth looked like are included. It could have taken place in no time at all or, God may have used eons of time to accomplish his objectives. I suggest that all **geological phenomena** except the creation of warm-blooded life were accomplished during this time. There was no way God could have described amoebas, bacteria, virus [sic.], or dinosaurs to the ancient Hebrew, and yet these forms of life were vital to the coal, oil and gas God knew man would need. Thus, God created these things (in verse one,*ser*) but did not describe them just as He did not describe a majority of the million species of life on this planet. Changes took place in the Earth (but no gap destruction) [John doesn't believe in the standard gap theory destruction between vv. 1 and 2, *ser*] until God began the formation of man's world with birds, whales, cattle and man in the literal days of Genesis"[)](http://www.watchmanmag.com/0204/020426.htm#N_8_). *("The Source* (Published by John Clayton, 1976), pp.147-148.)

 "Not only does the first verse give us the creation of celestial objects, but of a functional earth itself .... By the end of Genesis 1:1 there was a functional, living, working earth. If you had stood upon the earth now, you would have recognized it. Let us once again remind you that how long God chose to use to accomplish this creation is not revealed in this passage.... It is very possible that a living ecosystem operated in Genesis 1:1 to produce the earth. Bacteria may have swarmed in the oceans and giant plants may have lived in great swamps. Dinosaurs may have roamed freely accomplishing their purpose in being. The purpose of all of this would have been to prepare the earth for man. This living ecosystem would have produced the coal, oil, gas, and the like, as well as providing the basis of man's ultimate food supply. (“*Creation Compromises*” (Apologetics Press, Inc., 1995), pp. 195-196.)

 The most basic problem in the philosophical context is the point that there is really no such thing as absolute truth or proof from a purely logical standpoint. Since definitions of what is meant by reality and assumptions of what physical reality really is can always be challenged the absence of absolute proof can be defended. You cannot prove to me that you exist, for I can deny the use of sight by optical illusions or various other problems in interpretation (1990a, pp. 5-6, emp. added).

 **Bert Thompson** writes, “The fact of the matter is that both scientists and theologians should be concerned with fitting the scientific data to the truth —God’s Word—not with molding God’s Word to fit current scientific theories (which, in a few short years may change—e.g., in Charles Darwin’s day, the Earth had been “proven” scientifically to be 20 million years old, while today it has been “proven” scientifically to be 4.6 billion years old)” (Bert Thompson*, The Bible and the Age of the Earth,* Apologetics Press, p. 12*).*

 **Wayne Jackson** pens, “The Scriptures indicate that **the earth and the human family are substantially co-existent** in point of origin. Moses described the creation of the earth and man as occurring within the same six-day span (Genesis 1). That these were **ordinary** days, of approximately twenty-four hours each (not figurative “days” representing millions of years), is demonstrated by the fact that the prophet viewed them as the **same type** of day as the Hebrew sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11).

 It is unfortunate that some Christians feel that we cannot “be sure” as to the meaning of “day” in Genesis 1 (Shipp 1994, 2).

 The prophets affirmed that Jehovah’s sovereignty has been evident to man “from the beginning,” even from “the foundations of the earth” (Isaiah 40:21). How could this statement be remotely accurate if man did not arrive upon the planet until billions of years **after** earth’s creation?

 Christ stated that “male and female” humans have existed “from the beginning of the creation” (Mark 10:6). This affirmation can never be harmonized with the notion that man is “a very recent new-comer to this planet” (Clayton 1968, Lesson 8, 2).

 Paul argued that unbelief is inexcusable because evidences for the existence of the invisible God are “clearly seen” in the orderly universe, and have been “perceived” (a term that denotes rational intelligence—thus, obviously by man) “since the creation of the world” (Romans 1:20).

 Anyone who takes seriously the plain statements of the Scriptures cannot but see the import of such passages.”

 Wayne continues to state, “The Bible indicates that **man’s years upon the earth have been relatively few.** In Luke, chapter three, the divine historian lists the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Adam, who was the “first man” (1 Corinthians 15:45). Now, from Christ back to Abraham there are some fifty-five generations.

 Archaeology has demonstrated that these fifty-five generations spanned approximately two thousand years at the most (Kitchen and Mitchell 1962, 213). Furthermore, from Abraham on back to Adam, there are but twenty additional generations (a number of which were noted for exceptional longevity).

 Even if one grants a few possible omissions in the genealogical narrative (as with some Old Testament records—cf. Ezra 7:3,4; 1 Chronicles 6:6-10), there is no reason to assume that the earlier portion of the Lord’s family record is of a radically different structure than that which characterizes the later generations.

 And so, Christ’s genealogy spans only a few thousand years—not millions. If the genealogical accounts of the Savior’s lineage do not demonstrate historical proximity, what is their purpose? The Bible is notsilent concerning the relative ages of the earth and the human family.” (<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/7-how-old-is-the-earth>).

 Two men I had greatly admired for their scientific and theological teachings would adamantly disagree with John Clayton. Science does not define God, GOD DEFINES SCIENCE. Those are rules that He established that can be easily changed or altered at His will. God created time definitively and quantitively for man. There is absolutely no question in my mind that twenty-four-hour days begun on the first day of creation.

 John Clayton should had focused more on the Bible than on secular scientists. It must be made clear that there is NO SUCH THING AS EVOLUTION. Five times in Genesis one, God uses the phrase, “after his kind” (Gen. 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25). Within one hundred and forty-four hours, all creatures great and small were created.

 ***Instrumental Music***

**Alexander Campbell:** "*Instrumental music in worship] was well adapted to churches founded on the Jewish pattern of things and practicing infant sprinkling. That all persons singing who have no spiritual discernment, taste or relish for spiritual meditation, consolations and sympathies of renewed hearts should call for such an aid is but natural. So to those who have no real devotion and spirituality in them, and whose animal nature flags under the opposition or the oppression of church service I think that instrumental music would... be an essential prerequisite to fire up their souls to even animal devotion. But I presume, that to all spiritually-minded Christians, such aid would be as a cow bell in a concert."* (Alexander Campbell, recorded in Robert Richardson's biography, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Vol. 2., Also view ***Millennial Harbinger****, October 1851, p.582).*

 **J. W. McGarvey**: "We cannot, therefore, by any possibility, know that a certain element of worship is acceptable to God in the Christian dispensation, when the Scriptures which speak of that dispensation are silent in reference to it. To introduce any such element is unscriptural and presumptuous. It is will worship, if any such thing as will worship can exist. On this ground we condemn the burning of incense, the lighting of candles, the wearing of priestly robes, and the reading of printed prayers. On the same ground we condemn instrumental music."  J.W. McGarvey, The Millennial Harbinger, 1864, pp. 511-513.
 **David Lipscomb**: "Neither he [Paul] nor any other apostle, nor the Lord Jesus, nor any of the disciples for five hundred years, used instruments. This too, in the face of the fact that the Jews had used instruments in the days of their prosperity and that the Greeks and heathen nations all used them in their worship. They were dropped out with such emphasis that they were not taken up till the middle of the Dark Ages, and came in as part of the order of the Roman Catholic Church. It seems there cannot be doubt but that the use of instrumental music in connection with the worship of God, whether used as a part of the worship or as an attraction accompaniment, is unauthorized by God and violates the oft-repeated prohibition to add nothing to, take nothing from, the commandments of the Lord. It destroys the difference between the clean and the unclean, the holy and unholy, counts the blood of the Son of God unclean, and tramples under foot the authority of the Son of God. They have not been authorized by God or sanctified with the blood of his Son."  (David Lipscomb, editor of the Gospel Advocate.)

 **Phil Sanders**: “*In each and every instance, the music described emphasizes verbal communication: singing, speaking, teaching, making melody in your hearts, confessing, giving thanks, and the fruit of lips. The absence of a reference to instrumental music is startling. God desires music that is both of the mind and the spirit, not something irrational or nonverbal. God did not accidentally leave out instruments in these passages. There must have been a reason. When one considers the common use of instruments among pagans and in the Jewish temple, one is quite shocked to see Christian opposition to their use. Instruments cannot speak, teach, admonish, give thanks, praise, proclaim, confess or make melody on your heart. There are the things God wants us to accomplish in our singing. Instruments of music fail to do any of them. This is what makes them additions; they do something different from the instruction. They go beyond the instructions in the New Testament. Jesus taught us in*[*Matt. 7:21-27*](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Matt.%207.21-27)*that Christians are to do what He says in order to obey His will and enter heaven. The burden of proof for pianos and organs must be on the one who introduces them to show where Jesus has instructed this form of worship. There has never been any evidence from the Bible, from the language, or from history to show that instrumental music in Christian worship has won God’s approval.” (*<http://www.scripturessay.com/musical-worship-in-the-new-testament-church-and-the-use-of-the-instrument/>).

 **Rubel Shelly**: “*I don’t draw the line at the instrument. I don’t think the Lord died over that. I’m not going to make that a test of fellowship with you in Christ.” He indicated that while he might not personally like it, nor possibly worship with the congregation using it, neither would he make the use of an instrument a divisive issue, nor would he condemn it.* (Unity Form, Hillsboro Family Camp, Hillsboro, Ohio, <http://www.lakesidechurchofchrist.com/shelly.htm>).

 **Max Lucado**: The Oak Hills church in San Antonio, TX, started using instrumental music during their Sunday evening services in 2004. The elders, along with Max Lucado, wanted to disassociate themselves with the mainstream church of Christ. It didn’t take long before the Christ was taken off the sign. It is now simply called the Oak Hill’s Church.

 First, one must ask the question, “Is instrumental a doctrinal issue?” According to Shelly and Lucado, it is not! The statement made by Shelly that the Lord did not make it a test of fellowship is destructive. God made it a test of fellowship when He commanded His children to sing in the assembly. Paul exclaimed, “*What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also*” (1 Cor. 14:15). The Writer of Hebrews pens, “*Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee*” (Heb. 2:12).

 Any student of the Bible understands that there are three ways to draw out commands from the Bible. First, an **example** of the early disciples. We partake of the Lord’s Supper very first day of the week because of the example of the church (Acts 20:7).

 Second, we follow commands that are **direct**. Paul told the brethren at Corinth, “*Upon the first day of the week let every one of Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

*you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come*” (1 Cor. 16:2).

 Third, we find out what is doctrinal by **necessary inference**. In defining necessary inference, Wayne Jackson writes, “*On the other hand, if an inference is characterized as****necessary****, this means that the conclusion drawn from the facts is****irresistible****. If there is snow covering the countryside in the morning, one may necessarily conclude that the temperature was below thirty-two degrees during the night. (*<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/609-what-is-a-necessary-inference>).

 It is inferred in the scriptures that the New Testament church never used instruments in worship. It was acapella music that filled the airways. It is noteworthy that even the advocates of instrumental music do not debate the lack of its use in the first century. There only stance is based upon personal preferences.

 ***The Crossroads Movement***

In the 70’s, Chuck Lucas was the campus minister in Gainesville, Florida. His concern for the stagnant nature of many congregations led him to form the Crossroad movement. The movement taught aggressive evangelism infiltrating congregations and taking over the leadership.

 One source wrote, “*The main influence for Lucas was influenced by Robert Coleman’s Master Plan of Evangelism. In 1972, Kip McKean was converted and discipled through Lucas and the Crossroads Movement. McKean adopted and enhanced the discipleship techniques that he had learned and started discipling ministers in other Church of Christ congregations in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Charleston, Illinois, created conflict and discord and was asked to leave. He then moved to Lexington, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, in 1979. McKean's ministry was accepted by the congregation of the Lexington Church of Christ and he was able to put into practice his improved version of "Crossroadism".*

 *McKean gathered from the Lexington Church of Christ those who would practice his interpretation of Scripture and began another sect. McKean says, "The Lord allowed me to begin the restoration of the New Testament Church from a small group of 30 would-be disciples in the Gempel's living room in June, 1979 in Boston." In 6 months, there were 68 baptisms, many of which were the original group that were re-baptized into a new commitment. In the first year - 170 baptisms; second year - 250 baptisms; third year - 365 baptisms; fourth year - 402 baptisms; fifth year - 594 baptisms; sixth year - 703 baptisms; and the seventh year - 818 baptisms. This began what has come to be known as "the shot heard 'round the world" from Boston, according to McKean.*

 *In 1980, McKean introduced reconstructionism and gave a call of repentance to the mainline Churches of Christ. He advised them to commit to his discipleship program and be re-baptized. In response to this, the Churches of Christ labeled McKean as an apostate. It is then that McKean pronounced the Boston Movement to be the family of God, God's true church, and God's only modern-day movement. In 1993, the name International Churches of Christ arose. This title was suggested by John Vaughn, who is the founder and editor of Church Growth Today, and the president of the North American Society for Church Growth.*

 *It is interesting to note that while Kip McKean enforced the belief that those who were not baptized with a strong commitment and giving full submission to Christ must be re-baptized, he himself was never re-baptized*” (<http://www.letusreason.org/OCC10.htm>).

 There is no doubt that the church can become stagnant. A congregation can lose sight of the mission of the church, and problems can easily arise. This happened in the early years of the church. Whether it be the church at Corinth, or five of the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2, 3, the possibility of apostasy and stagnation can occur.

 Howbeit, one does not create his own direction in moving the church forward. The Crossroads initial philosophy was admirable. The Lord’s people needed to be accountable, and the care of every soul is sacred.

 There are prescribed remedies in the New Testament for what ails the church. Whether it be disciplining the erring (2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Tim. 6:5), or marking a congregation (Rev. 2, 3); the Bible is the only guide we follow. Once you start prescribing remedies that conflict with the word of God, TROUBLE WILL ARISE. In the 70’s and 80’s the Lord’s people had a plague that was destructive in design, and blasphemous in intent. Many of our young adults were swayed by the philosophies of Chuck Lucas and Kip McKean. Not only did they bring reproach upon the church, but were listed as a DANGEROUS CULT!

 ***The Max King Doctrine***

***(SOP, Spirit of Prophecy, Max King 1971) (CPC, The Cross and the Parousia of Christ, Max King, 1987)***

The realized eschatology theory has swayed many brethren. The belief that Jesus came at the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 is blasphemous. One article defines the stand for those who support this damnable doctrine.

 “What Is Realized Eschatology? The most basic tenant of realized eschatology is that Christ’s second coming occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He will not come again. King wrote, “There is no scriptural basis for extending the second coming of Christ beyond the fall of Judaism” (SOP, p. 105). With the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, all prophecy was fulfilled and there is nothing more to be fulfilled. “Prophecy found its complete fulfillment in the second coming of Christ, and now may be regarded as closed and consummated” (SOP, p. 65). “The fall of Judaism (and its far-reaching consequences) is, therefore a major subject of the Bible. The greater portion of prophecy found its fulfillment in that event, including also the types and shadows of the law. It was the coming of Christ in glory that closely following his coming in suffering (1 Peter 1:11), when all things written by the prophets were fulfilled (Luke 21:22; Acts 3:21). It corresponded to the perfection of prophecy saints (1 Corinthians 13:10) when they reached adulthood in Christ, receiving their adoption, redemption, and inheritance. The eternal kingdom was possessed (Hebrews 12:28) and the new heavens and earth inherited (Matthew 5:5; Revelation 21:1, 7)” (SOP, p. 239). The cross was the “beginning of the end of first covenant,” but the end of that covenant did not occur until A.D. 70. “As already mentioned, we do not disagree that the ‘New Covenant’ began at the cross. However, I believe that there is biblical evidence which demonstrates clearly that the ‘Mosaic age’ and ‘Old Covenant’ continued through the cross even into post-cross time and existed ‘concurrently’ in post-cross time with the ‘New Covenant’ until A.D. 70 (to the end of the age, Matthew 24:2-3). And during this period of time, Old Testament Judaism was still a veritable ‘religion’ and ‘the Jews’ were still ‘under the law’ because the ‘Old Covenant’ was still in effect” (Vanwyngaarden). “When the writer of Hebrews wrote … the consummation of the old aeon has not yet taken place. The Old Covenant age was ‘ready to vanish away’” (CPC, p. 223). “The phrase ‘is ready to vanish away’ was, from the writer’s point of view, an anticipation of the imminent, age-consummating coming of Christ” (CPC, p. 426). The 40 years between the cross and destruction of Jerusalem was the “eschaton.” It was also called the last days of Jewish period. “The last days [Acts 2:17; 2 Timothy 3:1; Hebrews 1:2; James 5:3; 2 Peter 3:3], therefore, never apply to the Christian age, but always to the closing period of the Jewish age, which ran from Pentecost to the fall of Jerusalem” (SOP, p. 79). The kingdom of God was not fully established until A.D. 70. “We are in the eternal kingdom of Christ, and instead of being in the last days we are in eternal days, world without end (Ephesians 3:21)” (SOP, p. 81). There will be no “bodily” resurrection -- the “resurrection” promised was the resurrection of Christianity out of the decay of Judaism. Marc Gibson wrote, “The resurrection is not to be taken in a literal sense, but must be understood in a spiritual sense. It has nothing to do with a ‘resurrection’ of a physical body at some future time. The physical body is discarded forever at death, and an individual receives a spiritual body in which he will dwell immediately and eternally in heaven. This spiritual body is a ‘new creation’ so no physical body is resurrected from a grave.” Max King, commenting on 1 Corinthians 15, wrote, “Next, Paul answers questions concerning how the dead are raised and with what body they come forth. The primary application deals with the development and rise of the Christian system itself, with a secondary application belonging to believers and their state within the system. The natural body that was sown (vs. 44) answers to the flesh or carnal system of Judaism in which existed prophecies, types, and patterns from which came the spiritual body designed of God … The natural body receiving its death blow at the cross and beginning then to wax old and decay (Hebrews 8:13), became a nursery or seed-body for the germination, growth, and development of the spiritual body by means of the gospel … Thus, out of the decay of Judaism arose the spiritual body of Christianity that became fully developed or resurrected by the end-time. Hence, this is the primary meaning of Paul’s statement, ‘It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body’” (SOP, pp. 199-200). Thus, according to realized eschatology, the followings events happened in A.D. 70. Second coming of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:23). Resurrection of the dead (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:23). Judgment day (cf. 2 Peter 3:10). Establishment of the New Covenant (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:25). Completeness in Christ (cf. Colossians 2:10). Kingdom fully established (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:5). Reception of the eternal inheritance (cf. Ephesians 1:11). G. Wayne Jackson wrote, “If the foregoing theory seems to make no sense at all, it is because the novice does not understand how these common biblical terms have been redefined to fit the King theory. The ‘second coming’ does not denote a literal return of Christ in the future, but a spiritual, invisible coming in A.D. 70. ‘Resurrection’ hasn’t anything to do with the human body; rather, it refers to a resurrection of the Christian system from the persecution inflicted by the Jews between A.D. 30 and 70. The ‘judgment day’ is not a time when all men will give account to God; it is the destruction of Judaism. And the ‘end of the world’ is not the passing of the earth; it supposedly is a reference to the dissolution of the Jewish world” (<http://lawofliberty.com/sermons/Resources/01-whatiseschatology.pdf>).

 When one looks at the conclusion of the book of Revelation, John is excited about the second coming of Christ (Rev. 22:20). These early disciples were awaiting the end of the world, and not the fall of Jerusalem. The Jewish system fell when Jesus was nailed to the cross.

 Realized eschatology bears no legitimate thoughts. It is not a new doctrine. It is preterist theology that originated with Luis de Alcasar, Hugo Grotius, and Thomas Hayne in the 1600’s. So many different doctrines seed themselves in the fall of Jerusalem. Many of these men focused more on the book of Daniel rather than the book of Revelation.

 Though I would agree that most of the visions in the book of Revelation relate to events that happened in the early church, the central message speaks of the fall of the Roman empire. That empire did not end until 476 A.D. when Rome was laid to waste. The overall message focuses on the righteous being avenged, and the destruction of ungodly worldly kingdoms. That is the purpose and position of the book.

 ***The Mac Deaver Holy Spirit Controversy***

 I could had included Mac Deaver’s view on the indwelling of the Spirit when I wrote earlier on the subject. Howbeit, I wanted to allow some separation. In all honesty, his view is not all that clear. Therefore, I’ve included certain brethren who have confronted the issue head on.

 Dub McClish wrote concerning Deaver’s position, “*The Bible teaches that, in addition to His sanctifying influence through His Word, the Holy Spirit operates directly to sanctify the heart of the faithful Christian. The core of the doctrine asserts that the Holy Spirit works directly on the heart/mind/spirit of a faithful saint, beyond what He does indirectly through His objective Word, to make one holier than he could otherwise be* (<http://thescripturecache.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/DEAVER-DOCTRINEE28094WHERE-DOES-IT-END.pdf>).

 Howard Denham writes, “*Now, Mac reasons that if the Bible teaches that (A) the Word strengthens the Christians, and (B) the Holy Spirit strengthens the Christian, then both strengthen the Christian in conjunction with one another. He will chide those who reason that the latter does His work of strengthening through the Word of being illogical. But, relative to the non-Christian, Mac reasons that if the Bible teaches that (A) the Word convicts and converts the alien sinner, and (B) the Holy Spirit convicts and converts the alien sinner, then the Holy Spirit must convict and convert the alien sinner through the means of the Word. To be sure, Mac will appeal to John 14:17 that the world cannot receive the Spirit to support his dichotomy, but John 14:17 is not specifically dealing with conviction and conversion. That is not dealt with until John 16:8-13. One would have to argue for this conclusion by way of implication, which causes some problems for Mac’s theory on Spirit baptism. It will be observed that Mac holds that Spirit baptism is essential to regeneration, but this implies that the Holy Spirit must immerse the spirit of the alien sinner in order to regenerate him so that he can become a saint for the Spirit in order to indwell him. If Mac maintains that John 14:17 precludes the Spirit operating in conviction and conversion of the alien sinner in a direct way, then it would also preclude Mac’s Spirit baptism theory as well” (*<http://jfmiller.com/keysofthekingdom/?p=390>).

 Brother Deaver utilizes the prophecy of Joel, the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, and the household of Cornelius receiving the same (Acts 10, 11) as the empirical proof that the Spirit dwells in man. He insists that the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to the obedient as shown in Acts 2:38.

 There have many who have taken the view that the gift spoken of in Acts 2:38 is proof for the indwelling of the Spirit. Most advocates will not branch further than an indwelling in conjunction with the word. Mac Deaver takes it a step further by insisting that the Spirit does do things for the believer outside the written word. This is where the controversy unfolds.

 This writer believes that the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 is not the actual Spirit being given to believers. The people did not ask for the Spirit, but for salvation. They wanted to know what they had to do to make things right with God (Acts 2:37). By “repentance” and “baptism” their sins would be washed away. By their obedience they would receive the gift that they asked for, SALVATION.

 Acts 10 speaks of the household of Cornelius receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Yet, it came before obedience. While the words of salvation were being spoken the Holy Spirit fell on them (Acts 11:15-17).

 In Acts 8, the Samaritans heard the gospel preached and responded by being baptized (Acts 8:12, 13). Note the next verse, “*Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them,* ***that they might receive the Holy Spirit****: for as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.  Then* ***laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit****.  Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money*” (Acts 8:14-18).

 When the early Christians received the gift of the Holy Spirit, SIGNS FOLLOWED. They spoke in tongues, prophesied, and performed miracles. This was all part of the direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

 ***The Charismatic Movement***

 ***“***The Charismatic movement is an interdenominational Christian renewal movement and is one of the most popular and fastest-growing forces within the Christian world today. The movement traces its roots to 1906, at the [Azusa Street](https://www.gotquestions.org/Azusa-Street-Revival.html)mission in Los Angeles, California, a Methodist-sponsored revival” (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Charismatic-movement.html>). This parenthetical statement is a brief history of the movement, and its beginnings.

 It was in the late 60’s and early 70’s that Pat Boone, a popular entertainer, announced that he had received the Holy Spirit and had the ability to speak in tongues. This led to brethren speaking out against Boone, and basically marking him.

 In 1973, I studied at Vincennes University. I attended the congregation in Vincennes, Indiana and found that some of the youth were meeting with denominational members. Back on campus, I was invited to a prayer meeting, which was basically a charismatic Holy Spirit reception event. As I mention in my tract, I was hesitant about receiving Holy Spirit baptism. When it supposedly took place, I was totally confused concerning my own personal faith.

 After reading Mac Deaver’s research on the Holy Spirit, it seems as if he is just one leg away from the charismatic concept of the Holy Spirit. The difference being that charismatics believe that tongue speaking is a necessity for proving one is in Christ.

 Once you believe that the Holy Spirit is working outside the domain of the written word, many doors are opened while others are shut. The question, “*What does the Spirit do*?” Is He whispering in your ear? Is He appearing in your dreams? Is He opening prison doors for you?

 When I was a charismatic, religion was undefined. To the true charismatic, what church you associated with was not important. It was all about being filled with the Spirit. Howbeit, the Spirit was actually the teachings and philosophies of an individual wallowing in pride.

 It is not my intent to argue if the Spirit resides in word only. I simply want to caution our brethren in making sure that whatever belief an individual hold does not go beyond the written word, nor compromises truth in any way.

 When researching the Godhead, we can all draw the conclusion that our knowledge is extremely limited. God does not go out of His way to explain Himself. The insight He offers is minimal because we are so intellectually immature in His presence. The ending of the book of Job points to this very fact. From Job 38:1 to Job 41:34, God brings up some of the creatures He created asking Job to explain how and why they were created. The basic thesis aimed at man’s inability to understand some of the simplest tasks God performed.

 The complexities of understanding how the Spirit operates will be pondered on by generations to come. They will know no more or less than what has been taught in the twenty-first century. With the removal of the miraculous creates a void. I will never know what it is like to be guided directly by the Spirit. I will never be able to speak in tongues, raise the dead, or miraculously heal the sick. Howbeit, what I can grasp are the fruits of the spirit (Gal. 5:22).

 So, let us not draw lines that promote personal philosophies that may be different from our own. Will any of us truly know how the Spirit dwells? Even though I believe He dwells in word only, I will not break the bond of brotherhood from one that believes in a personal indwelling. I encourage all true believers to seek knowledge, growth, and a pliable mind that will not compromise but be willing to expand. We are children of the light. Therefore, let us walk in truth!

 **What Is Doctrine?**

 One of the fundamental errors among many centers on their inability to define what is doctrinal. We would all agree that doctrine is of the utmost importance. Howbeit, what is the definition? Wikipedia defines it as, “ (from [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_language): [*doctrina*](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/doctrina), meaning "teaching", "instruction" or "doctrine") is a [codification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codification_%28law%29) of beliefs or a body of [teachings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teacher) or instructions, taught [principles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_%28personal_and_cultural%29) or positions, as the essence of teachings in a given branch of knowledge or in a [belief system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belief_system). The [etymological](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etymology) [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece) analogue is "[catechism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catechism)".”

 Jack Wellman, a church of Brethren minister, wrote, “Doctrine is essentially something that is taught and can be a principle or principles and even a creed of principles presented for acceptance or belief by someone or by a group of people. Doctrine is basically a system of beliefs and may denote both the act of teaching and that which is learned. For Christians, it is a set of accepted beliefs and it is the set of true beliefs that define the parameters of that belief system like the sinless-ness of Christ, His divinity, His all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross and so on. Christians believe these things to be true and there is no negotiating them or watering these beliefs down into something that is more palatable for those who may not believe them. The essentials of the Christian faith are doctrines that are unchangeable and are the immutable teachings of God taught through His Word, the Bible.” (<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2015/08/14/what-does-doctrine-mean-a-biblical-definition-of-doctrine/>).

 Harold Rhodes states, “The primary Greek word used in New Testament texts is didachē: “In an active sense it means the act of teaching, instructing, tutoring (Mark 4:2; 12:38; 1 Cor. 14:6, 26; 2 Tim. 4:2); in a passive sense, teaching which is given, that which anyone teaches, the manner or character of one’s teaching (Matt. 7:28; 22:33; Mark 1:22, 27; 11:18; Luke 4:32). In an absolute sense, it denotes the teaching of Jesus (2 John 1:9, 10); the Lord (Mark 11:18; John 18:19; Acts 13:12); the Apostles (Acts 2:42; 5:28; Titus 1:9); the things taught, precept, doctrine (Matt. 16:12; John 7:16, 17; Acts 17:19; Rom. 6:17; 16:17; Heb. 6:2; 13:9)” (Complete Word Study Bible compiled by Spiros Zodhiates, 2003).” (<https://lifehopeandtruth.com/bible/bible-study/what-is-doctrine/>).

 From a biblical perspective, one can draw a true understanding of doctrine. First, doctrine is associated with **law.** Solomon wrote, “*For I give you good****doctrine****, forsake ye not* ***my law***” (Prov. 4:2). Law defines what is sin. The Bible states, “*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the****transgression****of the law”* (1 Jn. 3:4).

 Second, doctrine is found in **language.** The Bible speaks authoritatively. It openly expresses what must be believed. In the first chapter of the gospel of John, the author states, “*The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might****believe..****. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that****believe****on his name*” (Jn. 1:7, 12). Verse seven centers on the teachings of John the Baptist, whereas, verse twelve focuses on Jesus.

 We interpret the Bible by **basic language skills**. The who, when, what, why, where, and how are applicable in understanding the Bible. Jesus said, *“For by thy****words****thou shalt be justified, and by thy****words****thou shalt be condemned*” (Matt. 12:37). This implies the fact that I must come to understand the doctrinal commands orated by Christ. Some things that Jesus taught were for a certain group of people. For example, the promise of Holy Spirit baptism was promised to the apostles specifically (Jn. 14:26).

 The declaration of the Lord’s doctrines is presented in the Sermon on the Mount. Not only does He tell us the character of a disciple, but the way we are to live, think, and teach. One comes to understand what is doctrinal by certain introductory phrases. For example, in Matthew chapter five, the Lord states, “*Ye have heard… but I say unto you*” (Matt. 5:21, 22, 27, 28, 31-34, 38, 39, 43, 44). What He is doing is introducing doctrinal commands.

 Also, the Lord speaks of doctrinal necessities when He comments on salvation issues. This is seen in Matthew 19:9; John 8:24; Mark 16:15, 16. Obedience is the key. For those who disobey, they face eternal consequences. It is pertinent for the reader to understand that doctrine can be distinguished by the penalties enforced if one does not abide in the command.

 Third, doctrines are issues that are **legislative.** The word is defined, “*the exercise of the power and function of making rules (such as laws) that have the force of authority”* (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/legislation>).

 The legislative originator is God. The enforcers are the elders. The Hebrew writer penned, “*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you”* (Heb. 13:17).

 One may respond to the elder’s decision by proclaiming that they have not the right to create doctrine. Thus, inscribing three services during the week will not jeopardize one’s soul if not obeyed. The fallacy in this perspective is that the elders do have the right to rule. Howbeit, Hebrews 13:17, which had just been scribed, gives elders the right to arrange services, and direct the saints to properly worshipping God.

 Anything that is against the commands of God would exact condemnation. So, if God commands to do something, believe something, or practice something; I’d better do it! You cannot take a command like Mark 16:16 and try to defend those who do not believe in baptism. It is a necessary act of obedience to God or it is not! You cannot ignore the act of adultery in Matthew 19:9. God said if you divorce your spouse, for any other reason than fornication, and you marry another; YOU ARE LIVING IN ADULTERY. God made both the necessity of water baptism and divorce and remarriage doctrinal issues.

 Fourth, that which is doctrine is spoken of in a **literal sense**. The Bible is filled with lessons using allegories, metaphors, and parables. But direct commands are simply that. They are stated boldly and firmly. There is no leeway for compromise nor complacency. It simply underlines the premise that God does not cast confusion (1 Cor. 14:33).

 From the “Thou shalt,” to the “Thou shalt not’s,” God does not shadow the necessities. Whether it is believing that Jesus is the Son of God or accepting the teachings of a unified kingdom; God is explicit. It is necessary to understand this concept when questioning if something is doctrinal.

 As Christians we should be able to separate what is an example or a necessary doctrine. For example, the Lord washing the apostle’s feet was not meant to be a doctrinal necessity (Jn. 13:1-20). It was a personal challenge to the apostles to exhibit care for one another. It was not instituted like the Lord’s Supper where the command is given to continue the observance (Matt. 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25).

 Next, doctrine is stated in a **logical manner**. For example, the decalogue informs us that adultery is equated to stealing. God said, “*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet the neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s*” (Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:21).

 The logical comparison follows the sequential pattern. What is a thief to do in order to repent? He must pay back double what he has taken (Exod. 22:7). Using the mind that God has given me, I can logically conclude that taking another man’s wife is the same as stealing. I can deduct that I cannot keep what I have stolen.

 Further, that which is doctrine will have **lethal consequence** for the disobedient. If doctrine implies the necessity of believing something, then failure to believe would enact punishment. In many of the Lord’s parables, the disobedient are “cast out” (Matt. 21:39, 22:13, 25:30).

 ***The Dilemma***

In my thoughts a dilemma has been created by looking at the past. Doctrine does not change or transition to the nominal beliefs of present or future generations. What was wrong two thousand years ago, is wrong today. What was doctrinal during the days of the apostles is doctrinal in these modern times.

 The question is whether divorce and remarriage, instrumental music, or the unity of the church was doctrinal during the days of Jesus? I would concur that these matters were considered doctrine! If not, why not?

 He did not come and create laws exclusive to the Jewish nation. The thought that the teachings of the gospels were not meant for the church now existing is ridiculous. Jesus was going to send the Holy Spirit to His apostles after His death for the purpose of bringing to their remembrance WHATSOEVER HE HAD SAID (Jn. 14:26).

 Also, would belief alone condemn a soul, or was it to be taught before one’s salvation would be at stake? I’ve heard some of my own brethren state, “As long as he does not teach it, his personal belief would not damn his soul.!” That statement does not make sense to me. One cannot believe something contrary to the teachings of Christ and think that heaven will be rewarded to them. At the transfiguration, the voice from heaven said, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5).*

I believe that a man will eventually teach what he believes. What is teaching? Is it not sharing our philosophies, beliefs, and theories with others? We search out the truth, and then convey what we have learned to others. The possibility that what we have learned is tainted or just downright wrong defines our human fallacies. The difference between the seasoned man and those vibrant young men in the pulpits today, is the maturity in our thinking. Through the years we have learned to be more cautious because of the times we errored in our beliefs. It is possible that time can be a detriment. Disease such as dementia, Alzheimer’s, and vasculitis can greatly affect one’s ability to think clearly.

 What about those that do not suffer from these diseases? What about the brother who openly compromises truth or distorts it? I cannot of myself redraw the lines that have been etched by God. I am not allowed to diminish doctrine to opinions.

 The question I ask, “Is one condemned because he believes something false, or when he teaches something false?” If I am a Baptist holding the belief that once I am saved, I cannot be lost; would that belief cost me my soul? What if that Baptist fellow believed in baptism for remission of sins, but held to other doctrines contrary to the Lord’s teachings; would he lose his soul?

 We cannot look at denominations and condemn them to a devil’s hell for believing things contrary to the Bible and dismiss our own brethren from paying the penalty for their divergence from the truth! Truth is absolute. It does not change with the current.

 ***Damnable Heresies***

The question arises, “*When is a doctrine damaging and damnable*?” Mirriam Webster defines heresy as, “an opinion, doctrine, or practice contrary to the truth or to generally accepted beliefs or standards; adherence to a religious opinion contrary to church dogma” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heresy>).

 One author stated, “*The word “heresy” comes from the Greek ‘hairesis’ which means “choosing” or “faction.” At first, the term*[*heresy*](https://carm.org/dictionary-heresy)*did not carry the negative meaning it does now. But, as the early church grew in its scope and influence throughout the Mediterranean area, various teachers proposed controversial ideas about*[*Christ*](https://carm.org/dictionary-christ)*, God, salvation, and other biblical themes. It became necessary for the church to determine what was and was not true according to the*[*Bible*](https://carm.org/dictionary-bible)*. For example, Arius of Alexandar (A.D. 320 ) taught that Jesus was a creation. Was this true? Was this important? Other errors arose. The Docetists taught that Jesus wasn’t human. The Modalists denied the*[*Trinity*](https://carm.org/dictionary-trinity)*. The Gnostics denied the incarnation of Christ. Out of necessity, the church was forced to deal with these heresies by proclaiming orthodoxy; and in so doing, condemnation upon these heresies and the heretics became a reality*.”

 The Greek word (**αἵρεσιν)** for heresy is found in Acts 24:14. It is translated “heresy” in the King James Version, and “Sect” in the NKJV, ESV, ASV, and NIV. The act itself is spoken about throughout the New Testament (Matt. 22:23; Heb. 13:9; Gal. 1:6, 7; 2 Tim. 4:3, 4; Acts 23:8; 1 Jn. 4:1-3). (<https://bereanresearch.org/heresy/>).

 We all recognize that a sincere, bright, religious person can believe and practice things contrary to the Bible. Paul proclaimed, “*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*” (Acts 26:9). Paul was heretical. His conviction was polluted with Pharisaic instructions.

 In his Christian walk, Paul wrote, “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them*” (Rom. 16:17). Further he scribed to Timothy, “*For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine*” (1 Tim. 1:10).

 Anything **CONTRARY** to the teachings of Christ is heretical. If they be heretical, then they must be condemning. There is no room for compromise. No excuse for false beliefs.

 Not one person will be judged on what is unknown, but what has been revealed. The Bible is our guide. Jehovah did not pen a manual that is above human comprehension. It is a book intended to guide men.

 The sacred text is a key to opening the gates of heaven or sealing the horrors of hell. If I teach a person that they can continue to live in an adulterous relationship am I not teaching something that will condemn their souls as well as my own?

 Next, anything **CONFLICTING** with the pattern of New Testament Christianity is heretical. Paul proclaimed to the brethren in Thessalonica, “*But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much****conflict****”* (1 Thess. 2:2).

 When something is conflicting, it is oppositional and antagonistic. It does not allow reason to ferment.

 Paul’s conflict arose from his own countrymen. The Jews themselves despised the teachings of Christ. The New Testament speaks of a pattern that must be followed. The apostle Paul said to Timothy, “ *Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting”* (1 Tim. 1:16).

 Further, **COMPROMISING** truth is heretical! Some people feel they can negotiate doctrine. They want to come to some agreement of compromise in order to sustain their position. The advocates of the divorce and remarriage issue are prime examples. They feel that the law established by God applied to Christian only.

 Even further, **CARELESSNESS** leads to heresies.  “*Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the LORD, which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone*” (Jer. 49:31). Those are the words of Jehovah to Jeremiah as he is sent out to do the Lord’s work. Imagine being sent to a people that care less about the world around them.

 There are some in the church that treat doctrine the same way. When you look at divorce and remarriage, and the instrumental issue, some feel one’s belief does not jeopardize his or her standing in the church.

   Jesus exclaimed, *“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful*” (Matt. 13:22). The Lord speaks of the second area of care that is diminished among many. People who are more involved in what the world thinks than what God says.

 **THE BOUNDARIES**

When does something become damaging to the soul? Some say there are no guidelines to follow, but I disagree. The Bible does offer guidance in this area.

 First, **time** is important. The Hebrew writer cites, “*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe”* (Heb. 5:12, 13). Peter proclaimed, “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Pet. 2:2).

 We can conclude that new Christians may still hold to doctrines that are false, and must be guided by the word to a correct understanding. Note the story of Apollos, “*And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.  This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord,* ***knowing only the baptism of John****.   And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly*” (Acts 18:24-26).

 In Acts 19:1-7, Paul comes across some men that had believed the same as Apollos. They were instructed by the apostle and baptized correctly. They were not rebaptized. There is no such thing. If you are baptized wrong, you must be baptized correctly. The first baptism was simply getting wet.

 Second, the **intellectual maturity** of the disciple. Jesus taught His disciples for three-and-a-half-years. He worked on their personal prejudices, narrow minded views, and lack of understanding. To state that the Lord was tolerant with them is an understatement.

 We are all aware that some people mature quicker than others. The pace we take with people is depended on their abilities to comprehend what is being taught. For the Jewish nation of the First Century, the book of Romans and Hebrews would not be confusing. To a Gentile, one would have to do further explaining and teachings to grasp the meanings of both letters.

 Third, **mind deterioration** can cause incorrect thinking. Even the finest preachers on earth can be plagued with debilitating diseases brought on by age. Dementia and Alzheimer’s are two damaging culprits that can cause brain deterioration. I’m not pointing at any of the men named in this manuscript, but we should never rule out that the mind does suffer the older we get.

 Years ago, one of my elders in Virginia suffered from a brain tumor. He would often say things off the wall. In fact, by the time the tumor had taken his life, he would often speak to a picture of his parents as if they were standing before him.

 **Generational lack of understanding or comprehension** can play a part in improper reasoning. In the last sixty years, I have seen the face of many changes in beliefs. When my father left this country to go and fight in a war in Korea, they packed cigarettes in his duffle bag. My grandfather during that period chewed tobacco, and my great grandmother dipped snuff. They were all hardcore Alabamians. If you didn’t roll with the tide, you needed to roll out of the state. Divorce was not an issue with any of them for there were not many that did so. Even drinking was not much of a problem because Walker County was dry in those days, and my grandfather was Chief of Police in Carbon Hill. However, prejudice was a problem. It went much further than flying the Dixie flag, or segregating the schools. As wrong and horrid as it was, it was cultural. Blacks stayed on one side of the tracks, and whites on the other. No different than the cultural barriers present during the days of Christ.

 I don’t justify those times, nor the actions of the ignorant. It is not about tolerance, but teaching. Often culture interferes with the teachings of Christ. “That is just the way it is,” or “That is what I was taught” keeps a generation in the dark ages. To be a Christian demand that we do not walk as other men walk. We do not practice limited ethnic conversion. In other words, we don’t preach to a certain group of people, and ignore the rests. Our commission is to preach the gospel to the entire world.

**CONCLUSION**

The power of the pen is amazing. It can influence, inform, condone, condemn, and direct. Yet, all this is accomplished by reading, understanding, and applying what has been read. So what happens when something is penned that is false? Those who are grounded in the word of God will be able to discern and challenge what is written. Others will believe the message and be led into apostasy.

 As a gospel preacher, I want to stand firm and at the same time have an ear to hear what the other person has to say. If he is wrong, I am obligated to correct him using the word of God. However, what if he is right? Then I must be willing to follow the right path laid before me.

 I have never met an elderly minister that has not changed some belief in his life. It may be accepting a later date for the writing of Revelation. A change might had taken place on the indwelling of the Spirit. Whatever be the case, we are pieces of clay that must be placed in the Creator’s hands.

 I do not believe that I am infallible. There could be things I believe that are incorrect. This is where grace abounds. I truly believe that we often put chains around grace. I simply pray that God’s umbrella of grace stretches further than my understanding.

 So, let us not be eager to judge the dead. I cannot speak for brother Wallace, brother Nichols, or any other that has stood before the judgment seat of Christ. I believe in my heart that they studied diligently the Bible. They opened doors for the rest of us, and they defended against damnable heresies.

 One day I will stand before the bar of God. Will He let me know that I was wrong in certain areas? Will he damn me to a devil’s hell because I was mistaken? I pray that I am correct in my beliefs. Yet, let me not shun those who are searching, but I pray for the opportunity to sit with them in peace, and guide them with truth.